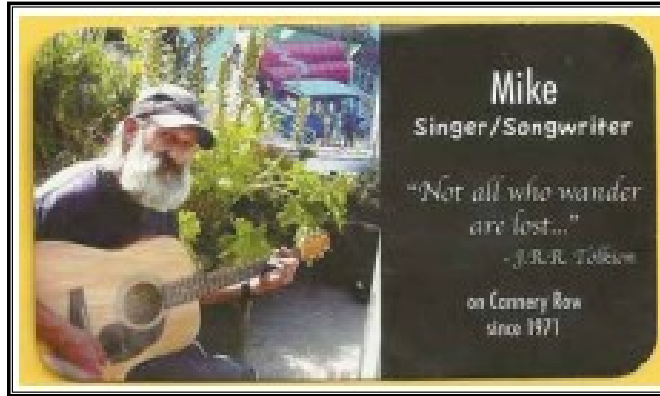


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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The NIMBY Syndrome - Part 3



A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO MONTEREY'S HOMELESS SITES

By Wanda Sue Parrott

PONDERING Monterey from a business angle, I wondered, “If an entrepreneur like me, with limited venture capital, wants to do business in Monterey, how should I start?”

My muse, aka Inner Buddha, said, “Pick your target market, then fill a need.”

“Needs of whom? Tourists? Sightseers?”

“Try again.”

“Golfers? Artists? Vacationers?”

“All, and then some.”

“Then some?”

“Sure. Add rubberneckers, realtors, developers, mayors, supervisors, city councilpersons, planners, firemen, paramedics, preachers, politicians, social workers and law enforcement officers.”

“What would I sell?”

“Sell? Nothing. You’ll give something the Homeless Census can’t even provide.”

“What?”

“A free map called *A Visitor’s Guide to Homeless Sites of the Monterey Peninsula*. First recipients must include back-packing ride thumbers, fleet-footed wanderers, visible vagrants, bikers and vagabonds on foot or behind wheels of live-aboard cars, vans and RVs.”

“Why such a map?”

“Recipients can perform self-guided tours that connect them to others without adequate shelter, so they quickly grow their own homeless communities in the peninsula’s back yards.”

“How would I profit?”

“Those who don’t want the homeless in their own back yards would pay you to kill production before distribution begins.”

The idea was intriguing. “Just how would one put together such a map?”

Buddha replied, “Start with research.”

Mapping The Homeless Campsites

I did a preliminary tour of the Monterey Peninsula that ranged from Lapis Road in unincorporated land north of Marina to the ocean at Asilomar in Pacific Grove.

Only seven or eight vehicles were spotted on Lapis Rd., since the California Highway Patrol had recently given orders to homeless campers to move within 72 hours, and most complied by the time I arrived May 26.

According to the May 22 Monterey Herald, there had been 35 vehicles and 21 RVs still parked and some of those who moved on were expected to return.

Clearing the encampment on Lapis Rd. had begun in earnest last January when the Monterey County Sheriff’s Office, responding to numerous complaints about the campers and their roadside trash, posted an existing ordinance prohibiting overnight parking.

A daylight-hours search yielded discovery of numerous RVs and old campers that had been ousted from Seaside last year were now parked again on Seaside side streets, in hotel parking lots, and at Roberts Lake, where parking isn’t permitted after dark but is legal by day.

Near Windows By The Bay in Monterey, old campers lined both sides of Del Monte Ave. and several persons were observed sleeping in the sun on the grass and on bus benches.

Veterans Park in Monterey is one site where overnight camping is allowed, with restrictions, so it would definitely appear on a hypothetical map of homeless sites if someone should produce such a handout.

Washington Park in Pacific Grove would also appear on the map, although the homeless who live there tend to vanish into the thick undergrowth and stay out of sight.

Not All Who Wander Are Lost

The homeless of Pacific Grove are as invisible to the naked eye as they are visible in downtown Monterey, Cannery Row and Old Fisherman’s Wharf, where they are colorful, if not welcome by business owners, attractions who panhandle to passersby.

At the mouth of the wharf, a string of street musicians with open guitar cases as cash boxes lines up with singers and artists, occasional performing poets, and even jugglers. These gifted beggars who play for pay perform on the homeless stage in the parking lots and sidewalks where tourists roam.

Are they genuine homeless artists or professional performers whose spirits prefer a troubadours’ lifestyle?

On Cannery Row, Mike, a bewhiskered singer/songwriter, hands out business cards that contain these words from J. R. R. Tolkien: “Not all who wander are lost.”

Beside the photo of Mike playing his guitar these words appear: On Cannery Row since 1971.

The Business Oases Of The Homeless Scene

A man flying a “Hungry—Anything Helps” sign near Home Depot said no to moving into housing on old Fort Ord, “No way. I like it here, where the action is.”

His panhandling corner is shared in shifts with others like him between Del Monte Ave.-Blvd. and Highway 1, along Canyon Del Rey just north of the Monterey/Seaside border at the entry to Home Depot, Smart & Final, Staples, McDonald’s, and Starbucks.

This makeshift socio-economic homeless community attracts hustlers who huddle with each other and seagulls to share begged breakfast and hot coffee after sleeping in everything from cardboard boxes behind the businesses to homemade tiny houses on flatbed trailers pulled by trucks.

On a map of homeless sites, McDonald's should be marked with palm trees to indicate they're oases.

(To be continued next week.)

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