

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

August 21-27, 2020

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD - Part 43

*this former marine
served as a photographer
for homeless press corps
a go-fund-me pool
was set up to defray costs
of his funeral
veterans like him
might not qualify for help
with their burials*



<https://www.obituare.com/ezzard-charles-mccall-obituary-79574/#services>

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/ezzard-dread-mccall039s-funeral-expenses>

EZZARD CHARLES “DREAD” McCALL
Photographer, Warrior, Comrade--(1954-2020)

HOW TO HELP DEFRAY THE COST OF A HOMELESS HERO'S FUNERAL

By Wanda Sue Parrott

DYING happens once in each of our lives.

If the decedent is well-prepared, with prepaid funeral arrangements and living will in order, disposition of his/her remains is easier on survivors than in chaotic situations created by the demise of people like Ezzard Charles “Dreadman” McCall, 65, of Salinas, who suddenly couldn’t breathe and then died on Aug. 1.

I learned of Dread’s death in a Facebook post from his best friend and colleague, Wes White, videographer who, along with Dread, has comprised the limited-member Homeless Press Corps of Monterey County since at least 2017. Salinas’ former Voices of the Street newspaper was a member, as is Wes White’s company, John Doe 13k Products.

Before Wes emerged as Monterey County’s most-prominent media sub-genre member, the Cedar Street Times was the sole peninsula outlet that carried coverage of homelessness week after week and month after month for over a decade. It remains the only known media entity on the Monterey Peninsula that, like the legendary Mouse That Roared, consistently shares highlights of the homeless scene on the Monterey Peninsula with local readers as well as elected representatives at all levels of government. (I hand-mail a personally addressed copy to Governor Gavin Newsom each week!)

I came aboard with my first edition of Homeless in Paradise in Cedar Street Times on October 31, 2014, 302 columns ago!

Three years later, in October 2017, I met Wes White, videographer, and, shortly thereafter, Dread McCall, photographer; they would go forward as activists in forming both the National Union of the Homeless, of which Wes White is president, and California Homeless Union Statewide Organizing Council.

First impressions from my 2014 column included:

“Glimpsing The Sacred Side Of Life On Lapis Road”

“The stretch of county Highway 1 north of Marina is near the dump, where the slight attar of stench permeates the air and countless extraordinary terrestrials live like aliens.

“Not like aliens from space. Nor like undocumented alien immigrants.

“They live like aliens in their own human homeland. These aliens are social outcasts known as Homeless. . . Divinity among dung heaps?”

Wes White thought so. He was helping the band of campers form their own Homeowners’ Association, when I first saw him on Lapis Road. As he and Dread McCall developed a friendship, their press coverage increased. They were everywhere: County Board of Supervisors Meetings, city council meetings and protests in parks, on streets and at the beach.

By Dec. 1, 2017, District 4’s Monterey County Supervisor, Jane Parker’s parking lot in Marina was opened to 15 vehicles and the One Starfish Safe Parking program went into operation as the first model community of homeless campers was established. Some are still there.

Around the time of Dread McCall’s death on Aug. 1, between 32 and 40 homeless people were camping at Robert’s Lake in Seaside; they have since relocated to a hilltop site near the future Campus Town near Monterey College of Law on the CSUMB campus.

What About A Funeral?

On Aug. 6, former Monterey Herald journalist Kathryn McKenzie posted an in-depth report that included questions too extensive to post here, things like it’s believed a heart attack killed Dread McCall.

Read this excellent piece at: <https://voicesofmontereybay.org/2020/08/06/dread-mccall-1954-2020/>

A simple “memorial” service for Dread McCall is today, Fri., Aug. 21, 11 a.m.– 4 p.m. at Mission Memorial Park & Funeral Home, 1915 Ord Grove Ave., Seaside.

According to Wes White, it will be “a somber simple viewing walk through. Up to 20 people are allowed inside the chapel and 60 people outside.” Family members will greet visitors.

Dread McCall’s great nephew, Robert Daniels, Jr. set up a \$2,000 Go Fund Me campaign to help cover funeral costs but raised it to \$10,000. His Go Fund Me message says, “Dear Family & Friends, we apologize for the sudden abrupt change of goal from 2500 to 10000. In all honesty we believed the VA would pay for most of all of Dread’s funeral expenses, due to his service. We unfortunately were informed otherwise after some time spent handling his affairs. We are doing the best we can given our circumstances. Thank you for your understanding. - Robert Daniels Jr.”

Senator Bill Monning’s entry says, “We mourn the loss of Dread, a social justice warrior whose presence through the years inspired, sustained, and fortified all of us. Rest in Power, Brother Dread. . . your spirit will live with all who knew and loved you! Viva Dread McCall!”

As of Aug. 19, \$5,370 had been raised. Contributions are not only welcome, they’re needed.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/ezzard-dread-mccall039s-funeral-expenses>

Are You Prepared To Die?

Average funerals cost \$8,500 to \$10,000.

A warning to those who assume Social Security or the military will cover your burial costs. Average social security payout for funeral expenses is \$255, if you’re lucky; some of us get \$0. To soften the blow of my final expenses on my loved ones, I’m donating my body to the University of California at San Francisco’s Willed Body Program. See <https://meded.ucsf.edu/willed-body-program>.

Military benefits are something our next generation of public servants—men and women of Wes White’s generation--must address.

What will Wes do now that his best friend and press partner has died? Last thing I knew, he was running for mayor of Salinas.

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Credits: Triple haiku by Wanda Sue Parrott

Illustration courtesy of Obituare, artist unknown

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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 like this one).

It also appears on Facebook, in Next Door and on private email lists. If interested in being added to the list, submit your request to the contact info below.)

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