

You can easily judge the character of a man by the way he treats those who can do nothing for him.  
— Goethe

# The ECHO

Texas Prison News

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Published Since 1928

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Distributed Free to Texas Prisoners

## TDCJ Commissary/Trust Fund to offer online purchases for families, friends

The TDCJ Commissary and Trust Fund Department will soon initiate a direct purchase program for friends and family members to allow them to make online purchases for offenders. These purchases will be from the existing product line along with some new packaged items that will be added. Offenders can receive one direct purchase of \$50 or less each calendar quarter. Offenders on commissary restriction will not be eligible to receive commissary items from a direct purchase. This will be accessible through a link on the *Texas.gov* website. The merchandise purchased online will be distributed to the offender from the commissary at their unit of assignment.

To ensure all items are on hand and the orders are filled in a timely manner, TDCJ will offer the top 100 selling items from the previous calendar quarter. The products offered will be periodically updated on the website and will also include any new items added to the product line.

The projected target date for implementation is June 2012.

## Choosing freedom OVER incarceration!

By Jeremy Busby  
Staff writer

When it comes to the choice of being incarcerated or being free, I choose freedom every time. It's what most people would call...a no-brainer! The mere thought of taking a walk in a park, spending quality time with my family or simply going to a movie theater to watch the new Harry Potter film really intrigues me, especially considering the less than desirable alternatives that incarceration offers. Quite frankly, prison is not supposed to be a walk in the park, and it isn't! Nor is it supposed to have any other means of attraction that would make a logical person want to be here. Considering all these glaring realities, why do some

people keep coming back? More importantly, why are there so many prisoners continuing to maintain the same destructive behaviors that led them to TDCJ in the first place? This puzzles me.

After all, the sentiment of selecting freedom over incarceration is not just exclusively held by me. Conversely, this is a sentiment that is held by the vast majority of those who are incarcerated in TDCJ (or at least all of the ones I have spoken to). Everyone is looking forward to being free with their family and friends. So the question I pose here is: *if you want freedom, why not act like it?*

CHOOSING continued on page 16

## Computer classes lead way to future at Jester III



The Windham School District BCIS computer class at the Jester III Unit produced trained graduates: First row: J. Briscoe, A. Charles, Second row: J. Burts, L. Smith, A. Escatiola, M. Marquez, R. Matrinez, Third row: J. Davis, C. Woodruff, E. Williams, R. Childers, J. Trevino, J. Jones, R. Baker, L. Koroma – Windham instructor, L. Willis, Fourth row: D. Martinez, R. Hess, B. Lacy; R. James (not pictured.)

By John E. Christ  
Jester III Unit Reporter

The computer is more than the wave of the future; it is a tsunami. There is hardly an area of modern life that is not affected. Look anywhere and there is someone who is tapping instructions or entering data onto a keypad or keyboard. If you are not acquainted with the basic functions of the computer, you are certainly at a disadvantage. It is hard to imagine a time when it was not ubiquitous. Computer classes are the best way to prepare for the outside world.

The earliest computer, the abacus, was a hand-held device facilitating calculations of numbers in commercial transactions. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that sophisticated mechanical devices appeared to do complex mathematical operations. These devices were hand-operated,

extremely heavy and expensive to make. With the age of vacuum tubes, giant electronic "brains" were constructed to rapidly handle complex calculations and decipher secret codes. Eniac, one of the first vacuum tube computers, was housed in an entire room, produced a tremendous amount of heat and consumed a lot of power.

The advent of the transistor and the push for miniaturization in the U.S./U.S.S.R. space race led to the development of smaller, more efficient computers. IBM developed machines still needing an entire room but far faster and more powerful. These early computers required knowing one of several computer languages, depending on the application.

JESTER III continued on page 6

# The ECHO

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### To the editor,

Thank God for shower shoes! They are designed to protect our feet from the myriad of microbes and other disease-causing substances on our shower floor. It is really worth the time to critically reflect for a moment about what our poor old shower shoes have to wade through every day. All the dirt, loose hair and sloughed off dead-skin cells are washed away with the soap and shampoo we use, ending up swirling away around our shower shoes until it goes down the drain.

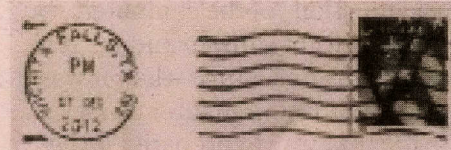
Our shower shoes swim in this “shower soup” on a daily basis. Now think about this. Before someone decides to walk down the hallway with shower shoes in hand or tucked under arm, think about where they’ve been! Before we decide to mark a seat in the dayroom with our shower shoes, think about where they’ve been! The other day I saw shower shoes sitting on the table where we eat and play games! We need to remind ourselves about the places these shoes were wading through before we decide to set them on various surfaces, such as seats, tables and benches. If we think about it for just a minute, it will be easy to conclude that shower shoes belong on the floor.

This is just a thought.

Thank you,  
**Richard Ware  
Wynne Unit**

### To the reader,

*Great observation! Shower shoes have a great function when used as intended. Other uses are maybe not so good.*



### To the editor,

In the years of my incarceration I have learned that inmates often underestimate the power of waiting a situation out. I call this process the “power of the pause.”

The older I’ve gotten, the more I’ve

noticed there’s a great deal of power in the “power of the pause.” More often than not, we make problems worse by rushing to fix them. If we pause, take a deep breath and use the pause to think things out more carefully, we can often find better alternatives than the ones we’re looking at in the heat of the moment.

A thought I always keep in the back of my mind is this: if you are patient in a moment of anger, you will save yourself hundreds of hours of sorrow later. In the past, I’ve sat in “lockdown” freaking out, wondering what negative effects I’ll face from my spontaneous, ill-thought-out actions. Believe me, it’s not worth it!

Thank You,  
**Jeremy McGilurey  
W-6 Trusty Camp**

### To the reader,

*Great advice — for all of us! Thanks for your words of wisdom and thanks for sharing them with *The ECHO*’s readers. Now let’s hope we can all apply them!*



### To the editor,

Your November 2011 issue left the entire right hand column off both the easy and difficult Sudoku puzzles. While I haven’t tried the easy one yet, my answer to the hard one differed from what you reported, possibly as you had numbers in the last column and your answer key had these numbers, while ours does not. Anyway, my results differed. I wouldn’t want anyone to mistakenly believe your printed answer was the only one possible, as it is not.

Sincerely,  
**Diana Dial  
Crain Unit**

### To the reader,

*A production error omitted the last column of both the easy and difficult Sudoku in the November, 2011, issue. The answers to those puzzles reflected the information given in the last column. You are correct that there is more than one correct answer with the last column missing — without the correct*

*information, one can achieve different results. However, when all the columns are present, there is only one correct solution to a Sudoku puzzle. Thank you for bringing the omission to our attention.*

MUNCIE IN 473

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### To the editor,

Greetings: The Nov. 2011 issue of *The ECHO* was a most informative issue. Thank you for a job well done. I wish to comment on a couple of articles.

First, the article entitled “Prison environment can be changed by offenders” (pg. 15) by Mr. Vernon Mooney on the Bill Clements Unit should be registered as a “classic.” His vision is filled with the wisdom of the ages; his ideas are profound and he makes us stop to think on the real possibility of prison life.

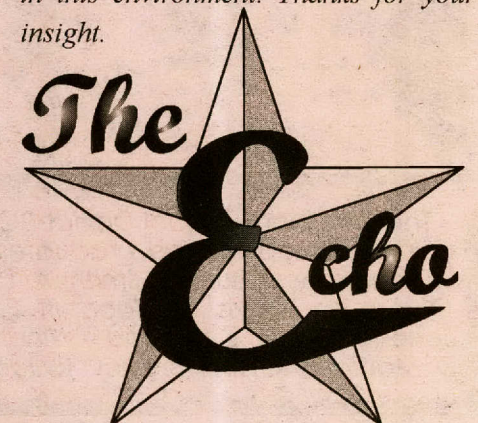
Secondly, Jeremy Busby’s article entitled “Libraries are made for visitors” (pg. 8) was also a hit! We continue to do what we always have done and expect a different outcome. If you truly want to change, you must educate yourself. The unit library has plenty of information that can enrich your level of knowledge and help change your life.

Finally, I want to say there is a better future for all of us, if we’ll just reach for it.

Sincerely,  
**Joseph T. Bambeck  
Allred Unit**

### To the Reader,

*Thanks for your response regarding the articles. It’s our intention to always publish articles that can make a difference. Your response to both of them indicate that you agree and understand that personal change is a requirement in this environment. Thanks for your insight.*



**Dear Darby,**

Ol'thang, how's it going? This is mainly in response to an earlier letter from Mr. George Torres. The inherent negativity of this environment tends to weigh on even the strongest of minds. After over 18 years in here, with almost as much left to go, I know it well.

How to stimulate our minds? Make things seem "worth it" again? All activity starts in the mind, regardless of the end result. The battle begins in your mind. Every unit has a unit library. Every library has a non-fiction section. Every non-fiction section has titles on stimulating your mind, increasing your consciousness and expanding your creativity. Look in the book index for these books using keywords such as: creativity, psychotherapy and mentality as well as any similar topics. Every library is different, with different titles and authors. If you are confined in ad seg, check with the unit's librarian about checking out a shelf list. The key to staying strong in this environment is not just to stay busy. You have to stay busy doing different things, because routine can be the enemy in this place, where options are limited, and doing the "same thing" leads to mental stagnation and deterioration. The mind requires stimulation to work at peak capacity.

"Self is the only prison that can ever bind the soul"—Henry Van Dyke. The choice is yours. Only you can decide whether you'll put the "pro" in "proactive." Always reach high and never be satisfied with the status quo.

Sincerely,  
**Joseph Fritz**  
Allred Unit

**Dear Joseph,**

Great advice! The library is loaded with books that stimulate the brain. Each library has a card catalog, where books are listed by subject, title and author. It is good to read books on the topics that you wrote in your letter, but books on any positive topics are good. Changing the type of material that you read is a part of the "shifting your patterns" that you spoke about. It would be wise for people like George to read some good fiction, occasionally. The library is the exercise room for our brain. Even the ol'thang has managed to stay mentally fit by visiting it from time to time.

