

Human Kindness Foundation

a little good news

Summer/Fall 2003

TRANSFORMATION: TALL TOM'S STORY

[Editor's Note:] This is the third in a series of interviews with people who have gone through tremendous spiritual change while in the prison system. We at HKF find these stories powerful and inspiring in two ways: First, they serve as a voice – however small – opposing the popular attitude that all prisoners are dangerous criminals incapable of change; second, as a reminder of hope and encouragement to all of us who wonder whether our own transformation is possible. Josh Lozoff interviewed Tom through correspondence, having been turned down in his request to meet with Tom in person.

[from Josh:] Tom Dodson's first prison bid was 30 years ago, at the age of 22. He's been serving a life sentence for the last 16 years. In that time, Tom has gone from being – in the words of a friend – a “manipulative dope fiend,” to becoming a true leader in his community. I choose the word “community,” because that's how Tom feels about his part of the Ellis Unit in Huntsville, Texas. He has facilitated AA meetings, formed a Hep-C support group, and helped run a recovery unit. He even started the Bar None Soup Kitchen, informally collecting soup packages from prisoners, and distributing them to others who didn't have canteen money.

Tall Tom has long been a source of inspiration for us here at HKF and for me personally. Throughout his own personal struggles (and he's had plenty), he is constantly aware that he's part of a larger picture; that he has a responsibility to the people around him. I hope this interview encourages and inspires you.

Let's start by talking about what kind of guy you were when you got locked up.

The simplest answer would be that I was selfish, self-centered, angry, scared, confused, foolhardy and irresponsible. That even applied to me when I was seven years old and the police picked up my brother Jim and me for trespassing. The police rode us around in their car to scare us, then let us out at the end of our street with the implied threat of “get it right or we'll get you later.” At that point in my life I had no idea how prophetic that officer's words would turn out to be. By the time I went to prison in 1973, I'd been involved with drugs for years and had been arrested several times. I was 22 years old.

Looking back, do you have a sense of why your life took that direction?

I think the first pivotal event was when my dad got killed when I was six. I made some choices at six to see myself as a victim and I stuck with those choices for decades. Those choices had an affect on my emotional and spiritual growth. Most notably, I blamed God for my dad's death, and despite years of going to church in my youth, I had no use for a God that would kill my daddy.

Back then, did you have any conscious spiritual perspective other than anger at God?

Well, I had my first conscious brush with transformation during an 18-month period of 12-step sobriety in which I learned hatha yoga and Transcendental Meditation. Unfortunately, the land of illusion still held a persuasive sway over me. One day I was overwhelmed by my

emotions, and an old thought-pattern told me heroin was the solution. Three months later I was sitting in jail for a drugstore robbery that netted me that first prison sentence.

From 1973 to 1987 I was only out on the streets for 18 months at a stretch. Then in '87, I received a life sentence for another robbery and I've been locked up ever since.

What did it feel like to hear “Life Sentence?”

The reality of it is something that came in bits and pieces over time. I held out hope for some possible relief from the courts for a number of years, and very early on I had thoughts of flying this coop. The reaction is both internal and external. Externally, it's the stiff upper lip – that's the only acceptable external facade. Internally, either you shut down your emotions, and/or you distract yourself from the onslaught of feelings that seem as if they'll overwhelm you. I did some of both. Anything fit the bill for me – schemes, dreams, drugs, alcohol, gambling, exercise, masturbation, TV, reading, sleeping, eating, whatever.

So from that space, how did your process of spiritual transformation start?

Well, in retrospect, I view my whole life as part of my awakening. But there have been specific pivotal events which affected me and gave me opportunities to start developing, refining, and defining my relationships with God and all living beings. Since I got busted in 1987, I've been blessed to meet and get to know a series of loving and caring people who exposed me to the wisdom of the ages. I got just what I needed in each particular situation.

But no one dramatic moment where things just suddenly changed for you?

No specific moment, but the process did seem dramatic at the time I became aware it was happening. Most notably because I lost the compulsion to use drugs or alcohol, and for me that was a miracle! When I sobered up in 1993, our substance abuse counselor, Pat Peterson, became my mentor. For years his guidance helped me through the healing process, which in turn helped me become conscious of my spiritual awakening.

“Conscious of spiritual awakening” is a good way to put it. I guess it’s true that spiritual transformation is a life-long process whether we know it’s happening or not. But becoming *aware* of that process is a big step. What do you remember about the beginning of that period of awareness – stuff you had to work through?

