

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

January 11-17, 2019

### PENINSULA PULCHRITUDE - Part 2



#### AN OPEN LETTER TO SUNNY FAWCETT

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**SEARCHING** for Sunny Fawcett last weekend ended with an F for Failure!

If rain hadn't been howling like a whipped child, my creep through streets around the Naval Postgraduate School might have had a happier ending.

Goal was to find a gray-doored van with piles of stuff announcing "Homeless Onboard."

If I couldn't find Sunny, would the woman I call Elisa be right? Could Sunny lose the use of her leg. Or her life?

Elisa's message indicated Sunny was struck in a crosswalk, was bent over on a walker, and letting her badly injured leg heal naturally while living in her van.

I returned Elisa's call.

"I heard she's parking near the Naval Postgraduate School near you," Elisa said. "Can you find her?"

"If I succeed, what should I say?"

"Ask her to do the right thing," Elisa said. "Get proper medical care. The responsible party's insurance should cover Sunny's care and housing for life. If she doesn't get help, well. . ."

Well, I failed.

#### Whatever Happened To Sunny Fawcett?

The former celebrity of the local homeless women's first wave faded out in 2017. People often ask if I know where Sunny is. I say, "I haven't a clue. Do you?"

“I heard she was selling clothes she got free at Gathering for Women,” one woman said, “so I think she moved to Salinas.”

Another said, “She’s a Gypsy. You know, a con artist.”

“How so?” I asked.

“A professional homeless woman who pretends she wants to be housed.”

“That’s hearsay,” I said. “The only thing I know for sure is that Sunny always wears a flower in her long hair, she has a flair for fashion and once dressed like Old Glory, and I liked her the minute I met her at the first fundraising breakfast to benefit the newly formed Friends of Homeless Women at the Elks Lodge in Monterey in November 2013.”

“Well, everyone likes her. That’s part of Sunny’s charm.”

I knew one undeniable true fact: Sunny dyed her hair auburn in public restrooms.

I also knew that once Sunny started talking about social injustice or good nutrition, she resembled a preacher litigating a pro bono moral case in court.

### **Two Red-Haired Stars**

Sunny’s prominence began to emerge after local businessman Timothy Barrett sponsored a symposium entitled “Hungry and Homeless in Paradise” at Monterey Peninsula College on May 18, 2013.

Approximately one month after the event, 62-year-old Sunny Fawcett made news when Monterey police officer John Olney pulled her van over late at night on deserted Garden Road.

The video camera on the officer’s police car recorded the 25+-minute stop in which the officer said Sunny had been driving as slow as 20 miles per hour, legally “impeding the flow of traffic” (although there was no traffic), an infraction of Vehicle Code 22400.

Sunny argued throughout the video.

Officer Olney eventually called for backup and the rest became City of Monterey history.

Sunny was released that night, but later booked on misdemeanor charges, which made her a star of the first wave of local homeless-women’s history, equaled only by Kelli J. Keane, a redhead around 20 years Sunny’s senior, who dazzled city councils with her appearances as the Advocate for Senior Women without Adequate Shelter; she, too, lived in a gray van until the One Starfish Safe Parking Program helped her find housing.

### **Winner Of The Officer Olney Oscar Award**

Whether the van Sunny is now reputed to live in was the same car stopped by Officer Olney is unknown.

The You Tube evidence of Sunny Fawcett’s perspicacity deserves a hypothetical “Officer Olney Oscar” award. <https://youtu.be/rtKI3R4GIZE?t=629>

If you happen to know Sunny Fawcett and you run into her, please convey the message I was unable to give her on behalf of Elisa and friends:

“Sunny, you are now 68 or 69. People care about you. Do the smart thing. Get medical help, move into housing the responsible party’s insurance will provide, and pretend to be homeless. If you truly are what they say you are, you can pull it off.”

Next week, CeliaSue Hecht, a prominent member of the second wave of homeless women on the Monterey Peninsula will reveal what it’s like to be 69 and living in a van.

## **Mark Your Calendar!**

Friends of Homeless Women, outreach arm of the Fund for Homeless Women, will meet Wed., Jan. 16, 10 a.m., at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 146 12<sup>th</sup> St., Pacific Grove. The agenda will feature the Tiny House initiative in our community with Community Homeless Solutions' executive director, Reyes Bonilla, and board of directors' vice-president Eric Johnsen, presenting an overview of transitional and permanent housing initiatives. Contact <http://fundforhomelesswomen.org>.

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CREDIT: Artwork--Interpretive sketch of Sunny Fawcett with bangs by Wanda Sue Parrott.

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