

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS



PHOTOS BY VALERIE SHAFER

Training Inmates to Raise Puppies to be Guide Dogs for the Blind

THE PUPPY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Summer 2001

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Goord *Vibrations*

Glenn Goord, the commissioner of New York's Department of Correctional Services, kicks off a question and answer session by telling his fellow P.B.B. board member, Elise O'Shaughnessy, "The day I'm having today, I might announce my retirement during this interview." If you're commissioner of the nation's fourth-largest state prison system, you're going to have moments like that. But on the whole Goord seems to thrive in his job, talking with enthusiasm about what he has learned in his 28 years of state service.

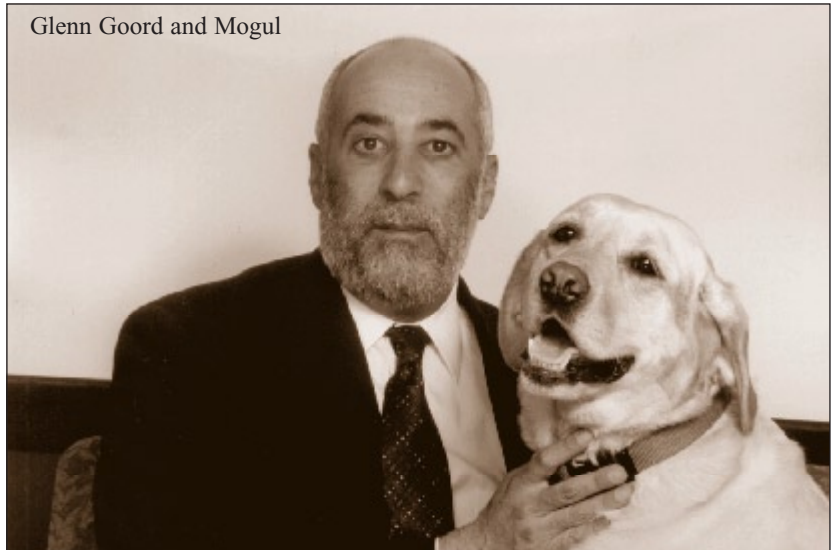
His seat on the P.B.B. board is a telling vote of confidence, and Goord already had begun exploring programs along the same lines when P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga arrived at his office four years ago to ask for his help. "She came in, nervous, not knowing what the system's perception would be," he recalls. "Then my dog came in." Goord's yellow lab, Mogul, is in the office with him nearly every day, and, as he often insists, is an integral part of his operation.

"I think Puppies Behind Bars has done an outstanding job," he says, adding with typically self-deprecating dead-pan humor that "I also like to think that having my support has made a difference. I picked places [the Bedford Hills and Fishkill prisons, to start with] where I knew it would be a success. For instance at Fishkill, the superintendent was Wayne Strack and he was a dog person."

P.B.B.: Aside from the fact that the commissioner has a yellow lab and Wayne Strack is a dog person, why do you think this program works so well?

G.G.: It's a win-win. It's what I try to make this system about. My system has to be rehabilitative and restorative. I can do drug programs, education, etc., but inmates need to be part of society. Restitution is something I feel strongly about. We

Glenn Goord and Mogul



do community service work: 2000 inmates go out into the community, which tells the inmates, 'This is restorative to you, this is something you're giving back.' Working with the dogs, the inmates are renewing their feelings of compassion and feelings of love. Those are very positive things that we want to send people back out to the community with. The community's perspective is that they've lost those things, they've lost those values.

I hate to sound corny, but what's more positive

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Goord Vibrations

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than a person's love for their animals or animals in general? If the inmates [P.B.B. has chosen] didn't have those values, they now have them, and if they had them, the program has renewed those values.... The



effect hasn't been just on our inmate handlers, either. The effect has been on every person the puppies come in contact with.

P.B.B.: When you talk about rehabilitation and restoration, what determines the success or failure of an effort like Puppies Behind Bars?

G.G.: Creating a good product for the consumers that are getting the puppies—that's very important to us. And the second piece of it, from where I sit, are statistics that over time show that these people go back to the community where they came from and don't come back to my system and are arrest-free. The problem in my business is that a person's failure in the community is sometimes looked at as a systems failure, but when you're dealing with human beings, you cannot just blame the system for that person's failure. But that's the way the system is judged. Don't forget, I'm working with *people* in the prison system—it's not as if I were a car manufacturer and I built crummy cars, well, you could blame people on the line who built crummy cars or engineers. But dealing with people it's hard to gauge success or failure. The most obvious measure is if people don't come back to prison.

P.B.B.: What makes the difference between someone the program works for and someone it doesn't work for?

