

Compassion

Written by Death-Row Prisoners

140 W. South Boundary Street • Perrysburg, Ohio 43551

MaY 2005, Volume 5, Issue 24 (Bimonthly)

If Dreams Come True

*If dreams were given to a man like
me*

*And those dreams came true
I would force myself to sleep at night
So I would always dream of you.*

*If wishes were given to a lonely man
And I were given two
I would wish for your eternal love
The other I would give to you.*

*If my tears could write love poems
Before my tears were through
You would know how I feel inside
And how much I love you.*

*Dennis Skillicorn
Missouri Death Row
Mineral Point, MO*

Compassion Awards Scholarship to

Law Enforcement Student

After reading his moving essay, the editors unanimously agreed to award Zach Osborn Compassion's latest scholarship. We would like to support him in realizing his dream of becoming an officer of the law and finding a way to prevent future violence. Zach is to be commended for the way he has risen above that "wasted fury" and found forgiveness in his heart.

Despite our bad choices, we still believe in the concept of right and wrong, and support what is right. Some people may question our sincerity, but our intent is genuine. As Frederick Douglass said, "The simplest truths often meet the sternest resistance and are the slowest in getting general acceptance."

We hope Zach accepts this scholarship in the heartfelt spirit in which it is given. It is our desire to continue this work and award academic scholarships as often as possible.

Sincerely,
Compassion's Editorial Staff

Compassion Scholarship Recipient

I Have Finally Been Able to Forgive...

For thirteen years I have been without a sister. Natalie Lynn Osborne had only been my sister for four years when she was taken away from my family and me. I pray for her every day and even though I know she is in a better place, I still wish she was here.

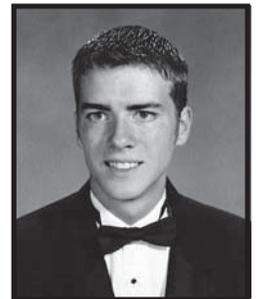
I was only six years old when she disappeared from our room one day. That night I didn't know where she was or why the police were there. An officer asked me if I had seen anyone that may have kidnapped her. When I replied, I described my mother's ex-boyfriend, Jeff Kandies, because earlier I saw him yelling at her, so I described the last man I saw with her.

After much investigation, Jeff turned himself in and told the police where my sister was. They found her dead, hidden in a closet wearing nothing but her underwear and stuffed in a black trash bag. At only six years old I didn't know what was happening, and it took many years for me to find out the truth. Reading old and recent newspaper articles about her death revealed to me that she was raped and had multiple head fractures from severe abuse.

My parents had already been divorced, but her death has torn my family completely apart. Natalie's death has haunted my family since the day she was found. I not only lost my only sister, but also a very close, loving family who once loved each other very dearly.

Now I am nineteen years old and still wish that I had a sister to talk to, have fun with, love and protect. After many long years of wasted fury, I have finally been able to forgive Jeff for his crime against my family. If I were to receive this scholarship, I would be able to pursue my dreams of becoming an officer of the law by majoring in criminal justice at East Carolina University. Through realizing this dream, I would play a key role in preventing situations like this from ever happening again.

Zach Osborne
Jamestown, NC



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LETTERS to the Editor

Letters to the Editor are welcomed from all prisoners (this includes non-death row prisoners) and the outside community.

In submitting letters, we ask that compassionate and introspective guidelines apply to your communications.

Limit size to 400 words or less. Letters may be edited for clarity and space considerations.

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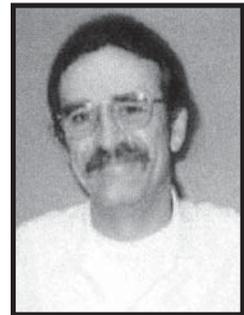
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EDITORIAL

To Rise Above



Have you ever had an idea or philosophy you wanted to share with others, but just the thought of getting up in front of people made you sweat or put a lump in your throat? As a result, instead of facing your fears, you ended up rejecting the whole idea.

I know this has happened to me. It can be a real stumbling block, and we will always come away from a situation like that, less than satisfied.

This type of social shyness is common to many of us, but it can be overcome. Don't be afraid to share your ideas. You might be surprised at the result.