**Dear Darby,**

Well, it has been almost 30 years since I began my life in TDCJ, and I have finally picked up my pen to write to the great, all-knowing Darbster. Never thought it would happen, but then again I never thought I would see the Texas Rangers in the World Series either.

I want to start by saying that this column is the first thing I read when I happen upon an ECHO. That's not kissing-up, just a fact. This and the letters to the editor are about the only things I read with any consistency. And that is my gripe or complaint if you want to call it one.

Some of us just do not care about poetry—inmate or otherwise. I would rather read about "code 20s" (or unregistered sex offenders as one of my pals calls them) or about "Johnny sacks" and the definition of "convict" than about someone's ideas regarding "hope" or "change." Give me a break!

Just wanted to vent, and I will continue to read your words of wisdom in the future. Keep 'em coming.

**Brent McLean**  
Estes Unit

**Dear Brent,**

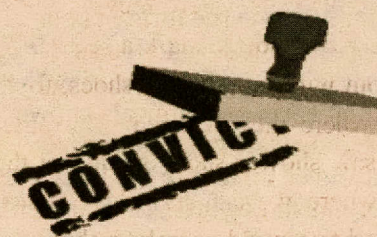
Your comments intrigued me. One in particular cries out for a response. You seemed to imply that things like "hope" and "change" were bad things. I can't help but wonder what this organization would be like today if a guy named David Ruiz hadn't once hoped for change. I doubt that any serious advances in prison reform were ever brought about by a bunch of people sitting around pondering "Johnny sacks" and "Code 20s".

I fully understand that everything in *The ECHO* is not enjoyed by every reader. There are some, however, who do enjoy the poetry. The myriad of offenders who submit their poems, for instance, probably find the poetry section quite enjoyable.

Alas, *The ECHO* will probably not be featuring articles about Code 20s for some time to come. Nor will it likely

include pieces that address that all-too-popular question of whether it is nobler to be called a convict or an inmate. (Seriously, don't you think that dead horse has been beaten enough?) What is likely, though, is that you will continue to see articles that speak of hope and change. But here's the thing. Wouldn't TDCJ be a better place if, instead of so many "unregistered sex offenders", we had more advocates for hope and change?

Here's how I see it, Brent. Change is inevitable. And, if it's a change for the better, it's a good thing. The men and women who write the articles about change are hoping for a better life. Those who feel that such writings have no place in a prison newspaper... well, maybe they need to be reading them more than anyone else. We appreciate you writing *The ECHO* with your opinions.

**Dear Darby,**

I'm writing to you and the male readers for advice. I've heard time and again how men don't put up with the stuff that we female offenders do. Here's the deal, Darby. We are supposed to have 20 minutes in the chow hall. This includes the time we are made to wait in line. Well, here at my unit, we're lucky if we get 15 minutes. You might think it's petty to fuss over five minutes, but after waiting in line for up to 10 minutes, we're looking at five minutes or less to eat. Well, I've got this bad habit of chewing my food, so by the time I'm getting booted out of the chow hall, I've eaten only half of my meal. I'm still hungry, and the stress cannot be good for digestion.

So, Darby, maybe if the guys gave us some advice regarding this situation, we could all get off the pink pill and actually eat a whole meal.

**Anonymous**  
Crain Unit

**Dear Jill,**

They say the grass is always greener

**DEAR DARBY**  
**LETTERS TO THE OL' THANG**

on the other side of the fence. Just so you know, here's what the other side of that fence looks like. On my unit, we are released from the chow hall one row at a time. It is not uncommon, though, for us to sit waiting to be released for 15 or 20 minutes after we finish eating. And, as someone who can comfortably polish off a meal in 3 to 5 minutes, a 20-minute wait is a major inconvenience. But it's a fact of life here.

I'm not trying to diminish your problem in any way. I fully understand that most normal people do things like chew their food. And, while I cannot empathize (because I personally tend to simply inhale my food in the chow hall and chew it later), I certainly sympathize with your plight. Now, I could teach you about the finer points of rapid ingestion, but that might make me sound crass. So instead, I'll simply point out that your plight is shared by others.

I do have some advice, though, for those who, like me, are made to sit and wait to be released. It helps if you always have something to read in your pocket. I like to carry one of those pocket-sized New Testaments. If, however, you're not into that sort of thing, there's always *The ECHO*. They fold up well.

**Dear Darby,**

I think that hurricanes are manmade. Why? Because after hurricanes Katrina and Ike, they haven't allowed another hurricane to hit the East Coast of the United States. Especially because people haven't recovered completely from the damages caused by Ike.

I also noticed that they had predicted two hurricanes long beforehand.

DARBY continued on page 15



# VITAMINS DEMYSTIFIED

By William Chaplar  
Released

Perhaps one of the biggest dietary questions in America today is whether it is necessary to take vitamin supplements. One possible reason that this is such a quandary is that too many Americans do not really know what vitamins are. To assist ECHO readers in this nutritional inquiry, here are a few vitamin facts.

Vitamins trigger thousands of chemical reactions necessary to maintain good health. Many of these chemical reactions are linked, with one triggering another. If there is a missing or deficient vitamin anywhere in the chain, the process can break down. This is *not* a good thing. A breakdown in one of these processes can lead to serious health problems. For example, vitamin C is important in maintaining our teeth and bones. Scurvy, a disorder that attacks the gums, skin and muscles, occurs in the absence of vitamin C. Those of you who are of the belief that our diet in here is devoid of vitamins might ask yourself when was the last time you saw an offender who suffered from scurvy. I digress.

Among the many functions of vitamins is the enhancement of the body's use of carbohydrates, proteins and fats. They are also central to the formation of blood cells, hormones, nervous system chemicals known as neurotransmitters and DNA. I've often heard people speak of taking vitamins just before a workout because they provide them with extra energy. While this is probably an oversimplification, it does have a foundation in fact. You see, if vitamins enhance the body's use of carbohydrates and fats, which are the primary sources of energy, then it seems only logical that if one's diet includes the necessary quantities of vitamins, energy levels will remain high. That is assuming that one's diet includes an adequate level of carbohydrates and fats.

Vitamins are classified into two groups: fat-soluble and water-soluble. Fat-soluble vitamins include vitamins A, D, E and K and are usually absorbed with the help of foods that contain fat. Excess amounts of fat-soluble vitamins are stored in the body's fat, liver and kidneys. Because these vitamins can be stored in the body, they do not need to be consumed every day. It is important

to note that, because these vitamins can be stored, there is the potential for overdose. Excessive consumption can cause vitamin poisoning, kidney damage, lethargy and loss of appetite.

Water-soluble vitamins, which include vitamins C (also known as ascorbic acid), B<sub>1</sub> (thiamine), B<sub>2</sub> (riboflavin), B<sub>3</sub> (niacin), B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>12</sub> and folic acid, cannot be stored and rapidly leave the body in urine if taken in greater quantities than the body can use. For those who don't know, taking vitamin supplements often cause urinary output to be bright yellow. This is nothing to be alarmed about. It's merely the body getting rid of unnecessary water-soluble vitamins. Something vitamin takers might want to consider is the fact that the brighter your urine, the more money you are flushing down the drain. But again, I digress!

Vitamins A (in the form of beta-carotene), C and E function as antioxidants, vital in countering the potential harm of chemicals known as free radicals. Free radicals can transform chemicals in the body into cancer-causing agents. Environmental pollutants, such as cigarette smoke, are sources of free radicals.

As alluded to earlier, there are those in the penitentiary who believe food served in the chow hall is totally devoid of vitamins. For these skeptics, I have included a list of common sources of the most important vitamins. You might recognize some of these foods as being common in here.

**Vitamin A** - milk, cheese, egg yolk, spinach, sweet potatoes, carrots, squash.

**Vitamin B<sub>1</sub>** (thiamine) - dry beans, peas, enriched cereals, bread, pasta, eggs, most vegetables.

**Vitamin B<sub>2</sub>** (riboflavin) - milk, cheese, lean meat, green leafy vegetables, eggs, bread, cereals.

**Vitamin B<sub>3</sub>** (niacin) - poultry, meat, tuna, whole grains, dried beans, peas.

**Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>** - whole grains, spinach, green beans.

**Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>** - meat, milk, eggs, fish.

**Vitamin D** - egg yolk, tuna, milk, (sunshine).

**Vitamin E** - leafy, green vegetables, vegetable oils.

**Vitamin K** - leafy, green vegetables, egg yolks, soybean oil.

A quick glance at this list of vitamin sources will show even the most

cynical offender that the food in here contains the vitamins necessary to promote good health. Those who choose to skip 10 or more chow hall meals a week may need to get their recommended daily allowance of these vitamins through supplements. Since you're probably skipping all of those meals because you eat out of your locker, then you likely have access to the vitamin supplements available at the commissary. Again, don't panic over the bright yellow urine.

A warning to those of you who take vitamin supplements. Dark yellow urine may have nothing to do with elimination of excess vitamins and everything to do with dehydration. This discoloration should be a

signal that it's time to drink water. If you dismiss it as simply being the elimination of excess vitamins, you could fall victim to a heat injury. Something the medics used to tell us in the army whenever we went on field training exercises was that we might want to curtail our vitamin supplementation while we were in the field, lest we mistake dehydration for vitamin elimination.

Hopefully, enough information has been provided for readers to make the right choice about vitamins. What is the right choice? It's simple. Just eat a balanced diet. More importantly, though, stop falling prey to the institutionalized belief that there's no such thing as a balanced diet in prison!

## Alzheimer's needs early detection

Staff Writer  
Jeremy Busby

When Pat Summitt, the all-time leader in college basketball wins, revealed to the world that she had early onset dementia, everyone was shocked! How could someone so young, so vibrant, so beautiful have early onset dementia, Alzheimer's type? Isn't this supposed to be an "old folks" disease?

While the news of Coach Summitt's Alzheimer's diagnosis is surprising to some, medical scientists were not at all caught off guard. In fact, medical researchers have discovered that early onset dementia can affect people who are younger than 65, like Coach Summitt. Symptoms from the disease can often appear as early as one's 20s. A rare, inherited disease, early onset dementia only accounts for about five percent of all people who suffer from dementia, according to the *Mayo Clinic* in Rochester, Minn. Incurable, like other Alzheimer's diseases, early onset dementia may be treatable if it is detected in its early stages.

