

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

October 16-22, 2020

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD - Part 51

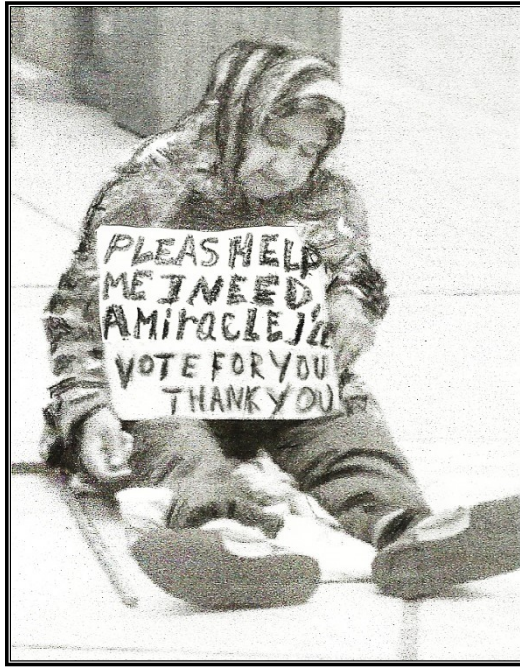


Photo courtesy of Clip Art with artistic augmentation by Wanda Sue Parrott

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF THIS HAPPENED TO YOU?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

STAYING apolitical flopped for me, despite my vow to stay out of the election. If you dare, imagine yourself in my hypothetical situation to get the picture.

It started as I was preparing to do some baking while watching the president, full of drugs that supposedly freed him in a flash of Covid-19, hit the campaign trail as a solo act after cancelling the second presidential debate originally slated for this week.

As his denouement, he blew a silent kiss into the camera and mouthed “I love you.”

To whom was he speaking? Certainly not me!

The Hypothetical Homeless Dilemma

Now, imagine yourself after recovery from a wave of . . . revulsion? confusion? amazement?

Making a quick dash to the supermarket to pick up a sack of all-purpose flour, you reason, “*If I hurry, the oven will be preheated to 400 degrees by the time I get the dough mixed.*”

You never leave home while the oven, washer or dryer are running, in case a fire breaks out, but you’ll only be gone five minutes. You pay and sprint toward the egress.

Then you see the old lady, obviously homeless, sprawled smack dab in front of you. She’s facing you, sloping as if asleep. Or dead. Her cardboard sign cries “I NEED A MIRACLE.”

What would you do if this situation, which really occurred to me, also happened to you?

Since politics filled the air, I decided to ask the mayors of the seven cities on the Monterey Peninsula how they would respond, so I emailed three questions:

1. *What's the first thing you thought when you saw the homeless woman blocking your passage?*
2. *What did you do next?*
3. *How could or would your city help deliver the miracle she needed right then and there?*

They had approximately 24 hours in which to respond. To help them get the picture, I enclosed a photo from Clip Art on which I added the words: I Need A miracle.

Two Mayors Met The Deadline

Two mayors responded. Their answers show them as sympathetic, honorable honest men:

Mayor Bill Peake, Pacific Grove (served on City Council for 6 years and is running unopposed in the upcoming election):

1. *The photo you provided appears to be a person in distress, as indicated by the sign asking for help. What type of help (shelter, food, medical assistance, money, maybe all) is not clear.*
2. *In an emergency I'd call 911. If not an emergency, calling for help makes sense. I'm not a trained first responder, so a call to a local homeless shelter (there are many in Monterey County), United Way (211) or the local police/sheriff department could bring a trained responder to assist the person in need.*
3. *My expectation is that if this were to occur in Pacific Grove, the Police Department would quickly respond to determine how best to help. When police respond, they make a determination as to appropriate next steps for resources (medical, social, or otherwise).*

Mayor Clyde Roberson, Monterey (four term-councilmember, and five-term mayor, serving a total of 26 years since 1981, taking breaks along the way, now running against former councilmember Timothy Barrett):

1. *Empathy and a desire to help.*
2. *Ask if she needed help, then contact homeless-serving agencies.*
3. *In Monterey, I would contact Gathering for Women, an incredible program for homeless*
4. *women. Also, we have an MDOT program in Monterey where social workers can meet the needs of homeless. There is also Interim, Inc., Community Human Services, and I-HELP. Each of these organizations can help.*

Both mayors gave credit where credit is due, a trait of character I find honorable in these tumultuous political times in which one of the mayors to whom I sent the three questions caused me more than simple concern. I felt deep enough grief to post this letter, excerpted here:

An Open Letter To Mary Ann Carbone, Mayor Of Sand City

Steve McShane's blatantly misleading TV commercial for the District 4 County of Monterey Board of Supervisors seat, followed by mailed ad, features Mary Ann Carbone, Sand City Mayor, stating: *"I've worked with Steve McShane to help open a homeless shelter in Seaside. He is the only candidate who has voted to expand sheltering and practical solutions to housing and homelessness."*

I set the record straight: Wendy Root Askew, his opponent for the District 4 seat, as aide to retiring Supervisor Jane Parker, helped open the first shelter in Seaside. The letter said:

"In my humble opinion, the attempt to steal the thunder of his opponent casts aspersion on the integrity of Steve McShane and, unfortunately, on you because you appear to aid and abet him in the misleading stretch to grab votes.

"Truth is, two years ago, after HEAP funding became available to communities with homeless crises, Jane Parker and her worthy, hard-working

aide, Wendy Root Askew, actively participated in brokering the partnership between the county and city of Seaside that led to the soon-to-open shelter known as Casa de Noche Buena, which is on county land within the city of Seaside.

“ . . . production of such an untrue ad is not nice, but you are nice! Jane Parker and Wendy Root Askew are also nice and deserve credit where it is due.”

As to the case of the homeless woman at Smart & Final, I was haunted by having pretended not to see her in order to hurry home, so I returned to the parking lot. The homeless woman was gone.

Did a miracle save her?

Would the candidate who told Americans “I love you” even have looked at her!

Did she even exist?

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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).

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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