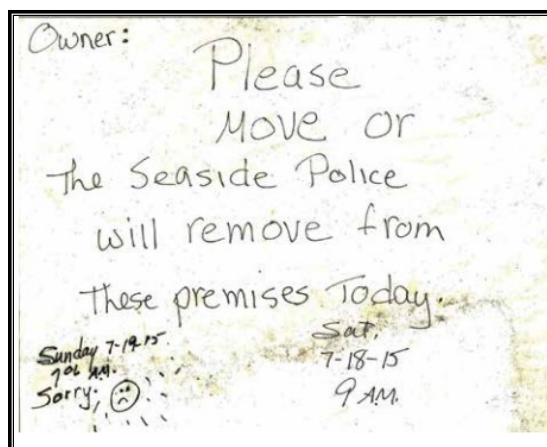


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

July 17, 2015

Column #40



THE SAGA OF A BIG STUFFED POOH BEAR, A HOMELESS WOMAN, AND AN 80-YEAR-OLD ADVOCATE FOR THE HOMELESS

By Wanda Sue Parrott

Date: Sat., 18 Jul 2015
Seaside, California

A HOMELESS PERSON dumped her blankets and stuff in the front yard and then took her little dog and left. It was 8:30 a.m.

I reported it to 9-1-1- but do not want the police to remove the stuff yet, as it is probably all the woman owns in the world.

If it is still here when I return from my critique group, I will again report it and ask for action. If I could report it while she is on the property, the police might arrest her and give her shelter, but I have no way of knowing the timing of her return, if she even returns.

She has a little dog she calls Charlie. I do not know her name. Meanwhile, I placed a note on the blankets saying that this stuff cannot stay here and must be moved, or it will be removed.

If I were able, I would move it to Mayor Rubio's yard as a way of punctuating the desperate need for shelter for these unfortunate women, as pointedly mentioned in my column last week and on other occasions.

If you come by the house, this explains what you might see and why.

12:45 p.m., Sat., 7-18-15

I returned home from my writers' critique group and found the homeless woman's stuff still parked on the white bench outside my door, so put what would fit into large black trash bags and moved it all into the alley on the north side of the property. It is now sitting along the fence.

It is topped by a 6-foot-tall stuffed shaggy teddy bear, which is probably what she uses for sleeping on. A smaller stuffed animal and two baby seats for her dog are also in the trash bags along with clothes and a few other items.

This is possibly the total of her worldly possessions. There is a once-gorgeous hand-crocheted heavy comforter that is filthy now.

Someone is going to come along and take the stuff, or part of it, so I am going to report it to 9-1-1 with request the police hold it for her ... and will send e-mail to Mayor Rubio and Chief Myers, so they know about this sad situation. I do not know the woman's name or where to find her.

As a reporter of homeless activity on the Monterey Peninsula, I am not qualified to also serve as a shelter for the homeless and, therefore, have taken the action noted above.

Alas, the Salvation Army is closed today, or I might be able to put the stuff over there, as it is just across the street.

I understand Lt. Paul Swain has been promoted to Captain and has not been around for the past two weeks.

I have hung a long piece of driftwood between the fence posts and suspended the NO TRESPASSING sign with Gorilla tape, which means the mailman will have to move the driftwood if he is going to have access to the mailbox by the door.

Repairmen who will eventually fix the glass the SWAT team shot out on April 7 when Matthew Bachelder shot himself will be able to access the south end of the property via the driveway and broken fence.

I have a barbecue date with my friend Ludmila in Salinas this afternoon, so will not be here until later tonight, and will be gone again most of tomorrow in case you come by.

Sat., July 18, 2015, 5:42 p.m.

Dear Chief Myers:

Thank you for your timely response to my earlier e-mail. I appreciate your concern and interest in this situation and also wish to thank the Seaside Police Department, for a young man did come by in response to my second 9-1-1 call, and quite thoughtfully suggested we leave the woman's items by the fence for a few hours to see if she comes to get them.

