



Behind the wall

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A few weeks ago "Behind the Wall" had the privilege to interview and publish, "The Nedra Bagley Story."

A story about an extraordinary woman wanting to pursue her dream to become one of the most effective and dedicated counselors in the field of state corrections.

Nedra Bagley feels in order to achieve such a goal she would have to know as much as possible about the individuals' life who may someday turn to her for professional advice; how to live once again within society as a productive citizen instead of wasting their lives away in cells, like animals.

To gain such valuable knowledge and experience Nedra Bagley worked hard to graduate in "Administration of Justice," at Portland State University. After obtaining a degree Nedra volunteered her services with Multnomah County Parole and Probation until she was employed by the State of Oregon at a 'woman's work release' center in Portland.

It was not long after that Nedra applied and was accepted to become the fourth woman to be employed as a correctional officer (guard) at O.S.P. After working six months in a guard tower, Nedra felt it was time to gain the most valuable experience of her whole career, working among the clients she someday hopes to counsel.

On September 1, 1978 Nedra Bagley and Brilante Murphy became the first two women correctional officers to be permitted to work inside the walls of O.S.P. Almost from the very first day a rage of individual complaints were verbally expressed by some of the inmates, and guards

alike. The inmates screamed, "invasion of privacy," while the male guards felt threatened that certain "gravy train" positions might become filled by women. But both women were placed on jobs that required them to do the same type of work as their male counterparts. Walking the "big yard," supervising the mess hall, opening and slamming iron gates . . . even frisking male inmates.

On September 26, 1978 Nedra Bagley's efforts to gain the experience of working among the people she someday wanted to counsel came to an abrupt end. She found herself being hit with a 'temporary court injunction' filed in Marion Circuit Court by three inmates. She and Murphy once again found themselves back in the gun towers where they had spent so many months prior. But during those three weeks inside the walls of the largest state male prison Nedra Bagley had done something that only a few guards come close to achieving and some never. Gaining the respect of some of the inmates, many who knew what the real meaning of discrimination was — having encountered it in their own lives.

All of a sudden the issue came forth as 'Discrimination vs. privacy rights.'

It was not until October 25, 1978 that Nedra Bagley received her day in court, only to find many of the inmates stepping forward to defend her position.

Edward Mueller, vice president of the prison Jaycees, said he is not personally offended by being searched by a woman. "The person is a guard, authority has no sex to it," he said. "I feel they (the women) should have

just as much right to work in the institution as anybody else."

"My own feeling is that it's much nicer when women guards are around. Most women smile a lot more than male guards," said John Stephens, who was transferred to the penitentiary from California last May.

Stephens said he has served time in several California prisons — which have female correctional officers frisk male prisoners — there was no hostility there toward women.

Harry P. Henderson, another inmate, said he couldn't understand why the inmates brought the lawsuit. "I committed a crime, I'm inside the institution, and I have to abide by the rules while I'm here," Henderson said.

David J. Sterling, one of the three inmates who filed the lawsuit, did not file the suit to remove the women officers from working among the prisoners, but only to prevent them from 'body search' and 'access to showers and cell blocks' where the inmates privacy is viewed.

Superintendent H.C. Cupp and Corrections Division Administrator Robert Watson both disagree with Sterling's position about security.

Minimizing the number of frisks performed by the female guards "would be an unfair burden on the male guards," said Cupp.

There are fifteen women (six at the penitentiary and nine at the correctional institution) among the 203 correctional officers, said Cupp.

Judge Richard Barber, Marion County Circuit Court has to rule on this important issue.

But the issue has now gone far beyond these tall cement walls and the politicians speak.

Candidate for State Representative, District #18, (Democrat) Jane Cease, supports the women officers being trained to work inside state prisons as officers and believes they should not be discriminated against.

State Representative Gretchen Kafoury (Democrat), District #13 supports the idea 100 percent. "Where else is a woman going to gain the experience to become a good correctional counselor among male prisoners? Out of a book?"

Margaret (Peg) Dereli, Representative, District #32: "If women work in prison positions as correctional officers, they are not to be locked up in guard towers."