Recently, I joined a new program called The Full Circle. It was created by several long-term offenders who saw a need in their community, and took the initiative to do what they could to meet it. This program addresses social skills, cognitive awareness, alternative thinking, and communication. The curriculum is designed to raise self-awareness and help members develop an ability to best represent themselves to others. If you present things in the right way, it gives your presentation more credibility.

Right where you are, there are men or women around you who have needs that could be met. Maybe you have an idea how to meet those needs. Nothing is unrealistic if you have a positive vision. You may feel you can't get anything done from your side of the fence or wall, but many of the world's greatest contributions have come by way of those who were oppressed.

For example, Stanley "Tookie" Williams, from death row at San Quentin, was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his work with youth. His work includes a number of children's books that stress making good choices and avoiding gang activity.

Award-winning journalist Wilbert Rideau, from the depths of Angola Prison, completed an Oscar-nominated film on Angola and turned the prison newspaper into a nationally acclaimed magazine. Through "The Angolite," he did a great deal to improve living conditions in the prison.

The Apostle Paul wrote the majority of the New Testament while incarcerated. His sharing of God's Word continues to impact millions of people every day.

All these men rose above their physical circumstances and made their dreams a reality. All that is required from you is to take the initiative, like the men of Full Circle and so many others. Seek out institutional remedies and resources. There are many options. Why not put them to work for the overall good of your environment and the community?

At Potosi Correctional Center, men sought out available information and patiently went to work to make their suggestions a reality. The men founded and now facilitate several successful organizations.

4-H LIFE (Living Interactive Family Education) is a family-strengthening program that allows those who are incarcerated to learn how to be more effective parents and role models in their child's life. Hospice provides palliative care for those with terminal illnesses. ICVC (Impact on Crime Victims Class) teaches about accountability and the need to reconcile broken relationships. Restorative Justice works with many organizations to give back to society. They participate in campaigns against smoking, drugs and violence, and raise money for Special Olympics, American Cancer Society, and local shelters and nursing homes.

Men here at PCC aspired to become better writers, so they sought out volunteers and began a creative writing class. As a result, their writing has greatly improved.

The creation of this very publication is the result of one man's ideas. Siddique Hasan knew incarcerated men and women could work together to give back to society. He took the initiative to find a way to make it happen. He diligently pursued his options, and you are now reading the result of that effort.

You can contact your institutional activities coordinator to see what you are able to accomplish. Whatever your ideas, it is very likely there are skillful volunteers willing to donate their time to aid you in your endeavor. If you would like to write to Compassion with your ideas, we will try to give you information that is available.

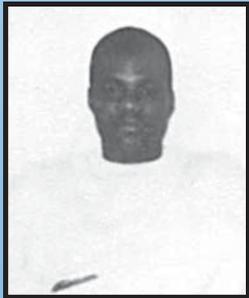
Idle hands or closed minds will take you absolutely nowhere. However, education in whatever area you choose will take you away from the confines of your situation and allow you to explore wonders you never thought possible.

Dennis Skillicorn
Missouri Death Row
Mineral Point, Mo.

Days of Tomorrow

To ponder life
With conscious thought
To deal with one another
As we ought
To move forward
After studying the past
To eradicate racial prejudice
And distinction of class
To equalize
Both large and small
The rich and the poor
That whosoever needs
Need no more
To respect life
As the greatest gift
Ever given
Remembering the Creator gave it
Because it's worth living

Melvin Speight
Pennsylvania Death Row
Waynesburg PA



Letters TO THE Editor

Know Us As We Really Are

Dear *Compassion*,

My name is John Joe Amador. I recently had an article featured in volume 15, edition 22 of your newsletter. Its title was "Laugh No More." I want to thank you and your staff for taking the time to print it. It sends a positive message for all of us.

I also read about Mr. Arthell V. Harris, your scholarship essay winner. I want to wish this young man the very best of luck in life.

A lot of emotions ran through me as I read what you did for him. I want to help you keep this very positive program alive. I cannot contribute any money, but there is something I would like to contribute on behalf of those on Texas Death Row. I've been blessed with patience, understanding and love. I found that I can express what is in my soul through my painting. My wife-to-be and I have a project that we soon will start in Texas. What I would like to propose is to donate a painting to *Compassion* to auction off. The proceeds would go to the family members of murdered victims by way of your scholarship. It would be a tremendous honor for me if you would accept.

