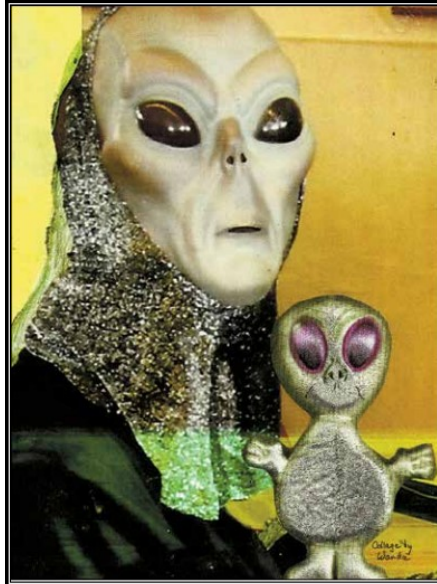


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

October 27, 2017

Column #159

Homeless Hotspots—Part 8



This collage entitled "Alien Madonna and child" is an artistic metaphor depicting homeless mothers.

GLIMPSING THE SACRED SIDE OF LIFE ON LAPIS ROAD

By Wanda Sue Parrott

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

DRESSING as an alien of the ordinary extraterrestrial kind has been my Halloween ritual for years.

If it weren't for an after-lunch outing last Sunday, I might have missed the E.T. epiphany that inspired this final "Homeless Hotspots" illustration.

The stretch of county highway north of Marina is near the dump, where the slight attar of stench permeates the air and countless extraordinary terrestrials live like aliens.

Not like aliens from space.

Nor like undocumented alien immigrants.

They live like aliens in their own human homeland.

These aliens are social outcasts known as Homeless.

Divinity Among Dung Heaps?

My friend Harold E. Grice is author of the one-act play about homeless women trying to survive, "The Houseless Hussies." We'd enjoyed Chinese food in Marina and were headed back to Monterey when he turned from Highway 1 onto Lapis Road so I could count vehicles.

“When I started this series Sept. 8,” I recalled, “I counted 76 RVs, campers, trucks, and cars, with heaps of trash and human waste along the shoulder.”

Harold counted 12 vehicles on Oct. 22. He said, “There are portable toilets and dumpsters. It looks pretty clean now.”

“That’s because, on Sept.1, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors resolved to give homeless campers until Nov. 30 to stay, provided they use portable toilets and dumpsters to keep the road clean.”

I explained that while the residents were policing themselves, the county began its search for a non-profit agency to manage a safe parking project for Lapis Rd. residents like the One Starfish Safe Parking Program for homeless women. “By Dec. 1, residents could move from Lapis Rd. to their new location.”

“How’s the search going?” Harold asked.

I said, “Pastor Jim Nelson of Pass the Word Ministry, who runs the One Starfish Program, volunteered to manage the project, but they need a place to go. It appeared the county had pinpointed the perfect spot in the Monterey-Salinas Transit's parking lot at Gigling Rd. and 8th Ave. in Seaside.

“Back in 2011, that site was proposed to become MST’s new headquarters, but in 2012 the project was vetoed by a 58,000-signature referendum that nixed the Whispering Oaks Business Park development. Thus, the unused space could have provided the venue to which Lapis Rd. campers could move by Dec. 1, 2017.”

Harold asked, “What happened?”

“At its Oct. 16 meeting the MST board voted it down by 11-2. Rumor is that Supervisor Jane Parker will provide parking lot space near her office in Marina, if nothing else turns up,” I said.

Harold was lost in plot thought.

And then it dawned on me! “People started digging for the Divine. And you know what? Some of them found it. Where? Right within themselves!”

Does God Really Help Those Who Help Themselves?

In late August, the neighbors-on-wheels formed their own Lapis Road RV Homeowners Association.

You Tube videos of their meetings and other videos of Lapis Road may be accessed by doing a Google search for “Lapis Road, Marina.”

Or take a shortcut by looking at a 9-17-17 video in The Kaffee Klatch series under the title Lapis Road, Monterey County, CA. It will be followed by “Lapis Road Hell” (update) and might then include the homeowners’ meetings and an Aug. 31 Community Forum organized by Supervisor Jane Parker and hosted by Father Jon Perez of Epiphany Lutheran & Episcopal Church, 425 Carmel Ave., Marina.

For information about the County Board of Supervisors visit cob@co.monterey.ca.us.

Father Perez welcomed all participants in the room almost full of Lapis Rd. residents. “It is relatively hopeful that we can do this,” he said. “It’s going to be tough.”

Lapis Rd. residents also spoke.

“Living has become a crime, but only if you’re homeless.”

“People eat, they sleep, they poop as part of being human.”

“I wake up wondering if this is my last day to live.”

A Sheriff’s Dept. spokesman said vehicles remaining on Lapis Rd. on Dec. 1, 2017, will be served 72-hour notices and those that fail to move will be towed.

Tearful activist Karen Araujo wept, “They’re human beings!”

I recalled Steven Spielberg's 1982 blockbuster movie "E.T.—The Extraterrestrial."

E.T. is in a room with Elliott, the little boy who found him, and Elliott's sister, Gertie. It's Halloween and E.T. is disguised in a girl's dress. They look at pictures of a phone.

Suddenly, E.T. scurries to the window and points his long finger toward the sky. "E.T. home phone," he says.

Elliott says, "E.T. phone home!"

Gertie gets it, "He wants to call somebody!"

That's when I got it.

If an alien is capable of sacred homesickness, aren't we all?

Happy Halloween.

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