Remember the prisoners

By Chaplain Sharon J. Reives

When I was in Divinity School, I was privileged to take a group of Divinity School Women to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in West Chester County in New York. We hugged the women prisoners' necks, we wiped their tears, we held their babies while in prison. I wanted to go to that particular prison because that is where Jean Harris was. For those of you who followed that story in the news, you will know that Jean Harris was convicted for the murder of the Scarsdale Diet doctor. Yet, she found her purpose and calling in life while in prison. This well-educated, well-traveled, affluent woman found her calling while in prison as she began to teach classes… training young mothers how to care for their babies. There are two places in this world which makes it impossible for one to escape from oneself: on a battlefield and in prison.
New York Theological Seminary has a remarkable prison program where they extend graduate ministerial training to inmates in the New York Penal System. These men in Sing Sing Prison say that it is the most humane experience that they have had while in prison. Since 1991, they have graduated more than 4,600 inmates. This program has attracted the attention of other states, the Federal Prison System, and other seminaries. It has been visited by representatives from England, France, and Japan.

All theology must be judged as to how far it contributes to the liberation and humanization of the Human Community. Isaiah 61:1 says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because, the Lord hath anointed me to preach good news unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. When we see prisoners, we judge them for where they are; but, we do not see where God wants them to be. Though they may be sentenced by civil authority, God has other plans for them. The stone that the builders rejected was the cornerstone. Who else has been more rejected than those who are in prison? The Church must respond and be responsible for the Prison Population. Today the United States is the leading country in its numbers of prisons. If the Church is going to be about serving an urban world, we need to be educated about the Prison ministry possibilities.
In closing, I want to share with you words from The Reverend Vaughan Booker's book, From Prison to Pulpit: My Road to redemption. It says, "In 1967, a young, middle class, black man gruesomely murdered his wife by firing five hunting arrows into her as she lay on their bed. The arrows, fired from only a few feet away, penetrated her neck, chest and side. Vaughan Booker, the murderer, immediately turned himself in to police. His case became known as the Robin Hood Murder, when it was found that it was the first bow and arrow slaying since 1790. He was tried, found guilty of first degree murder, and sentenced to life in prison."

What would cause a young man, an Eagle Scout, an altar boy to commit murder? Can one be forgiven for murder? Does a convicted murderer deserve to become a priest? What do you say? Here is what Rev. Paul Washington, Rev. Booker's tutor said: "I certainly had no question in my mind as to whether he would be suited for the ordained ministry. There was no question in mind about that at all." And The Rev. Rob Ross says, "I think that there is no better example of the incarnation of the theology of redemption, anywhere in the world, than is embodied in Vaughan Booker."

Vaughan Booker's story shines light into many dark corners: murder, the Penal System, injustice, domestic violence, guilt. Most of all, he speaks of redemption; it is the story of his growth and of his redemption. The Rev. Vaughan Booker went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from Villanova University and a Master of Divinity Degree from Virginia Theological Seminary. Currently he is the rector of Meade Memorial Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia. It would have been a tragedy if these people of God had refused to be the church to Vaughan Booker based on his past. Changed-lives is the whole foundation of Christianity. If we are to be a healthy church, we must not forget the prison population. Jesus Christ is still opening prison doors in more ways than we could ever ask or imagine.

CPO cont. from pg. 4

The CNO reaffirmed the Navy's stance on equality, placing the responsibility on commands to "create an environment that makes equal opportunity a reality and discrimination, for any reason, an unacceptable practice." We were just starting to open up opportunities to women. There were also some major uniform and grooming changes. Does any of this sound familiar?

Other policy changes included petty officers and above being allowed to have civilian clothing aboard ship, beer machines authorized in senior enlisted barracks and motorcycles allowed on bases. A more lenient leave policy was in effect for post deployment periods. Sailors were no longer required to have out-of-bounds or liberty passes and the dungaree uniform was authorized for wear to and from work. A liberal grooming policy allowed Sailors to express their individuality through longer hair and beards. There was a switch from crackerjacks to service dress blues (salt and pepper) for all enlisted and demise of service dress khaki. This rapid change caused angst in the CPO mess and wardroom. MCPON Black observed, "The majority of those not happy with the new order were senior people, both enlisted and officer. The rapidity and volume of change, rather than the changes themsel¬ves, created much of the opposition. Senior petty officers found themselves caught between junior personnel eager to explore their newly granted privileges and officers who sought to maintain some sense of control and authority.

