HELP WANTED

Are you fairly fluent in the Spanish language? Many inmates are being left out of the Pen Friend Program because they need Someone who Cares to write to them. This is a great opportunity to keep up or improve your skills. Just let Don & Yvonne know you’re willing.

A YEAR YOUNGER J

When you reach a certain age in life, you should pick a good number and stick with it. J Happy Birthday, Don (June 8). He’s also going to have some surgery on June 2, so please pray for him during this important week.

COME BY HERE, LORD

A song sung more often by our youth, but it’s a powerful message. Yvonne and I often think of the message in that song. Then we think of the power of music in the world. My wife asked me once what I thought might have changed my life before Christ came in. In the world, I loved music—good music, but never listened to much Christian music. I listen to what my Grandson hears and it scares me, what the world’s music has in it today. If you don’t listen to what our Youth are listening to, you sure better.

BLESSING IN MUSIC

Years ago, a friend wrote a song dedicated to Yvonne and I and the Lord’s ministry through us. It was arranged by our friend, Wayne Hooper. Not strangely, it is called Someone Cares. It goes like this:

These vital words apply to all;
Someone cares for you.
There is One who knows our shattered dreams,
Knows all we think and do.
Someone Cares who knows the power
   Of love locked deep in you,
The untold treasures not yet dreamed,
   Imprisoned, out of view.

Someone Cares about my hours
   of anguish, grief and shame.
Someone cares and loves enough
   to clear my darkened name.

So highly prized, my gift of love,
   He would have died for only me.
Heaven’s mighty prince stooped willingly,
   To set this captive free.

These mighty words apply to all,

   “Someone Cares for you!”
Someone who knows our shattered dreams,
   knows all we think and do.

Someone sent this message, friend
   “I’m coming back for you!”
Then sorrow won’t be known at all;
   He’s making all things new.

The intention was to find an artist and get it published to go toward Someone Cares funding. We invite any of you, so big a part of this ministry, if you know someone who might sing and/or publish this gift from a friend.

BILLY IS HIS NAME

In last month’s newsletter we included a letter from an Inmate. We asked some of you to write a note of encouragement to him. The response was overwhelming and we thank you!

WITH GREAT SADNESS

We say “see you soon” to our dear friend, Jerry Frederich. Over the years we have lost many friends, all very special. Jerry and his wife, Maxine, were part of a massive cornerstone of folks that made me ready to let the Lord, through us, start Someone Cares. How many times, in my process of being born again, did I call Jerry? His advice was always solid and put into action.

I think I am safe to say Jerry had never met someone with my background. Jerry
told me once that God took all the Broken Pieces (another neat song) and put them together and placed me in prison. Jerry’s ministry touched so many hearts and lives. Our love and prayers go out to his family. I would like to some day dedicate a newsletter to all who are waiting for the return of Jesus, who helped Yvonne and I so much, both in our problems and the growth of the ministry.

There sure is going to be a crowd around the tree of Life. See you there, friend.

AS PUNISHMENT, NOT FOR PUNISHMENT:

This is the reason men and women, boys, and girls are sent to prison when they commit a crime. You cannot move now without hearing of the abuse that some members of our Armed Forces are involved in.

As Christians, we are well aware of punishment and torture in prison throughout the Bible. It is a shame that news sources don’t give the coverage we are now seeing. We wonder why the public is not more informed about the same kinds of things that go on in U.S. prisons. Since many have asked, in a future newsletter we will share with you some of these stories. We also ask our Pen Friends to ask their inmates for current stories from their experience in prison.

I often think of a story from a few years ago. A female guard was raped while on duty. The inmate was caught and sent to another prison to await court for the crime. He was found “dead by suicide.” The “official” diagnosis was that he killed himself by shoving socks down his nostrils and down his own throat! Give us a credibility break, here.

A young gang member who assaulted a staff member was shot in what proved to be a staged fight on a prison yard.

There are countless numbers of female inmates who are raped or forced to perform sexual acts. This has been going on forever. In most prisons, the system causes trouble by its own rules. Being a snitch can be a death sentence. But if an inmate gets in trouble with another inmate and reports it, staff will not help unless all names are given up. Tom was gang raped and reported it. Staff said, “give us the names or show us the guys who did it.”

He said, “I will, but only after you transfer me to another prison and I go into protective custody.” He was transferred to another facility, filed a full report and his cell was fire bombed. I received his letter a long time ago.

UNSIGNED LETTER

If Someone Cares, let the world know how really bad prison is. I was sent to a maximum security prison for a white-collar crime. For almost a year I paid protection to a gang so I would not get raped or worse. I got tired and quit paying. On the yard several gang members stopped me and threatened me with terrible
things or they would carve me up. I bolted and ran to a guard. I told my story and got put in protective custody. It was there I got involved with you guys. I was transferred to another prison after the gang members were sent to the hole.

The day I got out of the hole I was stabbed thirteen times. It is a miracle I am alive and got out of prison alive. I was on two year parole, but know the gang has its power in and out of prison. I broke parole and moved to another state—a crime. but worth the risk. [This is common.]

