

THE ECHO

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DISTRIBUTED FREE TO THOSE WITHIN TDCJ

The ECHO announces 2020 Writing contest results

Todd R. Carman — ECHO Staff

All write!

LIKE YOU, THE ECHO HAS been dealing with 2020 COVID-19 challenges, including multiple medical restriction lockdowns, the Managing Editor having to work off-site for an extended period, and the staff operating in separate shifts to maintain social distancing protocols. Thankfully, we have good health, good work—and now, a great list of winners from The ECHO's writing contest.

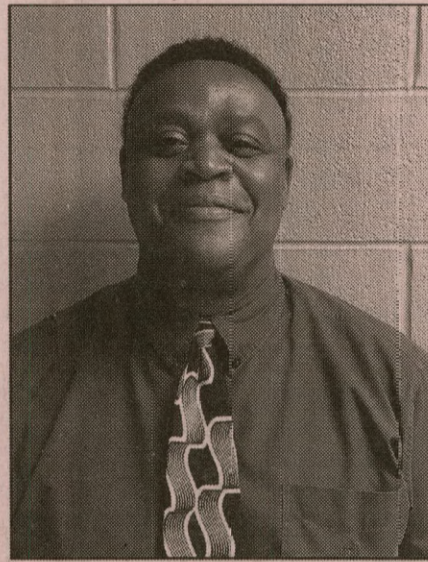
CONTEST continued on page 6 ▶

Windham teacher Lee Russell's dream: helping students find path to success

Bryan J. Moore — ECHO Staff

MY BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN CORRECTIONAL education is getting my students to see that the same tools for success on a job are the same tools required to be successful in obtaining an education. These are tools such as being committed, being responsible, being disciplined and being willing to put out the necessary effort to achieve," said Lee Russell, Literacy II/III instructor on the Connally Unit.

Russell is one of Windham School District's (WSD) 2020 Lane Murray Excellence in Teaching (LMET) initiative honorees. The LMET initiative acknowledges teachers' contributions to both the success of their students and the success of the instructional program itself. These accolades come as a result of Russell's powerful impact as an educator. After eagerly embracing the opportunity to teach at WSD two years ago, Russell has assisted



Lee Russell

students in making big strides in a short time.

His journey with WSD began with an occurrence to which the late Dr. Martin Luther King could certainly have related.

"One night I saw myself working in a correctional facility in a dream," Russell said. "But I didn't know anything about school in prison before I started working for Windham."

Before the dream, the idea to work in correctional education was also suggested by a much more conventional means.

"I was a facilitator and tutor for an adult literacy program that provided education for previously incarcerated individuals. One day, a student in that program asked me if I'd ever thought about teaching in a correctional facility, after which he expressed to me 'Mr. Russell, you'd be a good fit.'

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Windham, TDCJ support resident career success through partnered apprenticeship programs

John Walter Flagg — ECHO Staff

NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP Week takes place this month (Nov. 8-14), giving businesses, communities and educators the opportunity to showcase apprenticeship programs while providing valuable information to career seekers.

Windham School District (WSD) and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) are part of this effort. They maintain a partnership that provides job experience and valuable training for incarcerated individuals. These Apprenticeship

programs offer a promising transition from prison to the freeworld—ultimately aligning job skills development with viable employment.

"Our apprenticeship program has been in effect thanks to WSD and TDCJ since 1977. The whole point of apprenticeship programs is for residents in the TDCJ who have earned industry-recognized certifications and on-the-job learning experience to show employers their value and commitment to the trade area—which can help accelerate

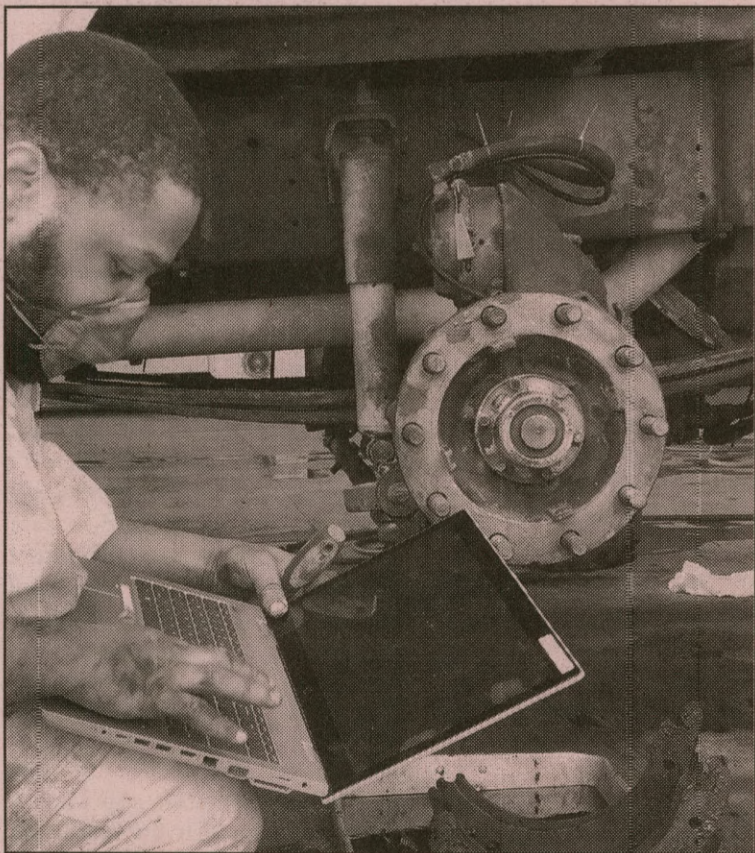
their hiring potential," said WSD Workforce Administrator Charlene Moriarty. She said there are currently 228 active participants in the program.

What is apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a program registered with the United States Department of Labor and designed to prepare individuals for occupations in skilled trades and crafts. Apprenticeships offer a combination of rigorous and relevant on-the-job learning with related technical instruction on theoretical

and practical aspects of the occupation. Upon satisfactory completion of an apprenticeship program, the participant is awarded a nationally-recognized Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship. This opportunity to earn employment credentials is available to residents of TDCJ. Along with TDCJ, WSD's partners include industry leaders and representatives, and Texas Workforce Development Board members across the state.

APPRENTICESHIP continued on page 4 ▶



A Diesel Mechanic apprentice uses modern diagnostic software in the repair of heavy equipment.

COVID-19's not-so-new normal

A historical perspective and observations by Bryan J. Moore — ECHO Staff

AS OF THIS WRITING, there are more than 40 million active cases of coronavirus worldwide. In its sheer scope alone, COVID-19 (the disease caused by the SARS-CoV2 virus) surpasses any national crisis we have faced in recent memory. Just thinking of the pandemic causes dark clouds to crowd the mind. We find ourselves navigating a straight-out-of-Hollywood apocalyptic atmosphere armed only with speculation, face masks, hand sanitizer, and plain old soap

and water. Seen with the naked eye, COVID-19 appears as a shadowy mass of inescapable destruction. Such a sight is a potential breeding ground for fear, anxiety and depression. Under the microscope of critical thought, however, the pandemic presents itself more clearly as an entity with distinct social, historical, and biological components. A constructive approach to grasping current circumstances is to analyze them in terms of these individual contexts.

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Colonists overcome New World hardships

John Walter Flagg ECHO Staff

IT WAS THE YEAR 1620. After nine arduous weeks at sea, the ship Mayflower dropped anchor near present-day Cape Cod. Aboard were 101 passengers. Also included, but not customarily accounted for, were close to 30 crewmembers. Many passengers were Pilgrims,



Monument to our Forefathers Plymouth, Mass.

passionate Protestants railing against the strictures of the established Anglican Church and the monarchy in England. There were also soldiers and mercenaries, too. They were all weather-beaten and severely debilitated, yet an aura of optimism permeated the group.

However, their buoyancy was soon to be replaced by sinking feelings of dread.

COLONIAL AMERICA continued on page 8 ▶

Texas Workforce Solutions offers Peer Support training opportunity

Information provided by TDCJ's Rehabilitation Programs Division

PEER SUPPORT SERVICES ARE EMERGING as a vital tool in the recovery and reentry fields and the need for certified peer support specialists is expanding.

A peer support specialist is a person who has lived through or experienced a mental health condition, a substance use issue, incarceration, or a combination of these challenges. Their first-hand involvement and successful recovery give them knowledge and understanding that standard professional training cannot duplicate. In addition to their own life experience, a certified peer specialist has undergone formal training to help them better use their recovery story to serve as

both a role model and "resource broker" to clients as they navigate their personal recovery journey and reentry path.

Peer support specialists work for organizations such as:

- ▶ Hospitals and outpatient programs
- ▶ Homeless shelters
- ▶ Rehabilitation and wellness centers
- ▶ Specialized Advocacy Groups:
 - ✓ Veterans
 - ✓ LGBTQ+
 - ✓ At-Risk Youth
 - ✓ Domestic Violence
 - ✓ Human Trafficking

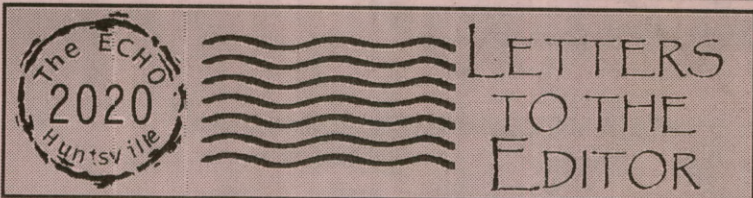
A peer support specialist's job func-

tions may vary within the context of the population they are serving, but generally include identifying their clients' needs and developing a personalized action plan for meeting those needs. This involves monitoring and tracking their clients' progress, networking and developing relationships with community resources, and connecting their clients to social programs that specialize in their clients' needs to provide a comprehensive continuum of care.

A peer support specialist that offers re-entry assistance works closely with their clients to assist them in activities that help them transition into society following release from incarceration.

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To the editor,

This is my first letter to The ECHO, even though I have done over 25 years in TDCJ. What I have to say could save your life, or even a toe or finger.

I have never liked going to the infirmary, but I recently had an injury that occurred when a dictionary slipped out of my hand and landed on my right big toe, splitting the nail and toe. Instead of going to see a nurse, I treated the wound in my cell. Gangrene set in, which was very painful, and I almost lost the toe. If I would have put in a sick call and went to the infirmary immediately instead of being a hard-head, this all would have been avoided. This injury definitely got my attention and opened my eyes to the falsehood of the negative rumors.

Stop listening to any negative rumors about the medical staff and go to the infirmary when you have a problem.

These people are here to help us—the nurses and doctors are very knowledgeable and they deserve more credit for their hard work.

**Thank You,
Donald Wicker
Beto Unit**

To the reader,

Seeking medical attention when small problems arise often prevents larger problems down the road. The infirmary is there to serve the medical needs of the resident population. Use it.

To the editor,

I've done 28 years and never before thought of writing to The ECHO, but our country hasn't faced this pandemic situation before, either, so there's a first time for everything. The purpose of this letter is to thank all those folks who kept—indeed keep—coming to work in the TDCJ!

This thank you is for you, the TDCJ correctional officer,

nurse, physicians' assistants, dentists, dental assistants, doctors, file clerks, mail room workers, maintenance, supply, laundry, food service, TCI supervisors and wardens—everyone who tends to the care and welfare of those of us who cannot leave! Thanks for the efforts of folks like you!

**Michael Pittman
Allred Unit**

To the reader,

Those who work behind the fence are also front line workers, especially when there's a COVID-19 outbreak on a unit. Thanks for your letter giving props to those working in the system!

To the editor,

I am truly thankful for Ms. Norton, Ms. Stout and all of the Windham School District (WSD) staff on the Tulia Unit. I appreciate their time, effort and hard work to supply us with weekly lessons—and especially for keeping our minds occupied with learning. These days are very frustrating and difficult. But together with a positive mind set we can push forward. I work in the kitchen as a

cook from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., so I am usually only working, sleeping or studying. And I pretty much stay away from the coronavirus debates and just try to keep myself focused on important issues and day-to-day tasks. Perseverance, prayer and positivity can (and will) power this nation along with togetherness, back to how it should be. Well, I have to save paper for my school work, and will cut this letter short. I just wanted to take the time to pass on my appreciation and gratitude to all the Windham instructors. God Bless you!

**Manuel E. Bernal
Tulia Unit**

To the reader,

Thank you for your positive comments and appreciation for our education staff. COVID-19 presented educators with an unprecedented set of challenges. WSD dealt with these problems admirably, creating new procedures and guidelines to continue providing a quality education to those confined within TDCJ. Their dedication, combined with perseverance on the part of students and unwavering support from TDCJ, creates

a winning effort and better futures for all. Thank you for making time to write and share your appreciation.

To the editor,

In your June/July 2019 issue, you published the poem "Desiderata." I wanted to write and tell you thank you for printing that poem, and that I very much enjoyed reading that particular poem in your paper. I would like to submit another poem for your readers enjoyment that I find to be every bit as wise and insightful, and that is "Invictus," by William Ernest Henley.

**Mike "King Kong" Keller
Beto Unit**

To the reader,

"Invictus" is indeed a great poem. We ran it in the October 2020 issue on page 10, so thank you for writing with your suggestion. This month we have included an inspirational classic on page 5: "If," which was written by English laureate Rudyard Kipling around 1895. It is straightforward advice for men (and women) on surviving and winning in the game of life.

TEXAS PRISON NEWS
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—MANAGEMENT—
Kristina Hartman — Superintendent
Bambi Kiser — Managing Editor
Mary Partida — Graphics Consultant

—STAFF—
Todd R. Carman — Staff Writer & Graphics
John W. Flagg — Staff Writer & Graphics
William E. Hill — Staff Writer & Graphics
Bryan J. Moore — Staff Writer
John J. Pippen — Staff Writer & Graphics
Tim G. Scoggin — Staff Writer & Graphics

—CONTRIBUTORS—
Sergio D. Alvarez — Hightower Unit
Lauren Aycock — Crain-Sycamore
Ruben Constante Jr. — Released
Laura Anne Cloy — Murray Unit
Ashley Dack — Mountain View Unit
Jim Dent — Polunsky Unit
Greg Freeman — Allred Unit
Robert Fridell — Neal Unit
Joseph L. Fritz — Estelle Unit
Joe Hernandez — Jordan Unit
Lisa Jackson — Murray Unit
Daniel P. Meehan — Darrington Unit
Michelle Orduna — San Saba Unit
James Pimentel — Ellis Unit
Roger R. Reister — Coffield Unit
Tim Rovell — Dalhart Unit
Bruce Ruckman — Ellis Unit
Eva Shelton — Lockhart Unit
Jennifer Toon — Released
Raymond Trinidad — Powledge Unit
Damon West — Released
Michael Wiese — Luther Unit

—UNIT REPORTERS—
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Telford Unit — Chad Uptergrove
Torres Unit — Stephen Unger
Woodman Unit — Kathleen Miller

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Dear Darby,

I love your ECHO issues, but why are they always black and gray? I think a little color would save the day! Could you please print the photos in color so we can see the lovely ladies in their vivid splendor?

**Thank you for the help,
Martin Aragon
Hughes Unit**

Dear Marty,

You see, The ECHO is in black and gray because... wait for it... it's a NEWSPAPER! Ya' know, the paper is a bit gray, the ink is a bit black. Remember the old riddle, "What's black and white and read all over?" Seriously, our printing job is posted for bids every few years and the cost-effective parameters don't include color ink. In the past, The ECHO occasionally had what is referred to as "spot color," where a single non-black color is used in different areas of the paper, but that's not part of our current printing contract. We also feel the beauty (or handsomeness) of our photo subjects shines through any print job!

Dear Darby,

I read all the good food you all put in The ECHO. I was wondering why you never put a measuring table in there. Like the recipe says, put 1 cup of rice in chip bag. How do you measure a cup? Do you use a green cup, the lid of the hot pot, or what? It would help if they put a measuring table for everything in the recipes for us to copy down.

Also, I liked the issues with all the Sudoku puzzles. Thank y'all for the great work.

Hungry Man

Dear Hungry,

Not sure you measure up, eh? Does your cup runneth over? Generally, the commissary cup is the standard of measurement folks use, be it a green or white one. Cooking in prison isn't an exact science, although there are many mad scientists who work their creative magic to make tasty treats from the eats at commissary! If a different unit of measure is needed (a hot pot lid or insert, for example), we'll specify that in the recipe. Glad you (and many others) enjoyed the extra Sudokus. Look for that to continue while we deal with the weirdness of the COVID era and quarantine times—we try to keep you entertained and occupied while we keep you informed!

Dear Darby,

I cannot agree more with Melissa Self, whose letter to you was printed in the June 2020 edition of The ECHO. Your column may have been relevant or perhaps entertaining decades ago, but not any longer. It's time to move on from your so called "wit."

