

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

September 23-29, 2021

LET THE BOONDOGGLE-BUSTING BEGIN! – Part 19



Harold Grice

Playwright Harold Grice launched his one-act play with tea five summers ago. "The Houseless Hussies" helped raise money for women living in their cars. Kelli J. Keane (left) played Granny Annie's star part in the premiere show. Wanda Sue Parrott (seen with Kelli Keane this year) co-authored the script.*



**Kelli Keane and Wanda*

THE LITERARY BOONDOGGLE BUSTERS AWARD GOES TO . . . GRANNY ANNIE!

By Wanda Sue Parrott

FOLLOWING Gavin Newsom's 2-to-1 victory in last week's Recall Election, it was obvious this collection of homeless columns is nearing its 7-year cyclical conclusion. If I decide to retire at the end of the seventh year, you'll read it here first.

Meanwhile, to transition from our local "boondoggle busting" period into Gov. Newsom's "get housing solved" cycle, I'm naming Granny Annie recipient of the 1st Literary Boondoggle Busters Award. You'll meet her as a role model in the truncated script below in which a women's shelter was proposed years before Monterey finally got its first such shelter, Casa de Noche Buena, in January 2021.

Who is this imaginary tough-but-tender matriarch of a makeshift family of homeless women in the 2016 one-act play we co-named "The Houseless Hussies?"

Harold's fictional campsite, where several homeless women live near a dumpster, attracts an itinerant guitarist named Sam Sam. I dubbed the eldest old girl Granny Annie. She's short, stout, stubborn, smokes cigar butts, and wears men's thrift-store suits. Kelli J. Keane helped create Granny Annie's dialog and read Granny Annie's part in a 2015 talent show that helped raise \$1,000 for the Fund for Homeless Women. I became co-author with a 2016 final revision.

Why focus on this play? Similar situations could be busting out all over America in the now-nascent next housing crises threatening to manifest in the US. Knowing what to expect helps prepare for what can happen if – and when--we get there in light of the influx of immigrants and refugees making news.

(Note: Due to spacing limitations in this publication, the standard play script format is not used, but readers should be able to follow along nicely.)

THE HOUSELESS HUSSIES

(The present day in a tourist resort where several homeless women share an isolated area between the waterfront and downtown. The play opens as the camp stirs to life and a social worker approaches as Granny Annie stands near the fire ring, arms clasped behind her, studying the rising smoke. The unlit stub of a cigar is between her teeth. Other women emerge and move to the dumpster to hunt for food. The lid flips open. Sam Sam stands up, guitar over his shoulder.)

SAM SAM - (*Riffles the guitar strings as he talks*) – “What for you come bothering me in the middle of my sleep? Seems you come a-looking for something you can keep. You can call me Sam Sam, The Travelin’ Man. I play for my dinner, and play for my keep. Please be still so I can get some sleep.”

GRANNY ANNIE – “Well, hello there, Sam Sam. My daddy was also a traveling man. Well, give us a tune of good rhymes, ‘Cause we gotta lotta bad times.”

SAM SAM – “That I can do, Granny Annie. Got tunes that’ll shake your fanny.”
(*Sam is interrupted by the arrival of Miss Kim, dressed in business wear with a clipboard.*)

MISS KIM – “Hello ladies, I am... (*louder*) Hello Ladies... (*shouts*) Ladies! May I have your attention!”
(*The group gathers in a rough arc while Miss Kim shuffles through papers.*) “I am Kim Smith from the Department of Transient Housing. I am here to offer temporary quarters. . . shelter. . . to the homeless. . . to those women who need. . . would like...”

GRANNY ANNIE – (*Steps forward of the group and stands with hands on hips. Loud, with authority.*) – “And I’m Granny Annie, the oldest person here. You need to speak up so’s we all can hear.”

MISS KIM – “Well, ladies, I see you have an established site with a tent and shelter. But I have no idea as to your hygiene habits. . . (*looks at the bushes*) or methods. . . Our new facility has. . .”

