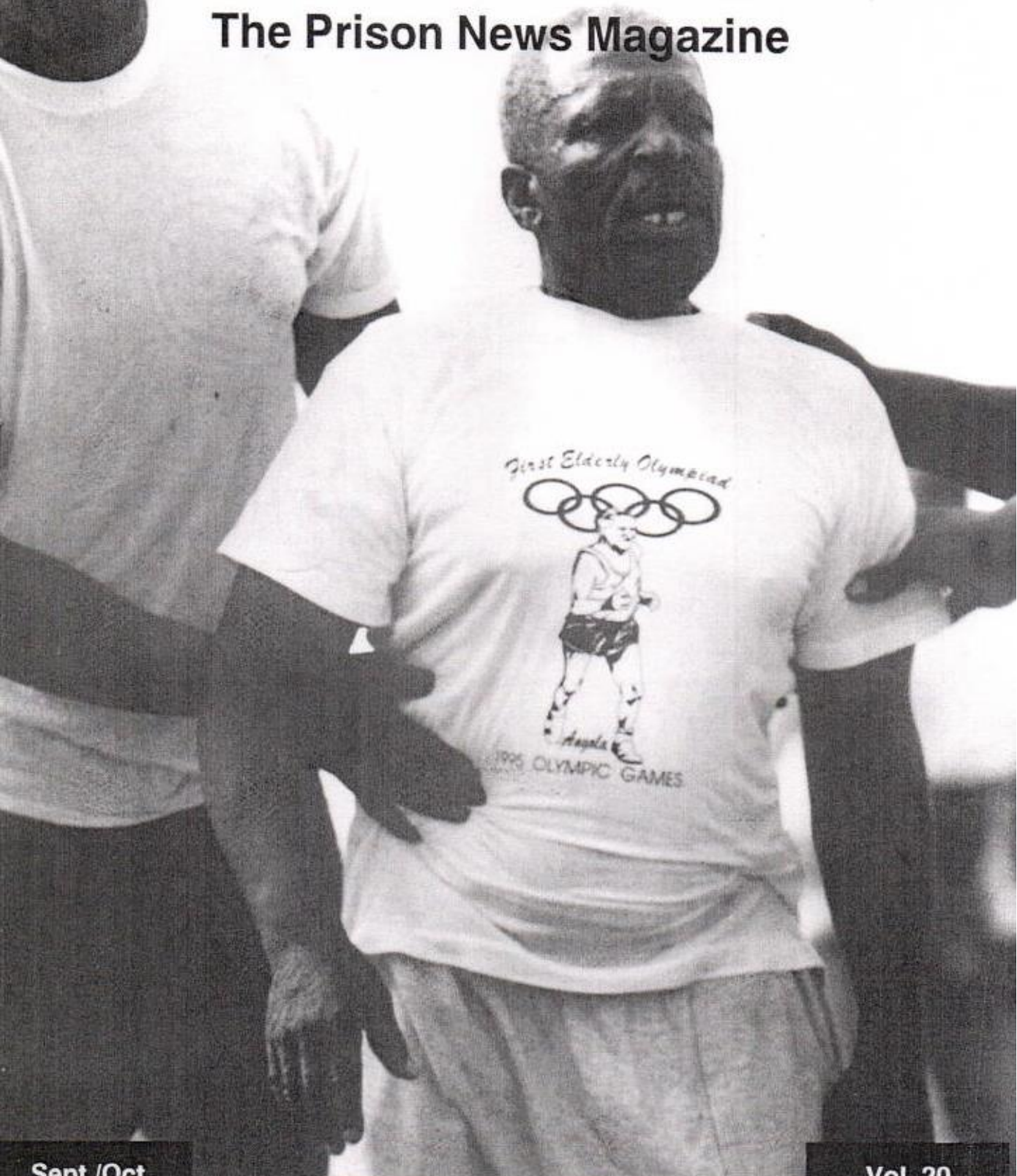


# THE ANGOLITE

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## RELIGION IN PRISON:

# THE SPIRIT MOVING

By MICHAEL GLOVER

*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. —John 6:63*

Christians believe the power of the Holy Spirit can wax and wane in the community of believers, and if this is true then that power is increasing exponentially in Angola.

