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April 30, 2004

Subject: **Terry Leroy Neal**

The Honorable Judge Haggerty:

Whereas many men live lives undistinguished in any way, my brother, Terry L. Neal, is the most extraordinary person (bar none) that I have ever known. He has had more fascinating experiences and ever-unfolding action-packed adventures than Indiana Jones. Gregarious, with sparkling energy, and blessed with the gift of gab, he tells his stories to rapt audiences. Spoken from the heart, his words have the power to move people to laughter, to tears, or to action. Many are those who've stated that his personal saga would make a blockbuster movie. And they're right, as he epitomizes the Wow! Factor.

Terry has always had goals and objectives to stretch toward. (Example: When asked, as a senior in high school, about his personal plans for the future, he promptly said that he wanted to change the world's monetary system. As such, he has spent a good portion of his life promoting Barter, as a form of exchange and international trade.) An entrepreneur, he is a man of high vision, multifaceted talents, and focused purpose, providing fresh approaches to business. He is truly a renaissance man: a world-class thinker, creative, innovative, and dynamic; an achiever, an explorer, a trailblazer, and a reformer; in short, a person who makes a difference: an agent of change. (Example: Terry freely shared his successful business tips and techniques with competitors. When corporate colleagues objected to this practice, he responded from a Win/Win position, stating: "There's no need to be greedy. There's enough for everyone." And that was that. He remains a resource to others, offering new possibilities, important insights and cutting-edge information.) He believes in sharing the harvest and good fortune. His ideas are valued, and his influence is vast. As a recognized and acknowledged leader in his field, his character traits can all be corroborated through the eyes of business colleagues.

Terry holds an unswerving dedication to his family, both immediate and extended. Because he and Maureen have a large family, he spends as much time as possible being with them, catering to their wants and needs, providing a safety net of physical

and emotional security. When the children were young, a great deal of attention went into managing the completion of their daily chores. (Example: Even the two-year-olds with short attention spans had little jobs, as simple as folding and stacking the washcloths. It was fun to watch Terry with a twinkle in his eye cheerfully scurrying from one child to another, patiently reminding them of their duties, guiding them back to focus on the work at hand, and being supportive of their efforts.) Carefully nurturing their growth, his teaching, disciplining, and counsel were conveyed with unconditional love. Over the years, they all learned about confidence, responsibility, dependability, trust, respect, keeping promises, contributing to the group, doing their personal best, pride for a job well-done, and the like.

While the children were young, Terry and Maureen found it difficult to spend evenings out with adult friends, because of their heart-felt obligation and duty to each of their children. Helping with homework and attending school, church, and community functions, sporting events, awards ceremonies, doctors' appointments, and so on, for *eight* children (one adopted and one hearing impaired), took up the bulk of their hours. In other words, they sacrificed their social life losing some friends in the process for a rich family life. (Example: Although birthday parties were held for each family member, Terry took the birthday child out to lunch or dinner for a *private* conversation. They would discuss his/her personal goals for the year, peer relationships, problems, and whatever was deemed important. It was their special time together. He wanted to make sure that no child was lost in the shuffle; that each received individual attention. He had cute nicknames for all, making them giggle and beam with happiness, knowing they were considered special. (No doubt, his children have many warm, comforting memories tucked away in the pockets of their minds.) Understanding, empathetic, and consistent, Terry is a loving parent, who gives applause, compliments, and recognition on a daily basis. As a result of such focused attention, his children started out in life with a firm foundation, steadily progressing step-by-step to their goals, all able to pursue adult achievement in the form of fulfilling healthy lifestyles, loving relationships, higher education, material success, social service, and spiritual growth.

High expectations were obvious, each according to their specific abilities and talents. Terry has always been a wonderful, wholesome role model, constantly singing, joking around, and laughing, providing a sense of what matters, while enjoying and appreciating a quality life. As a result, his children wanted to live up to his standards. (Example: To make a long story short, when one daughter was about 16 years old, she came home late from a date, and was greeted by her very disturbed dad. Terry announced his concerns to her in no uncertain terms, as any normal father would, under the circumstances. She charged up the stairs, throwing herself into her mother's arms, crying hysterically. She explained through hiccups and tears that it was the first time that he had ever raised his voice to her, and she didn't think she could bear it. She said that a hole was in her heart, her stomach hurt, and so forth, as she took great gulps of air, shuddering, and having a mini mental meltdown. *First?* was all I could think. *First?!* Good grief. I had been teaching in the inner city for years, and the gap between my

students' home lives (neglected, deprived, and abused) and that of my nieces and nephews was enormous. So this vignette really made an impression on me.)

The necessity of thought, effort, and continuous improvement, was always a part of the home atmosphere. In a relaxed, easygoing, playful manner, Terry stressed the joys of reading (books are prized (he has written four himself) and remain a prominent background feature in all rooms). He is a passionate about history, so geography, politics, economics, science, health, the arts, and social issues were often discussed. Lively, spontaneous debates ensued, as opposing viewpoints mattered. Everyone was encouraged to form their own opinions, and express them, which they loudly bandied about. It was a delightful sight to see.

