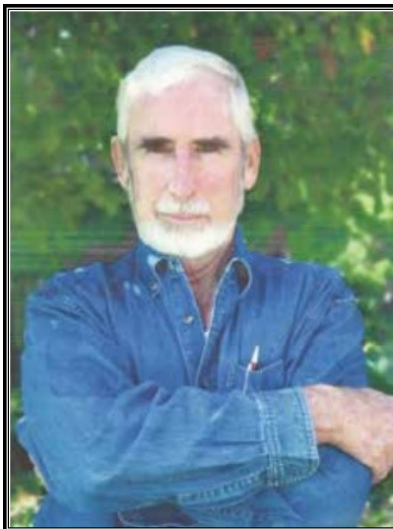


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #14



Harold Grice

BOOKS FOR BEDS AUTHORS AND POETS ARE HELPING TO HEAL HOMELESSNESS ONE BED AT A TIME

By Wanda Sue Parrott

A STRANGE COINCIDENCE happened on Jan. 12, but it didn't make the news—until now. Two benches vanished from the spots they've occupied for years outside the Monterey Post Office on the same day *Books for Beds* was officially kicked off.

Books for Beds, a fledgling literary speakers bureau, currently consists of four published authors and poets who meet twice a month on Saturday mornings at Juice 'n Java in Pacific Grove. SatChat is their critique group led by Harold E. Grice, past-president of the Central Coast Writers branch of the California Writers Club. To qualify for *Books for Beds*, writers must have at least one published book. They must also have once been homeless, houseless or somewhere in between.

Books for Beds' motto is: *helping to heal homelessness one bed at a time*. Its premise is: Everyone needs a place to sleep, so non-profits that benefit the homeless by providing beds (through low-cost housing, transitional housing, warming shelters, or other means) invite *Books for Beds* authors to help raise funds.

The recent coincidence was that *Books for Beds* came into existence to help replace what was lost by the removal of the two post office benches used as beds by homeless people in Monterey. According to a postal clerk, the benches were removed because the homeless sleepers "were also doing their business, urinating and defecating."

The use of benches as beds was predictable following passage last year of Monterey's controversial "Sit and Lie Ordinance" banning sitting and lying on sidewalks and grounds in business areas during business hours.. Thus, local charitable organizations like Shelter Outreach Plus were forced to face the daunting problem of providing beds for the growing homeless population. Shelter Outreach Plus cites an average cost of \$24 per night per bed. Costs vary by organization and situation. Most lacking on the Monterey Peninsula is adequate housing for homeless women, especially single senior women. Shelter Outlook Plus will open a 12-bed unit in Marina in February that's specifically for single women.

Books for Beds has already provided \$50 toward this project and also raised \$100 for One Starfish, the safe parking for women who sleep in their cars. As *Books for Beds* grows, authors and poets will be added to this core group:

Laureen Diephof, author of *Too Close To The Sun—A Dutch Boy Becomes A Man During WWII* (Great Spirit Publishing). Laureen, former newspaper reporter from King City, now lives in Aromas. She wrote the historical biography about her late pilot husband Wim's role in the Dutch resistance as he came of age in the war-torn 1940s. A former model-turned-adventuress, she holds a private pilot's license and has traveled extensively, often guided by fate and faith about where she will sleep. Years ago, Laureen and her three children were homeless. The beach was their bed for three weeks.

Harold E. Grice, author of *California Country Boy—Born Young—Life Is An Adventure—1933-1937* (Park Place Publications), a memoir. Already well-known in Monterey County as founder of Grice Engineering, Salinas, Harold reveals a remarkable memory in this endearing recollection from a child's point of view of farm life in California during the Depression years. Harold's remarkable memory (eidetic or photographic?) starts the book with vivid recall of his own birth. He was nicknamed "Tiger" by age 2. He lost his parents early and came of age by traveling on foot and riding the rails.

Kris Kissman, Ph.D., author/poet of *Letters To Iceland* and *Postcards To Iceland* (Great Spirit Publishing), memoir combo. Letters and poems to family members in Iceland from a girl whose mother ran a pool hall in Iceland's north fjords, where she raised eight daughters and one son. They fled to the south when the herring was depleted. Kris came to the U.S., worked as a hotel maid, and earned a doctorate from University of Texas. A retired social work professor widely published in peer journals and books, she lives in Monterey. Kris was houseless in Iceland and hungry while pregnant in the U.S.

Wanda Sue Parrott, author of *Cutting Through Bureaucratic Red Tape--THE BOONDOGLER'S BIBLE—How To Fight Like City Hall To Win!!* (Great Spirit Publishing). This book exposes how Wanda won her one-woman stand known as *Parrott vs. Springfield* in Missouri. From 2000 until 2009 she suffered repeated flooding from stormwater and raw sewage until she cut through bureaucratic red tape by following a lawyer's advice: *Boondoggle the boondogglers*. The tips in this book tell readers how to boondoggle to win. Wanda received \$91,000 just as she faced bankruptcy, sickness, and homelessness..

A *Books for Beds* author participates by donating a copy of one or more books for a silent fundraising auction, performing a reading from his or her book, or acting as vendor by selling books and donating part of the proceeds to the fundraiser's sponsor. Each author/speaker must agree to three terms: (1) open a presentation by saying a few words about his or her personal experience with homelessness; (2) agree to participate in a Q & A after the reading; (3) donate a portion of the proceeds from sales of the book to the sponsoring charitable organization. The event's sponsor must agree to let the authors offer their books for sale. All qualified local authors and poets are welcome to join.

Contact *Books for Beds* by leaving a message with The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887.