

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

April 20-26, 2018

HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSING—Part 9



1847 Illustration of Old Mother Hubbard,
Courtesy of Clip Art

The dame made a curtsy
The dog made a bow.
The dame said, "Your Servant."
The dog said, "Bow Wow!"



Doris Beckman (Left) and Annamarie Pluhar

A MESSAGE FOR DOG LOVERS RISKING OLD MOTHER HUBBARDHOOD

By Wanda Sue Parrott

DIGGING into deeper meanings of nursery rhymes made me wonder: "If Humpty Dumpty can be a metaphor for today's broken housing market, what other Mother Goose rhymes might be relevant to homelessness today?"

Google-search struck gold when Old Mother Hubbard popped up in this 6-line stanza most of us learned as toddlers:

*Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard
To give her poor dog a bone.
But when she got there
The cupboard was bare
And so the poor dog had none.*

The Very Long Nursery Rhyme First Appeared In 1805 And Remains Unchanged

Its second and subsequent string of 4-line stanzas include this verse you might also remember from childhood:

*She went to the baker's
To buy him some bread.
When she came back
The poor dog was dead.*

When I found this 1847 illustration showing Mother Hubbard as a bent old crone in rags, while her doggie is posed like a spoiled rich lord, I got the message of the old nursery rhyme meant to be a moral guide for 19th-century English children: *Set priorities and be prepared to be responsible.*

In other words: *Serve yourself first!*

Or, to put another slant to the moral:

You Don't Have To Be Rich To Be Spoiled (If You're A Dog!)

The English hag in the old drawing could be a 21st-century Monterey Peninsula bag woman in rags whose dog sports a jeweled collar, knitted sweater and even a raincoat.

Aha! Indeed, Old Mother Hubbard is a relevant metaphor today!

So is a local fairy godmother named Doris Beckman!

Doris Beckman's Magic Golden Wand

Doris Beckman of Marina founded Golden Connections, which co-hosted a workshop with the Monterey County Area Agency on Aging at the Marina Library on March 23, to help women avoid becoming modern-day Old Mothers Hubbard, a state into which Doris nearly tumbled after her husband of 43 years died of lung cancer a few years ago.

Doris didn't nearly wind up homeless because she spoiled a pet pooch; it was due to unpreparedness in handling everything from financial matters to paperwork she was ill equipped to tackle in shock and grief.

Widowhood left Doris challenged to organize her own priorities and start taking steps to help herself.

She did it by attending meetings of the Friends of Homeless Women and Homeless Outreach meetings, and by starting Golden Connections as a small business which, for a modest fee, helped women who faced homelessness connect with women who could offer shelter.

Golden Connections grew into a service offering, for less than \$50, a personalized guided consultation and workbook program through which Doris helps women facing ultimate aloneness lay a foundation of preparedness before shock hits and, thus, avoid the Mother Hubbard syndrome of "when she got there, the cupboard was bare." It also became a community of friends.

Who's Who Of Attendees

The "Sharing Housing Option" workshop featured Annamarie Pluhar of Vermont, internationally known author who specializes in the objectives of the gathering: How home-sharing can work; benefits of home-sharing, and identification of the next steps.

Attendees read like the Who's Who of Homeless Services: Housing Resource Center, Community Health Innovations, County of Santa Cruz, and Department of Social Services and Catholic Charities.

Others were: Central Coast Center for Independent Living, Monterey County Behavioral Health, Friends of Rippling River, Tree House Mortgages, Area Agency on Aging, and the Veterans Resource Center.

Also in the audience were women who face potential homelessness.

Participants explored the 22 benefits of sharing housing, guidelines for living well with others, and a step-by-step process for selecting good home-mates.

Local issue leading the list was “Housing is unaffordable. People who are born here can’t afford to stay here.”

Next step: Create networking opportunities for seekers and providers of housing.

In an earlier interview, Doris told Cedar Street Times:

“Since 2/3 of working women in Monterey County are living at the poverty level, it doesn't take much to tip them into homelessness. A job loss, illness, car repairs, loss of spouse or divorce are some of the ways a woman can lose everything.”

For details on the question “Is there a home-mate in your future?” contact Annamarie Pluhar at <http://www.sharinghousing.com>.

For information about Golden Connections, and to contact Doris Beckman, e-mail her at goldenconnections1@gmail.com or visit www.mygoldenconnections.com/contact-us/

Meanwhile, if you’re a female dog lover facing Old Mother Hubbardhood, is there a message for you here:

*She went to the hosier’s
To buy him some hose.
When she came back
He was drest in his clothes.*

In my humble opinion, homeless dogs deserve housing, too! It would help get countless Mothers Hubbard off the streets.

A future column will focus on Doris Beckman’s words and wisdom.

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Old Mother Hubbard and Dog

Photo courtesy of Clip Art

*The dame made a curtesy
The dog made a bow.
The dame said, “Your servant.”
The dog said, “Bow Wow!”*

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