

CHEVY CHASE AND MAX

by James Collins.

Chevy Chase was my good friend and neighbor. No, not the Hollywood star of stage, screen and TV, rather the New Hampshire look-alike and personality double known as Jack Starr. At 6'4" and 275 pounds, this man when he entered a room, made his presence known. He was born an unrepentant extrovert, loud, boisterous and jovial. Everyone loved Jack. His house reflected his personality as he had a tolerant wife, Judy, and six active kids who turned the place into bedlam.

Jack would do or say anything to get a laugh sometimes at another's expense. For example, my 16-year-old daughter Patricia was working as a checkout person at the local food market. Jack, three people back in the line, shouted, "Patricia has your dad found a job since he got out of prison?" This of course embarrassed my daughter, who, being 16 did not have a quick retort. When she told me the story, I told her that Mr. Starr would repeat that again. Next time Jack used the line in the crowded store, Patricia responded, "He's fine, he misses you and says you were his very best cellmate." As the people backed away from Jack, he replied, "Good one Patricia."

Jack felt something was missing from the family and decided to get a dog. Max a white English Shepherd with thick, curly hair covering his eyes arrived and quickly grew to 100 pounds. He fit in well with Jack and the rest of the family; he was big, loud and friendly. Unfortunately, he was dumb as a stump. Max came over from Jack's yard to my yard on a daily basis. There was heavy brush and trees between the two properties and I had installed a 10-inch white wire fence to stop the leaves from blowing on to the lawn. Max would come bounding through the brush, hit the fence and fall face down onto the lawn. Max never learned. He tripped over that fence every time he came into my yard. I told Jack. I thought he needed psychiatric care. Jack replied, "I have six kids, I cannot afford to get the dog a doctor."

On one occasion, the family had to relocate for three months to a different state. Related to Jack's business this event was a temporary situation. They used the opportunity as a mini vacation and drove out with Max in a rented van. When the assignment ended, the company needed Jack urgently and had him fly everyone home. Max had to be sedated by a veterinarian before he could be loaded on the aircraft. Nobody quite knew what happened, but when he arrived, Max was unconscious. Max remained unconscious for two and a half days and needed treatment by a veterinarian. Luckily, he appeared to rise from the dead and when he revived, he was the same old Max.

When summer arrived, the dog became a problem. The houses built in 1969 did not have central air and the 60-foot oak trees on the properties kept the temperature 20° cooler than the outside air. However, Max under his heavy white curly coat was always hot. He looked for sprinklers or irrigation units in the neighborhood and ran through them to get wet. Then he came into the house and the smell of wet dog was everywhere. Jack's answer was to get a 4-foot diameter electric fan and blow air out the screened back door to get rid of the smell. Max loved this idea. He figured it was created for his pleasure and cooling. Max would lie down in front of the fan blocking half the flow and fill the doorway. Walking past Jack's house on a summer's day, you always smelled wet dog. Finally, Judy had enough and demanded

that Jack take Max out for a haircut, wash, and flea treatment. Jack did as ordered and Max came back a more fragrant pet.

That night, it rained, but Jack had the duty to walk Max at about 9 PM. The streets were wet and slick. Since there was rarely any traffic that time of night, Jack took Max off the leash and leaned against a tree as Max wandered the street like a wayward school bus. Jack heard an engine and turned to see a Cadillac roaring up the street, skidding as it spotted Max and the 'Crump' as the car hit Max and he slid along the road. The car took off and Jack ran to his fallen dog with two thoughts that rushed into his mind at the same time.

There is \$75 down the drain; how big a hole will I have to dig to bury Max before the kids wake up in the morning?

Jack ran to the corner to see the lights of the Chevy disappearing down the road. Then he heard another sound and turned to see Max staggering up on his feet. Under the street lamp, it was an amazing sight. On one side, Max was all white and fluffy and the other side he was flat and black covered with oil, grease, and water. Once again, Max arose from the dead this time with a major cleaning operation in front of the family.

This all occurred 30 years ago. Two years later, the family relocated to Texas where all of the children graduated from Texas A&M. Max succumbed to natural causes years ago and is now a memory. Jack and Judy often come back to visit, and when they do, New Hampshire sparkles, is more alive and vibrant because Chevy Chase is back in town.

THE END