

Persecuted Church Defender Tom White Dies

Tom White, executive director of The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), passed away on Tuesday.

White worked with VOM for more than 30 years. He served as executive director for more than 20 years, during which time the ministry saw incredible growth in its outreach to the worldwide **persecuted church**.

While teaching English in the Cayman Islands in the late 1970s, White made repeated flights over Cuba, dropping hundreds of thousands of **gospels** provided by VOM (then called Jesus to the Communist World). The gospel drops were a response to Fidel Castro's ordered destruction of 100,000 Bibles, which were ground up in sugar mills. In May 1979, White's private plane crashed on a Cuban highway. He was arrested and sentenced to 24 years in prison for his **evangelistic** work.

During his imprisonment at Combinado del Este Prison, White was able to fellowship with imprisoned leaders of the persecuted church. After many prayers and letters of appeal from U.S. legislators, **Mother Teresa** and Christians around the world, White was released to be reunited with his family on Oct. 27, 1980.

White told the story of his work and imprisonment in the book *God's Missiles over Cuba*. He also wrote other books, numerous articles and a monthly column in VOM's newsletter, which is distributed to more than 500,000 homes in the United States. In addition, he contributed to the million-selling book *Jesus Freaks*, written by the Christian music group **D.C. Talk** and VOM.

White traveled to more than 100 countries, including many

dangerous areas, in order to meet with and deliver aid to **persecuted Christians** and to document their testimonies for Christians in the West. He was in high demand as a speaker, sharing stories of the many persecuted Christians he met and worked with in his travels. Just weeks before his death, White traveled to China, where he met secretly with **underground Bible school** students.

White received many honors over the years for his heart and diligence in presenting the plight of the persecuted church. In May 2001, Oklahoma Wesleyan University awarded him an honorary doctorate of ministry for his work on behalf of persecuted Christians worldwide. This award recognized his lifelong contribution—through books, videos and articles—to the body of knowledge about the modern-day persecution of Christians as well as his call to appropriate Christian study and response.

White will be remembered for his ministry service and as a lover of people, adventure, literature, poetry and life. His enthusiasm for life will be missed by all who knew him.