

# INSIDE EDUCATION



## 2002 Conference Issue

### The **LOGO**

of our newsletter, symbolizes the association.

### The **BALL AND CHAIN**

symbolize the nature of the students we work with....incarcerated.

### The **KEY**

symbolizes the hope and opportunity we offer them....*education* can be the way out.

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**Inside Education** is the official newsletter of the Alberta Correctional Education Association (ACEA);

The newsletter is published three times yearly, in the fall, winter, and spring;

The **ACEA** is a professional organization facilitating the educational needs of the incarcerated;

The **ACEA** strives to broaden professional horizons and interdisciplinary interaction of all personnel involved with correctional education;

Publications in **Inside Education** contain the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily represent the position of the ACEA, its executive or the editor.

## A Message from the Editor, Kimberly Partridge



Welcome to **Inside Education, the 2002 Conference Issue**.

As I write this message it is a warm and sunny February day, I am taking a few moments to relax, re-energize, and reflect on the past year while keeping a positive look of what is to come in the year ahead. Time is going by so quickly and WOW people are retiring, positions and roles are changing and there are various cut backs, all of which are having some affect on the membership. But, here we are at our 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Alberta Correctional Education Association Conference: Teaching & Learning for Change, Correction & Community.

Jim Barnes, in retirement, could not resist but to help with this year's conference, he and Ramona Deer are the Co-Chairs. With the range of experience, a variety of focuses, close connections with communities across the province and the ability to reach many audiences, a few of the committee's and association's greatest sources of strength, the conference will be successful, informative and fun. Some of the sessions consist of ♦Multiple Intelligences ♦Classroom Strategies to Help Students Improve Their Reading ♦Learning Disabilities ♦Career Development Resources in Correctional Education ♦You're not JUST a Teacher ♦Anger Management for Youth. *I see there are numerous new members attending this year. What a great new light to look at, welcome and enjoy the conference.*



Planning Committee of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference:

Murray Bialek – Hospitality; Karen Burford – Hotel Logistics; Bernice Gin – Registration; Judy Morcom – Treasurer, Marketing & Registration; Lorraine O'Neill – Planning; Mike MacKay – Conference Schedule and Presenters; Annette Valerio – Sponsors; Barb Blanchette – Planning; and George Hildebrandt – Conference Booklet and Logo.

View of the current ACEA board

- Kevin Wahl from President to Past President - Kevin has become a team leader, Access Centre, Lethbridge Community College
- Lehi Heath has been transferred to the Lethbridge Community College Carpentry Apprenticeship Program
- Randall Wright from Vice-President to Acting President
- Jacob Varghese Treasurer has taken on the tasks of the Acting Vice-President
- Myself, I am stepping down from the Newsletter Editor position – thank you everyone for your support, I will miss being a larger part of the association, but not completely disappearing I will continue to monitor the ACEA web site, send me an email [acea@telusplanet.net](mailto:acea@telusplanet.net) or check out the website at [WWW.NALD.CA/ACEA](http://WWW.NALD.CA/ACEA).

*Thanks to all of you, the past, the present and the new members of the association.*

*Kimberly*

## A Message from the Acting President, Randall Wright



This year has brought many changes on the ACEA board.

I would like to thank Kevin Wahl for his vision, determination and professionalism as our Past President. Kevin has been instrumental in professionalizing our association and contributing to its national and international presence in correctional education. He will be sorely missed.

Kimberly Partridge is stepping down as newsletter editor. This position is a difficult one to fill because it demands much effort and skill in order to produce the fine professional product that we now appreciate. Kimberly has made a substantial contribution to the look, feel and content of the newsletter. She too, will be sorely missed.

Lehi Heath is no longer Past President. This task falls to Kevin Wahl now. I want to thank Lehi for the wisdom and creativity he brought to the table. Often, when we thought we had hit a brick wall, Lehi would discover a way around it. By the way, Lehi and Kevin are early founding members of ACEA. *Thanks to both of you for your foresight and dedication.*

Jacob Varghese has moved from the Treasurer's position to Vice-President's. Thank you Jacob for picking up from where Jim left off, you have done a great job keeping the financial records organized and balanced. We wish you the best in your new position as Acting Vice-President.

The conference is on the horizon. Strikes are looming and this is a time when much is said positively and negatively, about teachers. It is a time of reflection for many of us to appreciate the important and unique work we do every day, despite the odds.

See you at the conference.

Randall Wright  
Acting President



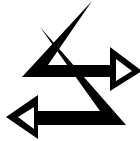
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## Past President's Message

Kevin Wahl

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### "Looking back – Thinking forward"



Time, what is it, and where does it go? Ever stop to wonder about the fleeting moments that make up a lifetime? As I get older life feels more hectic, time rushes by quicker and the years seem compressed and shorter. Is it because time is relative to age, and the longer we live the less a year is in the overall percentage of time? I do not know the answer, but I do know that this year has literally flown by, and now here I am a year older, another summer, winter and another Christmas season have past.



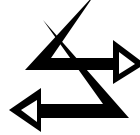
One thing that I have always tried to do is take time to enjoy life, to savor the moment whatever it may be. I love to checkout the sunset, or lay back and watch the sky, or watch a child play, or close my eyes in the warm spring sun and absorb the fresh smells of new growth, or watch the fresh snow cover the ground in a blanket of white. I have learned to never take anything for granted and to be thankful for the things I have in my life and the opportunities that exist - that exist everywhere, everyday, every minute. Yes, I admit that I am an optimist, but I like that and it helps me cope with life and with change.

Time and change - what are they to our students? How can we be a factor in how their time is spent and how their attitudes are formed? We play an important role as educators, a demanding and giving role that can really impact students and help change their perception of life and learning.

Many of you may have heard about the recent changes in my life; I am no longer in the classroom. I accepted a position on main campus at Lethbridge Community College as the Team Leader of the Access Centre. This is an academic administration position basically equivalent to being a Dean. I have a number of different program areas and four off campus sites including the Lethbridge Correctional Centre that I am responsible for. This means that I am still involved in Correctional Education and I still get to participate in ACEA.

After much thought and discussion, I tendered my resignation as ACEA President at the last Executive meeting. This was done for personal reasons, but more importantly it was a matter of succession planning to ensure continuity of leadership in our association. Randall Wright has assumed the President's role (as per the constitution), I will remain as Past President and Jacob Varghese was appointed acting Vice President - and will remain current Treasurer.

**“Looking back – Thinking forward” Continued...**



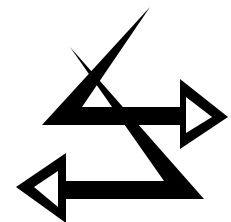
As I leave this office I want to express sincere heartfelt appreciation to all of you. As you know, I have spent 10 years on the board – six as president. During this time I have always sensed a spirit of support for my leadership, and for the board as a whole. Many initiatives, projects and great conferences have occurred and I am proud to have been a part of the design, planning and initiation of these events. More important to me though, has been the relationship side of the process. Over the years I have rubbed shoulders, shaken hands and traded stories with almost all of you and I can honestly say that this is what has kept me going, and kept me focused on what the association is really about; I truly enjoy the people that have become my friends and colleagues over the years.

As we move to another chapter in the life cycle of ACEA, I am confident that Randall will continue to provide quality leadership supporting the mandates of our mission statement and constitution. I have had opportunity over the years to work closely with Randall and I know that we share a common vision for ACEA and correctional education; I am excited about the opportunity to continue to work with him in my role as Past President. I hope that each of you will show Randall the support that you provided for me as he moves our association forward.

I also want to express a special thanks to anyone of you who has served on the board. It has truly been a special experience in my life that has established some deep-rooted relationships and bonds. I have sensed genuine support and unity from the board members that enabled me to work with a sense of confidence and optimism. Be assured that you have made a difference - that our association and correctional education are a better place because of the work, commitment and quality that each of you provided over the years; I know that our current board will extend these same qualities to Randall as we move ahead.

Once again thanks - the levels of commitment, giving and professionalism that abound in our profession astounds me. I look forward to seeing each and every one of you at the conference. It looks like Calgary is doing a fantastic job and this will once again be a great conference.

