

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

December 18, 2015

Column #62



EL NIÑO WEATHER WATCH

Part 7: Storm-Survival Tips From Sandbags To Sand City

By Wanda Sue Parrott

(Weather forecasts predict the Monterey Peninsula will be hard hit by El Niño conditions this winter, with potential flooding and frigid temperatures that could be deadly for unsheltered persons. What is being done to provide shelter and service if dire predictions materialize? This series explores foul-weather aid for everyone.)

THE RECENT STORM zapped my television set. Living without television this week has been challenging. If El Niño weren't predicted to fully arrive next week and last a month or longer, the loss of TV would be great.

I might use the quiet time to read the stack of unfinished books on my bedside table; however, since the Monterey Peninsula is predicted to undergo flooding, mudslides, downed trees, and power outages, having no TV weather news right now isn't a good idea.

What's true for me is also valid for residents of other low-lying areas, such as Carmel Valley (which has a record of flooding) and Sand City. Neither community responded to my recent storm-watch questionnaire seeking information on where residents should go in emergencies that leave both houseless residents, as well as property owners and tenants, temporarily homeless.

Pacific Grove, Monterey and Seaside responded, and their emergency disaster information appears in recent editions of this column. So, where does that leave those communities that didn't reply, starting with the stretch of coastline that doesn't really seem much like a bonafide city, but is one?

Sand City: Land Along The Strand Of Sand

Sand City, which occupies less than two miles of land along the strand of oceanside sand north of Monterey and south of old Fort Ord, is replete with mayor, city council, and police department, but no fire department or public schools.

It has been a city since its incorporation on May 30, 1960, at which time it was mainly industrial, known for mining sand once-renowned as "the finest of all sifted sand in the world." Today its unofficial reputation is "location of the highest per-capita income of any community in the country."

It's not that the 400 or so official residents of Sand City are rich, since the 2010 census showed the majority at poverty-or-below level of income; it's those revenues generated by its two shopping centers rake in gazillions of dollars.

Known today for its employment of about 3,000 people, and its daily attraction of between 40,000 to 50,000 shoppers, Sand City is not reputed to be the chosen home of drifting homeless persons. But home it is to those who vanish from view as they pitch tents or roll up in sleeping bags during temperate weather, only to reappear with sunrise.

Where do the drifters and panhandlers, the drug-addicted veteran, the old woman with her dog—and others—go during inclement weather?

The Salvation Army is a refuge where meals are served, and some transitional housing is available. I could find no actual emergency shelter or warming shelter listed for Sand City. In my opinion, this needs to be rectified.

Disaster Relief For Sand City And Del Rey Oaks



My call to the Red Cross to confirm disaster-relief shelter locations for both Sand City and Del Rey Oaks was not returned by press time, so this advice is presumed appropriate for both communities:

Oldemeyer Center, 986 Hilby Ave.,

Seaside Boys & Girls Club, 1284 La Salle Ave., Seaside

Seaside High School, 2200 Noche Buena St., Seaside

Comprehensive facts are available from both the Seaside and Monterey websites, which have emergency disaster preparedness programs posted online at: City of Monterey: www.monterey.org/stormcenter. City of Seaside: <http://ci.seaside.ca.us/index.aspx-?page=445> and <http://ci.seaside.ca.us/index.aspx-?page=445>.

Carmel, Carmel Valley, Pebble Beach, Monterey County, And Beyond

Neither Carmel/Carmel Valley nor Pebble Beach responded to my questionnaire, but a friend who lives in Pebble Beach will be picking up free sandbags from the nearest fire department and affirms that “the bags are heavy, weighing more than 8 pounds each.”

Reporter Kelly Nix says in the current edition of The Carmel Pine Cone that Carmel’s public works director, Rob Mullane, outlined numerous winter storm preparations the city has completed, including cleaning out storm drains and gutters.

Also, the public works department has sandbags for businesses and residents of Carmel. No mention was made of homeless persons, emergency- or warming-shelter locations. For such details, contact the Red Cross: 831- 624-6921.

Mike Niccum, general manager of the Pebble Beach Community Services District (PBCSD) did not respond to me, but told the Carmel Pine Cone it has a list of Del Monte Forest residents, including the elderly, who might need assistance during storms. In power outages, attempts are made to reach them by phone; if unsuccessful, attempts are then made to visit them.

At the other end of the peninsula, Marina did not respond, either. For details about Marina’s emergency disaster preparedness visit: <http://www.ci.marina.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=218>

A helpful El Niño preparation list that includes excellent instructions for filling and laying sandbags, appears on the Pebble Beach website at www.pbcsd.org. The only thing missing is instructions about where to go in case emergency shelter is needed. For more information call 831-373-1274.

The website advises keeping a battery-operated radio handy so you can access weather news if your TV loses its memory like mine did in last week’s storm.



Or why not use your e-equipment to access news straight from the experts, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association Weather Service? They're online at <http://www.wrn.noaa.gov/mtr>.

The day El Nino's precursor raised 20-foot waves in Pacific Grove and zapped my Comcast program, an old bag lady stood by her plastic-draped shopping cart at a Sand City corner. Clad in plastic poncho and old worn-out wet boots, she stood immobile as cars went by, going nowhere because she had nowhere to go.

And Great Spirit whispered words of a wise Native American as I passed by in my warm, dry car: "Judge not until you have walked a mile in the other person's moccasins."

I could not have stood there like a carved wooden female statue of Poor Old Kalijah frozen in the wind and rain.

Could you?

*(Thus ends this 7-part series. Thanks to those who answered my questionnaire.
Good news is that the long-neglected topic of warming shelters was on the agenda at
Monterey City Council's meeting on Tues., Dec. 15.
Stay tuned as further details unfold!)*

Case for warming shelters won by dead men While inclement weather was killing my Comcast last Sunday, advocates for public warming shelters were preparing arguments to give at Monterey's city council meeting on Tues., Dec. 15. Two homeless men beat them to it. Sometime between Sun. night and Mon. morning, they froze to death in the 500 block of Munras Ave., Monterey. More details will be released after the sheriff concludes investigation of the case won by the men who proved warming shelters are needed across the peninsula whether El Niño is a hit or miss.

###

Photos and clipart from Google online images; used for educational/illustrative purposes only;
no copyright infringement intended.

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