Let me give you one small example of how unintelligent your responses are: you obviously thought it very clever to point out that Ms. Self was judging you when she called you judgmental, but you are missing the point she made, which is the fact that you claim to dispense advice. She is not an advice columnist, nor did she claim to be, and stated her position clearly, which fits her role as a writer to a newspaper. She can be as judgmental as

she wants, unless you honor your word and give her space as a "guest Darby".

In fact, I think that The ECHO should just do away with "Dear Darby" altogether and begin a new tradition of an advice column. The paper should hold a contest, or accept nominations, for a new style of columnist to better serve the needs of modern residents. Heck, I'll go ahead and nominate Ms. Self. She's right; you're too arrogant.

**Sincerely,
David Hicks
Hughes Unit**

Dear David,

Thank you for writing, but my, my, my. Aren't we in a mood this morning? Calling me arrogant? Moi? I DID offer Ms. Self (who actually called herself Missy) the opportunity to submit a Darby letter and response. I suggested she have a friend write a letter, and then she could write a response and send it in. Unfortunately, I never heard from her. Maybe she got busy. Maybe she couldn't find a pen. Maybe the letter is in the bottom of our mail stack, waiting to surface. I am therefore opening up the opportunity to ALL my devoted Darby fans: have someone write a letter to Darby, write a response at the end of it (hopefully dispensing helpful advice), and send it in. Each issue I'll select a letter or two, polish them up, and publish them in a "Darby's Guest" section. Give it your best shot! Just remember—if you wouldn't let your folks read the letter you're sending in, it probably won't be published. Just sayin'.

Dear Darby,

First and foremost, I would like to say that I've been reading your section since 2013, when I first landed on TDCJ soil. I look forward to getting my snarky dose every month, along with the rest of the information provided by The ECHO. Thank you all for that. My main reason for writing is to put in a request to commissary. I know it's possible, especially if you are the one to let them know! What I want is for them to sell cooling shorts! The cooling shirts they have are great... but that's only half of the deal! Why not sell shorts made of the same material, so we can be really cool?! How can we make it happen, Darb?

**Angelika "Jelly" Young
Riverside-Crain Unit**

Dear Angie,

COOLING shorts! Cool beans! Seriously, Angie, if you want to work your jelly, write an I-60 to Commissary & Trust Fund, Huntsville, Texas. That applies for any desired commissary item. If enough folks request something, it just might show up on the shelves at the store. If things go well and commissary goes along with your suggestion, you'll be walkin' full-cool next summer!

Dear Darby,

Could I get copies of The ECHO from September through December 2019? I heard about an article I want to read. My friend couldn't remember what month it was in, but he knew it was in those months. I, unfortunately, just returned to TDCJ after a 15-year vacancy. I like to read The ECHO, anyway. If I could receive any uncirculated back issues, I'd really appreciate it!

**Missed You Much,
William A. Bates
Ferguson Unit**

Dear Willy,

Let's see... you were out 15 years and decided to come back to read The ECHO?! I know my column is popular, but c'mon!

You DO know that you can subscribe both in here and on the outside, right? I mean, it's only \$12 for a year! And some would say that your vacay is in here, not the outside, where you have to worry about payin' bills and all. Willy, I hope your stay is a brief one — 15 years is a long time to act right before returning to the pokey. You know, I hear the same story over and over from different people over the years: I got caught up in livin' life and forgot that I was still on paper (parole), and that I still had to abide by the rules or my parole could be violated and I could come back. I wouldn't personally know, since I've yet to make it out, but how hard is it? If you can avoid catching a bunch of disciplinary cases in here, can't you keep the same mindset on the outside? I'd love to hear from our readers on this subject—lace ol' Darb up! Meanwhile, please know that The ECHO is delivered 10 times per year to each unit and provided for free to residents of TDCJ. Sorry, we do not have the resources to provide back issues.

Dear Darby,

My name is Audie Babers and I'm here in the Marlin Unit. Upon doing the easy Sudoku in a recent issue, I found there were errors. Don't take this the wrong way, because I really enjoy doing the puzzles—they help me focus and pass the time. God bless y'all during these trying times, and keep the correct version of the puzzles coming!

**Audie Babers
Marlin Unit**

Dear Audie,

You found the puzzles puzzling, eh? Sorry about that. Here's the deal—sometimes we make mistakes and we don't catch a typesetting error on a puzzle until it's too late. That's what happened to your not-so-easy version of the easy puzzle in the August/September issue. One of the intermediate puzzles was off, too. We want to keep you entertained, not puzzled, with our Sudoku puzzles. We're now having the guilty typesetter solve all the puzzles with an ink pen before we let him back in the office—he can't come in until they're all done correctly! To you and others who have written: thank you for letting us know!

Dear Darby,

I am writing you this letter because I feel that my denial of mandatory supervision release is unjust. Consider the following: I have 22 months done on a four-year sentence, my crime is non-violent, non-sex, non-3g. I did a three-year sentence, received my mandatory supervision release, and then was picked up for a detainee from another county for the four-year sentence I'm currently here on. What gives? If I can make my mandatory on the first charge, why didn't I make it on the second one? I mean, I didn't even hit the streets! I've got things to do!

**Thanks, Darby.
Richard Tarby**

Dear Richard,

Just because you made your mandatory supervision discharge on your first crime doesn't mean that you will make it on a second, subsequent charge. Maybe they didn't know you had a pending charge. Maybe they did and felt you should do more time on the second one. Regardless, you'll be out before you know it! Take advantage of your time here and enroll in some classes from WSD or college—they have a lot to offer, even in these weird, COVID-19-affected times. You'll find that your time passes more quickly, and you'll leave with more tools in your proverbial toolbox!

Each month, *The ECHO* features articles from contributing writers within TDCJ, as well as from those who have been released and want to send hope and insight back inside. This page features a variety of columnists. Enjoy!

Playing it all the way to the end

John Phippen — ECHO Staff

Here Forward **G**REETINGS, MY friends! Let's talk about freedom.

You may think a prison is a strange place to expound on the concept of freedom, but we face it many times throughout our day, mainly in the form of choice. Our human brains calculate and make choices by the thousands, which in turn, our bodies put into action. Herein lies our limitation. While we are free to choose our actions, we are not free to choose the consequences of those actions: "If you pick up one end of the stick, you pick the other."

This was a hard concept for me to come to terms with. For example, I would say to myself, "This is America, we have freedom of speech, and I can say whatever I choose whenever I choose to say it." And this is true—only I couldn't choose what happened after I said it—the other end of the stick. You pick up one end—you pick up the other as well.

Before we get started, let's familiarize ourselves with a few terms real fast so that we're all on the same page.

Experience Simulator: Otherwise known as the prefrontal cortex. Pilots have flight simulators; we have the pre-frontal cortex. As humans we can actually have experiences in our head before they happen in real life. Game it out...see the next move. I don't have to jump off a cliff to find out what a bad idea it was to do so. I can play it out in my head, visualize

myself hitting the rocks below and know ahead of time that this was a terrible idea. None of our pre-historic ancestors could do this trick and no other animal can either. Uniquely human is the pre-frontal cortex—right up there with opposable thumbs and walking upright on two legs.

Impulse Modifier: Actually, I just made up that phrase, but I wish there really was such a thing—it would have saved me a lot of trouble over the years. The pre-frontal cortex is supposed to act as one, letting us visualize an outcome before actually taking action, in theory this would help regulate bad impulsive decision-making, but it doesn't always seem to be on-line. Too bad you can't call it into action like Siri, or an Alexa

You pick up one end of the stick—you pick up the other.

smart speaker. "Hey Cortex—please stop me from driving to Vegas and marrying the beautiful woman I just met last night after I misspelled the tattoo of her name on my neck." Just this one intervention would have saved me a lot of problems...and court costs.

Impact Bias: As it turns out, this *is* an actual phrase. It's the term used when the simulator works badly...making you believe that different outcomes are more different in fact than they really are. This can work both ways. It can work to your detriment by making you think all is well as your entire life implodes for everyone to see...except you of course. Or it can protect you from loss or failure, lessening the impact and intensity, and speeding up recovery time from said experience. Sometimes this is referred to as

our *psychological immune system*. Other times it is known as just being straight up delusional.

In the Real World:

So, let's run through this one time. **Experience Simulator:** You've thought of everything. Calculated all the risk factors, and visualized the entire process all the way to end. You've made your decision. You're riding with the Dallas Cowboys this week. **Impulse Modifier:** Everything in your being is screaming, "You're an idiot—don't do it! For once stop putting yourself through this." **Impact Bias:** If it wasn't for that bad call and two missed field goals, they wouldn't have had to go for it on fourth and twenty-six. Besides, it's only one bad game, and the Super Bowl is in Tampa this year...we'll be there. I think you can see where this is all going.

The Takeaway:

Use your head, or more precisely—your pre-frontal cortex. Think it through, play it all the way to the end. Visualize it before acting on it. Someone wrote in *The ECHO* awhile back that you could only control four things: what you think, what you say, what you feel, and what you do. I disagree with that. You *can't* control how you feel. At least I can't. We can control the actions—not the feelings—but we can stop the feelings from controlling our actions. Make sense?

I'll tell you what it makes...it makes me hungry...all this "word salad," blah blah—whatever!

"Hey cortex—stop me from putting this half bag of corn chips and two ranch dressings in my ramen noodles. On the other hand: just *try* and stop me. You pick up one end of the stick—you pick up the other. ★

Thoughts on pessimism and negativity

Lisa Jackson — Contributing Writer, Murray Unit

WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY DESCRIBES A PESSIMIST as one who tends to a negative view. My parents' photo should have accompanied that definition.

Growing up in the Pacific Northwest meant lots of rainy days producing puddles perfect to jump in—which I mostly did barefoot. When I arrived home, my mother went on a rampage concerning how I'd catch several deadly diseases from rainwater and proceeded to fill me with countless home remedy potions to try to save my life.

My father was much better at gloom and doom. If I asked him for a dollar he would wearily reach into his wallet for the lone single (I found out later in life he kept the bulk of his bills in his pocket) and exasperatingly comment that I might as well take the last dollar—for we were only one step away from the poor house, anyway.

When tax time came around, my father was at his best. For days on end we would eat nothing but beans. He said the government was getting rich off the working class and we had to be prepared for the next Great Depression.



When I broke all 10 of my toes, my father commented, "Don't you know how much it costs to fix 10 toes? Couldn't you have broken just one? They'll probably water down the plaster so you'll have to come back for more casts and bingo: another bill!"

My mother once took the car in for a tune-up.

When we got the car back, mother pulled out into the street and was hit by a city bus. My mother made quite a scene once the police arrived, ranting and raving how the car shop had deliberately tampered with her brakes so she'd have to come back for them to be fixed. Truth was, mother was a poor driver and had many accidents that she explained as "not my fault."

So how did all this affect me? I admit to a lifetime of deflecting responsibility, proclaiming I had nothing but bad luck and declining new experiences because I said I'd only fail.

If anyone can relate to this story, let me tell you that the glass does not always have to be half empty. Good and bad things happen to everyone, and no one has an exclusive deal on bad luck. Let me reassure you that you don't have to let negativity rule your life. Your blessing could be moments away or right around the corner. In the meantime, join me in being grateful that there is a roof over my head, clothes on my back, food in my stomach, and medical care close at hand. It takes way less energy to be optimistic—and you'll feel better in the end. ★

Free man struggles with new role in life

Ruben Constante Jr.
ECHO Contributor, Released

A FEW MONTHS AGO, A COWORKER ASKED ME WHAT the hardest thing was I encountered after my release from prison, and I immediately told them, "I struggled with my new role out here." They gave me a puzzled look, so I explained to them what you are about to read.

When another brother named Jason Cole and I preached a firestorm at the Torres Unit in 2011, we wrote a book afterwards called *The Book with No Title* (it's kinda' like a man with no purpose). We learned that for someone to fulfill their God-given purpose (whatever it may be), they must know their identity first. And that identity can only come from intimacy with our Creator. Jason and I call it "The Fatherhood Principle."

There's a purpose-seeking craze going on in many prison churches and faith-based programs right now, which is an incredibly good thing. But before purpose is revealed, an identity must be conferred, and that identity can only become known when we draw near to our Creator in intimate fellowship. There is no other way for a person to know what they were created to be and do.

If you try to bypass any part of this process, you will come up with a counterfeit purpose. You will have discovered your own way of living, instead of the Creator revealing your personal design. And we all know what happens when we invent our own ways of living. We always get into some type of trouble!

Take a close look at the way it works, and you'll see how badly we've fallen from our original intent. For example, if I identify myself with a certain group of people, then those people will confer onto me a purpose. It will work like this:

1. **The group becomes my "father;"**
2. **I begin to walk intimately with my father;**
3. **He imparts to me his identity; and**
4. **I begin to aim for the things that serve his end.**

Go ahead and plug in the counterfeit "father" you followed. It could have been drugs, money, women, or even work. Whatever you were intimately associated with is what you became. Roles in life flow from identities we form. Hence why having a sound and emotionally present father is crucial to a child's overall development.

I often tell men and women I mentor through our DMP (Distance Mentorship Program) that entering society is a culture shock. Just as we were shocked upon entering a new prison world, so, too, are we shocked when we are released from it. And the shock

Just as we were shocked upon entering a new prison world, so, too, are we shocked when we are released from it.

is mostly felt deeply within the soul—in this thing we call identity.

When I served my 18 years, I developed a new identity in my relationship to God. I immersed myself in as much academic and religious training as I could because I was determined to unlearn every bad belief I had developed prior to my incarceration and relearn an entirely new mindset. Success followed me as a result. That's when I discovered that the roles and positions we occupy flow from the identities we form. Whoever and whatever you think you are is what you will pursue.

I was no longer a Little Caesars pizza delivery boy or a Taco Bell assistant manager. I was now a Bible teacher, a program creator, a mentor, a writer, and a public educator. My roles had changed and were commiserate with my new identity in Christ.

But something happened when I was released. I entered a new world that didn't know me, and I struggled to find a position that would allow me to exercise all the strengths I had developed while incarcerated. No problem, I had thought. Just apply

everything you learned, Ruben. However, while applying the principles I had learned in prison came naturally due to my practicing them for years in the system, I grew discouraged because my role had changed. I couldn't do what I had been used to doing for so long.

For over a decade at Torres, I served in various roles with ease, but now that I had entered a new world, those roles were gone. I had foolishly thought I would immediately occupy a position out here that would allow me to serve in the roles I had been accustomed to for so long. But when those positions were nowhere to be found, I was disheartened. I felt God had let me down—I even "backslid" for about nine months!

Eventually, I got back on track. I realized that while my role had changed out here, my identity in Christ was fixed and immovable. I had to readjust my focus and adapt to my new world. And slowly, through a series of positive decisions and plenty of hard work, I am now occupying the roles that flow naturally from my new identity.

So, go ahead and get educated, pursue righteousness, develop positive attitudes, and renew your mind entirely, but remember that you won't instantly jump into your own Superman suit and rescue the day. We never get good at anything overnight. Improvement requires intense discipline and an unyielding dedication to pressing forward—no matter the cost.

Roles flow from identities—yes—but they take time to occupy.

Editor's Note: With 10 books in print, Ruben continues to serve the needs of the incarcerated population. From publishing books, to mentoring men and women behind bars, to reaching communities with a transforming message, he says he takes no greater joy than helping others discover meaning, purpose, and direction when life seems hopeless. ★

For more information on Ruben's mission, write to:

Blueprints for Living Ministries Inc.
P.O. Box 1465
San Marcos, TX 78667

Corrections for Matthew Gaines Article:

The article on Matthew Gaines that appeared in the October issue of *The ECHO* contained two date-related errors we would like to correct. The article states that Gaines was born in 1840 and was a teenager

when he made his second attempt to escape from slavery in 1863. The dates are correct, but Gaines was beyond his teenage years. The second error is that the Civil War ended on April 9, 1865 when Robert E.

Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia at the Appomattox Court House and not in 1864 as was reported in the article. *The ECHO* regrets these errors and appreciates all input from readers. ★

► **APPRENTICESHIP**
continued from pg. 1

Potential employers spend time in Windham schools offering current training suggestions, engaging and expanding students' career-readiness.

Apprenticeship programs are implemented through two different models, which are:

- **The front-loaded model:** where residents receive credit hours for previous WSD Career and Technical Education (CTE) training, college CTE training, or trade school certificates, in addition to hours worked in the specific area.
- **The classroom model:** where residents are aligned with a TDCJ job and are working in the trade area, receiving classroom instruction from an approved crafts person and on-the-job learning experience at the job site.

TDCJ apprentices are registered with the US Department of Labor (USDOL) to show prospective employers that their skill set and knowledge meets national quality standards. A variety of jobs in the TDCJ can be learned through apprenticeships, and incarcerated workers who competently perform essential job functions, maintain positive work habits and follow USDOL job standards earn a spot on the national register upon completion of the program. Examples of apprenticeable TDCJ resident occupations include:

- ✓ **Welding**
- ✓ **Electrical Work**
- ✓ **Graphic Design**
- ✓ **Truck Driving**
- ✓ **Cooking**
- ✓ **Diesel Mechanic Work**
- ✓ **Automotive Body Repair**
- ✓ **Automotive Technician Work**
- ✓ **upholstery Work**
- ✓ **Assembly Technician – Furniture Factory**

Windham and TDCJ are also expanding into other areas of occupational focus for resident apprenticeship.

