

"I looked in the phone book. I didn't believe it, but there he was. Dr. Taylor. I thought he had to be fifty or sixty. I was so surprised."

She told me that he's making a special partial for her, because her teeth don't come together.

"He listens, and everything. He *believes* me when I tell him I hurt. I couldn't believe it. Almost everybody thinks they know more than I do because of the way I speak. He treats me as if I had a brain. He should be enshrined. We hit it off right at the beginning. I'm 62."

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Sharon: Sharon (pseudonym) works every day in a hair cuttery. She is the mother of Laura, 27. Twelve years ago, Laura suffered a blood clot in the brain stem, with much brain damage. She can not speak.

"Laura was crying for a week, and since she can't talk, I figured it was her teeth. John was a godsend. I called so many places. They said I would have to bring her. They talked about money, hospitals, insurance, and they were all *nasty*. One dentist told me, believe it or not, 'We don't fool with people like her; we don't bother *filling* teeth. We use general anaesthesia, and we just extract them.'"

She was referred from agency to hospital to agency and back. Most of them talked about money, bringing her in, and wondered why she called *there*, etc. "I was mad. I didn't care about the money. I just wanted my daughter to get better."

"I had all this hassle. I really didn't believe anything would go right for us. I called John, even though I didn't believe there could be a mobile dentist. He came, filled four teeth (one of them was a front tooth), and cleaned her teeth. And he was so

at ease.

"I didn't want them to pull that front tooth. She'd look so bad, and she can see herself (in a mirror.)"

"I've been able to keep her out of nursing homes. I don't think she belongs there. I'm very happy. I was lucky with John. I recognized something special the minute he walked in."

John tells me that this lady cares for her daughter better than any nursing home could. And she just *does* it. No fanfare, no praise. She goes to work, comes home at lunch to care for Laura, goes to work, comes home. . . .

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Gloria: Gloria has twin daughters, both with Down's Syndrome. She lost her husband last June. She sounded so tired when I spoke with her. "I just keep hanging in there. Every once in a while I can get out. Far as any pleasure, we can't get out. . . . (I go) to shop at a mall, sometimes, for a little while."

"I have some help. A girl comes in. I have to care for (my daughters) every day: get them up, get them baths. They can eat, but I have to prepare it. They take a lot of care."

"I found John in the book. It's so hard for them to get out of the (wheel-)chairs. They're heavy. Their legs will give out. They can't get in(to) or out of a dentist's chair. I was so happy that some kind of care could be given. He's a wonderful person. Took a load off of my shoulders. He's been doing it now three years."

I asked Gloria how old the children are. They are forty years old.

I was stunned. I mumbled something about how strong and dedicated she is, and how long it's been, and in a quiet voice, she said, "They're my children."

For Gloria, that was all the reason she needed.

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There you have four stories of the many House Saints John sees regularly. He says there are many invisible people, ones nobody sees, nobody recognizes.

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Kudos: David Baker, who worked with our Bible School some years ago and still helps out, and Kimberly Perrine, his long time friend, were married on May 4, this year. Our congratulations and prayers.

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Thanks: Our thanks to the *Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation* for their generosity to *St. Francis*. They have enabled our Center to continue for another year. Our thanks, too, to their staff people.

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What's Next: The City is going to raze the 900 Block of Whitelock Street, which will have a final effect on our building. We had been negotiating, presenting plans to keep the local businesses here, making phone calls, speaking to the politicians, cajoling, caressing and cussing, all to no avail. No bureaucrat seems to have any *future* plans. Evict and raze now. No one seems to care about the *people*.

St. Francis has been in the neighborhood thirty years

I can't believe I found John. The miracle is that he does house calls. He does his work while I sit in the wheel-chair. My mother wants to meet him because she says that *nobody* makes house calls. He spends time, and we even had some laughs together."

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Mary: She has *hereditary ataxia*, a progressive, debilitating disease for which there is no cure and no palliative. Along with her other muscles, it has affected her speech. She slurs her words, and people often hang up on her because they think she is drunk.