G.G.: There are two pieces: First, their ability to function when they're released; the

other quite obvious piece is their ability to control their behavior within my prison system. And I think we have found that the inmates certainly have been very trouble free while they're involved with their new responsibilities of taking care of the puppies. The other positive things are that it gives the community some glimpse into

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what goes on in the prison system. It gives not only the inmates involved in the program, and the employees involved in the program, it gives all my employees some sense of pride that inmates are giving back to the community. I think that's very important. But it's a hard question, my friend.

P.B.B. We only ask the hard questions. You've devoted a large part of your life to a very difficult job, both hands-on and in the bureaucracy. Looking at it from both sides, what has been the toughest challenge of your career?

G.G.: When somebody looks at me or my system, they look at the basics: care, custody, and control. The biggest challenge has always been—and continues to be—to keep

the balance of care, custody, and control while you're creating an environment where inmates can get opportunities to fix their problems, and then working on programs for better transition [to society] and not returning to the system. The hardest part is when the large majority of the public is really just concerned that inmates go to prison, that my employees are safe, and that the inmates can't escape. That's the essence of what happens in prison. So I guess the hardest part of the job is creating an environment in these institutions where I can do all the things [rehabilitation and restoration] that I just talked to you about. Because in environments where inmates don't feel safe and employees don't feel safe, nothing else happens. So I guess to twist your question a little bit, one of the proudest things is that all our facilities are accredited by the American Correctional Association. Every three years we get auditors from other states and other countries, that come in and review the facilities—800 standards that the facilities have to meet, how do they operate, how do they look, how are they cleaned—it's everything from medical care to how you control toxics and cleaning fluids.

(The biggest problem, by the way, [when the auditors come to my central office] that my people are most concerned about, is how do they explain the dog [Mogul]. And I say, "The dog stays. You have to explain to the auditors that the dog is an integral part of keeping the commissioner focused and the dog is just part of the system.")...

There is such a great array of public opinion on what should and should not happen in prisons. My common joke around here is that one minute I'm talking to someone who is saying to me, "You don't do enough rehabilitation; you should do this and that; inmates should get this and that." And the next phone call is somebody telling me the inmates shouldn't have *air*....

Sending people to prison is meant to isolate them from the community; they're not supposed to be punished once they get to prison.

The other challenge that people don't talk about is that in my system, which has 70,000 inmates, I release 29,000 a year. We should, and we do, send people, especially violent people, to prison, but most of the people we send to prison get out someday. The average inmate is only in my system for 30 months. They are people from all walks of life, a lot of them minorities, that come into my system. When you look at their records, they've failed their families,

they've failed any religious intervention, they've failed any social service agency, they've failed in the schools. Anybody who tried to intercede in the pattern of behavior that ended up with the person in prison—all those people have failed and the person has failed. And in a lot of cases, I'm asked to take this person, and—in some people's minds, and in mine to some extent—I'm asked to make them better. Okay? So, the person has been doing whatever they've been doing for in most cases 17, 18, 19, 20 years, and the community says to me (and I take my responsibility very seriously, as you can tell, because every person who comes into the system, the law says they're sent to my custody), 'Okay, Commissioner, now you've got to make them better.' Well, that's a heck of a challenge.

So there are all sorts of little pieces that we offer in that short period of time, and you never know what piece made the difference to that person, so that they don't come back to prison. I've worked very hard, forever, to make sure I have an environment that gives inmates a choice and that gives them a direction to get involved with things.

SOMEWHERE A PLACE FOR US?

Puppies Behind Bars is still in dire need of office space in Manhattan. We are looking for 1000 square feet, preferably at below-market rent. Any leads or suggestions will be gratefully received.

Please call Gloria Gilbert Stoga at (212) 924-7404 or email gloria@puppiesbehindbars.com.

Seven Up, The Gang of Five, and Other Tail-wagging News

Seven out of the last seven P.B.B. dogs who took the test to enter Guiding Eyes for the Blind guide-dog school have passed with flying colors. To date, 12 of our puppies are either working guide dogs or in training at G.E.B., while three who did not pass this stringent test are serving as companions to blind children. This is a truly amazing batting average. Congratulations to the staff, the inmates, and the volunteer puppy-sitters who gave such a great headstart to our seven most recent alumni: Winston, Katie, Seymour, Victoria, Thornton, Hayden, and Emily.

Considering that P.B.B. began with five dogs just three years ago, the program's growth has been explosive: 25 dogs are being raised in the Fishkill men's prison and the Bedford Hills women's prison, and the program will have expanded into a fourth prison by the end of the summer. Five puppies went into the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women in Clinton, New Jersey, in May. Henry, Duke, Gretle, Sheeba, and Alex were sponsored by Mrs. Catherine Gaisman; and, as luck would have it, the entire "Gaisman Gang" has ended up at Edna Mahan together. They got a warm welcome from the prison, which invited representatives of the press, and local Kiwanis, 4-H, Rotary, and Lions Club members to celebrate the arrival of P.B.B.

