

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #67



### WHEN RAGING GRANNIES SING . . .

**They speak their minds because it hurts to bite their tongues**

**By Wanda Sue Parrott**

While help-the-homeless news was being made last week, Darby Moss Worth spoke up for grannies, loosely defined as homeless women past 50, or all women old enough to have grandchildren. Darby focused on Raging Grannies.

Recalling her 91-year life, Darby introduced Raging Grannies at the Women's Discussion Group at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Thurs., Jan. 14.

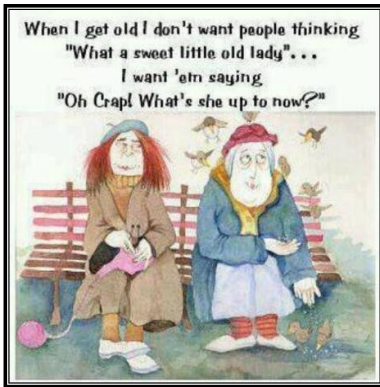
Raging Grannies are women who first wrote protest lyrics about the Canadian government, set them to well-known tunes, and sang out in public.

"They got aboard a ship and sang anti-war songs while wearing funny hats and aprons," said Darby, who believes we all need at least one good belly laugh each day. She recited the first stanza that inspired Gaggles of Grannies to form in Canada, the United States, England, and other countries. It's sung to the tune of "Side by Side."

*Oh, we're a gaggle of grannies  
Urging you off of your fannies;  
We're angry and how!  
We're telling you now:  
No more war!*

Wikipedia says: "The first group started in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada over the winter of 1986-1987... The members believed the presence of US Navy nuclear-powered ships in Victoria Harbor posed potential health and environmental risks to the city."

The Grannies' popular protests expanded to cover everything controversial--from anti-war sentiments to politics, women's rights, and homelessness. Gaggles are still active in Jose and the Bay Area.



This cartoon from the website of Eugene, Oregon's Gaggle of Grannies states:

*When I get old I don't want people thinking  
"What a sweet little old lady"...  
I want 'em saying  
"Oh, crap, what's she up to now?"*

### **Embalming begone!**

Darby has been a social activist throughout her adult life. She organized a group of local ladies who sang songs in the early 1990s when Congressman Sam Farr held one of his first town hall meetings. She said, "We've been out on the streets protesting all the wars." Her activism has slowed since a recent accident left one leg 2 inches shorter than the other.

The retired schoolteacher and still-prolific artist loves making collages. Darby collected quirky quotes from tee-shirts and sweatshirts, then cobbled them into colorful creative collages made of messages like:

*I'd love to have a battle of wits with you,  
but you appear unarmed*  
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*I speak my mind  
because it hurts to bite my tongue*  
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*Someday I'll be soil  
to save the planet*

After the Food Bank for Monterey County was destroyed last year by arson, Darby threw a fundraiser talent show in the UU church sanctuary where guests are fed and sheltered through the Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-Help).

I tap danced to "When Irish Eyes are Smiling," then tipped my green bowler and passed it for donations. Darby's musical soiree raised \$4,500 in food money for the homeless.

"Some people think I say inappropriate things," Darby said. "I prefer to think of it as radical honesty. You cannot be old and wise if you were never young and crazy. Inside every older person is a young person wondering what the hell happened."

### **Someday She'll Be Soil To Save The Planet**

Darby Moss Worth has garnered considerable publicity since her birth in Chester, Pa. on Oct. 25, 1924. She calls herself as a gypsy who needs people. She came to the Monterey in 1961 and has always been prominent in artistic and humanitarian circles.

She re-entered the protest spotlight recently by fighting for the right to be buried in her own yard in Carmel Valley, a yet-unresolved issue. She supports the burgeoning Urban Death Project which advocates Green Burial which turns the body into compost, then mixes it with soil.

At a time when cemeteries are reaching full-capacity and cities are contemplating how to handle the remains of indigent homeless decedents in overcrowded “potters’ fields,” Darby believes Green Burial offers a solution.

She first heard about Green Burial on a Fresh Air broadcast over National Public Radio interview with Terry Gross. “She was interviewing a mortician in Los Angeles named Caitlin Doughty, who had written a book entitled *Smoke Gets in My Eyes: and Other Lessons from the Crematory*,” available at amazon.com.

Darby concluded: “If you want to be buried at sea, go jump in. Ashes are insurmountable. If you’ve ever done any gardening, you know what composting is.”

Darby is a “self-professed Muslim-Jew because they don’t believe in embalming, and they do believe in burial within 24 hours of death.” After death, Darby expects her house to be sold.

Dorothy Jacobson, a retired scientist and rose gardener, quipped, “I don’t think anybody would like to buy a house with a haunted yard.” Darby’s retort was that people should do their research before deciding anything. She recommended visiting [www.urbandeath.org](http://www.urbandeath.org).

I took her advice and found these words from founder Katrina Spade: *The Urban Death Project is not simply a system for turning our bodies into soil-building material. It is also a space for the contemplation of our place in the natural world, and a ritual to help us say goodbye to our loved ones by connecting us with the cycles of nature.*

### **To Be Or Not To Be Human Fertilizer?**

Will homeless bodies become compost? Maybe.

Without a doubt, however, all older women who love justice, dressing up and singing—including the homeless—can start a Gaggle of Grannies. See details by visiting International Raging Grannies at <http://www.raginggrannies.org/>

The same week Darby spoke at the church, the local Fund for Homeless Women announced recipients of its 2015 fall grants amounting collectively to \$257,000, proof there truly is strength in numbers.

Also last week, the newly formed Salinas Homeless Coalition was preparing to announce on Martin Luther King Day that it plans to unionize in cooperation with Salinas. See KSBW Action News 8’s Twitter posting dated 1-18-16: Video: Salinas Homeless Plan to Unionize at [bit.ly/1QaKDhj](http://bit.ly/1QaKDhj).

The coalition’s chairwoman, Janet May, has been homeless for about a year.

She is a granny.

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The Women’s Discussion Group meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thurs., 2-4 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 490 Aguajito Rd., Carmel. Meetings are free, interesting, and open to the public. Contact Peggy Chandler, facilitator, at 831-372-8612, [pegndoug@redshift.com](mailto:pegndoug@redshift.com).

Interested in forming a gaggle? E-mail or phone me and I will pass your message to Darby. She will get back to you.

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Lead photo: Darby Moss Worth, courtesy of Darby; cartoon from the website of Eugene, Oregon’s Gaggle of Grannies. Images used for educational and illustrative purposes only; no copyright infringement intended.

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