



Among The Homeless

• It seems odd to be heading into the night, acting as if I'm without a home or material possessions. This is not some camping trip. I have 35 cents and the clothes I'm wearing.

• It's an especially dark night. As I head north on Ocean Front Walk I pass some of the real homeless. They stare at me and walk past.

• The ocean retains its beauty, but tonight it won't wash away the evening's apprehension. I find a crevice in the cliffs just south of Tourmaline, a spot blanketed in darkness, and settle in.

My two fears: The police rousting me from my place, and getting mugged by the criminal element.

Although I'm tired, my anxiety won't allow me any rest. As the night slowly creeps on, my mind gets the best of me and a fog bank of desperation sets in. Sleep eventually follows.

• When I awake, I slowly check my surroundings and move down the beach. Some light begins to mark the sky — a welcome sight.

• The lifeless bundles near the fire rings are actually the homeless who have quit hiding and fall anywhere to escape the harshness of the day. Someone has left a shopping cart of wrapped bread on the boardwalk. I'm tempted, but I resist.

• Later, I regret not taking a piece of that bread. My mind is telling my stomach how incredibly hungry I am. I hate to admit I ate a warm meal only nine hours earlier.

• I'm shunned by the citizens on the street and the homeless won't admit me into their cliques. I didn't expect to be this much of an outcast.

• I head east on Garnet Avenue, and when I reach Sav-On Drugs, I try my luck at panhandling. The response is not good. After a few comments like "get a job," I lose my desire and leave

the aggravation behind.

• I find a shopping cart in an alley and bring it along, sometimes adding items I find in the trash cans, like a broken toy boat.

• Finally, I talk to some homeless stretched out on the grass near the PB Recreation center — a group of four. They're cordial. "Call me Tennessee Willy," one man says. He claims to be a gifted guitar player, but hasn't had a chance to play for three months.

Among the group are three men and one woman, all under 45. Two say they are from Oregon. They came south looking for work. When their car broke down in northern California, they made their way to San Diego. Sometimes they take odd jobs. Sometimes they recycle aluminum cans and ask for handouts. This couple often takes advantage of church shelters that offer food. They say Pacific Beach is a good place to look for food the restaurants have thrown away.

• I head back toward the beach. Residents I pass seem friendly, despite the fact that I'm pushing a squeaky shopping cart with junk I've collected this morning. Travelling with a shopping cart is cumbersome, especially when crossing busy intersections.

• I end up near the lifeguard station at the end of Grand Avenue and sit around with two new homeless friends. One is from Kentucky, the other says he's lived in many places in California. They pass the time passing a quart of beer between them. They offer me some. I decline. A police squad car pulls up and, judging from their expressions, they aren't too happy with our appearance near the sidewalk, especially since children are playing nearby. The three of us move farther down the beach.

As the intensity of the sun increases, so does the intensity of their chatter. It's past noon now, and my new friends are babbling and swearing. I've had enough, and head for home. They remain in the

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didn't shop there. I guess not many people did, because it quietly faded away. Walker Scott came in — and went out of the business in the '80s, along with its sister stores elsewhere.

Plans for a movie/shopping complex were happily awaited. The recession squelched life out of loans for such projects, and there it sits, forlorn and useless...

What business can succeed here these days? A restaurant with fresh-cooked, inexpensive food. Resale clothing and antiques (just check out Cass Street, north of Garnet). Businesses with a new twist, such as **Play It Again Sports**, which buys, trades and sells sports equipment, or **Beads and More**, down in the Promenade, a mecca for jewelry do-it-yourselfers.

In case you were wondering why Ripples and Rumors disappears every other week, look for the new Business Spotlight instead. I have the fun task

area business people describing results of the recent **SD Police Department's** efforts at combating the problems. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 13, 7 p.m., in Pacific Terrace Inn's conference room, 610 Diamond St. (It will follow the **PB Business Improvement Association's** monthly meeting, held at 5:30 p.m.)

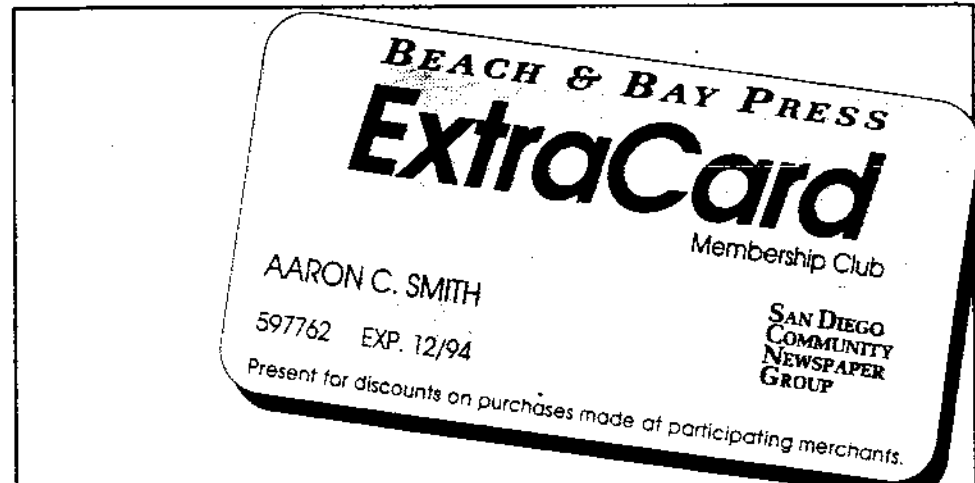
An Extra Special Award...Amy Fettig's quilt received a first-place ribbon in the recent Del Mar Fair's **Home Arts** division, reports her friend **Robb Trexler**. Fettig, a recovery room nurse at Mission Bay Hospital, started the quilt in January. Called home to Michigan to nurse her ailing mother, Fettig took the quilt, finished it and sent it back to Trexler.

With the encouragement of workers at **Golden State Fabrics**, Trexler entered the quilt in the fair, where judges agreed on its special qualities.

sand, no home to return to.

- The 18 hours I spent on the streets with the less fortunate are not nearly enough to understand their plight. In that amount of time, however, the sights and sounds remain graphic — the emotions are even more potent — depression, despair, hunger.

We spend hours debating our "important" issues and how to spend our tax dollars: Should we build a bridge? Should we enlarge the boardwalk? Should we conduct a study? All the while we are stepping over the bodies of the destitute as we go about our daily routines.



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Here's just a sampling of discounts from local businesses: