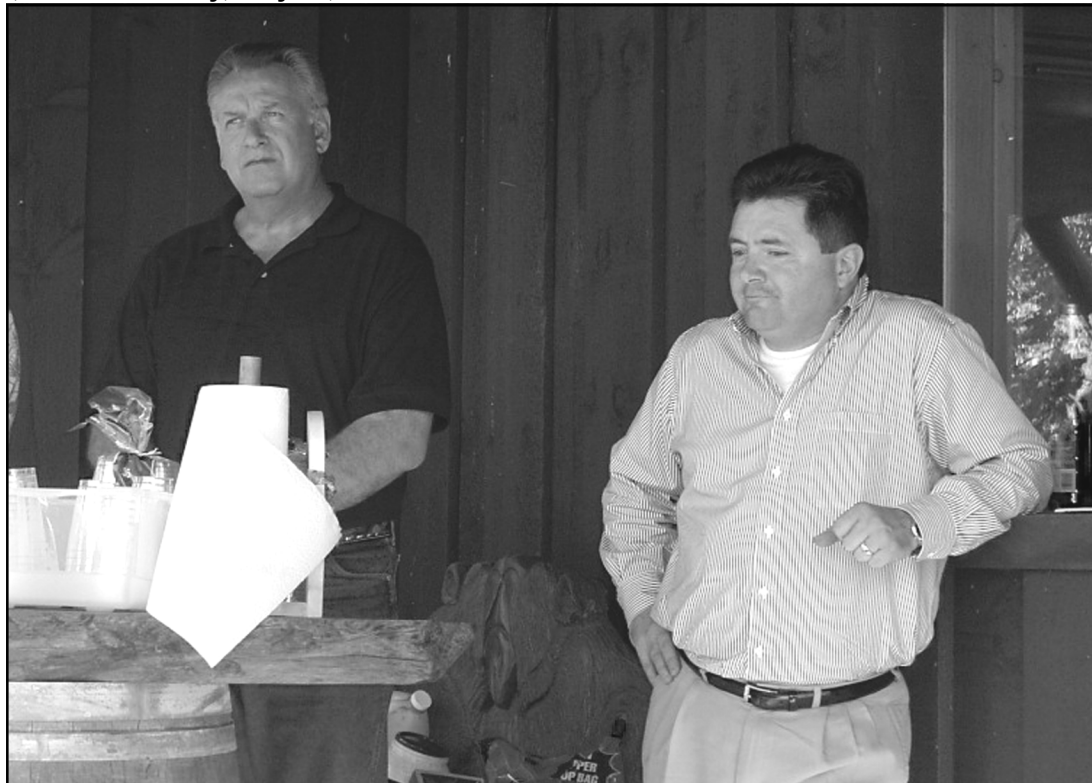




'PARTY FOR THE PRESIDENT' - Approximately 50 people attended a 'Party for the President' on Thursday, July 15 at Bridgeview Vineyards Inc. First Lady Laura Bush delivered via telephone a message underlining her husband's dedication and commitment to the office of the presidency for all Americans. Those attending also heard a short message from President Bush about his goals for the country. The event was co-hosted by Bob (at right in left photo) and Lelo Kerivan, Bridgeview



owners. Attendees included Helen Scott, chairman of the Josephine County Republican Central Committee; David Jakes (at right in photo above), regional chairman of the Win 2004 Bush Campaign; Jim Frick (at left in photo above), chairman of the Bush/Cheney Josephine County Campaign; and Cheri Adkins, events coordinator for the Bush Campaign in Josephine County. The gathering was one of more than 7,000 nationwide, and nearly 700 in Oregon held simultaneously.

From a life of crime and imprisonment, he finds salvation through Christ: his book details story

By SHANE WELSH
Staff Writer

Formerly known as "Maximum John," Selma resident John McLaughlin has turned a new leaf and is spreading his story of redemption in prisons across the globe.

McLaughlin, a Selma resident, wrote the book, "A Walk to Freedom," to give hope and inspiration to those behind bars, and demonstrate the peace and love he has found in his own life through extreme adversity.

McLaughlin recalled what it was like growing up in a broken home. "My earliest memory is at the age of 4 when my father backhanded me at the dinner table and broke my nose; he did that because I spilled a glass of milk. That was the first indication that life was destined to be rather challenging," he said.

