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This Former CO Aimed High

Chief of Department Eric M. Taylor

June 1, 1994, saw fulfillment of a prediction Eric M. Taylor used to make to fellow Correction Officers two decades ago. When they good-naturedly needled him on his eagerness to learn and advance, he'd smile and routinely say: "Enough now, guys, but someday I'll be in charge of this Department." Twenty months ago his forecast came true with his appointment as Chief of Department.



Of course, I said that then in jest, or at least at the time I thought I was just joking back at them. But now, thinking about it, perhaps some part of me really did mean it from the start: To aim for the very top."

Chief Taylor tells the story to illustrate a point he likes to make about DOC: the opportunity for advancement that it offers anyone willing to work at learning and mastering the Correction profession. Precisely this point was among the prime considerations that determined his choice between Correction and NYPD. "Eventually, I drew up a balance sheet of pluses and minuses for a career with the Police or with Correction," he recalls. "High on the DOC plus side was its greater opportunity for advancement."



The habit of drawing up balance sheets in his mind when making decisions can be traced back to boyhood hours helping his father, Gassemiel, with an installment merchandise business.

My father was a no-nonsense guy, fair but firm. His word was law. 'Don't give me two for one,' he'd say." The meaning was: Multiple reasons why an assigned task was undone were not acceptable substitutes for the one thing he wanted: the job done.

My mother, Dorothy, was soft-spoken, smiling, supportive, and strong in a gentle way. She was a working mom who, nevertheless, was always there for us – my brother and sister and I.

We were an extended family and lived in a big brownstone house with our grandmother. Ours was a churchgoing upbringing. We went to services on Sundays, we went on weekdays; in my memory, we were always going to church."

That formula seemed to have worked well. Brother Andre heads a business involving major league sports clubs accessing performance data and videos on opposing teams. Sister Marlene heads a federal service agency's local office.

Also traceable to those days of growing up in Bedford-Stuyvesant was young Eric's interest in pursuing a law enforcement career.

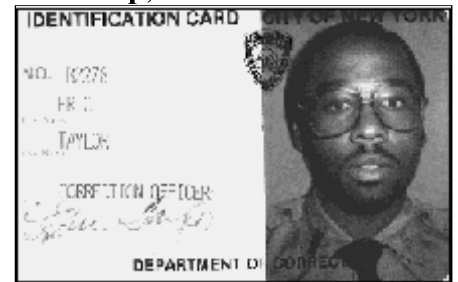


*Shield of the highest uniformed rank
in City Correction: Chief of Department.*

的 don't recall any other kid in the neighborhood wanting to be an officer, but I did, for as long as I can remember." Both his dad and an uncle were active in the 79th Pct. Auxiliary Police. Seeing them in uniform on auxiliary duty made a lasting impression. When the chance presented itself to take tests for law enforcement positions, Taylor – by then a Wingate High School graduate and a New York University undergraduate -- took 兔 every officer exam I could."

Correction called first. He joined in May, 1973 and first served at the then-newly opened Adolescent Reception and Detention Center on Rikers. Less than a year later, he was called by NYPD, joining in March, 1974, first working at Ozone Park's 106th Pct. and then Far Rockaway's 101st Pct., where he lived and could walk home to work, sometimes along the beach. However, a city fiscal crisis prompted layoffs of newly-hired cops in June, 1975. Taylor returned to Correction. 鄭 number of us back at DOC under those circumstances sued for reinstatement to NYPD. But by the time the suit won us that right, I had decided to remain with DOC where I was taking the Captains exam, where advancement came faster, where overtime opportunities were better. Going back to NYPD just didn't add up, at least for me."

*Don't let the glasses fool you.
This is Eric M. Taylor's ID card as a CO.
Because of an eye injury,
he had to wear the glasses
until the condition was corrected.*



Previously, Taylor served as a Division Chief managing six correctional facilities and Rikers Island Security Unit. Before that, he was warden at the Otis Bantum Correctional Center and the North Infirmity Command and the Maritime Facility in Manhattan, then the City痴--and the nation痴--first floating jail. Other previous assignments include Deputy Warden at OBCC, Commanding Officer of the Health Management Division, Executive Officer of Applicant Investigations Unit and Executive Assistant to Commissioner Jacqueline McMickens.

Eric Taylor痴 tenure as Chief of Dept. has been marked by significant achievements. Violent incidents within the jails have been reduced to the lowest level in five years. Overtime expenditures have come in under budgeted targets for the first time within a decade. This was accomplished with reduced manpower during a period when the DOC recorded its highest-ever inmate population.

He has reorganized the chain-of-command into a cohesive reporting system that stresses performance and accountability. "We needed Operations with a professional structure capable of setting and meeting goals. We needed to make necessary changes and to have people in command capable of making changes."



Chief Taylor, 44, resides on Long Island with his wife and their teenaged daughter.

*This old photo shows Eric M. Taylor
as a CO but without the corrective glasses.*

At home, Taylor relaxes by tinkering with his coral reef fish tank or surfing the Internet on the four on-line services to which he subscribes. 典 hat is, if daughter lets me get at the PC. Sometimes she's on it for hours."

Chief Taylor has had long association with the Correction Guardians which tendered him a testimonial dinner last fall. He is a member of One Hundred Black Men of New York, Inc., and a participating father

in the Nassau County Chapter of Jack & Jill of America, Inc.

Jack & Jill is an organization of families that emphasize parents going places and doing things with their children, making sure they share quality time together. Today, that's all organized. When I was growing up. That just happened." Fortunately for DOC, it did in that old brownstone in Bed-Sty.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT: We gratefully acknowledge NYC DOC's permission to post here material used in creating the original version of the NYC DOC web page posted on NYC LINK.

– Thomas McCarthy, NYCHS webmaster