Given your experience dealing with prisoners, I know I don't have to tell you of the stigma and negative image that we live with. But I'm hopeful that other incarcerated artists will become motivated by what I'm trying to do here and follow suit. We're here for a reason. If we could only learn to lower our guard and let people out there come to know us as we really are, not the way we are portrayed by the system, I believe it would be something healing and beneficial for us all.

With this spirit, I ask that you help me help others to see their path. Thank you in advance.

Your brother in humanity,
Ash

John Joe Amador
Texas Death Row
Livingston, TX 77351

[Editor's note: Compassion thinks Mr. Amador's suggestion is a wonderful one, and we add our encouragement to other inmates to donate their artwork as well. If we accumulate enough artwork, we will auction the items off, with proceeds of each going to our scholarship fund in the name of the respective artist. Please remember that all submissions should be appropriate for publication in Compassion.]

A Beacon of Hope

Dear *Compassion*,

I was fortunate enough to view the article in your publication written by Siddique Abdullah Hasan in reference to the humanitarianism of Mr. Staughton Lynd. While reading Brother Hasan's tribute to Mr. Lynd, I could only smile to myself, because somehow he was able to find all the right words to describe Mr. Lynd's genuine concern for human rights and dignity.

I have been blessed with the honor and privilege of knowing this humanitarian and personally experiencing his continuing advocacy of all mankind. Mr. Lynd and his wife, Alice, have spent countless hours assisting me and being a voice for me.

Though I can't say that I'm any closer to receiving justice through their tireless work, I can say that the good they've done for me goes far beyond any courtroom. Therefore, I commend Brother Hasan for having the ability to convey the message of gratitude that speaks for many of us.

However, this compels me to write about another godly man and humanitarian, Mr. Ray A. Harris. Upon learning of my dilemma, and knowing that I could not afford to hire his company, Mr. Harris agreed to build a fantastic Web site for me (ourfight4justice.com). He did so to give me a voice to generate help in my fight for justice. I can only assume that he took on this project after prayer and out of the humanitarian spirit and compassion he possesses.

Nothing may become of this as far as my fight for justice. Nevertheless, men like Mr. Lynd and Mr. Harris are an inspiration. Not only do they provide a voice, but also hope for the forgotten and light for those who only see darkness.

For myself and many others, I thank both men for being our beacon of hope and changing our lives.
May God bless them and their families.

Derek Cannon
Ohio State Penitentiary

SCHOLARSHIPS Available

Half the funds from subscriptions and undesignated donations to *Compassion* are given as college scholarships to immediate family members (parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, sibling) of murdered victims.

Funds for immediate awards are available. If you or someone you know is a U.S. citizen and is either attending or planning on attending a college or university (academic or religious) as a student and had a family member murdered, please submit an application.

To obtain an application, write to *Compassion* at 140 W. South Boundary St., Perrysburg, Ohio 43551, or call (419) 874-1333. Please ask for *Compassion's* office. Or visit our website at compassion43551.tripod.com/compassion/id3.html

Thank

You

To Our Readers



Anything death-row prisoners write may jeopardize their future appeals.

*For articles *Compassion* wishes to publish, we request prisoners furnish us with their legal representatives' names and addresses, if possible, so they may review their submission. Knowledge of these facts may limit the scope of a prisoner's expressions.*

All stories are subject to editing for grammar, sentence structure and clarity.

Letters TO THE Editor

Continued...

A Source of Inspiration

Dear *Compassion*,

Reading about those individuals living under the harsh penalty of death, earnestly relaying the wisdom they have earned through a life of pain and torment, gives me hope. However, many of the eyes of society by which a man is judged, tried, and punished, seem to close upon his conviction. In doing this, they fail to see the transformation that many of these condemned brothers and sisters have made.

The emergence of the human being from the previous pit of darkness is lost to many in society. For they have shielded themselves from witnessing the compassion which unfolds within the condemned as the seal is lifted from their hearts and the blindness from their eyes.

