

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

May 19, 2017

Column #136

### The NIMBY Syndrome - Part 1



*General Douglas MacArthur,  
whose lookalike is homeless in Seaside*

### HOW TO HANDLE HOMELESSNESS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**LEAVING** the Washington scene to try and Trump itself, let's refocus on the Monterey Peninsula by asking:

*If anything significant has been happening on the homeless scene since Jan. 21, what's most notable?*

Well, IMHO, the NIMBY syndrome has been growing, starting with homelessness in downtown Monterey that exhibits exaggerated flair for street drama, especially when holiday crowds arrive.

Is it good for business? No!

Is it bad for business? I can't really say.

Take last Sunday, for example.

#### Monterey's Mother's Day Homeless On Parade

As a Mother's Day crowd milled at noon on Alvarado St. in downtown Monterey while waiting for tables, a cadre of homeless persons made cameo appearances by parading past and through the crowds.

A "ground-bound Peter Pan" describes one young fellow. He had budding dreadlocks and wore a costume that would have been appropriate for the Mardi Gras. He practically roller skated barefoot through the throng while the gentle bay breezes blew his diaphanous pastel-hued cape behind him.

Others of his age and ilk were also fleetingly present as they worked their ways toward hotels where, according to local rumor, more than one disgruntled guest returned to his or her room and checked out after uttering this paraphrased complaint I've heard disgruntled business operators report at city council meetings:

“I came to see Paradise, not Panhandlers who pee on the street.”

### **Panhandlers Who Pee And Other Performers In Paradise**

A thirtyish couple with a bundle and a brindle bulldog between them wore matching army boots, fatigues and backpacks. They were marchers, two-stepping in tandem.

Threading his way through the crowd was a short, wiry young man dressed in dark clothes, with a stocking cap on his head. Like a street mime in Paris, he was agile and bright-eyed; however, he also looked dirty, unshaven and possibly smelled.

Across the street, resting akimbo against a backpack and plastic trash bag, was a man in black stocking cap whose grizzled gray beard made him appear elderly and almost, if not actually, dead to the world.

Passersby side-stepped this man, as if he were not there.

I observed no celebrants give handouts, maybe because their hands were filled with potted plants: mini-orchids, tiny tiger lilies and wee rose bushes encased in clear plastic, possible gifts from a local vendor whose generosity escaped me.

(The prior day I had received a beautiful long-stemmed lavender rose at the Mother’s Day luncheon generously provided at Oldemeyer Center by the City of Seaside, where homeless and sheltered women comingled in cleanliness and camaraderie.)

Most-memorable homeless presence I saw in downtown Monterey was a retired parking meter, now painted fire-engine red, in which coins can be dropped to help feed the homeless. Tourists and other passersby are admonished not to give money to panhandlers.

Over in Seaside, where often-unkept homeless persons of all ages are most rampantly visible in and around shopping centers near Highway 1, the only individual I’ve observed in costume is a man who impersonates the proud General Douglas MacArthur.

He appears impeccable and, with his well-mannered German Shepherd, migrates between the Fremont/Canyon Del Rey intersection to the south and Target to the north.

### **How Do The Homeless Observe Holidays?**

A formerly unsheltered woman I once interviewed said homeless people have a very hard time on family-oriented holidays. “Being alone with only memories can be depressing,” she said, explaining that she preferred to sleep in her car for safety’s sake, rather than sleep in a shelter or encampment.

Others form ad hoc families on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

In April, about a dozen people gathered on a ledge under Highway 1 near In ‘n Out Burger.

They sat cross-legged like natives gathered at a tribal Easter feast. Stocking caps, hoodies and black trash bags were badges of familial identity.

They were as oblivious to the scene beneath them as passersby in walkers and cyclists in shorts, bright shirts and ball caps were to the human eagles’ aerie over their heads.

Peace between sheltered and unsheltered communities seems to continue until one side or the other kicks off a reaction, as happened in Seaside recently.

An online NextDoor post questioned abandoned trash bags across from Safeway. What flared up next is history in the making.

By the way (BTW), IMHO means “in my humble opinion” and NIMBY means “not in my backyard,” which is where certain Seaside residents don’t want the homeless to be. Stay tuned!

Meanwhile, Community Hospital of Monterey Peninsula (CHOMP) will present plans for a mobile outreach clinic that should help the homeless at the Friends of Homeless Women meeting. Wed., May 24, 10 a.m., St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 146 12<sup>th</sup> St., Pacific Grove. Everyone is welcome.

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Photo of General MacArthur, photographer not credited. - Naval Historical Center; Direct link. Photo #: USA C-2413 (Color), photograph from the Army Signal Corps Collection in the U.S. National Archives., Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6492036>; used for educational/illustrative purposes only; no copyright infringement intended. Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at [amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com](mailto:amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com) or leave a message with The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887.

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