

# Action!

## "I was in Prison..."



By John Reese



Australia was founded by Britain as a penal colony. In the late 17th century, British cities were crime-ridden and prisons were overflowing. Britain offloaded about 60,000 prisoners to the North American colonies, but that ended with the American Revolutionary War. British authorities turned to their new discovery, Australia, and shipped 165,000 prisoners there from 1786 to 1868. Many times more people came for the Gold Rush of 1851-1871 and other purposes.

As we recently witnessed in our travels, modern Australia holds many reminders of its penal past. Before the Australian trip, we participated in the 40th National Jail and Prison Ministry Workshop hosted by Killen church of Christ and Heritage Christian University in Florence, AL. We were reminded of the overwhelming needs faced by the United States. From 1920 to 2006, the U.S. general population multiplied about three times, while the number of inmates multiplied more than 20 times. At year's end 2011, nearly seven million offenders (one in every 34 U.S. adults) were under correctional supervision, not counting juveniles.

The NJPM Workshop reinforced the proven solution—God's new creation! Effective workers include former inmates rescued by Jesus. Over and over, God proves that He can transform the most degenerate into the beautiful image of His Son (pages 1 and 8). The Workshop's variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, educations and languages was impressive. I feel humbled and encouraged by those who leave comforts to persist sacrificially for one basic reason—love. Few epitomize this spirit like Mary Parham and Ray Cox (page 5)

*continued on page 7*

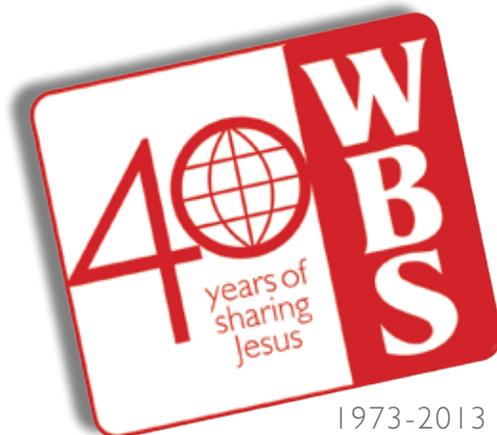
## SWAT Order: "Shoot Him"

Special: By Ronnie Crocker

See the picture at right? It's me. I had pulled a gun and then kidnapped that officer. The SWAT team had orders to shoot me. My life could have easily ended then. It was a suicide-by-cop attempt.

Mark 12:34 records Jesus saying, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." When I was young, I was so near yet so far. We

*continued on page 5*



*Editor's Note: This story came to us some time ago, but I was reminded recently of its Australia connection. By now, some of the story's sensitivities may have abated. We share it to illustrate the prison-like conditions faced by some WBS students, and the freedom God gives—even in the worst of conditions.*

# Abdul's Journey to Freedom

By Rick Walker

It has been a most unusual week in Kiev, with our activity focusing on a chain of events that began in Mogadishu, Somalia, more than one month ago. Mogadishu's conditions are well-portrayed by the movie *Black Hawk Down*.

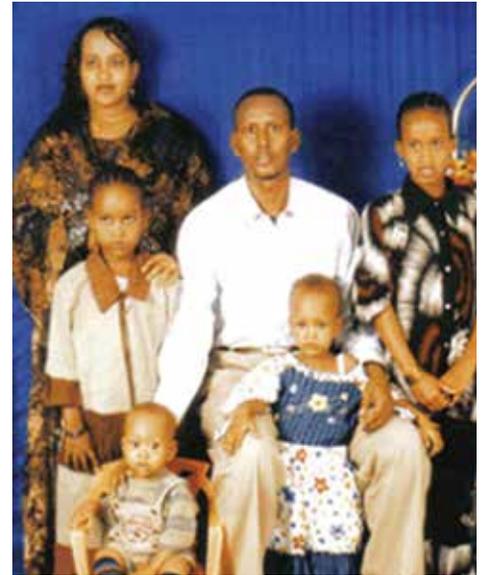
Abdul made contact with World Bible School after seeing a newspaper advertisement while he was in Nairobi, Kenya. After some five year, he was converted from Islam through WBS Internet. Credit for his teaching must go to Greg Wells, Lindisfarne church of Christ in Tasmania, Australia.

