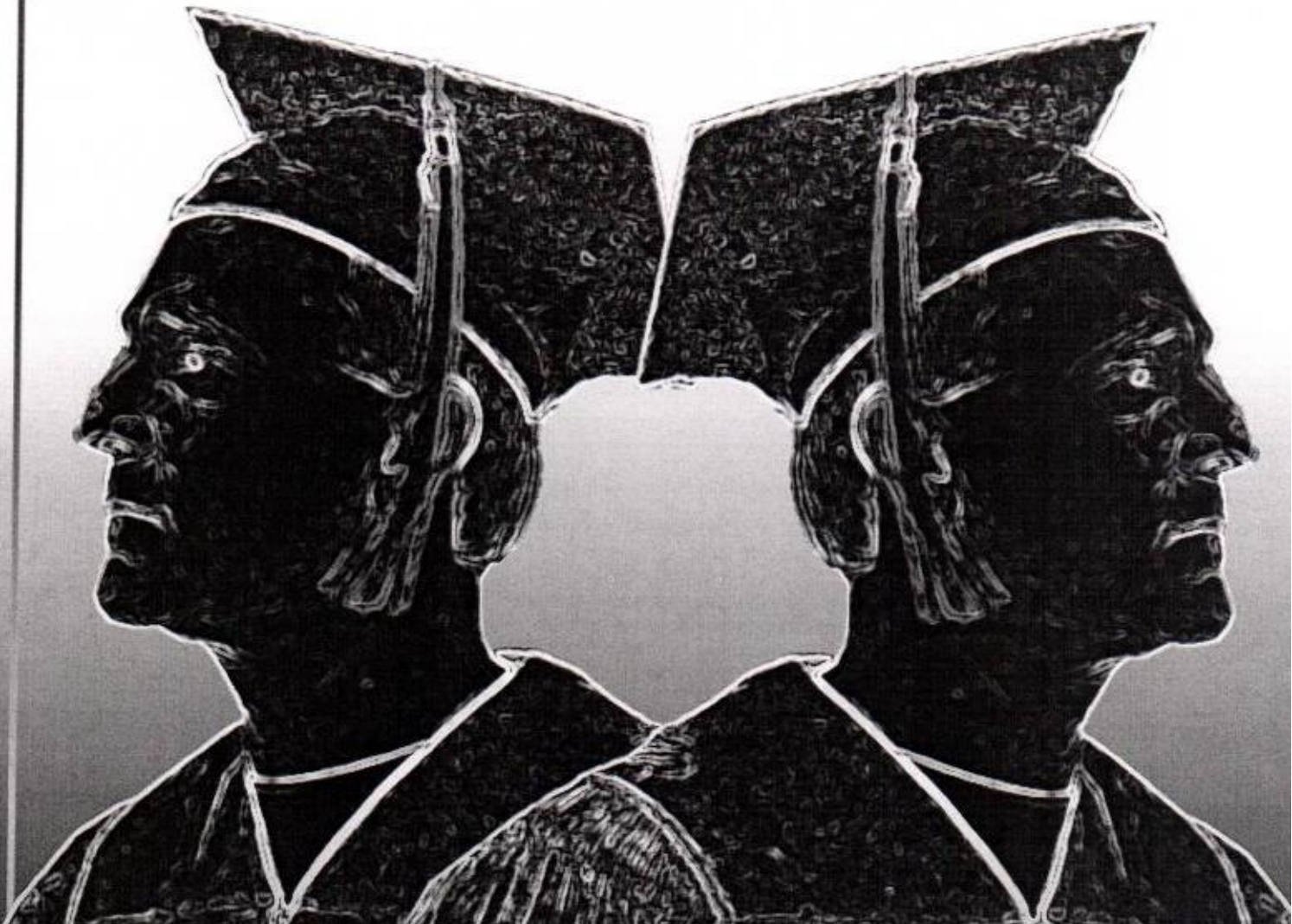


THE ANGOLITE

THE PRISON NEWS MAGAZINE



**THE END ...
AND THE BEGINNING**

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inside angola

THE END ... AND THE BEGINNING

THANK YOU MEN FOR HEARING THE CALL to preach the Gospel, and for studying to show yourselves approved workmen who need not be ashamed," said Dr. John H. Robson, director of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's (NOBTS) Angola Extension Center. He was speaking in the prison's Tudy Chapel to 51 inmate graduate-candidates of the NOBTS class of 2010, as they prepared to receive their diplomas. Attending the packed May ceremony were over 200 of the graduates' family members and a group of state senators, judges, district attorneys, sheriffs, pastors, chaplains and wardens from Louisiana, Georgia and Texas. Also making the trip back to Angola for the occasion were 26 NOBTS inmate graduate missionaries from eight satellite prisons across the state.

The sixth Angola campus commencement since the school opened its doors in 1995 was a collaborative effort of the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge (formerly Judson Baptist), the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. "Each year the Louisiana Baptist Convention, through the Association in Baton Rouge, provides for about one-fourth of the funding here at the seminary," said Dr. Norris Grubbs, associate dean, of Leavell College. "We are so very grateful for all of their support."

"It's a wonderful partnership that we share with this institution and its leadership under Warden Cain and with the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary under Dr. Kelley's leadership—that's the way the family of God is supposed to work," said Dr. David Hankens, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. "We are so glad to hear the news of this work spreading in other institutions, east and west, and hopefully all over the United States. We are proud to be partners with you and our role is to clap and cheer and thank God for what he does."

