

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

March 18, 2016

Column #75



ONE-MINUTE QUIZ

Can you name the stars on the homeless stage & screen?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

NAME-DROPPING is an American addiction. If you're a film buff, you can name Academy Awards winners. If a political junkie, you know the candidates. How many homeless or formerly homeless people can you name?

Take this short quiz. If you pass, great. If you flunk, that's okay, too. Then read my answers. You might be surprised!

Answer These Questions

1. Name the most-famous homeless character today?
2. Who is Alan Bennett?
3. Name ten rich, famous celebrities who were once homeless?
4. Do you know Monterey Peninsula's best-dressed formerly homeless woman?
5. Whatever happened to Sunny Fawcett?
6. Who is Renee Hammond?

And The Answers Are . . .

Question 1: Mary/Margaret Shepherd, portrayed onstage by British actress Dame Maggie Smith, who later played her on film, is the most-famous homeless character in the world today.

Although former-nun Shepherd is as memorably quirky as Auntie Mame was half a century ago, the cantankerous-but-lovable old London woman in the hit film "The Lady in the Van" directed by Nicholas Hytner is only a teeny bit fictitious.

Almost everything in the movie is factual—including offal on ground outside her vehicles, and trash bags aplenty. She joyfully paints three vans sunshine gold during her 15-year tenure on the playwright's property from 1974 through 1989. Money seems to be the least of her problems.

Question 2: Alan Bennett, now 83ish, is the London playwright whose personal memoir about life with two elderly women—his mother and the homeless woman in the van parked in his driveway—was first published in the *London Review of Books*.

It became the stageplay that evolved into the film that was released last Nov. 13 and is making its way around the world. It should have been nominated for an Academy Award, but homelessness does not sell tickets.

Question 3: Majority of the ten most-famous celebrities who became rich and famous were in show business. They are listed in alphabetical order. The others each get a paragraph.

Halle Berry, actress; Drew Carey, comedian; David Letterman, TV show host; Jennifer Lopez, actress; Jim Morrison, musician; Doctor Phil, TV show host; Sylvester Stallone, actor.

Chris Gardner is a motivational speaker and stockbroker whose personal struggle to establish himself while juggling fatherhood and homelessness is portrayed in the 2006 movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* directed by Gabriele Muccino and starring Will Smith.

Colonel Harlan Sanders, the southern gentleman in the white beard and matching suit, whose likeness appears on and in Kentucky Fried Chicken franchises around the world, rode the rails from homelessness into homes everywhere with three words: “Finger lickin’ good.”

Steve Jobs, along with other boy genius Bill Gates, launched the E-Age for Everyone, then, like Mozart, died prematurely.

To see their photos, press CTRL and click on this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZe9uzBWHyE&feature=player_detailpage

Question 4: Kelly J. Keane, 83, who spent three years living in her van while holding a fulltime volunteer job, was once described by photographer Bob Sadler as “the best-dressed homeless woman on the Monterey Peninsula.”

The petite redhead, who frequently speaks on behalf of homeless projects at groups and city council meetings, calls herself “a graduate of the One Starfish Safe Parking Program.” She is the Monterey Peninsula’s volunteer “Advocate for Senior Women without Adequate Housing.”

Question 5: Sunny Fawcett, now around 66, shot to stardom three years ago when Monterey police stopped her late at night on Garden Road. She resisted, was released, then later tried on criminal charges.

Sunny’s case is summarized at this Monterey County Weekly link:

http://www.montereycountyweekly.com/archives/2013/0815/local-spin---homeless-woman-who-annoyed-cops-gets/article_d02b4d92-0517-11e3-b14b-0019bb30f31a.html

The police vehicle’s videotape went online as a You Tube feature and Sunny shone like a blazing star with a flower in her hair.

I saw Sunny recently at a local senior center. She remains homeless and still wears her signature flower.

Question 6: Renee Hammond, a 10-year volunteer with Community Human Services, is my successor as winner of the Golden Cup for best costume at the 2016 All Women’s Ball. Renee, a newlywed of only three weeks, wore her wedding dress.

The dance at the Elks Club raised \$4,000 to benefit Safe Place, the CHS program for runaway and homeless youths.

You Don't Have To Be Famous To Be A Star



This faceless wig stand, featuring a beaded headpiece auctioned at the All Women's Ball, represents all homeless women by implying: You don't have to be famous to be a star.

Maggie Smith's stellar performance of *The Lady in the Van* gives factual face to faceless women everywhere who must live with human waste and plastic sacks.

Mary/Margaret Shepherd, devout Catholic, was once an aspiring classical pianist. What happened? See the movie or click this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZe9uzBWHyE&feature=player_detailpage

###

Photo/images provided by author; used for educational/illustrative purposes only;
no copyright infringement intended.

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com or leave a message with
The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887.