

The Celebrity

by Jack Swenson

The arrival of the celebrity at the rehab caused a stir among the guests. Father Chaos was jump-up-and-down excited.

"I knew he would show up. I just knew it! O'Reilly has all sorts of big shots up here," he said.

Later, Ken showed us the article. "Prominent Lawyer Jailed," the headline said.

"Took a shot at his wife," Ken said. "Newspaper says he had been drinking heavily."

They put the lawyer in sick bay. There was a regulation that new people had to be under constant supervision for the first twenty-four hours. The other "guests" helped out. There were two shifts, from ten to two and from two to six in the morning.

I volunteered for the second shift. Buzz said he'd do it, too, to keep me company.

We pulled one of the dining room tables over by the door so we could look down the hallway into sick bay.

"Why are we doing this?" Buzz asked.

"Read," I said. I pointed to the stack of books he had brought with him.

Buzz got up and went over to the refrigerator and came back with a plate of sandwiches and a half-gallon of milk. Buzz didn't look like a big eater, but he ate like a horse.

Later Buzz went down the hallway to check on the new people. Then he came back and sat down. "If you want to read, go ahead," he said. I put down my book.

We talked about this and that for an hour or so. Buzz had five kids. His wife was Catholic. Buzz was a shop teacher at a high school south of San Francisco. The first finger on Buzz's right hand was just a stub. Buzz said he'd raise his hand and ask questions at school board meetings. He'd hold up two fingers and the stub and say, "I've got three questions."

When Buzz talked about his children, he smiled, and his eyes got bright. He had been married for almost twenty-five years.

Buzz asked me about Father Chaos. I asked Buzz if he had seen Ken's bike. "Big Harley," I said. "He's got it parked over by the Guest House."

"He doesn't have a parish," I said. "He works in a hospital in the East Bay. He told me that if I were in that hospital and I woke up and saw him, I was in big trouble."

I explained about the magazine. Father Chaos carried around a rolled-up copy of *American Rifleman*.

"He's a gun nut," I said. "He owns four or five rifles and shotguns."

About four o'clock the lights went on in the lawyer's bedroom. Buzz and I went down the hallway to see what was going on. The lawyer was getting dressed. "I have to call my wife," he said. We got him back into bed, turned off the light, and closed the latticed door to his bedroom.

Buzz shook his head. "Poor bastard," he said. "He doesn't know whether he's afoot or on horseback."

"Tell me about it," I said.