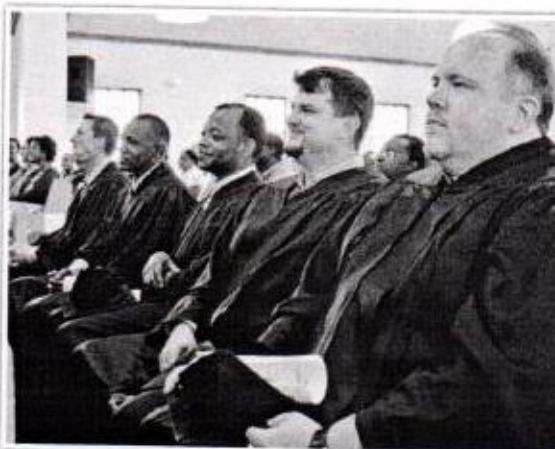
Angola warden Burl Cain credits the Bible College with altering the prison's culture. Graduates have the option to do tours as inmate missionaries, going to other prisons to assist chaplains and coordinate religious programs. Those deciding to stay at Angola are now being utilized in a newly implemented re-entry program to teach GED preparatory classes, vocational trades and self-help programs to qualified nonviolent offenders shipped in from parish jails.

Prison education programs flourished during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1982, there were more than 350 college programs in U.S. prisons, but in the mid-1990s Congress gutted higher education in prison by making inmates ineligible for federal Pell Grants. This despite voluminous data proving education has a positive impact on prisoners and significantly reduces recidivism by equipping them to return to society as productive citizens. Statistics have also shown that education, combined with faith based—or as Cain has coined it, "moral rehabilitation"—programs are even more effective at reducing recidivism.

At the beginning of his tenure, Cain saw a need to instill hope and peace in a population of over 5,000 inmates, 3,700 of whom were serving life without parole. In July 1995, he met with Dr. George Roundtree of Louisiana State University and Reverend T.W. Terral, former director of missions for Judson Baptist Association, to discuss options for faith based education. From that meeting came the idea for an extension campus of NOBTS at the prison. It was a way to overcome the loss of grant funding and still offer inmates the opportunity for higher education and moral rehabilitation.

