DEATH PENALTY:

Since the execution of a woman in Texas, Yvonne and I have had many questions asked about the death penalty.

We do not believe in the death penalty, as it just is not a deterrent to crime. We also believe more should be done for the families of the inmate and the victim. After an execution, violent crime goes up. Records also show that of all executions nationwide, more than fifty persons so killed were found legally "not guilty" after the sentence was carried out. The woman in Texas was killed by lethal injection. She was guilty of the crime she was killed for. Did killing her do any good? No! This woman, for all intents and purposes, had changed. She had accepted Christ and had, even in prison, made a better life for herself and those around her. This really leads into a doctrinal study on death.

Christians generally believe one of two things happened after she was killed.

First she went to sleep (Jesus' own words when he spoke of Lazarus' death to His disciples), and that when He comes again, "the dead in Christ shall rise first." The next face she will see is her dear savior, Jesus.

Others believe she died and is with Jesus. In either case the result will be the same. She will be with Jesus.

The taxpayer should be interested that it costs twice as much to execute a person as it does to keep him or her in prison for life. I must admit I had a little problem with the Governor's statement: "I shall not commute her sentence, but may God Bless Her."

PRISON LIFE:

Prison is a place one is sent for crimes;
There one has a lot of bad-hard times.
Dehumanizing, degrading, boring, and sometimes cruel,
I will survive if I obey every rule-
(the ones I should have obeyed that sent me here).
Here is always someone trying to do me harm.
Rejected of my freedom and my rights,
Always being locked up, not just at night.
Informants, gays, gangs, and those that act like a clown.
Prison is a place of much grief,
because of the grief we caused.
Life here is a living hell;
Life is not life in a prison cell.
I will continue to hold my head up high;
Some day this time will all pass by.
Life in prison is a tragic shame,
I only have myself to blame.
Young folks, you will stay out of prison if you are smart.
Prison life can change you,
especially your heart.
I pray for the day when this will pass,
My time over-I will be free at last.

D.L Caryle

A VISIT TO DEATH ROW:

The breakfast carts rattle through the concrete prison about 5.30, and as they approach Death Row, the first sounds of morning repeat the last sound of night-remote controlled locks clanging open and clanking closed, electric gates whirring, heavy metal doors clashing shut, voices wailing. A maximum security prison has no soft sounds. A trusty pushes a cart, stopping at each cell to pass a tray of powdered eggs and lukewarm grits through a small slot. Eating and sleeping are the easiest way to pass time on the Row. Around 9 the day resumes. Perhaps a man runs his eyes around the three concrete walls and a solid door. His cell is about two paces wide and three paces long. One step from bunk to toilet. He may have a steel locker for his meager belongings. There is a solid bar to hang a towel on. Most places have colored clothes; here we wear orange. To keep clothes clean, they are washed in sink or toilet. He knows every corner of this massively small place. Too cold in the winter, too hot in the summer. It stinks, the air thick with the odor of smoking, sweaty, dirty, defecating men. Filling the hours until sleep again. The options few-there is talk. Endless disembodied, mostly insane talk. We go to the cell door, called "Getting On the Door," and start talking to anyone you cannot see. Many are totally insane and will ramble for hours¼ When we go anywhere you can hear "Dead Man Walking."
NATIONWIDE HOT LINE FOR YOUTH:

Wouldn't it be neat if all the organizations such as us, Teen Challenge, Youth For Christ and Campus Crusade got our acts together? Our young people are in trouble and have no place to go, except prison. We have an idea, and possibly the finances, to implement the plan to start a Foundation that will deal with a lot of the problems youth face today that often lead them to prison. Drugs are the number one problem in the U.S., followed by child abuse: (sexual, physical and verbal). Yvonne and I recently spoke to a large group of students. When we dismissed the parents and teachers, we got down to it. These youth today take their problems to their peers, not their parents. The problem in Christian schools is compounded by ignorance because the teachers do not have training in the problems of today, and neither do our Pastors.

It will take a lot of brainstorming and a lot of talent, but God willing, we will be part of the whole. Care to join?

Our granddaughter talked us into taking her bowling the other night. Cosmic kids by the hundreds were just hanging out. We saw the daughter of one of our Conference leaders there and wondered what he thought she was doing?