GRANNY ANNIE – “Well, we’re the Houseless Hussies. Sometimes we get to those places that flushes. But what you don’t want to know is--When you’re out and about and gotta go, you gotta go— ‘cause if you don’t go when you gotta go, when you do get to go, you’ve already gone.”

MISS KIM – “Our facility is specifically for homeless women...”

CHORUS OF WOMEN – “We ain’t homeless women. We’re the Houseless Hussies, just temporarily outa room.”

MISS KIM – “Well, all those resources are available at the new facility. It will provide overnight shelter, restrooms and showers, and a protected environment for overnight rest. There will be the opportunity to meet with medical staff should there be a need. . . desire. We also have counselors available for those who need...wish. . . to explore opportunities. It’s free to those who qualify. . . Of course...as with all public facilities, drugs, alcohol, or severe mental illnesses...are not permitted.”

SASSY SUE – “A shelter for women only, how exciting. Living this way is not my thing. I haven't bathed for quite some time. And I really can’t stand this hair of mine.”

GRANNY ANNIE – “Now just you wait up, Sassy Sue. We ain’t heard all Miss Kim’s spew. I won’t know until she’s through just what we’re all gonna do.”

BIG BETTY – (*Turning forcefully*) – “Granny Annie, you be still. You aren’t going to be our shill. Now you just get out of the way so we can hear what she’s got to say.”

MISS KIM – “Why do most of you have a double name that rhymes, or their capitals are the same?”

GRANNY ANNIE – “It’s the way we keep our privacy. . . to hide our true identity.”

SAM SAM – “I play down at the wharf with my cup at my feet, and when it’s sunny and warm it’s a treat. I get folding green stuff from folks who listen to what is missing from this woeful life of mine. I don’t have a job, so I don’t get up. I don’t serve folks, so I don’t clean up. Don’t have to press my pants and shirt. Don’t have to worry about a little dirt. I don’t have credit ’cause I live with cash, so I don’t need a bank to hold my stash. I’m poor and worthless and don’t give a damn. And best of all, I don’t fool with that Tax Man. And I spend time with.” *(Sam Sam waves his arm to the women. There is a moment of quietness. Then everyone turns around with questioning looks that imply they wonder what’s next. At this point, Sam Sam comes forward.)* “It was nice to meet you, Miss Kim. Granny Annie, Hussies, sorry to break up the party, but I’ve gotta go to work.”

GRANNY ANNIE – “You got a job?”

SAM SAM – “I’m self-employed. I serenade tourists strolling by. They’re generous when the sun is high.”

GRANNY ANNIE – “You’re a panhandler!”

SAM SAM – “I’m a street entertainer. I work for tips.”

GRANNY ANNIE – “And I’m George Bush, son. Read my lips.”

SASSY SUE – “Do you have a license to practice what you do?”

SAM SAM – “Don’t think I need one, since I’m just passing through.”

GRANNY ANNIE – “Back in the Midwest, where I hail from, you’re a “fiddlefoot”—it means “travelin’ bum.” So don’tcha expect me to cut you no slack. If you’re gittin’, then go! And don’tcha come back.”

(Sam Sam grins, bows to Granny Annie, strums a chord, then sashays cockily offstage as Miss Kim begins passing out flyers.)

(To be continued next week)

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CREDITS:

Photos: Harold E. Grice, courtesy Central Coast Writers; Kelli J. Keane and Wanda Sue Parrott, courtesy Cynthia Westbrook, D.C., New Beginnings Chiropractic Health Care. Play: "The Houseless Hussies" by Harold E. Grice and Wanda Sue Parrott.

Book: *The Boondogger’s Bible - How to Fight Like City Hall to Win!!* (\$17 from Wanda Sue Parrott, P. O. Box1821, Monterey, CA 93942-1821) or from amazon.com. Website property of Great Spirit Publishing. Content copyrighted by Wanda Sue Parrott. For details on making contributions to support maintenance of the website, see Contact section at <https://homeless-in-paradise.yolasite.com/Contact.php>.

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