This year 44 students received associate degrees which prepare them for basic ministerial work and for pursuing upper level baccalaureate work. Each associate degree consists of courses totaling 70 semester hours, including life skills, Christian studies, basic ministry foundation and free elec-

Graduates Michael Vanchiere (right), Kenneth Vickers, Ralph Williams, Frankie Willis and Kenneth Woodburn listen as class valedictorian Earnest Hancock delivers the student message



Solving the twofold problem of providing higher education and moral rehabilitation programs for inmates, Angola warden Burl Cain opened the door to the NOBTS extension campus in 1995

ASSOCIATE DEGREES IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Michael M. Banford Sr.	Saul Johnson
Noble E. Bates	Samuel Kelly III
Michael B. Blanc	George H. King III
Kyron Breaux	Marlon King
Arthur L. Brown	Kerry P. Ledet
Issac Carr	Darren Maillard
Stanton R. Easley Jr.	Juan Matthews
Ronald Edison	Glenn Polk
Randy Finch	William C. Reese
Henry L. Fisher Sr.	Anthony C. Robinson
Derrick J. Gardner	Charles Rodgers
Theodore F. Genter III	Jack D. Segura
Ernest Hancock (Robert G. Jones)	David D. Settlemyer
Tyson T. Hollis	Larry S. Sharp
Michael O. Houston	Sherman Singleton
Oliver W. Howard III	Marvin Smith
Byron J. Jackson	George C. Toca
Gary Jamerson	Michael S. Vanchiere
Darren James	Kenneth H. Vickers Jr.
Norris James	Ralph E. Williams
Gill W. Jasmine Sr.	Frankie R. Willis
Dannie Johnson	Kenneth L. Woodburn Jr.

tives. The curriculum provides a historical foundation for Christian ministry as well as courses that provide practical information for leading and performing an effective ministry.

The Bachelor of Arts, awarded to 45 graduates, is the foundational degree offered by Leavell College that emphasizes practical ministry through a thorough understanding of biblical and theological principles. Graduates complete 126 semester hours that provide opportunities for development and reflection upon an accurate interpretation and application of biblical truths. Included in the degree is a concentrated focus

on the application of the Bible's teachings and the practical areas of discipleship and a chaplaincy ministry. "As a result of their class work," said Dr. Scott Drumm, acting dean of Leavell College, "each one of these graduates is prepared to fulfill God's call of ministering to his fellow inmates."

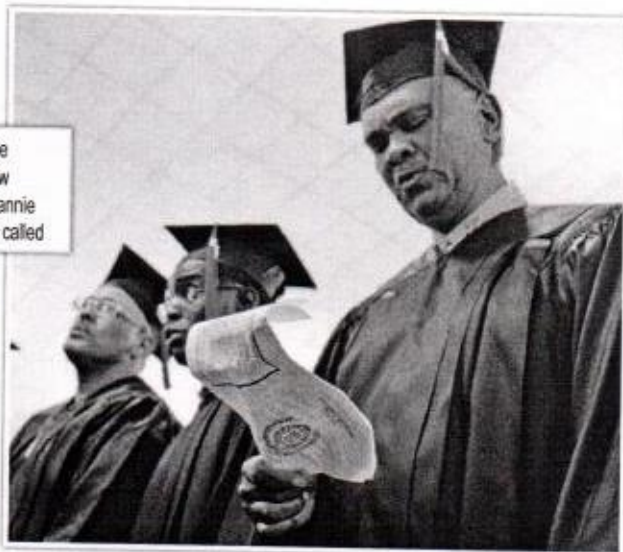
Dr. Jimmy Dukes, director of theological education, said it was quite moving for him to sit during the graduation and remember how the school started. "The joy we were able to experience was possible because of the cooperation of the officials at the prison, our own seminary people, the teachers who

have served, and the students who have worked so hard to complete the program," Dukes said. "As these trained leaders go out to serve within or without the prison walls, who knows what God will do to reach people for Christ and change lives. To him be the glory!"