"TDCJ and Windham work closely with the Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information-Management Data System (R.A.P.I.D.S.) program. A timesheet is also developed that tracks student training and monthly-earned apprenticeship hours," Moriarty said. R.A.P.I.D.S. is a national database that collects and collates apprenticeship-related training hours into a progress report to be used for future employment opportunities.

WSD Superintendent Kristina Hartman emphasized the importance of career preparation through training and certification.

"TDCJ residents must have the intrinsic quality to set and meet goals to improve their position while incarcerated," Hartman said. "Following the different pathways to self-improvement, such as Windham CTE courses, college CTE, or working on a TDCJ job site is an incredible incentive. Earning acceptance into an apprenticeship program is a step in the right direction."

Marketable skills and career experience can be acquired within each program, with the ultimate aim of conveying vital

workplace competences while giving residents real-world steps to lead toward future occupations.

"This program is highly beneficial across the board, whether it is specific to the apprenticeship program or working in a facility and gaining hands-on experience," said Sharon Albert, program supervisor over Offender Work and Training Programs (OWTP) for TDCJ's Manufacturing, Agribusiness & Logistics (MAL) Division.

"WSD and TDCJ do their best to align residents with positive employment on the outside," she said. "We guide them in the direction of positive and productive opportunities."

Albert also said apprenticeship training involves preparing individuals to deal with the interpersonal demands of the workplace.

"Residents learn not only the hard skills, but also the soft skills of communication," she said.

These skills can include interview techniques as well as communication tools, employee daily responsibilities and meeting the expectations of employers. Earning job-skills training and certification will increase a TDCJ resident's job marketability. Apprenticeship programs provide individuals with opportunities to obtain workplace-relevant knowledge and progressively-advancing skills.

"Incarcerated individuals do have a chance with employers. Students develop the tools for a future career, professional ethics and self-confidence. With their certifications and apprenticeship, they can succeed," WSD's Moriarty said.

Courtney Hooper, a TDCJ resident currently enrolled in the Ferguson Unit's culinary apprenticeship program, said he enjoys his experiences with the job training in TDCJ.

"The culinary apprenticeship program is awesome! My 12 fellow students and I are learning expert skills that will lead us to success," he said.

Hooper has worked for years as a cook and baker in the Officers Dining Hall, a job he proudly performs. Applying skills learned from on-the-job training has become his daily routine, and he looks forward to working after release from TDCJ.

"Being able to provide a satisfactory service to others is like paying my debt back to society. When I get out of prison, I am going to put these skills [such as daily food service work] to work and get into the restaurant business," Hooper said. "This is all going to pay off in the end. You have to stay dedicated and diligent. Commitment is the key."

Hooper expressed gratitude to Windham, TDCJ and his instructors for his fortunate journey toward culinary distinction. He thanked culinary apprenticeship instructor V. McGowan for everything she teaches the class at the Ferguson Unit.

"We all take this seriously mainly because the instructor takes culinary arts very seriously," Hooper said. "We know we are learning expert knowledge from the experts."

At the Hobby Unit, TDCJ resident Jenny Eisenman also expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the Graphic Design Apprenticeship Program.

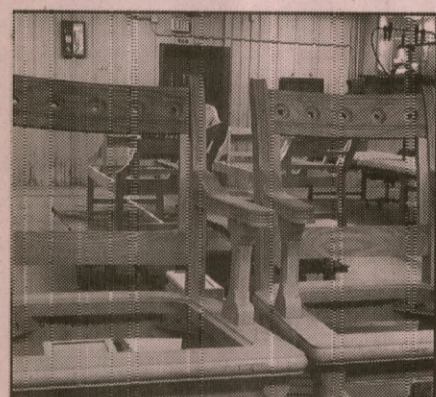
"I feel the graphic design apprenticeship program will open doors for me upon release," she said. "There are so many



Upholstery group works at Ramsey Unit.



Upholstery chair project



Upholstery chair frames

job opportunities available for graphic designers in the world. One day I hope to own my own business and work for myself. Each student is creating a personalized professional portfolio that we can send home. I will be able to take my portfolio on job interviews to show potential employers what I am capable of [doing].

"In addition to learning graphic design in the classroom, I get to apply my new skills to my actual job as a graphic designer in the Hobby Unit Print Shop.

"I love the creative aspect of the apprenticeship program," Eisenman said. "I get to create so many different projects that I feel each day presents a new opportunity to learn and grow. I enjoy taking a job through every stage in the print shop. I can design a job, print it, cut it and create a finished project. It's rewarding to walk a job through the entire process myself."

"I also like the challenge of designing for different customers. There is so much to consider when taking on a new project, such as that is the customer, or what type of image do they want to portray? This class is helping me think outside the box and grow my self-confidence."

In 2020, the effort to equip workers with the right skills and self-confidence is as important as ever to Windham and the TDCJ, despite new economy and hiring challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The TDCJ-WSD apprenticeship partnership continues across Texas.

"The collaboration between TDCJ and Windham is so vitally important. It is our mission here to make a difference," Albert said. "Any resident of TDCJ can be successful if they make up their mind to do so and put forth true effort to achieve it. Once the decision is made to change, it will happen. We are here to help."

Editor's Note: Anyone needing more information about the Apprenticeship Program may send an I-60 to Charlene Moriarty at WSD or Sharon Albert at TDCJ/MA/OWTP. ★

Apprentices at Powledge Unit offer TDCJ workforce insights

"My work experience in life was a series of odd end jobs, some lengthy, most short, but none were ever career-focused. In welding school, we were told about this program, and I knew this was the structure and foundation I needed. Through this program, I've developed a work ethic that was [previously] somewhat lacking. I've also gained a marketable work skill that will carry me through life with confidence—and not just as a welder. This program has developed in me a sense of honor in being depended upon to do a job.

"Since completing this program, I am now a journeyman welder and have been given the responsibility of teaching new welders. I love this. Not only do I have a sense of accomplishment, I also get to return the blessing I received by being an apprentice."

~ Wallace Clark, Welding Apprentice, Powledge Unit

"I believe it [the welding Apprenticeship Program] puts me on track for a full rehabilitation upon my release. It also gives me a chance for a better life outside these walls. Some employers are looking for employees that have already gone through the Apprenticeship Program. It saves some companies money if the person they are trying to hire already has [earned] their full 6,000 hours [of training].

"As a welder and fabricator, you have to work with the parts [or materials] you are given, and sometimes those materials arrive slightly inaccurate. I was taught by my supervisor Mr. Jones that to become a good welder and fabricator, you must be able to work with what's in front of you. When I first started [the training program], this was the most challenging part about the program [for me]."

~ Ashton V. Craven III Welding Apprentice, Powledge Unit

► **WORKFORCE** cont. from pg. 1

This could include scheduling appointments and securing transportation, obtaining important government documents (such as state ID, driver's license, social security card, and birth certificate), establishing financial services, participating in legal proceedings, and securing housing and job placement.

A former TDCJ resident who is currently unemployed and interested in earning certification as a peer support specialist may register with the Texas Workforce Solutions (TWS) and request to participate in Re-Entry Peer Specialist training offered by Via Hope. If approved, the TWS client may be able to participate in the 46-hour training free of charge. (Additional costs, such as application fees and required travel may not be included, unless approved by TWS.) Once this training is completed, the TWS client may apply for certification as a Re-Entry Peer Specialist through the Texas Certification Board.

Requirements to apply for and obtain the Re-Entry Peer Specialist (JI-RPS) certification include:

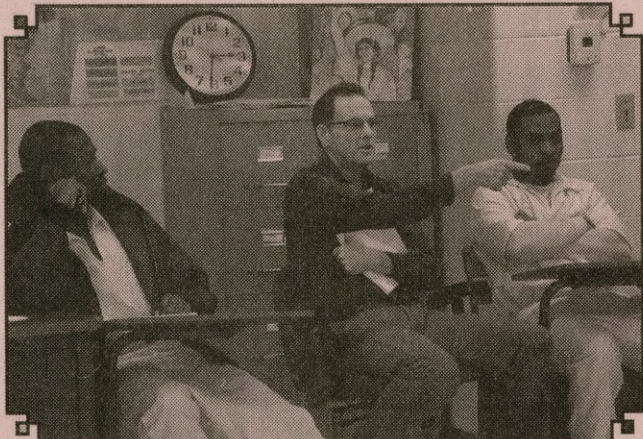
- ★ High School Diploma or GED
- ★ State-issued ID
- ★ Copy of Re-entry Peer Specialist training certificate
- ★ Attestation of lived experience with incarceration, with demonstrated current self-directed recovery and willingness to appropriately share one's own recovery story with participants
- ★ Signed agreement to comply with ethical standards
- ★ \$60 non-refundable fee. ★

Working on a parole packet?
CHECK OUT A PROGRAM
in the
Chaplain's Office
Time to change your thinking
try
BRIDGES TO LIFE
Give some of your old thoughts the slip
try
OVERCOMERS
Send I-60 to the Chaplain's Office!

*Thank you,
Mr. Rose*
1964-2020

The ECHO offers its condolences in the loss of correctional educator Frank Rose, a 27-year veteran of the Windham School District who taught at the Robertson Unit in Abilene and helped open the campus in 1992. Mr. Rose was a respected and passionate teacher for WSD's pre-release program, CHANGES. He passed away unexpectedly in early November as a result of COVID-19.

Our hearts are with Mr. Rose's family, friends, coworkers, students, and graduates, all of whom were impacted by his gift to affect positive change—especially in the classroom. His spirited, well-informed,



positive and honest lessons were vital to his students. Even though he taught within a prison facility, his impact reached far beyond the walls to those who were released. He continually communicated the success stories of these former students to his current classes, inspiring them to meet the challenges of reentry. Mr. Rose was an authentic fighter for second chances.

"His ability to connect with students and challenge them toward change was unparalleled," said a longtime Windham colleague and friend. "The impact of that wisdom and his legacy have shaped many, many 'generations' of our students. They say a teacher lives on through his students, but in Mr. Rose's case, it means that our students get to really live."

**The ECHO continues to express its sympathy in the loss of TDCJ residents and employees, as well as their loved ones, during the COVID-19 pandemic. ★*



Commissary Line

Commissary extends holiday spend periods

TDCJ Commissary will offer extended three-week spend periods during the holiday season.

Extended spend periods are as follows:

Thanksgiving: Nov. 9-29.
Christmas/New Year: Dec. 14 – Jan. 03, 2021

To the end

Submitted by Raymond Lee Cavitt — Jester III Unit

FRIENDS OFTEN COME AND GO
AND IT'S OFTEN HARD FOR YOU TO KNOW
IF YOU HAVE FOUND A FRIEND
WHO WILL STAY WITH YOU 'TIL THE END.
I DO NOT POSSESS A CRYSTAL BALL
SO THE FUTURE I CAN'T TELL YOU AT ALL.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TOMORROW WILL BRING
BUT I CAN TELL YOU ONE THING.
I'LL CARE ABOUT YOU, AND BE YOUR FRIEND, TOO,
FOR AS LONG AS YOU WANT ME TO.
I'LL DO MY BEST TO CARE AND SUPPORT YOU
NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO.
I WILL NEVER INTENTIONALLY DISRESPECT YOU,
NOR SAY THINGS TO MAKE YOU BLUE.
I WILL TRY MY BEST TO BE TRUE
WHILE STANDING BY YOU THROUGH
ALL THE SEASONS, GOOD AND BAD.
I'LL LOOK FOR NO REASONS, WHENEVER I'M MAD
TO STOP CARING ABOUT YOU
AND STOP BEING YOUR FRIEND, TOO.
I'LL ALWAYS TRY TO BE A LOYAL FRIEND—
ON THAT YOU CAN DEPEND.
SO PLEASE BELIEVE IT IS TRUE
WHEN I SAY I'LL CARE ABOUT YOU
AND BE YOUR FRIEND
ALL THE WAY TO THE END.

If....

By Rudyard Kipling

IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HEAD WHEN ALL ABOUT YOU
ARE LOSING THEIRS AND BLAMING IT ON YOU;
IF YOU CAN TRUST YOURSELF WHEN ALL MEN DOUBT YOU,
BUT MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR THEIR DOUBTING TOO;
IF YOU CAN WAIT AND NOT BE TIRED BY WAITING,
OR BEING LIED ABOUT, DON'T DEAL IN LIES,
OR BEING HATED, DON'T GIVE WAY TO HATING,
AND YET DON'T LOOK TOO GOOD, NOR TALK TOO WISE;

IF YOU CAN DREAM, AND NOT MAKE DREAMS YOUR MASTER;
IF YOU CAN THINK, AND NOT MAKE THOUGHTS YOUR AIM;
IF YOU CAN MEET WITH TRIUMPH AND DISASTER
AND TREAT THOSE TWO IMPOSTERS JUST THE SAME;
IF YOU CAN BEAR TO HEAR THE TRUTH YOU'VE SPOKEN
TWISTED BY KNAVES TO MAKE A TRAP FOR FOOLS,
OR WATCH THE THINGS YOU GAVE YOUR LIFE TO, BROKEN,
AND STOOP AND BUILD 'EM UP WITH WORN-OUT TOOLS;

IF YOU CAN MAKE ONE HEAP OF ALL YOUR WINNINGS
AND RISK IT ON ONE TURN OF PITCH-AND-TOSS,
AND LOSE, AND START AGAIN AT YOUR BEGINNINGS
AND NEVER BREATHE A WORD ABOUT YOUR LOSS;
IF YOU CAN FORCE YOUR HEART AND NERVE AND SINEW
TO SERVE YOUR TURN LONG AFTER THEY ARE GONE,
AND SO HOLD ON WHEN THERE IS NOTHING IN YOU
EXCEPT THE WILL WHICH SAYS TO THEM: "HOLD ON!"

IF YOU CAN TALK WITH CROWDS AND KEEP YOUR VIRTUE,
OR WALK WITH KINGS, NOR LOSE THE COMMON TOUCH;
IF NEITHER FOES NOR LOVING FRIENDS CAN HURT YOU,
IF ALL MEN COUNT WITH YOU, BUT NONE TOO MUCH;
IF YOU CAN FILL THE UNFORGIVING MINUTE
WITH SIXTY SECONDS' WORTH OF DISTANCE RUN,
YOURS IS THE EARTH AND EVERYTHING THAT'S IN IT,
AND, WHICH IS MORE, YOU'LL BE A MAN, MY SON!

The arrow of time

Submitted by Mike Keller, Beto Unit

YOU CAN ONLY GO FORWARD FROM THE POINT IN WHICH YOU EXIST,
SO SAY PHYSICISTS ABOUT THE ARROW OF TIME,
THAT WE CANNOT GO BACK AND CHANGE THE PAST SEEMS
LIKE SUCH A PERENNIAL CRIME.

YESTERDAY IS NOT OURS TO RECOVER
BUT TOMORROW IS THERE TO LOSE OR WIN.
TODAY IS A DAY YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE
AND ONE YOU WILL NEVER SEE AGAIN.

SO SEIZE THE DAY,
FOR THERE IS NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT!
DON'T BE LIKE THE GREAT SLOTH;
DO NOT WAX QUIESCENT.

BECOMING AN ASTRONAUT
WILL TAKE YOU VERY FAR
BUT ALWAYS REMEMBER, NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO
THERE YOU ARE.