The latest prison to participate in the P.B.B. program will be the Mid-Orange Correctional Facility, a men's medium-secu-



rity prison in Orange County, New York. Like Edna Mahan, Mid-Orange will start with five puppies and gradually increase its capacity to twenty dogs.

The new improved P.B.B. website
www.puppiesbehindbars.com

is up. Thanks to Gabe and Julie Stevens of Stevens Interactive, Inc. (www.stevensinteractive.com) for all their work on our cyberspace presence.

- I would like to be a SURROGATE OWNER of a puppy (minimum donation: \$3000.)

Please accept my donation for:

- 1 puppy's weekend visit to NYC (\$25)
 - o A sleeping crate for 1 puppy (\$85)
 - o Other amount
- Leashes and bowls for 1 puppy (\$50)

- Please charge my credit card:

o Visa o MasterCard o AmEx

(Please list name as it appears on card. List billing address.)

Number: _____ Exp: _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

- o Add my friend to your mailing list

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State & Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Please mail your tax-deductible contribution with this form to:

Puppies Behind Bars • 99 Madison Avenue, 2nd Floor • New York, NY 10016

Sunday in the Country With Burt

Board member **Burt Ehrlich** and his wife, Fran, had a full house on Sunday, May 20th. The Ehrlichs generously opened their beautiful home in Greenwich, Connecticut, for a cocktail reception with musical entertainment on behalf of Puppies Behind Bars. The event was featured the following day on the front page of *Greenwich Time*—a wonderful way of spreading the word about P.B.B. Guests heard from beneficiaries of both sides of the program: Judy Goldman, the owner of Lucie, P.B.B.'s very first guide-dog graduate, spoke eloquently about the difference Lucie has made to her by restoring some of the freedom and confidence that was taken from Judy when she lost her vision three years ago. Susan Hallett, a former inmate at Bedford Hills, told of how the program changed her life, both while she was in prison and since her parole last year. In addition to her fulltime job at the Legal Action Center, Susan is now working part-time for P.B.B., as a much-needed driver for our peripatetic puppies.

PUPS IN PRINT

- *Good Housekeeping* magazine profiled P.B.B. president Gloria Gilbert Stoga (who was photographed with Doris and Carlos) in its April issue.
- *The New York Times* published a special "Volunteering" section on April 17, which highlighted eight volunteer-driven organizations. P.B.B. was prominently featured among them, with a photograph of puppy-sitter Ali Nortier on the front page.
- In October, the *American Kennel Club Gazette* ran a two-page article on P.B.B., written by Marilyn Singer, author of the children's book *A Dog's Gotta Do What a Dog's Gotta Do*, and photographed by Mary Bloom.
- *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, which is the newspaper of the non-profit world, contains a regular photo essay, titled "The Face of Philanthropy." P.B.B. was the subject of that essay in the May 17th issue.
- **The Westchester Film Festival** asked P.B.B. to submit the videotape we use to educate people about the program as a documentary, and it was selected as one of the films shown at the festival.

PAWS FOR APPLAUSE

— Congratulations to P.B.B. managing director **Lisa Bruno** and her husband, Tullio, who became first-time parents on May 14, with the birth of Julian Emilio Bruno.

— P.B.B. welcomes two new instructors, **Reid Smith** and **Ken Walicki**, to the staff. Reid, who came on board in November of last year, is a former assistant professor of anthropology and sociology at Knox College in Illinois; Ken, a composer, taught as an adjunct professor of music at NYU, and arrived at P.B.B. in May 2001.

— **Sue Murray**, one of P.B.B.'s dedicated weekend puppy-sitters, was named Volunteer of the Year by her company, CH Energy, Inc. "Sue not only helps to socialize the puppies," says P.B.B.'s Lisa Bruno, "she has helped let the inmates know what a great job they're doing by making gifts for the pups on each major holiday. She'll send them a dog-dish with hearts on it full of treats on Valentine's Day, or a doggy stocking at Christmas."

— Mayor Giuliani appointed P.B.B. Advisory Board member **Fredrick J. Patrick** as Commissioner of Juvenile Justice for the City of New York. Congratulations not only to Fred, but also to the children in the city's juvenile justice system, who have a caring, compassionate, and effective commissioner in him.

designing woman

Kathleen McGilvery, the designer who gives P.B.B.'s newsletter and other promotional material their much-admired elegance, originality, and professional look, is expanding her business. Potential clients interested in contacting McGilvery for her design and layout expertise in the areas of corporate identity, editorial, advertorial, and promotional materials can reach her in the office at K. McGilvery Design at 212 319 5105 or kmcgnyrcn.com.

PUPPIES BEHIND BARS

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