It is the greatest loss to society, that people cannot see this change. As a result of my relationship with one of these condemned individuals, I have been blessed to see the beauty in this individual. Because after the struggle of repentance, self-purification and forgiveness, a beautiful person arises, who is worthy of the enlarged community called humanity.

Through the teachings of the Noble Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon you), I have learned the true meaning of being a man, a Muslim, a son and a brother. Moreover, through the writings of these men and women published in *Compassion*, I have learned the true meaning of being a human being.

May they continue to be my source of inspiration.

Abdullah Hasan c/a Robert Bolton
Georgia Death Row
Sylvania, GA

A Perspective on Jihad

I have studied under the Sunnah (the orders, acts of worship, statements, and the legal ways of the Prophet of Islam that have become models to be followed by the Mu'min) of all Islam for 16 years. That which is now being presented as Jihad is not of Islam. Aggression is forbidden. Jihad is a spiritual quest. The state of Jihad is one of peace and reconciliation. A struggle to enlighten one's psychological and emotional functions is Jihad.

Jihad is a personal, individual, spiritual journey and is not associated with anger, hate, or man's physical wars. Jihad is a communion with self. To obtain peace is Jihad. That is the true and only definition of Jihad, according to the Prophet of Islam.

Abu Ali Abdur Rahman
Tennessee Death Row
Nashville, TN

*Please Donate
to our
Scholarship
Fund...*



PRISONERS:
*Helping others is
contagious.*

DONATE TO OUR SCHOLASHIP FUND to help a family member of a murdered victim attend a college or university. Thank You.

Contributing since last issue:
Anthony Bankston
California Death Row \$50.00

SEND TO:
Compassion
140 W. South Boundary St.
Perrysburg, OH 43551

Editor's note: Al Cunningham wishes to share with readers this story and the message it gives.

Different People

A water bearer in India had two large pots. Each hung on the end of a pole, which he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years, this went on daily. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, but the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was only able to accomplish half of what it had been made to do.

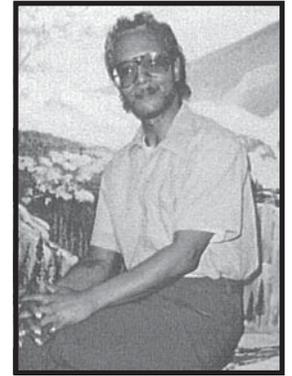
After two years of perceiving itself as a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you. I have been able to deliver only half my load, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house. Because of my flaws, you have to do all the burden and you don't get full value from your efforts."

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that there were flowers only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I've always known about your flaw. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path. Every day as we walked back, you watered them. For two years, I've been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

Each of us has our own flaws. We're all cracked pots. But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take people for what they are, and look for the good in them.

Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape. Remember to appreciate all the different people in your life.



Al Cunningham
California Death Row
San Quentin, CA

Remember My Chains

As I sit in this prison watching the seasons change, the years, months and days go by while I count the hours. I'm reminded that I'm getting older. My daughter is growing up and maturing into a fine, responsible, beautiful young lady.

Incarceration not only affords me too much time to think and reflect, but it's emotionally, psychologically, and physically draining.

Though the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed, day by day. Steel bars, concrete, and isolation can have a dehumanizing effect, therefore numbing one's sensitivities. Incarceration to me feels like being constantly exposed to the elements – such a fierce wind, storms, hail and snow. As beautiful as the sun feels to one's skin, too much exposure can cause a myriad of health problems.

When a building, or any inanimate object, is exposed too long to the aforementioned elements, it will eventually cause damage to its structure and if not repaired, can cause destruction. The same argument can be made for those separated from society, family, friends, a life, and those we love, coupled with the steel and concrete, can cause despair, even in the strong. It feels like being exposed to all the elements, depending on the season of the year.

I'm in no way clearing or absolving the guilty, nor complaining or blaming anyone else, nor am I saying everyone in prison is guilty. It has been proven, time and time again, innumerable innocent persons have been convicted and sent to prison, only to be exonerated later. What I'm saying is, I can't even put into words the importance and necessity of having the constant support and love of our family and friends.

That love and support is what shields us from the elements associated with isolation and the pain of being forgotten: loneliness, despair, a feeling of being unworthy of love, degradation, and a loss of self-respect.