With his photographic memory, and the ability to speed read, Terry was, to all intents and purposes, self-taught. While a teenager himself, his high school recognized Terry's potential (coupled with that of his boredom) and so allowed him to become the first student in the district to spend his senior year attending Long Beach City College full-time. He was only required to return daily to Lakewood High School for a gym class. (In those days, one could not graduate from high school without six years of gym, middle school and high school together.) But because he and Maureen got married during that year, he dropped out of school, to get a job. He was required to take one additional class as a replacement for a gym class, and received his high school diploma immediately thereafter. (Both he and Maureen took night courses and extension courses from various colleges, over the years, amassing many units. Unfortunately, although they received a well-developed formal education, at least half of the units were not transferable, leaving neither with an "official" sheepskin.)

Even so, education was constantly stressed in the home, leaving no doubt that each child would attend college. It was simply a given. Yet, even though Terry was the founder and president of several companies, he had no university diplomas. Later, because his brilliance and leadership skills were evident to one and all (without any further formal education) he was asked to become the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Prometheus College, a small, exclusive college, which he happily agreed to do. He later received an honorary MBA. However, the simple act of signing graduate certificates of completion became too time-consuming, cutting into his business income, so he reluctantly gave up that position. (This was rather humiliating to me, since I was plowing through my own Masters at the time, while he was simply signing his name to others' degrees. Oh, woe, how I wished I had *his* brain.)

Terry now radiates the same love and caring concern for all of his grandchildren. He and Maureen make sure that they are at the hospital bedside for the birth of each new family member. The love and playful interaction that is shown between the 20-plus cousins is truly a testament to their upbringing: healthy, positive environments, with overflowing kindness, support, and encouragement. They all participate in Cousins Day, where they meet and play together every so often. What a legacy! (If only I could say that my own family had turned out as well . . .)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints plays a central role in his life, and he is strong in his faith. Terry's life is built on guidance from above, as he prays upon matters large and small, seeking deeper wisdom and lessons not revealed to the casual eye. He maintains a balance in both worlds. Evolving in spiritual understanding, he has held positions of church authority, since he was a very young father. He attends church regularly, giving speeches and presentations, and is well-respected by other members. His knowledge of church doctrine, alongside that of world archaeology, has converted numerous people to Mormonism. He really makes a connection with people. (Example: As world travelers, an unexpected side effect is that Terry and Maureen have done much for race relations on the Island of St. Kitts, Yucatan, and other countries simply by the way they interact and intermingle with other ethnic groups. They are a remarkable couple.)

A compassionate person, Terry is always anxious to help anyone, going out of his way to check on those who might be in need, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, or spiritually. (Example: Domestic violence set the tone for my first marriage. When I went missing for several days, Terry spent a great deal of time, effort, and energy looking for me. Upon finding that I was in a hospital, he patrolled the outside grounds and parking lot for several nights running, as a way to forestall any further problems with my abuser.) Enormously courageous, Terry is protective of his family, friends, and neighbors, as well as his employees.

Terry doesn't act superior or affected or important in any way. He is as friendly and sincere with a busboy as with a CEO or head of state. A calming influence, he gives everyone the benefit of the doubt, reaching out and embracing others within his large emotional field. He is openhearted and generous in the extreme. (Example: When first incarcerated with these charges, Terry showed genuine concern for other prison inmates, such as: (1) those who had no living relatives; (2) those who never received letters from anyone; (3) those who were illiterate; and (4) those with particularly grim backgrounds. He was truly bothered by their plight.) The call to service is key, but the actual width and depth of his humanitarian service is not generally known. He does his best to share what's in his heart, not just his mind. Seeing the best in everyone, when introducing others, Terry emphasizes everyone's strengths and accomplishments, as he sings their praises. Like polishing apples, he shines up our personalities and achievements, until we all glow. He is a master at creating magic moments for others. No wonder everyone wants to be around him! He makes us all feel unique, understood, validated, and appreciated.

Terry's positive attitude is an absolute marvel! Always smiling and upbeat, he sees problems as challenges and potentially invaluable lessons. No matter the dire stress he might be under, his motto seems to be "*Never is heard a discouraging word,*" as he refuses to waste time wallowing in bitterness, resentment, or frustrations. He feels a sense of gratitude even while confronting the difficulties of life. A sensitive, gentle man, he has the courage of his convictions. His life is both inspiring and invigorating, and can

be seen as beneficial medicine—a tonic—to all who observe him, as he refreshes and restores one's spirit, uplifting everyone around him. The greatest gift he gives is hope; an optimistic outlook for the future.

Terry has never lost his sense of awe and wonder, loving life in all its surprising forms. By maintaining his curiosity, and staying alert and open to new experiences, and ways in which he can participate, he lives more fully. Knowing that life is a series of new beginnings, he most likely considers this unearned prison-stay as tuition in the school of existence. This circum-stance will no doubt serve as an opportunity to strengthen his spirit. And while therein, it will probably be his personal mission to raise awareness in the prison population, inspiring them to positive action and change. He is a powerful, outstanding individual, living each day with enthusiasm! And I am thrilled, honored, and proud to have him as my brother.

Sincerely,

Sherry L. Meinberg, Ed.D.