Alzheimer's researchers have looked for ways to detect the disease while still in the pre-dementia stage. Research has shown that if the disease is detected in this stage, Alzheimer's patients can treat the disease with various pharmaceutical

therapies prior to the disease having a damaging effect on the brain. This way patients can live a healthier life while functioning on a high level as they make plans for their futures.

Alzheimer's disease experts have discovered a new brain scanning technique that can identify some of the hidden signs of the disease decades before symptoms appear. Using these new brain scanning technologies, doctors can recognize the substances in the brain which are indicators for Alzheimer's before they begin to contribute to the death of brain cells.

Some of the early symptoms of Alzheimer's include memory loss, erratic behavior, poor judgment and personality change. Untreated, the average mortality from diagnosis to death with Coach Summitt's disease is seven to nine years. However, since her disease was detected early, time of survival may be extended. The most important aspect of detection is to identify the disease before it begins to damage the brain. Medical experts are excited about the decision that Coach Summitt made to go public with her diagnosis. It's their hope that others will understand the significance in getting treatment early.

Resources: *USA Today*, August 24, 2011, Sports, pg. C-1; *Health and Living*, August 2011, pg. 14.

**AGENCY INFO — POLICY UPDATES — LEGAL NEWS**

**Prison thoughts:  
intellectual evolution  
vs.  
education**

*By Rick Pearson  
Michael Unit*

Over the years I have been incarcerated I have been disappointed and dismayed by the extreme intellectual devolution that seems to be pandemic here within the prison system. I was especially alarmed when I realized that I, too, had become entangled in the slang/prisonese. So entangled in it, that my vocabulary had regressed to grade school level. My entire speech had devolved. Naturally, I began to consider how the mental/verbal degradation contributes to the recidivism rate, and I have arrived at the perfectly logical conclusion.

Illiteracy and intellectual cognition stagnation directly influence the population growth in prison.

What confounds me is the cognitive dissonance I see — we profess aspirations of greatness, yet we continually engage in activities and thought processes which clearly contradict those aspirations. In fact, they pull us further away from where we say we want to be. One cannot become a success through inconsistency and regression.

If we truly have a desire to become better individuals then we must actively strive for that. The proper concept of living a 'fulfilling' life seems lost on many of us. Considering the fact that self-indulgence, hedonism, heathenism and instant gratification have ruled some of us so completely for so long I suppose that the state of things today is no big surprise. Many of us exhibit habits in opposition

to productivity here within the system, and also to success upon release.

That brings us back to recidivism. How can we expect to better ourselves and be successful if all we do while incarcerated is watch soap operas? No one can dispute the fact that prisoners generally have very fertile imaginations, but surely this notion that we can somehow be better people without trying beats all! It has been said that those with the most fertile minds often seem to have the most personal problems, so maybe that explains

it. I would say, however, that fertile minds—much like fertile lands—have to be tended and nurtured in order to realize their benefits. An untended

garden soon finds the plants choked by weeds and destroyed by insects.

An untended mind languishes, then regresses and that regression will always lead to wrong thoughts and wrong choices. If intellectual growth is truly a priority, then we need to use our time productively and take advantage of the educational opportunities offered to us via the Windham School District. We all have access to the libraries in one form or another, so no one has an excuse as to why they cannot immediately begin to improve themselves. Anything you learn now that is of a positive nature will prove to be beneficial to you at some point in your life.

I will never again lower myself to the next person's level—I will always, hereafter, compel them to rise to mine. Do the same. Live honorably. *ε*

***Devolution: a retrograde evolution***

**Scholarship fund seeking offender donations**

*Staff Report*

Donations to this fund should be forwarded to:

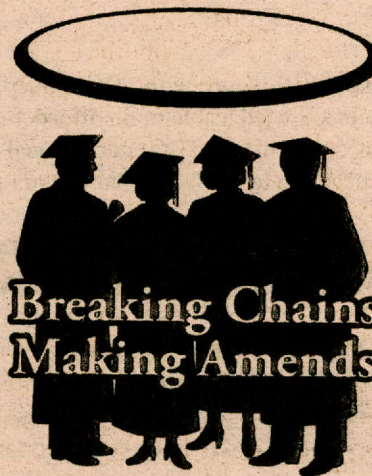
**Breaking Chains—  
Making Amends  
Scholarship Foundation  
P.O. Box 10769  
Huntsville, TX**

77340

-Or-

**Breaking Chains—  
Making Amends  
Scholarship Foundation  
1211 Financial Plaza  
Huntsville, TX**

77340



The Breaking Chains-Making Amends Scholarship Foundation is actively seeking donations from offenders and others to provide scholarships to children and grandchildren of offenders currently or previously confined in TDCJ, as well as children and grandchildren of crime victims. Donations received from offenders and others will help break the cycle of crime by giving children hope for the future through the promise of higher education.

Offenders confined within a TDCJ prison can donate to the Breaking Chains-Making Amends Scholarship Foundation through their trust fund. Offenders must fill out two I-25s, have a stamped envelope addressed to P.O. Box 10769, Huntsville, Texas 77340 and an I-60 or any sheet of paper stating the purpose of the withdrawal in order to make a donation. This must be processed by the unit trust fund officer. *ε*

**Darrington Seminary requirement cancelled**

The ECHO's December 2011/January 2012 edition contained an article entitled "Seminary program begins on Darrington," with a list of requirements for admission. The last item on the list, "Offender must have earned the 'Certificate in Biblical Studies', the seminary's prequalifying curriculum, and have obtained the recommendation of the instructor prior to final admission," is NO LONGER REQUIRED.

The next group of applications will be taken in July and August, 2012. For questions, please contact:

**The Darrington Bible College Director  
59 Darrington Road  
Rosharon, TX 77583**

The ECHO apologizes for any inconvenience this may have caused. *ε*

## Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) 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 provides offenders, family and friends of offenders and the general public an independent office to report sexual assaults occurring in Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) correctional facilities, and to ensure the impartial resolution of complaints of allegations of sexual assault. 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**

Due to the serious nature of sexual assaults, and in accordance with TDCJ policy on "Zero-Tolerance" against sexual assaults, offenders knowledgeable of an offender-on-offender or staff-on-offender sexual assault that occurs within a TDCJ correctional facility are encouraged to immediately report the allegation to the facility administration or the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

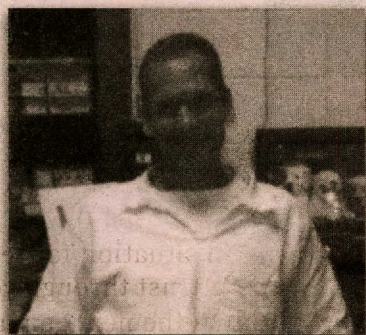
JESTER III continued from page 1

A program was punched onto cards which were then input into the computer, a process taking a considerable length of time. Any program errors resulted in having to repeat the process until the problem was fixed.

The development of smaller desk-top models started initially as a hobbyist endeavor until the first mass-produced machines appeared. Apple and IBM sold two different operating systems incompatible with each other. Both systems had its advantages and ardent advocates.

The popularity of the PC soared, resulting in the acclamation by *TIME* magazine on its cover in 1980 as "Machine of the Year." With the continued development of ever-increasing computer power, both memory and speed, there was an explosion of applications. Everything from music, cell phones, the internet, household appliances, cars and GPS incorporated elements of the computer. The keyboard became omnipresent.

Just as books led to literacy with the advent of printing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the computer has led the way to a new wave of technological literacy in this, the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To compete successfully and utilize the new devices, certain fundamental computer skills are necessary to every adult.



The Jester III Unit's Windham School District BCIS program can boast of offender Jerry Herring as one of the first students in the system to ever pass all four certification exams offered in Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access.

The BCIS (Business Computer Information Systems) course offered by Windham School District at the Jester III Unit covers basic Windows operations along with Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access and Visual Basic in over 600 hours of hands-on instruction with comprehensive text and lectures. For those who are unfamiliar with the keyboard, a typing tutorial is available. Each class is structured so that every student progresses at his own pace. Individual progress is evaluated at the end of each

section. Two PowerPoint presentations are given by each student after completion of the 600-hour course. At the end of the course, everyone should have at least a basic competency that will be useful in the growing complexity of computer applications in the free world.

In addition to a basic level of computer literacy, the Windham BCIS course offers students access to Microsoft Industry Certification, a globally recognized certification, entitled: Microsoft Certified Application Specialist—MCAS.

Certification, once acquired, gives the Windham graduate a true advantage when he returns to the freeworld work force.

*WSD's BCIS course is also offered at eight other units. Send an I-60 to your unit education counselor for more information.*

## Stiles offenders rejoice during Kairos

By Charles A. Redd  
 Stiles Unit

The Stiles Kairos members and care persons enjoyed a day together at a semi-annual retreat. Approximately 30 Kairos care persons who regularly engage with offenders at the Stiles Unit came and about 130-140 offenders attended. Almost all active members were present.

The retreat consisted of several talks on different Christian subjects. The room was divided up into different groups with one or two care people in each group. After each subject was taught, each group would discuss the subject among themselves. Offenders would pair off and

discuss how it affected them now.

The care persons had the opportunity to share a lunchtime meal with the offenders.

"After lunch we went back to our talks and some wonderful singing. I love those Kairos songs. At the end of the talks we had a question and answer period where we were allowed to ask a panel of care persons some religious questions," said a participant. "It was a wonderful day."

The Kairos personnel thank Warden Rich and his staff for allowing participation in this retreat, and thank his officers for conducting security for this event.

## Goree trusty camp holds track and field event

By Kolade Adeyanju  
 Goree Unit Reporter

The Goree Unit recently held its first track and field meet at the trusty camp. The weather was perfect for the event, which allowed for a huge turnout.

The winner of the 100-meter dash was Anthony Joseph. Placing first in the 4 x 100 meter relay was the team made up of Donte King, Cameron Jones, Fitzgerald and Anthony Joseph. First place in the 4 x 400 meter went to the team comprised of Charles West, Richard Pinkard, Robert Nuncio and David Oldham. Robert Nuncio also went on to take first place in the mile run. The softball-throw champ was Christopher Williams.