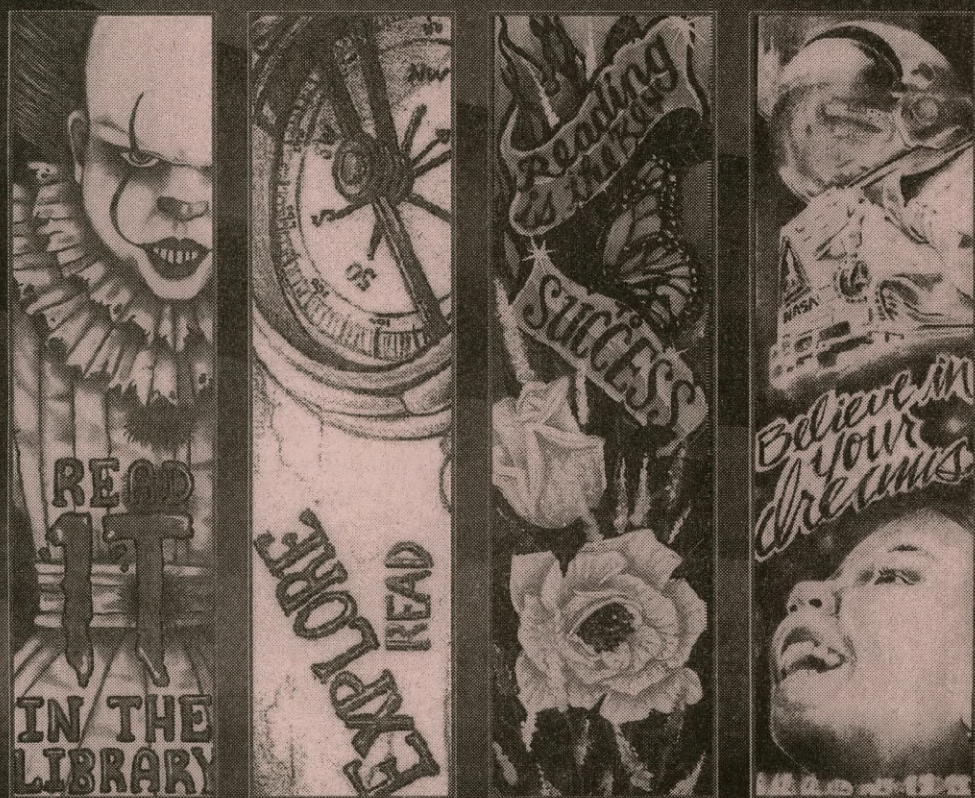
THE TIME YOU ENJOY WASTING
IS NOT WASTED TIME.
MY DEAR CHILD, YOUR LIFE HAS
A DIVINE DESIGN.

AS YOUR FATHER, I DON'T WANT YOU TO FRET
THE FUTURE NOR FEEL SAD ABOUT THE PAST.
BE MINDFUL AND LIVE IN THE MOMENT,
FOR YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE AND IT GOES BY SO FAST.

YOU'LL PARDON ME FOR BEING SO EPIGRAMMATIC,
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO YOU,
MY ONE AND ONLY DAUGHTER,
I TEND TO BE A BIT OF A FANATIC.

Coming in December

BOOKMARK ART CONTEST



ASK LIBRARY STAFF HOW TO ENTER



► CONTEST continued from pg. 1

We appreciate all of the aspiring writers who entered our contest. Entrants put in many hours writing, editing and sending in their work, and that effort is what has made this contest a success. Many gifted residents poured out their hearts on paper, resulting in

hundreds of submissions. There is an impressive amount of writing talent in TDCJ, and it shined in these entries. We encourage everyone to continue to submit content for your newspaper—it is your work that makes *The ECHO* possible! Those who are very interested in writing on a regular basis may wish to write to our

managing editor for consideration as a reporter or contributing writer.

We rated contest entries from one to 10 in each of the “Four C” categories (content, clarity, creativity and correctness), totaled the scores, ranked the entries, and debated the merits of different submissions when the scores were tied. You once again

entertained, enlightened and inspired us with your entries. *The ECHO* will now be sharing many of the winners, finalists and honorable mentions with readers in the upcoming months. Again, thank you for making this a successful writing event! Your time, patience, and literary efforts are valued and appreciated. ★

Winners

Fiction

- ❶ “Seek,” by John Butcher, Coffield Unit
- ❷ “Free at Last,” by Cory “Shaggy” Nabors, Cotulla Unit
- ❸ “Clearing the Air,” by Troy Glover, Darrington Unit

Non-Fiction

- ❶ “An Unlikely Servant,” by Fabian Flores, Stiles Unit
- ❷ “Razor Wire Running,” by Johnny L. Wooten, Eastham Unit
- ❸ “The Blessing of Adversity,” by Jared Anderson, Michael Unit

Finalists

Fiction

- ★ “I Peter 5:7,” by Troy Glover, Estelle Unit
- ★ “A Dead Man’s Shoes,” by Henry R. Lovelady, Darrington Unit
- ★ “A Journey Across Greyspace,” by Trever Lee Menzies, Middleton Unit
- ★ “A Pierced Heart,” by Terry L. Porter, Cole State Jail
- ★ “Caravan to Nowhere,” by Lisa Jackson, Murray Unit
- ★ “Dry Pancakes,” by Andrew Riley Reynolds, Lynaugh Unit
- ★ “Execution,” by Troy Glover, Estelle Unit
- ★ “Game Over,” by Chris Rogers, Goree Unit
- ★ “If Only,” by Moses Valdez, Roach Unit
- ★ “Nerd,” by P. Bentley, Dalhart Unit
- ★ “Off the Grid,” by Kevin Murphy, Stiles Unit
- ★ “Penitentiary Mouse,” by Oscar M. Sanders, Eastham Unit
- ★ “Pixie Godmother,” by Terry L. Porter, Cole State Jail
- ★ “Shadow Walker,” by Donald R. Thetford, Scott Unit
- ★ “The Kinetic Batter,” by Terry L. Porter, Cole State Jail

Non-Fiction

- ★ “Behold the Future,” by Kellen Mackey, Formby State Jail
- ★ “Compassionate Sentencing,” by Johnny L. Wooten, Eastham Unit
- ★ “Deerly Departed,” by P. Bentley, Dalhart Unit
- ★ “Father,” by Michael Brooks, Daniels Unit
- ★ “New Future: Rob Fox,” by Robert Davenport Ferguson Unit
- ★ “Practical Means,” by Terry L. Porter, Cole State Jail
- ★ “Spearhead,” by Jack William Walker, Wheeler Unit
- ★ “Step Zero,” by Sean O’Brien, Eastham Unit
- ★ “Suicide: The Other Side of a Tragedy,” by Lee Burke, Clements Unit
- ★ “Taking your Time,” by Troy Glover, Estelle Unit
- ★ “The Nightrider,” by Juan Ortiz, Leblanc Unit
- ★ “The Other Chain Gang,” by Lily Archuleta, Murray Unit
- ★ “To Prison to Purpose,” by Chris C. Freeman, McConnell Unit
- ★ “Where Exactly is Paradise, Anyway?” by Sarah Luedecke, Crain Unit
- ★ “Who’s Following You?” by Oscar M. Sanders, Eastham Unit

Honorable Mentions

Fiction

- ★ “Being Good,” by Marshall W. Greenlee, Kyle Unit
- ★ “Best Laid Plans,” by Daniel Sky Walker, Telford Unit
- ★ “Catcher’s Final Pitch,” by William Little, Stringfellow Unit
- ★ “Desperate Desperado,” by Marcus E. Gay, Clements Unit
- ★ “Destined,” by Robert Torres III, Wallace Unit
- ★ “Finding True Love,” by Michelle Wallace, Mountain View Unit
- ★ “For the Love of Charly,” by Rick Ables, Huntsville Unit
- ★ “Homeomorphous,” by John A. Little, Garza East Unit
- ★ “How East, East Texas Was Won,” by Monti Bergamini, Ramsey Unit
- ★ “I hit the jackpot,” by Hector Aldana, Lynaugh Unit
- ★ “Lepi, the Moth,” by Nicholas Kenison, Beto Unit
- ★ “Mrs. Chicago Jazz,” by William Little, Stringfellow Unit
- ★ “Old Pair of Boots,” by James Walker, Neal Unit
- ★ “Princess and Turtle,” by Ricardo Cisneros, Neal Unit
- ★ “Riley,” by Brandon Copeland, Stiles Unit
- ★ “Terribly Mistaken,” by Isani Michael Ramirez, Coffield Unit
- ★ “The Lost Ranger,” by Christopher Elmore, Torres Unit
- ★ “The Make of Me,” by Kenneth Wilson, Luther Unit
- ★ “The Rainbow Blade,” by Angel Martinez III, Hamilton Unit
- ★ “The Serpent and the Rabbit,” by James Walker, Neal Unit
- ★ “The Stormy Night Terror,” by William Bryant, Allred Unit
- ★ “What Defines a Man?” by James Walker, Neal Unit
- ★ “What is Your Name?” by Troy Glover, Estelle Unit
- ★ “When I Grow Up,” by Steven B. Sirois, Stiles Unit
- ★ “The True Story of Adam, Eve, and the Honest Serpent,” by David Clayton Ratliff, Middleton Unit

Non-Fiction

- ★ “Alive—Shrouded in Controversy,” by Steven Strindo, Gist State Jail
- ★ “An American Slum, in the Heart of Texas,” by Riku Melartin, Segovia Unit
- ★ “Blinded from Darkness,” by Barry Crayton, Jester III Unit
- ★ “Breaking a Promise,” by Joe Carranza, Wheeler Unit
- ★ “God is ... Love,” by Christopher A. Ray, Lewis Unit
- ★ “Home,” by Brad W. Wallace, Luther Unit
- ★ “I’m Trying to Be Patient, But ...,” by Justin Wade McFtridge, Formby State Jail
- ★ “Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?” by Monti Bergamini, Ramsey Unit
- ★ “Lost Boy of the Barrio,” by Richard Vasquez, Eastham Unit
- ★ “Magnifying Your Divine Potential,” by Burt C. Culberson, Allred Unit
- ★ “Necessities,” by Tammy Dixon, Woodman Unit
- ★ “Prison for the Children,” by Keven Murphy, Stiles Unit
- ★ “Protect your Freedom with Self-Discipline,” by Jesus Fernando Escoto Lazara, Daniel Unit
- ★ “Spelunking Life Lessons,” by Stephen Lawrence Stoeltje, Stiles Unit
- ★ “Storms of Life,” by Carl Snider, Coffield Unit
- ★ “Summer, Autumn,” by Sam S. Rotolo, Ferguson Unit
- ★ “Texas Bull Ride,” by William Jacob Little, Stringfellow Unit
- ★ “The Days Go By,” by Juan Antonio Martinez, Lewis Unit
- ★ “The Devil Inside of Me,” by Filbert Watson, Scott Unit
- ★ “The Faith of a Child,” by Kenneth Andrus, Torres Unit
- ★ “The Light,” by Donald Thetford, Scott Unit
- ★ “The Only Death I Fear, is Dying Ignorant,” by Jonathan Wayne Staker, Coffield Unit
- ★ “Welcome to My Mind, My Pain,” by Mack Horton, Ferguson Unit
- ★ “Who is ‘I Dunno’?” by Daniel Paul Meehan, Darrington Unit
- ★ “Wings of Sobriety,” by Xavier DeLosReyes, Wheeler Unit

Razor Wire Running

Johnny L. Wooten — Eastham Unit

THE FIRST TIME I WENT ONTO the rec yard, it was a beautiful fall day. I had been cooped up in county for almost a year and I was ready to get outside. I had walked a couple of times around the track when a guy in my dorm called Bug bet me that I could not run a single lap without stopping. It was only a lap, so it should not have been a problem. Since six laps made a mile, I believed one lap was gonna be easy, but little did I know that I had become horribly out of shape.

Running is a sport that requires strength, agility, endurance and mental toughness—all things I thought I had until that first day at recreation. In 2012, I was convicted on three sentences totaling 165 years without parole and began serving my time on the Eastham Unit in Lovelady, Texas. I was on the infamous “Ham,” referred to as “America’s Toughest Prison” in *Newsweek’s* October, 1986 edition. Prison changed my life; running changed my perspective.

I made it three-quarters around the track and ran out of gas.

I had to take that walk-of-shame back to the handball court where everyone was already laughing at me—Bug laughing the hardest. He informed me that I would never run a mile without stopping, and so the race was on. I decided that day I would start a program of running in



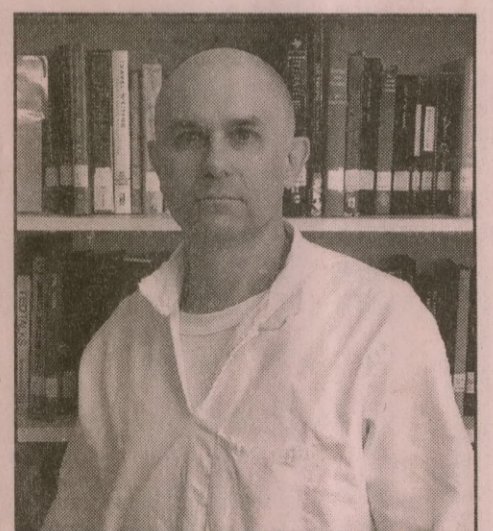
2nd Place ♦ Non-Fiction

order to get one mile down. Nothing else mattered. At the time, I was not concerned about 5Ks, 10Ks, half-marathons or full marathons; my life’s goal was one mile. I started simple, running one lap at a time. I alternated between running a lap and walking a lap every time I went to recreation. When I finally felt good about running one lap, I started running two without stopping. Then three, then four, and finally made it to six laps, one mile, without stopping. I was ecstatic! I did it! But why were they, Bug included, still laughing at me on the handball court? Apparently my time for a mile was not to their approval. I though 9:36 was a great time. I had run the hardest, fastest mile of my life!

Aggravating Bug told me my time was pitiful and I was a slow, old man.

In 2013, I was 42-years-old, not old by any comparison, except in prison. I was told that my mile didn’t count because it was so slow and I would never run a mile in under eight minutes. How this bet went from running six laps to running six laps in a certain time beats me, but again, the race was on. I went to recreation every chance I got, which can sometimes be rare in prison. Normally recreation happens three times a day for two hours each time. Your work schedule, staffing and whether you have disciplinary cases determine how much recreation you are allowed to go to. The two-hour time periods limit the amount of miles that you are able to run, but none of that was a problem for me—one mile a day was my requirement. I would wear a watch, timing myself each mile until finally, months later, I was able to beat the eight-minute mark. Again, I was ecstatic until I heard the laughing. They were still on the handball court, laughing at me. Once I got over there, Bug said it was great that I had beat the eight-minute mark, but I would never get under seven minutes? Can you see why we call him Bug? Again, the race was on.

Running, running and some more running. But somehow the more I ran the more I liked it. A fire began to grow in me that I could not put out. Running was changing my life. I was losing weight, working out some and, more importantly, my outlook on life was beginning to look better. Having as much time as I have can start to weigh a person down, but I can still have meaning to my life. I am



J. Wooten

ashamed of what I have done, but I am not ashamed of what I have overcome. And running was helping me overcome. My body was feeling better, my mind was clearer, and overall, I was better.

Seven minutes went and of course, Bug still lowered the bar. Then six minutes came and went also until my personal record was set at 5:30. I was ecstatic the day I broke six minutes, but I didn’t stop myself that day. If I could run one mile, then why not two? So I started working on two, then three, and so on. Bug was right there all along, betting me that I couldn’t do one more mile, and I was still proving him wrong.

In September of 2019, at our first annual Suicide Prevention Walk/Run, I was able to accomplish 13 miles without stopping—a record 78 laps. The amazing part of it is that I got to run it with my running partner, Woody, barefooted. We may not be cross country runners, but we are Razor Wire Runners. I still try to save time at recreation so I can catch up and talk with everyone, including Bug, but he doesn’t laugh at me anymore. ★

An Unlikely Servant

Fabian Flores — Stiles Unit

BEING SOCIAL WAS NEVER MY strong suit. I was always better as myself when I was by myself. Growing up in Houston, Texas, I didn't have genuine friendships or worthwhile relationships. I had a lonely life only worsened by drugs, depression, suicidal ideas, and other self-destructive mental habits. My teens were an emotional wasteland. Because I hadn't cared for myself or others, I took a man's life. I was 19, and would receive a 99-year sentence. That was 22 years ago.

In prison, I worked hard to be alone; I avoided gangs and immersed myself in drawing and reading—remnants of my freeworld life. Most importantly, I could do these alone in my cell. From these things, I withdrew deeper into myself, blocking out the lifeless world of prison. It worked for a while. It helped pass the first few years and the first decade, and it offered one of the most important gifts one could have in prison: peace of mind.

Then I discovered my true passion: scriptwriting, with the ultimate goal of directing. I studied books, dissected movies on TV in dayrooms, and read every review and actor/director interview in every magazine and newspaper I could find. As I excelled at screenwriting, I learned that there was more to the craft than sheltering in my writer's grotto, pecking away at scripts and expecting them to magically be swept away and made into films. Filmmaking was a collaborative effort that required folks working together toward a unified vision. Teamwork was necessary, and that terrified me.

In 2016, a guy invited me to a Toastmasters meeting. I had no idea what Toastmasters was, although I had heard of it. "It's a club," he explained, "where you learn servant leadership, effective communication, and teamwork through public speaking."

Coolly, I told him I'd think about it, being stressed about it was more like it! I knew this was a good chance to learn teamwork skills—but public speaking? Speaking in front of strangers sounded terrifying. Yet, I slowly realized that

this club would one day help me with producers, agents, investors, and my own movie team. No matter how scared or ill-equipped I felt, it was a hurdle I needed to surmount to achieve my goal as a director.

A few days later, I told the guy to sign me up.

Two weeks later, I sat in a cramped room full of strangers brimming with confidence, poise, and ways of speaking which I rarely saw in fellow inmates. Intimidated, I started second-guessing the whole thing.

Yet, I remembered my goal, my "why" for being there. I needed to break free of my comfort zone. So I became a member.

