

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

March 16, 2018

### HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSING - Part 4



#### A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR IN DOWNTOWN PACIFIC GROVE?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**LOOKING** for houseless persons for the 2015 Point-in-Time Homeless Census & Survey was rough, since unsheltered people, students and visitors wearing backpacks looked alike to me.

If it weren't for my reporter's "nose for news," I'd have missed the old man with one front tooth who was out of place in the city known as America's "Last Hometown."

He looked like a homeless panhandler outside the Pacific Grove post office last Friday afternoon, just two days after city council adopted affordable housing as an agenda item to be explored.

Instead of flying a sign, as do some men in Monterey, Seaside and Sand City, this grizzled elder was seated like a lumpy, balding Teddy Bear outside the PG post office. On his left were his sleeping bag, backpack and what appeared to be a bundle of earthly possessions.

Before him, on a folding table, was a sheaf of papers clipped together.

#### A Son Of The Children Of The Greatest Generation

He was the age of children of the Greatest Generation, my peers, described by Anonymous in the essay "The Children of the Greatest Generation" as:

"We entered a world of overflowing plenty and opportunity, a world where we were welcomed. We enjoyed a luxury: we felt secure in our future. . . We are the last generation to experience an interlude when there were no threats to our homeland."

I needed to pass him to reach the bank of newspaper racks so I could pick up a few copies of Cedar Street Times, but my nose for news twitched.

I looked down on his balding head and thought: “When he was twenty, he probably wore his hair in sleek pomaded waves or combed out as a bushy, soft Afro.” Now the tufts were like islands on a sea of freckled skin.” I asked, “What’s happening?”

His blue-gray eyes confirmed the revelation of his creamy coffee shade of skin. “He’s mixed race, not unusual today but less usual when I was a child of the last dominant generation of white privilege.”

In my youth, we wouldn’t have been having this conversation.

He shoved his sheaf of papers and a ball point pen at me. “I’m collecting signatures for the November ballot,” he said. “Are you a registered voter?”

I nodded. “I’m a newspaper columnist. I write ‘Homeless in Paradise’ for. . .”

“I used to do a column. It ran in five newspapers in New Jersey.”

I feared he might tell me he was Studs Terkel, as some old men on the streets are wont to ramble into fantasyland, so noted that a number of local signatures appeared on the lines, and asked, “What is this initiative?”

“There are three of them.” He flipped the pages.

“One is for low-income housing for elderly seniors.” I signed.

“One is for affordable health care for all seniors.” I signed.

“One is for children’s hospitals throughout the State of California.” I signed.

I started to ask for proof of his identity, but Conscience whispered, “Remember what Jesus is reputed to have said: A prophet is without honor in his own country.”

“So?”

“The man’s name doesn’t matter. He’s offering solutions to start resolving the problems none of the city councils on the Monterey Peninsula have achieved.”

“From panhandler to prophet?” I thought, knowing that according to various sources, “A prophet is a person who is believed to be divinely inspired to tell people about things that need to be done according to God’s will.”

### **Someone’s Long-Lost Curly-Headed Groom**

“Where do you sleep?” I asked.

The man didn’t blink as he gazed into my eyes. “I prefer not to divulge that information,” he said, “but I will tell you that I learned my greatest lesson in survival from a pack of coyotes I once lived with.”

I dubbed him “Someone’s Long-lost Curly-Headed Groom, inspired by 82-year-old Texas sonneteer Yvonne Nunn’s beautiful reminiscence of children of the Greatest Generation:

## **Days Gone By**

By Yvonne Nunn

How many raging rivers have I crossed  
with danger stalking footsteps near the bridge  
while waters raced beneath the mountain's ridge  
and I, I braved the beasts that plagued the lost.

These years have left upon my head a frost,  
yet wrinkles seem to leave a minute smidge  
of lines on face of eighty-year-old midge,  
although my body strength now bears the cost.

I must admit my mind's acutely strong.  
It roams the sleepless night, a lurking cad  
as mem'ry brings to life a past life room.

I oft recall a wedding's vows in song,  
an organ's sign to walk the aisle with Dad,  
a waiting man, my curly headed groom.

Input, anyone?

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Photo: "Someone's Long-lost Curly-Headed Groom"

Photo courtesy of Clip Art

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