In the less-than-conventional-event category, the horseshoe toss champion was Brice Daniels. First place in the "big-man" dash went to Michael Johnson. There was even an event for the injured—the "bad-knee" 100-meter dash—which was won by Bobby Prelow. A concession was even made for the "old-school" offenders. The winner of all of the events in the over-40 category was Jeffery Burton.

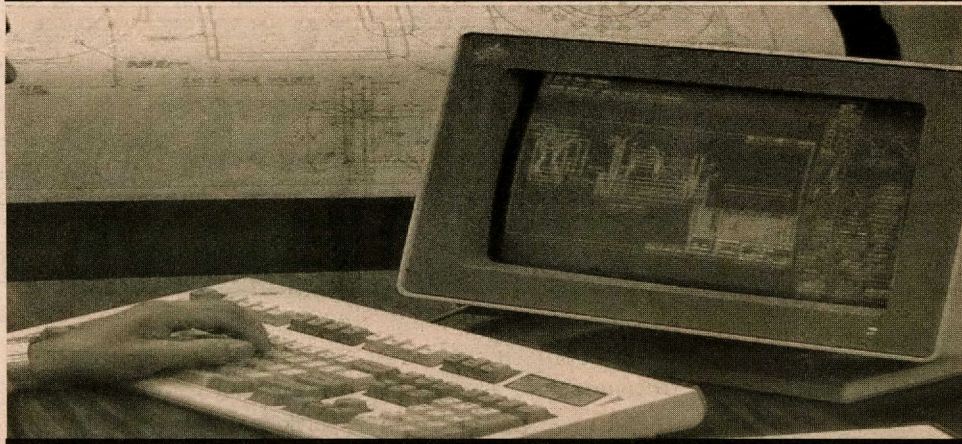
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Difficult



## Job of the month: Accounting Clerk

By Kevin Hargrove - Polunsky Unit

**Job Title:** Accounting Clerk

**Department:** Box factory, Texas Correctional Industries (TCI)

**Offender:** Eric Corley, age 38, incarcerated 17 years

**How did you get this job?**

I sent an I-60 to Warden Simmons with a copy of my college transcripts, explaining I previously worked in the law library on the McConnell Unit in 2001. I have a bachelor's degree in business management and an associate's degree in computer information systems.

**What kind of work do you do?**

The work I do entails processing work orders, preparing monthly reports, performing inventory control, verifying deliveries and following basic accounting principals.

**What benefits do you feel you get from your job?**

The benefits of this job include the OJT Certificate, the work experience and the ability to use my imagination in solving whatever work-related problems arise. The work experience gained through working at any of the TCI facilities is transferable to the free world through the Texas Workforce Commission. Every position in each industry has an occupational on-the-job training program.

**How would someone go about getting a job like this or receive the training**

**to do this work?**

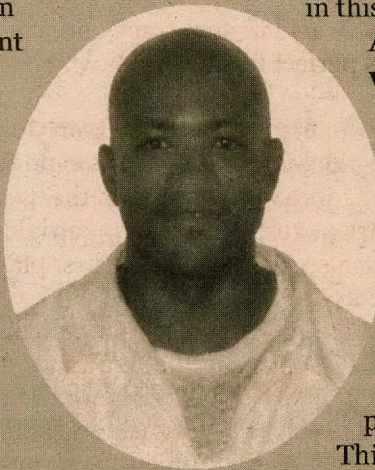
If someone has an interest in this job, they should send an I-60 to the Box Factory Plant Manager or to the TCI headquarters office in Huntsville expressing interest in this type of job. Education is very helpful in this field — classroom or self-educated. The on-the-job training gives one the hands on experience needed to be proficient in this occupation.

**Anything more you would like to say in favor of this job opportunity?**

The most important aspect about this job is having the ability to interact and communicate with people and using your problem solving skills.

This position interacts with just about every person in the factory and sometimes with customers who may have problems. If business problems do arise, a classroom setting won't help solve the problem. Experience in knowing the business process can assist with problem solving, as well as enlisting ideas from every person at work can help solve problems, too. There is no "I" in team! I can't do my job without the assistance of every clerk in the box factory.

*Author's note: The Polunsky Unit operates the only box factory in the State of Texas that uses offender labor to produce products for multiple state agencies. This box factory produces approximately one million items annually.*



## Computer Recovery facilitates Win-win at the Wynne

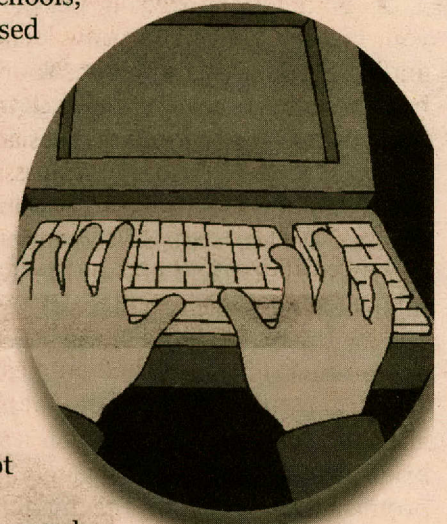
By Michael Linton  
Wynne Unit

This program is truly a win-win situation for everyone involved. It occurs in an unusual place, which is appropriately named Wynne. The program is Wynne Computer Recovery, and it's a program where public entities; universities, public schools, cities, counties and state agencies donate used computers and equipment. The equipment is rigorously tested. If it's unusable, it is recycled in an environmentally friendly manner. If this was all the program was, it would be a plus because used equipment contains lead or mercury.

However, there is much more to this program than the aforementioned. Reusable equipment is cleaned, sent through extensive testing, then given back to schools, free of charge, saving school districts public tax dollars. Many school districts receive computers they could not otherwise afford.

The Wynne Unit in Huntsville is a state penal institution and the work is performed by incarcerated offenders, who take great pride in their jobs and having the opportunity to give back to their communities. The offenders are learning skills, which can be utilized upon their release.

This program truly is a win-win situation for teaching needed work skills to offenders, building trust through community service, saving public tax dollars, enabling the next generation to learn computer skills previously unavailable, and teaching environmental safety through action.



## We have no choice

By Tommy Preston - Ellis Unit

To rebuild or repair—that was the question. Most of us have thought briefly about what we really needed to do to improve our lives. Some have thought that they only needed to repair their lives. But many of us have made the conscience decision to rebuild our lives. In any event, we have chosen our fates with the understanding that it could be our last chance to make it in this world.

To rebuild our lives we must go through a process that will require patience to allow everything to come together. Just think about how long you have waited for the parole board to allow you the opportunity to be released back into society. If you can wait that long, living around unfamiliar faces and in uncomfortable places, then surely you can go through this process.

Weighing out the positive and negative aspects of the rest of your life should undoubtedly disincite you toward anything negative.

Knowing you have no more choices from your old life allows you the ability to burn the bridges to that life with a big smile. After you receive your opportunity to live and breathe again, you will have to go through a metamorphosis. You must be patient.

It's time for you to stop crying and whining. Get it together and stop blinding your future with those self pity tears. Open your eyes. You are mainly hurting yourself. Negative actions will only result in continuous heartaches and pains. You must have a strong foundation to build upon.

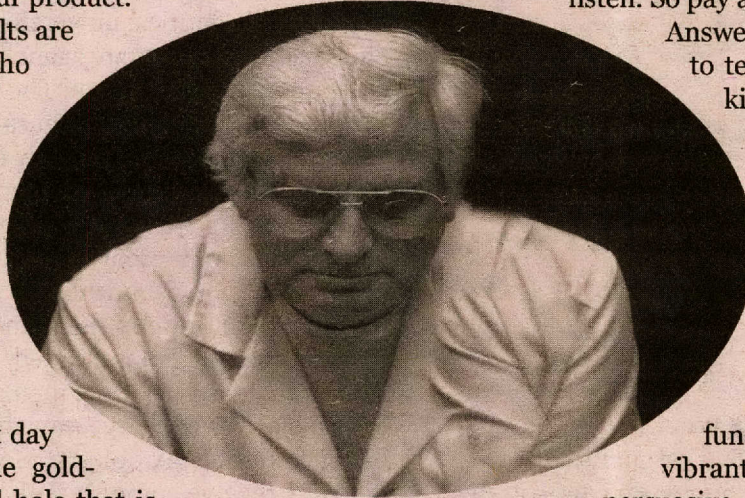
We all must decide to win or lose, to love or hate, to try or quit, to risk or withdraw, to accelerate or hesitate, to dream or stagnate, to open or close, to succeed or fail, to live or die. Every one of these starts with a choice. So, prepare yourself for what's awaiting you once you're allowed to leave these walls. Your future rests between your ears.

## BEFORE MAKING DECISIONS, CHECK YOUR INVENTORY

By Kevin Johnson - Michael Unit

**T**rain the working mind! Your mind is your product. Your actions are your package. The results are your history. Your history always advertises who and what you are as a person. Your thoughts become items or events, whether you pursue them or not. Everything revolves around a sphere of knowledge or ignorance, a virtual cause and effect. Protect your mind. Put your mindset to work! It's essential to your growth in every facet of your life. Resilience, intensity and tenacity will assist you in life. Having the belief that one will succeed in a given situation is a start.

For many, they've surrendered to judgment day already. Not the one where you walk down the gold-brick streets to the pearly gates, nor the hell hole that is promised to some for the terrible deeds they've done, but the mindset growth generator dies...leading you to juggle with the fear of failure and many other excuses. Everyone's life talks to them, and it is up to you to



listen. So pay attention.

Answers come in various ways, and mistakes are there to teach you. We are all defined by the integrity and kindness with which we think and act. Be as careful about what you put into your mind as the food you put in your body. Put in negative-minded chatter and repetitive institutional rhetoric, and you will eventually be filled with uncertainty. Do not fraternize with negative-minded people, for their attitudes are highly contagious. Love yourself more than you hate your past. Be courteous to yourself, at least.