And so the continuing episode in the Nedra Bagley story continues as a few people like Professor Gary Pealstein, Administration of Justice, Portland State University, and Gladys McCoy, candidate for Multnomah County Commissioner, praised Nedra's work in college and in the community, wait and watch her career come under attack.

But then there are inmates who are not afraid to speak out in support of Nedra Bagley, such as our 'Behind the Wall' Poetry Editor, Julius Snowden: "Twice while attending Jaycee meetings I had the opportunity to speak with Officer Bagley, I questioned her on why she chose this type of work — corrections — as a profession. Her response assured, not only myself, but others that her reasons were selfish, but only the point that she desires to help people, specially those unable to understand that they do need help. I wish Officer Bagley all the luck and support she has coming. I further believe that these women will undoubtedly add a much overdue new dimension to an otherwise dark and ugly situation."

Nedra Bagley is not alone in her struggle to someday become one of the most effective and dedicated counselors that the Oregon State Corrections ever had. But then again, discrimination comes in all forms, shapes, sizes and colors, even between men and women 'behind the wall' of a state penitentiary.

Citizens honor 'Gospel Train' founders

Fourteen years ago this month, November 12, 1964, two action minded citizens of the Albina community of Portland struck an agreement to demonstrate their faith in God.

Ira D. Mumford and Willard Harris established a Sunday morning radio program, The Gospel Train, bringing the word of God to hundreds of people, among them those physically unable to attend church services.

This year, November 12th, the 14th anniversary of the Gospel Train will be celebrated at a special program and tribute to the founders of the program. Distinguished guests and city officials will gather in the King School auditorium at 3:00 p.m. The public is invited to participate and further information can be obtained by calling 285-5575.

The first Gospel Train programs

were broadcast from the Golden Rule Restaurant, where Mumford served as announcer and Harris was executive director and coordinator of the Gospel Train format. The Soul Seekers, a spiritual vocal group in Portland, joined Mumford on the program during the first year.

Faced with financial difficulties many times during the years of broadcasting, Mumford and Harris were dedicated to the program and determined to continue bringing it to the community, even when funds were from their personal accounts.

At one time the program was discontinued due to a lack of funding, but because it was considered "a unique and valuable asset to the radio station, a \$1,200 balance was written off by producers at KGAR."

Since then the Gospel Train has been aired every Sunday morning,

live, without missing a radio date in the past fourteen years.

"Through the Lord's blessings" notes Mumford, "we have been able to bring this Gospel message to the community every week. We are reaching out to help our friends and neighbors find the Lord in their hearts and keep the Lord in their lives."

Mumford has been a member of Allen Temple CME for the past 27 years. He currently is serving as Extension Agent for the Urban 4-H program, Oregon State University, where he is involved in meeting the needs of young people and adults through the community 4-H organization.

Mumford is a man of positive thought and direction. He has identified his goals and purposes in life according to his special gifts. His ability to spearhead programs aimed at bettering the lives of people of Portland has become a legend.

Paraphrasing a favorite poem of Ira Mumford's: "I never spoke with God, nor visited in heaven, but certain am I of the spot as if a chart were given."

Willard Harris came to Portland in 1960, securing work as an interior decorator and contractor. He has been a member of New Hope Baptist Church of Portland for the past eighteen years, where he served on the board of trustees and sang with the church choir.

The combination of Mumford and Harris will continue to bring the Gospel Train to the community, via station KGAR, Vancouver, every Sunday morning from 7:00 to 8:30 a.m., bringing Portland the "best in Gospel listening."



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NOVEMBER 1978

SERIES I

In keeping with Exodus Community Service Policy, Exodus will host a Symposium on Alcohol and Substance Abuse Problems. Exodus will do this in coordination with other agencies providing similar services.

The General Public is invited. The Symposium will be held at:

EXODUS DAY TREATMENT

1223 N.E. Alberta
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The meeting will be from 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Wednesday, November 15, 1978 while there is no charge for the general meeting, a small donation for lunch will be appreciated.

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