My first speeches were pathetic and embarrassing. I stuttered, sweated, and missed my speech objectives. I prepared hard, but always dropped the ball. I sought reasons to not attend meetings. I persisted because my fellow members showed me patience. They encouraged me to be braver, and educated me concerning my missteps. At first, I thought they were just helping me speak and present myself more effectively, but as those strangers became friends and mentors, I realized that they were really helping me become something I had not expected: a better, more effective person.

As I gained better speaking skills, I likewise gained better social skills.

I now wanted to relate to people. I became more opinionated. My self-confidence grew until I couldn't deny it. I had joined the club for selfish reasons, simply to one day be able to convince investors and producers to fund my scripts. But in that cramped room, I had changed. I was no longer just about helping myself; I was more focused on helping others. I wanted new guys coming into the club to experience the same positive growth

and empowerment I experienced.

I wanted others to become a servant like I had.

Two years after I reluctantly entered the Toastmasters "Sui Generis" club, I was voted in as club president. Though I had warily accepted the nomination, I worried that I would fail the club, steer it wrong, and prove myself incompetent. Being locked up at age 19, I never had a career, community involvement, marriage or kids. Who was I to tell older men, some of them veterans, how to be better individuals?

Yet, I remembered our club motto, something I held closely to my heart: "Servant leaders lead to see others succeed."

I wanted to make the leap, for good or for bad.

It was a very interesting, and testing, year-long journey. I learned what makes a good leader, and also an ineffective one. I learned my strengths and weaknesses, in equal measure. I dropped the ball many times. But none of my club members had ever regretted voting for me.

Toward the end of my term a couple of guys told me that no one had run against me because the group honestly felt that I was better for the job.

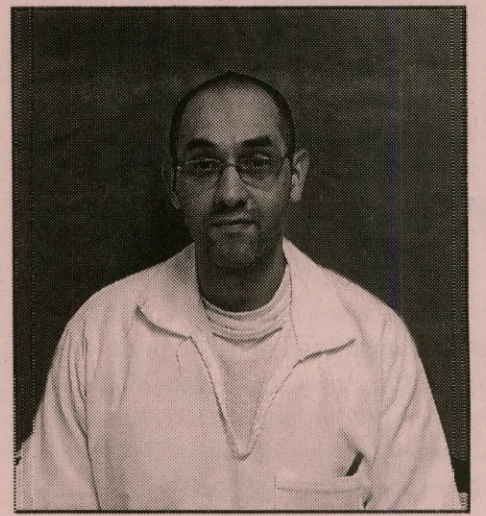
"Really?" I genuinely asked. "Sometimes," one of them said, "the best ones to lead are the ones who don't think they are capable."

"I wanted to help guys," I admitted. "I just didn't want to mess up the club."

The other guy chimed in, "It was never about the club. It was about you, about your growth to a better version of yourself. In a lot of ways you weren't ready to be a leader. It was the club's job to make you ready."

That's exactly what they did. I have since left the "Sui Generis" club, though I will never forget who I became there. I stepped out to open a chair for the next man to enter and grow like I had done. All the members who had been under me are still close friends.

I still have dreams of being a filmmaker; I still write scripts, study movies, and read everything I can



F. Flores

about the film world. My focus is now more on serving others. Alongside "aspiring filmmaker," I have gladly added "aspiring motivational speaker." Now I am constantly on the look-out for opportunities to reach out to guys in here, whether it's volunteering to be a GED tutor, a facilitator of a novel-writing group, or even an assistant director in the unit's drama club.

A few months ago I was invited to a leadership conference hosted by outside organizations and ministries, aimed at guys making a difference inside the prison community. I have even stretched my wings and have written the first draft of a prisoner self-help book geared toward living a better life in prison.

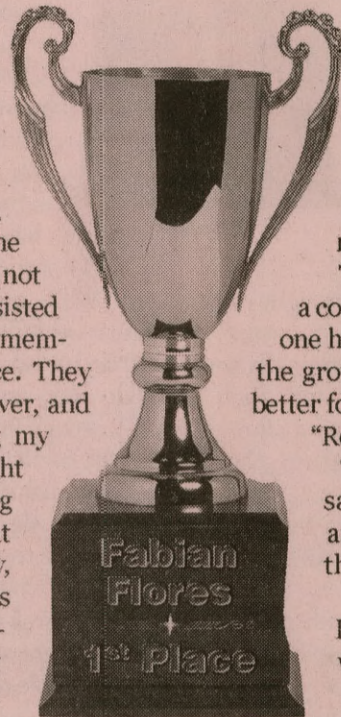
Prison is a hard and lonely place, only made more insufferable by our own screwed-up thinking and actions. If we aren't able to take a closer look at our faults and take the necessary leaps to become something better, for ourselves and for our loved ones, this place will devour us and spit us out worse than what we went in.

You don't need to join a Toastmasters club to be better (though I recommend it!), but you do need to connect with people and groups that are aimed at making you better. You need the course to believe in your own voice and to know that you have the sole power to change your life, someone else's life, maybe even the world.

Life is complicated, inside or outside of prison. Here are four steps to make it constantly rewarding:

1. Believe that you can become better.
2. Become better.
3. Help others become better.
4. Repeat.

It's really that easy. Take it from me, an unlikely servant. ★



Non-Fiction

Free at Last

Cory "Shaggy" Nabors — Cotulla Unit

MOSES REACHED OVER THE bunk—the bare mat devoid of a sheet as it was being used to hold the majority of his meager belongings—and grabbed the old, tattered Bible from its usual place between the bars over the window of his cell that faced outward onto the recreation yard at the center of the arrangement of buildings that made up the prison. Pausing to look affectionally at the weathered and often-handled brown leather cover, he slowly passed his wrinkled and mildly arthritic hand over its timeworn surface. He chuckled to himself as he marveled over how the leather, after 15 years of being carried to prison church services and faith-based classes, so resembled his own time-beaten, wrinkled and dark-brown skin.

Moses was finally at the tail end of a 20-year sentence for armed robbery; a crime he committed out of a heroin-driven act of desperation to get that next fix. He was 44 when he went down, and now, after 15 years in the system, he had finally made parole five years shy of his maximum sentence, a fact for which he daily bent the knee, bowed his head and thanked the good Lord almighty. He knew it was God's grace and not his own effort that made it happen. Now, at age 59, the lord had answered his fervent prayers: Moses was going home.

Lost in thought, he was slightly startled by the knock at his cell and youthful voice shouting, "Look out, School!" It was Cody, Moses' cellie. Cody was here for his first time down after he was caught with an ounce of K2, 20 Xanax, and a loaded .38 under his driver's seat. He had been bunking with Moses for only about three months, but in that time, Moses, being a veteran of the system, had taken it upon himself to take Cody under his wing. He knew that guiding Cody and others like him were God's purpose for Moses and his time in prison.

"Cody!" Moses shouted in his dry, raspy baritone. "Wazup, youngsta? Ya' good?"

"Yeah, School, I'm good," Cody replied with a chuckle as his bright and youthful eyes, pale white and freckled face and charmingly goofy Irish grin appeared in the little room of D-wing—Moses' home away from home for the time he had

been on the Lewis Unit.

"I just wanted to check on ya, old man. Thought I'd see if you were gonna' need any help haulin' your stuff down when they call you for chain," Cody said.

"He's a good boy, Lord. Thank you for sending him my way," Moses thought to himself. To Cody he replied, "Ya know, youngsta, I think I just might, ta' tell ya' the truth. These old bones ain't what they was when I first went down, I'm sorry to say. I'd sure appreciate ya' helping me out when da' time come."

"Of course, School. I'd be happy to," Cody cheerfully said. "So, any big plans for when you finally hit the freeworld?"

"Oh," Moses thoughtfully responded, "I don't know. Prob'ly go pay a visit to my sweet Charleen"—Charleen being his wife of 33 years who faithfully stayed by his side until the day she went to be with the Lord five years ago. This was another of the Lord's tests of Moses'

the first time, said, "You **have** been in the Word!"

"You bet!" Cody replied. "Every day and every chance I get!"

"An' why do we do that, Cody?" Moses asked.

"So that we may," Cody paused, trying to remember the verse. "So we may show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the work of truth," and then with a proud look, "Second Timothy 2:15!"

"Man, man! You got that right on the money there, youngsta! Now I **know** the Lord is with ya! You gonna' be alright, son!" Moses said.

"You know, Moses, I think I am," Cody replied, a glow to his face. "Well, I'd better let you finish up, School. I'll be in on the next door roll to help ya' with your things."

"Thanks, son," Moses said, a small hint



2nd Place • Fiction

faith. "After that, I ain't sure. I guess I'll play it by ear!" he said with a raspy laugh.

"Well, School," Cody said, "sounds to me like a good place to start." Then, more somberly, "You know, you're sure gonna' be missed around here, Moses—especially by me. I honestly don't think I'd have made it these past three months without you."

"Oh, now," Moses said, "I gotta' feelin' you'd have been just fine. You come in with a faith and love for the Lord. He just sent ya' to me so you could get your spiritual armor refitted. You just needed some fine-tunin'! Now, you know He says in His word that He works all things for the good for those who love Him."

Cody flashed him another of those charmingly goofy smiles (he knew this was another of Moses' tests of Bible knowledge), and with a wink said, "And I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me!"

Moses, suddenly beaming like a new father watching his baby/boy walk for

of sadness in his dry, brittle voice. "And Cody, God bless ya' for your kindness to an ol' man."

Still smiling, but with a touch of sadness on his face, Cody responded, "You know, Moses, I think he already did. He brought me a friend like you," and with that, Cody's freckled, Irish smile vanished from the window.

"He's gonna' be alright, ain't he, Lord?" Moses said quietly to the cell he'd called home for so many years. Suddenly, he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder. Turning, Moses found himself face-to-face with Jesus, King of Kings and Prince of Peace. Standing next to the savior, clad in shining white robes, great double-edged sword at his hip and majestic white wings folded against his back, was a celestial being of incredible stature—his presence eclipsed only by the presence of the Son of God Himself.

"Fear not, good Moses," said the Christ, "and be of good cheer. The seed you have planted will bear much fruit."



C. Nabors

Cody will be well protected, as I shall give my angel, Kadmiel, charge over him and he shall keep Cody from harm. He shall have a bright future as a servant of the kingdom and shall save many souls to the glory of the Father. Well, done, my good and faithful servant. You have great honor for your namesake and your King."

"It was my honor, Lord. My honor that you chose this lowly sinner as a vessel of your mighty works. I am humbled and blessed, Lord," Moses said.

"Very good," said Jesus, "Are you ready to go?"

"Yessir, Lord, yessir! First thing I wanna' do is see my sweet Charleen," Moses replied with a joyous chuckle.

"And so you shall, my friend," the Lord said, "She waits for you, and you have more than earned it."

It was about that time that the officers were calling for the next door roll. The shouts of "in and out" could be heard echoing throughout the wing. As the cell door opened, Cody rushed in, eager to help Moses with his things.

"Alright, ol' timer," Cody said jokingly. "Let's get you going," and then he stopped. Moses and all his things were gone. Stunned and confused, Cody struggled to make sense of it. "Where'd he go? How's this possible?" he thought.

Then he saw it, lying on the old, plastic-covered mat Moses had slept on. Moses' old, worn out Bible. Picking it up, Cody gently opened the old, battered Bible to the inside of the front cover. There, written in fading black pen ink, he saw a single verse: "With God, all things are possible."

Closing the Bible, Cody hugged it to his chest and smiled. "God bless you, ol' man," he said to the empty cell, "and God speed." ★

Seek

John Butcher — Coffield Unit

THE CRAFTSMAN ADMIRING HIS work. Everything was almost ready. He dipped the paintbrush: one last time into the small canister and retraced the six words across the glass cube. Overhead, the sun beamed brightly through the leaves of a massive tree, causing dappled shapes to dance across the object as the craftsman set his brush down and closed his eyes, feeling the gentle breeze.

A moment passed before he lifted the cube and set its open side down over an envelope centered on a white pedestal, sealing the cube's edges to ensure an air-tight frame.

Then, with one last look, he gathered his tools and tiptoed away to begin his final project, a very important ceramic sculpture.

The two creatures circled the strange object, naturally curious. The older of the two sniffed the cube warily while the younger held back at arm's length, darting her eyes back and forth as her heart fluttered in her chest. When she could bear it no longer, her words rushed out in three excited syllables: "What is it?"

The other creature circled the object once more, eyebrows furrowed in thought. Finally, he took satisfied breath. "This," he announced with supreme confidence, "is the Sacred Pedestal."

The female smiled brightly. "The Sacred Pedestal," she whispered. She stepped closer, reaching out to it, but the male gently intercepted her hand and shook his head.

"This is the key to our success. Others will come from all over to gaze at it." He released her hand, adding, "We must get ready."

Six days of strenuous labor followed. Each morning the female awoke to find her mate already at work constructing a crude hut around the Pedestal. And so it was that on the seventh day the male grunted his approval and lay down to sleep beneath the massive tree that grew nearby. However, his sleep was fitful—the female watched as he tossed and turned and muttered. Overhead, thick clouds roped in and out of the pale moonlight, drawing her eyes to the hut

as it pulsed to the rhythm of the weather.

She rose quietly. With a nervous look to the doorway, she ducked under the square of vines and reached trembling fingertips to the first of the red symbols, a long straight line. Just as quickly, she was retreating toward the open air as she scrambled back over the vines. Breathless, she lay back down to try sleeping when a sharp pain bloomed around her finger, causing her to cry out.

Her mate lurched upward.

"What is it?"

"Nothing," she gasped, knowing she'd said the words too quickly, and closed her eyes again. Later, she opened them and stared at the tiny thorn and the dried red paint that she couldn't understand, stuck on her finger where she'd touched the cube.

As time passed, a coat of grime built up across the glass, obscuring the thin rectangle item inside, yet no one dared touch it or clean it. Only the bright red words seemed impervious to nature. It was no ordinary paint. Nations rose and fell. Cultures clashed and then compromised. Questions were flung into the dark by restless creatures, but answers were in short supply.

The red marks were studied by eager etymologists and tireless scholars; no universal theory emerged.

Grace watched the countryside roll by, trying to tune out her younger brother. He made it clear that he hated being confined to a car-seat at his age. As he moped and whined, Grace stared out the window thinking. Once a year the family of four loaded up the van and made the five-and-a-half-hour trip east.

"Father?" she asked, turning.

He glanced up to the rearview mirror. "Yes, Gracie?"

"Why do we have to go to the Sacred Pedestal every year?"

His eye darkened a little. It wasn't the first time she'd asked.

"We don't have to, we get to," he said.

"One day you will understand. Okay?"

He scanned the road before looking back up.

"Now, Gracie, you're not going to create any problems with your curiosity,

are you?"

"No sir," she replied.

He always said it like that, the "s-word." It made curiosity seem like a disorder and Grace was guilty for having it. She clammed up as her brother resumed his protests.

The tour of the enormous facility was long but enjoyable. The keeper was fairly young but well-trained, exhausting his mental treasure chest of history and tradition for nearly an

hour.

"Any questions?" he concluded, with raised eyebrows.

Grace raised her small hand. A moment later her father's larger one came to a firm rest on her shoulder, a reminder of her promise in the sun.

"Yes, dear?"

"What's inside the dirty cube?" She pointed at the Pedestal twenty feet away, secured by a set of thick green-braided rope and two serious-eyed member of the Enclave.

"Ah! Well, my child, to unlock that mystery we would have to first discover the true meaning of the phrase on the outside. For now, we must honor the First Keeper's Principles.

Grace's hand went back up. She felt the squeeze on her shoulder: a little warning. The Keeper sighed, looking first at her father before responding, "Yes dear?"

"What do you mean by 'mystery'? Can't you—" that's as far as she got before her father cut hers off.

"We apologize, Keeper. Please continue."

The young man composed himself, straightening the slight frown on his face.

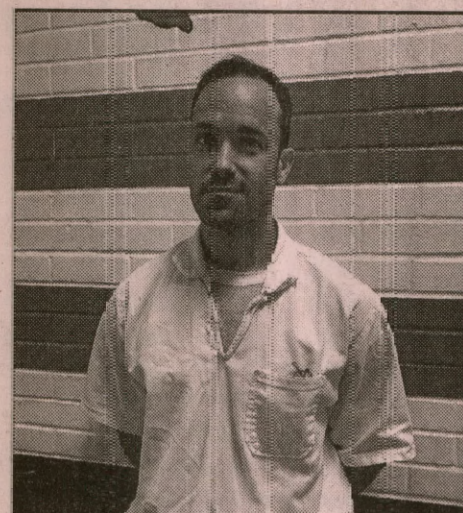
"Thank you. For more information, we offer many fine resources and famous works in our excellent bookstore." A few people clapped as he pressed through the group in a rush, his green robe swishing softly just inches from Grace's cheek. The bright gold Pedestal and Vines embroidered on the front moved out of sight.