She told me she is afraid to go out because she might fall. She always has to get somebody to buy groceries, get the mail, put out garbage.

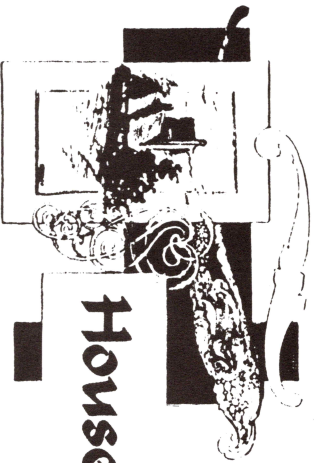
She dropped her upper partial and it broke. "I needed a miracle. And Dr. Taylor came. He is a life saver. And (as the disease progresses) it will mean more and more to me. It's bound to."

She said that all her family has ataxia. Her oldest brother hasn't left the house in fifteen years.

"It's hard for me to hold *anything*, like a tooth brush, so I have to get my teeth cleaned more often.

"I'm so grateful to have somebody to come to the house to do *anything*. It's so hard to get services because everything has to gel. It has to be a clear day, there has to be someone to take me, the appointment has to be coordinated, etc.

"I can't put into words what he means to me. I can't believe that anybody cares about the disabled. People don't care about the disabled until they become one. I could not believe (it), especially at his age. He ought to be locked in his office making lots of money instead of helping people like me.



House Saints

Our last brochure told a tale of **Street Saints**. You wrote that you were taken by the story of Annie, that you felt like you knew her. That's great! It carries Annie's life and spirit way beyond the grave.

This time, John suggested we write about **House Saints** . . . the folks John meets both as patients and as caregivers every day in his mobile practice.

Backgrounds: Almost all of John's *Mobile Dental Service* patients are homebound or institutionalized. Many are physically handicapped. Invariably, on John's first visit, the patients say they waited so long to call because they didn't believe he really came *into* the home. They pictured a van or bus and embarrassing public display with wheel-chair, steps, handlers, starting eyes, hoopla and hurt. Travel is a traumatic assault on the body and the psyche. With John, there is none of that. There is only a quiet man with a dental van, a unit on wheels, the time to care, and the competence to match. Although he is adamant about privacy, he did ask some of his patients to speak of their experiences so that we could tell their stories.

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Bart: I spoke to Bart (pseudonym), a Viet-Vet, paraplegic amputee. "I never thought I'd be able to eat corn-on-the-cob and sirloin steak again. John says I will be able to, in about three weeks. I hunted for four years for a dentist who even had handicap access.

this year, twenty-six years at this location. One of the City's go-fers suggested that we put the Church into storage. Blowtorch Composto then re-suggested, among other things, that he come on Sunday and tell that to our congregation. *Wonder-of-the-world* has been scarce ever since. It's amazing how life patterns are changed by small knots in the human fabric.

Please pray for some light. We do not intend to leave this neighborhood and the people whose lives we share. I have asked God if our work here is done, what's the next step. God likes to hide out till the last minute. I hear, "Do you want my job?" Divine comedy!

There really do need to be changes made. The crime, the drugs, the violence are worse than ever, and 15,000 decent people live under a crime-crust. Some of the dealers respect St. Francis, and I would like to channel some of that respect. We argue about their "business," and, once in a while, one will come to church, or ask us to pray for a family member.

