



Lynn Reece

Even after 25 years of prison food, Lynn Reece hasn't forgotten how to cook. Before he got in trouble, he ran a successful restaurant in Houston, The Real Meal. "It was home-cooked dishes. Everything that your mom's going to prepare for you. Meat loaf, pot roast, chicken and dumplings, fried chicken. All from scratch. Homemade. And the little place got popular." Business was so good that he expanded into catering.

And then came hard times in the '90s, and The Real Meal suffered. Before he knew it, he was desperate. "I slid back into meeting some of my old friends," he explains, and everything fell apart. Lynn was arrested and convicted for his part of a drug conspiracy, and because of state charges, priors, and guns, he got 365 months (more than 30 years).

The good news is that Lynn, now 71, is cooking again and out of prison. In March, he was granted compassionate release. He is now living with close friends, both 77.

Lynn heard about FAMM's compassionate release work through Corrlinks email and applied right away. "If you thought that you could qualify for compassionate release, FAMM wanted to hear your story. So write down your story and send it to FAMM. So I did."

But at this point compassionate release wasn't news to Lynn. For years, he'd been researching the option, bringing characteristic drive and persistence to the prospect. He describes people in prison as belonging in two different categories: the "lay up in a cell kind of guy" and the guys like him. "I was hyper-busy in prison. I never was complacent. Every day that I was in there, I had something in the court. Every time they passed anything that affected my case, I was right there. Drugs minus two, I got a reduction. I kept myself so busy trying to find every avenue I could to reduce or reverse my sentence that I didn't have time to be depressed or sad."

About a year before he turned to FAMM, he had applied pro se. "You have to have a clean disciplinary record, be over 65, had done more than 10 years, or 67 percent of your sentence. Ok, so I complied with all three of those criteria, so I filed for compassionate release, in 2018." The warden never responded, and because of the First Step Act, he was able to file directly with the court. Lynn then transferred to Oakdale Camp. At this point, his motion to the court for compassionate release had been pending for over a year. That's when he contacted FAMM.

By now, decades had passed since Lynn first was incarcerated. In his initial letter to FAMM, he wrote, "I am now over 70 years old, I have paid off the \$10,000 fine with prison wages. I have never been to solitary confinement, never had a fight nor any violence while here, no drug or alcohol infractions in here, my disciplinary record is clean. I live at a Camp with no fences, no bars, no locked doors. Posing no threat to anyone, nor the public. My minimum-out trusty status indicates that the BOP believes that I pose no threat to anyone."

When FAMM's Juliana Andonian followed up, Lynn told her his petition was pending, and he sent it to her. "I think she saw that it was a pretty decent little petition. And she told me, 'I'm not

going to promise you anything, but I'm going to try to get you some help. I'm going to try to get a lawyer to represent your petition for you.” FAMM connected his case with the federal defender in October of 2019, and they filed a supplemental motion in February of 2020.

Then COVID hit Oakdale – hard. In light of that development, Lynn’s attorney filed an expedited request to the court. Very shortly after, the judge ruled in Lynn’s favor, and he was granted immediate release.

Lynn’s life now is peaceful and full. His was a struggle long- and well-fought, with a happy ending. And a timely ending, given the virus: “If it wasn’t for FAMM,” he says, “I’d be in that place on a ventilator right now.” He will continue to live with his friends, whom he has known since they were all children. Since he’s the “youngster” in the house, he has taken on all the cleaning, maintenance, and cooking duties. Especially the cooking. “I told them, All y’all got to do is make a request and I got it. I have spoiled them! I’m talking about peach cobbler, coconut cake, whatever they want.”