The Bible College's success has already been the prototype for expansion into correctional institutions in other states such as Georgia and Mississippi. Texas is now committing to carbon-copy the program after a visit to Angola by Grove Norwood of Fulshear, Texas, in January. He shared his testimony about the death of his four-year-old daughter, Sarah Joy, after being struck by a truck.

Norwood chose to forgive instead of seeking retaliation or the incarceration of the man behind the steering wheel.

Norwood felt that there was something different about Angola and the men incarcerated in it compared to those in the Texas prison system. He returned in May with a group of 17 for a three-day tour of the prison to let them see firsthand how Angola does corrections. "This would have never been allowed in Texas because our folks don't see it yet. Our inmates don't see it," Norwood



Norris James (right) follows the program as he waits with fellow graduates Gill Jasmine and Dannie Johnson for their names to be called

BACHELOR'S DEGREES IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Michael M. Banford Sr.	Saul Johnson
Noble E. Bates	Robert Juarbe
Michael B. Blanc	Samuel Kelly III
Arthur L. Brown	George H. King III
Michael J. Dright	Kerry P. Ledet
Stanton R. Easley Jr.	Juan Matthews
Ronald Edison	Howard Rapp
Randy Finch	William C. Reese
Henry L. Fisher Sr.	Anthony C. Robinson
Zachary Franklin	Charles Rodgers
Derrick J. Gardner	Jack D. Segura
Theodore F. Genter III	David D. Settlemyer
Justin Granier	Larry S. Sharp
Ernest Hancock (Robert G. Jones)	Sherman Singleton
Tyson T. Hollis	Marvin Smith
Michael O. Houston	Henry L. Taylor
Oliver W. Howard III	George C. Toca
Byron J. Jackson	Hury Vance
Gary Jamerson	Michael S. Vanchiere
Darren James	Kenneth H. Vickers Jr.
Norris James	Ralph E. Williams
Gill W. Jasmine Sr.	Kenneth L. Woodburn Jr.
Dannie Johnson	

said. "We're going back with your message and they will. We have good people in our prisons, both inmates and staff. They just need to have a new world view. We are gonna be making some bigger investments in Texas."

"I've been in office 37 years and every time I think I've seen everything, then I have an experience like this morning," said Texas state Senator John Whitmire, who accompanied Norwood on the fact-finding tour. "I can't tell you how proud I am to be here and the impact that you are having on the

Texas delegation. Senator Patrick asked me to visit this institution because he and I normally deal with problems every day. You gentlemen don't know how bad I need a success story. I'm human. I get beaten down. I get depressed. I take three steps forward trying to get rehabilitation in our prisons and then our administrators pull me back two steps.

"But I don't give up," he continued. "I need my batteries charged every now and then, and I am receiving it here at Angola. I am blessed and the Lord knew what he was doing when he flew us over here. We're going back to Texas and make this happen in the Texas system."

Angola's Bible College is not without its critics and naysayers, those who believe the prison's culture change is merely fraudulent jailhouse religion. "You are a living picture of God's redemption and power, and anyone who doesn't believe that just needs to come down to Angola and look at the Bible College here," Drumm told the graduates. "We have sought carefully through prayer and planning to develop a curriculum to equip students to fulfill their ministerial calling."

"It's an amazing journey that we are on. Two institutions coming together, one because of the civil authority—punitive justice—and the other an institution that is called of God to enable ministers of the Gospel," John Robson told the 2010 graduating class. "How could they mix? How could they possibly bring themselves into

unity? Only God and not man could do that and he has done it and we are grateful."

Four years of sitting in a classroom can create bonds between students and their professors. That was evident during the student response speech given by graduate-candidate Ernest Hancock. He described an incident in Robson's class on his third day of school. "There are statements we hear that are life changing. I thought I had all the answers, and when I raised my hand to tell Doc that I didn't fully agree with one of his



statements, Doc said, 'You need to get over yourself Hancock, it's not about you.' I learned a valuable lesson that day, and I want to tell all of you, if you think today is about you, well you need to get over yourself—it ain't about you.

