

The Parking Violation

by Tim Page

It was a cold day in March. This doesn't matter. What made this day different was my thoughts. My Father-in-law was in the later stages of bowel cancer; my step father was taken down with ALS. Both these men, strong and active would die in the same week in the coming April.

I drove to the swimming pool as I did each Thursday with a lot on my mind and running later than usual. I drove around the neighbourhood looking for a parking spot. Finally, I found a vacant spot. I parallel parked and bolted off to the pool.

It was always a good day when my buddy Bob was there. We got along well, talking and laughing. He often told jokes. He had surprising knowledge of the world's most familiar novels. Often, we would stand in the shallow end and talk.

I didn't speak of the illness that those close to me were experiencing. This day was just nice to have the ear of a friend. We talked as usual about things that were interesting but insignificant. This was enough to take my mind off the family matters.

This day we conversed longer than I actually swam. When the pool closed, I went for a shower, taking my time, writing my thoughts in my journal. Bob had left and I had a few precious moments alone in the locker room. This was a practice I carried on for several years after I was showered and dressed.

I walked slowly from the pool feeling the cold March wind blowing right into my face. As I turned the corner where I parked, there was some commotion around my vehicle.

There were two men standing beside my car, one of whom was upset and waving his cane in distress.

As I moved closer, I pulled out the key and the man spoke directly to me, "You've parked right in front of my driveway! Can't you tell?"

I was completely unaware of what I had done. I looked over to his van which had a disabled sticker in the window. "Oops," I thought to myself."

"The Bylaw officer is on his way," said the fellow still waving his cane.

"Sorry," I said as I got in the car and drove away as quickly and discreetly as possible trying to avoid the wrath of the man and the white Bylaw vehicle which could be coming around the corner at any moment ready to write me a ticket. I was completely guilty and escaped before I was penalized.

I was in the wrong. I had inconvenienced the man. There are worse things than having your parking space blocked but he had a right to be angry.

Th following week, I drove to the pool and parked on a different street. I had a Tim Horton's gift card tucked into a written apology for having inconvenienced the fellow. I put the card in his mailbox and walked away.

I never saw the man again. And I hope that perhaps he might understand that I didn't block his driveway intentionally and with an apology there was still some goodness in the world.