

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

May 29-June 4, 2020

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD - Part 31

Seaside Mayor Ian Oglesby suggests
Opening Robert's Lake just one day a week
to house the homeless,
so other peninsula cities
can also house them in their parks.

Photo courtesy City of Seaside



HOW DO HOMELESS RV DWELLERS DUMP THEIR WASTE TANKS WHEN THEY'RE FULL?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

COUNTING public toilets and hand-washing stations that serve the homeless was Vanja Thompson's idea. If I thought my part of the task would be easy, I was wrong!

She took public places and did a fabulous job of listing the inadequate facilities on the Monterey Peninsula, while I ended up looking for, and failing to find, similar private sanitary amenities.

So, I put myself in the place of anyone needing, but not finding, a bathroom, and got a feeling of what it must be like to be homeless. It sucks.

It would be bad enough to have an accident, but even worse if you were unable to clean yourself up after the accident.

This poem is dedicated to Seaside, whose May 21 virtual meeting inspired it.

MONTEREY'S BIG FLUSH
*Have you ever been out walking
when Nature called to you
and you had to use the bathroom
for numbers 1 or 2,
but you couldn't find a toilet
in time to take a seat
so Nature flushed your insides
down your legs onto your feet?*

*If you've never yet gone through this,
There's a chance someday you will,
and most folks who have survived it
all confess it haunts them still.*

*It's especially destructive
for those forced to live outside,
since the stench of being homeless
is a scent no one can hide.*

*Let's end feces on our footpaths
and urine's raw rank smell
before the scourge of homelessness
rings Monterey's death knell.
Porta-potties on street corners
won't impact our tourist trade
half as much as human waste will
when it's California made.*

*From PG north to Marina
boondoggling's going round--
shifting, shuffling and delaying--
homeless cures aren't being found.
What's the answer? Look at Seaside,
whose approach will soon make news
as their option for success is:
Spread some shit on all our shoes.*

###

At last Thursday's Seaside City Council meeting, Mayor Ian Oglesby said he was being flexible about letting homeless people stay in their RVs and motorhomes at Robert's Lake during the Shelter-in-Place order because such vehicles are equipped with self-contained waste disposal amenities.

OK, I thought, but what happens if the indoor septic tank needs to be emptied?

I learned from the internet that dump stations are available throughout California. Travelers often dispose of their waste at dump stations that are free, or range from \$15 to \$75, at RV parks up north, along the Mexican border, or even in Death Valley, El Cajon, and Bakersfield.

Not a single dump station was remotely near Monterey unless you count Redding as just up the road a piece.

I learned that a holding tank can range from 5 to 11 gallons, and that an RV toilet empties into a holding tank located on the underside of the vehicle. Under ideal circumstances, most RVs have three holding tanks. One is for fresh water, another for "gray" water, and the third for "black" water.

Black water, human waste, results from flushing the toilet.

I interpreted Mayor Oglesby's statement to mean he believes the public is safe from pollution by RV and motorhome dwellers. Sorry, Mister Mayor, but I know it isn't so.

The night before the council meeting, a young man living near me in an RV was dumping his waste into the gutter around the stormwater sewer across from Bethel Community Baptist Church. To flush it down the drain, he connected a hose to Pastor Harold Lusk's church-front water faucet.

As a person out for an evening stroll, I can assure you the foul eau de cologne would never have passed for night-blooming jasmine!

I went back to his parking spot on Memorial Day weekend and questioned him about why he was parked on Elm Avenue.

He said, "My mother and I spent our family inheritance buying the vehicle and now we can't find a place to rent space, so stay here because Seaside's mayor is lenient during the crisis."

I opted to let the young man find out for himself what's ahead in Seaside, because city council decided at the May 21 meeting to further pursue the idea of closing Robert's Lake to overnight parking except for one day a week and letting each of the other cities on the peninsula use one or more of its parks to share in hosting the homeless who now seem to be congregated in Seaside because they can.

Those who live in vehicles on the streets, watch out!

The Boondoggle Busters are coming.

Go, team, go!

###

CREDITS: Photo courtesy of City of Seaside. Poem "Monterey's Big Flush" by Wanda Sue Parrott.

###

About this column: "Homeless in Paradise" is a free public service self-funded and produced by the author.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, this column appears regularly on the last week of each month in the Cedar Street Times at www.cedarstreettimes.com (and as periodic FLASH columns). It also appears on Facebook, in Nextdoor, and on private email lists. If interested in being added to the list, submit your request to the contact

info below: Copyright 2020 by Wanda Sue Parrott

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