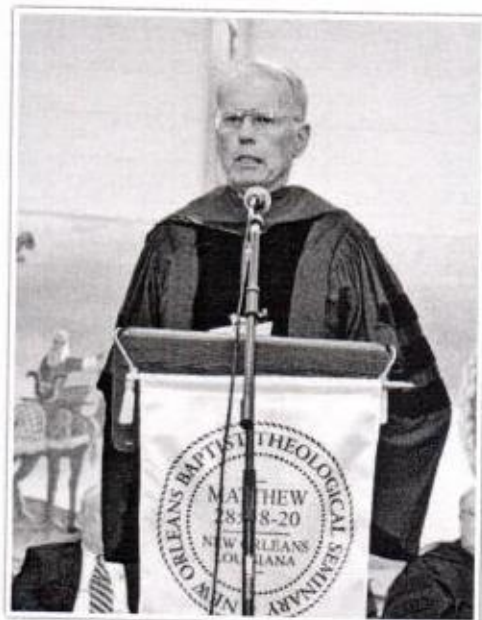
"The Class of 2010 doesn't want you to miss this message here today," he continued. "We really appreciate what the school has done for us. They have really helped us further our education.

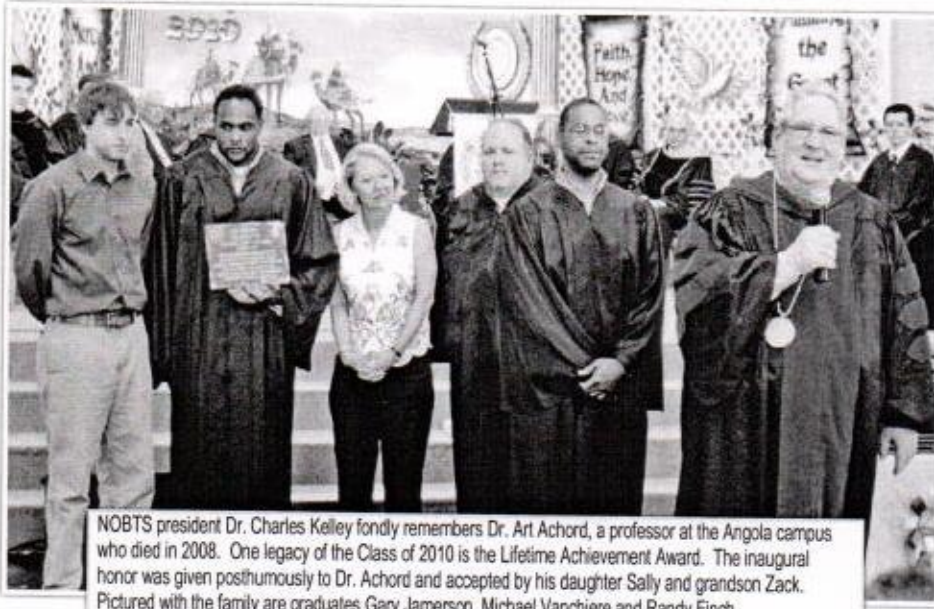


Texas state Senator John Whitnire of Houston, who toured Angola with state Senator Dan Patrick and Texas corrections officials, wants to duplicate the Bible College in Texas prisons

Valadictorian Ernest Hancock jokingly told the rest of his graduating class to "Get over yourself," as he delivered the response for the Class of 2010

NOBTS Angola Extension Center director Dr. John Robson has administered the prison-based campus since it opened in 1995. This was his sixth commencement





NOBTS president Dr. Charles Kelley fondly remembers Dr. Art Achord, a professor at the Angola campus who died in 2008. One legacy of the Class of 2010 is the Lifetime Achievement Award. The inaugural honor was given posthumously to Dr. Achord and accepted by his daughter Sally and grandson Zack. Pictured with the family are graduates Gary Jamerson, Michael Vanchiere and Randy Finch