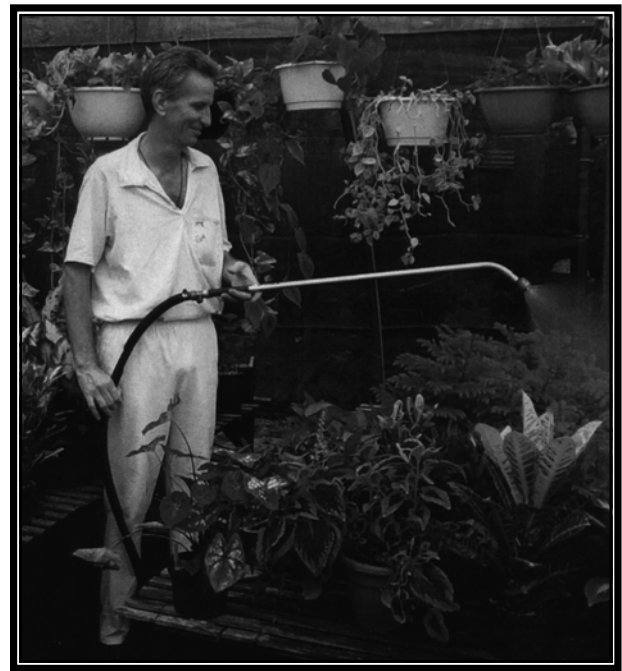
As I was beginning to open up, it was suggested to me that I pray for a deeper understanding of fear. I thought that sounded stupid, but I was willing to follow the suggestion of someone who was wiser than me. Strange things started happening. I came to realize that all the anger and resentments I had towards the criminal justice system, and toward certain people, were just different levels of fear. I had allowed fear to rule my life. Today, although fear still exists in my life, it’s no longer the force behind the bulk of my decision-making. I can experience fear and anger, and if I can refrain from opening my mouth to say something antagonistically or confrontationally, the feeling will pass and I’ll survive the experience. Whereas in the past, I thought that if I didn’t say something or act out violently, I wouldn’t survive whatever experience I was having.

When I first began doing this, I ran up against my old belief system and my ingrained interpretation of what a man is, and how he should respond to those feelings. Those were my worst enemies.

That’s an interesting realization. We’re taught that standing up for yourself and confronting people is the way to overcome fear. But a lot of time, sitting still and letting the anger pass is a lot scarier and takes more courage. Is this fear/anger thing a resolved issue, or are you still working on it?

Well, it’s been ten years now, and sometimes I’m surprised when someone tells me that I handled a situation so much better than I used to. When all I’ve done is just kept my mouth shut and not raised my hands.

My thoughts might not always be the healthiest, but the main difference is that now, when I get triggered, I immediately start processing what’s going on by asking myself, “What is it that scares me about this situation?” I’d say that in the last ten years, 99.9 percent of all the situations where I allowed myself to get angry, I eventually identify some form of fear at the root of it all.



Tall Tom in the Ellis Unit greenhouse.

Sometimes my consciousness seems to fade and I allow fear to have its way. Dealing with fear as it manifests itself in anger, control issues, expectations about how other people and institutions should behave and perform have been some of the hardest tests for me.

How did your friends inside react as they saw you changing?

Lots of them were sure I was running a game, or that in time I’d come to my senses and get back into the mix, the criminal life.

Did these friends kind of fade away as they saw you were changing for real?

Actually, I must say that many of these old cons really have stayed in my corner all these years. That’s cool for me because, even though I’ve made some big changes, I have years of hard knocks history with these guys and love them like brothers.

Have any of your friends gone through their own transformation at this point?

Yeah, a number of men. Everyday I see, or sense, something that shows me glimpses of subtle and not so subtle shifts in these men and their perceptions of the world.

Have you ever made contact with your crime victims?

Yes, I contacted an agency called Victim-Offender Mediation Dialogue Program. I couldn’t contact my own personal victims because the victim must initiate the process, but the contact led me to better understand the victim’s perspective. I did get to participate with a group of inmates in several sessions when the Victim-Offender program staff was training new employees. That was a phenomenally healing experience.

I learned that there seems to be a time for healing everything, yet you can't set a timetable for it. All you can do is be willing, and when it is supposed to happen it will. It has worked like that so many times for me that I absolutely believe it now.