Traditional thinking really restrains one's fundamental personality. We must escape and become vibrant individuals. Self-assured people are often calm, persuasive and willing to take risks then lead. Let's release all unprogressive mindful stock. "Check your inventory" to make significant decisions and adjust to change. Then prevail. Now you're on the correct path. ε

## STAYING THE SAME VS. MAKING CHANGES: THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

By Von Michael Short  
Wynne Unit

**T**he tides of punishment theories change from year to year with one group looking to rehabilitate and another group seeking retribution for crimes against society. The truth of the matter is that no one can rehabilitate you. Only you can do that. It doesn't matter how many programs there are in prison, you must decide you actually want to change your life. Until you decide that you've actually had enough and get mad enough to make the effort to change, it will not come.

I found this out after serving 20 years behind these walls. The addictions never go away. They will haunt you for the rest of your life. Until you realize that and never let your guard down, you will always risk re-offending and coming back or prolonging your stay. The longer someone is incarcerated, the better they become at hiding the character flaws that put them in prison in the first place. Letting your guard down one time is all it takes to find yourself back on that Bluebird bus headed back to a penitentiary near you.

The people I hear complain the most are the ones that have been locked up four or five times. Well, it must not be too bad if you keep coming back. Just because this is my first and only time in prison, it doesn't leave me out of the fray. Anytime I break a rule or do something that could prolong my stay, I don't have any room to complain.

**You have to be creative if you want to rehabilitate yourself.** It's you that must take

these steps. Simply coming to prison doesn't rehabilitate anyone. If you let it, prison will make you cynical and angry. You must decide whether or not you've finally had enough of prison life and then do something about it. There are still plenty of things you can do to better yourself.

**First you have to make a plan.** Set some goals and decide how you want to spend the rest of your life. There is life after prison—this I can assure you. But you have to want it badly. There are people in life dedicated to seeing us become successful; for example, the staff members at Lee College. If you don't do anything else while you are locked up, get an education. Just do it! There is no excuse not to.

**If you are an addict,** seek help through the psychology department or find out if there is an A.A. group on your unit. Most units have some sort of substance abuse counseling available. This is extremely important if you intend to get out and stay out. I've yet to meet a successful drug addict or alcoholic. All those roads lead back to here.

**One of the best assets that you will find on your unit is the chapel.** Many volunteers come on their own accord to help us change our lives. Utilize these tools. It doesn't matter if you are a Christian, Muslim or other, the chapel has

something suited to your tastes. Seek and you will find.

**Most of us will eventually go home some day.** We all look to the positive parole answer or the discharging of our sentences to be the answer to all our problems—the solution to our every need. However, if you haven't addressed the issues that put you in prison in the first place, you will be back. Take it from a 20-year veteran, I've seen many of the same faces in and out until they finally get that lengthy sentence they've begging for all their life.

There are tools and help available, but it's up to you to find them. Believe it or not, nobody wants to see you fail. What most people who manage to stay out of trouble all their lives realize is that it's you who must make the effort to change. Spending 20 years in prison will certainly change you, but it's up to you whether or not you want that change to be good or bad. If you waste your time in here thinking that thinking alone will be enough deterrent to keep you from coming back, I've got news for you—and it's not good. Rehabilitation starts from within. Use the tools, however few they may be, and become a better person. Life is just starting for many of us. Make the most of it. The Windham School District and other continuing education programs continue to offer classes to help offenders change their lives. ε



# Book review: *Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart* offers truths for prison life

By William Chaplar - Released

Those who make regular visits to their unit's library may have noticed that there is a well-stocked collection of self-help books. In prison, it seems only logical that those who choose the non-fiction books on library shelves would lean in the direction of a genre that focuses on positive life changes. Most self-help books do just that.

What is disturbing with regard to these excellent works is the fact that they are not anywhere near as popular as they should be in prison. It's not at all unusual to pull the card out of one that has been on the shelf for several years, and see only two or three names listed as having previously checked it out. Meanwhile, virtually anything written about crime will require a new card within a year of its arrival. The idea that a well-written self-help manual has only been checked out by two or three individuals should be considered disturbing in an environment where just about everyone can benefit from the advice contained within its pages.

I recently read a wonderful self-help book by a man named Dr. Gordon Livingston. The book was entitled *Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart*, and it had a foreword written by the recently deceased Elizabeth Edwards. It was published by Marlow and Company, and the copyright date was 2004—in other words, it was current enough to still have significance.

Since I fully believe in the usefulness of self-help books in prison, and since the popularity of such books is dismal to say the least, I'd like to share some of this book's more salient points. I will also offer a penitentiary-related example with each one to assist readers in better understanding the benefits that this book, and others like it, can provide to those of us on the inside.

In the book, Dr. Livingston eloquently points out that "It is difficult to remove by logic an idea not placed there by logic in the first place" (pg. 12). It's fairly simple to draw connections between this statement and life in prison. The

one I've chosen has to do with the current misconception that good behavior in prison will somehow result in your being set off for "manipulating the system." Not only is such a concept ridiculous, it's also an extremely dangerous belief. It's dangerous because you actually *can* be set off for bad behavior, so believing it is somehow in your best interests to behave poorly so you won't be accused of manipulating the system...well, in the words of that infamous Vulcan of *Star Trek* fame, "That's not logical." Our author clearly states that, if the idea wasn't

disobeying a direct order, causing a disturbance and various other infractions. Now, anyone who believes that this individual is not totally responsible for whatever happens to him or her as a result of this exchange..., should perhaps be reading more self-help books!

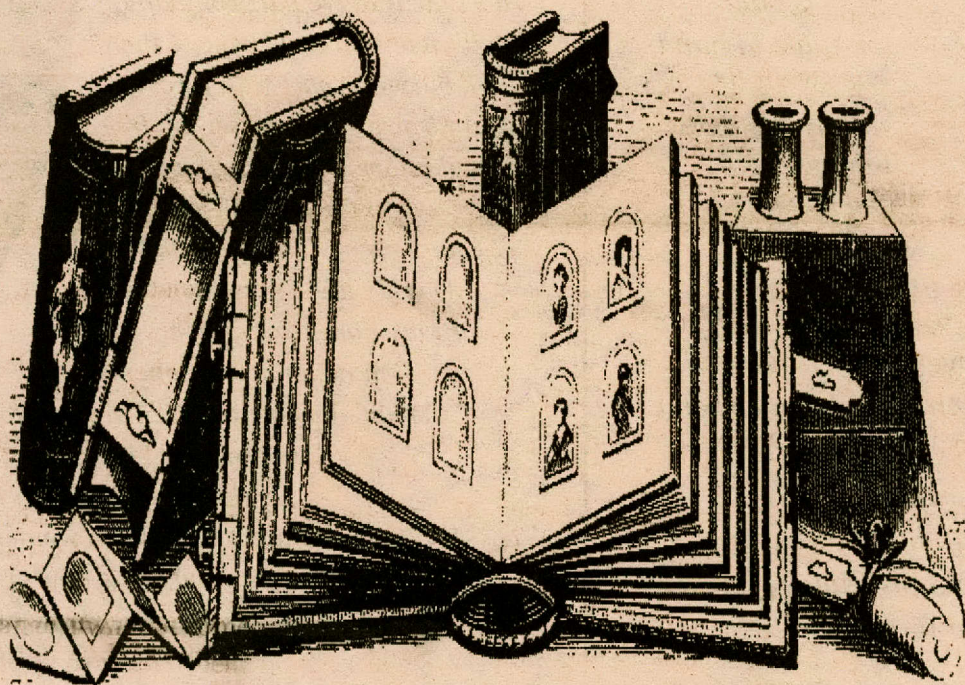
The author relates that, "Life is a gamble in which we don't get to deal the cards, but are nevertheless obligated to play them to the best of our ability" (pg. 49). Far too many people in prison will likely say that this is not true. But that's only because so many in here spend so much of their time trying to "deal the

they do in here are mistaken. If you get caught dealing from the bottom of the deck in the free world, your time out there will very likely be shorter than you would like it to be.

Dr. Livingston states, "One of the basic rules of psychology is that any behavior that is reinforced will continue; behavior that is not reinforced will extinguish. It is just hard sometimes to discern what that reinforcement might be" (pg. 126). Actually, it's not all that hard to discern what the most prevalent form of reinforcement in prison is. Since there is very little *positive* reinforcement doled out in here, people here tend to pursue the negative variety. Why else would someone consistently engage in behavior that he knows will result in some sort of verbal correction? Could it possibly be that the individual thrives on attention and is more than willing to risk all manner of punishment to get it? It might be interesting to see what would happen if, rather than reprimands, bad actors in here were to hear positively-reinforcing comments. Most of them would probably just stand there in slack-jawed amazement.

Another significant quote is, "Only by embracing our mortality can we be happy in the time we have" (pg. 54). Put another way, until we fully come to terms with the idea that we will die one day, we'll never be able to get to the business of truly *living*. I can't help but wonder if that might not be at the heart of the recidivism problem. Maybe if we all took our mortality a little more seriously, there would not be so many ex-convicts so diligently trying to become *convicts* again.

I hope I've provided some food for thought. I have no idea whether Dr. Gordon Livingston's book is in your unit's library, but I'd like to believe that a little of his advice has been provided with this review. If nothing else, I hope it will prompt you to look for whichever self-help books your library *does* have. As someone who has read dozens of them, I assure you that they are well worth the time it takes to read them.



placed in your mind by logic, you can't use logic to remove it. So to all of you out there trying to perpetuate the idea of system manipulation, do us all a favor—*stop!*

Dr. Livingston also states, "We are responsible for most of what happens to us" (pg. 21). Perhaps nowhere is this truer than in prison. Consider, if you will, the individual who is verbally reprimanded for some minor infraction like talking in the hallway. Choosing not to accept the reprimand, he or she goes on the defensive. The discussion escalates until the notoriously popular demand of "Get some rank over here!" is shouted.