God also offers a plan, not just to those who are bound by chains, but to the free, also. He has a plan of salvation that is available to those who have no support from family and friends.

God has given me a secret place where I can hide to shield myself from the loneliness and despair. Jesus is my refuge and a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs says, "Better is a friend that is near than a relative far away."

I can call on Him any time of the day and night, or when I cannot get to the telephone. When I'm burdened with the cares or problems of life, I can cry out to the Lord, and He gives me peace.

If you know someone in prison, visit him or her, as our Savior instructs us. Remember those of us in chains.

Marcus A. Wellons
Georgia Death Row
Jackson, GA

My "Dear John" Letter

This message is to men and the outside and incarcerated men who will be getting out some day, to let them know how important it is to keep their commitments to their wives and their children.

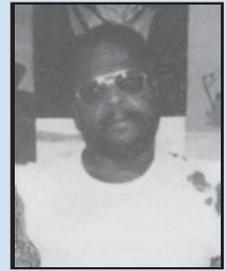
I am a death row inmate who once had the opportunities of a lifetime to become successful. At that time, I saw two paths that may lead me to the wealth I was longing for. The long path to success would require me to perform hard work and tighten up my wallet. The other path was a shortcut to success. I could only choose one, and live with the consequences.

Today, I received my "Dear John" letter from my beloved saying:

"Dear James, I would like to bring back some old memories to your attention. I can remember when we first met. You wined and dined me until I could no longer resist your proposal to marry you. It wasn't long before we were walking down the aisle together and standing before the preacher. There, under oath to God, we made our commitments to each other. Because we both believed at the time that our oath would bind us for the rest of our lives, we added 'til death do we part.' We ended up having two beautiful children together. We were both responsible for seeing that they get tender loving care, that we provide them with the best protection possible and means to achieve an education. And to instill in them good moral and spiritual guidance as well as to keep our commitments to each other. But there came a time when you got off the path of righteousness and got on the path that you called 'the shortcut to wealth.' You started running around on me and staying out all night. You not only became a cheating husband, but you also started committing criminal acts. I warned you to settle down or you would wind up doing time. But you would only look into my eyes with a smile and say, 'Loving one woman is a waste of my time, and why work for something that is easy to steal.' James, you broke your oath to me and you failed your responsibilities being a father to your children. Therefore, I am no longer beholden to any commitments I made to you. Especially, 'til death do we part.' You have failed me and your children. But don't feel sorry for us, because I found that perfect man who will stand by me 'til death do we part. And that man is now the perfect father to your children. I will always tell your children about the good side of you, and when you are man enough, please tell them about your bad side. James, this is goodbye forever from your best friend and I."

Oh, my God! I can remember when it came to pass that my best friend was sad and blue. So I told him, "What's mine also belongs to you." So he took my wife and he left me his empty life. Oh, my darling, it's so hard to hear you say goodbye. Oh, what a way to do my time.

James Jones
Pennsylvania Death Row
Waynesburg, PA.



The Heart of God

Greetings to all Compassionate readers! Well, I've made it into another year by the mercy and grace of God. As this New Year begins, we will all be faced with new challenges. Some will be worse than others. Pro sports players will face the challenge of helping their team to remain a winning team. Actors will face the challenge of producing a better box-office movie. Recording artists will try to find that Billboard song that will stay number one for a long time.

Being in a covenant relationship with Jesus Christ, I thought ... what challenge does a person who believes in Christ have? Jesus always gave parables when He wanted disciples and other followers to know how to deal with the challenge of a wicked and perverse society.

So, please indulge me as I share the parable of two men in prison on death row. One was a Christian, the other was not. Both men were housed next to each other in one-man cells, where they stayed 23 hours a day. The non-Christian was very moody, and often didn't like the Christian because he kept pretty much to himself, not bothering anyone.

This non-Christian talked about the Christian in hurtful ways, for no other reason than he just didn't like him. Several times, the Christian noticed the non-Christian had not received commissary. Out of the goodness of his heart, he blessed the non-Christian.

One day, the non-Christian had been real ugly with the Christian, even to the point of threatening him because he would not go to recreation. This was commissary night. As the Christian made out his list, the spirit of the Lord spoke and told him to buy the non-Christian a few items.