What is your daily spiritual practice these days?

I start my day with hatha yoga, meditation, and prayer. I do some form of inspirational reading on a daily basis. For the last nine years I've started every day by reading from a book called *Pocketful of Miracles* by Joan Borysenko. It's a great book for me because it draws from and honors a great number of spiritual traditions.

Five days a week I work at the horticulture school and greenhouse where I do a little bit of everything (my work partners might tell you it's a *very* little bit ☺). My job is a blessing in so many ways because it affords me contact with a more natural and peaceful environment in which fresh vegetables are available to supplement my diet year round, and each day is filled with interesting interactions with students and staff. Plus, there is an old tomcat out there named Lucky, and he thinks I'm his dad!

When I come in from work, I rarely venture off the dorm anymore. On the dorm I probably spend most of my time writing, reading, or studying, but I also enjoy movies, and limited doses of TV – like football during the season.

One of the most frustrating things for many inmates is feeling powerless to make a difference. People say “I want to help out, but I’m locked up. What can I do?” During the years we’ve known each other, I’ve been impressed & inspired by your spirit of service. Clearly you have found ways to be of service from in there.

Yeah, I guess. I've been involved for years in a number of activities on the unit: 12-step meetings, meditation groups, Hep-C support groups, drug abuse orientation classes, victim mediation programs, and peer support groups.

In the last few years those activities have been disbanded or severely curtailed by the administration. Yet, as your dad has so often stated, service takes on many forms. Today it shows up in less identifiable ways. The casual conversation, or the letter written just because I had an urge. Just listening can be a service. Giving away material goods to someone in need, or saying no to someone's request for material goods, can both be a service in their own right. I will say that saying no is harder for me to do.

How's your relationship with the C.O.s?

Pretty good. I'm courteous and respectful. Some of them are more conscious than others. The less conscious ones are usually more angry, authoritative, rigid and seem to bring some sense of being overwhelmed emotionally to the job with them. All of them aid me on my own particular spiritual path. Sometimes I think it's the ones that are less conscious who help me make the greatest strides. Not that I like it much when it's happening ☺.

What's your relationship like with your family?

I have a lot of family and I'm pretty close to most of them. While I've been in prison, all three of my living grandparents died, and my youngest brother Stevie died of Hep-C. The blessing for me was that before they died, we were able to repair some of the damage I'd done to our relationship over the years. Once Stevie told me he had been mad at me for years because I had stolen his big brother – me – by repeatedly coming to prison. I spent so many years as a selfish drug-addicted criminal, I was clueless that it had even mattered to him. I never viewed my own behavior as affecting other people's lives.

But there must have been rough spots along the way.

My mom has always hung with me, but as I got progressively crazier, she distanced herself from me so as to not completely break her heart. When I'd get busted, she'd be relieved because she felt like the odds of my staying alive in prison were better than if I was on the streets, and I'd say she was right. In the last ten years we've not only repaired our damaged relationship, we've become pretty good friends and that is such a blessing. Today I believe that she sincerely thinks I'll get out of prison, do well, and stay out. I hope to show her that her beliefs are well-founded.

My little sister wrote recently and offered her own heartfelt support, but she also said that she honestly wasn't sure I'd ever get out and stay out of prison. I understand what she's saying. My track record would indicate that I couldn't. I hope to change that perception I've given her.

My brother has been my pal all my life. We were crime partners for some years and in 1977 he got shot in a drugstore robbery we were doing. He died twice on the operating table, lived to go to prison again, and then made parole in 1983. He's been out twenty years now and lives a legit life. He and his wife are both solidly upper-middle class corporate execs who live in the country and raise retrievers! He's one of a number of success stories I know, but you just can't imagine how grateful I am that he lived in 1977, and has turned his life around so completely.

And then there's Kit.

Yes. Kit is my fiancée and I've known her for 35 years as a friend. A few years ago when I was writing lots of amends letters, I was able to apologize to her for some past wrongs. That turned into an extended writing period where we became friends. We've talked about any and everything. Her take on life is very similar to my transformed one. She does kind, compassionate things on a daily basis because she has been doing them all her life. She's never been arrested, she put herself through school, raised two kids mostly by herself and all the while has been a responsible, intelligent, engaged member of society. I could go on and list attributes and reasons why I love her, yet I'll just say she's a pretty cool chick and I see her presence in my life as a gift from the universe.

Tom, do you expect to get out?