**Kevin Wahl**  
Past President



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**2002 – 2003 Membership List**

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Workplace</b>
Barfield	Dianne	Facilitator	Alternative Learning Program
Eaglebear	Velma	Director	Blood Tribe Social Development
Ramsay	Jan	Extension Programs Coordinator	Bow Valley College
Dersch	Dexter	Chief of Education	Bowden Institution
Hemmingway	Laurie	Chief of Personal Development	Bowden Institution
Dahl	Marianne	National Account Executive	Bridges.com
Batting	Brent	Instructor	Calgary Correctional Centre
Libbus	Marlene	Consortium Coordinator	Calgary Correctional Centre
Lloyd	Gordon	Carpentry Instructor	Calgary Correctional Centre
Peace	Dwayne	President	Calgary Police Service
Deer	Ramona	Program Director	Calgary Young Offender Centre
Barnes	Jim	Conference Co-Chair	CYOC, Retired
Poltaruk	Randy	Project Supervisor	Correctional Service of Canada
Clark	Jaime	Teacher	Counterpoint House Juvenile Sex
Cook	Jim	Manager, Contracts & Performance	Div of Support Services, AB Justice
Doney	Brent	Director	Div of Support Services, AB Justice
Grimsdale	Gary	Painting/Graphic Arts Instructor	Drumheller Institution
Mergen	Diane	Textile Supervisor	Drumheller Institution
Mergen	Joe	Vocational Carpentry Instructor	Drumheller Institution
Mulgrew	Pat	Chief of Education	Drumheller Institution
Pugh	Bob	Supervisor, Comprehensive Educator	Drumheller Institution
Quist	Glen	Vocational Welding Instructor	Drumheller, Hilltop Education Ctr
Bell	Graham	Coordinator/Instructor	Edmonton John Howard Society
McIntosh	Floyd	Resource Coordinator	Edmonton Remand Centre
Partridge	Kimberly	ACEA Newsletter Editor	Excalibur Learning Resource Centre
Wright	Randall	ACEA Acting President	Excalibur Learning Resource Centre
Beagle	Sherry	Educational Support Staff	Excalibur, Grande Cache Inst.
Varghese	Jacob	ACEA Treasurer, Acting VP	Excalibur, Grierson Centre
Irwin	Dorothy	Teacher	Excalibur, Saskatchewan Pen
Cheecham	Loretta	Outreach Coordinator	Fort McMurray First Nation #468
Arthurs	Shirley	Education Awareness	Fort McMurray First Nations \$468
Bell	Kevin	Instructor	Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Ctr
Froehlich	Sandra	Education Program Coordinator	Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Ctr
Goltz	Leo	Instructor	Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Ctr
Legris	Catherine	Senior Instructor-Supervisor	Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Ctr
Shipka	Ken	Instructor	Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Ctr
Wurtz	Ron	Instructor	Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Ctr
Dubie	Shelley	Administrative Assistant	Highwood School Alberta Hospital
Wales	Judy	Teacher	Highwood School Alberta Hospital
Woo	Leon	Teacher	Highwood School Alberta Hospital

Calliou	George	Elder	Inuwini
Brewer	Susan	Instructor	Lethbridge Community College
Duval	Lynda	Instructor	Lethbridge Community College
<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Workplace</b>
Clow	Patti	Academic/Personal Develop Instructor	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Doepker	Jim	Automotive/Small Engine Instructor	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Kruger	Lillian	Academic Upgrading Instructor	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Eaglebear	Gilbert	Native Program Coordinator	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Guenther	Wayne	Carpentry Instructor	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Kelenc	Joe	Building Service Work Instructor	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Kitaguchi	Doug	Correctional Education Coordinator	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Leigh	Gordon	Addiction Awareness Instructor	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Mauthe	Jayne	Correctional Education Secretary	Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Wahl	Kevin	Team Leader	Access Centre, Lethbridge
Qualtieri	Deanna	Youth Probation Officer	Lord Shaughnessy High School
Nepinak	Reg	Elder/Youth Coordinator	Metis Calgary Family Services
St. Amour	Michel	Teacher	Mission Institution
Wise	Frank	ABE Instructor	Mountain Institution
Gehlen	Marjorie	Tutor	Peace River Correctional Centre
Harrop	Jim	Coordinator	Peace River Correctional Centre
Oslie	Jenny	Instructor	Peace River Correctional Centre
Smith	Anita	Native Arts Instructor	Peace River Correctional Centre
Thompson	Annette	Administrative Support	Peace River Correctional Centre
Maxson	Sharyn	Teacher Assistant/Secretary	Red Deer Remand Centre
Olson	Blaine	Teacher	Red Deer Remand Centre
St. Germain	Brian	Teacher	Red Deer Remand Centre
Barrette	Arlette	Student	University of Alberta
Barbor	Don	Assistant Principal	West View Secondary
Bialek	Murray	Teacher	West View Secondary
Burford	Karen	Teacher	West View Secondary
Craig	Ken	Teacher	West View Secondary
Gin	Bernice	Teacher	West View Secondary
Keays	Peter	Teacher	West View Secondary
Krausnick	Wayne	Teacher	West View Secondary
Morcom	Judy	Administrative Secretary	West View Secondary
Morton	David	Teacher	West View Secondary
Neufeldt	Jeff	Teacher	West View Secondary
O'Neill	Lorraine	Teacher	West View Secondary
Sharpe	Barry	Teacher	West View Secondary
Sharpe	Gerry	Principal	West View Secondary
Taylor	Wendy	Teacher	West View Secondary
Valerio	Annette	Teacher	West View Secondary



*Alberta Correctional Education Association*

## Inside Education

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Young	Raffaella	Teacher	West View Secondary
Collins	Lynn	Education Assistant	West View, Enviros Base Camp
Sneddon	Astrid	Teacher	West View, Enviros Base Camp
Burgess	Sam	Teacher	William Head Institution
O'Connor	Colin	Teacher	William Head Institution
Cardinal	Jim	Support Staff	Woodside Central Program



## *ACEA News, Views and Reviews*

### **Annual General Meeting Minutes Friday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2001 Banff Park Lodge - Banff Alberta**

1. **Welcome**

President Kevin Wahl, welcomed ACEA members to the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the last AGM, (Lord Elgin Hotel, Ottawa, Ontario – May 1, 2000), were published the newsletter.

3. **Treasurer's Report as of March 22, 2001**

This report was prepared by Jacob Varghese. This year to date, there have been deposits of \$7,811.69; withdrawals of \$3,154.99; and a balance of \$10,934.15. The fiscal year end has been moved to June 30, 2001 and to June 30<sup>th</sup> each year after this, instead of at the time of the annual Conference, to allow Conference accounts to be settled.

**motion: to accept the Treasurer's report**

Wayne Krausnick/Karen Burford – carried

4. **Newsletter Report**

Kimberly Drozda, Editor, wishes to pass on this job to another individual, centre or institution. Volunteers are gratefully accepted.

5. **Web Site**

The website carrier is now the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) rather than Telus.

6. **Accreditation**

Randall Wright summarized his efforts to establish an accredited correctional education degree, first, but not limited to, the University of Calgary. Currently, he is negotiating with California State University.

7. **President's Report**

Kevin summarized the activities of the ACEA over the past year:

- Journal of Conference Proceedings – Published and sent to each ACEA member
- Web Page of the ACEA
- Newsletter – published twice yearly and sent to each ACEA member
- Correctional Education Association (CEA Region VI) and the ACEA – reciprocal agreement to waive conference registration fees
- Professional Development Activity – funds spent this year on a Conference speaker
- Correctional Education Council of Canada (CECC), still active, though independent of the ACEA
- Accreditation
- Conference 2002 Planning – Calgary's turn
- ACEA Board member election next year.

8. **Adjournment**



Alberta Correctional Education Association

# ACEA Messages

THE SALVATION ARMY  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
<http://ab.salvationarmy.ca>

The Salvation Army forwarded the following note to Westview Secondary School, Calgary:

December, 2001

**Dear Friends,**

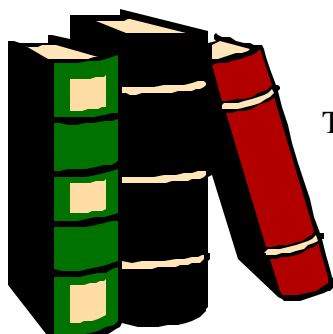
**This is the 8<sup>th</sup> year in which we are very pleased to announce that a donation was given to us as a Christmas gift on your behalf.**

**Please be assured that many will know the benefits of this gift.**

**The sender of this gift, Banff Park Lodge Resort Hotel and Conference Centre wishes you a Very Merry Christmas and A Happy Prosperous New Year.**

Sincerely,

John Goulding, Major  
Director  
Regional Development



## “ “ “ *Library of Books* “ “ “

The Calgary Young Offender Centre is looking to build a library of books (reading or reference) relative to “Native” or “Aboriginal” stories/issues. If centers have titles or bibliographies they can recommend suitable for young adults, we would appreciate it.

*We're on the Web!*

Email: [acea@telusplanet.net](mailto:acea@telusplanet.net)



Alberta Correctional Education Association

## The Three State Recidivism Study

With permission; by Stephen Steurer, Ph.D., Linda Smith, Ph.D., Alice Tracy, Ph.D.

*The Three State Recidivism Study* was conducted by the Correctional Education Association for the United States Department of Education Office of Correctional Education. Over 3600 inmates, who were released more than three years ago in Maryland, Minnesota and Ohio, are involved in a longitudinal study. The study, which uses educational participation while incarcerated as the major variable, shows that simply attending school behind bars reduces the likelihood of re-incarceration by 23%. Translated into savings every dollar spent on education returns more than two dollars to the citizens in reduced prison costs. In Maryland, that means that last year's \$11,700,000 annual state budget for correctional education returned at least \$23,280,000 to the state. The Correctional Education Program in the Maryland State Department of Education has legal responsibility for the state prison education programs. The State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Nancy Grasmick, has been outspoken about her belief in the effectiveness of prison education for some time. While the savings in dollars is important, the reduction in crime itself cannot be so easily translated into dollars.

**Background** Drs. Stephen Steurer, Linda Smith and Alice Tracy are the primary investigators for the *Three State Recidivism Study*. Dr. Steurer, who works for the state of Maryland Correctional Education Program, and as Executive Director of the Correctional Education Association, is the Project Director. Dr. Smith, from the University of Maryland Bureau of Governmental Research, is the lead researcher for the project. Dr. Tracy, former Assistant Director for CEA, is project manager and responsible for much of the report itself.