You can imagine how the Christian felt after the hard day he had had with the non-Christian. His first challenge was to obey the voice of the Lord. He struggled, but he heeded and did as the Lord said. The second challenge would come the next day when he received his commissary. The devil crept up and gave the Christian some of the most sound logic as to why he should not give the non-Christian anything.

The arguments were compelling. But the Christian remembered, the Lord said to do this. The Christian bagged the items up and sent them over to the non-Christian.

After getting the package, the non-Christian said, "Why did you do this? I didn't ask you for anything."

The Christian softly said, "I know you didn't ask for it."

The non-Christian's heart was so full of evil that it was beyond his comprehension that someone who he had been treating so rudely for so long would want to buy him anything. The Christian, on the other hand, came to learn the challenge of having a pure heart.

What the Christian did had nothing to do with himself. It was about a covenant relationship with Christ and a willingness to obey His voice while trusting His guidance.

For the non-Christian, it was God revealing His love to a soul who needs love.

To society, this parable is about the challenge of the heart. Many in prison are looked upon by society as the filth of the world. Jeremiah 14:9 states, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?"

As believers in Christ, the challenge every day is to live our lives separate from the mandate of a wicked society. We are challenged daily to love, give, touch and forgive different from the world. In everything we do, it should be done in the pureness of one's heart.

To those outside prison walls who often wonder how they can witness to a soul behind prison walls, listen to the voice of God. If He's challenged you to help a prisoner more than you have, or write a prisoner in need of love, listen to the voice of God. Just think, one day a person behind bars, whether a Christian or non-Christian, may say to you, "Why did you do this for me? I didn't ask you to do this."

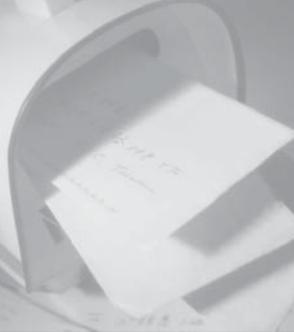
And you can, with peace and joy in your heart, tell them, "I know you didn't ask me for anything. But I didn't do it from my heart, but from the heart of God."

Ke'ry Allen

Texas Death Row
Livingston, TX

**Please mail
your writings to:**

**COMPASSION
140 W. SOUTH BOUNDARY ST.
PERRYSBURG, OH 43551**



DEATH-ROW PRISONERS SEND US YOUR ARTICLE OR LETTER

Suggestions

Write a compassionate article about someone else.
Write something about yourself that would interest others.
Write about an experience that had an impact on your life.
Write about something positive you have done in prison.
Compose a poem to share with others.
Your article or letter does not have to be religious in nature.

Try to limit your article to 400 words or less.
If possible, enclose a photo of yourself and your attorney's name & address.

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COMPASSION IS SENT FREE TO ALL 3,400 U.S. DEATH-ROW PRISONERS. HALF OF SUBSCRIPTIONS AND UNDESIGNATED DONATIONS ARE GIVEN IN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS TO IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS OF MURDERED VICTIMS. PLEASE SEND YOUR DONATION TODAY! THANK YOU!

COMPASSION

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An Appeal to the Outside Community

Half of all subscriptions and undesignated donations are given in college scholarship form to family members of murdered victims. Please help us. Contribute now so that we can maintain free distribution of *Compassion* to all 3400 death-row prisoners. See form on page 7.

Thank you.

I'VE OPENED MY HEART

I remember a time when my life was full of sin
Street life was the only way that's how I spent most of my days
I remember a time when drugs was my only friend
Didn't worry about my future dyas, Dear Lord hear me when I say

I'm tired of running around I need to stand on solid ground
No more lies, games, drugs or sin. I'm knocking on Heaven's door
Lord, please let me in.

I've opened my heart to you Lord. I'm seeking the peace you promised in your Word.
I'm down on my knees I'm begging you please to forgive me and send me your love.

I remember a time my heart was full of so much pain
Didn'

T have any place to go the devil tearing at myt soul
I remember a time I a was told about a special love
If I believed in Jesus Christ I would gain eternal life.

By

Leon Taylor And
William Weaver
Missouri Death Row
Mineral Point, MO