

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

January 25-31, 2019

PENINSULA PULCHRITUDE - Part 4



WAS SUICIDE-BENT SENIOR SAVED BY HER DOTING DOG?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

LOSING 69-year-old homeless writer/editor CeliaSue Hecht seemed inevitable. If her aging dog Cici hadn't intervened last Friday, CeliaSue might be gone today.

What happened besides possibly getting evicted "from everywhere for being old and poor," as she once said? Cici intervened simply by being there when CeliaSue sent the suicide-flavored email, meaning I could almost taste what she was trying to say:

This is it

I've hit the pit

I quit!

Almost Over The Edge

The email arrived on January 17 after CeliaSue spent another agonizing sleepless night in her freezing-cold van during torrential rain on a lonely road south of Monterey County.

CeliaSue has been homeless more than four years, and her meager Social Security covers rental of a motel for only about one week each month, leaving her to literally beg, borrow, and fundraise the other three weeks.

During the three years I've known CeliaSue, her belief is: elected officials don't do anything or even seem to really care, and the non-profit agencies that purport to be helping homeless women might give out gas vouchers, meals, and clothing, but they don't provide what's needed most: housing, including shelter for their dogs.

As a freelance writer/editor, CeliaSue works frequently in a fast-food place or coffee shop, as opposed to the crowded discomfort of her overstuffed van. She calls the Monterey Peninsula home, but her circuit has taken her to Mesquite, near Las Vegas, where a room in a casino is around \$30, and south to Paso Robles, where rent is cheaper, and the sun is warmer than in Monterey.

CeliaSue's email opened with, “. . . *am going to come back to Monterey. . . and deposit Cici somewhere. . . and find a way to do away with myself. . . can't function like this. I am done. I have had it.*”

The catch words “deposit Cici” moved me to respond, “Have you asked Cici how she feels about what you're planning to do?”

The answer is excerpted here.

My Mama And I Need A Home
By Cici Hecht, A Dog

We've been together for twelve years. She rescued me from a bad situation when I was just six months old.

She is not a spring chicken and has limited funds, but she feeds me, walks me and gives me treats.

My mama is a senior, like me, and she needs some urgent medical care. . . and I need a foster home or dog boarding while she gets back on her two feet again. Me, I've got four paws.

I can't get comfortable in the car. . . I do paw and nose things around and then can't find a comfy place to lie down in.

Right now, we need doggie food, medicine for mama and me, and a gently used camper home, cottage, granny unit.

Mama is a published writer, newspaper and newsletter editor and does PR, too. She is media and computer savvy and . . . We wrote the dog travel blog [Have Dog Blog Will Travel](#) for ten years. Here are Mama's clips. Thank you.

<https://celiasuewriter.wordpress.com/2018/12/06/celiasues-writing-credentials/>

<https://apetreporter.wordpress.com/2018/08/15/selected-clips-of-cs-hecht/>

I asked Cici to “tell Mama her last paragraph reads like poetry” that reminded me of an entry I received during my 21 years as contest administrator of the National Annual Senior Poet Laureate Poetry Competition.

Poet Gale Denham of Sunriver, a suburb of Bend, won the 2012 Oregon Senior Poet Laureate Award with “Helen,” reprinted here with Gale's permission:

HELEN

By Gail Denham

Sometimes she drew a crowd, did Helen. It was the clothes--bright crazy-colored skirts, wild tops, floppy hats, striped long stockings. Every Tuesday Helen was first into the 23rd Street Thrift, moving other patrons away like a reverse magnet as she dug in the bins. One-dollar-a-bag yielded her acres of wild stock. Outside, Jen pulled her basket even with Helen's. "Whatcha' find today?" the three-layered woman asked. "This scarf suits you, don't you think?" Helen draped the woman's faded dirty hair with the filmy paisley. Nearby, Arthur couldn't speak, but his eyes grew round with appreciation over the Hawaiian shirt in outrageous oranges. Shuffling close, Trevor grinned his thanks. as Helen handed him a decorated tin for his cigarette butts. Helen had been a teacher, high school art. Programs were cut—band, football, drama, art. Six months her savings carried her. Then condo and car were repossessed. Casual friends peeled off like too-ripe peach skins. Her world was wide as the city, narrow as the small shed she shared with Elsie and Emmy, twins who'd once sung and danced on stage. No one called the shots for Helen now. Trading supplied immediate needs. Now and then temporary jobs dumped coins into her rusty baking powder can. Amazing how generous churches were, serving her soup with Proverbs. Once a week showers at shelters prompted her to send one more job application—no one ever replied. For now, it was enough. She'd need a dentist one day—and far in the future she envisioned a pile of bright rags in the corner of their shed—a bundle that no longer moved.

(Reprinted from "2012 Golden Words" by permission of 2012 Oregon Senior Poet Laureate Gail Denham of Sunriver, Ore. Contact her at booksgal2@gmail.com .)

I wondered:

Will CeliaSue Wind Up Like Helen?

CeliaSue's return email addressed my comment. Her poem dated January 17 is on her blog at:

<https://celiasuewriter.wordpress.com/2019/01/17/some-day-home/>

Some Day Home...

By CeliaSue Hecht

i don't really care
am not holding my breath
about what they're going to do
some day. . .some day is
homeless women's time
between sunday and monday
where we're trapped on ice
what they're going to do
about homelessness someday
doesn't help us now
I have been this way
for more than four long years now
will i freeze to death and die
without dignity in my car
before they do something

There's a ripple going around that Gathering for Women intends to address housing for homeless women with dogs, women like CeliaSue.

On January 22, I checked CeliaSue's blog to see if she'd written about the rumor. I found this new post: *Good-bye*.

Four hours later it was gone.

###

CREDITS: CeliaSue Hecht's 12-year-old pet Cici wears her new winter plaid coat, a gift from veterinarian, Doctor Dani, whose high-tech Pebble Beach-based Pawsitive Mobile Pet Clinic on wheels makes home and homeless calls. (Photo of Cici courtesy of CeliaSue Hecht).

Photo: Gail Denham, 2010 Oregon Senior Poet Laureate, won her title with a free verse about a formerly professional homeless woman she called Helen.

This column appears weekly in the Cedar Street Times, Pacific Grove, California's Hometown NEWSpaper at

www.cedarstreettimes.com .

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott, 831-899-5887, amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com

Copyright 2019 by Wanda Sue Parrott