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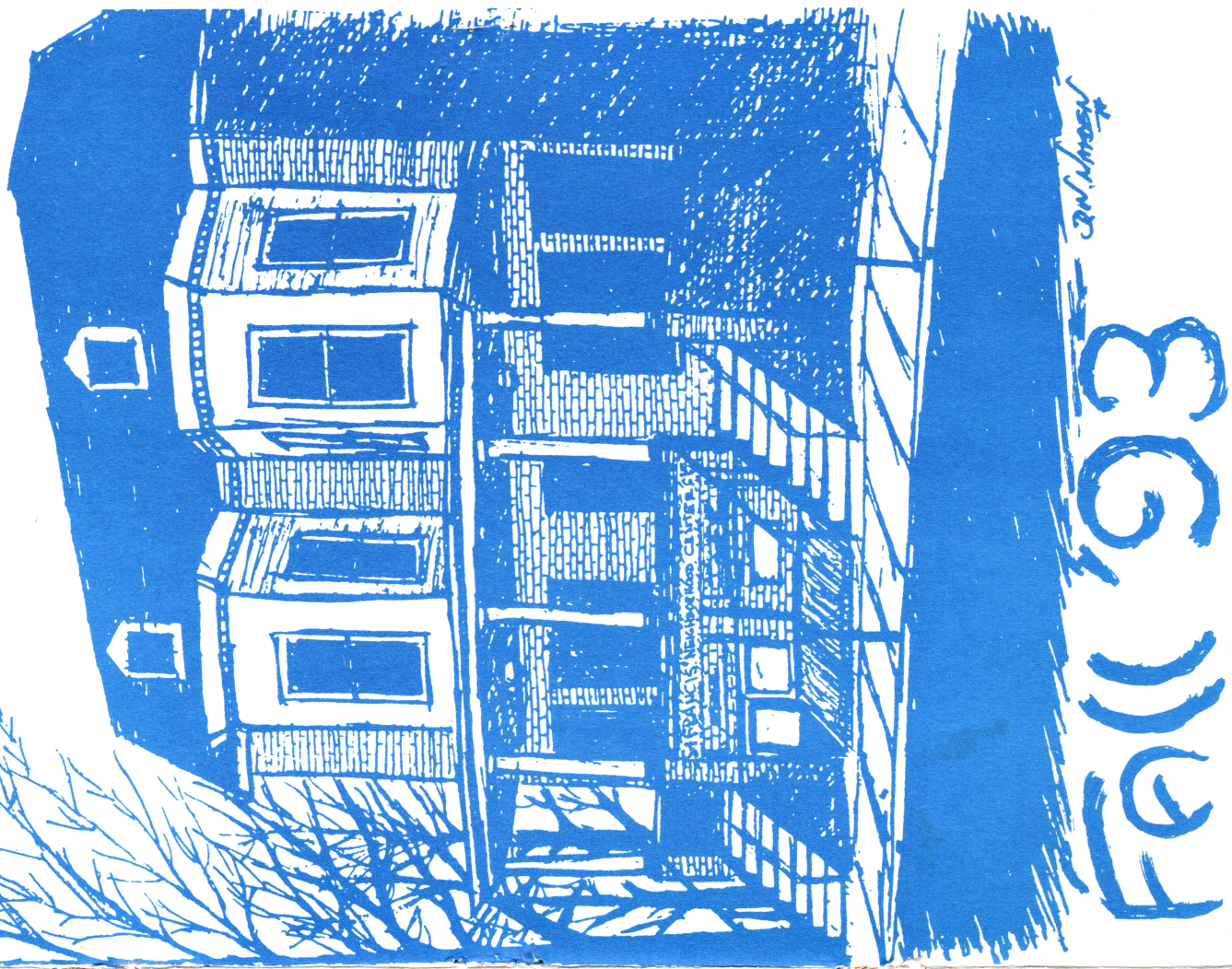
Personal: Please accept our thanks for the gifts you have so kindly sent over the past months. We have read all the letters, and prayed as you wished. With the hassle over the neighborhood, it's impossible to answer each letter. Thanks for your understanding.

Please enjoy Fall and its colors.

For Lou, John & Debbie

You know what I noticed when I read this over? Somewhere in here is another **Street Saint**. When John read this, he felt that too much attention was focussed on **him** and not on his patients, the real **House Saints**. He wanted me to add this.

ST FRANCIS
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER



St. Francis Neighborhood Center

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