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ROGER COLEMAN Grundy, VA

Today, January 12, 2006, Governor Mark Warner has announced that the DNA testing in the Roger Keith Colman case has confirmed Roger's guilt.

Press Release from James C. McCloskey, Executive Director of Centurion Ministries, Inc. on the Roger Coleman DNA Testing Results

With Governor Warner's announcement, it has been established once and for all, with absolute scientific certainty through unimpeachable DNA testing, that the semen found in Wanda McCoy belongs to Roger Coleman. This means that Roger Coleman is the killer of Wanda McCoy. We now know that Roger's proclamations of innocence, even as he sat strapped in the electric chair moments before his death, were false.

We, who seek the truth, must live or die by the sword of DNA. Through my efforts, spanning from 1988 until the day of Roger's execution on May 20 1992, Centurion Ministries conducted an exhaustive reinvestigation of Roger's conviction. Up until the Centre of Forensic Sciences issued the most recent DNA results, I had always believed in Roger's complete innocence. In my view, he had no motive, means, or opportunity to do this crime. I now know that I was wrong. Indeed, this is a bitter pill to swallow.

Those of us who seek the truth in criminal justice cases must never be afraid of finding it. If there is a means to discover the truth, we must never shrink or shy away from using it in our search. We must never stop the hard effort to touch the factual bottom of any case. The Truth can be very elusive, and even illusory. Our search for facts can delude us into thinking that what we have found is gold, only to discover that it is in fact fool's gold. But once the gold of absolute truth is revealed, we must embrace it, and be thankful that we have finally uncovered it.

Believing in Roger's innocence and even promising him on the night of his execution that I would do all in my power to one day prove his innocence, I have spent the last six years persistently pushing for the post execution DNA testing that was just completed. Even though the results are far different that I expected, and even though this particular truth feels like a kick in the stomach, I do not regret that this effort has at last brought finality to all who have had an interest in this matter. In Socrates' Apology, he said that, "in doing anything, we ought only consider if, in our doing, we are doing right or wrong." This arduous journey was an honest and diligent search for the truth that I believe has served the public interest.

The search for the truth in establishing Roger Coleman's innocence or guilt is finally over. The controversy that has surrounded the Coleman case for the last 25 years has now been put to rest, at least as far as I am concerned. I'd like to thank Virginia Governor Mark Warner for authorizing the DNA testing to proceed. Without his intervention, the complete truth would never have been revealed.

I also want to thank **Paul Enzinna**, Esq. of the law firm Baker Botts in Washington, DC for partnering with me in our six-year effort to get the DNA testing done.

I trust that all those with the power and authority to do so throughout the nation will follow in Governor Warner's footsteps – to have the courage and vision to preserve all the biological evidence and allow post conviction and even post execution DNA and other forensic testing to go forward so that the absolute truth may be known to all. No one should fear the truth. As Governor Warner did, let the DNA chips fall where they may. Only then, can real justice be done.

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January 17, 2006
An Additional Reflection on the Roger Keith Coleman DNA Results

By Centurion Ministries Executive Director, James C. McCloskey

As I said in my first statement issued on January 12, 2006, we now know through unimpeachable scientific DNA testing that Roger Coleman was guilty of the rape and murder of his sister-in-law, Wanda McCoy, 25 years ago in Grundy, Virginia.

The results turned out far different than I expected. My belief in Roger's innocence was proven wrong. Naturally, I was devastated and shocked when the Director of the Centre of Forensic Sciences in Toronto, Canada telephoned the findings to me immediately after he informed the Governor. As deeply disappointed and hurt by the results as I am, nevertheless, I feel a great sense of relief that an innocent man was not executed in this case.

In my numerous investigative trips to Grundy and Buchanan County, Virginia, I developed a great respect and warm affection for the people in those communities. In particular, I much admired the fair-mindedness and courage of Judge Nicholas Persin, Mr. Coleman's trial and sentencing judge who ordered the original 1990 DNA testing much against the wishes of the local and statewide law enforcement folks. I also have always had a deep sympathy for the family and friends of Wanda McCoy. I know that the truth-seeking process that has extended over the last 25 years has been an extremely painful and never-ending ordeal for them. Now, with the certainty of Roger's guilt, I hope that all of those whose lives have been disturbed by this hard journey will finally obtain peace of mind.

We all make mistakes, and I made a whopper that was magnified a million times over, especially since the whole world seemed to be watching. However, I do not regret in the least that I pushed for the DNA to be done. Those of us who search for the truth must never be afraid of what we will find. If there are any unused and reliable means with which to uncover the truth, we must employ them in our pursuit of it. If we don't, then we are charlatans who merely pretend to be seekers and lovers of the truth. To limit our search by not using the available tools of contemporary science is both morally irresponsible and a disservice to the public interest.

Besides establishing guilt, much has been accomplished through this most recent DNA testing. Governor Warner made history last week. He was the first governor to authorize and order post-execution DNA testing. This was a groundbreaking and precedent-setting decision that can serve as a model for other governors and those with the power and authority to follow in his footsteps when asked. In the future when those who have well-informed reasons to believe in someone's innocence petition for DNA testing, they can always point to Governor Warner and use his action as an example to convince the powers that be to do the same.

What Centurion Ministries achieved in forging the agreement with Governor Warner and propelling the Coleman post execution testing forward 14 years after the fact was a pioneering effort. Surely, some day in the future it will pave the way for others in authority to order DNA testing that might save genuinely innocent people from execution or prove the innocence of someone already executed.

There is no reason not to allow DNA testing that has the potential to establish innocence or guilt to go forward in any case where it could shed light on the truth of the matter. Those of us who are fact-finders in the criminal justice system must live or die by the sword of DNA. This applies in all criminal cases, whether they are post-execution or pre-execution in capital cases, or post-conviction and pre-conviction in non-capital cases. The biological evidence must be preserved and tested in all instances.

Do as Governor Warner did. Let the DNA chips fall where they may. Only then can the real truth be known, and only then can "*Justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everlasting stream*" (Amos 5:24).

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See also:
A&E Documentary Special
Deceiving Innocence: The Roger Coleman Story
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