CEA received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Correctional Education in 1997 to study the impact of education while incarcerated on post release behavior, primarily recidivism and employment. The study covers inmates who were released from Maryland, Minnesota and Ohio in late summer, 1997 to early winter, 1998. The states pooled their data in a format that allows for individual state as well as aggregate reports. Within each state the correctional, parole and probation, education and work force agencies cooperated in the data collection.

As the study began each state determined who were the next 1,000 or more releases. These inmates were called together in the various institutions and given a one hour interview. Their answers were put onto scan sheets and entered into the database. Of course, it was voluntary, but most inmates were eager to participate after the study was explained to them. Criminal history and educational data was collected on each person as well. After release the parole officers were asked for behavioral and employment information. Finally, re-arrest, re-conviction and re-incarceration data were collected from state records. These are the three common recidivism definitions used by the federal government. The re-incarceration rates are of particular interest to the correctional and education agencies. While recidivism dropped significantly for all three areas, the 23% overall figure represents re-incarceration for all three states.

Over 450 variables have been collected on the study participants. While the first report deals primarily with recidivism additional reports on the demographics of the participants is anticipated. The results and the quantity of data are impressive. There is an enormous amount of demographic information on family and community background, economic status and employment, educational experience, offender perspectives on education, motivational factors and much more. No other study has attempted to collect so much information from so many agencies. This is the first study to collect extensive information from the inmates themselves.



### Three State Recidivism Study Continued...

#### The Results

The tables below show a summary of the recidivism results of the study for each state and for all three states as an aggregate. The three most commonly used definitions of recidivism are used – re-arrest, re-conviction and re-incarceration.

Recidivism Results for Each State		
<b>MARYLAND</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Non-participants</b>
Re-arrest	52.1	55.7
Re-conviction	31.5	36.0
Re-incarceration	30.9	37.7
<b>MINNESOTA</b>		
	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Non-participants</b>
Re-arrest	42.6	54.0
Re-conviction	24.5	33.8
Re-incarceration	14.3	21.5
<b>OHIO</b>		
	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Non-participants</b>
Re-arrest	50.7	58.2
Re-conviction	26.1	33.7
Re-incarceration	24.4	31.7

#### Aggregate Criminal History Data for Maryland, Minnesota and Ohio

( ) shows percentage drop in recidivism

Three States	Participants	Non-participants	Recidivism Drop
Re-arrest	48.4	55.9	(-13%)
Re-conviction	27.3	34.5	(-21%)
Re-incarceration	23.2	30.3	(-23%)

#### Implications

The results can be used to guide policy and legislation. While it is difficult to ascertain which kinds of education programs are most effective, overall investing in education for the incarcerated is wise. As a matter of public policy it would seem that education should be emphasized as both a rehabilitative as well as a crime reduction tool. Further research is needed to decide what education program work best. The drop in recidivism in each state clearly indicates that the program returns at least \$2 for every \$1 spent in terms of saving in cell space on those who do not



*Alberta Correctional Education Association*

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return to the system. While it is difficult to generalize the results of a study from one state to another, the fact that the recidivism results were similar in three different states is very encouraging.

## **Front-Line Staff Visit Hong Kong**

with permission (Martin Belanger), Let's Talk

**Two Correctional Service of Canada front-line staff accompanied senior managers in February 2001 to Hong Kong. During the many hours they spent with Hong Kong Correctional Service (HKCS) employees, they discovered that they had much in common with their counterparts and returned to Canada with a broader understanding of corrections.**

### **Lawrence Kwok**

The purpose of this visit, aside from promoting the understanding of culture between the two countries, was to share and exchange knowledge and experience about corrections. While in Hong Kong, the Solicitor General of Canada and the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) signed a memorandum of understanding with the Secretary of Security and Commissioner of Hong Kong Corrections that ensures an ongoing exchange of ideas and knowledge, values and experience between CSC and the Hong Kong Correctional Service (HKCS).

Hong Kong is situated on the south coast of China's Kwangtung province. It was leased to Britain on 99-year lease which expired in 1997; the land has since been returned to China. The total land area in Hong Kong is 404 square miles with a population of 750 million. As such, land is at a premium and very expensive.

Our agenda was twofold: visits to correctional institutions in Hong Kong and Macau and participating in discussion groups and workshops with the line staff.

Treatment and training programs have been developed for different types of offenders such as young offenders, drug addicts, first offenders and repeat offenders. HKCS categorizes inmates into three categories: A, B and C. The availability of

rehabilitation program(s) and release potential is enhanced according to the categorization of each offender.

In Hong Kong, the team visited Shek Pik Prison (maximum security) and Tai Tam Gap Correctional Institution (female offenders under age 21). After visiting the prisons and institutions in Hong Kong, the one thing that stood out and impressed the team was the level of discipline amongst both staff and offenders. Junior staff are required to salute senior staff, and during a visit by an officer, offenders are required to stop what they are doing and stand up as a way of showing respect to the visiting officer.

There is only one prison in Macau, serving a population of approximately 250,000. There is no life sentence under the Portuguese system, and the longest period an offender can serve is 28 years.

The work program is the main core program within the institution. The inside operation of the prison is run by institutional staff whereas the perimeter security is contracted out to Gurkha soldiers from Nepal who are in the British or Indian army. Literacy among the offender population in Macau prison is low and educational upgrading is one of the main programs, as is vocational training. The majority of offenders serve two thirds of their sentence prior to release.



Alberta Correctional Education Association

## Inside Education

17

## 2002 Conference Issue

### Deann Bourgeois

Being selected as the correctional officer representative on the CSC trip to Hong Kong last February was both an honour and a privilege. Before leaving, my colleagues at Grand Valley Institution were very supportive and excited for me; I felt like I was not going alone, but carrying with me the good wishes and support of all the wonderful people I work with.

While in Hong Kong, I was given the opportunity to share operational experience with correctional officers and to observe how they carry out their duties. It was interesting to note the similarities and differences between the two stories.

In the Hong Kong Correctional Service, there is a clearly identified rank structure much like our military. When I walked through the staff training institute, new recruits snapped to attention and saluted us. I kept thinking, "If you only knew how close in rank I am to you – CX 2" and then I'd smile to myself.

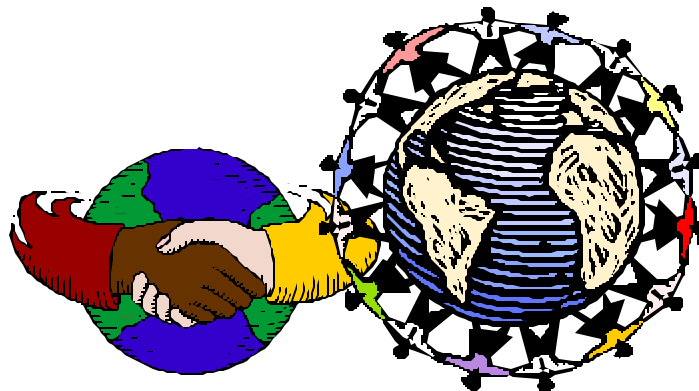
Many Hong Kong correctional officers live next door to their institutions. These subsidized accommodations are greatly sought after due to the high cost of housing on the island. Recruit training in Hong Kong lasts six months instead of 10 weeks as in Canada. HKCS

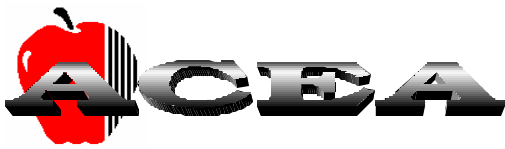
philosophy is "Inmates who are purposely and productively employed reduce the risk of unrest through boredom and lack of constructive activities." An inmate's security classification is based solely on his offence.

The HKCS is similar to our Service in many ways. Their mission statement reads: "As an integral part of the Hong Kong criminal justice system, the Correctional Service is committed: to serve the community by providing high quality and cost-effective custodial and rehabilitative services in which the public can be confident and the staff take pride; to detain persons committed to our custody in a manner which is secure to the public, safe for inmates and compatible with human dignity; to provide the best possible opportunity for all inmates to make a new start in life by offering timely, apt and comprehensive rehabilitation programs." If you compare this to our mission statement, the similarities are striking.

**This exchange not only strengthened the professional ties between the two services, it also enabled us to see each other as colleagues and friends working towards a common goal.**

*Thank you Phyllis Fleck for providing us with this interesting article.*





**Caring for the Whole Community, Martha Dobbin, Edmonton Institution for Women**

Would people help each other if it were not in their own best interest? This question was asked by June Callwood some time ago in an article which appeared in the Homemaker's magazine and was titled "The Kindness Connection".

Because we are social beings, Callwood suggested, we are longing for connectedness, even to the point of helping strangers. This is evidenced in the outpouring of help during natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes and the ice storm in Quebec. Callwood noted further that as humans we rally around and support a person who succeeds despite handicaps, as did Rick Hansen and Terry Fox.

Her conclusion was that we are very generous to those in need if we can identify with them, if we can say "That could be me". And she concluded the opposite is also true. We are impatient with or indifferent to those with whom we cannot identify. If we are hardworking and thrifty, we are not generous in thought or money to people living on welfare. If we are temperate, we have no patience with alcoholics and drug addicts. If we are law-abiding we want the law-breaker punished to the fullest. We are unsympathetic because we say "That could never be me".