After becoming a Christian, Abdul taught and baptized his friend Solomon. They also conducted a very small Christian (family) school for their children. Abdul would not send them to the public schools

because "they teach *jihad*".

A little more than one month ago Islamic militants stormed Abdul's house on a Thursday afternoon looking for Abdul. They demanded for Solomon to reveal Abdul's location. When Solomon said he did not know, they shot him in the stomach. Abdul was called on his cell phone, came home, and took Solomon to the hospital, where he died two hours later.

Abdul fled from Somalia by plane. Abdul thought the plane was going to a neighboring African country, but instead found himself in Russia. In Moscow he joined a group being smuggled into Ukraine. Entering Ukraine they were all captured by the border guard and spent a very difficult month in a military guarded detention center. Fortunately, Ukraine is the country of Eastern Europe where churches



**Abdul, Fortoon and family**

of Christ are strongest. A local church put Abdul in contact with us in Kiev.

Abdul speaks regularly with his wife, Fortoon, by phone. She is doing well, though seven months pregnant and caring for four children. One is her youngest sister orphaned by war. This week Fortoon has been sleeping on the floor with her children because of gunfire as *jihadists* fight in their neighborhood. We are working to reunite the family.



# WBS and NewLife Behavior

By Hillary Motsinger

World history shows that a powerful idea and a dedicated leader can change the world. Jimmie Lovell and his idea fit this description. His idea was, instead of bringing the student to a school, send the school to the student. Thus was born World Bible School.

In the 1960's, I had the privilege of putting Jimmie's "Miss-A-Meal for Missions" plan into play at Dallas Christian

Schools. Later, while working at Pepperdine University, I listened to Jimmie explain his World Bible School concept that made it possible for thousands of members to evangelize at little cost and minimum inconvenience. One could be a stay-at-home missionary and still be a part of an international effort. A shy person could lead a person to



**Partners Tex Williams, Hillary Motsinger, Louise Gerber (NLB in South Africa), John Reese and Rob Pottberg**

Christ without having to learn a foreign language. Then, while a member at Skillman congregation in Dallas, I sent WBS lessons to Africa

and to U.S. prisons and kept up with news through *Action!*

Over our 29 years, *NewLife Behavior Ministries* has learned from WBS and utilized the concept of sending the curriculum to the students. NLBM, now led by Buck Griffith, has studied with almost one million (901,463) incarcerated men and women by mailing the lessons. In the last five years, NLB International, has followed WBS's lead in studying with students around the world through the internet. Over 3,000 students are enrolled in the English, Russian and Chinese NLBI courses.

To Jimmie, Reuel, Tex and John, and all at WBS, we at NLB Ministries and NLB International, say "Thank you!" And you are correct, "No one has the right to hear the Gospel twice until everyone has the right to hear it once."





## Above & Beyond

by Kevin Rhodes

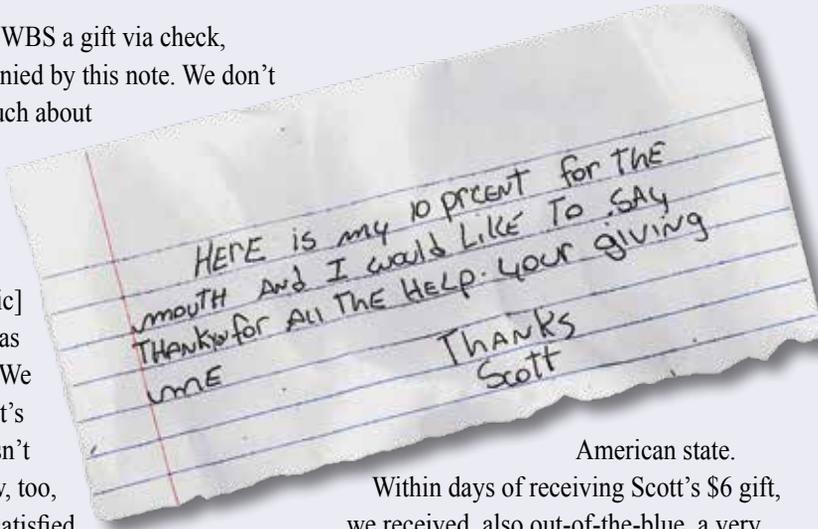
### 169935's mite.