I believe so. I become eligible for parole review in 2007 and I choose to view that in a hopeful way. Not that I live

in la-la land. I know that making parole will be a miracle. It's just that I believe in miracles. Not long after I cleaned up and started my conscious transformation, I became more hopeful about life in general, both in prison and about any possible future life outside. That hope makes it easier to envision myself as being released one day.

Any last thoughts on the subject of *Spiritual Transformation*?

Well, maybe this: I spent my entire life comparing myself to other people. Usually I wouldn't measure up to their

accomplishments, skills, or appearances, and I'd feel bad. And then other times, I'd see myself as *better* than others and get some form of satisfaction out of that. When I began consciously changing ten years ago, I slowly decreased my concerns (fears) with not measuring up against others. I also redefined what I considered *success* to be. Today, "successful" is me looking at my present self versus my old self and giving myself credit for finally making some inroads into aligning my will with the divine will, yet knowing that it has occurred only by grace.

[EDITOR'S NOTE:] The following edited excerpt from Bo's book, *Deep & Simple*, shows and then discusses one of Tall Tom's creative ways of facing problems in his prison unit. We include this here as a reminder that you can take a personal step to make a difference anywhere. Tall Tom posted this note in his unit several years ago:

Underneath, Tall Tom left a place for signatures, and nine other men signed on. He says that from the time he posted the sign, there's been

ATTENTION: THERE IS A CELL THIEF ON THIS TANK!!!

I find the behavior of stealing from other men on D-12 to be unacceptable. I publicly proclaim my dissatisfaction with this behavior. I hereby commit myself to working toward a non-violent solution to this situation. I encourage anyone who has similar feelings to join in a moment of silence at 5:45 am. You are encouraged to approach this period of silent contemplation with a feeling of peacefulness and community unity toward all men on D-12. Your support in this effort is appreciated.

no stealing reported in his tank. He'll never know how many participated in the silent meditation, but the sign obviously had an effect.

This is a solid beginning of community organizing. There is *always* an opportunity to be of service. And prisons especially need your kindness and helpfulness, don't they? You may not want to be there, but millions of people in the "free world" also live in dangerous, ugly places where they would rather not be. That doesn't mean you can avoid doing your part.

Don't Just Keep Your Head Down

If you're getting released from prison soon, *please* don't get out here looking for what you can get, but rather come out and see what you can give. People out here have been working their butts off while you've been inside. Come home with the attitude of, "Sorry I haven't been here to do my part; how can I help?" That's the healthiest and most truthful way to come back to the free world. You may be hearing advice from family or friends like; "get a little job, a little apartment, keep your head down, and just stay out of trouble." Don't buy into that view of what your life on the outside should be about.

Here's the truth: WE NEED YOU. Really. We're not doing so hot out here. Our kids are angry and confused, we're knocking ourselves out trying to achieve some level of "success" that doesn't even exist, and we've generally abandoned our true faith in the Transcendent, in the Glory of God. We Need You! We need your experience. We need your wisdom. This culture needs to see people who have had all their "stuff" taken away from them, and have discovered that they didn't need so much stuff in the first place. What a great example you can be for your kids who think that getting the latest video game will make them happy.

Plug into the problems in your community; share your experiences and ideas. There's usually at least one local group, minister or community organizer who is trying to improve the neighborhood. Find them and join up. If you're religious, find a church of your denomination and speak to the pastor honestly about who you are and where you've been. Offer yourself in any way you can be of help.



The kids in your neighborhood especially need to meet some truly good people who are not lily-white goody-goody, but are **real**, like you. Neither lie about your past, nor carry on about it. Let them meet a real adult who has been humbled by his or her pain, and is transforming it into compassion, peace, and simple happiness. Give your life away to your community and see what you get back.

We all have a helpful part to play, wherever we live. The notion of "doing my own time" does not lead to a successful spiritual life. We need you to do your part. Are you ready and willing? The world is anxiously awaiting your help.

There are many people who can do big things. But there are very few people who will do the small things –Mother Teresa

Artwork by Barbara Peterson, Tucson, Arizona

LETTERS

Dear Bo, Josh, & Sita,

Let me begin by thanking you so humbly for the publications you and your blessed foundation have sent to me. They have been of great help to me in my spiritual journey towards enlightenment.

