

WARDEN EMMA WATTS RETIRES

*after 38 years with the Oklahoma
Department of Corrections*

by Brittne Hackler, Warden's Assistant



Emma Watts

*The first female
to serve as unit
manager on the
H-Unit at Oklahoma
State Penitentiary
(OSP) and the first
female warden at
Jackie Brannon
Correctional Center.*

Emma Watts has worked her way up through the ranks of the Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC). She began her career in 1977 at the OSP-Women's Facility where she promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 1979. She remained at the Women's Ward until 1982 when the female population was

moved to Mabel Bassett Correctional Center in Oklahoma City. Emma was then assigned to the OSP-Trustee Unit where she remained until 1984 at which time she left the ODOC to care for a sick family member.

In 1988, Emma returned to the ODOC. She had completed her Associate of Science Degree in Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement and returned to work as a sergeant. In 1991, she received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice and promoted to the position of correctional case manager and then a few years later promoted to senior case manager.

Emma Watts has the distinction of being the first female unit manager at OSP. She was promoted to this position from

senior case manager in 1999. One of her assignments as unit manager was to H-Unit, which is the high maximum unit at OSP. Again, Emma has the distinction of being the first female to serve in this position. She promoted to the position of deputy warden at Eddie Warrior Correctional Center in 2005, where she remained until her promotion as warden at JBCC in 2007.

Warden Watts is a passionate leader and enjoys sharing her years of knowledge and experience with those whom she supervises. *"Do the right thing for the right reason, especially when no one is looking"* is a rule that Warden Watts continually stresses to her staff. Her humorous encouragement is often displayed as she follows up a pep talk with *"You don't believe me? If I tell you a rooster dips snuff,*

you better look under his left wing!”

With her strong commitment to mentoring, Warden Watts has had the privilege of seeing numerous staff members develop and grow in their careers. Success has moved some of those valuable employees to take positions of leadership at other facilities and yet Warden Watts is quick to seize the opportunity to build

upon the talented team that continues to serve at JBCC.

When asked what she plans to do after her retirement Warden Watts replied, “*As little as possible*” with a great big smile and laugh.

She shared her most memorable moment in her career with the department as the time she had to look after Terry Nichols

while he was housed at OSP during his trial. She stated that she took pride in her job and it was her duty to ensure the safety of Nichols while he was housed on her unit. She had to push all of her own thoughts and emotions aside about the case and had to stand tall and do exactly what she was called on to do.



Pictured above: (top left) Leroy Young-Community Corrections, Ed Evans-Field Operations with Emma at her retirement party; (top right) Warden Sharon McCoy-Eddie Warrior Correctional Center wishes Emma well in retirement; (bottom left) Emma receives a card from former ODOC Deputy Director Bobby Boone; and (bottom right) Emma in a group shot with her family.