

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

December 8, 2017

Column #165

The New Bedou - Part I



*then a scent infused
ocean air that seemed salt fresh
with breathtaking rot*



*all along the road
and near dumpsters piled with trash
spirits waved good-bye*



*from atop sand dunes
old abandoned rifle range
looks like faceless sphinx*



*tires and furnishings
strewn about like broken bones
prove life does move on*

A FEW WEEKS BEFORE CHRISTMAS ALONG LAPIS ROAD

By Wanda Sue Parrott

*new bedou search here
for oases without palms
where their body rests*

“FOLLOWING the lapse of their temporary legal welcome along the 1-mile stretch of county road north of Marina, did the Lapis Road Homeowner’s Association vacate its parking spots by their December 1 deadline?” a reader asked.

“If yes,” I said, “at least 15 vehicles are now parked in the County of Monterey Coastal Offices that house District 4 Supervisor Jane Parker, the Department of Health and Public Guardian at 2616 1st Ave., Marina.”

Last summer, I’d counted 76 vehicles before the county cracked down, inspiring Lapis Road Homeowners Association’s formation by people living in vehicles.

Until they formed their body, they were strangers parked west of the landfill known colloquially as the “dump.”

By organizing, they transformed Lapis Road from quagmire to quasi-oasis by agreeing to vacate their parking spaces during daylight hours, keep the roadside clean of trash and human excrement, and move before Dec. 1, 2017.

The county placed dumpsters and portable toilets along the road, and the homeowners kept their word.

“They’re the New Bedou,” my inner muse said.

“Who?” I asked, fully aware that the 19th-century term for plural Bedouin was Bedou, but today it is Bedouins who travel by camel far from California.

Muse replied, “New Bedou search here for oases without palms/where their body rests.”

“You’re describing migrant Americans!”

“Right,” Muse said. “The first New Bedou moved on . There are others. Check them out.”

And so, I did.

Looking For The New Bedou

At 6:40 a.m., Tues., Dec. 5, I exited Highway 1 at Lightfighter Dr. and wound up in the VA parking lot.

Lost, I then found old Fort Ord's blocks of mustard-yellow barracks and followed signs to the parking lot where the campers could park from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

When I arrived at 7:15 a.m., only four cars and two vans with CA Exempt license plates were in the lot. A fenced enclosure housed another 11 unoccupied vehicles.

Four cars were on the street near broken fencing that led to an open barrack door with a scarlet three-pointed crown above the word CHONES.

Retreating through cedars, Spanish moss and cattails, I crossed Highway 1 and spotted an abandoned rifle pit yawning in the rising sun. Beyond, in Dunes Park, two trucks and one car were parked. Then, my eyes and nose led me back to Lapis Road.

A Few Weeks Before Christmas

And, what to my wondering eyes did appear
but an old couch and chair
showing folks moved from there.
One dumpster was filled with assorted old tires
and the other with fodder for furniture pyres.
But the scene on the road that most captured my sight
was the twenty-one cars that had camped there all night,
and black trash bags revealed these New Bedous' unload
of their garbage and junk by the side of the road.
Before I could act, I started to wheeze
so I left Lapis Road and its rank toxic breeze.

How are the first wave of New Bedou campers faring? I don't know. Stay tuned!

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