I would like to share a brief story of myself with you. It begins in 1993, after dropping out of school in search of an early adult life, mainly because I believed I knew all that was needed to know. I used drugs heavily and joined a gang, known as the Bloods. They profess to be about unity, love, and revolution. I believed in this cause and fought very hard for its members. We often battled with rival gangs causing much bloodshed and death on both sides. I was 13 when I was jumped in (a ritual, symbolic to the hardships endured by the mother in birth), and by my 14th year I was a man of rank and status to this cause. I took life without compassion, and openly defied authority.

In 1996, I was transporting drugs and weapons for this gang, when I was pulled over by a state officer. I acted foolishly and violently, and unloaded a .38 caliber pistol into his chest. I was caught three months later and charged with attempted 1st degree murder on a police officer. At 16 I was waived as an adult and sentenced to 68 years in prison.

At first, I literally did not care anymore, about anything. Then, I encountered a large group of bloods in my prison. They had heard of me and offered me great respect for my actions. I was so happy to be looked up to, that I lost concern for my prison sentence.

Then, in 1999 my mother passed away. I was so shocked by this that I secluded myself from everyone for almost two months. Then the oddest thing happened.....

The officer I had shot, wrote me a letter. He said that he had heard of my misfortune and offered his condolences. He told me that he was completely recovered from my assault, and offered to speak on my behalf at a court reconsideration.

I was shocked! Such compassion and forgiveness had never been shown to me before. As I read the letter I wept for

myself. The first time I had wept since I was a small child. Two weeks later, my lawyer visits me and tells me the judge will reconsider my sentence.

I went back to court, and (just as promised) the officer was there. He was allowed to speak in reference to his hardships as a victim in opinion to my consideration.

He told the court that the incident had brought a unity, and love in his family during, and after his recovery, that had never previously existed. He said that he had no permanent damage other than scars, and he forgave me. He asked that the court do the same.

The states attorney went into a fit about how I must have sent people to threaten the officer, and how there was "more than meets the eye" to his story.

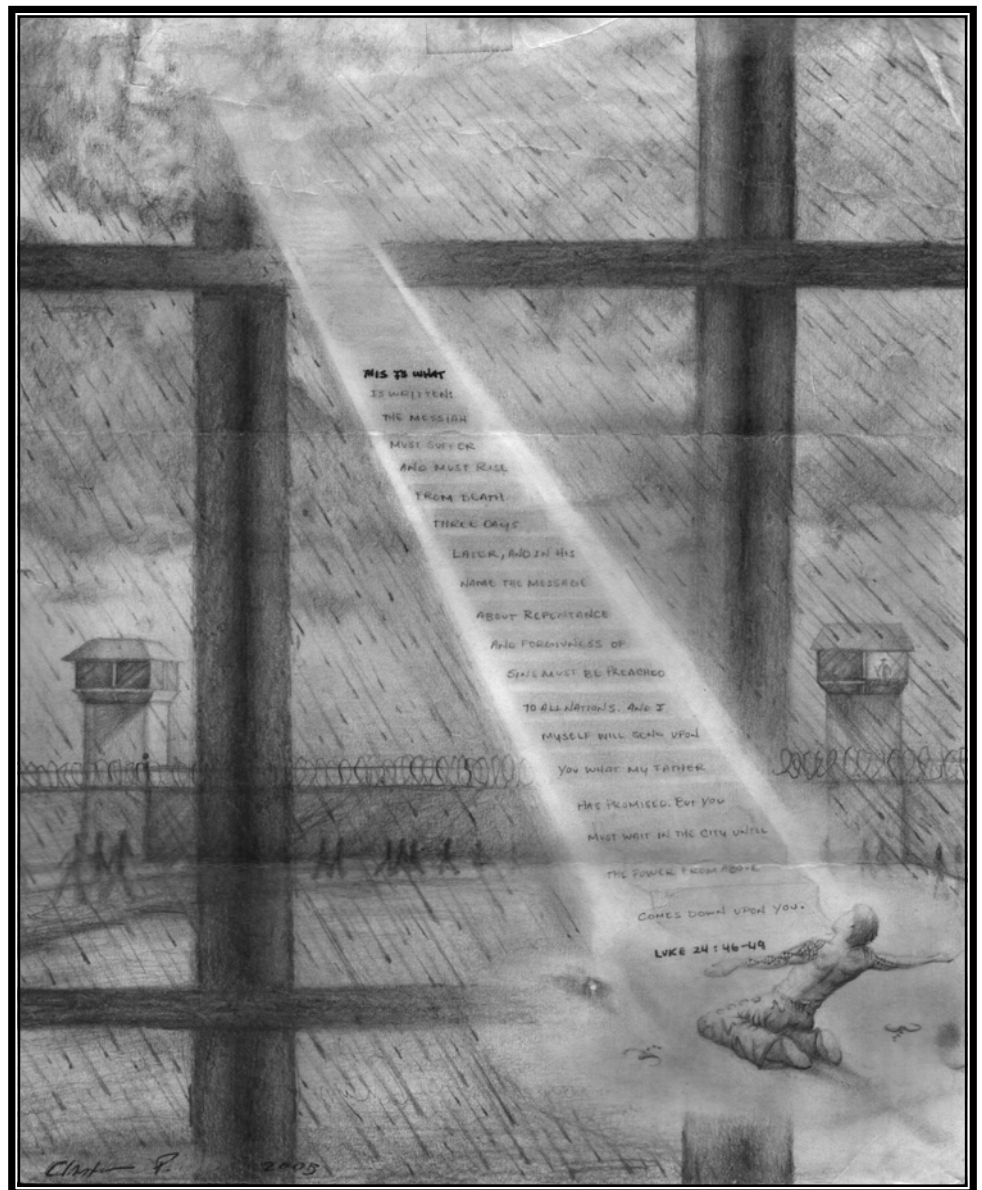
The judge asked him if it was true, and he simply said, "Compassion, your honor, is what separates man from beast." Well, the judge reduced my sentence to 15 years, and allowed the officer to shake my hand before I left the courtroom. I am scheduled to go home in 2006, I have quit the gang through great difficulty, and began my search for a compassion equal to that officer's.

