

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

September 9, 2016

Column #100

### Part 2 – Monterey Workshop Addresses Affordable Housing Solutions



*Glorietta Rowland*

### PLAYING THE BALL WHERE THE MONKEY DROPPED IT

By Wanda Sue Parrott

#### Housing? Which Housing Issue?

**IF YOU'D ATTENDED** the jam-packed Affordable Housing Workshop hosted by the City of Monterey Planning Dept. on Wed., Aug. 31 at the Youth Center in Monterey, you'll understand the question.

If you weren't there, here's my take as I'd have covered it as a young associate editor of the society page of a major metropolitan daily in Los Angeles.

#### Biggest End-Of-Summer-Season Non-Social Social Event

Today such sections are called Lifestyle. In the 1970s they were the Social Scene, and even earlier, Rotogravure (with scads of photos of chic people milling about). In other words, I didn't know what to expect.

I thought, "Buddha, how should I cover this gala?"

Buddha bade, "Play the ball where the monkey drops it."

Translated, that monkey metaphor means: "Expect the unexpected, then make the most of it."

How sage that advice proved to be!

#### Playing The Ball Where The Monkey Dropped It

First move was to send an e-mail to Elizabeth Caraker, principal planner with the host organization of the event, City of Monterey Planning Dept. which stated: "I am planning to attend your Affordable Housing Workshop. May I bring handouts of the Cedar Street Times containing my column Homeless in Paradise? If yes, how many do you recommend I bring?"

Elizabeth answered almost instantly, "Twenty-two should be enough."

I envisioned the newspapers in a pile on a table containing handouts the speakers would also be distributing after the program. I was wrong.

Later, Buddha butted in. “Better double the number of handouts.”

Second move was to drive to Pacific Grove and pick up extra copies. Buddha was almost right. Quintupling the number would have been a more accurate prediction of how many copies I needed for everyone present to get one.

Third move was preparation for copious notetaking as different speakers talked about various aspects of the housing questions I planned to include in this week’s column. They included public opinion and input regarding questions about which my presumption was dead wrong:

Short term rentals (STRs)?

Second units (both granny and junior units)?

Conversion of old hotels into residential space?

Warming Shelter?

There were no speakers on a podium. People discuss these as they mixed and mingled on the floor. There were no seats for sitting and listening, although various representatives of the City of Monterey graciously stood by the tables and directed attendees to vote about how they felt by affixing brightly colored red, green and yellow labels to printed sheets that soon became plastered like op art creations.

Conversations, like bees, hummed and buzzed. It was not the proper milieu for claustrophobics.

Forgive me, Buddha, but someone else beat you to the metaphor that describes the dilemma in which I, a reporter, was stuck:

### **The Best Laid Plans Of Mice And Men Oft Go Astray**

A social soirée the event was not. A socio-civic swarm it was indeed! This fact was obvious as I arrived at 7 p.m. and saw a line already forming out the door and into the parking lot.

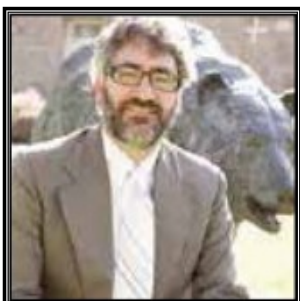
Most women were in ankle-length pants suits ranging from the eggshell-gray lace ensemble worn elegantly by Glorietta Rowland of the Dept. of Social Services to the chic casual of Cindy Storrs, director of activities for Gathering for Women.

Men were in everything from Bermuda walking shorts with Hawaiian shirts to black suits without black ties, or any ties at all. Monterey councilmember Timothy Barrett looked sporty in a baseball cap and sunglasses. Rev. Michael Reid came in natty sports coat and high-fashion slacks. No bare feet were observed.

Nor did I find any bare spots on the array of tables that squared the room, so I monkey-walked around and quickly ran out of handouts.

If anyone did emcee the event from the floor, his/her announcement was lost in the din created by a crowd that could have been crammed into a small Beverly Hills art gallery to celebrate opening night. Only thing missing besides speakers were cocktails and canapés! Swellegant describes the turnout! Dismal describes my coverage.

### **Alan Haffa To The Rescue**



I borrowed a few words from Monterey City Councilmember Alan Haffa’s Facebook post:

“. . . There were many people there — easily over 100...as I spoke with neighbors, I realized that there is not a lot of consensus. Some people are worried about how rising rents force people out of their apartments and create more homelessness...But others are worried about how increased density will make parking more difficult or how additional second units will impact their privacy...

“Also, it struck me that we need more conversation between those who are worried about rising home prices and those who are worried about the degradation of their quality of life.”

Thanks, Alan. Buddha’s monkey couldn’t have said it any better. I’ll publish statistics next week!

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