

Guy next to me on the plane

by [Warren L. Molton](#) in the [August 26, 2020](#) issue

He said he was a fallen catholic, lower case, and smiled. Said he didn't intend to be, often pretended not to be, but was. Said that God for him was like the guy next door, a retired cop who packed a .38 and a billy club wherever he went, but was nice as Hell. Insisted that the only Jesus he ever really knew was his best bud, who lived across the street, and on the other side lived the Holy Spirit, a loving little old lady of ninety who made the best sweet potato pie with toasted meringue he ever tasted.

He talked sort of sideways to me with his fingers laced and his elbows braced on both arm rests, chin on his hands. When I asked if he ever prayed, he dropped his hands into his lap as though startled or just caught, and turning toward me, he said, All the time anymore, since I had to put down my tired and sick old dog, Sam. I took him to the vet to do it. Laying there on the table with his great head cupped in my hands, he looked at me with the most loving and forgiving eyes I ever saw, like he was human and I was his God, or something.