

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

September 22, 2017

Column #154

Part 3 - Homeless Hotspots



"Planet in Peril"

A homeless hotspot is any place unsheltered people hang in or hang out in order to hang on.

"Planet in Peril" is a photo-poster featuring human sludge in a manhole that overflowed.

Photo by Albert L. Baker

HUMAN NIGHT SOIL, SLUDGE OR SEWAGE, IT'S TOXIC WASTE BY ANY NAME

By Wanda Sue Parrott

HANGING out around dumping grounds for offal can be awful.

If truth be told, deadly effects of exposure to waste don't appear immediately.

So, if you're homeless and must "do your duty" (as my Ozark-born father called the act of elimination), try to do it right. Use proper toilet facilities.

If such facilities aren't available, at least imitate nature's wonderful felines and cover up your evidence of excrement.

And wash your hands! If you cannot wash, carry sanitized wipes in your backpack.

On the other hand, if you aren't homeless and you come across human excrement on a footpath, in bushes or along any road where campers dump their "night soil" (another Midwest term meaning "poop in a pot") don't walk away. Run!

When using any public toilets, especially outhouses like "port-a-potties," get in and out as fast as possible.

Avoid Killer Toxic Fumes

Gases that spawn bacteria and spew viruses can creep up on you and into you through your breath, causing everything from instant skin rashes to long-term tumors like those that nearly blinded me by invading my brain and causing loss of part of my left cheekbone.

Growths in my sinus cavities resulted from constant exposure to toxic mold in Missouri while I lived as a parental caregiver on family property from 1988 through 2009.

I served as chairperson of the neighborhood watch group “Springfieldians Against Stormwater-Sewage” (SASS) in an attempt to get the city to solve the annual-flooding problem before it killed me and sent the neighborhood down the drain.

Albert L. Baker, photographer who prettied up this photo of raw sewage sludge in an open manhole, was also a member of SASS. He died of cancer three years ago. Whether exposure to mold was a responsible factor is unknown, but in 2005 the 94-unit high-rise AI managed for the Housing Authority of Springfield was flooded by raw sewage in this “Planet in Peril” artwork that illustrates our haiku scroll “Floodville, USA.”

To see the full-text scroll, which appears in the Weeping Waters section of our website, please click this link; if that won’t work, copy and paste it in your browser:

<http://www.amykitchenerfdn.org/news/ww003.html>

When the page comes up, click on “Weeping Waters prologue.”

Not only is the kind of deadly exposure to which we were subjected possible here in Monterey, wherever the homeless camp, it is a huge problem around the world.

As of Monday, Sept. 18, damages from Hurricanes Harvey and Irma had reached an estimated \$200 billion and displaced hundreds of thousands of people from the Virgin Islands all the way to Florida and Texas. More storms are coming.

Sludge Remains When Water Goes

My nutshell definition of sludge is:

It’s all the fiber, grains, and other solid stuff left when the water’s squeezed out.

It is a breeding ground for minuscule forms of life, including mildew, mold, fungi, viruses, bacteria and mites, the feces of which I was so allergic to that a benign papilloma virus the size of 2-1/2 golf balls developed in my left sinus cavity.

Years before NAFTA, I was told human sludge was used in Mexico for fertilizing crops, which was why my family never ate Mexican produce.

More recently, animal-based sludge was a controversial news item in Missouri, where the question was: to use or not use sludge as fertilizer? Sludge won.

The late Bill West, Department of Public Works employee in Springfield, told me that sewage gas is “so toxic that sewer maintenance employees must work in teams. Exposure to toxic sewer gas can cause unconsciousness, confusion, memory loss and temporary amnesia.”

Odors from sewer-gas build-up can escape through openings in manhole covers.

Bill spoke from experience. He ran the truck that pumped sewage backups from manholes like the one in this photo. His advice was: “If you stand over a manhole, cover your nose with a tissue.”

Excerpts from the haiku scroll “Floodville, USA.” provide insight into what might lie ahead for the thousands of displaced victims of the current tropical storms that threaten to render their homes uninhabitable:

*fecal coliform:
bacteria from sewage
thrives in colonies. . .
houses start to smell
floorboards weaken, crack and bend
settling's taking place. . .
on hot humid nights
grounds muddied by raw sewage
smell like steam-cooked shit. . .*

Last, to homeless persons living in underground sewers, "Do so at your own risk."

Want to donate to last week's telethon? Call Hand-in-Hand Hurricane Relief Fund at 1-800-258-6000 or make your check to: Hurricane Relief Donor Assistance and mail to: Comic Relief Special Events, P. O. Box 419892, Boston, MA 02241-9892.

###

Photo provided by author, taken by Albert L. Baker; used for educational/illustrative purposes only;
no copyright infringement intended.

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com or leave a message with
The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887.