Over the past two years, I have taken many vows and shall dedicate myself to the happiness of all beings. I greatly look forward to the day, when I may bless all life as it has blessed me with love, and compassion.

Your Humble Friend, R



Artwork by Paul Clayton, Aiea, Hawaii



JUST DO IT

Hello Friends,

First, I would like to thank you for three words you gave me almost seven years ago. I had written to you and had complained about how hard I was finding meditation. Well I received back a post card with the words, "Just do it", and it was signed Sita.

Well at first I just set it aside and just shrugged my shoulders. But over the next two weeks it seemed as if that post card kept finding its way into my attention. I'd open a book, there it would be, move some papers in my locker, there it would be, clean my room, hey there it was again.

I finally sat down, and guess what – "I just did it!" meditation has become an important part of my life. I am now a Buddhist who has started sanghas at 3 different camps and have kept a "Just do it" attitude over the years.

I kept that post card taped to my mirror for about two years until an inmate asked about it. I told him the story, and then I did something I never dreamed of. I gave it to him. Well it slipped my mind until about six months ago and a new guy moved into the block. Well I was talking to him at his locker and when he opened it there on his locker was a post card. Yeah, amazing, it was the one you sent me. Almost five years and about five different camps later I find out that the post card (your post card) has been passed around to about seven different inmates to remind to meditate. Thought you would like to know that those three words of reminder have meant a lot to at least 8 inmates.

Thanks, D

I am not a Christian, I cannot and do not believe in all that is in the Bible. As with all religions, I know deep down that they are not for me. It seems to me that maybe I should accept that maybe I am just evil, and embrace it. But if I do this, then as you must know, or will know, I am capable of many devious things. Yet there is also a spot n my heart for love, I can feel it...

I hope to find more insight in your books and tapes. Please help; I would love to hear your opinions and suggestions that may help me out. I'm tired of spiritual warfare, it's time for either the good side or the dark side to win. I'm tired of bouncing back and forth.

With all due respect, J

Dear J,

You're not the first, nor the only person to discover that there are both good and evil forces within us. Like an old native American saying goes, "I have a good dog and bad dog within me. Who wins? – The one I feed."

If you allow yourself to "accept that I am evil," you will live in sheer hatred and misery all your days and then some. Like myself and every other human being, you were born to travel the spiritual journey. No excuses. My books are about how to do that, even after the terrible things you have done. There's nothing I can write in a letter that can help more than the material in my books. Those books contain the wealth of advice that holy people have given us for thousands of years – people who knew good and evil, who knew how hard it would be for me and you, and who knew that good does eventually conquer evil, and the love you say you can feel in your heart, does conquer hatred.