## PRISON-WIDE BIBLE COURSE

The first sign of a fresh strength was the success of Angola's first prison-wide Bible course, *Experiencing God*. Warden Cain first took the course himself, then recommended it for Angola's inmate pastors and religious leaders. In one of the first meetings he held after becoming warden

Cain told the leaders, "We need to know what God wants us to do, and where God wants us to be. This course will help us to do that."

*Experiencing God* is one of more than 500 courses available from the Church Study Course of the Southern Baptist educational system. It was written by Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, and is part of the Lay Institute For Equipping (LIFE). Simple, yet profound Biblical truths are presented in twelve chapters of the workbook. Each week the student reads a chapter and spends about 30 minutes completing the exercises. All the students meet with their facilitator once a week to discuss the chapter and view a portion of the course video.

There was no trouble finding prisoners to take the course. Inmate pastors and their assistants from each prison congregation (except Jehovah's Witnesses) volunteered for it. Added to them were Deacons, Elders, and other Christians lucky enough to be at the meeting. More than sixty prisoners signed on.

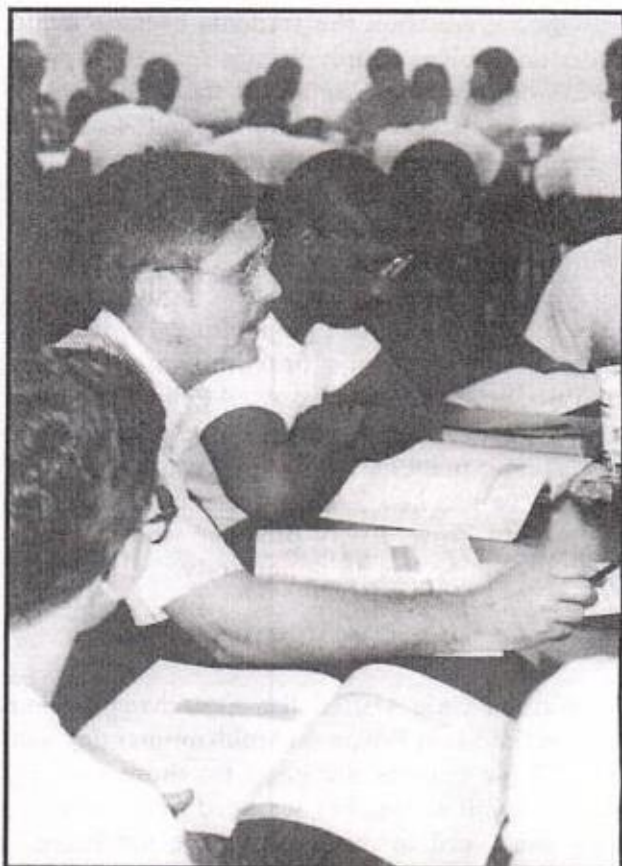
At least six facilitators were needed to teach the course. They would have to be free Christians willing to sacrifice a large part of their lives to come to Angola and share their thoughts with prison-



WARDEN CAIN (3rd from right) WITH INITIAL FACILITATORS



MRS. DEBBY CAIN



DEATH ROW STUDY GROUP

ers. This would require an uncommonly high level of commitment. They would have to be convicted in their spirit that this is what God wanted them to do. In most cases this is where good ideas fail.

Not this time. Warden Cain's wife, Debby Cain, and several members of her Sunday school class volunteered for the job. For the next twelve weeks the study groups met and discussed their lessons in the Main Prison visiting area. This was the beginning.



GRADUATION

Upon graduation the students became facilitators themselves. Study groups formed at every outcamp, every yard, and even the prison hospital. The original facilitators moved on to lead what is perhaps the most astonishing group in the history of this prison. They went to Death Row, and brought the power of the Spirit with them.