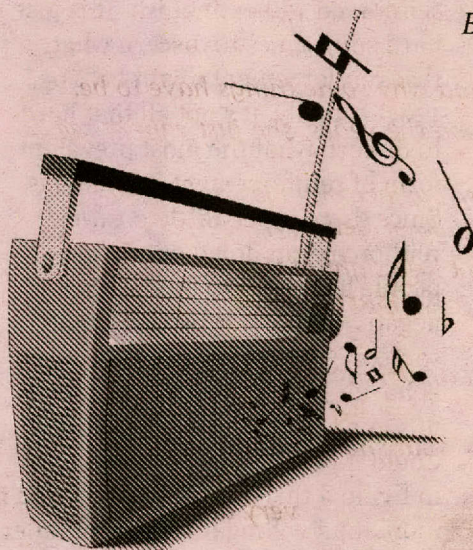
Rank arrives, handcuffs are drawn, and someone who was talking in the hallway is now facing charges of

cards." You want pressed clothes, extra food, etc. - you can "deal the cards" and break rules to make these things happen. For virtually any hand you are dealt in here, there are cards that you can also deal yourself to make life easier. In fact, there's really only one hand over which you have no control—when you will be released. Since the majority of us *will* be released one day, it seems only logical that any time spent trying to figure out how best to deal the cards in here is time poorly spent. A far better use of one's time would be to learn how to play the hand you are dealt. Because that's what you're going to need to be able to do when you get out. Those who believe that they will be able to deal the cards on the outside as easily as

## A convict tune

Submitted by Ronald Parks  
Roach Unit

Radio, play me a song  
As this old convict sits and rots in this cage.  
Drowning out the world,  
Living life from day to day.  
Some awaken to the sun rise,  
Have a cup of coffee listening to the oldies.  
Hoe squad, get ready; so many of us  
dread it.



But the tunes I have  
embedded  
Carry me through  
the day.  
At work, I'm  
counting down  
Until my debt  
is paid.  
Aggie in hand  
as sweat drips.  
In my head, the  
tunes still play.  
The boss waves  
hat in hand.

I've grown fond of  
the grayish brim.

When I'm stressed over not getting mail,  
My radio plays and heals my heart with each song.  
I long to feel the intimacy of its embrace.  
Me and my radio  
Have served time through hellish weather.  
This old convict and his radio  
Will be entwined forever.

## Visit at 117

Submitted by D-Messenger  
McConnell Unit

I wonder what I'd be doing  
If I was outside looking in  
Instead of inside looking out  
Only God knows, that's no fooling  
Maybe with a woman in sin  
With drugs and alcohol no doubt  
What's with the voices in my head  
Evil thoughts and painful sorrow  
Now, I follow only one voice  
The true word of God  
I must spread  
We are not promised tomorrow  
Repent now, be saved and rejoice  
All those demons that lurk within  
And dark visions  
that follow close  
It's time that we part company  
I don't fear you now, begone then  
I'll bury our past with a rose  
And forgive you, God set me free  
I would hope I've learned a lesson  
Or two to turn my life around  
Cause doing time is not for me  
Quality life, I must stress on  
With my hopes and prayers abound  
I'm no longer the enemy  
My life has gone to Hell and back  
In the Lord I have found His light  
I choose salvation in Heaven  
I don't want loose women on crack  
The good life is now in my sight  
God came to cell one-one-seven



## DEPRESSION

Submitted by Joshua Pierce  
Ware Unit

As the sun goes down and night descends  
Perpetuating blackness engulfs me from within  
Seeing my agony, knowing my weakness  
Trying to fight it, keeping me sleepless  
Energy, strength, expenditure of both  
I sense it, I feel it, and it's got to be close  
My body starts to tingle, my skin begins to crawl  
What I wouldn't give to get away from it all  
I turn to look and find nothing there  
And so begins the vacillating ride of pain and despair  
The pain comes in waves, and then when it peaks  
I'm crippled; I'm blinded, unable to speak  
Wishing to cry, searching for just one tear



I sense it, I feel it, and it's got to be near  
I turn to look but find nothing there  
Becoming numb to the pain, embracing despair  
Senses are clouded, feelings are lost  
Killing all emotion like flowers dying in frost  
Void of all understanding  
Reason, rationale, a distant conception  
A brilliant façade, master of deception  
Pain and complacency juxtaposed  
The harder I fight it, the more it grows  
Kicking and screaming I cannot break free  
Is this what I've become?  
What has happened to me?

# For a while

Submitted by Raul A. Jimenez  
Stiles Unit

Although I've been gone  
for a while,  
my waiting is almost done.  
Fifteen years of my life wasted;  
the last 11 quickly gone.

I've been gone for a while,  
but God has still blessed me.  
I'm able to speak and hear;  
I'm blessed to be able to see.

I took life for granted once;  
something I won't ever  
do again.

Through these  
trying times,  
I've found me a  
true friend.

When I was  
down, you were  
always there to  
lift me up.  
Your comforting  
words of  
encouragement  
and sweet  
compassionate love  
were things I could never get  
enough of.

You were a blessing I got.  
Heaven lost you to me.  
The angels cried  
when they lost one  
of their wonderful own;  
my friend  
and true love indeed.

I wish you could take a journey  
through my mind, soul, my heart  
and maybe then you'll realize  
just what exactly sets you apart



from anyone I've ever met.  
No one even comes near.  
And not ever having you  
in my life  
is my heart's biggest fear.

When I finally have the chance  
to hold you in my arms,  
I'm going to put your hand  
on my chest  
so you can feel the beat of my heart.

It only beats  
for you.  
It's you that I  
hold dear.  
No one again  
will ever be  
able  
to come near.

For a while  
now, I've  
been wishing  
I could give you  
what you've  
given me.  
And very soon,  
my sweet darling,  
you will be able to see

how I'm going to show you  
just how special you really are.  
I'm always going to be  
there for you  
no matter how near or far.

For a long while now  
I've longed for a simple touch  
of your hand.

so I can touch you right back and  
assure you that I am  
that special man.

# Never surrender

Submitted by Brett E. Fowler — Clements Unit

A godly mother toiling in a wicked place,  
Shining the light and being the salt  
in a darkened and tasteless space.

Having a heart full of compassion is not such an easy thing  
When the leers and the jeers add to the hurtful sting.

Never quite seeing what the years ahead will render.  
Only knowing that she simply can never surrender.

Mother is learning over again that some things are not fair,  
But ever thankful for a loving husband;  
who in this world is so rare.

She does not understand why some things have to be.  
And through the tears and the years, she just cannot see.

The amber liquid flows as her precious daughter  
fights another bender,  
But mother will not lose sight of the fact that  
they can never surrender.

Daughter is a good-hearted and  
pleasant soul.

But she is finding out that atop that  
bottle is a  
very dark hole.



The young lady just cannot  
fathom why  
This situation remains no  
matter how she may try.

But deep inside that heart  
so tender,  
Baby girl wishes only to  
never surrender.

Together mother and daughter will work through the pain;  
Through the valleys and through the darkness  
and through the rain.

Two brave hearts united on a journey of healing,  
Clinging to their love that is more fact than mere feeling.

Promising to remain fighters and that each will be a contender,  
Knowing that as long as they have each other,  
they will never surrender.

So do not give in, kindred spirits, nor bow under the strain.  
Keep your heads up and hearts loving regardless of the drain.

Guide each other and carry one another and hold the other's hand  
And be proud of your daughter or your mother  
for such a valiant stand.

But most important of all, most important of all,  
you must always remember

For as long as you love one another, you will never surrender.

# KNOW US FIRST

Submitted by Andrew Barnes

Clements Unit

Bars on every window  
bricks on every wall  
surrounded by wired fences  
that stand ten feet tall.  
This life of an animal  
is not what's up  
trapped in a place with no escape  
and filled with hate and no love.  
Can you blame us  
for the frustration we face  
experiencing the feeling  
that our life is a waste?  
We all make mistakes  
in this life that we live  
so if we are for it  
then it's time to forgive.  
We were just the ones

who happened to get caught  
and didn't listen  
to what we were taught.  
The fun is over  
and it's time to be grown  
by learning how to live  
a honest life of our own.  
We are not bad people  
just made some mistakes  
so now we have to change  
and do whatever it takes.  
Don't judge a book by its cover  
or first few pages  
and don't judge a prisoner  
until you've been locked  
in his cages.

# Horror witnessed— A trucker's nightmare

By Nathaniel Cozart  
McConnell Unit

I have been driving since 1993. I get to see a lot of beauty out there on the road, but there are ugly things out there as well. Some are dreadful; some are horrifying; some are tragic.

I don't talk much about those things, but that doesn't mean they don't happen. Most of the time I try to ignore them or forget them. Sometimes I can't. Sometimes they haunt me. I wake up in a cold sweat or I avoid a particular place or piece of road. I might share the tale with other drivers, but I don't go home and share them with the family—it would only make them worry more. But every now and then something happens. Something you can't shake.

It's summertime. The bugs fill your windshield. The drunks stay out later. The highways sprout orange construction cones that grow into barrels like dandelions in the grass. It's just like clockwork. The weather warms; the construction crews go all out to repair the roads. Those big lights light up the highway at night and will blind you for a few seconds. There's less traffic to deal with then, it's cooler, so it's the best time for construction crews to close lanes and get work done.

It's something I've had to adjust to. I have to adjust my routing, my speed, my watchfulness and my awareness. If I don't do it, it can be costly. Sometimes, the cost is too dreadful to contemplate.

Traveling on a major northern interstate on a summer night, I was approaching a construction zone that reduced the three-lane highway to one lane. As it often happens, a four-wheeler sped past me so that he would not be stuck behind a slow truck going below the posted speed limit. It's so common an occurrence that I come to expect it and make allowances for it. So, I slow down more to give him room to cut back in front of me knowing he's just liable to slam on his brakes when he sees that smokey bear up ahead. But this person was in a serious hurry. He didn't slow down, and he wasn't back into the lane before it happened.

It's frozen in my mind, in bright, white light and full color, the big lights showing everything crisp and clear—the yellow construction vehicles, the red pickup trucks, the red and blue lights of the state police car sitting

nearby, the smell of tar, the steam rising from machines and the orange barrels. I saw the face of a man by a cone looking over his shoulder at another man, in horror, knowing what was about to happen.

He was too far away to shove his fellow worker out of the way in time. The police car was in intercept mode to catch the driver; too late, too late. I was breaking fast, praying no one would ram me from behind. There was too much tragedy for one night. Shock set in. Slow motion; time stops; then stutters; time enough to see it and remember it all.

The man was thrown about 20 feet into the air, coming to the earth in the path of the police car. The police car swerved into the ditch to avoid running over his broken body. He received massive injuries to the head, ribcage, back, hips and legs. They probably told his family that he died instantly. I wish I could say

the same; I know better.