You will probably never be outside of prison again. If you can accept your life now as a spiritual seeker, a monk in a cell, you have a chance for holiness and love and contentment that you can't even imagine right now. But it will require a total surrender on your part,

total devotion to the path. That is the invitation before you. It's going to be hard to do unless you decide to have faith in God. Your choice.

I wish you every blessing, Bo



Dear Bo,

I hope this finds you and yours doing well. I am doing as well as can be expected. I would like you to know that five months ago I received your book (We're All Doing Time) I want to thank you so much for the book and the changes it has truly made in my life.

I have totally gone from a wise ass, foul mouth troublemaker that went out of my way to harass correctional officers, no matter what time of day or night. I am in seg. "Go figure". I have been for 31 months, and I get out to regular population in 4 1/2 months and not only myself but the C/O's would shake your hand if we could.

They – C/O's know what the change has been in my life and the reasons for the changes. I've been put on strip cell twice in the past 5 months about two weeks after I get the book from you. I thought of a hunger strike, but I am not one to purposely harm myself physically, so I took a vow of silence for 9 days I was on the "strip cell." The C/O's took it as a temper tantrum but I was also trying to meditate twice a day. It was useless at first. But, after a week of doing it every day at 5:00 AM till 6:00 AM and 9 PM till 10 PM.

I was becoming so calm and quiet the officers called the shrink thinking I was losing my mind. That's one for me, cause I did not lose my mind. I found it and it seems to be the part that controls my heart, mind, and mouth! I am on my third reading of We're All Doing Time.

From me, my family and the C/O's thank you for your love, kindness, wisdom, and time. I've never been one for showing my emotions, but for anyone that would and does so willingly give so much to so many strangers you deserve all I am and all I hope to become with the help of your books and love. You have my love and gratitude for life.

Sincerely Yours truly, J



Dear Bo,

I am currently fighting the death penalty in the court system, so please add me to your mailing list.

I have done some good things in my life, and I've done some horrible things as well. Here is my dilemma: I try to grow in a positive way more, and toward a good relationship with God, and with my own spirituality. But it seems like a dark, hidden evil that recesses deep down inside me pushes more and more to hatred, and to a path of utter destruction. I do have people that care about me, and I do have a pleasant life although I am in jail and fighting such a serious offense. But it seems to me that my evil, my evil thoughts, and my disgusting vile hatred pushes more and more to the top of my thoughts. I practice meditation and a few other things as well, such as breathing techniques, and so on. But all my thoughts become evil, and my heart seems filled with hatred.

NEWS, NOTES, AND OFFERINGS

RESULTS OF OUR BOOK TITLE CONTEST

We received many creative, thoughtful, and even funny title suggestions for Bo's *Just Another Spiritual Book*, but in the end, the title we settled on was.....well, it was the old title. Many people wrote to say how much they liked it, and none of the new suggestions seemed like quite the right title.

However, we *have* changed the cover design, with the help of talented cover designer Mark Heliger, of Los Angeles. It's still a great book, and we hope you like the new cover. *(If you've already received a free copy, please be considerate of our donors and don't ask for another free one just for the cover.)*

CONSIDER FOR THE HOLIDAYS....

We mentioned in our last newsletter that Human Kindness Foundation now has a wonderful online catalog of our books, tapes, videos, and a variety of other items such as our "Be Love" t-shirts, juggling sacks, incense, fine art and stained glass, and archery equipment. We ask our supporters to please check us out when you begin to think of holiday gifts this year. Every penny of profit from our catalog supports the nonprofit work of HKF such as sending out Bo's books for free. You will find our catalog listed under

www.humankindness.org

TEXAS BUDDHIST NEWSLETTERS

I have started a newsletter called, "TEXAS SANGHA QUARTERLY" (TSQ) which is for and about Buddhist prisoners in Texas prisons. Any prisoners within the Texas system can send their submissions for publication (articles, sutra quotes, etc.) to the following address:

TSQ
P.O. Box 38064
Dallas, TX 75238-0064

As a recent outgrowth of the TSQ, a friend in Ft. Worth is interested in helping establish a free-world prisoner support group. Many Texas prisoners are isolated from other Buddhists, and are in need of support – even if only that of friendship. Anyone in the free world interested in helping with either of these projects can write to me at the following address (be sure and include my prison number); thanks.

