

No Guarantees Go With Good Fortune: Consider Case of Commissioner Ciuros

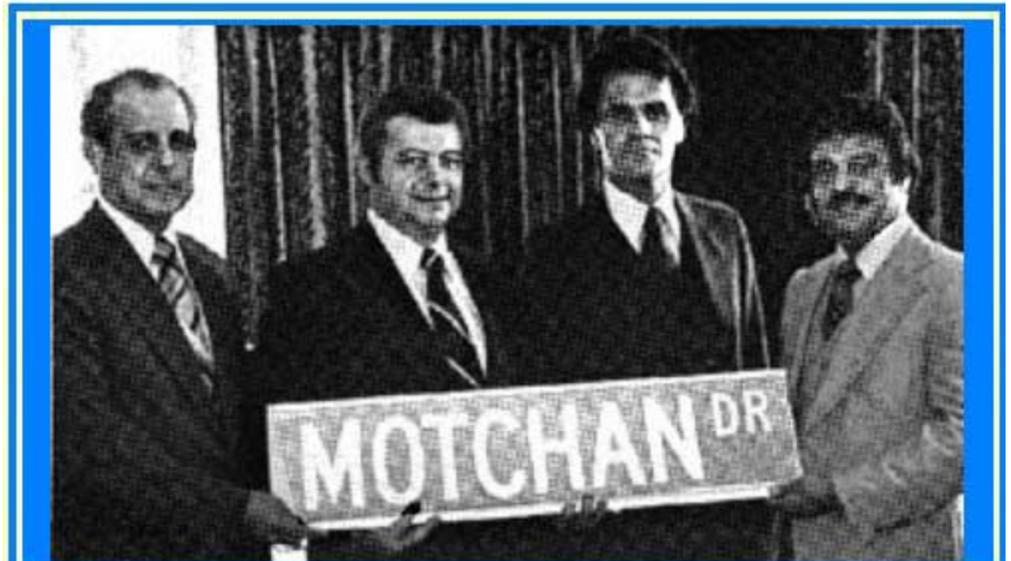


Looked at one way, the career of William J. Ciuros, who dropped out of high school and became a prison officer in the historic NY Correction town of Elmira, benefitted from good fortune as well as from his ability to learn, capacity to apply what he learned, the will to achieve, plus his considerable energy.

After all, had he not risen from correctional officer to deputy commissioner in the state prison system and then been appointed by Mayor Koch as NYC DOC Commissioner in January, 1978?

But looked at another way on another day, Ciuros perhaps had the misfortune of **being** the NYC Correction Commissioner on May 21, 1979.

That's when accused FALN-er William Morales escaped Bellevue Hospital prison ward, allegedly climbing down an improvised rope despite having blown off nine of his fingers in a reputed pipe



The 1978 *Pen* caption: Commissioner Ciuros presents a replica of the Motchan Drive sign to Supervising Warden Louis Greco, COBA President Richard Basoa, and COBA Recording Secretary Frank Bruni. C0 Bruni, who is also the President of the Long Island Correctional Assoc., originally suggested the idea for a memorial to C.O. Motchan in a letter to the Commissioner.

bomb-making accident July 12, 1978, in Queens. A month later, Ciuros was gone. Koch replaced him with Ben Ward, who as State Correctional Services Commissioner had been Ciuros' boss. In fairness to the replaced NYC DOC Commissioner, the Koch administration was caught in Correction cross-currents of financial problems, pending court challenges and impending court degrees, rising inmate populations and



One of *The Pen's* front page photo sections forming the letter "C" shows C.O. George Motchan's widow watching as the Motchan Drive street sign is unveiled on Rikers Island.

increasing demands as well as efforts to reform the system. Koch needed a game changer. Morales' absconding may not have been so much a cause of Ciuros' own departure as providing an opportune moment for bringing into the situation a different persona in that role. Not long after leaving NYC, Ciuros was appointed by Vermont Gov. Richard Snelling as State Corrections Commission.

When photographed at NYC DOC-related events, Ciuros appeared in uniform or civilian attire, depending on the occasion and perhaps his preference. Those critical of his uniform

garb as unbecoming the civilian nature of his position or who attributed it to inappropriately trying to identify with the staffers "in blue," overlook key factors: His having come up through uniformed ranks in the NYS prison system, his feeling honored by it, proud of it, not ashamed to "wear the blue," nor indeed to **be blue** again. A vanity, perhaps; but surely understandable.

The composite blue-frame image right is based on a



larger photo shared on ***CorrectionHistory.Org*** by Errol Toulon Sr., capturing part of the dedication of the bridge to Rikers as a memorial to Francis R. Buono who had been supervising warden of the island for many years. Shown right, Buono kin. Shown left, unidentified warden (Joseph D'Elia?) and Commissioner Ciuros, second left.

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