Disjointed images of that night haunt me. I still see the face of his boss, and the short, plaid blanket someone placed over his

broken body. The smell of tar and steam filled the air from the new black asphalt.

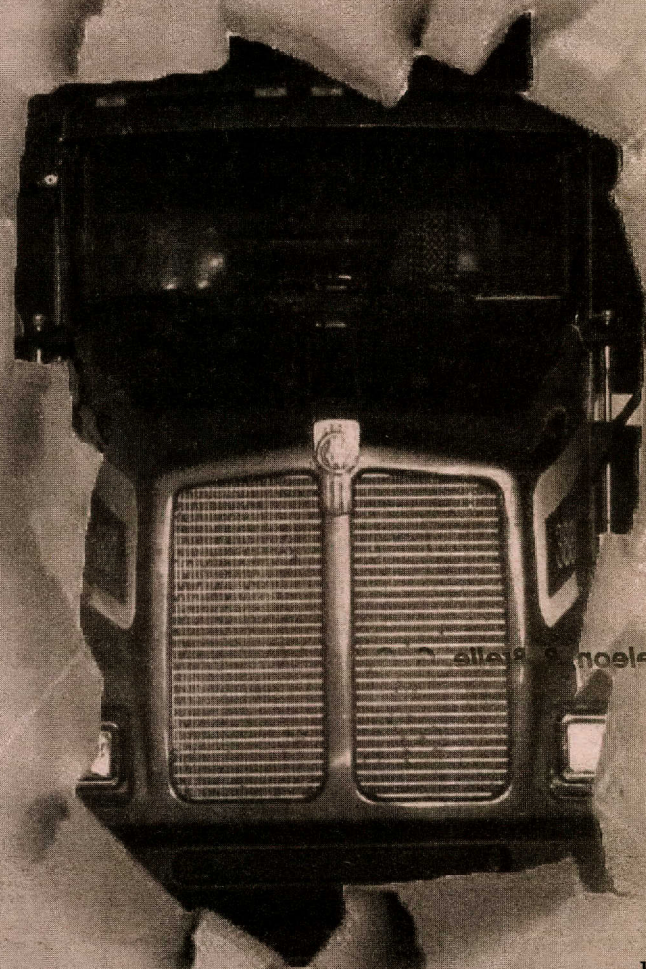
Lights sparkled on the broken glass. It took an hour for the ambulance to get through the backed-up-traffic. The scuffed, slightly worn shoe was sitting on the hood of my truck. The shoe he put on for the last time that day. Did he know? Did he

kiss his family goodnight as he went to provide for them? When he tied the laces for the last time; did he know?

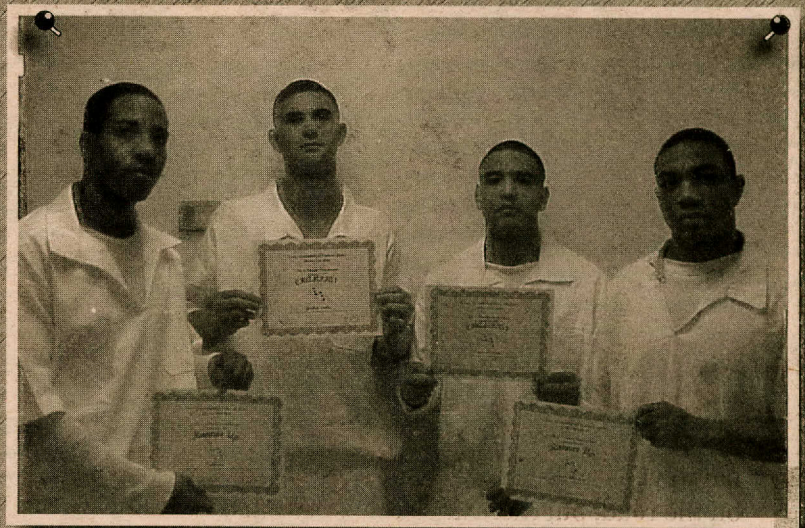
The shoe was sitting on the hood of my truck. No one acknowledged it; no one looked at it but me. No one else saw it. They moved around my truck. Their eyes never looked on top of my hood. It's not real. For four and one-half hours the shoe bears witness, but offers no testimony. It just sits there; the silent evidence of shattered lives.

It's summertime. The bugs fill your windshield. The drunks stay out later. The highways, sprout orange construction cones. Slow Down!!!

Give them a brake.



# TDCJ/Windham bulletin board



Wynne Unit Lee College welding graduates are R. Jobe, M. Minor, R. Fernandez, J. Gore, B. Taylor, C. Brent, J. Bradshaw, J. Cook, C. Melton, E. Cruz, T. Voelker, J. Kesinger, D. Trevino, M. Royal, R. Boyd, W. Froman and instructor W. Knuppel.

Cole Unit "Big Six" domino tournament winners are E. Sierra and J. Ladue with the runner up team of S. Lyons and K. Brown.



Dalhart Unit GED graduates are R. Alvear, J. Cosme, A. Diaz, Jr., K. Moree, W. Clifford, W. Hubbard, P. Jackson, D. Parker, J. Maxwell, B. Duncan, M. Gill, W. Spiller, M. Deleon, R. Brelje, G. Garcia, C. Llanez, A. Tabarez, G. Hamilton and H. Balderas.



Dalhart Unit plumbing graduates are instructor J. Reichert, J. Gonzales, C. Lago, T. Ashley, D. Swanson, W. Seay, A. Garner, J. Guel, J. Gonzales, T. Broadbent, P. Hernandez, L. Sanchez, C. Llanez, J. Garza, A. Liendo, Q. Clark, W. Clifford, G. Westbrooks and L. Morris.



Cole Unit GED graduates are D. Priddy, K. Wilson, G. Cantu, R. Ramirez, S. Marsh, E. Roberts, J. Blalock, M. Stephenson, R. Forsythe, J. Bowling, T. Townzen, R. Roberts and T. Doyle.

## TDCJ/Windham bulletin board



**Dawson State Jail GED graduates from Windham School District are D. Nelson, M. Estrada, R. Moore, M. Grider-Riddle, C. Clark, A. Bailey, K. Blakley, T. Hill, T. Lee, S. Hill, S. Crutcher, B. Westbrook, T. Cagle, Y. Merla, A. Matin, L. Goodman, S. Gonzales, C. Edwards, L. Manford, A. McBride and J. Clary.**



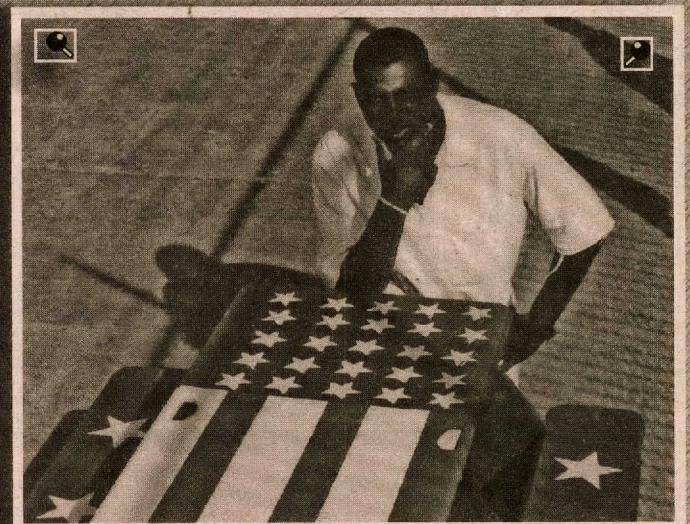
**Wallace Unit Western Texas College Horticulture graduates are S. Lee, J. Rivera, S. Goolsby, R. Johnson, T. Moore, A. Lugo, J. Rios, L. Ekpo, D. Fannin, B. Benford, J. Fowler, A. Cantu, C. Bird and J. Harden.**



**Ware Unit GED graduates from Windham School District are W. Johnson, J. Miller, D. Tomlinson, S. Salomon, M. Burrola, J. Martinez, N. Mitchell, A. Madrid, J. Lechaga and A. Quezada.**



**Sycamore/Crain Unit Cognitive Intervention graduates from Windham School District are S. McInnis, S. Bohot, T. Reasonover, T. Hoffman, A. Eilers, J. Brock, M. Alexander, C. Lockett, N. Cowell, T. Roberts, J. Fenton, S. Summers, L. Sykes, D. Williams, V. Griego, D. Allen, G. Brown, A. Christopher and C. Anderson.**



**Windham School District (Powledge Unit) Painting & Decorating graduate is M. Dawson.**

# Offender finds passion in recovery

By Lester Rainwater Wynne Unit

If you listen to motivational speakers, you will often hear them encourage people to "find their passion and live." In substance abuse recovery, you are inspired to find something you are passionate about and fill your life with it.

Over the years, I have been passionate about a lot of things. Very few of them have been positive. My passion for drug use has led me to TDCJ four different times.

On one of my possession charges back in 1995, I was offered a 15-year sentence. I decided to make bail and enrolled myself in a Christian rehabilitation center. After completing the program, I stayed at the center to work as a spiritual advisor and a 12-steps teacher. I was actually making something of my life.

Then I ran into a problem. The rehab center was giving me a lot of free time and I had nothing positive to do with it. I saw this woman at a Taco Bell. We had once dated, so we talked for a little while and I took her back to my place. We ended up doing drugs, and I was back to jail a short time later.

When I got out of jail, I went back to work for the rehabilitation center. Since I lived only 45 miles from Dallas, I would go to movies or meetings there on my days off just so I wouldn't run into anyone I knew.

One day I thought I was strong enough in my recovery to mingle with old friends. I went by an old friend's house to show him how good I was doing. Later I realized that this was a bad decision. Before long, I found myself back in jail.

Since I've been back in prison this time, I've come to the conclusion that I have to be wiser about the decisions that I make. Most importantly, I needed to do something more positive with my free time. I needed a passion that would not land me back in TDCJ every time. Every time I had extra time on my hands,

I would always use it in a negative way. Enough was enough!