There are some groups that most of us have difficulty identifying with, such as prisoners, in-your-face-teenagers, street people, drug addicts, etc.

In recent years, I have come into close contact with one such group - prisoners. I must admit that before I took the position of teacher at the Edmonton Institution for Women, though I was attracted to working with women, I was inclined to dismiss the subject of prisons and prisoners with little interest. "That could never be me."

In my job I have met women - young and older; women from substantial financial backgrounds, as well as, women on welfare; those with support on the outside and those with none; women with little education and women with successful careers; women from many ethnic backgrounds; women separated from their children - all paying dearly for their mistakes.

Now that I have met the women who are incarcerated at EIFW, I have come to the conclusion "That could be me".

It is common knowledge that the majority of women in correctional institutions have suffered either mental abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of them. I ask myself, would I have developed any self-esteem had I been knocked around and come to believe I deserved it?

Would I have a healthy psyche had I been sexually abused by the adults who were supposed to care for me? Would I be addicted to drugs and alcohol had I shared in some of their experiences?

I imagine being a child of 2, 6 or 10 years and living in a system of neglect, with no one to hug me, hold me or listen to me. I imagine being a student trying to concentrate on words and numbers while worried about what is happening at home. I reflect on growing up in a functional family and I imagine growing up in the opposite.

None of the above are excuses for crimes committed, but might be insights into a problem that separates us according to whether we are keeping the law or breaking the law. In such a system there is little room for explanations, understandings, and second chances.

Further, since I have started working at EIFW the words 'inmate', 'criminal' and 'prisoner' have come to sound harsh and only the word 'woman' seems to fit the persons I have met.

Am I a 'bleeding heart' who has been conned? No. Just a person who has made a deep connection through contact and through understanding that "That could be me". A person who hopes society will give each of these women a second chance as they try to pull their lives together with the added handicap of a criminal record.



**The Metamorphosis of LESRA MARTIN**, by Lynne Schuyler

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**L**esra Martin lived in Bushwick, NW, a Brooklyn neighbourhood rife with gangs and drug dealing. At 15, he met some Canadians who saw promise in the youth and invited him to Toronto to further his education. But soon they discovered that Lesra, near the top of class back home, could barely read or write. So they undertook to reverse the damage done by the ghetto and in the process discovered a remarkable young man.

### **Life in Hell**

STICKY, humid heat clung to Lesra Martin as he sat next to his father, Earl, on the subway. Neither spoke as they grimy train clattered and swayed, rushing towards Green Point, a white section of Brooklyn north of their home in Bushwick. This July 1979 morning would be Lesra's first day at his summer job in an environmental lab, part of a government sponsored project for inner-city kids whose families were on welfare.

Lesra, 15, stared at the unfamiliar cityscape rolling past. He was anxious, but not about his new job.

The skinny, malnourished tenth grader knew only the world of his neighbourhood, a few city blocks that more resembled a war zone than a community. Bushwick, one of Brooklyn's poorest areas, was a tough district of boarded-up store-fronts, mounds of garbage, rusting car shells and burned-out tenement buildings. Bursts of gunfire were common.

Even walking to school was perilous. At the first sound of shots, Lesra had learned to duck behind the tires of the nearest parked car or flatten himself in a doorway. He had some protection: His older brother Fru, a gang member already in trouble with the law, told others that Lesra was off-limits. But rival gangs staked out entire city blocks; it was a place where blacks like Lesra lived on one side, and poor whites and Hispanics on the other.

Now, crossing into Greenpoint, unfamiliar territory, Lesra was nervous. "You mind your p's and q's," Earl cautioned in his low, raspy voice.

Lesra stared at his father's shaking hands. Their lives hadn't always been like this. He had dim memories of a different life, of a house in Queens with a green lawn. His parents had been different, too.

In the 1960's Earl had worked as a factory foreman. The family shared lots of special times. Alma, Lesra's mother, used to crank their living room stereo to full volume, grabbing her babies by the hand and dancing with them. Sometimes they went up to the Apollo Theatre to see performers like James Brown scorch the stage.

But overnight, it seemed, their lives abruptly shifted due to a series of humiliating setbacks. A severe back injury left Earl disabled. They lost their house in a fire; at times, they were homeless, stranded in shelters or with relatives. The Martins slid into poverty, ending up in Bushwick. By then, both Earl and Alma had severe drinking problems, and their lives disintegrated into endless late-night arguments that disturbed their hungry children's sleep.

LESRA pushed his fears aside and tried to listen as his father pointed out the stops he'd have to remember to return home. The 15 year old willingly shouldered a heavy responsibility. Five of his seven siblings had left home, but the rest of his family, housed in a decaying tenement, depended on every cent he earned. The family's welfare cheque was exhausted long before month's end, and it wasn't unusual for the household of five to go a week with very little food.

Lesra had been nearly 11 when their lives hit rock bottom. Hungry, wanting to help out, he walked into a local store one day and, uninvited, began bagging groceries. The manager shooed him out, but the feisty



kid kept returning until they let him stay. Customers took to the good natured, pint-size boy who lugged their groceries home. On good days he pocketed \$2 or \$3 in tips, enough to buy rice and beans for his family.

A likable kid with a bright smile, Lesra had a knack for drawing people to him. Still, it wasn't enough to protect him from the random violence always at hand. His mother feared Lesra would not survive the streets if he didn't toughen up. "Men aren't allowed to cry," she constantly told him. Yet Lesra hated fighting; it was a last resort when nothing else worked. In the neighbourhood he earned the moniker The Diplomat for his ability to talk his way out of trouble.

That didn't stop two neighbourhood toughs, brothers, from zeroing in on Lesra. One time, the younger brother raced out of his house with a bow and arrow and shot Lesra in the chest. Furious, Lesra thrashed him. He had his wound dressed at school but knew this wouldn't be the end of it.

After school the older brother, now joined by a big, menacing cousin, stood outside Lesra's house. "Get out her, punk!" the brother screeched. "What's a matter-you scared?"

In the house, Lesra paced the floor, fearing not only the two boys outside but his older brother's fury inside. "You gotta fight or you'll be branded a sissy," Fru raged. "If you don't go out there, I'll beat you up." He reluctantly stepped outside, hoping he could talk his way out of trouble. "Your brother stabbed me in the chest!" He said, yanking up his shirt to show the wound.

But the two weren't buying it. The brother punched Lesra's wound while the cousin jumped him. As they tore into him, Lesra backed into a fence, hoping to gain an advantage. But they overpowered him, getting in a few more licks before they raced off.

Lesra stumbled to his feet, boiling over with fury. He chased after them and tackled the brother, whacking him over the head with garbage can lid.

Then he clipped the cousin on the side of his ear. Howling in pain, the pair limped off.

The brawl left him shaken, but nothing frightened him as much as the power of his own anger. He knew he could easily have killed one of the kids. With Fru in and out of jail, it seemed only a matter of time before Lesra followed in his foot-steps.

By the time he was 13, Lesra was fast becoming hardened. Repeated harassment from gang members forced him to tuck an unloaded gun into his pants one day. He fanned it around at school, hoping it would make the others back off. By 15, he was feeling the pressure to join a gang.

Now, as the subway train screeched into the station, Lesra had no way of knowing how profoundly his life was about to change.

### **The Canadians**

IN THE middle of that July 1979, Candians Terry Swinton, 32, Sam Chaiton, 28, and several housemates had traveled to the Greenpoint Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lab to research a gas-saving pollution device. They were part of a group of eight university friends who, in the 1960's joined resources and became successful entrepreneurs. All shared a strong social conscience, mixing business with activism and compassion for anyone less fortunate. They owned a house in Toronto and ran a profitable business importing batiks from Malaysia. Living and working together, they had become family.

The brawl left him shaken, but **nothing frightened Lesra so much** as the power of his own anger.

At the EPA lab, Lesra's infectious grin and raw energy soon caught the attention of Chaiton and swinton. Lesra and William fuller, another ghetto youth hired at the lab, spent their workdays playfully punching, chasing and spraying each other with water instead of the taxis they were supposed to wash. Whenever Lesra saw the Canadians, his face would light up. "Yo, Canada!" he would loudly chortle. They loved his quick wit, his curiosity and his good nature.



"I'm gonna be a lawyer," Lesra cheerfully told them one day, confiding his ambitions. "Lawyers make lots of money from people in trouble, and where I live, some one's always in trouble."

Listening, Swinton and Chaiton sensed Lesra didn't have the faintest idea what a lawyer actually did. Privately, they speculated that he was more likely to need a lawyer than to become one.

The Canadians returned to Toronto, but couldn't get Lesra and William out of their minds. They purchased plane tickets for the pair, inviting them to Toronto for a long weekend at the beginning of August.

In Toronto, the two Brooklyn youths were shocked by the ordinary: clean streets, clipped lawns, graffiti-free subway cars. In turn, the Canadians were stunned at how little the boys seemed to know outside of their own neighbourhoods.

"New York's country, right?" Lesra asked them one day. The Canadians exchanged bewildered looks. Lesra was set to enter Grade 11 that fall. How could he not know what country he lived in?

In mid-August, Terry and Sam returned to Brooklyn for more research at the lab. With them as Lisa Peters, 34, another of the group's members. They spent time with both boys and met their families. One night, as Lesra horsed around with Sam and Terry in their hotel room, he noticed Lisa tucked away in the corner, deeply absorbed in a book.

