

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

May 1-7, 2020

### IN OUR OWN BACKYARD—Part 29



“Wear a Mask or go to Jail!” publicity photo from Spanish Flu epidemic of 1917-1920.  
(Courtesy of Dennis Hickman; photographer and source unknown.)

### WHERE HAVE ALL THE HOMELESS PEOPLE GONE?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**YELLING**, “Audie’s sick, and I think she’s dying!” my grandfather stumbled into the house with his eldest child draped in his arms. If one outstanding scene dominated Mother’s memory until her death at 87, that was it.

She was eight when the Spanish Flu killed Audie as Mother watched helplessly.

As her own life ebbed in 1997, Mother said, “No funeral for me. I’ll find out if heaven exists after it’s over and I get where I’m going.”

Truth was, she was haunted by what made it possible for the Flu pandemic to invade her remote farming town. Westboro, Missouri, had only 200 people county-wide. Mother became a lifelong agnostic, filled with questions about how such things can happen rather than believing in a God who either punished or rewarded people personally.

Sound familiar? People wore facial coverings and were under orders to socially isolate, just as we are doing now, but they did not have the crisis that dominated our national scene before Coronavirus stole the

spotlight. Our top national scourge until three months ago was the housing crisis, a great slice of which pie involved homeless people - and still does.

After Covid-19 drove people into social isolation and staying at home, our streets, institutions, and even churches emptied, raising the question:

### **Is History Repeating Itself?**

According to details emailed by Dennis Hickman (with a photo of seven people in masks), the protocols for survival during the Spanish Flu epidemic included this Public Notice dated October 19, 1918, by D. W. Sutherland, Mayor, Corporation of the City of Kelowna, B.C.:

*“Notice is hereby given that, in order to prevent the spread of Spanish Influenza, all Schools, public and private Churches, Theatres, Moving Picture Halls, Pool Rooms, and Lodge meetings are to be closed until further notice. All public gatherings consisting of ten or more are prohibited.”*

### **So, Where Have All Our Homeless Gone?**

Governor Gavin Newsom recently announced that 100 trailers are heading to the Monterey County Fairgrounds as shelter-in-place sites for the homeless, but they haven't yet arrived.

Is that because they were upstaged by the announcement last week that Monterey County Fairgrounds and Marina Airport have been designated Covid-19 Alternate Care Sites? Homeless people who test positive will be isolated in exhibit halls divided into private areas like hospital wards, each with a cot, a table, and a chair.

I visited the Fairgrounds on Tuesday and learned, by speaking through the fence to the security guard, that renovations are ongoing, but no patients have yet arrived. Perhaps they never will.

### **From Porta-Pots To Parking**

A swing by Roberts Lake at 2:30 AM, Tuesday, revealed where Seaside's porta-pots and hand-washing stations are. I counted 18 overnight campers, 11+ cars parked and a rusty NO PARKING sign stating the park is closed from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Meanwhile, a homeless 74-year-old unemployed licensed security guard I'll call Rosey Maduro is volunteering her services at a local Monterey church. Four clients of One Starfish Safe Parking Program live full-time in their vehicles on the premises during the Coronavirus crisis. She is one of them.

Recently 15 unauthorized vehicles arrived without permission, ignoring the sawhorses, and entering the parking lot. According to Rosey, "I said to them politely, 'Pardon me, but this is private property, and you cannot be here.' They said they were meeting there for a birthday party and would do as they pleased. They were not wearing masks or taking precautions to distance themselves."

When Rosey reminded them they weren't following the law, they told her what she could do to herself and gave her the finger, so she called the police. "Last I saw, they were headed toward the Fairgrounds and the One Starfish girls are safe and well."

So, are the Homeless Emergency Lodging Programs for both men and women? Instead of traveling from one church to another for nightly lodging and a hot meal, around 15 guests of I-HELP for Women are residing full-time in one venue in Carmel and various congregations fix and deliver meals each night. The same is true of the 18-20 I-HELP Men who are staying in Monterey.

## **Meanwhile In Marina**

CeliaSue Hecht, formerly homeless writer now housed in Marina, says she “went to a drive-thru food bank in Seaside that started at the Auto Center (auto dealers) and went past Broadway.” She had seen a full-page ad in the Monterey County Weekly that said all seniors were welcome to the free bags of food.

“The line of cars was huge, three- to four-blocks long. So many hungry seniors were waiting,” CeliaSue says. “Thankfully, a cancer nonprofit sent me a gift card, so I was able to get food at Target instead of waiting on that humongous line. Sad, really sad, so many hungry people...”

<https://celiasuewords.wordpress.com/home/> ; <https://celiasuewriter.wordpress.com/vip/>

Food banks for the homeless began on April 28, and will be covered in future columns.

Another drive-thru free food event will be from 9:00 - 10:30 AM on Saturday, May 2, at Seaside City Hall, 440 Harcourt Avenue, Seaside. It is jointly presented by the Food Bank of Monterey County and City of Seaside.

Vanja Thompson, a writer from Marina who is researching homelessness, reports, “A couple weeks ago, I went to Lucky late at night to avoid any crowds. I saw a guy ride his bike and jump off of it, letting it careen into a parked car as he ran over to the water machine and checked for loose change. Then he came back to the bike and rode away.”

We’ll hear more from roving reporter Vanja in the future!

## **Stay Out Of Jail!**

Meanwhile, Dennis Hickman included this reminder with his email:

- 1720, Plague;
- 1820, Cholera Epidemic;
- 1920, Spanish Flu;
- 2020, Coronavirus.

It seems that history repeats itself every one-hundred years.

If you don’t favor the idea of going to jail, remember that, starting April 30, and continuing until further notice, the Monterey County Health Department requires everyone throughout the county to wear facial covering in public until further notice.

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This column appears weekly in the Cedar Street Times at [www.cedarstreettimes.com](http://www.cedarstreettimes.com).

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