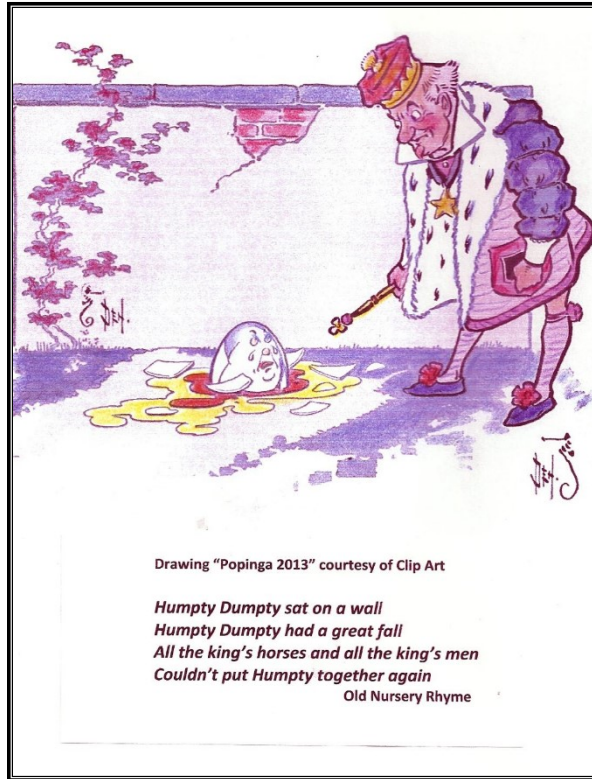


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSING – Part 1



CAN MONTEREY'S CRACKED LOW-INCOME HOUSING MARKET BE FIXED?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

REVIEWING movies isn't my reason for coverage of Monterey's cracked housing market because of almost no low-income housing; if, however, I didn't mention two films that inspired this new series, I'd be remiss. So, here goes:

First film is a nominee for Best Picture, "Darkest Hour," that I saw on Presidents Day in a theater packed with people the age of my 1952 high school classmates.

It's about British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's first weeks in office in 1940, during the German blitzkrieg that was crushing Europe.

Around 390,000 allied troops of Belgian, French, and British armies were surrounded in Dunkirk. On three sides, Germans were advancing. Trapped, with their backs to the sea and no craft to use for escape, the soldiers were on the brink of mass annihilation.

Rather than engage in peace negotiations to appease Hitler, Churchill ordered mobilization of a fleet of civilian watercraft ranged in size from dinghies to fishing boats and yachts. Britain, he said, would fight to remain independent as an island, or die.

Under a heavy cloud cover, the plan was executed and the British army was saved.

Churchill won the support of King George and Britain remained standing throughout the war.

War News In The 1940s World

I was only five when Dunkirk was news, a memorable time because my little sister had been born just three months earlier. Jan had just celebrated her 78th birthday when I went to see Darkest Hour.

I sat among elders with white, gray and varying shades of hair who were too young to be what Tom Brokaw titled “The Greatest Generation” in his best-selling book about the adults of World War Two, but who fit the title of an e-essay that my Monrovia-Arcadia-Duarte High School classmate Sally (Bassi) Richards had e-mailed from Arizona as I was being awed by Churchill’s wisdom and wit in Monterey.

It is said that there are no accidents, so surely this was not a mere coincidence.

“Children of the Greatest Generation” is a wordsmith’s wow-cracker! Parts of it follow.

Children Of The Greatest Generation (Excerpt)

Born in the 1930s and early 1940s, we exist as a very special age cohort. We are the Silent Generation.

We are the smallest number of children born since the early 1900s. We are the “last ones.”

We are the last generation, climbing out of the depression, who can remember the winds of war and the impact of a world at war which rattled the structure of our daily lives for years.

We are the last to remember ration books for everything from gas to sugar to shoes to stoves.

We saved tin foil and poured fat into tin cans.

We saw cars up on blocks because tires weren’t available.

We can remember milk being delivered to our house early in the morning and placed in the “milk box” on the porch.

We are the last to see the gold stars in the front windows of our grieving neighbors whose sons died in the War.

We saw the “boys” home from the war build their little houses.

We are the last generation who spent childhood without television. Instead, we imagined what we heard on the radio.

. . . We did play outside, and we did play on our own. There was no Little League. There was no city playground for kids.

The lack of television in our early years meant, for most of us, that we had little real understanding of what the world was like.

On Saturday afternoons, the movies gave us newsreels of the war sandwiched between westerns and cartoons.

Telephones were one to a house, often shared (party lines) and hung on the wall.

Computers were called calculators. . . Typewriters were driven by pounding fingers, throwing the carriage, and changing the ribbon.

Newspapers and magazines were written for adults, and the news was broadcast on our table radio in the evening by H.V. Kaltenborn and Gabriel Heatter.

(And, I might add, if homelessness did exist, not many of us were aware of it.)

How This Column Was Named

After seeing Darkest Hour and reading “The Children of the Greatest Generation,” I suddenly awakened with the realization that unlike the “boys” returning from World War Two who were building homes, we now have a Humpty Dumpty Housing market that’s like the fabled egg in the nursery rhyme—broken in pieces that no longer serve the needy.

Housing MUST be our top priority or the battle with homelessness could be our great country’s undoing. Churchill found a solution. Can we do the same?

Which takes us full circle.

Competing with Darkest Hour is another film nominated for the Best Picture award. “Dunkirk” tells the story of the invasion, battle and rescue devised by Winston Churchill during his darkest hours as Prime Minister. It’s on my must-see list. See you there?

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