Why didn't anyone know what the words meant? Couldn't they read? Grace was amazed. She squinted at the cube, reading the phrase several times.

Without a second thought, she tore



Fiction



J. Butcher

away from her father's grip and ran toward the Pedestal, snatching one of the many gold candlesticks surrounding the relic as she ducked under the ropes. Rearing back, she swung with all she had. A crash like nothing she'd ever heard burst outward as she smashed the filthy cube, scattering moldy green shards flecked with red across the polished granite floor.

Silence—a good two seconds of it passed.

A second explosion of voices and cries tore the air, but Grace wasn't finished yet. She swiped the preserved envelope and sprinted toward the giant doors, dodging a sprawl of arms, legs and robes. Out she fled, directly into the Reserve, the dense and ancient stand of untouched trees revered by countless generations of Keepers. Voices yelled after her, but no one dared follow. Not until they'd consulted the Order.

Gnarled roots and thick vines accosted her with every step until the pain of simply breathing lanced up her side and her legs threatened to give out. She slumped heavily, trying to slow her heartbeat, staring at the envelope.

"Well, I followed the directions."

The red words on the cube couldn't have been more clear to Grace: In Case Of Emergency, Break Glass. She wiped dirt and sap across her shirt to clean her hands before lifting the flap and sliding a stack of papers out of the envelope, curiosity coursing through her like fire.

"If you are reading this, then you've taken the first steps toward becoming a Seeker: courage, humility enough to admit you need help and curiosity. Welcome to my garden. I've been waiting for you..."

Grace paused, smiling, before continuing. ★

► COLONIAL AMERICA continued from pg. 1

No one had imagined what the consequences of malnutrition would be after two months at sea. The food supply was depleting fast, and a cold New England winter was upon them—and with it, a foreshadowing of doom.

Mayflower passengers took to shore at the tip of Cape Cod near present-day Provincetown. However, little fresh water was to be found, so they sailed to Clarke's Island across Cape Cod Bay. Again the site proved inhospitable, which finally led to their landing at Plymouth. In order to get to dry land, they had to wade through almost half a mile of shallow water in cold weather. Mayflower passengers were shocked by what they saw: a vast wilderness full of seemingly strange and sinister creatures. Scouting expeditions were sent out to forage for supplies and identify a site for a permanent settlement, also establishing relations with the Native Americans who inhabited the area. The Native Americans allowed them access to their buried food supplies—but the cost was heavy. The Mayflower passengers had to dig several feet in the frozen ground to reach the buried corn and beans. Afterwards, they had to return to the ship, wading back through frigid waters.

Signs of illness soon appeared, including coughing fits, then chills, followed by burning fever. Scurvy eventually surfaced, and the ravages were horrific, breeding disease and infections amid their cramped and clustered existence. The lack of firewood as colder temperatures crept in worsened the situation.

Meanwhile, the Colonists relied mainly on home cures and folk remedies they often borrowed from African and Native American traditions. Such treatments typically involved the use of bark, herbs and roots that ultimately became quinine, which the colonists used to treat malaria or malaria fever.

Mayflower passengers experienced enormous hardships in the New World. Hunger and sickness killed half of the original settlers during the first year. America did not resemble a utopia anymore, but rather a graveyard. The ship's crew abandoned

the Pilgrims, sailing back to England with tragic losses of their own. The community was riven by conflict, threatening to splinter into fragments. Mutinous speeches abounded, as did looming potential violence with Native Americans.

Yes, these settlers lived conflicted lives: unrelenting racial conflicts, ferocious religious conflicts, conflicts with authority and recurrent conflicts over property rights. Yet they not only survived, they thrived. What began as an experiment in exile with but scant participants, resulted in laying the framework of the future United States of America. Because the Pilgrims landed 400 years ago and produced many generations of huge families, there are said to be 35 million Mayflower descendants.

The early Pilgrims, and less than a decade later, the Puritans, lived in a state of nerve-racking insecurity or expectation of meteorological or virological rebuke. Life was a puzzle to them, always leaving them on edge. A wilderness of unknown enveloped them in this new land, spacious and taut with apprehension and frustration. But through pain, hardship and often great despair they pushed on together, sometimes with nothing but sheer grit and determination.

John Adams, the second president of the United States of America, once said: "The real American Revolution was not the war itself, but the revolution in the hearts and minds of the people, and in the radical change in their principles, opinions, sentiments and affections."

Like our Colonial ancestors (either genetically or metaphorically), we currently find ourselves in a vast wilderness of uncertainty. We are faced with many daunting challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and social and economic upheaval. But no matter what obstacles lay before us, we can rise and surmount the odds together. The American spirit is resilient and adaptable at its core. Our heritage bears the imprint of a traumatic upbringing, yet it is in our DNA to rebound and create a better future on the other side of tragedy. We will not only survive—we will thrive. ★

Source: "Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War," by Nathaniel Philbrick (2006).

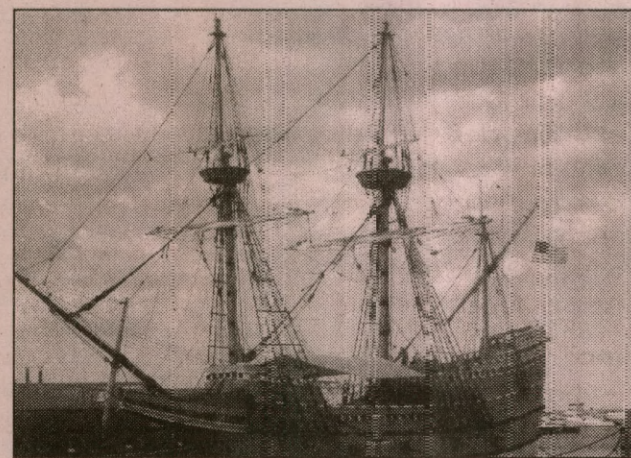
Commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower landing

Celebrating the 399th Thanksgiving Day

- The annual day known as Thanksgiving is a historical, national and—for some—a religious holiday.
- The "First Thanksgiving" was celebrated in the autumn of 1621 by the Mayflower Pilgrims and the Wampanoag tribe, Native Americans living in the area.
- Tisquantum, or "Squanto" as he is historically known, was a Wampanoag Indian that befriended the Mayflower settlers and instructed them in agricultural practices, provided them with corn seed and helped them to survive that first winter.
- Squanto already spoke rudimentary English and basic French when the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth. Long before the settlers arrived, Squanto was captured by barbarous pirates: first by the French, from whom he barely escaped, then by the English, who later set him free. He learned each of their respective languages while in captivity. How and why he returned to New England is something of a mystery.
- In autumn of 1621, Plymouth Governor William Bradford, after a particularly abundant harvest, proclaimed a "celebration feast." Approximately 50 Pilgrims, the survivors of the previous harsh winter, and roughly 90 Wampanoags, dined on wild turkey, waterfowl, venison, lobster, eels and a variety of vegetables and dried fruit.
- General George Washington issued a proclamation of a nationwide day of prayer and thanksgiving on Nov. 26, 1789.
- In the mid-19th century the 1621 Plymouth celebration set a precedent for locally legislated Thanksgiving holidays.
- It wasn't until the late 1850s when Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor of Ladies' Magazine, began a campaign to establish Thanksgiving as a national holiday. Her barrage of epistles to President Abraham Lincoln resulted in Lincoln's proclamation in 1863, designating the holiday on the last Thursday of November.



Plymouth Rock Memorial



Mayflower II. Replica of original.

Uncle Lance's almost-just-like-that-famous-restaurant's tacos

Lance Burress
Huntsville Unit

Ingredients:

2 pkgs. flour tortillas
1 pkg. roast beef
1/3 bag kosher beans
1 pkg. chili no beans
1 chili soup
1/4 bag tortilla chips

Directions:

Drain liquid contents of roast beef and save juice in inset cup. Shred roast beef into fine pieces and add to chili pouch, then install pouch into hot pot and heat approximately 20 minutes. Crush soup and save seasoning for additional Spanish rice. After chili pouch is heated sufficiently, add to soup until very firm (add a little beans if not firm enough). Layout nine tortillas and divide bowl evenly (roughly 1 heaping brown commissary spoonful). Fold tortillas into tacos and insert into rice bag, set into hot pot until hot. Lay out nine additional tortillas. Mix beans with heated juice from roast beef until pliable. Spread beans evenly among tortillas and sprinkle with crushed tortilla chips evenly. Remove first tacos from hot pot and fold onto second layer of tortillas. Ta da! Double-layer tacos!

Strawberry moon pies

Ryle Avery
Middleton Unit

Ingredients:

1 pkg. strawberry cream cookies
1/2 cup powdered milk
1 pkg. cream cheese
1 pkg. strawberry oatmeal
1/4 cup creamer

Directions:

In a bowl, separate cream filling from cookies and set aside. Crush cookies and mix with oatmeal. Add water to make dough. Create 12 medium-sized dough balls. Use bottom of coffee cup to press balls into "cookies". In a separate bowl, mix powdered milk, cookie cream filling, creamer and cream cheese. Add water as necessary to whip into creamy mixture. Spoon this mixture onto one cookie, then place another on top to make a cookie sandwich. Repeat until all cookies are part of a sandwich. Let cookies sit for 20 minutes. Recipe makes about six cookies.

Uncle Lance's Spanish rice

Lance Burress
Huntsville Unit

Ingredients:

1 bag rice
1/3 pickle
1/3 bottle cheese
1 can V8
1 pkg. chili soup seasoning
1/3 pkg. orange sports drink
1/4 bag pork skins, crushed fine
Garlic powder, to taste
Onion powder, to taste
No-salt seasoning, to taste
Ranch dressing, optional
Party mix or corn chips, as topping

Directions:

In a bowl, mix rice and V8; let sit for 1 hour. Add pork skins, seasonings, cheese



and sports drink. Place in an empty chip bag and cook in a hotpot for an additional hour. Pour contents in bowl, top with chips of your choice and drizzle with ranch dressing, if desired. Makes 2 servings.

Jack-O-Lantern cake

Jeffrey Flohertz
Michael Unit

Ingredients:

1 1/2 pkgs. cream cookies
9 pkgs. cream cheese
2 pkgs. powdered milk
30 orange fruit candies (half broken)
1/2 bag hot chocolate

Directions:

Separate 46 cream cookie wafers from the cream, crush wafers, add a little water, Sprite or coffee (your choice) and form into dough. Form the cookie dough into an oval cake crust on an empty, opened chip bag and turn edges up a little. In an empty container, take 6 cream cheese packets and 18 broken fruit candies and combine the. Let mixture sit for about 2 hours so the candy dissolves into the cheese. In a separate container, let 12 fruit candies dissolve into 3 cheese packets. Drain the liquid from the cheese and whip the cheese and the candy together. Mix the 6 cream cheese mixture with the two powdered milks (add a little water, if needed) and pour into crust. Let sit 2 hours. Take the 3 cream cheese mixture and combine with the 46 cookie creams; place on cake. Mix a little water with the hot chocolate to make fudge. Roll fudge and form into triangles for the eyes and nose and make a jagged mouth. Enjoy!

Chicken pot pie supreme

Anonymous

Ingredients:

2 chicken soups, crushed
1 pkg. chicken chili
1 pkg. chunk chicken
1 pkg. saltine crackers, crushed
2 pkgs. Golden round crackers, crushed
1 nacho chips, crushed

Directions:

Heat pouches in hotpot. Cook soup noodles without seasoning packs; drain. Place crushed saltines and 1 sleeve crushed golden round crackers in a bowl; add 1/4 cup hot water and form into a dough; spread dough around bottom and sides bowl to make a crust. Mix soup seasoning packets, chicken chili and chunk chicken with noodles; pour into crust. Mix 1 sleeve crushed golden round crackers with the crushed nacho chips; spread across the top of the chicken pot pie. Enjoy!

SUDOKU

Novice 1

	1		5					7
	2			9	8		4	1
3			4		6			
				6				3
	6	3				4	2	
5			4					
		9		5				2
2	5		3	7			8	
	3				1		6	

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Novice 2

	9					5		3
8		3	5	6				1
5					4		6	
1			7	9				2
	5	9				4	7	
7			4	3				8
	8		9					5
2				4	7	6		9
9	6						8	

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Easy 1

	7		3	6	2			4
6	3	1	5	8				9
						6		
1			2		6			5
	5			7			2	
2			1	9				8
		5						
3			9	1	4	5	2	
7			8	4	5		3	

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Easy 2

			5	1	2		6	
2	5					9	1	
1	7				6		5	8
			8		1			
5	1		3	4		9	6	
		2		6				
9	2		4			8	7	
	4	3					2	1
6		2	7	1				

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Intermediate 1

7	1			6	8			
			2				8	
	3					1		
			5				2	
1		4				8		3
	8			7				
	6					9		
2				6				
			1	9			3	5

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Intermediate 2

				3	4		7	
2		9					5	
			8	5	2			
1		8						
	3				8			
			4				6	
		5	2	4				
3			7				8	
4	6	1						

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Intermediate 3

				7		8	9	
		1	9				5	
7								
	6		3	9			7	
2						4		
7		4	6		2			
						6		
1				4	3			
2	8		5					

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Intermediate 4

1		3		5	4			
	6	3					8	
		7			3		1	
		1		4		7		
5		1			9		2	
	3		9		2			
2	8			3				
						2	3	
		6	5	9			4	

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Tough 1

1								
		4			5			9
			8		1		7	
	6	1						5
9		7		4				3
2					4	9		
	4		5	8				
7		2			3			
								1

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Tough 2

			5		4			
4				9	8			3
	9		3			5		
				2			9	
	8						1	
7		3						
	1		8			3		
3		6	5					2
		2		6				

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Super Tough 1

7								
			2		4	9		
		6			4	7	3	
					9		8	
			6	5	3			
6		1						
1	5	9	3			2		
	6	7		9				
							4	

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Super Tough 2

		5			2			3
		6			9	2	5	
4		7						
3	1			4				
				3			2	1
						1		4
	6	8	9			7		
7			5				8	

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► COVID-19 continued from pg. 1

Social

While COVID-19 *the disease* is a viral puzzle that we and our crossed fingers are confident modern medicine will inevitably solve, the solution to COVID-19 *the social challenge* remains unclear. Our efforts to maneuver this nerve-racking enigma demand constant mental and emotional course-correction. It is alarming to consider how in such a brief timespan the illness has claimed more than 25 million lives across the globe. These kinds of statistics have the instant effect of jolting us into an unwelcomed intimacy with our mortality.

Besides its inherent lethality, mass miscommunication seems to be another of the pandemic's key side-effects. A prime example is how after having been mandated, personal protective equipment (PPE), such as latex gloves, face masks and face shields, was something that the typical citizen did not have on hand and had no clue how to obtain. This often led to confusion and feelings of frustration as the immediate requirement was so far beyond anything we had ever needed for daily life. Now we are somewhat dizzy from playing the head-spinning shell game of figuring out which medicines are or are not effective in treating the symptoms of the illness, and we hold our breaths, caught up in the suspense of watching pharmaceutical companies compete to be first in the race to formulate a vaccine.

All of the above epitomize the so-called new normal. "New normal" is more often than not a euphemism, suggestive wordplay designed to induce a mind frame that enables us to quickly embrace what was perhaps only moments ago considered abnormal. Not being able to shop for groceries without being six feet apart in protective gear is about as abnormal as it gets.

Established COVID-19 prevention practices are nevertheless, a necessary brand of vexation for protecting one's health. However, some people are starting to feel the kind of stress that stems from the burnout of diligently maintaining the protocols of proper handwashing, social distancing, sanitizing surfaces and the prospect of having to continue wearing PPE indefinitely. Regrettably, there are those whose stress is a product of their opinion that these rituals are nonsense. Even with the more than 205,000 lives claimed by COVID-19 in the U.S. to date, some individuals aggressively question whether or not it is an infringement upon their rights to be required to wear a mask before boarding a plane or entering a place of business.

Historical

To be sure our times are uncertain, hectic, and scary. Yet current events aren't as unprecedented or as alien as they might appear. Plagues and pandemics are a scarlet thread that is deeply woven into our history as a species. Many of us have seen illustrations of ancient PPE, the frightening masks with large blank eyes and long beak-like protrusions filled with scented herbs worn by "plague doctors" during England's bubonic plague outbreak of the early 1500s. In more recent history, people in other parts of the world have become much more acquainted with major viral eruptions. China and Africa have had to endure waves of various viral invasions for the past decade, such as the Ebola outbreaks of 2007-2008 in the Democratic Republic of Congo and

China's encounter with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), making their citizens practiced-hands at functioning in a pandemic world.

Until the sudden emergence of COVID-19, we in the United States had been fortunate to evade the brunt of a pandemic. Nonetheless, we have historically been here before. Look no further than the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918. There are numerous parallels between that viral event and what we are experiencing now. Many of the same types of measures were being taken to "flatten the curve".