*What could be more interesting than the fun we're having?* He wondered.

Lisa began reading to him from Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*. Lesra stopped goofing around and sank into a chair, mesmerized by the story of a New York ghetto youth who survived desperate poverty to become a lawyer and a writer. The book was a revelation, one that filled him with hope.

Lesra was euphoric when the Canadians invited him to spend ten days with them later in the month. This time, Lesra's return to Bushwick was even more

difficult: In Toronto, for the first time in his life, he had felt safe.

For their part, the Canadians had formed a close emotional bond with the boy. They were deeply troubled by the gaps in his schooling and worried for his survival in a neighbourhood where drugs, jail or gangs were the only options.

A bold plan took hold: Why not bring **Lesra to Canada? Maybe they could** help him reach university. They had the financial means and plenty of room in their large Edwardian-style house on nearly a hectare of land.

Maybe they could help him reach university. They had the financial means and plenty of room in their large Edwardian-style house on nearly a hectare of land.

The eight members of the group wrestled with the idea. Was it fair to take Lesra from his family, who loved and depended on him? "Once he leaves, it's; be hard for him to go back," Peters pointed out. If he came, they agreed, the entire house hold would invest their energy and resources in helping him realize his potential.

One afternoon in September, African-American poet James McRae, a co-worker at the EPA lab and a friend of the group, sat in the Martins' tiny living room. Lesra nervously watched as McRae explained the Canadians proposal. McRae reassured the Martins that the Canadians weren't taking Lesra away; he would be back for summers and holidays. "It would be a shame to pass up an opportunity like this," he said. "nothing is more vital than access to a decent education." His parents were perplexed by this generous offer. Lesra saw the pain in his mother's eyes, yet he desperately wanted to go. Agitated, uncertain, Alma hopped up from the couch. "I can't make that decision; you can't ask me to give up my son," she said. Still, she wanted something better for her boy. She turned to her husband. "Earl, you decide."

A few days after McRae's visit, the Canadians flew Earl Martin to Toronto to checkout their home



and to discuss Lesra's education. He returned a day later. Lesra met him at the subway station, anxious to hear his decision. "What do you think-can I go? He asked.

"Well, boy, you can if you want to," his father said, clearly satisfied that his son would be in good hands.

### **A Different World**

LESRA arrived in Toronto in October 1979. Apprehensive, excited, he had no idea what to expect but was overjoyed to be with the people he affectionately dubbed The Canadians.

Their first goal was to tackle his health problems. They watched in astonishment as Lesra heaped sugar on his meat and vegetables. Haunted by years of hunger, he squirreled away bread and fruit in his room. "there will always be plenty of food in the fridge," Lisa gently told him. Back home, doctors were only for desperate emergencies. As a consequence, Lesra had lived in pain for years. He suffered from a sinus infection, constant headaches, stunted growth and poor vision. The Canadians spent months shuttling him to doctors, specialists and dentist to improve his health.

Carefully they drew him into a larger world by reading books and newspapers out loud, by watching TV news, by asking his opinion during business discussions. Everything provided fodder for learning.

One day they sat on the grass at the Ontario legislature, Queen's Park, across the street from the University of Toronto. Sam pointed out the university's law school. "That's where you'll be going to school one day," he told Lesra. Lesra hadn't the vaguest idea of the enormous obstacles he faced in reaching such a goal.

At first the Canadians guessed that Lesra was no more than a few grades behind. They talked about enrolling him in Grade 9, perhaps with some extra tutoring.

"Read this," Sam said one day, sliding a book into Lesra's hands.

Lesra fumbled to pronounce the words. Sam watched as his eyes skittered over the page, desperately searching for words he recognized, like "cat."

"What's this word, and this?" Sam repeatedly asked, pointing to the text. Stumped and unwilling to admit it, Lesra searched his memory for words he knew or made up the words as he went along, growing more frustrated and angry.

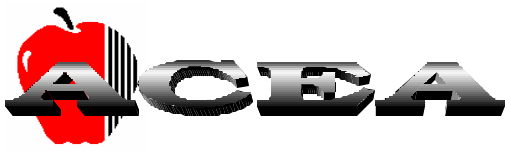
Suddenly it dawned on Sam that Lesra could neither read nor write; they had greatly overestimated his level of education. A subsequent reading test placed him at a Grade 2 level. Lesra was shattered. He had attended school faithfully, easily passing from grade to grade. If he couldn't read or write, what had been the point of his going?

Chaiton had tutored Lisa Peters' son Marty, who was severely dyslexic. It seemed natural that he could teach Lesra as well. Lesra was bright, but his lack of Standard English- the key to learning everything else- was a huge obstacle. Lesra's speech was a complicated mix of street slang, broken English, even triple negatives. He pronounced words like "beauty" as "bruty."

The first year, Sam stripped everything down to the basics, tackling phonetic skills first. None of it made sense to Lesra; That's not the way I was taught in school," he argued. Once proud of his class standing, he soon became convinced that he was incapable of learning.

"I'm stupid. There must be something wrong with me," he frequently told Sam, tears streaming down his face. Such moments were heartbreaking for Sam, tears streaming down his face. Such moments were heartbreaking for Sam. "No, Lesra, it's not your fault," he said. Often their lessons veered off into discussions of personal issues as Lesra battled deeply ingrained feelings of inferiority.

For Lesra, school had been a safe haven where he could sleep, get warm, have something to eat. Tests that challenged a student's knowledge were almost nonexistent. Kids played cards at the back of the



class while teachers read newspapers. Lesra had never been assigned homework or asked to write an essay or to read a book. "That's why you didn't learn," Sam explained.

Many days ended with both of them physically and emotionally exhausted. "I can't do this!" Lesra would shout, storming up to his room and throwing his clothes into a bag. He wanted to quit, go home. Sam and the others would leave him alone to cool down. Then a couple of them would go up to his room to talk and to ask him how he'd explain to his family that he'd given up. So Lesra would calm down and begin the struggle to learn all over again.

In truth, Lesra enjoyed learning and didn't want to leave. The house hold was a stimulating bustle of activity, a place where learning never stopped.

Trips home, however, were a painful reminder of the staggering extremes between his two worlds. On one visit to Bushwick, he was strolling down the block with his younger brother Elston when police cars screeched to a halt near them. Trunks popped open, guns were yanked out, and the police stormed a nearby building. Lesra, 16, and Elston, 14, hit the ground as bullets whizzed over their heads. Lesra reached for his brother's hand, certain they wouldn't survive. The siege ended as abruptly as it started, but Lesra was furious that anyone had to live like this.

Even more painful was the toll his absence seemed to take on his family. It was expected the eldest brother at home would always look out for his younger siblings. With Fru in and out of jail, that responsibility had fallen on Lesra's shoulders.

"Why did you leave?" Elston would ask during his visits. "All the pressure to take care of the family is on me now."

Elston's frustration posed a terrible dilemma for Lesra. The rest of his family was supportive, never pressuring him to come home. He knew his younger brother looked up to him and followed his ways. The close-knit pair were a lot alike-taking responsibility and trying to be fair and decent to others.

"I wouldn't have left if I didn't think you could do it," Lesra told his brother, proud that Elston tried hard to fill his shoes.

On every flight back to Toronto, Lesra cried. For weeks after his return, he'd be distracted and miserable, unable to study. He lashed out at the Canadians, trying to pick fights. Everyone knew that he was hurting. Eventually Lesra began taking the train, a 12-hour ride, allowing him time to adjust as he traveled between his two very different worlds.

Yet he couldn't forget his family. Lesra cut lawns, raked leaves, shoveled snow-all to earn money to send home. His family's hardships were harsh reminders of his need to become educated, to stay out of the ghetto.

### **Revelation**

WHEN HE'D first moved to Toronto, Lesra had been struck by its peacefulness compared to the chaos of Bushwick. "Do white people ever fight and argue?" he asked the Canadians. Exposed to little else, he quickly drew the conclusion that the violence he understood so well was limited to African-Americans.

To dispel Lesra's misconceptions, the Canadians encouraged Lesra to study the past, emphasizing black heroes and black American history. One summer day in 1980, Sam handed Lesra a thick book by Frederick Douglass, a brilliant black American human-rights leader.

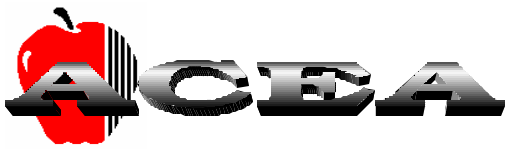
"You can read this out loud to us," Sam said.

"It's like a foam [phone] book!" Lesra retorted. The dense volume, written in 1857, was laced with difficult words and Victorian phrases but told of Douglass's own struggle with literacy.

Terrified, Lesra flipped it open, his eyes raking over the text. Haltingly, he stumbled over the words. Tears welled up in his eyes. He slammed the book shut and glared at Sam and Terry.

"You can do it," Sam insisted. "You've got the skills to handle this. This is where the payoff is for all the work you've been doing.

The passion behind Carter's words **and the force of his language bore into** Lesra's mind and heart.



Lesra remembered his mentors telling him not to stop at trouble-some words, but to read the whole sentence and paragraph so that the meaning would become clear. He sounded out the words, working his way through the text. A flicker of recognition crossed his face. The words, the paragraphs, everything suddenly made sense to him.