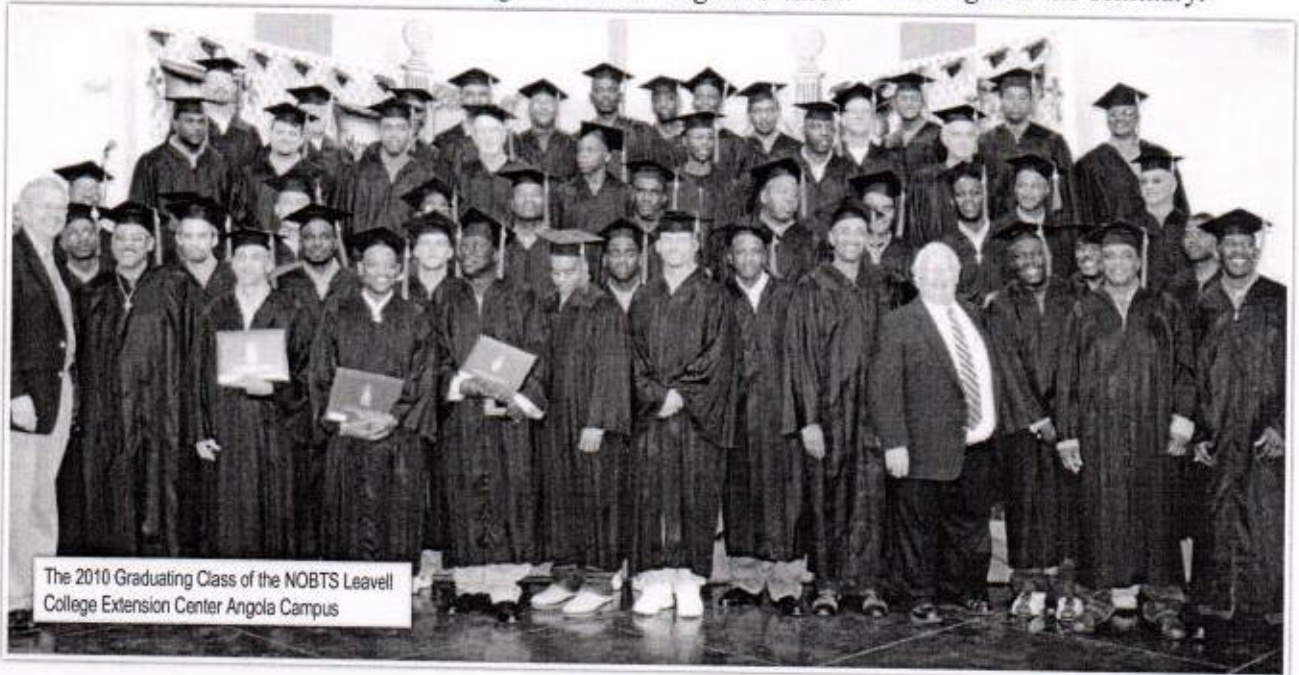
God,” said graduate-candidate Gary Jamerson, who presented the award to Achord’s daughter Sally and grandson Zack. “This man chose to share all of himself with a group of men who have taken from so many.”

“One man can make a great difference by investing in human lives because every human life is valuable to God and worth an investment,” said Dr. Charles Kelley Jr., NOBTS president, about Achord’s love for teaching. Kelley said the award will be permanently displayed at the New Orleans campus.

Warden Cain has allowed Jesus to come into this institution. We’ve got the people here from Texas. Let me tell you all something, this is not a program, it’s not a process, it’s not about humans, it’s all about Jesus. You want to change the Texas prison system, you let Jesus come into those inmates and he will change their lives. That’s what today is about—it’s about Jesus and his fruit here today.”