Carl Horne #418860
M. W. Stiles Unit
3060 FM 3514
Beaumont, TX 77705-7635

OUR "10-20-30" CELEBRATION IN '04

Between December 2003 and June 2004, we have a noteworthy conjunction of anniversary dates coming up: The 30th anniversary of the Prison-Ashram Project, the 20th anniversary of the publication of *We're All Doing Time*, and the 10th anniversary of our community, Kindness House. How can we resist hosting some sort of get-together to celebrate our good fortune at having been involved with such meaningful activities for so many years?

So, the first weekend of June, 2004, will be an open house at Kindness House, a chance for any of you who are outside of prison to come see our home & headquarters, meet our staff and of course Bo & Sita, and especially to meet each other, make new friends, enjoy silent times, music, meals and fellowship with us for a couple days. We'll be happy to house as many people as we can fit, and we have plenty of space for those who like to camp. There are also a number of hotels within ten to twenty minutes' drive from here. If our work has influenced your life significantly, we'd love to meet you and hear about how that happened. If you're one of our supporters, come see what your support has enabled us to build and sustain. Let us all thank you in person.

If you're in prison and can't be with us in the flesh that day, you can be with us in spirit, and perhaps you can write a *brief* message you would like us to read to those who are here, or we can post it on a central bulletin board.

We intend to have a 20th-anniversary edition of *We're All Doing Time* available at that celebration, with a new preface by Bo. *We're All Doing Time* has had a truly remarkable life of its own, numbering now over 300,000 copies in English, with editions also in Spanish, French, Italian, and one coming up in Dutch. There really is not a day that goes by that we don't receive a letter from someone saying "that book saved my life." It continues to be the flagship of our whole organization, and what we are most known for around the world.

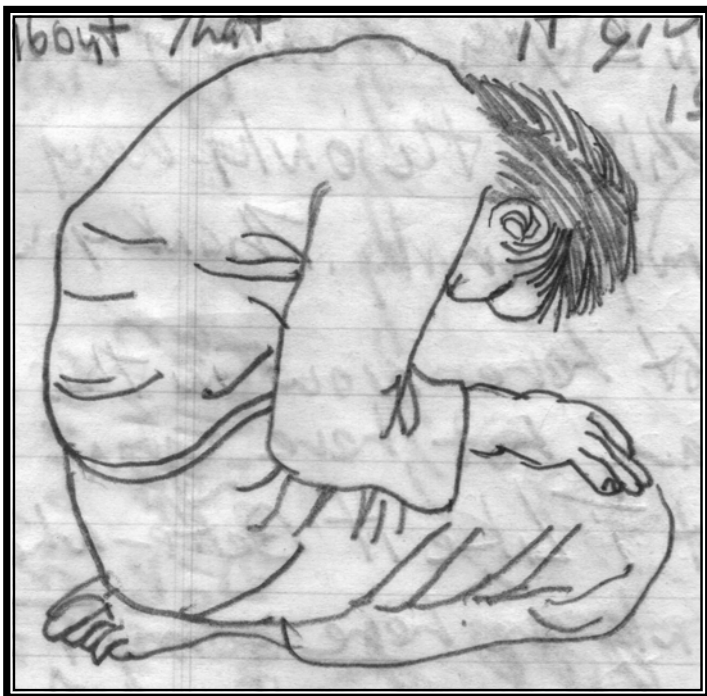
We also hope to have a new release on CD of Bo's music album, *Stumbling Toward the Light*, as well as a BRAND-NEW music album Bo is working on right now, titled *Pushing Sixty*. Many of the same great musicians who played on his first album will be helping with this new one as well (and some of them, like Bo, are pushing sixty and making even better music than ever...).

More on the celebration as it unfolds.... In the meantime, if you want to reserve a place here for that event, let us know (no fees or costs for anything; we're privileged to host you).

a little good news

is a publication of Human Kindness Foundation, which is non-profit and tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Donations and bequests are welcomed and are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. All money goes directly to support HKF's work, helping us to continue producing and distributing free materials to prisoners and others, and sponsoring Bo Lozoff's free lectures and workshops and the other projects of the Foundation.

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Artwork by Rickey Winland, North Africa

I HAD TO SEEK THE PHYSICIAN

I had to seek the Physician
because of the pain this world
caused
me.

I could not believe what happened when I got there –
I found my
Teacher.

Before I left, he said,
“Up for a little homework yet?”
“Okay,” I replied.

“Well then, try thanking all of the people
who have caused
you pain.

They helped you
come to
me.”