**REGENERATION . . . BUT!**

We are still welcoming new members to the God Squad, and prayerfully seeing old ones return. Paper Sunshine, or the Pen Friend Program, is a ministry to lead men, women, boys and girls to Christ, not to our “church.” First, most church members find it hard accepting those coming from prison. Your job is to try to establish a friendship that will lead them to Christ. Once friendship is established, then slowly attempt their conversion.

One lady wrote a six-page letter, all Bible verses, to her new Pen Friend! He wrote us, asking for help. Each of us must crawl before we walk, or run. When I accepted Christ, a “Who’s-Who” tried to teach me the do’s and don’ts instead of the Love of Christ. That’s why we try to teach, “Don’t let your doctrine be a barrier, but a bridge to Christ.” Go slow, friends.

The other side of the coin: A truck driver heard us on VOP and wanted to write. The truck driver, not a Christian, was matched with a real Christian inmate. We had to slow the inmate down. After writing for two years, the inmate led the truck driver to Christ! Amen!!

**OUR FRIEND, DAVID SMITH**

A long-time member of VOP has moved on to pastor a church. We wish him and his family well. Working with David is one of the many joys we receive as members of the Family of God.

**TO ERR IS HUMAN**

Never in our history have we had an outreach that hit as many folks. We had E-mail, phone calls, faxes and letters. We pray all are matched, but think some may have been added to the computer and not sent a packet. If so, please contact us again.

**TO FORGIVE IS DIVINE**

**JAKE’S CORNER**
Hi. I am back again. I’m sorry I missed last month’s corner. Welcome to all newcomers—we are glad you could join us and write to a Pen Friend. Just let me tell you how much a card means to one of these inmates. It is like a miracle for them. They think no one cares about them. I once heard of an inmate who had not received a letter or card for over 15 years!! Finally we got a pen friend to write to him and he shared the letter to all the men that he could. Then everyone wanted someone to write to them. That is why your letters are so important. Some inmates have not received a letter from anyone for longer than that. so please, don’t give up writing, and share this with others who might be willing to write.

I’ve told you about my Dad, in prison for 15 to 21 years. For newcomers, there is somewhat more to the story. My Dad helps inmates and writes to their families, and sometimes on holidays he makes greeting cards for me and my Mom and other family members.

Well, that is all for now; talk to you next month. Please keep praying and writing to inmates. And pray for my Dad, also. Thank you very much.

**YVONNE’S CORNER**

In prison it does not take long to realize that music is the universal language. So we would end up having a long song service. One evening after one of our services, one of the inmates who attended regularly, handed me a piece of paper This is what it said:

**You Brought Me To My Knees,**

by V. Washington.

I played around, I got high,
I robbed, I stole, I got by,
I laughed, joked, took my life at ease.

I lived as I very well pleased,
At the corner of Scam & Sleaze,
But, this time O Lord this time
You brought me to my knees.

I was moving so fast
there was nothing I couldn’t do.
I was just as fast
And just as down as you.

I was traveling a wide, wide road
Not caring where it might lead.
But this time O Lord,
You brought me to my knees.
I didn't see it coming,  
I thought I had it made.  
The world was a merry-go-round  
So I got on and played.

Everything seemed alright,  
No warning would I heed.  
But this time, O Lord, this time  
You brought me to my knees.

Sometimes we can’t slow down  
Unless we take a fall.  
Then friends, we can be still  
And hear God when he calls.

Suddenly we see the forest,  
Not just the trees.  
I’m so glad this time O Lord  
You brought me to my knees”.

I can’t help but wonder how many of us can relate to this? Are we so caught up in everyday things that we end up making excuses for not doing what we should be doing? Something to think and pray about.

JEAN’S JOTTINGS

This issue must have a gem in it for a lot of you out there. We can always tell, because the devil really tries to mess up the Email delivery of the copy to and from all the sources. Our God can whip the devil any day–all it takes is prayer and sometimes a bit of patience thrown in.

It’s nice to have Jake’s Corner back, and poetry to stir our hearts. It makes up for the hassles Satan throws at us.

There Shall be Showers of Blessing, whether or not the lawn mower will start.

Jesus Loves Me, no matter what time I get started in the morning. His Amazing Grace follows me all day, every day, Yes, What a Friend We Have in Jesus. He’s there In the Garden, or on the stormy seas of life.

He sends creatures to us for joy, or comfort. Even the raccoons that inhabit my basement are cute, although potentially dangerous. Their destructive digging has un-earthed an old stairway I wanted to restore. They must leave, but isn’t it wonderful how they dug in at least one good spot? All Creatures Great and Small, even birds, learn to trust us and sing with us–right on pitch at times! The beautiful flowers will mark the seasons’ progression, all in their Creator’s timing so we have
color to cheer us every day.

In a Little While We’re Going Home, Praise God! When We All Get to Heaven we can meet our Pen Friends and rejoice for the ministry of Someone Cares that allowed us to meet. What A Day That Will Be!

Shall We Gather At The River, Sing Praise To Him Who Reigns On High, and Never Part Again!!

Someone Cares Home Page