

# We Have a Win!

As it turns out, my pen did prove to be mightier than the system! Last week I wrote a blog titled [“It’s Really Bad Karma to Make Throw Away People”](#) about a local disabled veteran who was ordered out of his four bedroom paid-for home, with his paid-up property taxes, for not having energy services. And PG&E, the monopoly energy provider, refused to give him energy. The county’s plan, I suppose, was that he would be put on the streets, his house would be boarded up and posted ‘unsafe to occupy’ and then he would walk right to the river and drown himself, or right to a gun-shop to get hardware to do the job, or right to a tree to hang himself. One of those. He wouldn’t meth or heroine himself out, peaceably; he would do it angrily, like a statement. I know him.

When the universe tosses us a grenade and asks us to step up and ‘do something’, it’s not always the best timing. For the Sisters of the Valley, the distraction of this homeless threat crisis took just enough of my attention away from business to cause a financial crisis at the Abbey – by the time it was all said and done.

On Thursday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, I was called by this disabled veteran because he was having a panic attack (due to his vacate notice) and needed some of the [Sisters’ tinctures and teas](#) and word medicine. He wasn’t asking me to come to help him [fight the establishment](#). He was asking me to help him cope. In my opinion, people under this much attack shouldn’t have to ask for help. I hate asking for help, myself, because when I see people in pain, I help them. When people can see my pain, why should I have to ask for help? *See my pain and offer – don’t make me ask!*

I took him medicine and as soon as I realized that there were no criminal elements or facets to this situation, I volunteered to get involved and help him. He didn't believe I could do anything. He has been trying for six years.

He had a defeatist attitude that – I must admit, made me more determined than ever to get his lights back on. However, sometimes I can't carry two swords very well and the picking up of the sword to take on this vet's cause, required I put down the sword I was using to complete a litigation process that would bring a little financial security to the Abbey. Ironically, reaching out to help save this vet from homelessness, caused the Abbey to bounce their first rent check ever . . . and it freaked out our landlord. It's all good, now. The Sisters have people who help them in times of crazy . . .

On the morning of Day One, I met with a local attorney to get advice on local agencies that could help. He gave me personal contacts at the Central California Legal Services, an agency that we could never penetrate, although we made many phone call attempts and even showed up there in person, at three p.m., to find a sign on the door that said 'back at 3:30'. Peeking through the glass, we could see that the suite of offices was a ghost town.

During the afternoon of Day One, I spent hours on the phone with PG&E. The next two days were weekend days, so I used that time to write a blog and put together a package for the President of PG&E . . .

*PG&E*

77 Beale Street, 24th Floor Mail Code B24W San Francisco, CA  
94105

Attention: Anthony F. Earley, Jr., Chairman, Chief Executive  
Officer, and President and Linda Y. H. Cheng, Vice President,  
Corporate Governance and Corporate Secretary

Dear Sir and Madame,

***This letter is of a most urgent matter.*** On July  
24<sup>th</sup> (yesterday) I spent several hours on the phone trying to  
get assistance from PG&E in regard to a disabled veteran in my  
home town, who has been ordered out of his home for not having  
electricity.

I contacted your emergency number, because this disabled vet,  
who was ordered out of his home by midnight on Monday, July  
27<sup>th</sup>, is at high risk of suicide. Apparently, your people  
called the Sheriff's department, and sent me to collections.  
After explaining the situation at length to two people at  
PG&E, I was then referred to Collections. I was trying to  
speak with the District Manager; they would only give me  
collections.

Rebecca, in collections, insisted I get the disabled  
(distressed) vet on the phone, and then she proceeded to  
lecture us about the energy being a commodity and how the only  
way we will get the energy turned back on is to give PG&E four  
thousand dollars.

*According to Mr. Gary Gunn, the disabled veteran on whose behalf I write, PG&E has made unreasonable and difficult demands from the beginning. Mr. Gunn has had electricity at his home for six months of the past six years, and sometime around 2012, a friend tried to help him get the electric turned back on, but bounced a big check with PG&E and so the lights went off again.*

*On the phone call with Rebecca, I was requesting a complete investigation to the charges of that property, the usage, going back six years. I was denied. I also requested some kind of assistance from PG&E for this veteran, and she said 'we are a commodities business, not a charity'. It was a dead end with her and she made that clear. Four thousand dollars or no electric.*

*So we were denied an investigation – outright – and we were denied any consideration of turning the lights on so this disabled veteran doesn't get evicted.*

*He owns his home outright, there is no other debt, and he is a home-bound disabled sixty-year old man with a dying mate occupying a back bedroom. Merced County is about to evict him because he has no energy and he can't get energy because you have a MONOPOLY and your people won't work with him. (They claim they've tried, but 'working with him' means extorting large sums of money to get the lights on for very short periods of time. Case in point, he turned over a large part of his first disability check to PG&E, they turned the lights on for six months and then they were turned off again.)*

*He is spending \$400 to \$600 a month on fuel for a diesel generator and that provides minimal energy. His health gets*

worse, and he is in no mental condition to take up this battle. He legitimately threatened to blow his brains out, as he is about to be thrown out of his home and onto the streets, because of PG&E's refusal to work with him.

