

## Steve Jackson Martin

### Pampa High School Class of 1966



Steve J. Martin is the third of four children born to Naomi and Bill Martin. Naomi, a Registered Nurse, worked for 40 years for a variety of Pampa health care facilities, including the Worley and Highland General Hospitals and the Kelly-Laycock Clinic. After she retired, Naomi continued serving the community as a volunteer for the Pampa Hospice, which inspired Steve to work with the Texas Legislature to create one of the first prison-based hospice programs. Bill worked for the Railroad Commission and Trans-Western Pipeline during Steve's school years, and was always involved in Steve's and his two brothers' extracurricular activities, including scouting and sports.

Steve's mother fostered a love of reading from a very young age and encouraged him to spend ample time at the Lovett Memorial Library during his grade school years. It was there that his lifelong passion for criminology and prisons first emerged while reading *Cell 2455 Death Row* by Caryl Chessman, a death row prisoner at San Quentin, who became the subject of a national debate on the death penalty. After reading the Chessman book, Steve read *Life Plus 99 Years* by Nathan Leopold and *The Birdman of Alcatraz* by Robert Stroud, which cemented his early interest. He never imagined, while reading these books, that he would one day be involved in prisoners' rights litigation at San Quentin, Joliet State Prison (where Leopold was confined), and ADX, the modern-day Alcatraz located in Florence, Colorado.

Steve started his educational journey at Woodrow Wilson Elementary, then transferred to Travis Elementary during its inaugural year. It was there that he met his dearest lifelong friend, Gary Crossland, a popular student and outstanding athlete who was a positive influence on Steve throughout their school years and beyond. After graduating from Pampa High School in 1966 and working for a brief period in the panhandle oil field, Steve settled in at Texas Tech University and Sam Houston State University, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology and Corrections. After receiving his bachelor's degree, Steve was awarded a Teaching Fellowship at Sam Houston State, which enabled him to pursue his graduate studies, and a Graduate Internship with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. During his years as a student at Sam Houston State in Huntsville, Steve was employed full-time as a Texas prison guard working, among other assignments, death row at both the men's and women's prisons. After completing a Master of Arts degree in Correctional Administration, Steve received an appointment as a United States probation and parole officer. While thus employed, Steve continued pursuing his education, attending the University of Tulsa School of Law from which he earned his Juris Doctor degree.

Steve's professional life has been a reflection of his personal values and his early experiences in Pampa. Steve began his law career in the Tulsa County District Attorney's Office where he defended the sheriff against lawsuits filed by county jail prisoners. In 1981, he returned to the Texas prison system as legal counsel and ultimately became the agency's General Counsel and Executive Assistant to the Director during the tumultuous years of the *Ruiz v. Estelle*, the most comprehensive prisoners' rights lawsuit in the history of American jurisprudence.

Upon completion of his service with the Texas Department of Corrections in 1985, he was appointed a Special Assistant Attorney General and also accepted a visiting faculty position at The University of Texas Law School. He thereafter began working as a corrections consultant and attorney, serving as a federal court monitor in adult prison and juvenile confinement systems across the nation and as an expert for the United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, for 15 years. He has been involved in prison and jail litigation in more than 40 states, including the five largest jails in the U.S. (New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, and Philadelphia), and has inspected correctional facilities in Northern Ireland, Guam, Saipan, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Steve has appeared as *amicus curiae* on three cases before the U.S. Supreme

Court, and testified on numerous occasions before state legislative and congressional committees, including the U. S. Senate. He has also worked with various entities in the development of national correctional standards, policies, and guidelines. During his career, Steve has been associated with many of the seminal prisoners' rights cases in American law. Steve is currently involved in litigation in 17 states, the Virgin Islands, and with the federal Bureau of Prisons supermax facility, ADX, in Colorado. He continues to monitor large scale prisoners' rights lawsuits for federal courts in New York, Ohio, and Mississippi.

Steve co-authored the book, *Texas Prisons: the Walls Came Tumbling Down*, and was a contributing author to *Courts, Corrections, and the Constitution: the Impact of Judicial Intervention on Prisons and Jails*, and *Building Violence: How America's Rush to Incarcerate Creates More Violence*. He serves as a member of the editorial board for the *Correctional Law Reporter*, a professional journal, and his work has been cited in such publications as *Newsweek*, *Newsday*, *the New York Times*, *the Los Angeles Times*, *Texas Monthly*, *USA Today*, *the Congressional Quarterly*, and *the Christian Science Monitor*. He is often invited by both professional and news publications to provide commentary on criminal justice issues in the U.S.

His abiding belief in the importance of education and community service instilled in Steve during his formative years remains strong. Steve has served gubernatorial appointments to the Texas Punishment Standards Commission and to the Texas Council on Offenders With Mental Impairments, and as an advocate and guardian for clients at the Austin State School. Steve also served as staff director for the Texas Supreme Court's Study Committee on Judicial Education. Through a variety of forums he has advocated for abolition of the death penalty for mentally retarded offenders in Texas.

Steve has taught classes or lectured on prison reform issues at numerous colleges and universities, both here and abroad. He served as a presenter at the Fortunoff Criminal Justice Colloquium at the New York University School of Law and as visiting scholar to the Institute of Criminology and School of Law, Queen's University, Belfast, Ireland. He routinely gives freely of his time to law students involved in legal clinics and programs at such schools as Harvard, Yale, and New York Universities, and continues his own education by taking classes as time permits at an Austin seminary. Steve is entering his fifth year as a mentor in the Austin Independent

School District and was selected as the district's Mentor of the Year in 2008. He currently serves as a founding board member for the Barbara Jordan Freedom Foundation.

Although Steve retains that strong Panhandle work ethic and remains passionate about the treatment of confined persons, he is most content when he is with his family. Steve currently resides in Austin with his wife, Gina, who is director of the Texas Senate Research Center, and daughter, Sage, an honors student and musician at Anderson High School. Steve also spends as much time as possible in Tulsa with grandsons, Jackson and Nathan, budding scholars and athletes, and their parents, son, Ross, and daughter-in-law, Christine.

Steve is proud of his Pampa heritage and often says that that is where he learned all of the important life lessons--the benefit of hard work and tenacity, the importance of community and giving back, and the inestimable value of family and friends. Steve says, "Anything I have achieved in my life is built on the foundations that I was given in Pampa, Texas. I may have left Pampa, but no matter where I go, I always carry those early lessons and a sense of belonging to that place with me."