

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #22



KICK THE CAN POLITICS:

Homelessness versus diplomacy on Seaside City Council

By Wanda Sue Parrott

IF I WERE EMPOWERED to give out public service honors, Seaside City Councilman David R. Pacheco would have won 2015 Diplomat of the Year Award at last week's city council meeting.

Dave's response to an item on Seaside's March 19 agenda was so moving that I was catapulted back to age 10 during World Two, when kids played Kick the Can and dignified diplomacy was a way of life summed up by my dad as, "Mind your mouth."

"Why?" I didn't want to be a doormat.

"Loose lips can sink ships," he said.

Mother prided herself for personal protocol. She said, "When someone gives you a gift or sends an invitation, always reply within three days of receipt."

"What if I don't like the gift?"

"Thank the person anyway."

"What if I don't want to go where I'm invited?"

"Respond with either a yes or a no, but never with maybe. It isn't fair to make people wait. You don't want to be called a boondoggler."

"What's a boondoggler?"

"A time waster. A person who delays making decisions. Cities and politicians are boondogglers."

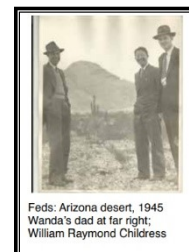
"Is Daddy one?"

"No. He's a Fed."

Dad was actually a civil service accountant with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Los Angeles. He handled financing of Top-Secret projects during World War Two, about which he remained mum until his death at 82 in 1989.

In 1945, at age 38, Daddy traveled with two men who also wore suits, ties, and hats like I later recognized on federal agent Eliot Ness (Robert Stack) on *The Untouchables* TV series.

I later deduced Dad was at the atomic testing grounds in New Mexico, since he brought me a Hopi doll, silver-and turquoise Indian bracelet, and turquoise ring; he lived his diplomatic philosophy by never discussing his secrets.





The only indication Dad wasn't as diplomatically imperturbable as he seemed was evident in his imitation of Kilroy. Sketches of the GI's long nose and eyes peering over a wall popped up all over the globe during World War Two. Accompanied by the words KILROY WAS HERE, the sketches implied American soldiers were ubiquitous, undefeatable, and infinitely intelligent.

To create his non-military version of Kilroy, Dad used a fountain pen dipped in black Quink ink to deface periodicals by drawing horn-rimmed glasses and a bushy mustache on each man and woman in print. From America's allies to radical axis leaders, or generals to priests and nuns, each face was transformed into a likeness of comedian Groucho Marx, with three exceptions: Dad never defaced the President, Uncle Sam, or Jesus.

"Shame on you, Ray," Mother would kid, cuddling on Daddy's lap as he grinned like a heroic one-man slayer of Hitler, Hirohito, and Mussolini whose pen strokes freed the world of tyranny and released his fear of being a frustrated human doormat.

I named Daddy's caricature "Quirko." Quirko faded out with Kilroy when World War Two ended in 1945, so I was taken aback when memories of them resurfaced on March 19, 2015, triggered by an incident evoking diplomacy at the March 19, 2015, meeting of Seaside City Council.

When new Seaside City Councilman Jason Campbell moved the city contribute \$16,500 to Pacific Grove's matching challenge fund, an issue that had dragged on for nine months and was expected to be resolved that night, Mayor Ralph Rubio countered Campbell's action by stating no motion or vote could take place because the issue was listed in the agenda as a business item, not a consent calendar item.

Councilman Dave Pacheco, who served as council's homeless liaison for more than a year, reacted with such heartfelt passion his voice shook. "We've been kicking the can down this road for the last 18 months..."

He said he hoped the issue could be settled "sooner than later." (PG's council member Rudy Fischer first invited Seaside to participate in the challenge grant on June 19, 2014, and, after numerous deferrals, a response to the invitation was expected to be made at the March 19 meeting).

After lengthy discussion, the issue was again tabled, this time for 90 days pending receipt of results of the 2015 Homeless Census from the Coalition for Homeless Service Providers. Deferral until June enables Seaside City Council to further study how best to allocate funds to be used toward its burgeoning problem of homelessness.

By the time June arrives, a year will have passed without Seaside answering yes or no to PG's invitation. For that reason, I nominate Seaside as recipient of the hypothetical 2015 Boondoggler of the Year Award.

I also nominate Seaside City Councilman Jason Campbell as recipient of the hypothetical 2015 Kilroy of the Year Award because he will heroically keep appearing until the war of words and wills ends when Seaside finally votes "yay" or "nay" to PG's long-overdue invitation.

Dave Pacheco gets the hypothetical 2015 Diplomat of the Year Award because, when Mayor Rubio commented about the two council members who were upset, Dave replied in a perfectly calm voice, "I'm not upset. I'm a little disappointed. I look forward to the 90 days. . ."



As to the 2015 Quirko Award? I gave that one to myself.

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