Angola inmate has spent most of his life in prison

By The Associated Press

SHREVEPORT — Sammie Robert Robinson was 17 when he was sentenced to 15 years in prison for attempted rape. That was in 1953. He's been in prison ever since.

"I don't believe there is no way in the world to be staying in the penitentiary this long. I've got old in the penitentiary," said Robinson, 54.

He has been in prison longer than any other Louisiana inmate. He last applied for a pardon in 1987. It was denied.

Robinson originally figured he'd be out of prison in about five years.

But in 1958, he got a life sentence for killing a fellow inmate with a two-by-four. Robinson said a third inmate had poked him in the eye, and he hit the victim when he came onto the tier.

Prison records show that Robinson got another five-year sentence in 1970 for hitting a guard with a jar. Fights and other violations of prison rules were major factors in state pardon board rejections of several requests for release, said Corrections Department spokeswoman Martha Jumonville.

"I wasn't looking to be here that long; it's just a bad situation," Robinson said last week from his cellblock at Angola State Penitentiary.

Until 1973, people sentenced to life were automatically eligible for parole after 10 ½ years. Now, the Pardon Board must vote to cut the term to a set number of years and the governor must approve it.

Angola's inmate-run magazine, "The Angolite," published a cover story in March describing Moreese "Pop" Bickham, 74, as Louisiana's oldest and longest-serving inmate, only to learn later about Robinson.

Robinson, who now works as an orderly, said he has wasted his life. Both parents died in Shreveport while he was in prison, two brothers are in prison in Texas and another was killed at Angola, he said.

"I wouldn't know what (Shreveport) looks like, I've been locked up so long. Don't you know 38 years is a long time? I want some of that free world; I'm not as bad as they say."

Inmates seize part of jail over quality of breakfast

By The Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — More than 100 inmates apparently upset about the quality of their breakfast took over part of a jail for three hours, an official said.

No hostages were taken during Saturday's riot. One inmate was treated at a hospital for a leg injury.

The inmates returned to their cells after talking with a police negotiating team.

"They complained of the eggs being watered down and the bacon not being done properly," said A. Ray Mills, chief administrative officer at Shelby County Jail.