

Some prison officials seeking to draw guards' bigger pension

By Stephen Kurkjian
GLOBE STAFF

Richard G. J. Grelotti and Ernest Vandergriff were among more than 4,000 people who took the civil service examination in March 1992 to become prison guards, but they didn't really want the job.

Grelotti and Vandergriff, who work for the Correction Department in high management positions, were among eight department managers and professionals who took the examination — partly for job security reasons and partly because it gave them a shot at a lucrative early retirement benefit available only to correction officers.

A 1982 state law allows Massachusetts

correction officers to retire with 50 percent of their salary as their annual pension after 20 years on the job.

The law has led several correction officials to take the civil service exam in the hope of being certified as correction officers even if they work only a minimal amount of time in that capacity.

Grelotti, for example, makes \$74,000 a year as the Correction Department's associate commissioner for administration.

If he were certified as a correction officer, he could retire immediately with an annual pension of about \$37,000. Without the certification, his pension would be about \$17,000.

Jeanne M. Wiggins, the only one of the

eight who has retired since taking the examination, was certified by the department as a correction officer in May even though she worked less than three weeks in the position before submitting her retirement papers.

The amount of the pension for Wiggins, a 35-year veteran of MCI Framingham, has yet to be determined. Her retirement application is still being processed.

When the Globe told state Retirement Board officials of the situation last week, they said they would look closely at all applications for pensions from those Correction Department managers who had taken the 1992 civil service examination.

Frank McCauley, executive director of the retirement board, declined to discuss specific cases. But he said that he was concerned that correction officials had interpreted the law too loosely on who was eligible for the correction officers' higher retirement package.

"That law was written to reward corrections officers, not people sitting behind a desk," said McCauley, who has served as executive director for two years.

Correction Commissioner Larry E. DuBois said he was unaware that some of his managers had taken the civil service examination to qualify for the added pension benefits.

He said he thought anyone seeking the added pension benefits should have to work at least five years as a correction officer.

Yet some of DuBois' employees think otherwise. Tempthia Battle was a deputy superintendent at MCI-Framingham and about to become the department's director of affirmative action when she took the 1992 corrections officer exam.

In a telephone interview, she said she doubted at the time that she would ever lose her manager's job. She said she took the exam to provide added job security and to qualify for the increased pension.

"People have done it in the past, that's what I was told," said Battle, a 23-year employee of the department now making more than \$52,000 a year.

Although she passed the civil service exam with a score of 92, Battle has not yet sought department certification as a correction officer or put in for retirement.

Vandergriff was certified by the department as a correction officer on March 19, 1993, several months after passing the civil service examination.

But the certification didn't change Vandergriff's job. He continued his responsibilities as one of the agency's top managers, an associate commissioner in charge of classification and programs.

Vandergriff said he took the exam and sought the civil service position of correction officer "to obtain job security. If all of a sudden I lose my job as a manager, I want something to fall back on."

Sit behind a desk, but retire as a guard

After 20 years on the job, correction officers are eligible to retire with 50 percent of their highest salary. The formula for calculating managers' retirement is more complicated — and far less lucrative.

	Base pay	Years of service	Typical age	Retirement salary
Correction officer	\$38,000	20	45	\$19,000
Manager	\$38,000	20	45	\$3,800
Manager	\$38,000	35	60	\$14,250
Manager who qualifies for correction officer pension	\$60,000	20	45	\$30,000

SOURCE: State Retirement Board

Vandergriff was a temporary guard for three years in the late 1970s but needed to take the 1992 correction officer examination to become eligible for the higher retirement benefits.

Asked if he intended to take advantage of the retirement benefits available to a correction officer once he completes his 20 years in the department next year, Vandergriff said: "I have to see how the law is interpreted next year. If it's available to me, I might consider it."

Vandergriff would receive a pension of approximately \$33,000 a year if he were able to retire as a correction officer.

Grelotti, the associate commissioner for administration, the department's third highest-ranking official, also took the 1992 civil service examination.

A 23-year veteran with the department, Grelotti makes \$74,000 a year. Although he has never sought certification as a correction officer or put in his retirement papers, if he did so successfully, he would receive an annual pension of about \$37,000 a year.

If he were to retire as an assistant correction commissioner, he would be classified as a department manager and receive an annual pension of just \$17,000. Grelotti was on vacation last week and could not be

Others in the department who took the civil service examination include: Edward J. Foley, deputy superintendent of MCI-Concord; Paul F. Ruane, deputy superintendent of the North Central Correctional Institute in Gardner; Daniel R. DeLeon, deputy superintendent of the Boston Pre-Release Center; and James Matesanz, superintendent of the Bay State Correctional Center in Boston.

McCauley, a former mayor of Quincy, said his research determined that the Legislature passed the law in 1982 to financially reward prison guards for the arduous, dangerous demands of their work.

He said he has told Correction Department officials that no retirement applications would be approved for anyone who failed to work less than 20 years as a guard.

But the Correction Department has long interpreted the law liberally, allowing people to qualify for the higher pension benefits even if they worked only a fraction of their years with the department as a guard.