Mature Christians and new converts alike have found this course enlightening. Andrew Joseph, one of Angola's best known preachers, didn't believe the material would challenge him. "I was wrong," he said later. "These lessons are powerful no matter what level of Christian maturity you've reached." At this writing the classes continue to grow. Every prisoner who wants to take this course has an opportunity.

### PRISON REVIVAL

Warden Cain visited the *Experiencing God* class in the Main Prison one midsummer day and said, "Bible courses are good for those who already are Christians, but we need to do more to bring the Word to those who have not heard." He had an idea for a revival and, as all *Experiencing God* graduates learn to do, he sought con-



REVIVAL ON THE RODEO GROUNDS



RAY JONES & RADIANCE MINISTERING IN EAST YARD TENT

firmation from other Christians. He got it.

Several planning sessions later the warden brought the outline to Angola's Christians. "We have a revival coming up!" Cain said. "We will have outstanding preachers and outstanding music. You are going to enjoy it. But you are going to be the men who make it possible." He introduced the key members of the Southern Baptist Convention who would coordinate the effort with churches throughout the area. Revival

was set to take place over a three-day period from September 15 through September 17.

On Thursday, September 14, there was a reunion of prisoners and the original facilitators of *Experiencing God*. They filled the Main Prison visiting area with laughter and good will as prisoners renewed the bonds they'd forged through 12 weeks of study.

But this meeting had two other purposes. First, another Bible course, *Disciples Prayer Life*, was introduced by Ms. Wilma Sue Goetzmann. That course also produced by Henry Blackaby and the Claude King. After Goetzmann's speech, and after viewing the ten-minute video she brought with her, every one of the former students was eager to sign up for the new course.

The other purpose was to get ready for the revival scheduled to start the next day. Warden Cain reminded the group once again, "We can

set the table and put out the food, but unless the people are ready for revival it won't work. The responsibility is squarely on your shoulders." Cain arranged for most prisoners to get off work Friday afternoon, just before the start of the program.

The next day the revival team overwhelmed the prison. They spread out to all the camps, and pitched tents on all the yards. Pastor Fred Luter, Jr., from New Orleans set up a team on the Main Prison's East Yard, while Pastor Lee Wesley from Baton Rouge set up on the West Yard. Evangelist Bill Saye, from Stockbridge, Georgia set up at Camp D while Pastor Jim Thomasee, of Alexandria, set up at Camp C. Pastor Bobby Ready, of Baton Rouge led a team at Camp F, while Tim Robinson, from the Louisiana Baptist Convention's Evangelism office, led a team at Camp J. Evangelist Carl Carrigan ministered to Death Row. Over the weekend they rotated their positions until they all met on the prison rodeo



GOETZMANN



EVANGELIST FREDDIE GAGE



JOHNSON

grounds Sunday morning. There, Evangelist Freddie Gage from Eules, Texas, led the gathering.

The musicians rotated with the preachers. They included Music Evangelists Price Harris, Ellerbes, and Gwen Williams. The Swanner Brothers were there, as were Soloists Jessica Carmichael, Johnny Driscoll, Frances Clark, and Lollie Ready.

One of the most remarkable performances was that of Radiance Ministries, led by lead singer Ray Jones. Jones sang at the preliminary gathering, and in the rodeo arena. All who heard his voice were moved.

Perhaps the most remarkable performance was that of Dr. Vernard Johnson, hailed across America as the world's

greatest gospel saxophonist. Johnson's testimony is powered by his background—a child of Kansas City's ghetto—who overcame all obstacles to earn his Doctorate of Musical Arts from Southwestern Seminary. Johnson was born an asthmatic, and throughout his young life he had difficulty gathering enough wind just to breathe. His saxophone is constant testimony to the healing power of the Lord. Prisoners who tried to avoid the tents and ignore the preachers could not hide from the pure and perfect sound of Johnson's horn as he blasted his message across Angola.

When the revivalist weren't performing they were freely walking around the prison, listening to whomever would talk, and talking to whoever would listen. They shared their hearts and their souls. By Sunday afternoon, when they finally had to pack it all up and leave, there were new Christians on the river.



DESTINY