For example, PPE as a daily fashion necessity is not unique to 2020. There are numerous photos from the 1918 pandemic depicting Red Cross volunteers, city workers police officers and everyday citizens wearing protective gear. The official warning was "Obey the laws and wear a gauze" (referring to a face mask). From this same era, we also have evidence of social distancing, as well as self-quarantining being imposed upon citizens. According to Michael Oldstone, in his book *Viruses, Plagues, & History*:

"All schools were closed and people were required to wear masks (SEE POSTER.) The (1919 Chicago) city's Board of Supervisors ordered the wearing of gauze masks by the entire population. Those who refused to wear a mask (then referred to as "mask slackers") either paid fines or went to jail. On November 21, the sirens in the city shrieked to announce that masks could come off."

And just as we are experiencing upticks in the number of cases after thinking we had things under control, so, too, did our predecessors. Oldstone relays: "...but two weeks later the next wave of influenza began and struck 5,000 in December alone. The wearing of masks again became mandatory. By February, when masks came off for the second time, over 3,500 civilians had died."

This brings us to another unfortunate parallel: staggeringly high death tolls. During the last week of October 1918, more than 21,000 Americans had died from the Spanish Flu. In total, 675,000 Americans perished in the 1918 pandemic. The 1957 H2N2 Asian flu and 1968 H3N2 Hong Kong flu pandemics each caused one million deaths worldwide. From April 2009 to August 2010, over eighteen thousand people were confirmed dead from the H1N1 pandemic, also known as "swine flu", which occurred primarily in Asia.

In short, what should help to diminish our present level of shock and awe is keeping the big picture in mind. A century ago we grappled with a viral pandemic crisis virtually identical to what is transpiring now. Before the 1918 pandemic and between it and coronavirus, there were viral events that were just as bad, if not worse. Outbreaks and pandemics have been a nasty part of the bargain on earth for practically the entire course of our collective life on this planet.

The downside is that we are probably very far from this being the last time we see a lethal virus sweeping across continents. But the good news is that each time our existence has been challenged by a microbial invader, we have found a way to survive. Despite missteps, overlooked warning signals, and a tragic loss of life, as a species we will ultimately overcome COVID-19 and file this horrible chapter away as yet another not-so-new normal episode in the ongoing war between humans and viruses. ★

INFLUENZA

FREQUENTLY COMPLICATED WITH

PNEUMONIA

IS PREVALENT AT THIS TIME THROUGHOUT AMERICA.

THIS THEATRE IS CO-OPERATING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

YOU MUST DO THE SAME

IF YOU HAVE A COLD AND ARE COUGHING AND SNEEZING. DO NOT ENTER THIS THEATRE

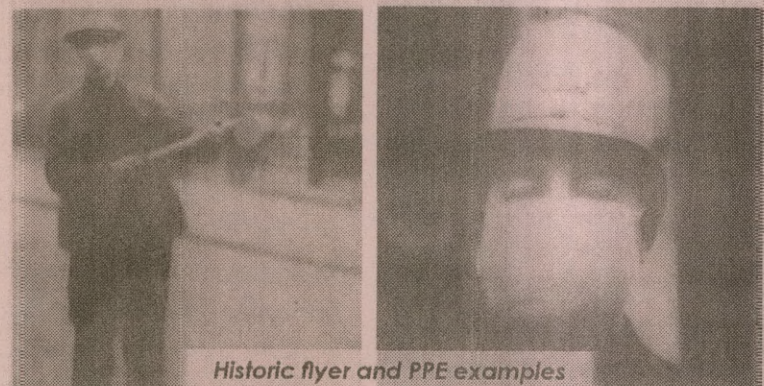
GO HOME AND GO TO BED UNTIL YOU ARE WELL

Coughing, Sneezing or Spitting Will Not Be Permitted In The Theatre. In case you must cough or sneeze, do so in your own handkerchief, and if the coughing or sneezing persists, leave the theatre at once.

This Theatre has agreed to co-operate with the Department Of Health in disseminating the truth about influenza, and thus serve a great educational purpose.

HELP US TO KEEP CHICAGO THE HEALTHIEST CITY IN THE WORLD

JOHN DILL ROBERTSON
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH



Historic flyer and PPE examples

Viral Biology

The Basics

Virus—Viruses consist of two basic components, their genetic material—either RNA or DNA—and a protein coat that protects their genes. They don't have the mechanisms to grow or reproduce on their own; they are dependent on the cells they infect. In fact, viruses *must* infect cell-based lifeforms in order to survive. To maintain itself in nature and to replicate, a virus must undergo a series of steps.

Viruses infect their host cells, whether they are bacterial or human, through the use of a biological lock-and-key system. The protein coat of each virus includes molecular "keys" that match a molecular "lock" (actually called a receptor) on the wall of a targeted host cell. Once the virus's key finds a matching cellular lock, the door to that cell's machinery is opened. The virus then hijacks the machinery of that host cell to grow and propagate itself.

Pandemic—A new infectious agent that has spread to individuals on all continents. In order to be catastrophic a microbe needs both *the potential to harm or to kill* and *the potential to spread*.

Epidemic—also known as an "outbreak", this is when "a disease spreads rapidly through a demographic segment of the human population, such as everyone in a given geographic area, a military base, or everyone of a certain age or sex..."

Super-spreader—A term much used in the news as of late. "A super-spreader is a person or animal (or event) that plays an outsized role in the spread of an infectious disease."

In parting, consider these prophetic thoughts from Nathan Wolfe, author of *The Viral Storm*. Way back in 2011, Wolfe had this to say concerning pandemics: "Unfortunately, the world too easily becomes complacent to threats like H5N1 and H1N1... microbial threats will grow in the coming years in their ability to plague us, kill people, destroy regional economies, and threaten humanity in ways more severe than the worst imaginable volcanoes, hurricanes or earthquakes...whether it's H1N1, SARS or...a completely novel microbe that blindsides us..."

Sources:

Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 8th Edition
Viruses, Plagues, and History, by Michael B.A. Oldstone
The Viral Storm, by Nathan Wolfe

Preparing for inclement weather:

Recognition of cold-related illness, injury

Information provided by TDCJ Risk Management

Frostbite

Not only can wind chill cause a rapid body heat loss, it also can cause frostbite, the freezing of body tissues. Frostbite can occur in 15 minutes or less at wind chill values of 18 below zero or lower. Offenders can be at an increased risk to frostbite because of factors such as exhaustion, hunger and dehydration, which further lower the body's defenses against cold.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a condition occurring when the body loses heat faster than the body can produce it. With the onset of this condition, blood vessels in the skin constrict (i.e., tighten) in an attempt to conserve vital internal body heat, thus affecting the hands and feet first. Hypothermia, the severe or prolonged loss of body heat, begins when a person's body temperature falls below 95 degrees. Because the temperature drop may be gradual, and an early symptom of hypothermia is mental confusion, the victim may not know a problem exists. If one's body continues to lose heat, involuntary shivers begin. This reaction is the body's way to produce more heat and is usually the first real warning sign of hypothermia. Further heat loss produces speech difficulty, forgetfulness, loss of manual dexterity, collapse and finally death.

Some offenders can be at an increased risk to hypothermia if they have predisposing health conditions or take certain medications. Some of these conditions include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, poor physical condition, poor diet, and/or advanced age.

▼ Watch for the following symptoms of frostbite:

- ◆ cold, white and hard skin;
- ◆ pain;
- ◆ itching;
- ◆ loss of feeling in the affected area;
- ◆ spots or blotches on skin;
- ◆ swelling and blistering;
- ◆ skin becomes red and blotchy when warmed; and
- ◆ tissue loss, depending on the severity of the frostbite.

▼ Watch for the following symptoms of hypothermia:

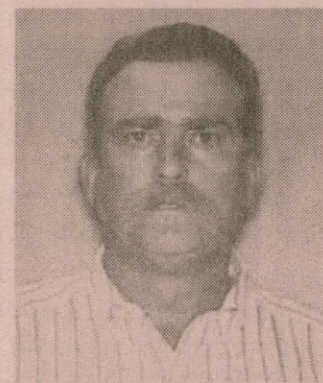
- ◆ confusion;
- ◆ drowsiness;
- ◆ slurred speech;
- ◆ a drop in blood pressure;
- ◆ shallow breathing; and
- ◆ a pinkish tint to the skin.

Report all incidents of cold-related illness to a staff member immediately. ★

CRIME STOPPERS

Missing Person

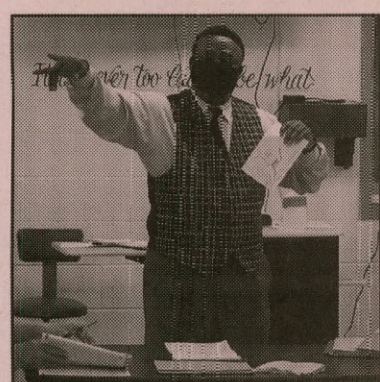
Jack Randal Morris



Missing person Jack Randal Morris was last seen Aug. 12, 2009. The truck he was driving was located south of Bonham, Texas. Foul play is suspected. Morris was wearing a polo type shirt and denim jeans. Born Oct. 15, 1961, Morris is a white male who is 6' tall, weighs 220 lbs., and has brown eyes and brown hair. He has a scar on his right arm and is allergic to chlorine.

If you have any information on this missing person, please contact the TDCJ Crime Stoppers Office at P.O. Box 1855, Huntsville, TX 77342-1855. Crime Stoppers will pay from \$50 to \$1,000 for any information leading to the arrest, filing charges or indictment of a person or persons that committed a felony crime or is a wanted fugitive. Crime Stoppers guarantees your anonymity. ★

► RUSSELL continued from pg. 11



Russell

"From there I began to search for job opportunities in correctional education, and I ran across Windham School District. I applied — and here I am."

Russell brings a vast background in education to WSD. Besides teaching in the above mentioned adult literacy program, he is also a former instructor of anatomy and physiology on the collegiate level. Moreover, he had an extensive career in public school academics. Russell has been teaching practically all of his life.

"I've taught for over 20 years at the middle school and high school levels, and I was also a teacher evaluator at a charter school. I also taught my peers and my brothers and sisters growing up, so I was always teaching."

Russell strives to prepare his students to navigate a threefold challenge: the daunting challenge that re-entering society presents to all ex-offenders; the everyday challenges facing students who are in the correctional setting; and the rather significant challenge of eradicating self-defeating internal mindsets.

"When I taught at the middle and high school levels, it was always at at-risk schools. I find that the attitudes and the behaviors of the students at those at-risk schools and the correctional facility are very similar. When I got here, I could see that for most of the students, it [cor-

rectional education] was a reality check. I can see that they are thinking, 'I missed out; now I understand that education something really valuable that I need.'"

Russell has his own set of challenges as an instructor in this unique environment, and said he must continually devise new strategies to overcome them.

"One of my major tools for teaching that can be used at any time is a game I call 'Speed.' I created a board with squares that are numbered 1 through 100. Each student is given a small piece of paper colored with a marker and

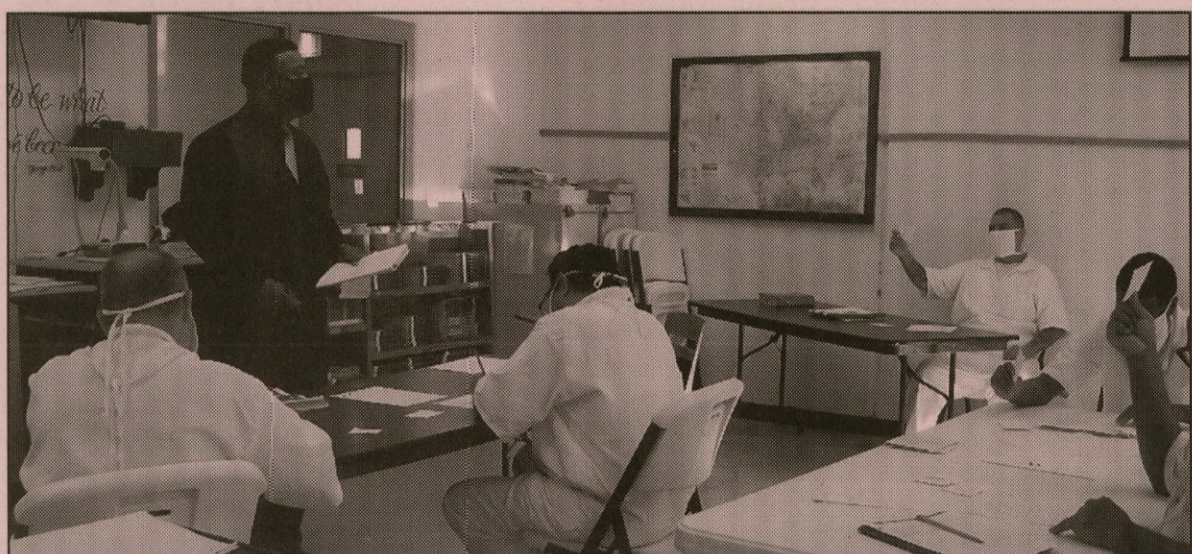
Through resourcefulness and dedication, Russell is able to persuade students to become invested in their own development. When they reach the milestone of achieving their High School Equivalency (HSE) as a result, it is just as gratifying for Russell.

"The last HSE ceremony I attended was such a touching moment for the parents and for the staff. Seeing tears of joy in men's eyes over the fact that they graduated was one of the most sentimental moments I've ever had. But actually, everyday for

carry yourself with integrity, responsibility, respect. Hopefully the knowledge gained in the classroom will prevent my students from returning to a correctional facility," he said.

Like any good educator, Russell is always learning from his pupils even as he imparts knowledge to them.

"Watching the students here deal with living in prison and still show up to get an education is a significant success story in itself. It teaches me the importance of not giving up — and the importance of hope."



Russell instructs students at the Connally Unit.

rolled into a ball that a student advances across the board with each correct answer they provide. The students enjoy racing against each other, so the game keeps them totally engaged."

As someone gifted with creativity, Russell frequently makes use of these kinds of fun, original activities to ensure his students are motivated and enthused about learning.

"I'm very excited about all of my students and what motivates me is seeing them learning and sharing in the joy of them achieving their goals."

me is a rewarding experience just being able to do this kind work in a correctional institution."

A piercing degree of insight allows Russell to recognize the need to fulfill additional roles besides teacher, such as life coach and mentor.

"The most important aspects of correctional education are learning to communicate effectively, learning to be apart of a team, learning to use technology, and carrying oneself as a professional. This is all in keeping with the things that were taught to me: to always

The scholastic equation requires only two elements: someone to learn and someone to teach. Russell is among those who, on behalf of WSD and its students, have answered the call to pour into others and introduce them to a larger sphere of personal growth. Russell realizes the significance of Windham serving a means for incarcerated men and women to get an education.

"Windham provides a pathway to success for the students to follow," Russell said. The moment a student steps into my classroom, learning is their job." ★

HELP WANTED

Manufacturing Agribusiness & Logistics

MA&L Transportation is seeking Outside Trusty workers for the following positions:



Drivers Needed

▼ Skills/Qualifications needed to apply:

- » Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics Freight Transportation is looking for qualified commercial motor vehicle operators to drive at freight terminals located in Snyder, Beeville, Rosharon and Huntsville.
- » At this time, we are in need of commercial motor vehicle operators who have their P-Endorsement or are wanting to obtain their P-Endorsement.
- » This position offers an opportunity to gain marketable job skills. There is a nationwide shortage of truck and bus drivers and this position offers documented driving time and work experience.

▼ Applicants MUST meet the following requirements:

- » Must be classified as an Outside Trusty, G1, only.
- » Have no medical restrictions that limit physical activity
- » Have or have had a valid Class A Commercial Driver's License
- » Have or be able to obtain a Medical Examiner's Certificate
- » Successful completion of the Freight Transportation Road Test
- » Provide consent to be registered and consent to a full query in the Federal Motor Carrier Clearinghouse

If interested, send an I-60 with all experience to:

→ MAL HQ/OWTP/Huntsville

Please, specify position and region of interest.

Experienced Diesel & Industrial Truck Mechanic

(Maintains and repairs all semi-trucks and diesel vehicles)

Snyder Freight Terminal is seeking qualified Outside Trusty offenders for the Daniel Unit in Snyder, Texas

▼ Skills/Qualifications needed to apply:

- » Strong mechanical background desired
- » Knowledge of engines, transmissions, and other components
- » Knowledge of general preventative maintenance
- » Knowledge of general repairs (breaks, seals, cylinders, spark plugs, shocks, filters, etc.)
- » Must be able to understand written and verbal instructions, have basic math skills (add, subtract, multiply and divide).

▼ Applicants MUST meet the following requirements:

- » Must be classified as an Outside Trusty, G1, only.
- » No medical/work restrictions.
- » No major disciplinary within past year.

If interested, send an I-60 with all experience to:

→ MAL HQ/OWTP/Huntsville

Please, specify position and region of interest.