Not long afterwards, at a used book sale, Lesra's eyes fell on *The Sixteenth Round: From Number 1 Contender to #45472*. The fierce looking man on its cover was the author, Rubin "hurricane" Carter. The famous middleweight boxer had been tried and imprisoned for the 1966 murders of three white people in Paterson, N.J. Intrigued, Lesra bought the book.

Hungrily he read Carter's story, published in 1974. The passion behind Carter's words and the force of his language bore into Lesra's mind and heart. The book was filled with profanity, language he had heard every day on the streets of Bushwick. That in itself was a revelation: He didn't know anyone could write as they spoke or felt in real, everyday life. As Carter's story unfolded, Lesra experienced the anger, frustration and helplessness the boxer felt over his wrongful conviction.

Until then, Lesra thought about Carter all the time, resolving to work harder at his studies. If Carter could not be broken, then surely he could overcome his own fear of reading and writing.

One day he carefully smoothed out some paper on his desk, then picked up a pen to write Carter a letter. He struggled to find the words to express his thoughts and feelings. Soon, balls of crumpled-up paper surrounded the waste basket as he scratched out his thoughts. Finally he folded a letter and slipped it into an envelope.

### **A Single Letter**

AT NEW JERSEY'S Trenton State Prison in September 1980, Rubin Carter barely glanced up when a guard propped a single letter between his cell's bars. Every day, mail arrived from people begging for autographs or asking to write his story. Appalled, he never opened them.

After his second trial and imprisonment in 1976, continuing to steadfastly maintain his innocence, Carter kept himself apart from the routine of prison life. *I'm not a criminal, and I'm not participating in this system*, he thought bitterly, refusing to wear prison garb and eating only food shipped in by friend. Disillusioned, forgotten by the politicians and celebrities who had once rallied to his cause, he shunned visitors for nearly five years, refusing to let any one but his lawyers see him in the "lowest pits of hell."

Now, the solitary letter nagged at him for hours until he finally ripped it open.

"Dear Mr. Carter," it began. It was the first letter Lesra Martin had ever written, and in it he told Carter about his home in Bushwick, his new life with the Canadians and his belief in Carter's innocence.

WEEKS after he'd mailed his letter, Lesra haunted the front door mail slot, waiting for a reply. Finally, a white envelope with U.S. postage arrived. He stared in disbelief, then whooped and hollered for the others to come see.

The innocence and energy in Lesra's letter had touched a profound chord in Carter. Through Lesra, he felt a pure joy that he hadn't know in years. Soon letters flowed back and forth between Carter and Lesra and the Canadians.

On the last Sunday in December 1980, while home visiting his family, Lesra set out for Trenton State Prison. At the forbidding stone walls, lined with gun towers and barbed wire, Lesra's heart pounded with excitement over seeing Carter and with sheer terror over entering the ominous structure. *Fru's been in jail*, he thought, *and I'd probably be here too if not for the Canadians*.

It took more than an hour for him to pass through a series of screenings, sign-ins and security checks. Finally he stood in the prison's former death house, now used as a visiting area and still showing the braces where the prison's electric chair once stood.

The other visitors and prisoners paired off until Carter and Lesra, who was shaking with fear, were the only two people left standing.



“You must be Lesra!” Cater boomed in a deep, rich voice. He’d known of Lesra’s intention to visit, but had not encouraged it. The death house was a degrading place for prisoners and those who came to see them.

Lesra had expected to find the Carter of his photos: the formidable, shaven-head boxer with the ferocious stare. Instead, Carter, not much taller than Lesra, greeted him with a broad grin. Sensing Lesra’s fear, Carter crushed the teenager to him in a protective, fatherly hug. Lesra immediately felt safe.

As they sat laughing and talking, Lesra turned over the contradictions in his mind. From Carter’s own book, Lesra knew he was no choir boy; Carter had been in and out of trouble before his murder conviction.

Still, that was no reason for him to be in jail for something he didn’t do. *He’s survived this place and yet he’s so gentle*, Lesra thought in amazement. His every instinct told him that Carter was innocent.

Their visit drew to an end, and both sat in silence, Carter’s warm hand resting on top of Lesra’s. It was the first outside human contact Carter had had in years. They both looked up as another prisoner approached.

“Mr. Carter, would you like a picture of you and your son?” the man asked, noticing the affection between the two. Pleased, and not bothering to correct him, Carter nodded. The pair stood, arms clasped around each other, and Lesra beamed.

### **Miscarriage of Justice**

ARRIVING back in Toronto, Lesra couldn’t stop talking about Carter. Over the next two years, through letters, lengthy phone calls and numerous visits to the prison, the entire household forged a strong friendship with Carter, slowly drawing him out of his shell.

As they learned more about his case, the Canadians were convinced there’d been a terrible miscarriage of justice. They sent him gifts of food and clothing, but they could provide little more than moral support as Carter’s lawyers pushed through legal appeals on his conviction.

“How’s your schooling going? Carter asked in every phone call to Lesra. Learning, he patiently told Lesra, was not only a way to express himself but a means to take control of his life. Carter was intensely proud of Lesra and showed his school essays to other prisoners.

As they learned more about Carter’s case, the Canadians were convinced there’d been a terrible miscarriage of justice.

Inspired by Carter, Lesra worked hard, earning high marks in his correspondence courses and, later, in an English night-school course. He routinely sent his marks to Carter. “What happened to the other two points?” Carter queried when Lesra received 98 percent on one of his papers. Lesra chuckled. Like Sam Chaiton, Carter expected him to do well. Yet for every step forward, another crisis always pulled him back.

In the fall of 1981, he picked up the phone one day to hear his father’s voice, dejected, slurred. “I have some bad news,” Earl said. Listening, Lesra sank into a chair sobbing. Devastated, he passed the phone to Terry.

The gifts he regularly sent home were prized by his family. But a knitted cap sent to Elston had been stolen, resulting in a fight that had gone too far: Fru accidentally killed another man while trying to get it back. Guilt ridden and in shock, he had waited for the police to arrive.

Lesra wanted to go back and help his family, but the Canadians convinced him it was better to stay. Unable to concentrate on his work, he was sick at heart for weeks afterwards, anguished that his gift had caused someone’s death. Fru would later be sentenced to five to 15 years for manslaughter.

THROUGHOUT 1982 the Canadians spent months studying Carter’s case, reviewing court transcripts, tracking every detail in testimony. They tacked papers to the walls, sorting and analyzing the mountain of information. Aided by Carter, they compiled a one-by-three-metre chart of witnesses, noting every discrepancy in their testimony, then sent it to Carter’s



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lawyers, hoping it would somehow be useful in an appeal in U.S. Federal Court.

Then in November there came another blow: Carter cut off all contact with the Canadian household. He had lost another round of appeals, and in despair of ever being released, he stopped writing and phoning.

For Lesra, it was tortuous to think of Carter lost in despair. To ease his mind and heart, Lesra focused on his studies, finishing grade 13, while preparing to enter the university of Toronto. He graduated high school that spring of 1983 with straight A's and was honored as an Ontario scholar for his superior academic performance. The Canadians surprised him one day with his diploma, beautifully framed and wrapped.

Smiling, Sam proudly told him, "The next one you frame will be your university degree!"

Lesra carefully packaged copies of his **diploma and the acceptance letter from** the University of Toronto, mailing a set to his parents.

Lesra carefully packaged copies of his diploma and the acceptance letter from the University of Toronto, mailing a set to his parents. They were very proud; he was the first in his family to attend university. Lesra quietly sent the other copies to Carter, the only way he could say "thanks" for the role Carter had played in his success.

### **Renewed Effort**

EIGHT months after Carter had cut off contact with the group, he phoned the Toronto house again. This time his call, in late summer 1983, was to ask for help. The Canadians, inspired by Carter's continued fight, told him that no matter how long it took, they would fight alongside him to help secure his release from prison.

To finance their efforts, the friends sold their Toronto house and moved into a smaller place. Chaiton, Swinton and Peters even moved to New Jersey to be closer to Carter, while Lesra stayed behind to attend school and help with the group's

[www.NALD.CA/ACEA](http://www.NALD.CA/ACEA)

home-renovation business. The trio would devote the next five years, and contribute hundreds of hours of time and energy, to Carter's case.

They researched more than 15 years worth of legal documents and evidence, and helped draft legal briefs that would be used to seek a writ of habeas corpus from a Federal Court judge, demanding that authorities justify the incarceration. In Carter's case, the writ alleged prosecutorial misconduct, suppressing evidence and improperly introducing a theory of racial revenge into the trial. If it failed, all avenues of freedom would be closed and Carter would spend the rest of his life in prison.

Struck by Lesra's self-assurance, Alma **proudly gazed at her son.** "You've become a real man," she told him.

IN SEPTEMBER 1983 Lesra entered the University of Toronto. He had dropped the idea of becoming a lawyer, soured on a system that would allow Carter to be imprisoned unjustly.

He decided instead to major in anthropology and sociology. Listening to the other students, he was secretly pleased that he could speak and write as well as they did. Chaiton had taught him well.

But instead of drinking in the success of his academic achievements, he was haunted by self doubt. On the outside he appeared articulate and confident, but inside, his old fears were never far away. The ghetto was around every corner. Once, leaving a campus building, he opened the door and thought he saw not the lush school grounds but the scarred streets of Bushwick.

