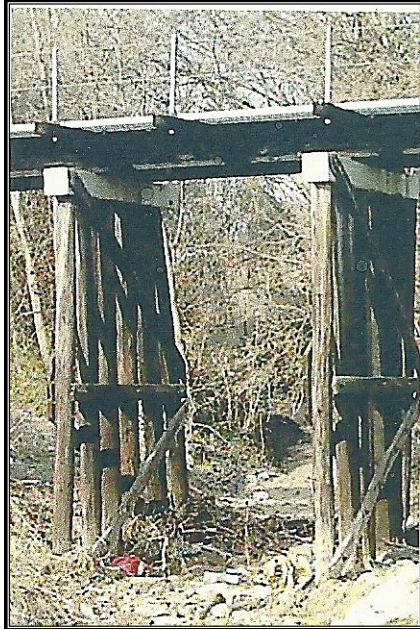


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

January 12, 2018

Column #170

The New Bedou - Part 5



(photo by Al Baker)

*trash under trestle
sign that New Bedou slept here
wandered off alone*

WHERE HAVE ALL THE NOMADS GONE?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

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

ZIPING over to Lapis Road to celebrate the first Sunday of the New Year, I thought, “If I’m right, no one will be parked in District 4 Supervisor Jane Parker’s lot at 2616 First Ave., Marina, since Monterey County’s new Safe Parking Program doesn’t allow project participants to start their 12-hour overnight stays until 7 p.m.”

A road sign on Highway 1 waved: “\$1000 Fine for Littering.”

“I predict finding 33 trucks, trailers, campers, RVs, cars and bikes parked along Lapis Road.”

“Oh, yeah?” A sign on the right side of the highway winked. “Litter Removal Next 2 Miles—Pick Up Artists.”

“Who are the Pick-Up Artists?” I wondered and scribbled on a scrap of paper “Google them.”

At 3 p.m. I reached New Bedou territory, meaning the oasis north of Marina where migrating dwellers in vehicles parked and often slept illegally for days.

Last Week's Trash And Then Some

The Monterey County Coastal Offices lot was empty of all vehicles except those with California Exempt licenses. A sole car was parked along the 1-mile stretch of Lapis Road.

The only evidence humans had ever camped on Lapis Road was lots of uncollected trash, plus new litter strewn most-prominently around the ocean side.

Near the Cemex plant entry were two full-sized mattresses, three couches, dozens of tires, and several soggy, matted rugs.

Elsewhere were more wet mattresses, cardboard beer-bottle containers, a swivel chair and one brown mini-Christmas tree with soggy strands of limp silver tinsel.

The dumpsters and portable toilets the county had provided through December 31 were gone, probably to Jane Parker's parking lot where participants in the new Safe Parking Program administered by Orphan Productions can now use them legally between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. daily.

The county's pilot Safe Parking Program has officially now been in operation for two weeks, but on Friday, Monterey County's Glorietta Rowland had e-mailed to suggest I publicize how homeless people living in vehicles can apply for the new project's 15 parking spaces."

"So, things may be going slower than hoped," I mused. "But pick-up artists are sorely needed here on Lapis Road! And where are the New Bedou, American nomads living in vehicles?"

I decided to explore the area.

At 3:15 p.m. I shouted, "Eureka! They're found!"



(photo by Wanda Sue Parrott)

*people's broken dreams
lie abandoned like old trash
homeless souls move on*

A Newcomer Finds Nomadic Oasis On Nashua Road

My exploration took me north on Highway 1 and off at Nashua Road, about three miles south of Castroville.

Nashua Road goes through bucolic artichoke fields glistening like a luminous shimmering silver shallow sea.

Until last Sunday, I'd never driven on Nashua Rd.

Wow! Did I discover New Bedou Paradise when, about a mile east of Highway 1, I turned right on Del Monte Road. and followed a 1.6 mile stretch to the Dole Cooler packing plant at 315 Neponset Road?

The inland side of Del Monte Road parallels railroad tracks that cross a creek branch of the Salinas River, over which a trestle bridge stands like a rusting memorial to a romantic train-lover's dreams.

And the west side of Del Monte Rd. dips into a mini-arroyo of dusty trash hidden under tumbleweed-like brush anchored to earth.

Along this pastoral route that cuts through agricultural fields were 21 disparate vehicles.

Clustered around the entry road to the Dole Cooler, my prediction came true. There were 33 vehicles, mostly RVs and campers.

I didn't spot a single person, dog, portable toilet or dumpster.

“Like the fabled image of paradise, this heavenly oasis looks like streets paved with gold compared to Lapis Road,” my muse concluded.

Which brought me back to reality.

How Can Homeless Campers Apply For Safe Parking?

Tia Fechter, co-administrator of Orphans Production which runs the Monterey County Safe Parking Pilot Program and the One Starfish Safe Parking Program which primarily serves homeless women who sleep in their vehicles, says:

“We are using the Marina Public Library and some spaces that Reyes Bonilla (executive director of Community Homeless Solutions) provides while we are searching for an office.”

If you’re in need of immediate help about safe parking, call Randi Bittner, Safe Parking’s social worker, at 831-204-0230. More details will be covered next week.

Meanwhile, Google provided this definition of Pick-Up Artist:

“A pick-up artist (PUA) is a man (or, very rarely, a woman) who studies to hopefully improve their success rate with women (or, rarely, a man) in ways which are most often sleazy and sexist. . . . with criticisms ranging from those who think the subculture consists of tasteless assholes to those who are skeptical of the claims made by proponents.”

Sounds more like politics than perfunctory roadside volunteerism.

Can anyone set me straight?

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amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com or leave a message with
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