You might not know this, but it is estimated that twenty-six (26) vets a day commit suicide and the vast majority because they are denied services, denied access to basic human services.

Let's be clear. The City of Merced is about to make this man homeless. His suicide would be on their hands, technically. But why is the City making him homeless? Because he doesn't have electricity and the only player in town won't give it to him sans four thousand dollars. If the man had any money, we wouldn't be having this conversation.

The City of Merced, at my request, has extended the vacate order to August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Gary Gunn was once a proud Marine and is still a proud man. He will not watch the city put him and his dying mate on the streets, and board up his house. He will not live through that.

Let me say as well that Gary's mental health would be fine – if he wasn't facing homelessness. It is this situation that has aged him before my eyes. It is his living without electricity (and no hope) that has aged him, and affected his health adversely. He is homebound, cannot drive, so he can't even buy a lottery ticket and hope the universe craps enough

money on him to get PG&E to turn the lights on. He had no hope, but I have convinced him that there is hope and that is you (two). I write you to beseech you to 'do something'. Make the electric at his home your problem for which a resolution must be found – quickly. You deal with Rebecca the Hun in Collections. You have the power to fix this – literally.

I met Gary Gunn seven years ago, when his doctor asked the Sisters to visit him and provide him with some choices in alternative pain medicine. In all the time I knew him, he never asked for our help with PG&E. He is hurt and angry about the situation, and didn't bring it to my attention until he was at the edge of the cliff.

He received the vacate notice Tuesday of last week and contacted me Thursday. The next day, Friday, I got the County to agree to extend the date to give us time to work this out. I have enclosed two of the most recent notices from the County (that include his address) and the e-mail correspondence from me to the County, as well as a blog about 'throw away' people that I began. The Sisters take a particular interest in helping 'throw away' people – which is what PG&E and the County are colluding to make Mr. Gunn. I do trust you can help us make this story have a happy ending. We are certainly willing to do our part.

Most hopefully,

Sister Kate

Sisters of the Valley

On Monday morning, I was again back in front of the attorney, with him reading this letter. (This is a local attorney who doesn't charge the Sisters for advice . . . a good guy.)

"Do you think it's too strong?" I asked him.

"Rebecca the Hun in Collections. You are funny, Sister." He said and setting the letter down added, "You send it just as it is, Sister, please."

I rushed from his office to UPS to overnight two copies of the letter, in two different envelopes, for both recipients independently, for signature delivery, and it cost around fifty dollars. Later that night, I realized that I sent the letters, without the attachments! I had to remind myself to slow down and the next day, I sent another round, with attachments.

That was Tuesday, and that day we spent at the Veterans Administration. Two women, one his representative at the VA and one a liaison in Fresno, reached out and got a third woman involved from Veteran's Affairs, and those women worked to get someone to help. I began to collect contacts and numbers and email addresses of people within the VA that cared about what was happening here. And all of them got all the information that I sent to PG&E . . . the blog story about 'throw away people' that expressed my sheer repulsion at the idea of this man being escorted out of his own home for being poor, the vacate notices, the energy bills, the e-mail correspondence and statuses I gave to the County.

By Wednesday, I was sick and in bed with a cold, and just kind

of praying that all the ripples I sent out would net me a fish. Not any fish . . . I really needed PG&E. And when a nice man finally called me back from Veteran's Affairs to find out what he could do to help, my first statement to him (and to any one offering help for that matter) was 'get PG&E to come to the table'. I would remind everyone that PG&E is given the right by the citizenry to operate our public utilities (our natural resources) and without them at the table to fix this, no solution is a permanent one. So every ripple I sent out was with the specific directive of getting PG&E to the table.

I lost Wednesday in bed to a bad cold, but emails and calls kept happening and I was able to catch and maintain. Thursday morning I was supposed to drive to the UCSF dental school three hours away and tried to reschedule, but my procedure was specialized and it would have delayed it all another month, so I drug myself there. It took three hours to get there, three hours in the dentists' chair, and five hours to get back home. The cold was brought on two days prior by me spending all afternoon and into early evening with my disabled veteran, going in and out of buildings with the air conditioning set at frickin' freezing, while temperatures outside are one hundred and five degrees. I sat and baked in the Walmart parking lot while my vet got some dog food and cigarettes. And then I took the drive from hell, also baking in the hot sun with the A/C blowing on me in the car . . . by Friday, I had a cold and a bad back.

While I was focused on doing the bare minimum, my vet arranged to purchase and build a solar kit. It was an inexpensive kit, and gave him only about an hour's worth of energy after dark, but it was a start. It made him feel better to make the motions. He called me sadly, though, to report that the county will charge him four hundred dollars for a permit to operate it.

