

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

December 22, 2017

Column #167

The New Bedou - Part 2



*van parks on the street
moves around night after night
sleeping box on wheels*

AT LEAST 20 MORE VEHICLES AND ONE LONE MAN!

By Wanda Sue Parrott

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

SETTING off like Santa driving Dasher, I headed north on Highway 1 at 5:45 a.m. on Tues., Dec. 19.

“If I don’t get lost in the dark,” I told my Honda, “I’ll reach Supervisor Jane Parker’s office at 2616 1st Ave., Marina long before 7 a.m. to see whether the Lapis Road Safe Parking Program went into effect.”

Well, guess what? The darkness wrapped around my vision like reindeer antlers that served as blinders, and the 7-mile trip from my house to Marina left me circling without a site in sight.

Since I couldn’t find the route that’s much easier to spot by daylight, I simply stayed on Del Monte Avenue and traveled north, reasoning I could get off on the southern Lapis Road intersection, travel one mile and reconnect with Del Monte Avenue at the northern end.

In other words, do a sweep of Lapis Road before trying to circle back and hunt for Jane Parker’s now-famous parking lot where 15 vehicles should legally be able to spend the night before vacating the lot by 7 a.m.

So, What Happened?

Gradually, along the left side of the road, hulking shadowy figures materialized like giant camels on resting knees along the sandy flat roadway oasis. There wasn’t a light in a window. Not a creature was stirring.

I recognized a black truck to which a gleaming little house trailer was hitched by the side of the road. It was formerly parked near the cemetery in Pacific Grove until someone complained and the owner-occupants were given their move-on orders.

The woman who owned the trailer had just called a day earlier, saying, "I'm a lifelong resident of the Monterey Peninsula. I am a teacher."

Due to personal conditions, she and her husband were living in their little trailer. "I have it fixed up real cute," she said. "I said I would never go to Lapis Road, but. . . there is no other place. What do we do?"

I suggested contacting Jane Parker and Orphan Productions in order to register for the Lapis Road Safe Parking Program. I said, "There were rumors that possibly more than 15 vehicles will be allowed parking privileges in Jane's lot."

As I passed the ¾-mile mark, I had counted 20 vehicles of various makes and sizes on the left shoulder of Lapis Road near portable toilets and dumpsters.

And then suddenly, a vision, like a pre-dawn mirage, arose on the right. Tall, dark imposing rectangular shapes rose like a city skyline against the eastern sky, and I shouted, "On Dancer! Eureka! I think we found the answer!"

Lined up like a neighborhood on wheels were at least 20 more vehicles and one lone man walking across the parking lot as if to say, "We aren't there yet, but keep the faith because we're getting closer."

I waved and headed home just as pink streaks illuminated the sky over seemingly bleak terrain.

Fifteen Is A Start

Fifteen barely scratches the surface of the number of vehicles that need safe parking here on the Monterey Peninsula, but it's a start that might never have happened without the dignified determination and dogged dedication of District 4 Supervisor Jane Parker and her able aide, Wendy Root Askew, who, like the Energizer Bunny, keep going when most batteries would run down!

I am particularly grateful to journalist Jim Johnson of the Monterey County Herald, whose excellent coverage of this important piece of history filled in gaps I missed. Contact him at jjohnson@montereyherald.com.

Here is an excellent You Tube video recorded Dec. 4 and posted Dec. 6 that features, among other speakers, Marina Mayor Bruce Delgado discussing the peninsula-wide problem of safe parking for those who live in vehicles. The community meeting in the Marina City Council chambers features two panels that discuss the Lapis Road Safe Parking Program.

Mayor Delgado argues that not only should various cities on the peninsula host such a rotational safe parking program one year at a time, but every city should have its own safe parking program.

If you are at risk of ever having to live in your vehicle, or the threat of others living in their cars in your literal backyard is bothering you, please watch this You Tube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGrKNPsHE6Q>

And stay tuned to signs of vehicles that indicate New Bedou migrants are everywhere, not only in remote places like Lapis Road.

They could be parking on the street where you live, as they were spotted in an old U-Haul van from Arizona near me in Seaside. Such used vans are for sale.

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