

# The Reactor

by Paul Azevedo



They were two quite different men. One old. One young. The older man was stone-deaf, and feeble. He had lived over 90 years...and what years!

Adventure...accomplishment...captain of a whaling ship...rescuer of explorer Ronald Amundsen. He had lived a rugged, heroic life. When he grew old, he retired to his snug harbor in the trees, not far from the sea. His name was Christian Pedersen.

His wife of 48 years cared for him. His peaceful Vallemar home was decorated with the memories of his days in northern seas.

**THE OTHER** man's biography could be found mostly in police records. Sometimes he called himself Ramon Salcido, sometimes Carlos Lopez, sometimes Jojola, sometimes other names.

San Francisco county jail is a multi-storied building constructed in the early thirties. Miles from the city, it stands incongruously surrounded by plowed fields in a small valley in the hills between San Bruno and Pacifica.

Salcido-Jojola-Lopez escaped from that jail one June day in 1969. With a fellow escapee he headed west over Sweeney ridge, and came down into the peaceful wooded valley where Captain Pedersen lived.

**HE BROKE** into the captain's home. He, or his fellow escapee, beat the captain to death. They beat the captain's wife. They destroyed whatever chance she

might have had for peace and joy during the rest of her life.

Salcido-Jojola-Lopez was captured, tried, convicted. Only seven years, a bare 60,000 hours later, he was again walking the streets of San Francisco.

In 1969 he had been called a major example of failure of the criminal justice system. He proved how true that was again in 1977 when he was charged with the killing of officer Douglas Gibbs.

**I WAS UNHAPPY** to learn that he was loose. So were Mrs. Gibbs and her children and many others in the Bay Area. I hadn't known he was loose, but I wasn't surprised.

No one in the criminal justice system thought it was our business that he was loose. When your neighbor or mine wants to build an eight foot fence, or add a room too close to his property line, the city notifies us. A public notice is advertised in the Tribune. The city sends out postcards. If we want to object or comment, we are told where to go and when to be there.

As it is, we don't even know if anyone thought of Captain Pedersen when Salcido was turned loose. Here he is still mourned. There he may have been forgotten completely.

**EVERY MAN** who has been convicted of a serious crime deserves consideration, but so does the public that wishes to be protected and revenged.

The state should be required to publish an ad in the newspaper in the area where a criminal's violations took place.

The ad should name him, tell of his crimes, and state that he is being considered for parole. The reader should be told where he can comment or protest.

If such an ad had been published in the Tribune last year, I would certainly have written to protest against Salcido's parole. Perhaps you also would have written. If we had protested and had been listened to, officer Gibbs might be alive today.