On Day Ten (this past Monday), I finally could move enough to do some housework, and as I cleaned, I wondered about next steps with my Veteran. It was beyond my belief that the heads of PG&E had my package for five days and still, no word. It was beyond my belief that the Veterans Administration didn't have it within their where-with-all to get to a district manager at PG&E and coerce him to call me. I dusted and vacuumed away some of my frustrations. I pondered. That afternoon, I posted my story on Sara Silbrik's facebook page (ABC News in Fresno) and wondered if it was too late. I called our Congressman's office and reported the situation.

On Day Eleven, I lit a candle, prayed something would happen, and turned my attention to the dragons at the door of the Abbey. It was August fourth and the delay of funds coming to us from the IRS was causing all the bills to blow up around here, all the accounts to overdraw, and I had to call and beg time with all sorts of institutions.

On Day Twelve, I was getting desperate and wrote the following email to the County:

*Dear Vicki,*

*Again, tomorrow, I have to be in San Francisco, so we are running out of time with Mr. Gunn.*

*a. We did try to get help from the VA, but have not heard back from them. I am copying his representative at the VA, with this update.*

b. ABC News, Sara Sandrik's help has been requested and she passed on my request that the media get involved, but neither of us have heard from them.

c. No PHONE calls or responses to the letters sent to PG&E.

It appears that I am the only one who sees any urgency in this . . . PG&E has not been driven to the table, and the very least I expected from the V.A. was to get them to impel PG&E to make a phone call to our vet to work this out. Maybe the veterans administration has absolutely no pull with PG&E.

In the meantime, Mr. Gunn has assembled an inexpensive solar kit. He is being told that he needs a \$400 permit from the city in order to operate that solar.

I think, Vicki, it's time you and I get serious about resolving this. One, there must be someone at the city or county level that can certify this vet for solar without him having to pay a fee. Secondly, we need a friendly inspector to 'ok' what he has done. At least to 'ok' the situation for a period of time . . .

PG&E, apparently, is like the Vatican. No higher authority. No one can get them to even call Mr. Gunn or I, and they have already declared that it would cost \$4K to put the lights on, much more to keep them on.

The Sisters of the Valley could put an account in our name, rent Gary's place from him and get the lights turned on, but that will require a deposit and we have our next funding

*coming in to us around the middle of August, so we wouldn't be able to put up a deposit before that time.*

*Do you have any suggestions? I'm running out of time and ideas. I've escalated in every direction I know of and I'm appalled that PG&E didn't respond to anything.*

*Please advise.*

*Sister Kate*

When I pushed the send button on that email, I put my head down on my desk and said, "Oh, Lord, give me the strength . . . I think I'm going to have to round up all the occupy folks in the valley to make an action so big that the County won't dare step through the folks to make a disabled vet homeless . . . I will make a human barricade a thousand-folk deep." With my head on the desk, I let myself imagine reporters and light-flashes and media vans and protest signs and the sheriff's department and hordes of people . . . then poof, that imagery was replaced with the image of the phone calls I would have to make, the work I would have to do . . . so little time . . . With my head still on the desk and my arms dangling in defeat, I said, out loud::

*"Lord, you know and I know that I am capable of pulling this off, but dude! I'm tired as shit! Is this really necessary?"*

I think I still had my head on the desk when the phone rang. It was a San Francisco number. It was a veteran who works for PG&E and he asked me what he could do to help me help my

veteran. I think I was so shocked by the timing of it all, that my first statement was "Don't hang up! Don't hang up and first, I want your name and direct number in case we get disconnected." I think I also said, "You called! You called! Oh my God, PG&E called! Sir, you have to work this out with me, I'm so *not* up to organizing an action."

This man sounded like a kind old country doctor. "Of course I'm going to help you." Were the first words out of his mouth. On that call, he agreed the energy could be turned up immediately and put on the Sisters of the Valley's account. He said he would do an investigation into the back charges. He said there would be no requirement for a deposit. I wanted to kiss that man!

I had to get busy notifying everyone that it appeared there was a happy conclusion. And the next morning (yesterday), the news got even better. The man from PG&E with the country doctor voice and manners called to say that he investigated the past charges and found that they are outside the statute of limitations on collections and he is having all but seven hundred dollars removed from the bill. (He made nine thousand three hundred dollars of charges disappear.) He further said that money wouldn't be due until we could pay it, that he also enrolled the veteran in a discount program and there is another program that the vet is eligible for, in regard to a little more subsidies, but there are medical forms that have to be completed by the doctor and they are in the mail. It isn't necessary for the Sisters of the Valley to carry the energy bill, as they are having it turned up in the vet's name. The first day I spoke with this man, I could have kissed him. Receiving that news, I wanted to marry him.

The lights went on yesterday. Also, yesterday, a friend of the

Sisters took a thousand dollars to our landlord to cover the rent check that bounced (good grief!). It's over. The county has been notified and an inspector will arrive sometime today to flick the lights on and off, initial a piece of paper, and then (hopefully) ride off into the sunset. The vacate notice will be nullified. Our veteran is safe. The Sisters are safe. I can go back to work . . .

Sister Kate

PS. Thank you all for your prayers and words of inspiration.

PPS. If you want to help us, visit our [store](#) and check out our pain relief products. They are, afterall, what led me into this adventure.