

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

February 12, 2016

Column #70



### HOW THIS COLUMN BEGAN

*Reprising Pacific Grove's matching-funds challenge*

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**TODAY** (Feb. 12) is my 81<sup>st</sup> birthday and the 70<sup>th</sup> column in this “Homeless in Paradise” series in Cedar Street Times, Pacific Grove’s weekly newspaper that’s published online every Thurs. and in print form on Fri.

Crunch the numbers. Eighty-one minus 70 equals lucky 11.

I invented my first job at age 11 by writing a neighborhood newspaper in 1946 in the Emery Park district of Alhambra, Calif. After creating a master which was hand-copied in pen and ink. I delivered the gossip sheet to neighbors who paid a dime per issue. I’ve been a writer ever since.

Where’s this column going next? Let’s look at a phenomenon that started in Pacific Grove.

### Rudy Fischer’s Amazing Challenge-Fund Proposal

Last week Pacific Grove City Council voted unanimously to contribute more than \$15,000 to Monterey’s Matching Fund Challenge, which was approved by Monterey City Council at its Dec. 15, 2015, meeting after two homeless men apparently froze to death across the street from Trader Joe’s.

The original challenge idea was set forth in early 2014 by Pacific Grove council member Rudy Fischer, assisted by PG council member Ken Cuneo. Beginning in April and continuing into summer, Fischer and Cuneo addressed every city council on the Monterey Peninsula, backed by a cadre of supporters in which I found myself.

By then, I had made a new friend who, at 80, was living in her car. She is now a graduate of the One Starfish Safe Parking Program through which she found housing. Back in 2014, she convinced me to argue FOR the Matching-Funds Challenge, so I wound up addressing all the city councils by asking, “Are you boondogglers?” I then gave out copies of my new book *The Boondogglers’ Bible—How to Fight Like City Hall to Win!* My basic message was “Don’t delay—contribute today.”

Fischer and Cuneo proposed that PG would contribute \$1 per resident to a fund to help address homelessness, but only if at least three other cities pledged \$1 per resident. The coalition would be comprised of members of the participating city councils.

### **Don't Delay—Contribute Today**

The original goal envisioned by Fischer and Cuneo was a collective \$100,000 pool for the benefit of all communities on the peninsula touched by homelessness. Funds would go to legal non-profit 501 C-3 charitable organizations.

First city to come aboard was Monterey. Sand City and Carmel followed. Neither Marina nor Del Rey Oaks met the matching-funds challenge. By fall 2014, when I started writing this column, Seaside was waffling. Seaside resisted well into 2015, so I awarded it a hypothetical “Boondoggler of the Year” Award.

Although Seaside did not contribute funds, despite being the center of most homelessness on the peninsula and having the largest population, at least one representative of the Seaside City Council attended challenge-fund meetings and contributed valuable input about the homeless problems both within and outside Seaside.

### **Congratulations: No Homicides In Seaside In 2015**

Seaside Mayor Ralph Rubio explained his resistance to putting \$35,000 into the 2014 matching-funds challenge was that money would not specifically be earmarked for pressing issues (homelessness, gang violence, etc.) inside the city of Seaside itself where it was needed.

Instead of contributing \$1 per resident to the matching-fund, in 2015 Seaside approved \$35,000 for housing for its homeless veterans. Boondoggling one year led to a Big Boon the next. Congratulations, Mayor Rubio and the City of Seaside, where there was not one homicide in 2015.

### **What's Next On The Matching-Funds Agenda?**

Total raised through the 2014 matching-funds challenge was about \$49,000. Recipients of grant money included the One Starfish Safe Parking Program, The Salvation Army and The Gathering Place (now Gathering for Women), among others.

Thus, the second round of matching-funds challenges, now spearheaded by the City of Monterey, is just kicking off. Pacific Grove is leading as first contributor. Next week we will talk with Monterey Mayor Clyde Roberson about Monterey's role as leader of this worthy cause.

Rudy Fischer's original challenge-grant led me to writing this column. This 81<sup>st</sup> birthday edition celebrates with printer's ink rather than candles and cake.

I am lucky to have found and followed the path of my heart at age 11. In the short intervening 70 years, I have come close to, but never been, homeless. Thank you. May you be as lucky.

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CST added the following Birthday Wishes to Wanda in the online publication of this column:



***Happy Birthday, Wanda Sue!***

***May you ride “bear back” for another 80 years!***

***~ Cedar Street Times***

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Photo of Rudy Fischer from his website, [rudyfischer.com](http://rudyfischer.com); used for educational/illustrative purposes only; no copyright infringement intended.

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at [amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com](mailto:amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com) or leave a message with The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887