

Musings
pg. 1



The new world of Russell Wolden—a nine-by-five prison hospital cell

—Examiner photo by Seymour Snaer

Wolden Tells of Life in Prison

—From Page 1
interview Wolden has granted since his arrival at the California Medical Facility.

Earlier in the morning, Dr. Lester Pope, medical superintendent of the facility, observed that "Wolden is a very sick man."

This was evident. Obviously nursing his strength, and haunted by a cough, Wolden sat upright and then relaxed on the bed again.

"Yes, this has been a very

difficult adjustment because of my family, for one thing. Obviously, there are tensions and worries and concerns.

"And very frankly, on a long night, you can't help worrying about your health."

He looked at the barred door, ajar.

"I'm not used to being closed in at 6 p.m.," he said.

Through the years, from the time he inherited the office of City Assessor from his father, the doors always had

been open to Russell Wolden.

But now, weary and nursing his breath, there was neither the time nor the energy for reminiscing. Outside, in the wide corridor, other prisoner patients were talking in loud voices.

Wolden, shifting the weight of his body on the hospital bed, nodded toward the voices.

"They've been kind to me," he said. "All of them.

"I've done a little work here — a little bit on some medical charts. That way, you can sit down and not do very much. But I can't do anything physical."

The words came slowly, in that same monotone.

After a long pause, he said:

"I wish I were more alert — more with it," he shrugged. "I have sleeping problems. I have fitful nights. I sleep a few hours, then I'm awake again. . . ."

But the condition of his heart continued to dominate the interview.

"My heart is the real problem," he was saying. "I had a virus when I got here. If

the virus ever goes into my heart — it's just too bad for me. But they're giving me medication. And all the nurses on the floor are very helpful. Everyone has been very pleasant. They do everything they can for you. . . ."

A tired old man in his mid-50s, he shrugged again and smiled.

"Someday I'd like to write," he said. "But I haven't had the chance . . . my heart."

And now, very weary, he lay back on the bed in the nine-by-five prison hospital cell that has become his only home.