Scott sent WBS a gift via check, accompanied by this note. We don't know much about

Scott. We know he gave generously, in fact, a full "ten percent" [sic] of his income, as he informs us. We know that Scott's hand-writing isn't great. We know, too, that Scott is a satisfied and grateful WBS student. "Thank you," he writes, "for all the help your [sic] giving me. Thanks, Scott."

I don't mind telling you how much Scott's free will, unsolicited gift to WBS was: \$6.00. That's *six dollars*. He continued to give at that level for some months. If you do the math on Scott's tithed gift and the \$6.00 amount, that means Scott's total monthly earnings were...hmm...60 bucks.

Oh yeah, there's one more thing about Scott. He is prisoner #169935 doing time in a crowded correctional facility in a mid-



American state.

Within days of receiving Scott's \$6 gift, we received, also out-of-the-blue, a very significant *five figure* gift. What a lot of money! What a blessing! But which gift do you think received the most attention and even drew tears in our office? Yes, it was the prisoner's mite.

Scott represents so many WBS students who are prisoners. As this issue illustrates, many of our WBS postal teachers see their greatest successes with students who are incarcerated. These WBS students are people like you and me, sinful beings, who have made mistakes, come to know Jesus and are saved by grace.

Here at WBS we don't appeal to our students for gifts of support (although we very occasionally may receive one). We certainly don't expect those who are prisoners to give! And yet the need and the opportunity is so vast to reach more. Every student that is being served by a WBS teacher is a spiritual prisoner deserving of God's eternal hope and freedom.

Perhaps you could give to WBS today with spiritual prisoners in mind. With every \$1.00 given to WBS, one soul studies the Bible with us. We thank you for generous gifts large and small that allow us to share Jesus with millions. Thank you for your partnership in the Gospel.



## Action!

Editor: John Reese

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## Ray Cox: Fighter for Freedom

**A**lbert Ray Cox (85) passed to his reward on May 28, 2013. Ray was diagnosed with prostate cancer several years ago. After treatment, it went into remission, but later reappeared in his bones. Despite health battles, Ray worked tirelessly and very fruitfully.

Ray dutifully served as an U.S. Air Force pilot, but he described his true commitment this way: *Let us never forget this, that our primary duty on earth is to preach the Gospel, to sow the seed of salvation among men. We can all have a sense of accomplishment because God has blessed us with such tremendous success in bringing souls to Him. But we must always understand, the power to save is in the word of God (Romans 1:16), not in us. Our congregation, Rainbow, developed a prolific World Bible School program, teaching people all over the world and we maintain that mission today.*



Ray Cox, as an Air Force pilot



Kathy Overbey and Tony Cleveland with plaque honoring Ray

Ray became a WBS teacher in 1978. Impressed with the impact and visualizing much more, Ray took the initiative to go to countless congregations to share this teaching method. For years Ray ran WBS ads in the local newspaper. He also used it to great effect in Prison/Jail ministries and in mission fields

like Zimbabwe. In Bulawayo, Ray, Norman and Dorian Flynn and Rainbow's elders set up a WBS office with Velaphi Mlangeni.

Ray entered prison ministry in 2001 using NewLife Behavior. He helped to motivate an entire prison ministry movement in Alabama. He also developed online Agape studies, which enrolled over 10,000 students from 180 countries. He referred his best students to Nations University. His extensive work continues, coordinated by Kathy Overbey.



## Brother Ray: My WBS Teacher

**I**would like to pay tribute to my most loving teacher, Ray Cox. He nurtured me patiently with the word of God, especially on the matter of salvation and baptism. While I was studying with WBS, Ray led me to Nations University two years ago. Today I completed my last course with Nations University and will earn a Bachelor of Religious Study this summer. Brother Ray has a heart that is willing to swim across the ocean to reach out to his students. He expressed his care, concern and encouragement to me constantly. He will remain in my heart and memory as a person that revealed God's love, someone that I embraced with great honor, respect and love.

From Catheryn Tan of West Malaysia



Ray Cox



## SWAT Order from page 1

lived near Palm Beach Lakes church of Christ, Florida. My coach was a deacon. Mary, my sister's best friend, was a member and lived in the house behind ours. Yet, for my first 15 years, I had never prayed, never read the Bible and never attended services. No one in my family was saved!