DuBois said Friday that since he became correction commissioner in 1992, he has continued the department's "past practices" of approving applications for the higher retirement pay if they have worked five of their 20 years as a guard.

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Treasurer slams 'waste' in state spending

By ROBERT CONNOLLY

State Treasurer Joseph D. Malone said yesterday there continues to be "waste" in state government and urged the Weld-

Cellucci administration to take a page out of his budget-pruning manual.

"I do think that there are places within state government right now where tremendous

savings could come about," Malone said after announcing that treasurer's office spending has declined for the fifth consecutive year.

State spending has risen from \$13.3 billion to \$16.5 billion during the six-year period that saw treasury spending drop from \$15.7 million to \$9.3 million.

Malone, who may collide with Lt. Gov. Paul Cellucci in the 1998 GOP gubernatorial primary, said much "bloat" and "waste" remains in the state government that fellow Republicans, Gov. William F. Weld and Cellucci, have administered for the past five years.

While the Weld administration quarreled with some of Malone's numbers, gubernatorial spokeswoman Virginia Buckingham declined to get into a

fiscal war of words with the treasurer.

"We have appreciated the treasurer's contributions to our ongoing effort to shrink government and give more money back to taxpayers," she said. "We're certain the treasurer will continue to downsize his agency as we focus our second term on radically reshaping and reducing state government."

Malone said he was heartened by recent reports that the governor and lieutenant governor are embarking on a government-streamlining effort.

"Based on what I'm hearing now, they're going to start looking into reduction of cost (and) reduction of waste in government, so I view that as a positive, and I think the sooner they get around to it, the better off the taxpayers of this state will be," he said.

Malone, who said that while

the number of full-time workers in the treasurer's office has fallen from 325 in 1989 — the year before he was elected — to the current 134, agencies under Weld and Cellucci's control continue to be riddled with fat.

Malone said the MBTA derives only 17 percent of its revenues from fares, leaving the state with a heavy subsidy bill. "In last year's (state) budget, \$600 million came out of the budget to subsidize the T. I've got to believe that a big dent could be made in that \$600 million. It hasn't occurred yet, my hope is that it's going to occur," Malone said.

Weld administration fiscal spokesman Robert Bliss said MBTA operating costs will actually decline by \$101 million between fiscal 1994 and fiscal 1996, in what he described as a "significant" exercise in belt tightening.

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DuBois and Jack Flanagan, head of the union that represents the correction officers, said changing the system would deter correction officers from seeking promotion into management ranks.

Asked if the retirement benefit should be available to those who are already managers, Flanagan said, "I don't want to comment on that part of it."

The dispute between the Correction Department and the retirement board is being negotiated by lawyers for both agencies.

If an agreement cannot be resolved soon, McCauley said, he intends to ask Attorney General Scott Harshbarger for a ruling.

David Armstrong of the Globe staff contributed to this article.

State prison captain suspended

By JOE HEANEY

Allegedly sold gun to convicted felon

A captain of corrections officers at the state's maximum security prison in Walpole has been suspended for allegedly selling a handgun to a convicted felon currently accused of being a Charlestown hitman.

Department of Corrections spokesman Tony Carnavale confirmed yesterday Capt. Richard Goyette of Chelsea was suspended with pay Aug. 8 pending the outcome of an investigation.

Meanwhile, sources yesterday disclosed federal agents are investigating reports the gun became the property of [redacted] 32, accused hitman in Charlestown's infam-

ous "Code of Silence" murders.

[redacted], a career criminal, was arrested in October two days after an alleged armored car robbery and later charged with killing two Charlestown men and trying to kill two others.

The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms declined all comment on its possible role in the probe, but other sources said the agency has launched its own investigation.

"Right now, the issue is the gun and how [redacted] got it,"

another informed source" disclosed.

Goyette is a 16-year corrections officer veteran who was promoted to captain about a year ago, according to prison sources.

Goyette and [redacted] were acquainted while [redacted] was incarcerated, but the gun transaction occurred after [redacted] left the Cedar Junction lockup, other sources said.

The gun, reportedly a .9 mm Glock, was allegedly purchased by Goyette from another corrections officer, who filed the appropriate purchase/transfer

papers with the state.

Sources said Goyette came under scrutiny for not filing papers on the second sale. Also, investigators believed the weapon went to a convicted felon and the gun's serial numbers had been removed. Attempts to reach Goyette at home were unsuccessful.

[redacted] has been charged with being the enforcer for a reputed bloodthirsty Charlestown drug ring charged with terrorizing and murdering neighborhood residents to preserve a \$3 million cocaine dealership.

Police said [redacted] is on the wanted list in charges. Full name after he or alleged accomplice Alan J. Skinner, 36, of Charlestown, bragged about the crime to an informant.

"[redacted] is a predator. The worst level, this is a guy we want off the street to good," said one police investigator.

[redacted] qualifies as a armed career criminal under federal law and could face a mandatory minimum of 1 years in prison if convicted on weapons charges.

He would be tried separately on the armed robbery and murder charges.

(Mike Belle and Ralph Han all contributed to this story.)