Midyear, he was assigned to write a political philosophy paper on social justice issues. He knew how to research his papers, yet he found himself frozen with fear. His mind churned in panic as his deadline approached. The night before his paper was due, he sat down to write, snatching ideas from the top of his head. He was shocked when his paper was praised as "original" and later considered for publication. That paper became a talisman, something he would look back at whenever his confidence failed him.

*We're on the Web!*

Email: [acea@telusplanet.net](mailto:acea@telusplanet.net)



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By 1985 Lesra was working full time in the renovation business, rising at 6:30 a.m., putting in a full day, then rushing off to night-school courses and doing homework. He longed to be in New Jersey, helping his friends work on Carter's case. When he could, he researched trial transcripts, often dashing down to New Jersey for weekend visits.

### **Freedom**

YEARS of exhaustive work by Carter, his lawyers and the Canadians paid off in November 1985 when Federal Court Judge Lee Sarokin overturned the 1976 convictions, citing grave "constitutional violations." He ruled that Carter's conviction, and that of his codefendant John Artis, was based on "racism rather than reason, and concealment rather than disclosure" by New Jersey prosecutors.

After 20 years in prison, Rubin Carter was at last free. The miraculous outcome left Lesra overwhelmed with joy. Emotional upheavals at home, however, continually tugged at his heart. Both of his parents had developed cancer, and Earl suffered seizures from a brain tumour. Lesra saved his money and, in the summer of 1986, brought them to Canada on a rare visit. He bought a new suit for his father and new shoes and a white chiffon dress for his mother on her birthday.

Struck by Lesra's self-assurance, Alma proudly gazed at her son. "You've become a real man," she told him. She had been tough on him while he was growing up, preparing him for the world she thought he would have to live in, but it had created a gulf between them that had hurt Lesra deeply. Now, though, he finally understood his mother. His leaving had brought them closer together.

One night at the house, Lesra tucked his frail parents into bed. Shortly afterwards, Earl reappeared. "I want to give you something," he said quietly, motioning his son to follow him upstairs. Curious, Lesra followed, then sat on the edge of his parent's bed.

Earl cleared his throat, then slowly, gently hummed and sang a song he'd written for his son. It was called "The End is Near."

Lesra felt his eyes brimming with tears. His father had rarely talked about his long-lost hopes for a singing career, and Lesra sensed that he was deeply ashamed of how his life had turned out. This was a truly special gift from Earl.

That fall of 1986, Lesra, now 23, took stock of his life. Carter, along with Chaiton, Swinton and Peters, was living in New York, responding to legal appeals that would drag on for another 26 months. Like the rest of the household, Lesra had carried a big load, going to school and working in the group's business to help finance Carter's case. He felt drained and wanted some time for himself. So Lesra stuck out on his own, moving into an apartment near the university.

### **Taking Stock**

IN APRIL 1988 Lesra was studying for his final exams when he was jarred by the ringing of his phone. It was Lori, his older sister; their mother had been hospitalized with severe abdominal pains. He rushed home.

In New York Lesra sat by Alma's hospital bedside, stroking her hand as he stared into the worried faces of his family. He stayed several days and when Alma appeared to regain her strength, he returned to Toronto. A few days later she passed away. Devastated, he buried himself in studying for his final exams, anything to avoid grieving.

On a mild day in September, Lesra set out on a 19-hour drive to Dalhousie University in Halifax, where he planned to study for his mother's degree in anthropology. For the first time in eight tumultuous years, he had hours and hours to think. His life had been a series of extraordinary events unfolding at breathtaking speed: his life in the ghetto, the struggle to read and write, the fight to free Carter, his mother's death. Now his father was dreadfully ill with cancer. Every thing had taken its toll.



He felt the weight of unspoken expectations – likelihood of someone from Bushwick making it this far were slim to none. Yet he had . The future suddenly frightened him. What if he failed?

He finally understood what an unselfish decision his mother had make that day in 1979 when she asked Earl to decide. It was a bitter sweet memory. Eh was proud of his parents, yet saddened they would not share in his success. *Why am I doing this? What difference does it make now?*

He pulled off the road, exhausted by the emotions crowding his head. He closed his eyes and tears slid down his cheeks. Headed for a new life in Halifax, he had everything in the world to look forward to. Instead, he felt hollow inside.

Lesra's years of illiteracy still shaped every decision he made. He rushed headlong into the demanding course load for his master's degree. Not long after his arrival in Halifax, he befriended a young woman at school. Longing for some kind of stability, he married her in the spring of 1989.

Shortly afterwards, in May, his father passed away. Once again, Lesra blunted his grief with work, turning to his sister Lori for solace.

His pace never slackened. Every time he passed Dalhousie's law school, a lump burned in his throat. *That's where I should be*, he now thought. It remained an unfulfilled dream and he decided to act. He was accepted at law school in 1990 and figured he'd juggle that with his master's degree.

But by the following spring, Lesra felt his life spinning out of control. He had somehow squeezed in a full-time job between his classes, working night shifts. Running at breakneck speed through out his day, he barely found time to crack open his books.

He was never home and his marriage – complicated and unhappy – unraveled. Miserable, he was forced to take a hard look at his life. Nothing he started ever got completed. Work on his master's degree had fallen by the wayside. Tackling law school before he was ready left him unable to focus. He

made the painful decision to withdraw, before he lost that dream, too.

Lesra soon realized his downward slide had begun with the death of his parents. He had lost his sense of purpose. He resolved to complete his masters degree and one day return to law school.

Two years later, in 1993, Lesra handed in his master's thesis, prepared to delay his plans for law school after learning he'd been accepted into the University of Toronto 's sociology doctorate program.

### **Rekindled Desire**

ON A FREEZING, snow bound day in February 1994, Lesra pulled up to his doorstep in Toronto. As he got out of his car, he was startled to see Rubin waiting and shivering in a Jeep. "Lez I need a place to stay," he said, stepping out to give Lesra a big hug.

In the years since his release, Carter had lectured, written and traveled in the United States, living on and off the Canadians. Now, waylaid by snowy weather on his way back to the States, he decided to stop over at Lesra's apartment, then continue on the next morning.

They had seen little of each other in recent years, each going his own way. As they sat talking the next day, Lesra realized he wanted to spend more time with Carter. Yet he worried about derailing his goals, taking on too much. But suddenly he blurted out, "Why not stay for a while?"

The next few weeks, they discussed the idea of working together. They moved out of Lesra's flat and into a larger home. Lesra grew to appreciate Carter hollering "son" as soon as he stepped through the door.

Once, on a flight back from giving a speech, a flight attendant mistook them for father and son. Carter turned to Lesra and made a surprising revelation. "I told your parents I would take care of you if anything happened to them. I'd be honoured if you accepted me in that role." Lesra was deeply touched.

Rubin turned to Lesra. "I told your **parents I would take care of you** if anything happened to them.



He continued to work on his doctoral degree, and together he and Carter wrote, lectured and traveled, sharing their remarkable journey with others. Carter became the executive director of The Association in Defence of the Wrongly Convicted, a volunteer organization formed to address the problem of wrongful convictions internationally. On behalf of the organization, they researched cases, and Lesra's interviews with lawyers and judges rekindled his desire to be a part of the legal system.

One chilling visit to death-row inmate Rolando Cruz left Lesra deeply unsettled. Bleak and menacing, the Illinois prison was set high on a precipice. The clang of cell doors, Cruz's hands and feet shackled in chains, the vivid sights and smells, reminded Lesra of his first prison visit with Carter. Afterwards, as their car wound down the hill from the prison, Lesra slumped in his seat, emotionally drained.

He remembered how horrifying it had felt to leave Carter behind. It was no different with Cruz. Eventually, Cruz would be cleared and freed, but for Lesra, the helplessness he felt that day only added fire to his desire to return to law school.

Everything he had ever wanted was happening. He was pursuing his doctorate and working with Carter. Yet if he didn't pursue his dream, he would always wonder if he'd made the right choices. Returning to Toronto, he reapplied to law school. But that meant leaving Carter.

### **Beating the Odds**

WHEN LESRA returned to Nova Scotia in September 1994, he was no longer afraid of what lay ahead. Now 31, he was on a mission, more clear and focused on his goals than ever before. He immersed himself in his studies and joined several student associations. At one meeting in the fall of 1995, he noticed a slender young woman with delicate features who seemed just as curious about him.

*Who is this guy?* Cheryl Tynes, 28, wondered when she heard him speak. Private and reserved, she was drawn to his warmth, confidence and outgoing nature. They became instant friends. As they spent

long hours together studying for their grueling law exams, they discovered many similarities in their backgrounds. Both were from large, poor families living in racially tense neighbourhoods, and both valued education as a way to succeed in life.

One wintery day in January 1996, Lesra confided to Cheryl that he was attracted to her, but she brushed him off. "You're not in my five-year plan," she told him bluntly, afraid her own hard-won goals would be disrupted.

Lesra heeded her feelings and didn't call for weeks. But one day he phoned to say "hi," catching her off guard. Cheryl couldn't hide her excitement at hearing his voice again.

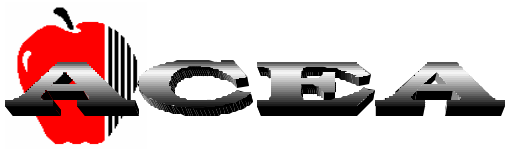
By April Lesra had finished his second year of law school. Needing a break, he met his sister Lori in New York, then traveled with her back to her South Carolina home. Late one afternoon, they telephoned Elston. The siblings laughed and talked for hours. Lesra hung up and looked at Lori, his eyes sparkling. "Let's surprise Elston with a visit!" he grinned, and they made plans to go back to New York.

