



Ray McMinn 1948-1997

It was when Ray spoke of his involvement with the Homeless Garden Project that his voice filled with pride and his heart with love. He had found work, friends, and real meaning in his life.

July 1997

In July, 1995, Ray's number came up. He was arrested and detained for extradition to the State of Virginia for having left the state without permission, thus violating parole. The airfare was over \$4000 alone. Expenses for courts, judges, lawyers (both prosecutorial and defense), bailiffs, the cost of the buildings, insurance, phone calls, computers, and police salaries were all incurred. The bill added up and, as usual, the public paid the tab.

Prison costs in California average over \$25,000 per year per inmate. The estimated cost of Ray's incarceration and extradition were over \$40,000. All this for the "safety" we are supposedly experiencing due to the dubious milestone of having put 1.6 million people behind bars. Virginia is becoming a state known for a high incarceration rate (as is California), with Governor George Allen leading the parade to build more prisons for more "dangerous" criminals like Ray McMinn.

John B. Metzger III was the chairman of the parole board who decided it was a worthy expense and a necessity for the sake of public safety to extradite the "dangerous" criminal Ray McMinn. It was John B. Metzger III who passed judgment on Ray's "morality." It was John B. Metzger III who was indicted for taking bribes, sexual harassment, and backdating warrants.

While Ray was incarcerated in Powhatan Correctional Center in Virginia, he inherited over \$100,000 from his mother's estate. On Friday, January 19, 1996, Ray McMinn donated \$10,000 to the Homeless Garden

Project. He also wrote a will leaving his entire estate to The Homeless Garden Project. Not only did Ray dedicate his life and service to the needs of homeless persons, but he became a patron and benefactor.

I wonder how many of our judges, lawyers, and prison administrators donate 20 hours of service each week to a nonprofit cause? I wonder how many of those same high moral leaders have donated \$10,000 to a humanitarian cause? When is a person considered rehabilitated? How many years of service to the community does it take? How can we justify these high prison costs when our schools are suffering, our libraries are closing, and so many are now homeless?

Ray McMinn was officially released on parole in January, 1996, but due to red tape and the California parole board turning him down twice, he was not released until the following October. I saw Ray McMinn in February and again in May of this year. He was a broken man, filled with sorrow and anger, ill health and alcohol. I knew Ray, and I know that if it weren't for this draconian criminal justice system, Ray would not only be alive, he would be a happy and productive man.

Ray passed away May 25, 1997. He never returned to work at the Homeless Garden Project. He was never even given permission to return to the State of California, but he did as a final act of defiance We will all miss him. And we all thank him for the message his life had for us.