At 15, I stood at a fork between the wide and narrow gate. For the next 15 years, I paid a high toll on the broad way that leads to destruction. Drug use turned into abuse. Abuse led to addiction. My parents, like many in those days, tried counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists to save me. But I found myself in and out of jails, drug programs and mental hospitals. That's when the picture on page one was taken.

In Palm Beach County Jail, a preacher led me in "the sinner's prayer" and told me I was saved. After my trial, I was transported to prison. About half way through my sentence, "I came to myself" and made a vow to God to study the Bible. But different religions promoting

**I met a Gospel preacher who gave me WBS lessons. They laid everything out so clearly.**

their varying beliefs were confusing. In March 1986 I met Gospel preacher Frank Parker who gave me World Bible School lessons. They laid everything out so clearly.

Remember Mary? I wrote my mother a letter, and Mary was there when she opened it. In this letter I explained how I had found the New Testament church. Mary, who had unsuccessfully invited my family to church for years, broke down crying. On June 1, 1986, I was baptized into Christ, the first in my family. Mary introduced me to Jesse Ford who continued WBS with me. I loved getting those certificates! The encouragement gave me hope! Today, I thank God that someone took time to teach me. I thank God for WBS which played a part in the conversion of my whole family.

Since then I have ministered to thousands of addicts. In 2007, my wife Jeanie and I established Project Rescue which reaches out to church members caught in the snare of addiction. When you send that WBS lesson, you can't imagine the long-reaching effect of that one simple act. When combined with an open heart and God's providence, amazing things result!



Mary Parham

## Mary Parham Goes Home

By Mary McKinney

**M**ary Parham (81) has left for her home with Jesus. She was in charge of postal World Bible School at East Ridge church of Christ in Chattanooga, TN, and was also secretary there for 22 years. She established the Mary Parham International School in Ghana, West Africa. She went there last year with our preacher one more time. Mary loved the Lord, her family, WBS, reading and traveling. She will be missed!



## Barbara Bagwell: "Hands Free"

By Judy Hammond and Pat Thurston

We at the Pikes Peak church of Christ in Colorado Springs, CO, would like to commend our sister, Barbara Bagwell, for her diligent work in our World Bible School program.

Barbara has dystonia as a result of encephalitis contracted at the age of four years old. As a result, she has no use of her left hand and limited use of her right hand. Her hearing and speech were also affected. Despite these challenges, Barbara has never let her health deter her. She earned her BS degree and worked a full time job for eight years. After her job was phased out, she looked for meaningful volunteer work. Finally (13 years ago), "something compelled her" to volunteer for the WBS program at Pikes Peak church.

She grins now and says, "I didn't know what I was getting myself into!" **I love the work I'm doing. It's so fulfilling!**

Barbara knows the program from beginning to end and does all the computer work. How does she accomplish this with no voluntary movement in her hands? Her response would be, "with my foot and mouth, of course". She operates the computer mouse with her foot and types with a mouthstick between her teeth.

The work she does includes typing new students' names and addresses, and assigning initial lesson to teachers. She serves our 42 WBS teachers, processing as many as 400 names a month. When we receive returned lessons, she verifies all the information and often needs to make changes. She makes sure the next lesson we send is the correct one. She prints the address labels for each student and is a WBS teacher too, sometimes receiving as many as seven lessons at a time. To apply address labels, she uses an unsharpened pencil to peel back the corner of each label. She then uses her lips to finish taking off the label and stick it on the envelope.

At the first workday we had after Barbara took over this seemingly daunting endeavor, she told the WBS coordinator excitedly, "I love the work I'm doing. I haven't felt like this since I lost my job. It's so fulfilling!"

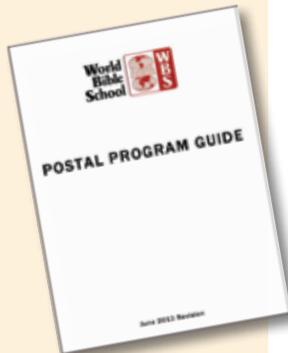


Barbara Bagwell

## New Postal Program Guide Available

Teaching with WBS postal—using printed lessons by mail—is as relevant and effective as ever. WBS teachers that have the best programs tend to have the best practices, too. Download the new, updated Program Guide to make sure your WBS teaching is reaching as many as possible.