Sudoku Solutions

Novice 1

9	1	4	5	3	6	2	7	8
6	2	5	7	9	8	3	4	1
3	8	7	4	1	2	6	9	5
4	9	1	2	6	7	8	5	3
8	6	3	1	5	9	4	2	7
5	7	2	8	4	3	9	1	6
1	4	9	6	8	5	7	3	2
2	5	6	3	7	4	1	8	9
7	3	8	9	2	1	5	6	4

Novice 2

6	9	4	7	8	1	5	2	3
8	7	3	5	6	2	9	4	1
5	2	1	3	9	4	8	3	7
1	4	8	6	7	9	3	5	2
3	5	9	1	2	8	4	7	6
7	6	2	4	3	5	1	9	8
4	8	7	9	1	6	2	3	5
2	3	5	8	4	7	6	1	9
9	1	6	2	5	3	7	8	4

Easy 1

8	7	9	3	8	2	5	1	4
6	3	1	5	8	4	2	7	9
5	2	4	9	1	7	8	6	3
1	8	7	2	3	6	9	4	5
9	5	6	4	7	8	3	2	1
2	4	3	1	5	9	7	6	8
4	1	5	6	2	3	8	9	7
3	6	8	7	9	1	4	5	2
7	9	2	8	4	5	1	3	6

Easy 2

3	9	8	5	1	2	7	6	4
2	5	6	8	4	7	9	1	3
1	7	4	9	3	6	2	5	8
6	3	9	7	8	5	1	4	2
5	1	7	3	2	4	8	9	6
4	8	2	1	6	9	3	7	5
9	2	1	4	5	3	6	8	7
7	4	3	6	9	8	5	2	1
8	6	5	2	7	1	4	3	9

Intermediate 1

7	1	5	9	8	3	4	2	6
4	6	9	2	1	3	5	8	7
2	3	8	7	4	5	1	6	9
6	9	3	5	8	1	7	2	4
1	7	4	6	2	9	8	5	3
5	8	2	4	3	7	9	1	6
3	5	6	8	7	4	2	9	1
9	2	1	3	5	6	4	7	8
8	4	7	1	9	2	6	3	5

Intermediate 2

5	9	1	6	2	3	4	8	7
2	4	8	9	7	1	6	5	3
3	6	7	4	8	5	2	9	1
1	7	4	8	5	6	9	3	2
6	5	3	7	9	2	8	1	4
8	2	9	3	1	4	5	7	6
7	1	5	2	4	8	3	6	9
9	3	2	5	6	7	1	4	8
4	8	6	1	3	9	7	2	5

Tough 1

1	5	7	3	9	2	8	4	6
8	2	4	6	7	5	1	3	9
6	3	9	8	4	1	5	7	2
4	6	1	9	8	3	7	2	5
9	8	5	7	2	4	6	1	3
2	7	3	1	5	6	4	9	8
3	4	2	5	1	8	9	5	7
7	1	8	2	6	9	3	5	4
5	9	6	4	3	7	2	8	1

Tough 2

6	2	3	7	5	8	4	9	1
4	5	7	1	2	9	8	6	3
1	9	8	4	3	6	2	5	7
5	3	1	8	4	2	6	7	9
2	8	9	6	7	5	3	1	4
7	6	4	3	9	1	5	2	8
9	1	5	2	8	4	7	3	6
3	4	6	5	1	7	9	8	2
8	7	2	9	6	3	1	4	5

Super Tough 1

5	7	4	9	3	1	6	8	2
8	1	3	7	2	6	4	9	5
2	9	6	5	8	4	7	3	1
7	3	5	4	1	2	9	6	8
9	4	8	6	5	3	1	2	7
6	2	1	8	7	9	3	5	4
1	5	9	3	4	8	2	7	6
4	6	7	2	8	5	8	1	3
3	8	2	1	6	7	5	4	9

Super Tough 2

8	5	9	6	7	2	4	1	3
1	3	6	4	8	9	2	5	7
4	2	7	3	5	1	8	9	6
3	1	5	2	4	8	6	7	9
6	7	2	1	9	5	3	4	8
9	8	4	7	3	6	5	2	1
5	9	3	8	2	7	1	6	4
2	6	8	9	1	4	7	3	5
7	4	1	5	6	3	9	8	2

Insane 1

6	5	2	3	4	7	1	8	9
4	3	1	9	8	2	6	7	5
9	7	8	6	5	1	4	2	3
8	4	8	2	3	9	5	1	7
3	2	5	1	7	8	9	4	6
7	1	9	4	8	5	2	3	8
5	9	4	7	2	3	8	6	1
1	6	7	8	9	4	3	5	2
2	8	3	5	1	6	7	9	4

Insane 2

1	8	2	3	9	5	4	6	7
7	6	3	2	4	1	5	9	8
9	5	4	7	6	3	3	2	1
8	2	9	1	5	4	6	7	3
5	4	1	6	3	7	9	8	2
6	3	7	9	8	2	1	4	5
2	9	8	4	1	3	7	5	6
4	1	5	8	7	6	2	3	9
3	7	6	5	2	9	8	1	4

Making A DENT

Jim Dent, Contributing Writer
Polunsky Unit

REGARDLESS OF HOW IT turns out, or when it ends for Cam Newton, he surely deserves a standing ovation from the fans watching from the comfort of their own homes, masks and all. As the physical talents of Tom Brady begin to wither and Drew Brees misses his open receivers, Cam continues to jump over tacklers at the goal line and score touchdowns. He throws his own body around like a human missile wrapped in hard plastic, breaking tackles along the way.

What a difference a little

The resurgence of Cam Newton

time away from football can make. Only a few months ago the talk around the NFL was that Cam was finished. He had missed half of the 2018 season after a shoulder injury required two surgeries. Back in 2018, Pittsburgh's T.J. Watt rocked Newton with a sack that was enough to finish his season. When he returned in 2019, he suffered a broken ankle that put him back on the operating table and finished that season, too.

The Carolina Panthers did not help his stock by canning him last March. Cam's hopes of catching on with another team were put on serous hold when two days later the league shut down operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Knowing that teams couldn't bring him to their facilities for an evaluation, he made his own workout tape. ESPN showed a lot of it and he looked sharp to me. Finally, New England signed

him in late June. The NFL personnel men surely said, "What does Belichick know that we don't know?"

I'll tell you what Belichick knew — that Jared Stidham of Baylor and Auburn, drafted to be the heir apparent to Brady, wasn't up to the task. Belichick also learned that Cam was back to one hundred percent. Cam then blew away Stidham in training camp, leaving only one more question to be answered. Could the free-spirited and quite animated Cam get along with the robot known as Belichick? I answered that question by saying that Belichick can get along with anyone who is talented.

Early in the season, Cam energized the Patriots during a crucial time. The departure of Tom Brady, in my opinion the best player in the history of the NFL, was a blow to team morale. Brady could always bail out the Patriots in

spite of their biggest deficits. Cam now gives his team the same feeling. He brings an important dimension to the offense in that he can burst through a crack in the line and run through tacklers in the secondary.

Cam was finished. He had missed half of the 2018 season after a shoulder injury required two surgeries.

With Cam running freely again, and recklessly at times, his magic has returned. New England looks different with him instead of Brady, but the outcome could eventually become the same. My prediction is he will lead the Patriots this season to the playoffs, but the Super Bowl will have to wait a couple of years. If Cam can stay healthy,

and the pandemic doesn't wreck the 2020 season, the Pats will start to build towards greatness again.

It is time the Patriots invest heavily in the free agent market. Sony Michel and Julian Edelman would work well with an average team like the Houston Texans.

For the Cam Newton era to really click, the Pats will need an elite running back and at least one great wide receiver. Cam did lead a mediocre Carolina offense to the Super Bowl years ago, but time has changed. New England must get past Patrick Mahomes and Lamar Jackson in the 2020s. They need an injection of new talent.

I predicted before the season started that Cam would win the Comeback Player of the Year award. He is back running with the Big Dogs. I have a feeling that life with Belichick is going to work out just fine. ★

Sports View

SW

Will Hill

The opinions expressed in this column are those of sportswriter and fan Will Hill and do not represent official viewpoints of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice or The ECHO.

One of the hot topics of conversation while sports were on their extended hiatus earlier this year centered around whether the championships won in 2020 require an asterisk when/if sports returned. The simple answer from the very beginning, at least from me, was yes. Before anyone is able to get all hot and bothered, allow me to explain. The placement of an asterisk does not invalidate the accomplishment; it simply denotes that there is more to the story. I think that in 20 years' time, the year 2020 is going to require a lot of explaining on many different fronts, including sports. Here is some of my takeaways on the various sports seasons of 2020, some of them completed and a champion named and some still ongoing.

College football

*Just when I started to think that at least some of the actual power brokers in college football—conference commissioners, athletic directors and university presidents—actually might have the best interests of their players in mind they go and prove me wrong like they have so many times before. After postponing their fall sports seasons, the Big 10 and Pac 12 conferences reversed course recently and decided that the pandemic that has claimed more than 200,000 lives in America alone really isn't that big of a deal after all. I'm sure their decision had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that the Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 12 and Southeastern Conference were playing games—and receiving television money.

It is interesting to note that the first conference to postpone its fall sports seasons, the Ivy League, which does not boast multibillion-dollar television rights deals with the major networks is

* 2020, the year of the asterisk *

not returning. Coincidence? I think not. Perhaps the other conferences should take their lead from the smartest people in the room, literally and figuratively.

Major League Baseball (MLB)

*In physics, there is a theory that postulates that we live in only one of an infinite number of multiverses with an equal number of possible realities. Scientists sometimes refer to this as string theory. If this is true, then it is reasonable to assume that there is a universe in which I am an Astros fan—but, it isn't this one.

Although the Astros made their American League Championship Series matchup with the Tampa Bay Rays interesting by winning three consecutive games and forcing a winner-take-all game seven, karma ultimately trumped talent, allowing the Rays to advance to the 2020 World Series against the

I am Cowboys born and Cowboys bred; and when I die, I'll be Cowboys dead.

Los Angeles Dodgers. The victims of the Astros and Boston Red Sox' sign stealing scandals in 2017 and 2018, the Dodgers, demonstrated the hearts of champions to win their own game seven to advance to the fall classic for the third time in four seasons. The organization would go on to defeat the Rays in six games to win the organization's first championship since 1988. Ace starting pitcher Clayton Kershaw, winner of three Cy Young Awards as the best pitcher in the National League, was able to finally add a world championship to his hall of fame resume.

Once again the Rangers fell just short of making the playoffs, and by that I mean they missed it by a country mile; although, their new ballpark made it to the World Series in its rookie season. Playing playoff games in neutral sites just doesn't seem right, but then again what about 2020 seems right?

National Basketball Association (NBA)

*Apparently bubbles work. When the NBA decided to resume their shuttered season they took the added precaution of inviting those teams with a possibility of earning a postseason berth to Disney World in Orlando Florida where they would not have to travel and thereby

lessen their chances of getting or spreading the coronavirus. The NBA played eight regular season games and their entire postseason inside an isolated bubble without one positive test for COVID-19 during the 100 days of isolation. Compare that with the MLB and NFL seasons and the only logical conclusion that one can reach is that isolation works.

*The Los Angeles Lakers survived isolation inside "the bubble" to win the franchise's 17th NBA title tying the Boston Celtics' record for most all time in the NBA. However, the real winner this NBA season were the Golden State Warriors who were so bad the league didn't even invite them to finish out the rest of the season after returning from quarantine. How can that be, you ask? Two reasons: first, the team won the right to the second overall pick in the draft. The team can either use the selection to draft one of the young, dynamic collegiate players such as Obi Toppin or package the pick to another team for a proven veteran player to pair with current stars Steph Curry, Klay Thompson and Draymond Green. Whichever way the team goes moving forward; can anyone really see the management team that put together the roster that made appearances in five consecutive NBA Finals make a total mess out of it? Second, Curry and Thompson, who each were hampered by injuries almost the entire season, have had additional time to recover and should be fully healthy for the start of next season. That may not be good news for the Texas based teams in the Western Conference, such as Dallas, Houston and San Antonio, but it is for Warriors' fans.

National Football League (NFL)

Although the Super Bowl won't be played until February 2021 (hopefully), the bulk of the season will have been played (again, hopefully) during an ongoing pandemic. Here are some random thoughts garnered during the first handful of weeks of the 2020 season.

*Injuries: Through the first five weeks of the season, the biggest storylines are the injuries suffered by some of the sport's biggest stars such as Nick Bosa, Saquon Barkley and Dak Prescott. Football is a rough sport and injuries are an unfortunate part of the game; however, the amount of season-ending injuries suffered in just

the first few weeks of the 2020 season rivals the year-end totals. I am not a doctor although I did play one in my high school drama club's production of "Dr. Cook's Garden." Therefore, I am totally unqualified to speculate on the reason for these injuries—but I'm going to anyway. A lack of organized team activities and with no preseason games (due to coronavirus concerns this season) has hampered players' in properly preparing for the grind of a season.

On a more positive note, the highlight of the season thus far, and probably for the entire season, happened when Alex Smith trotted onto the field for the Washington Football Team. For those who don't know his story; Smith was the team's starting quarterback when he suffered a broken leg in a 2018 game. His rehabilitation included enduring 17 surgeries, and at one time, his doctors' feared that he would have to lose his leg. He persevered, and after Kyle Allen was injured against the Rams, Smith trotted onto the field to a standing ovation from the sparse crowd, especially his wife and three kids who attended. If Smith wanted to provide a ray of sunlight in an otherwise dismal year, he did it.

*Cowboys: The Cowboys are making fans in TDCJ scream harsh words at televisions in dayrooms across the system. Albert Einstein once said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result. If that is true, then I am as loco as a Texans' fan all-amped up on Mountain Dew and Juju beans. Every year I buy into in all of the hype surrounding the Allas Cowboys. No, that is not a typo—that's just what I'm calling the team because they obviously have no D(efense). This season they are so bad that I am considering switching my allegiance to another team—this from a fan who suffered through the disastrous 1-15 season of 1989. My faith back then ultimately proved to be well-founded. This happened when three years after the ignominy of going almost winless for the season, the team won the first of three Super Bowls in a four-year period. Oh, whom am I trying to fool? I am Cowboys born and Cowboys bred; and when I die, I'll be Cowboys dead.

So, yes there will be an asterisk beside the championships won in 2020 and the teams and their fans should embrace it because it designates that their team did something that, hopefully, no other team will ever have to do again—play during a global pandemic. ★

Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman

In 2007, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman was established by the 80th Legislature (Texas Government Code §§501.171-178) and was appointed by the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ). The PREA Ombudsman office was created to provide offenders, family and friends of offenders, and the general public with an independent office to report sexual abuse and sexual harassment occurring in Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) correctional facilities. The PREA Ombudsman also provides a confidential avenue for offenders to report sexual abuse and sexual harassment and ensures impartial resolution of complaints and inquiries related to allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. The PREA Ombudsman reports directly to the TBCJ Chairman and may be contacted at the following address:

PREA Ombudsman
P.O. Box 99
Huntsville, Texas 77342

TDCJ has a "zero tolerance" for all forms of sexual abuse and sexual harassment of offenders. Offenders knowledgeable about offender-on-offender or staff-on-offender sexual abuse or sexual harassment that occurs within a TDCJ correctional facility are encouraged to immediately report the allegation to the facility administration, PREA Ombudsman or the Office of Inspector General. Offenders may remain anonymous upon request.

Acta de Eliminación de Violación en Prisión Ombudsman

En el 2007, el Acta de Eliminación de Violación en Prisión (PREA) Ombudsman fue establecido por la 80a Legislatura (Código de Gobierno de Texas §§501.171-178) y fue nombrado por la Junta de Justicia Criminal de Texas (TBCJ). La oficina PREA Ombudsman fue creada para proporcionar a los ofensores, familia y amigos de ofensores, y al público en general con una oficina independiente para reportar el abuso sexual y el acoso sexual que ocurre en los establecimientos correccionales del Departamento de Justicia Criminal de Texas (TDCJ). El PREA Ombudsman también proporciona una vía confidencial para que los ofensores reporten el abuso sexual y acoso sexual y asegura resolución imparcial de las denuncias y consultas relacionadas con las acusaciones de abuso sexual y acoso sexual. El PREA Ombudsman reporta directamente al presidente de TBCJ y puede ser contactado en la siguiente dirección:

PREA Ombudsman
P.O. Box 99
Huntsville, Texas 77342

El TDCJ tiene una política de "cero tolerancia" para todas las formas de abuso sexual y acoso sexual de ofensores. Ofensores con conocimiento acerca de un abuso sexual o acoso sexual de un ofensor a otro ofensor, o de un empleado a un ofensor que ocurre dentro de un establecimiento correccional de TDCJ se les recomienda hacer inmediatamente la denuncia a la administración de la unidad, PREA Ombudsman o a la Oficina del Inspector General. Los ofensores pueden permanecer anónimos al solicitarlo.