NATIONWIDE DRESS OUT PROGRAM:

We have talked often about the dress out program we had in California. We provided any inmate, leaving prison without funds, free clothes to start their lives, knowing that they often had to live on the streets. It really is a shame to keep a man/woman in prison for, say, ten years at the cost of $350,000.00 (low side) and when they are released give them:

(a) what money they may have earned, plus
(b) two hundred dollars.

Out of the two hundred, if they do not have street clothes they must buy the prison clothes they have been wearing. This money is given half on release, the other half when they get to their parole office. In most cases they must parole to the county of commitment (where they committed a crime), not where they live. With little or no money, dress out clothing becomes vital.

VOICE OF PROPHECY:

Our friends at V.O.P are airing new radio programs featuring Someone Cares Prison Ministry, Yvonne and me. The dates are May 4 through 8. Check your local paper for radio times. Please ask friends to tune in, as the Holy Spirit was present when we did the broadcasts. You can call (805) 373-7611 for stations in your area.

PERSONAL TOUCH:

We like to share notes from some of you and some of the inmates we deal with:

From Mary: Thank you for having such a good program that I could get involved in. My one Pen Friend told me in his first letter that the guys used to tease him because he got no mail. When my first letter came they all cheered! He is so happy to get mail.

From Scott: I wanted to write and tell you that through your program you have put together two people who have formed a warm and lasting friendship. Cathy and I have a great relationship based on God, respect, truth, & trust.

From Chaplain Brooks: Thank you for your Pen Friend applications. These applications will help those here find friends outside to correspond with.

From Chaplain Ballesteros: I am the Chaplain of a new prison and we really need Bibles. (This appeal I sent out via e-mail, and we sent two cases ourselves. The Chaplain has been blessed. If you have an E-mail address we would love to have it. Please send to: sdapm@someonecares.org.)

From Eddie Parris: The four men you sent me to write were providentially matched by an unseen hand. There is mutual feeling of relating. Being a paraplegic, I have discovered a natural talent for writing. Joe has a keen but somewhat skeptical mind; Larry did not respond for five months but I did not give up and he wrote "Thanks for not giving up on me." Then Don said, "had I not come to prison I would have never known Jesus."

From Jim: I am so glad you are both working so hard to bring the light of Jesus to those in prison. I was encouraged by the last newsletter when you said "you can be sure you are doing the right thing if God calls you." To be honest, my reaction to your broadcast was emotional rather than God-led. I am not called to letter writing." I wish more of you were as honest. If you do not like the person we matched you with, just send the information back to us. Don't do what so many do-just stop writing and never tell us.

TROUBLE IN RIVER CITY:

Once in awhile, we are overwhelmed with mail. Then, so nothing is delayed, we may forward the mail without reading it. Well, we did that to a dear friend and she sent the letter back to us. It was terrible. More than X-rated, and they had been writing for awhile. Yvonne sent the letter back to the inmate and told him he was no longer welcome. The next day another card came from the same man to the same person. This we sent to the Chaplain and this man will not be doing such a thing again. We re-matched the free person, and will pray the inmate gets help. Please, if you have problems with your Pen Friend, tell us so we can work it out.

DEAL WITH PROBLEMS:

I wish everyone read each newsletter. When you write, it is you writing, not Someone Cares. Please leave our name off of your letters. Please do not use Grandma or Aunt Sue as your return name. If your inmate is transferred or does not write, send a note to the Chaplain c/o the inmate's address, or call the prison. Friends, we just do not have time or staff to solve all these mysteries.

Do not mail items to a person in prison until you have a permission slip from the prison, not the inmate. The rules in all prisons are changing and none of

(Excerpt from "Among the Lowest of the Dead" By David Von Drehle: We will continue next month.)
the changes are for the better.

The happiest people don't necessarily have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything.

RELIGION: ARE YOU KIDDING?

"I would like to tell you what I think of your Pen Friend Program. I am a convict in prison for things that would make your skin tingle. Some jerk sent you my name and you sent me this dumb application [torn in pieces]. Well here it is. No Jesus, no God and no damn Christian can help me. I have watched all the so-called Christians getting their Bible Study certificates, and going to all the services. I have seen these same men smoking a joint, drinking pruno [prison booze] and making love to one of the he-shes here. The Chaplain might as well be a cop as he turns in more inmates than the court does. So take your religion and @#$%^!!!!"