A legacy of the Class of 2010 is the Lifetime Achievement Award. The inaugural award was given posthumously to Reverend Arthur Achord, a professor at the Angola Extension Center from 1995 until his death on March 30, 2008, for his lifelong service, achievement and direct impact upon the student body. “Brother Art often said, ‘To change all things we must begin to know

Other awards presented by the class were given to Dr. Paul E. Gregoire Jr., dean of admissions and registrar, in appreciation for coordinating the graduation; Dr. John Robson for his lifelong work of sowing good seeds into the lives of the men; and his wife Yvette Robson, who was escorted by their son Brian to receive her award for the unselfish sacrifices she made during the 15 years her husband has taught at the seminary.



The 2010 Graduating Class of the NOBTS Leavell College Extension Center Angola Campus

"You never know what seeds you plant. I'm hoping that there is a possibility of being able to send guys from here into Texas to kick off the program," Gregoire said. "But look at the influential people that are here. If you have Jesus in it and the powers that be, it's got to work."

For the average college student, graduation means no more late night studying, no more difficult tests, and a new, often uncertain chapter in their lives. But for the Angola students, years of commitment and struggle is an end to a beginning. "We want to encourage each of you to continue to be an encourager for these precious students," Kelley told the family members of the graduates. "Their work is actually just now beginning. Everyone will have a ministry responsibility either here in Angola or they may be sent out as a missionary to other prisons somewhere in this state, or, who knows where all God will take them?"

After the commencement ceremony, family members expressed their feelings about the graduates. Kim Martin, from Youngsville, Louisiana, has been visiting her brother, Jack Segura, regularly for 28 years. "He is my best friend and when we were growing up I believe I would aggravate him more than anything, but my being a thorn in his side might have not been a bad thing after all," she told *The Angolite*. "Today is a miracle of God—that what God can do for him, he can do for anybody. Because God is not a respecter of persons. I believe whether Jack wanted it or not God was going to work through him because of my faith and my mom's faith and

all the prayers of the rest of the family. My prayer for him is that whatever doors God opens, let no man shut. And whatever doors God shuts, let no man open."

"It is such a great feeling to know that your parents love you through the trials, and with everything that leads us up here they stick with you," Gill Jasmine said about his mother, Diane, who drove from LaPlace, Louisiana to see her son graduate. "And this can only happen because of a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is only because of him that makes people see differently."

Theodore Genter's mom, Jill Christensen, knew there was something special about him the minute the doctors handed him to her. "I knew that he was going to do something very important someday. From that day on he was the most difficult child I have raised and I kept looking at him to find that glow that he was born with and I couldn't find it," she said. "For years and years I grieved because I felt that I hadn't helped him reach his potential. Today he reached his potential, and I saw that glow around my son again."

NOBTS president Dr. President Charles Kelley put some perspective on the students' accomplishments. "If there is ever any doubt in your mind that your life matters," he said to the students before leaving, "I want for you to remember that there was a warden who took a great professional risk because he believed your life mattered. And there is a seminary down in old New Orleans who believes that your life matters. Don't let anyone tell you any different." —*Kyle Hebert*

Prison Numbers



Number of inmates housed at Angola on August 30, 2000 —
5,131

Number of inmates housed at Angola on March 24, 2010 —
5,113

Percentage of Angola's population age 40 or older on August 30, 2000 —
44.4%

Percentage of Angola's population age 40 or older on March 24, 2010 —
61.4%

Percentage of Angola's population age 65 or older on August 30, 2000 —
1.5%

Percentage of Angola's population age 65 or older on March 24, 2010 —
4.1%

Estimated cost of housing one prisoner per year, according to the 2000-2001 legislative budget —
\$18,118.13

Estimated cost of housing one prisoner per year, according to the 2009-2010 legislative budget —
\$23,370.80

Oldest identification number of a prisoner housed at Angola on June 14, 2010 —
59103

Newest identification number of a prisoner housed at Angola on June 14, 2010 —
565779

Source: Louisiana State Penitentiary and *The Advocate*, Baton Rouge.