

May 29, 2007

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To: Editor
Gainesville Sun
Gainesville, FL

February 26, 2007, was, for all intents and purposes, my last day as jail director.

For nearly nine years I had the absolute pleasure of serving the Alachua County community as the county jail administrator under former Sheriff Oelrich. He took a troubled jail and gave me the authority to get it back on track. I'm happy to report that was done as evidenced by state and national accreditation, re-accreditation and successful annual inspections conducted by trained peer assessors from Florida and elsewhere.

Though the problems of chronic overcrowding and budgetary constraints prevented this jail from being perfect, it was managed at the highest level possible given those challenges.

When I heard what the investigative report was saying that led to my resignation, I felt two overpowering emotions; great pain and great helplessness regarding the fairness over judgments and interpretations toward me which, by the way, were released to the media even before I or my counsel had a copy. Then, I actually wrote nearly 3,000 words of rebuttal to the report before I realized my response could be viewed as "my word against theirs" in the court of public opinion.

It is my intention to continue to live and be productive here and I would like you to know that I'm intensely proud of the level at which I've conducted myself as a human being and as a law enforcement officer, 56 years and 33 years respectively. No one need feel uncomfortable around me because I am very comfortable with myself.

I would like to thank the literally hundreds of people, both inside and outside of law enforcement and the judicial community, who have contacted me and my family to express their understanding and their support. My family and I will be forever grateful.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Chapman

Gainesville, FL