I enrolled in and completed the faith-based dorm program on the Wynne Unit. At the same time I entered the faith-based dorm, I also got into the craft shop to work with leather. Most people thought that I could not craft with leather because of an accident in 1994 in which I lost one of my hands. I had a hard time trying to figure out how I would be able to perform with my missing limb. I decided to pray about it and left it in God's hands.

The night before I went to the craft shop I came up with an idea. If I could figure out a way to use some

straps to tie my hammer around my nub, I could hammer the leather.

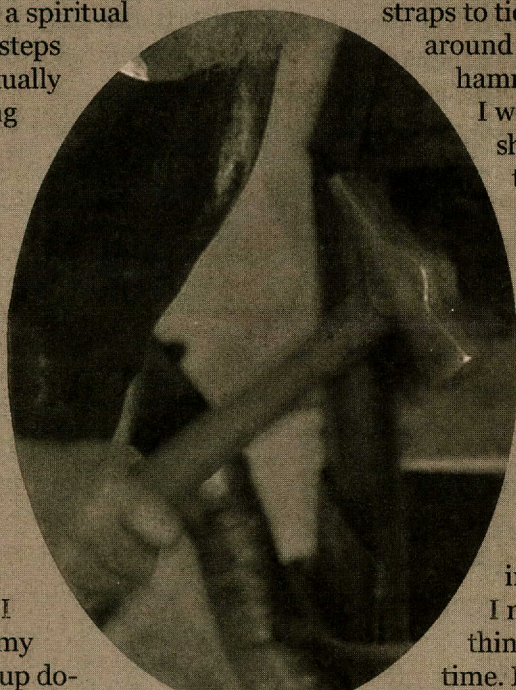
I went to the craft shop and created the straps, and to my surprise...it worked! After a few practices, I became good at it and enjoyed doing it. It has become my passion.

With my newly found passion of working with leather, I now have something to do with my time. Never again will

do negative things that will lead me back to TDCJ. With just a simple piece of leather and my hammer, I can make something that is beautiful-- something that I can be proud of and others can enjoy, also.

Talking about passion, I wake up every morning hoping to go to the craft shop. I go to sleep at night thinking about what I will do in the craft shop the next day. There are not a lot of positive things that I have felt this passionate about in my entire life.

Maybe someday when I'm free, I can go to drug rehabs and various hospitals and be an inspiration to others. I can strap on my hammer and share my passion with them. I'm sure children who have lost a limb would enjoy seeing me work with leather. I have found my passion in the craft shop.



DARBY cont. from page 3

They knew which direction they'd take. And both went north after they'd hit Jamaica and Cuba. They both missed the United States and then turned back, heading back out into the Atlantic Ocean. Which is good! But I'm just curious about their long-before-hand predictions. What's your opinion, Old Thang?

Godfather

Ramsey Unit Ad Seg

Dear Godfather,

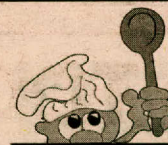
I'm guessing that life in Seg has become pretty boring when all you have to do is question the accuracy of hurricane prediction. But I'll take a little time to engage you in debate, because weather prediction has always been sort of a pet peeve of mine. But not for the reason you might think.

You see, I'm not one of the frustrated multitudes who believe that meteorologists always get it wrong. On the contrary, I believe that they are right far, far more often than any other prognosticators that people tend to blindly believe.

There seems to be a never ending array of individuals prepared to predict the outcomes of elections, award shows, football games and all sorts of other frivolity. And Americans seem to put all sorts of faith in their predictions. This despite the fact that they are usually correct less than half the time. Meanwhile the weather predictors may call for rain that does not come one time out of a hundred, and they are considered morons who couldn't predict the weather if their lives depended on it.

Those who predict hurricanes have probably been responsible for saving hundreds of lives. Let them make one miscalculation that causes a few people to be inconvenienced for nothing, however, and that's all anyone remembers.

No, Godfather, I don't believe that hurricanes are manmade. But I do believe that humankind has a fairly firm grasp on being able to tell when they are coming and where they are headed. I thank you for giving me a forum through which I might share that belief.



## RECIPES



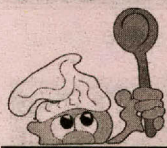
### Ingredients:

- 1 chili soup
- 1 package jalapeno peppers (culled and sliced)
- 1 tbsp salad dressing
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 packet ranch dressing
- 1/4 bag instant rice
- 1 package saltine crackers (optional)

### Directions:

Preheat a full hot pot of water to the 5-cup mark. In a hot pot insert, pour in crushed soup noodles and the entire flavor pack. Pour in jalapeno slices. Add the spoonful of salad dressing and the packet of ranch dressing. (If ranch dressing is not available, just use another tbsp. of salad dressing.) Add water until the insert is about three quarters full. Add soy sauce and stir until the mixture is a uniform orange color.

Slowly pour in the instant rice until it reaches just short of the brim. Add water slowly until the rice is covered. Carefully and slowly push the spoon down the sides back and forth until the rice is blended with the soup mixture. Pour in just a little more rice until you see the insert is near the top. Place in hot pot and put lid on. Fill the hot pot with water, and heat for 45 minutes to an hour. After you transfer it to your bowl, it will look like three inserts worth of rice. Serve with crackers. Serves two easily or one really hungry person. Enjoy.



# RECIPES

## STUFFED JALAPENOS

Brandy Resse  
Woodman Unit

### Ingredients:

- ½ package chili
- ½ package Mexican beef
- ½ cup refried beans
- 4 packages cream cheese
- 4 tablespoons jalapeno cheese
- 1 cup crushed party mix
- 1 cup crushed jalapeno chips
- 12 pickled jalapenos

### Directions:

Halve and dress jalapenos and rinse with cool water. Set aside. In bowl, blend to a nice thickness-chili, beef, jalapeno cheese, jalapeno chips and beans. Inside the jalapeno halves run a line of cream cheese, then stuff with mixture. Top with crushed party mix. Enjoy!

## TIPPY'S TIPPERBOO

By Kristin Metz  
Mountain View Unit

### Ingredients:

- 1 vanilla Moon Pie
- 2 Hersheys bars — plain
- 2 bags salted peanuts (chopped)

### Directions:

Take 2 Hersheys bars and melt in hotpot. Place Moon Pie in the middle of white bowl. Pour melted Hersheys all over the moon pie until it is completely covered. Take the chopped peanuts and sprinkle all over the chocolate. Let it set for one hour. Enjoy!

## CHOOSING continued from page 1

I know, I know. There is someone reading this and saying, "Here we go again. Another one of those well-to-do, know-it-all intellectuals who hasn't spent one moment in the shoes of those who grew up in dire poverty and suffered through the unlimited amount of challenges that compel one into criminal activities to survive."

Well, anyone who is remotely considering that thought is absolutely incorrect. First and foremost, I came to TDCJ as a lesser person than perhaps the majority of TDCJ offenders. Unlike most offenders who grew up with some sort of positive influences in their childhood, who taught them the difference between right and wrong, I grew up learning all the wrong things. Take a look around the dayroom or your dorm and locate the most backwards, immature and disruptive offender you can find and you are looking at the person I once was.

Secondly, considering my background and my triumphs to overcome it, I never had a high horse to ride and won't begin riding one

now.

Nonetheless, it is my desire to relate the fact that true freedom (at least for me) is a lot more than just a mere desire or a thought. It is an action that requires courage, strength and sheer determination.

Having come to prison needing to be formed as opposed to being reformed (you can't reform a person that has never been formed) I know firsthand how difficult it is to align your desires and actions to be free so that there are no contradictions.

I thought I was being responsible by neglecting every single responsibility that came my way. When I was assigned to a job, I looked for every conceivable way to get out of the work. When people entrusted me with their friendship, I would abuse it. The more schemes I ran, the more manly I felt. I showed no respect to other people's property, ideas or existence, and it gave me a rush. Every time I caught a disciplinary case, it was never my fault. The officers were always picking on me. I was tough, hard, cool, real and in my own little petty mind I was destined for greatness. Yet, there was nothing more that I desired than my freedom.

I lived this way for nearly five years until one day I stumbled upon a book by the powerful motivational speaker Les Brown called, "Live Your Dreams."

Unlike me, Les Brown grew up in a loving household. His foster mother was a strict disciplinarian. He was taught the difference between right and wrong but decided to be a delinquent, instead. Les had big goals that he wanted to obtain, but his negative behavior prevented him from doing so. To his benefit, there was a high school teacher that pointed out to Les that if he was ever to be successful in living his dreams, he would have to change his negative behavior.

After reading this, I began to take inventory of my life. I wanted freedom but all my actions suggested that I desired incarceration. I was the epitome of a walking contradiction. The people I elected to hang with and the activities I chose to engage in were identical to the activities and people that led me to

TDCJ. There was obviously something wrong, and it was up to me to correct it.

The first course of action I had to take was understanding the difference between actual truth (ultimate reality) and imagined truth (distorted reality). The actual truth, what was genuinely real, is that all actions I displayed screamed incarceration. The imagined truth, what I thought was real, is that I wanted to be free. The ultimate reality of it all is, had I been released back into the freeworld it would only have been for a very short time. Unprepared to live as a law-abiding citizen, my actions would have compelled my quick return. I had to embrace this disturbing fact and release my distorted reality that I could remain free without altering my criminalistics ways.

Once I understood the difference between those truths, I had to bring my actions into alignment with my desire to be free.

I quit trying to get out of work at my job. Actually, I started looking at my job as a medium to learn better work ethics. I quit running schemes on people and started dealing with them justly. I began to respect everyone I came into contact with. I no longer did the foolish things that warranted the officers to write me a disciplinary case. Although the old crew that I hung around with ostracized me, I found a new brand of friends that encouraged me to do more positive things. I enrolled in college and became involved in some of the chaplaincy programs. It was not long before every single conversation I had, every single action I displayed, and every single environment I entered, screamed, "I want to be free, I want to be free."

The contradictions were removed.

Now from an actual truth perspective I feel extremely confident in my ability to leave TDCJ and remain free. That is because I can honestly say I am free. I'm free from my distorted criminal ways. I have taken control of my life.

If I can do it, you can too. You can't afford to wait until you come up for parole or until you get into the free world to take control of your life. You have to free yourself now.

## Sudoku solutions

### Easy

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

### Difficult

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