

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

September 30, 2016

Column #103

Part 5 – Monterey Workshop Addresses Affordable Housing Solutions



ASK YOURSELF: NOW WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

REDUCING a speech, lecture, or event into a one-line summary isn't easy, but you'll be surprised what you discover by condensing a major phenomenon into ten words or less.

If interested, try this: Focus on one specific event, such as the first Presidential Debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump last Monday. Then ask: What was that all about?

When I did the exercise, 15 hours of contemplation resulted in extracting a comment Hillary made at the opening of the debate. Paraphrased, the most-important message I culled from event was:

One Out Of Two Americans Lives Paycheck To Paycheck

Never mind the fact neither candidate mentioned the H word. Hillary's statement implied poverty is already a national epidemic. Mass homelessness proportional to disenfranchised Americans of the Great Depression years seems imminent, even in a paradise like Monterey.

That not-too-distant future is now for CeliaSue Hecht, about whom you've read in this newspaper.

The former journalist who's now homeless lives a nomadic life which is currently reminiscent of Biblical times.

Monterey's Rider On A Horse With No Name

CeliaSue is a stalwart symbol of bright, sober, and mature homeless women with both courage and talent. She is a well-bred middle-class, college-educated former New Yorker, age 66, whom homelessness turned into a living example of the legendary person crossing the desert on a horse with no name. The steed in her case is a dusty white van shared with her dog Cici. It serves as the office from which she freelances as a writer and blogger. <https://celiasue.com/2016/09/26/a-goat-whisperer-in-joshua-tree/>.

During the six-months in which the City of Monterey was researching the feasibility of adopting five amendments to its Housing Element, each of which might hopefully ameliorate the affordable housing crisis in the city, CeliaSue Hecht went south to avoid becoming a starfish on another cold winter beach in Monterey.

Hoping to find a cozy room at an inn, she found instead, what I would succinctly define as a temporary oasis in The Promised Land for the Homeless, otherwise known as the desert near Giant Rock Airport.

The Promised Land For The Homeless?

CeliaSue has been sleeping in a trailer on a campsite where she helps tend a herd of 30-plus goats. There is no running water or electricity, but a perk in this region noted for flying saucer sightings is an occasional anomaly above the yucca trees that could be a fortuitous sign or even revelation of future things to come.

Look at the photo above and ask yourself: What is this streak all about? Then try to define it in 10 words or less.

As a help, you might remember the most-beloved Bible story of them all, in which a bright star appears over the manger in which an infant sleeps while shepherds tend their flocks by night.

When I asked myself what this is all about, the answer was: History repeats itself.

If this goat could talk, it might reveal where the homeless go from here by baabaa-baa-ing, “There’s lots of land in the Great American Southwest!



Meanwhile Back In Monterey

Closer to home, I wondered “What was that all about?” after the Monterey City Council meeting of Sept. 21 at which public comments coupled with council debate resulted in council’s naying four of the five amendments presented by the Planning Dept. for inclusion in the 2015-2023 Housing Element.

My conclusion: Legal or not, Short Term Rentals will transform Monterey.

Council’s decision has bought time for continued survival of the struggling single-family neighborhood community spirit until 2023, when the issue of legalizing STRs (that now operate illegally) again arises. By then, will homeowners who now cherish Monterey homeownership be able to afford to live here?’

The final amendment to the 2015- 2023 Housing Element, recommended location of proposed areas deemed suitable for an emergency shelter, will be presented to Monterey City Council by the Planning Dept. at the Oct. 4 council meeting.

I predict council will adopt this amendment that recommends a location in the C-3 sector of NW Monterey as the best-suited area for an emergency shelter, although no specific site is named for actual location of such a shelter.

After five weeks covering the affordable housing workshop issue, I now ask: What was that all about?

Answer: Monterey seems to be back to square one. Is it?

Stay tuned for the final installment of this series next week. Where the Affordable Housing issue ends, the Matching Funds Challenge begins, and Monterey Mayor Clyde Roberson offers some inspirational advice about how single-family homeowners can weather the financial-crunch storm despite the fact both granny units and second “junior” units are not allowed in Monterey.

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Desert and Goat photos courtesy of CeliaSue Hecht; used for educational/illustrative purposes only; no copyright infringement intended.

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