Growing up in a violent home wasn't easy. However, he had support and help from his mother, Emma, and four siblings; especially his brother, Pat.

"My mother was our presence of love; a comfort; the one who gathered her children under her wings," said McLaughlin. "If not for her, none of us would have lived to be 10 years old."

"My brother was my hero, my nemesis, my protector, my jawbreaker; he was the reason the rest of us found the power to survive."

"When my brother was 8 or 9, my mother woke in the middle of the night and screamed. Pat had crept through the bedroom door

with a hammer and a ten-penny nail that he intended to drive into my father's ear as he slept so we would be rid of the terror in our life.

"All of us used to go to bed and pray that we would die in our sleep, just

'I knew in my heart it had to be God. I felt it in the soul I never knew I had.'

- John McLaughlin -

to get out of the horror that we had been born into. I remember coming home one day and my dad had chained the refrigerator shut because we ate too much," he said.

With all the hate and anger built up in his heart, McLaughlin ended up spending a great deal of time in and out of the judicial system.

"I did my first state bit at 19 with my brother, who was 20 at the time, for fighting. We were fighting people all the time. The judge told us if we kept going the way we were, we would never live to be 21; he gave us a year each."

"My brother served six months and got out on parole. He died just before he turned 21, not long after coming to visit me in prison where he told me he loved me for the last time," he said.

McLaughlin stayed on his path of wanton malice and destruction; getting 20 years for a felony and five years for another unrelated crime. Following his last release from prison, his motivation in life became focused on killing those

who had brought him to justice.

"Somebody who used to run around with me picked me up just after midnight, the day I got out of (Josephine County Jail). He had a .357 pistol on the seat next to him; just like

old times.

"What he didn't know is that I had a number of people who I intended to kill, including a judge who had sentenced me. I picked the gun up and pointed it at him. I was certain I was going to kill him; but the main person I was going to kill was myself."

"As I preceded to let him know that he was about to part this world, I heard a voice speak to my heart."

"It said, 'Enough John, enough.' I knew in my heart that it had to be God. I felt it in the soul I never knew I had. With those three words, I put the gun down and walked around in the rain praying the rest of the night."

"I called my parole officer later the next day and told her that something wonderful was happening, but I wasn't sure what it was," said McLaughlin.

After reconciling with his acquaintance the next day, he said, "Everything was new to me. I was totally entertained by a man (God) I had no idea about. I had spent over 20 years in maximum security, and five years in solitary confinement. The first 47 years of my life was a proving ground that I needed a savior."

"I read in the Bible that he who is forgiven much must forgive much. After accepting Jesus in my heart, it took me years to finally forgive myself; the hardest thing I've ever had to do. I thought forgiving my father would be the hardest," he said.

Although McLaughlin had found redemption in his own life for his wrongdoings, he felt the need to spread hope to others who were facing adversity.

"I had written a lengthy manuscript while spending time at 'The Rock', a Florida prison," he said.

"A prison psychologist smuggled it out for me and

gave it to my woman at the time. After I was out for a while, she got in touch with me and mailed it to me. After reading it, I realized it was a hateful, violent attack on the prison system and life itself; a total inability to accept one's own responsibility," said McLaughlin.

After moving to Cave Junction, he joined Life Lines ministry. The non-profit organization sends letters to more than 2,200 prisoners across the globe each month to inspire faith, love, and hope for those who likely would have none.

During his involvement with Life Lines, responding to letters from prisoners, McLaughlin was led to finish his book and donate proceeds from sales to help the ministry.

"I had 400 pages to begin with. We had to remove a lot," he said. "I realized early that the story wasn't about me, but it's about the testimony I've been blessed to share with those seeking peace. It's about the love, mercy, grace and redemption I have found in the Lord Jesus Christ."

"I wrote my story in memory of my mom. She died just five months after

(Continued on page 7)

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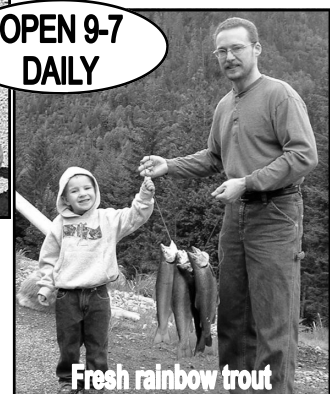
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