This and other great helps are available at [www.worldbibleschool.net/resources](http://www.worldbibleschool.net/resources). If you need to have the .PDF emailed to you, email your name, contact information and church information to [postal@worldbibleschool.net](mailto:postal@worldbibleschool.net) or call 512-345-8190 or 800-311-2006.



## Compassion Comes Full Circle



A letter from Bradley Meredith to the Plymouth church

Hi, I'm Bradley. Let me share with you a miracle of sorts. For those of you who know the Lord, this will uplift you and make you smile. For those who may not know Jesus, I pray this will encourage you to change your spiritual condition so you will know the joy and love that I do now.

My story starts in late 2009. I was in prison for the fourth time, facing over 100 years. My fiancée was eight and a half months pregnant with my first child. My world fell apart when she cut me from her life due to my sentence.

In a jail cell, suicidal, at the complete end of myself, I cried out in anguish of the tragedy that my life had become. I told God that if He was listening—if He truly cared about me—to save me from myself. Since I am writing this almost two years later, you would be right to assume that He did just that.

My transition period was very rough. I lashed out at those who knew me best. I pushed away the entire world as I desperately sought out the Lord. In March 2010, I started Bible studies with many different organizations—I mean *several dozen*. It was through a lesson from World Bible School that I

### I urge every Christian to find someone who needs a friend and share the Good News.

met your beloved Zona Christensen, a woman who has become a dearly cherished friend, confidant and sister in Christ. Unlike so many others who simply graded, Zona took the time to answer my questions about the Scriptures and to offer her much welcomed insight into my situation and life.

When I completed the WBS series, I worried that the correspondence I now so dearly enjoyed would cease. I humbly asked Zona if she would write to me as a pen pal. I was overjoyed when she graciously accepted this request, and she has honored it continuously since. Not only did she write to me on a regular basis, but she also took it upon herself to contact a local minister with the church of Christ to inform him of my situation. Through Zona, I have been blessed to be baptized and to continue deeper studies with Mike Morgan, a minister of the local Culpeper church of Christ in Plymouth, FL.

I share these things not as proof of Zona's spirit, but of Christ's Spirit living through her. Through Zona, Christ has provided, taught, counseled and strengthened me. By the fruits I have tasted from Zona, I have seen first-hand what being a Christian should entail and I am blessed, having been

continued on page 7

# WBS Goes to the Y and Prison

By Barry Poyner

Our congregation, the Kirkville, MO, church of Christ, recently rediscovered World Bible School when we had a Mission Emphasis Sunday and invited Bill Colwell to speak. All monies contributed on this day went to world evangelism. We discovered the exciting possibilities with Internet teaching, enrolled in WBS Connect, and signed

## Inmates Visit WBS

By Lori Brady

Two men recently visited the World Bible School offices in Cedar Park, TX. Both were former inmates who had studied WBS lessons while incarcerated.

One was looking for WBS lessons for his children. He said since he had been locked up for four years, there wasn't much order in his house anymore. He wanted to read the lessons with his children. He also related how, using the lessons from WBS and other materials, the inmates would sit around and discuss and debate religious matters. He asked for a Bible since the family struggled to understand their King James Version. We were glad to oblige!

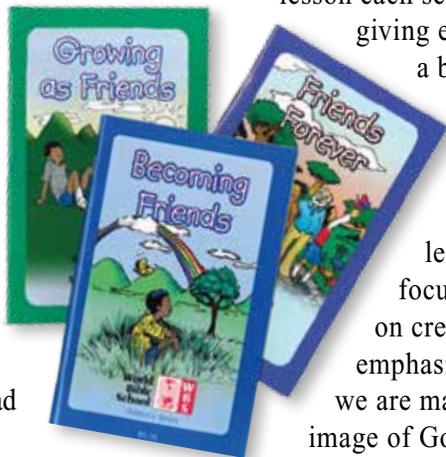
The second one was so excited that he had actually stumbled across our WBS offices! He even took a picture of some of the staff in front of the WBS sign to post on his Facebook page! He showed the Bible given to him by his WBS Study Helper. It was tattered and worn and held together by electrical tape. He talked about how much the Bible had meant to him through the years and how much he relies upon it to this day.



up nine members as teachers. We also distributed WBS lessons to area prisoners.

