

My name is Lewis Dickerson. I am a 75 year old inmate serving my 48th year of a 1st degree natural life sentence. In 1975 I went to trial and was convicted of an armed robbery which resulted in a murder. I was sentenced to Life-Without-Parole.

During High School I transferred to a Trade School for automotive repair. I worked in the trade for about 2 years, a profession I really enjoyed. On February 1, 1968 I was drafted into the U.S. Army, served as an Armor Crewman stationed in Germany. I was assigned to a tank division that operated and maintained both M60 Patton tanks, and Reconnaissance Half-tracks, and was trained in all aspects and positions of commanding these tanks. I earned a National Defense Service Medal. A couple years after being honorably discharged from the Army, I was involved in an armed robbery, in which a store clerk was shot and killed. During the robbery, there were two accomplices who escaped arrest. By all accounts one of these men shot and killed the store clerk. I was sentenced to spend the rest of my life in prison for something I did not do.

Once I entered the Massachusetts State Prison in Walpole I took advantage of any available opportunity to rehabilitate myself. I was subsequently transferred to the medium security prison in Norfolk. There I established myself as a model prisoner and earned a trustee position that allowed me to work outside the prison walls on a daily basis. In 1983 I was transferred to a lower security prison, the Northeastern Correctional Facility

known as "Concord farm." I would remain there for the next 4 years. While at minimum security I worked on a building renovation crew traveling around the state renovating both state and county buildings and properties. One of the more interesting renovations was the complete renovation of the old Brighton Courthouse. Another, notable project was a building used to house battered women, and another on Long Island would provide housing for the homeless.

During this time I decided I wanted to do more to help people. I signed up for the newly established Concord Achievement Rehabilitation Volunteer Experience(CARVE) program at Concord Farm. The CARVE program was overseen by correctional coordinator, Peter Doyle, and employed selected inmates to work at various community hospitals assisting both hospital staff as well as patients, or as we would refer to them as "Clients". I started at Massachusetts Mental Health Hospital assisting clients getting to their medical appointments at area hospitals such as the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital. My most rewarding experience was working at the Metropolitan State Hospital, for the next 4 years. My official title was "Day Program Counselor" and I was assigned between 5-6 mentally challenged individuals who resided on a locked ward. I was responsible for their overall daily well-being, including personal hygiene, appointments, programs, and for those who worked, inside and outside the facility, getting them to work on time. I would also conduct daily Community Meetings with clients where issues were addressed and resolved which effected

the "community". I would also meet with doctors, nursing staff, and psychologists to discuss treatment plans and I would present my progress notes on each client. I was also assigned to the Direct Work Program, where I would assist clients finding employment inside and outside of the facility. Those working outside the facility were usually transitioning back into the community. I would also serve as an advocate for clients seeking passes, or privileges, and at times I would work with clients and their families to ensure a smooth transition back home, or home visits.

At 3:00AM on December 29, 1989 I was jolted awake by members of the Department of Correction's tactical team and was taken from minimum security back to a medium security prison in Bridgewater. I would later be transferred to MCI-Norfolk, then to Baystate prison. In 1991 Baystate was renovated and opened as a "long-termers" prison. The plan was that Baystate would be a medium security prison because of the fences, but the interior was consistent with the amenities at a minimum.

While at Baystate I worked as the head chef, and head baker, for both the inmate population and the staff kitchen. Because of the extra effort put into food preparation, Baystate became renowned for the high quality of meals. Baystate often catered lunches, and Superintendents' Meetings were held at Baystate at the requests of Superintendents, and the Commissioner.

Due to the closing of Baystate men were being moved to other institutions. I returned to MCI-Norfolk about 2008 and have since worked in Industries, in both the Clothing and the Upholstry Shops, earning \$1.35 an hour.

Though I am experiencing a number of age related ailments, I try to stay positive and healthy. Today, myself and other men who earned their way to minimum security see a Classification Board each year, and are classed to remain at medium security because Department of Correction Regulations prohibit us being classed to minimum security.

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