He said it would be difficult for her to have to come to the station on the weekend to collect the items from evidence, but if she has not picked up the things by evening, he will do so.

My apology, but I did not get his name. He is to be commended and the 9-1-1 dispatcher should have his name.

I did cancel my barbecue date in Salinas in order to be here if needed.

It is now 12:57 a.m. on Sunday, July 19.

The lady's big bear and other things remain in the alley by my fence.

The police did not come, nor did she.

It looks like another boondoggle. I am so very sorry.

File Note: 7-19-15 6:38 a.m.

Rumbling of thunder awakened me. It is so rare, in the ongoing drought, to even get sprinkles,

so a thunder-and-lightning storm was a true eye-opener. I went outdoors in the drops that were falling in Seaside and found the homeless woman's possessions still in the dirt by the fence in the alley. The local police must have gotten tied up with crime and their promise was not fulfilled. I hope it was not a boondoggle, so will not make a judgment call.

Anyhow, Nature destroyed my attempt to save the estate of an unknown homeless woman.

South of Seaside, over Pacific Grove, nature was putting on a sky-splitting golden lightning show.

The big naked shaggy bear was lightly dusted with moisture. I tried stuffing everything deeper into plastic bags and marveled at the difficult task--and the fact one little woman had transported all this stuff to my front yard. How? How could such a person even survive under such conditions? How will she survive if all her stuff is now junked?

She had stuck a pigeon feather into the heap, as a message I have not deciphered. Did it mean: I am leaving my treasure with you for care? or, this is a gift to you because I won't return?

This morning, her feather was gone. A part of me is mourning. Why? I do not even know her name.

I went online and looked up Winnie the Pooh bears and found that Sears and Disney both make giant huggable, lovable bears like the one that was obviously the lady's treasure... with shipping, in new condition, the cost reaches \$400.

This bear, unlike those with red shirts that say POOH, is naked.

Now that her treasure is wet, it will become moldy, like old love that was wrong from the outset and goes sour... a dream that went awry... a love story that was built on fairy-tale lies.

Somehow that seems such a tragic loss, and I might weep while the sky grows dry again. Does anyone know the meaning of the Native American sign language written with an upright feather? I do not know that meaning because my Native American blood is so miniscule that I have little connection with my Chickasaw ancestry, except for this closing salutation: Aho.

It sounds amazingly like the start of the term ---hole. Whose? Theirs or mine?

The Homeless Census results are being presented to the County Board of Supervisors this coming Tues., in Salinas. I am not sure if I will or will not attend. WSP

Sunday, 7-19-15 5:40 p.m.

As I prepare to go to the monthly ETC potluck dinner with my friends from the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula, I see the plastic trash bags still remain piled in the sun by my fence.

I think of the UU recitation about recognizing “the light in every human heart- -may our individual sparks meet and merge, bringing both light and warmth to the world.”

Lyrics from Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” enter my mind and remind me that Pooh has already started to mold in his black sack.

“Now I’ve heard there was a secret chord/that David played and it touched the Lord/but you don’t really care for music, do you?”

I respond, “I love music!”

The song continues, “You say I took the name in vain/ I don’t even know the name/but if I did, well really, what’s it to you?”

I respond by breaking into tears that are not only my own. They are collective tears of anguish from caretakers of our cities--mayors and councilmen of America--who, like me, frozen with confoundment, wonder: What can we do about the unknown homeless for whom Pooh is a symbol of broken love for one another?

And I say to myself: The buck stops with me. When I get home, if the black trash bags are still here, I will wash the unknown woman’s blanket and put Pooh through the dryer.

It might not be too late to save him. Sunday,

7-19-15 9:06 p.m.

When I got home, the black sacks were gone from the fence.

Farewell, Pooh!

Hallelujah.

###

Note art by WSP; Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at 831-899-5887 or amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com