

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

June 3, 2016

Column #86



### SHARE YOUR MEMORIES

*Who was the first homeless person you remember?*

By Wanda Sue Parrott

**RECALLING** my first homeless person inspired the following short tale. If you remember the first homeless person you ever saw, please share your memory as a letter, fiction, non-fiction, or poem. We'll hopefully gather enough memoirs for a chapbook to sell as a fundraiser to benefit the 450 homeless women on the Monterey Peninsula, starting with the four senior-seniors (nonagenarians) and working backwards.

My 500-word historical fiction is woven from post-war memories in Alhambra a year after the end of the war we Southern California kids called "the Duration."

### Sunday Morning Murder

*It was scarier than I remembered, not because the man in the abandoned shack was a fresh corpse, but because my parents threatened to throw me in jail when I burst into the kitchen and announced, "There's a dead guy in the old shack down behind Yoorie's Market!"*

*I plunked the quart of Adohr milk onto the table. "Call the cops!"*

*"Aw, what're you tootin' about now?" Daddy grinned. A dribble of coffee dripped from his chin as he dug the cardboard cap from the bottle with his thumbnail. Daddy doused his Cheerios. The new dentures that hurt his gums lay beside his favorite Sunday funnies, The Katzenjammer Kids.*

*"Well, Googie?" Mother's hair was in pink rollers and her hands were shoved into the pockets of her blue chenille robe. The look she gave me spoke without sound. "Tomboy. Why can't you act play with dolls instead of imitating that boy scout, Red Rover."*

*Mother's chest was flat like a boy scout's. As a 90-pound low-hurdle sprinter, she'd run her way through a business college scholarship. Then she married my dad, got pregnant, and I was born.*

*"Call the cops yourself," Mother said.*

*Daddy added, "If this is another tall tale, they'll put you in jail."*

*Kids under twelve can't go to jail, I thought, and made the call.*

*I spotted Mother's falsies with nipples like rubber erasers on the kitchen counter by the phone. She bought them at Woolworth's. I'd tried on her lace-trimmed 32-A bra. It was huge. I inserted Mother's molded*

*mounds. Voila! I felt transformed from age 11 into the most-glamorous movie star of the age. Lana Turner, the blonde sweater girl, had been discovered in a drug store on the Sunset Strip.*

*I was more comfortable as a pre-teen Nancy Drew. "I think he was murdered!" I hung up.*

*Mother thrust an upturned palm at me. I leaped out of the way, hit my father's arm, and his hand swept his false teeth into the air. They smacked the window shade and clattered onto the black-and-white linoleum floor.*

*"The change," Mother said, wiggling her sexy claws with sharp nails the color of dripping blood.*

*"Googie, give Mother the change." Daddy gummed like Mister Mushroom.*

*"Oh. I forgot." I slapped the change into my mother's palm.*

*"Dovey love, give Googie a dime."*

*"Why, Dumpling?"*

*Daddy winked, smirking. "Just give her the dime."*

*Years later, I realized that they had known I would dawdle, poke, and go exploring when they sent me for milk, which gave them an hour of Sunday morning lovemaking time, free of their only kid's relentless intrusion.*

*That morning, Mother said, "Googie, you can have two dimes."*

*One was just an old Liberty Dime, but the other was a brand new 1946 dime with FDR on the face.*

*The police arrested the corpse. The vagrant was dead, all right. Dead drunk.*

*As to me? I became the buxom blonde investigative reporter known as Lana Love.*

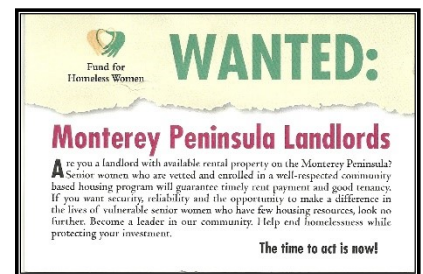
### **Wanted: Monterey Peninsula Landlords**

Switching from fiction back to fact, is it possible the "vagrant" in my story was one of the first World War II veterans to become homeless? Such men usually wound up in downtown Los Angeles on "skid row."

Homeless women didn't really appear on the streets until the 1970s. Today, there are 450 homeless women on the Monterey Peninsula. Unlike the man in my story, they aren't vagrants or addicted to drugs or alcohol. They are women of quiet dignity, one of whom is age 97.

The Fund for Homeless Women has issued a postcard that asks: Are you a landlord with available rental property on the Monterey Peninsula? Senior women who are vetted and enrolled in a well-respected community-based housing program will guarantee timely rent payment and good tenancy. Help end homelessness while protecting your investment. The time to act is now!

Contact Monique Jiminez, Housing Specialist, Housing Resource Center of Monterey County, 831-429-9186, ext. 24 or 831-596-6414, [moniquej@hrcmc.org](mailto:moniquej@hrcmc.org).



####

To share memories of the first homeless person you ever saw, contact Wanda Sue Parrott at [amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com](mailto:amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com) or leave a message with The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887.

Photos provided by author or as shown; used for educational/illustrative purposes only;  
no copyright infringement intended.