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Correctional officer profession a tradition for some families

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Editor's note: Certain types of jobs seem to run in some families. In stories over the next few days, we will feature families in which members share the same or similar professions that in some way serve the public.

CLEAR SPRING — When Elwood M. Faith started working at the Maryland Correctional Institution south of Hagerstown, there were 19 correctional officers per shift, inmates were segregated by race and he made \$3,200 a year. He supervised inmates as they picked tomatoes and made hay.

It was 1956.

"I tried to see it done right," Faith said of working on the prison farm during an interview at his home north of Clear Spring.

"Back then, we ran the jail. Officers took care of everything," he said. "If you treated them (inmates) right, you didn't have any problems."

It's different now in the prisons, Faith said. He knows, because his son has worked inside the Maryland Correctional Training Center on Roxbury Road for 22 years.

When Maj. Todd Faith started at MCTC in 1986, he was working with officers who served with his father, who retired from that prison in 1977.

"I kind of egged him on to go there," Elwood Faith said.

The benefits and pay are good, he said.



Maj. Todd Faith and his father, Elwood M. Faith, relax in Elwood's backyard near Clear Spring with Bucky the dog. Elwood M. Faith worked at the Maryland Correctional Institution south of Hagerstown from 1956 to 1977. Todd Faith started working at MCTC in 1986. Elwood's other son, Sgt. Daniel Faith, has worked for the Washington County Sheriff's Department for about 20 years. (Credit: By Kevin G. Gilbert / Staff Photographer)

Todd Faith applied to several law enforcement agencies after he got out of the U.S. Air Force in 1985. He was called to work at MCTC and had been there a year or two when the Maryland State Police called him. But at that point, he wasn't interested and decided to stay at the prison.

For one thing, the job provides job security.

"I never have to worry about getting laid off," Todd Faith said.

The state prison population has grown since he started. In 1986, Maryland housed 12,868 inmates. Now there are 23,500 inmates in the system.

And while the benefits and pay are still good, a lot has changed since his father was a correctional officer, Todd Faith said.

"In his day, they did have a lot more control," he said.

Inmates used to spend more time inside their cells, while now they have the chance to participate in more activities, Todd Faith said.

"We didn't have drugs back then," said his father.

But even when Todd Faith came on the job, the drug problem wasn't of the magnitude it is now, Todd Faith said.

"It's more dangerous now," his father said. "They get all kinds of weapons in there now they didn't have back then."

Elwood Faith does worry about his sons' safety, with Todd working at the prison and another son at the sheriff's department.

Sgt. Daniel Faith has worked for the Washington County Sheriff's Department for about 20 years. A framed story from The Herald-Mail about him and his K9 partner hangs in his father's living room.

Service is in the blood. Todd Faith's maternal grandfather worked at MCI from 1953 to 1976, supervising inmates at the cannery there.

Not everyone sticks with it as long as the Faiths. Elwood said he remembers starting work at the prison with five other men. Within six weeks, three of them were gone, he said.

"You've got to put up with a little extra bull, but it's good security if you do the job right," he said.

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