

The Conversion of George Soap

A Coach Chronicle

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Soap is an interesting character in Eric's (Coach's) Pantheon. He is a full blooded native Cherokee, still tough at 72, standing a tall six foot two. With wavy shoulder length hair, he resembles Michael Landon a bit, only with a native nose. He is a talented artist in bead work, in jewelry making, and good at wood burning arts. He plays guitar and is able to take an Elvis tune for a couple of rides with his impersonator voice.

Soap is a lifer, incarcerated for thirty or more years for unknown evil deeds which have receded back into the shadows of his past. He is a respected tough guy who doesn't cotton to everybody, revered by all the young braves who want to make a name for themselves. He is for the most part stoical. His relationship to Coach was respectful, cool perhaps, in keeping with his native personality.

Then it got around that Soap was sick, perhaps dying. He was now on dialysis. He seemed to be on the verge of collapse as much from uncertainty as from pain. It was then that he approached Coach without his usual cool demeanor. "Coach," he said, "I'm scared. I'm scared of dying."

"Okay, Soap." Coach answered. "I will say the Sacred Words with you but you have to think about it, get ready for it, and come back when you are good and ready." Soap nodded.

A week later, Soap went into Coach's office and said, "I'm ready." And there the words were spoken, the Words of grace and eternal life, the Words that guarantee the forgiveness of sins, the Words that change lives. The Words of life everlasting. Soap's countenance changed. His fears lightened.

The scuttlebutt was that he was still on dialysis, but seemed to have more vigor. Coach kept an eye on him; he was Coach's new convert.

Lexington Prison welcomes Christian volunteers from the outside. They treat them like gold and they do a good work. However, an insider, a lifer, can spot a phony right away. The Old Timers grow wary having become students of the human personality. A goody goody is not trust worthy. Zeal has to be real! So, some time later, after the Sacred Words, Coach observed one of these eager volunteers approaching Soap. This will be interesting, Coach thought. Busying himself, he kept his eye on the encounter and his ear sharp.

"Hello there friend," said the volunteer, plump, well-fed, little guy resembling a human

Danish who had grown up safe. He was new to the penitentiary and notably nervous, yet excited about evangelizing. “Can I tell you something about Jee-zus?”

“Can I tell you something about these hands?” Soap countered, looming menacingly over the volunteer. “They’ve been in Nam, They break necks like chicken wings, like this,” followed by the twisting and snap gesture. A look of terror spread over the volunteer's face. First he backed away, and then turned and high-tailed it out of there.

In some way, the volunteer had not come across as genuine. Eric kept his eye on Soap, but was assured that he was still on target as he met weekly with a little old lady volunteer for a one-on one Bible study. Soap's body was gaining strength; he was still keeping on the King's Highway. But as the old saying goes, don't con a con.