

Connections

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TDCJ employee Robert Moore marks fifty years with agency

Fifty years ago, our country was fighting the North Vietnamese overseas ... civil rights leader Martin Luther King and presidential candidate Robert Kennedy were assassinated ... the first manned mission to the moon happened ... and Robert Moore began working for the Texas Department of Corrections.

A native of Reagan, Texas in Falls County, Moore graduated from Marlin High School in 1965. He came to Sam Houston State University to further his education with a criminology degree and found out that he could pay for his schooling by working for the TDC, which would become part of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice in 1989.

A career that spans five decades has been defined by positions at the Ferguson Unit in Midway where Moore was a custodial officer, a sergeant and a lieutenant before being promoted to Special Services and later the State Classification Committee, of which he became the vice-chairman in 1990.

Moore, currently a program specialist with Executive Administration in Huntsville, has seen a lot during his years with the agency. "Almost everything has changed from when I came to work here," said Moore. "From recruiting to training to staffing, it's been interesting to see the progress that's been made," Moore said.

As an example, training was a two-week period that Moore says he barely remembers. He says that you learned 'on the job.' "You paid attention to the veterans because there weren't any instructions in a textbook," said Moore. "You listened to what they said and you watched what they did," he added.

Moore has had his mentors over the years. "Frank McCarty promoted me to lieutenant and Slim Savage is who recommended that I should look into classification as a full-time career," he said. "And Jeff Baldwin (former Chief of Staff, now retired) was great to me over the years and the reason that I've stayed on as long as I have."

In his fifty years, Moore notes that the most prominent overall change that he's witnessed has been in classification.

"It was the genesis of our modern system," said Moore. "Prior to then, we just had stand-alone units that the war-



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dens ran." Moore added that TDCJ implemented changes to staffing, added medical help and implemented programs for the individual units. "There's also now defined, written policies and procedures for employees for specific situations which we did not have before," Moore said.

Another major change that he has witnessed is the integration of female employees into all the units. "Prior to the 1980s, even administrative roles within the agency were staffed by males," said Moore.

When inmate Joe Carrasco attempted his breakout at the Huntsville Unit in the summer of 1974, Moore was assigned to man a checkpoint near the action. "I remember looking up at the picket and there was a .50-caliber mounted up there with an ammunition belt about four feet long," said Moore.

He has no regrets about his five decades of employment with TDCJ. "I have a saying: You can always look backwards but that's the wrong thing to do," said Moore. "Look forward. See where you're going in the future," he added.

Moore also has some sage advice for TDCJ employees. "Look at your position within the agency as a positive thing," he said. "Focus on what's ahead, and what you'll have that many jobs don't offer, like retirement and the benefits that go with it." ♦