The result was an inevitable weakening of senior leadership, both officer and enlisted, in commands unable to adjust." It's interesting that he did not say that the entire Navy CPO mess fell apart, rather only the commands that could not maintain focus and adjust. We've heard similar stories about two ships tied up to the same pier. You can see the one with a strong CPO mess by her outstanding material condition, tight military bearing and engaging attitudes of her Sailor's. In contrast the one across the pier is failing…there is rust, the Sailors have no pride and they hang their heads low. Same Navy, same operational and organizational challenges, but one clearly has a CPO mess that is able to maintain standards. During the Vietnam War the Navy contributed to the execution of millions of sorties, established riverine squadrons, provided logistic support, built infrastructure with the efforts of Sea Bees and witnessed the transformation of frogmen into the famed Navy SEALs; none of which would have been possible without CPO leadership.

The period from the mid 70's thru eighties saw a push back to traditional standards and a resurgence of pride and professionalism led by the efforts of MCPON Walker. Once again, organizational challenges were plenty. Many policy changes were occurring that affected the enlisted force and CPO mess. Once again you can see the parallels to changes in policy we see today. Fleet and force master chiefs gained approval to serve on the E 7 and E 8/9 selection boards (two per board) and the Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist program was born. A problem area was in overseas screening resulting in a waste of PCS monies. You all know as well as I that we continue to deal with this…35 years later and we still haven't cracked that nut! Command sponsorship programs needed shoring up. A uniform poll was conducted to determine the opinion of the Navy enlisted force toward the coat and tie uniform and the bell bottom and jumper uniform. By the late seventies and early eighties, inflation was taking its toll on military paychecks. Families unable to cope with the increased cost of living were turning to food stamps. These are operational and organizational challenges that we still deal with today, but our fundamental roles and responsibilities as Chiefs have not changed. There was a press for a resurgence of the CPO mess and reinforcement of the role of the Chief. MCPON Walker championed the Chief's community toward what he described as the five "Principles of Professionalism": technical expertise; job skill; leadership; motivation; and personal integrity and responsibility. MCPON Crowe's idea of leadership was that the CPO mess should be the focal point of the enlisted community and that they needed to be the teachers, trainers, and role models and needed to speak up when necessary." Sounds like those CPO duties of 1918.

As we've engaged with the conflicts of the cold war, Operation Desert Storm and now with Operations Iraqi and Enduring freedom, our Navy has and is meeting with new operational and organizational challenge. We've all seen guiding principles in one form or another over the years. Although the words may change, the fundamental duties that we have been traditionally tasked with are still in there somewhere. Take some time to reflect on the legacy the Chiefs before us have developed and left to us.

Stay knowledgeable, stay engaged and continue to develop so we can ensure that the term "Ask the Chief" stays relevant. Happy Birthday!

Geoff Fong, Yokosuka Middle School principal, presents the emergency plan including evacuation locations for DODEA schools during CFAY's Emergency Preparedness Summit at Benny Decker Theater March 22.

SUMMIT *cont. from pg. 1*

"I believe, in an emergency, as long as the community knows you are working in their best interest, and will provide them with the information once you have it the delay in getting the information is understandable," Stewart continued. "In the effort to get information, stick with approved sources, which will alleviate the confusion of the "sea lawyers" or people who are operating from what they *think* they know."

The Emergency Preparedness Summit gave the CFAY community an opportunity to ask questions to the command and address some of the issues that may not have been covered in the presentations.

"I was here last year for the earthquake and there was a lot of confusion," said Leanat De La Cruz, summit attendee. "I was hoping they would give light to some of the questions that everyone had last year, which they did in some cases. In some other cases, I'm actually submitting the comment card for that."

In preparing for an emergency situation, knowing who to contact and where to get the proper information is one of the most important steps.

"My husband is on the *Washington* and now I know that I have to go to my husband's command first in order to get the information that pertains to me instead of relying on places like PSD," said De La Cruz. "I am going to try to get as much as I can from them before they leave, in case something happens when they are gone."