

Ehrlichman's Pal Again

By Joseph Albright
Chronicle Correspondent

Washington

Sometimes it is hard for old pals to pick up where they left off years earlier, but Congressman Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey and his former law school friend, John Ehrlichman, have done just that.

"I am glad to be able to resume my friendship with John after a three-year break caused by political differences," said McCloskey (Rep-Portola Valley) in an interview yesterday.

It turns out that Ehrlichman, who faces up to eight years in prison because of his involvement in the Ellsberg and Watergate cover-ups, telephoned McCloskey one day last month to talk over his court-imposed predicament.

McCloskey, learning that Ehrlichman was paying \$35 a day to stay at a Washington hotel, insisted that the former White House aide move into McCloskey's house in Georgetown.

Ehrlichman stayed at McCloskey's house for about two weeks during a post-trial appeals proceeding, McCloskey said.

During that visit, McCloskey says he became convinced that Ehrlichman has "an absolutely genuine and sincere" desire to serve society in some way, as a form of penance.

"John indicated to me that he wanted to spend some time doing whatever menial work he could — perhaps working with retarded children, or helping quadruple amputees, or picking up papers along the highways," said McCloskey.

The congressman said he had made "certain inquiries" aimed at finding Ehrlichman an opportunity to work with retarded children or amputees — thus far with no result.

During the visit Ehrlichman, spent many hours reading. He read one book he recommended to McCloskey: "Zen and the Art to Motorcycle Maintenance" by Robert Pirsig.

A friendship between

McCloskey, one of the first to call for Richard Nixon's impeachment, and Ehrlichman, one of Mr. Nixon's staunchest defenders, is not as incongruous as it sounds.

At Stanford University Law School, they were partners in moot court debates in 1949 and 1950. Their friendship persisted after law school, and they used to send each other an occasional law client.

There was a time when McCloskey and his family took a driving trip to Seattle and camped out in Ehrlichman's backyard.

The U.S. invasion of Cambodia in 1970, bitterly opposed by McCloskey and loyally defended by Ehrlichman, put their friendship on ice.

"It was very embarrassing for him over in the White House to explain what his friend McCloskey was up to," recalls the congressman. "At that point, it was hard to stay friends."

McCloskey insists that Ehrlichman, whose present whereabouts are unknown, has changed his system of values after two coverup convictions.

"What he wants to do now is help people, rather than try to re-establish himself as a successful lawyer and make a lot of money," said McCloskey.

Although Ehrlichman's court appeals may take two years, the former White House aide is not optimistic about avoiding prison, according to McCloskey.