That night, however, as Lesra settled on Lori's couch, the phone rang. It was his younger brother Damon. His voice broke as he told Lesra that Elston had been shot and killed on the streets of Harlem.

Lesra staggered to his feet. Dazed, he lurched into Lori's room. Too choked to speak, he handed Lori her bedside phone. "No, no, no!" she sobbed.

In the hours that followed, they learned what had happened. A niece had argued with a man at a nightclub. She called home and Elston left to pick her up. Getting out of his car, Elston asked his niece what happened. A patient man, he liked to rock back on his heels and cross his arms when he listened to others. As he lifted his arms to fold them over his chest, the man who'd argued with his niece fired, hitting Elston.

His brother's senseless death wounded Lesra even more deeply than the deaths of his parents. Elston was the man Lesra would have been had he stayed in Bushwick, trapped by a lack of education. Violence defined their neighbourhood, yet Elston was



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a gentle man who worked and raised his family, never troubling anyone. Grief stricken and haunted by guilt, thinking he should have been there instead of Elston, Lesra felt he had lost a part of himself.

Lesra drew closer to Cheryl as she helped him cope with his sorrow on his return. Her compassion made him realize how much he loved her. In 1998, a year after he graduated from law school, they married.

Lesra articulated with a Vancouver law firm and a year later moved to Kamloops to work in the Crown counsel's office. In May 1999 he stood in an oak-panelled room of the Kamloops courthouse, his black robes swirling about him. Family and friends packed the courtroom, smiling and crying as the newly called lawyers rose to take their oath before a B.C. Supreme Court judge. Carter sat next to Cheryl, his eyes alive with pride and love. He had never dreamed that Lesra would be the catalyst upon which his own freedom rested. Now he was watching yet another miracle take place. He and Lesra had both beaten the odds.

### **"The Hurricane"**

THIS PAST January Lesra and Cheryl found themselves on a plane to New York. They were going to attend a United Nations special screening of *The Hurricane*, the movie dramatization of the events surrounding Carter's release from prison. Bushwick, a place that once held no hope or future, was only a subway ride away from the UN, an irony not lost on Lesra.

As he worked during the flight on a speech he was to deliver to the UN, the tears wouldn't stop. Lesra felt as if he had come full circle. He was back in his parents' living room, waiting for their decision that would allow him to leave. For him their sacrifice was heroic.

He remembered how complete stranger had made a commitment to help him better his life, then kept that promise. He wondered if Elston would still be alive had he been given access to a proper education, too. He wondered how many other kids were in places like Bushwick, their promise held back by illiteracy.

He knew that when he stood before the UN delegates, he would have a story to tell: How compassion, courage and hope can change lives forever.

THE RELEASE of the movie *The Hurricane* has proved to be another life-changing event for Lesra. In demand as a lecturer, he has taken a leave of absence from his Crown prosecutor's job and speaks passionately about the issues surrounding literacy.

"I'll always be a lawyer," he says. "But right now I can make more of an impact speaking about the importance of education, the freedom I found in reading and the value of learning.

"I'll never forget where I came from. I'm still on a journey – I'll be on it for the rest of my life."





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## LINKS OF INTEREST

Department of Justice Canada: Youth Justice	<a href="http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca">www.canada.justice.gc.ca</a>
Teens, Crime, and the Community	<a href="http://www.nationaltcc.org/index.html">www.nationaltcc.org/index.html</a>
Canadian Parks and Recreation Association: Youth	<a href="http://www.cpra.ca/youth/youth.html">www.cpra.ca/youth/youth.html</a>
AADAC: Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission	<a href="http://www.gov.ab.ca.aadac">www.gov.ab.ca.aadac</a>
Justice4Youth	<a href="http://www.justice4youth.com">www.justice4youth.com</a>
Youth Justice Education Partnership	<a href="http://www.extension.ualberta.ca/youthjustice">www.extension.ualberta.ca/youthjustice</a>
National Crime Prevention Centre	<a href="http://www.crime-prevention.org/english/">www.crime-prevention.org/english/</a>
Statistics Canada	<a href="http://www.statcan.ca">www.statcan.ca</a>
ABA Juvenile Justice Center	<a href="http://www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/home.html">www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/home.html</a>
Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association	<a href="http://www.accpa.org">www.accpa.org</a>
Alberta Justice: Crime Prevention	<a href="http://www.gov.ab.ca/just/crimeprev/">www.gov.ab.ca/just/crimeprev/</a>
Department of the Solicitor General Canada	<a href="http://www.sgc.gc.ca">www.sgc.gc.ca</a>
Correctional Service of Canada	<a href="http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca">www.csc-scc.gc.ca</a>
Native Youth and Alternative Justice in Lethbridge	<a href="http://www.usask.ca/nativelaw/jah_harsh2.html">www.usask.ca/nativelaw/jah_harsh2.html</a>
Alberta Courts	<a href="http://www.albertacourts.ab.ca">www.albertacourts.ab.ca</a>



# Health Advice

## The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter

### Earth's Easiest Exercise



and stroke

*Walking* can add years to your life and life to your years. And it couldn't be easier. You don't need to join a health club, wear special equipment or go into training to reap the rewards:

**The Conditioner** *Walking* conditions our heart and lungs and raises your body's ability to use oxygen more efficiently. Fact: In one study, women who *walked* briskly (3-4 miles per hour) at least three hours a week cut their risk of heart attack by more than half.

**The Protector** *Walking* helps beat other health problems, too. It reduces your risk of some forms of cancer and osteoporosis. It fights the battle of the bulge, taking off fat and building muscle. *Walking* can even help people with diabetes reduce or eliminate their need for medication.

**The Joint-Savor** *Walking* can burn about as many calories per mile as jogging does. But it delivers only about a quarter of the jolt, so it's much easier on your joints and muscles.

**The De-Stressor** *Walking's* easy on your mind, too, since it lessens stress and lightens depression. Beginning walker usually report that they feel better, sleep better and that their mental outlook improves.

**The Winner** Best of all, *walking* has the lowest dropout rate of any form of exercise. So you're more likely to stick with it and get all these benefits and more, like better digestion, improved regularity and lower blood pressure.

### There's Nothing To It

Just put on a sturdy, comfortable pair of shoes and go. Smart moves: *Walk* to the store for the Sunday paper...park a few blocks from work or get off the bus or train one stop early and walk from there...use stairs instead of elevators or escalators...on bad weather days *walk* in a mall or on a gym treadmill.

How fast should you go? That's easy, too. Just use the "talk test." Move at a steady clip that makes your heart beat faster and causes you to breathe more deeply-but doesn't leave you too breathless to carry on a conversation. You'll do yourself a world of good.



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## ACEA APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Alberta Correctional Education Association (ACEA) is dedicated to the academic, vocational and personal development of offenders and the professional enhancement of Association members.

Membership is open to individuals working in correctional facilities, or associated professionally to, or have an interest in correctional education.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Workplace: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsoring  
Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please include postal code)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

The annual membership fee is \$30.00. Please make cheque or money order payable to “**ALBERTA CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION.**”

Please mail your cheque or money order, with completed application form to:

Jacob Varghese  
**ACEA Treasurer**  
Grierson Centre  
9530 – 101 Ave  
Edmonton, AB T5H 0B3

**Interesting Facts to Think About**

- ❖ In Shakespeare's time, mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes. When you pulled on the ropes the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer to sleep on. That's where the phrase, "goodnight, sleep tight" came from!
- ❖ The sentence "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" uses every letter of the alphabet!
- ❖ The only 15 letter word that can be spelled without repeating a letter is 'Uncopyrightable'!
- ❖ The world's termites outweigh the world's humans 10 to 1!

**If Restaurants Functioned Like Microsoft. . .**

**Patron:** Waiter!

**Waiter:** Hi, my name is Bill, and I'll be your Support Waiter. What seems to be the problem?

**Patron:** There's a fly in my soup!

**Waiter:** Try again, maybe the fly won't be there this time.

**Patron:** No, it's still there.

**Waiter:** Maybe it's the way you're using the soup; try eating it with a fork instead.

**Patron:** Even when I use a fork, the fly is still there.

**Waiter:** Maybe the soup is incompatible with the bowl; what kind of bowl are you using?

**Patron:** A SOUP bowl!

**Waiter:** Hmm, that should work. Maybe it's a configuration problem; how was the bowl set up?

**Patron:** You brought it to me on a saucer; what has that got to do with the fly in my soup?!

**Waiter:** Can you remember the last thing you did before you noticed the fly in your soup?

**Something to Think About**

- ◆ Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.
- ◆ To handle yourself, use your hand; to handle others, use your heart.
- ◆ Anger is only one letter short of danger.
- ◆ Great minds discuss ideas; Average minds discuss events; Small minds discuss people;
- ◆ God gives every bird its food, but he does not throw it into its nest.
- ◆ He who loses money, loses much ◆ He who loses a friend, loses more ◆ He who loses faith, loses all.
- ◆ Beautiful young people are acts of nature, but beautiful old people are works of art.
- ◆ Learn from the mistakes of others, you can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