This was written in 1989 and too much of a challenge for me to pass up. I wrote Jim back and told him of my background before I met Jesus and asked him if he would be interested in a friend. I sent him a self-addressed stamped envelope (which his prison allowed). Several weeks later I got a letter, still bitter but willing to write if I left religion out. That's like leaving the Pop! out of Pop Corn. I got him a subscription to Message and sent him a Steps To Christ. As God does, in His wonderful wisdom, I got a chance to preach at Jim's prison and asked the Chaplain for a visit first. We met on the yard at Northpoint and he came to the service and sat with Yvonne. The Holy Spirit was present and filled his heart. Here is a letter I just got:

Bless you, my friend, for being so stubborn and strong. Your trust and understanding has made a new person out of me. I got transferred to La Grange just after you went to Michigan. In two weeks I'm going to be released. When I pack my things, on top will be the well worn Steps To Christ, my Bible and in my heart the love of Jesus. As soon as I can I'll be up to visit, but please keep me in prayer. I really want to make it out there and never have been able to before.

God Bless You both.

NOT EVEN A WORD:

As the mailman passes by my cell,
This lonely place where I dwell.
He looks at me with sad dismay
For he has no mail for me today.
He must think that I am quite insane,
Suffering with this constant pain.
My friends have let me down once more,
As he quickly passes by my door.
Write, my friends, to ease my mind.
Please don't be cruel, cold, unkind.
Send me a letter of friendship and cheer,
Then let me bend your ear.
Maybe tomorrow the mailman will stop here.

Ron H.

YVONNE'S CORNER:

Stop and Look around you. Aren't we blessed, with so much that we cannot imagine what it would be like to go without a pen or pencil or better yet paper or envelopes, lastly a stamp.

One day when Don and I were volunteering at San Quentin Prison, we were asked to go to a locked down unit and deliver a death notice. Upon arriving in the cell block, we informed the Sergeant what we were there for. He said he would call the inmate out of his cell and let us use a cell that was a makeshift office, consisting of a table and three chairs. We said O.K. . The inmate walked toward us, knowing that something must be wrong as we entered the cell and sat down. Don gave him the bad news that he had lost a loved one. He began to cry, and I could not find any Kleenex. I found some toilet tissue and tried to fold it so it would not look so bad and then apologized. We have so much to be thankful for, yet we take so much for granted. Let us be more humble.

One of Jesus' favorite words when referring to His followers was "disciple" which literally means in Greek "he who is taught" or "he who is trained". This word appears 269 times in the gospels. All of us who are willing can become what Christ asks of us. Most of you who are writing to inmates are already doing this for our Lord. According to Jesus, a disciple follows four basic instructions given us in the gospels. According to Jesus, a disciple is one who:

1. keeps and lives by his word.  
   John 8:31.
2. demonstrates real love for 
   his fellow man. John 13:35.
3. forsakes all to follow Jesus.  
   Matthew 16:24.
4. because of his union with

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http://www.someonecares.org/archives/v98n4.htm
Christ, produces fruit.
John 15:8.

It is not always easy to apologize, to begin over, to take advice, to be unselfish, to keep on trying, to be considerate. To think and then act, to profit by mistakes, to forgive and forget, to shoulder a deserved blame — but it always pays!

Another time we were asked to go to a cell block to give a death notice. This time things were a little different. The young man, when he saw us, said “who was killed this time?” It seems in the course of a week he had lost a brother, a sister, and now we were about to tell him about his dad. He did not cry or even seem to care. That is the way things were where he came from. He told us later he did not expect to live long either in prison or when he got out.

The importance of Someone Cares is that Don & I try to help you make a difference. A lady just wrote me saying “My Pen Friend asked for money and I quit writing. No, I did not inform you as it did not seem important.” I wonder how Jesus will deal with her? Had she returned the paperwork we would have re-matched the inmate and prayed for her.

BRIGHTEN THE CORNER WHERE YOU ARE:

Someone asked us if we thought we could be effective wherever we are? The answer is Yes! God is in control. We were also asked if we would move if the challenge were big enough? The answer “If ever asked to do anything in the name of Jesus, say “I’ll be happy to.”

In fact if we now had a choice, we would move to Nevada. From there we could help in California and also Texas, two systems in need of help. Got a piece of property there you would like to donate? God has blessed this ministry so very much. We are excited each day. We never know what the mail will bring, the phone, now e-mail. As we grow larger and larger, it seems God wants Yvonne and me to open doors for others and train others to do what we now do. If this is so, God will show us the way as He always has and always will. We will be visiting a lot of prisons this summer and God may plant a seed. Agape,

Don & Yvonne McClure