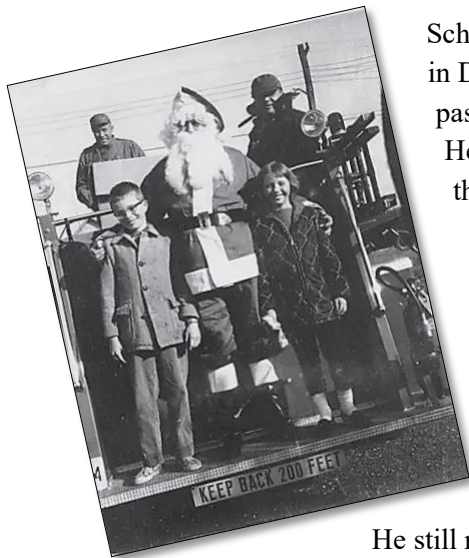




Dear Deborah,

When Ronnie talks about his childhood, you can almost see the barefoot little boy running through the red dirt roads of Davis, Oklahoma in the early 1960s—pockets full of creek frogs, singing whatever he heard on the radio, and believing every word his mama told him. At Christmas she would warn, “*If you don’t go to sleep, Santa will put pepper in your eyes,*” and Ronnie believed it so deeply that he never once tried to stay awake. His parents would put gifts on layaway and have them delivered late on Christmas Eve, so the house looked empty one night and overflowing with magic the next morning.



School was different. Ronnie was the only Black child in every single class he attended in Davis. He didn’t understand segregation then. He only knew that the school bus passed him by each morning while he walked the dirt road alone. **Still, he found joy.** He excelled in school, made a best friend in the pastor’s son, and discovered the voice that still brings our campus to life - especially at Christmastime.

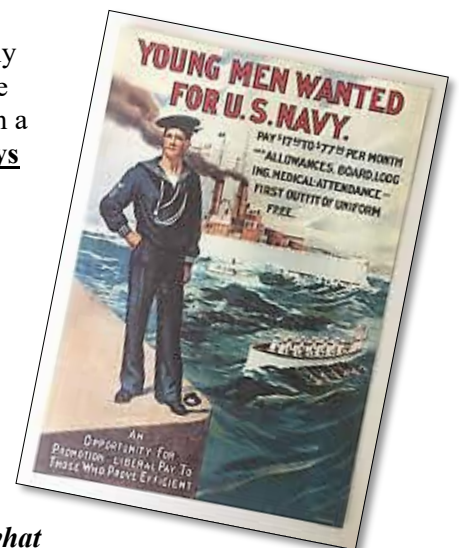
But childhood innocence couldn’t protect him from heartbreak. When Ronnie was ten, the man he loved as a father -a man who taught him to farm, lifted him onto ponies, and showed him how to protect newborn piglets -was killed in a violent car accident. Ronnie wasn’t allowed to attend the funeral because he wasn’t considered “family” in the eyes of the adults. “*He wasn’t my real daddy,*” Ronnie said quietly, “*but I loved him like he was. I just wasn’t allowed to hurt like the others.*” Some even ridiculed him for grieving at all, as if his love didn’t count.

He still remembers the sound of his mother’s wailing, the whole house heavy with grief. Within weeks, she packed all eleven children and left Davis behind because she couldn’t bear to stay where she had lost him. In one sweeping moment, Ronnie lost the man he loved and the only world he had ever known.

Oklahoma City brought culture shock. The friends he made there would eventually get pulled into gangs and dealing, but Ronnie chose a different path. He joined the Navy, later built a career in corrections, became a protective father, and lived with a deep sense of duty. **He didn’t always have the words for his hurt, but he always had a good heart.**

Years later, when he was in his forties, that heart was tested more than he ever imagined. Ronnie had married, built a home, and worked hard to give his family stability. But betrayal cuts deepest when it comes from someone you trust. When he discovered that his wife was involved with a man he had known since childhood, someone he once protected and called brother, something in him shattered.

He remembers getting into his car that night, anger boiling over. He had two places he could have gone: to confront his wife, or to find drugs. “*I don’t know what took me to my brother’s instead,*” he said. “*I don’t know what I would’ve done.*” In that moment of heartbreak, he chose escape. And for the first time, the drugs quieted the storm that had been rising in him since childhood.



What began as a moment of relief became a slow collapse. Addiction dismantles people quietly. Ronnie found himself walking into drug houses and seeing the faces of women he had once supervised in maximum-security prison. They recognized him too. Some protected him because of how he had treated them years earlier. But it tore at him. ***“It was humiliating. But that’s what addiction does.”***

He tried to get clean more than once. But life kept stacking losses on top of old wounds. His mother, his best friend, passed away. One of his sons died the following year. After a rehab stay, he returned home to find his apartment ransacked and everything stolen by his own brother. ***“I relapsed that same night,” he said. “I couldn’t take any more.”***

That was his breaking point. A man who spent his life serving others felt he had nothing left.

So Ronnie reached out to the VA and asked about a place he had heard of—Another Chance House. He was told the VA could place him here for only thirty days. But when Ronnie stepped onto our campus, something in him settled. ***“God meant for me to be here,” he said. “I felt that the moment I walked in.”*** And God opened the door—literally—to one of our Victory Duplexes, giving Ronnie not just shelter but a home, a community, a place to breathe again.

Today, Ronnie sings in church choirs and at our Christmas events. He laughs freely. He mentors other men. He walks with dignity. He has rebuilt a life he once thought was gone forever. ***“This is where I stopped running, this is where I started living again.”***



And that is what your generosity makes possible.

You didn’t just give Ronnie a bed.

You gave him the space to grieve what he never got to grieve, the strength to face what once broke him, and a community that reminds him every day that he is wanted, needed, believed in, and worth rebuilding.

This Christmas, Ronnie will wake up in safety and warmth with a renewed sense of Christmas Magic. He will sing - of course he will - and he will be surrounded by people who call him family.

Your support makes hope like this possible.

Thank you for giving men like Ronnie the chance to rediscover joy, purpose, and a life they are proud to live.

With heartfelt thanks,

Steve Smart

Executive Director
Another Chance House

Scan here for a
Christmas message
from Ronnie



P.S. I’ve added in a simple card with this letter. Would you consider filling it with a Christmas greeting or a few words of encouragement for the men of Another Chance House and mailing it back to us? Your message may be exactly what someone needs to hear this season.