Then we discovered the WBS Children's Series booklets designed for children ages 8-12. The local YMCA recently contacted us for help, and we heard the Macedonian call! They were going to have a fair, so we signed up to have a booth and had Bible Quiz games there. We then asked if we could help in some way with after-school programs. Their Summer program was already planned, but they offered us three consecutive Thursday afternoon sessions. We gladly accepted.

What fun it was to see 16 high-energy children, jumping, skipping and hopping from the adjacent school. We knew we needed to be interactive. We used the three WBS children's booklets, highlighting one lesson each session and giving each child a booklet to take home each time. The first session's lesson focused on creation, emphasizing that we are made in the image of God. When we talked about creation,



we gave each child a packet of seeds with the church business card stapled to it. We encouraged them to complete the enclosed quiz sheet and return it the next week to be eligible for a prize drawing.

Our goal in this outreach was to make new friends, to acquaint others with the church and to organize a short-term outreach effort. You can do the same!



I Was in Prison from page 1

who embodied partnership, using World Bible School, *NewLife Behavior* (page 2), *Agape* and *Nations University*.

What if your home country is a virtual prison? (See page 2.) What if, instead of shackled wrists, illness robs your hands of ability? (See page 6.) Loss of freedom comes in many forms. Our stories illustrate that God works in all such situations. He creates free spirits that refuse to be conquered. He works through caring hearts. As He says in Matthew 25:36, "I was in prison and...." And you get to prepare your answer to Him.



Compassion from page 6

guided by a "doer" of the Word with a saintly heart.

I urge every Christian to go the extra mile like Zona, to find someone who needs a friend and to share the Good News. There was a time when Zona was the only friend I had. Now I thankfully call her my sister through the lessons she taught me. I have been responsible for leading over a dozen others to the foot of the cross.

Zona and her husband have gone through health issues in the past many months. Zona has often expressed her undying gratitude for the help she has received from her church family. For those that have been of assistance to her and Bert, I personally thank you. Christ in me commends you for the good work you have done in caring for his faithful servants. I am proud to know that a church is not only preaching the Word, but also practicing the Spirit of Christ in its walk. For those of you who do not know these two members, please join me in remembering them both in your daily supplications.

I thank you all greatly and ask that our Heavenly Father bless you all as abundantly as He has truly blessed me.

In Christ, Bradley





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# I Was Sentenced to the Electric Chair

By Clyde Thompson

**I**t is great and wonderful what God did for me. At 17, I was sentenced to the electric chair. At 19, I was the youngest man placed on death row at Huntsville. I had 60 days to live.



A prison photo of Clyde

While on death row, I overheard a guard's radio and P. D. Wilmeth preaching. He baptized me six days before I was to be executed. Four days later, I received a stay of execution to await another trial. They had already given me my last bath and offered my last meal.

Later the governor commuted my sentence to life. For a year I lived faithful to my Lord. Not one Christian came. Had Christians come, I am sure that the horrible things that happened afterward

would not have happened.

**The more I studied my Bible, the more I discovered it was Truth.**

[Experiencing extreme

brutality...] I lost my faith completely. I was determined to escape. I would make them kill me or I would get away. I killed two inmates in knife fights. I now had three life sentences and no hope of getting out unless I broke out. Things went from bad to worse at "Little Alcatraz." Finally, officials isolated me in an old morgue behind death row.

[Eventually I got a Bible.] The more I studied it, the more it convinced me that it was a book of truth and I was false. I realized this is the actual Word of God and our only hope. I repented in tears, on my knees day and night for months. My life since then is a testimony to the fact that a person who has committed murder



Don (author) and Kim Umphrey

can be saved. When one finds out that he is a sinner, lost, undone, and without hope, and he turns back to God, God will help him and use him. Though eight are dead because of me, God later saved many people through me. I

thank God that He used me for His cause, but I don't thank God for sin. I thank God that He brought me to understand that I couldn't save myself, and the only hope was His mercy through Jesus.

Through a preacher friend, I became acquainted with a Christian lady. We fell in love and planned to be married. The prison manager told her, "Young lady, you might as well go on and forget this fellow. He'll never get out of prison." But again



God accomplished the impossible. I was released. We were married. God gave us a wonderful family and ministry.

Clyde's story is summarized here. The details are truly compelling. Christian journalist and professor Don Umphrey tells those in *The Meanest Man in Texas*, Quarry Press, P.O. Box 181736, Dallas, TX 75218.



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