

Stuck on 108 St. with the car park blues again

by Nina Miller

In the past students protested for civil rights, peace and long hair. Today students complain about where to park their gas-guzzlers. But why shouldn't they complain if there is a parking problem?

This year, out of 3000 students who applied for parking spaces, 900 were refused. This doesn't include those who gave up applying years ago or those who couldn't understand the application form.

A considerable number of people who apply live within a few miles of the campus, or even within walking distance. For example, a forty-five year old lady phoned parking services and demanded a sticker because of her age, even though she lives on Whyte Avenue. Jim Carrol, manager of parking services, set her straight. "You're not very old," he said, "I'm a heck of a lot older and I take the bus."

Whether or not you deserve a sticker is determined by the allocation system set up by the Housing and Transport Committee of the Students' Union. Living out of town or having a car-pool increases one's chances for a parking space.

If you're cunning, the solution is obvious. An unethical person might submit a phony application with a false address or an imaginary carpool to qualify for a space.

Although Jim Carrol says he doesn't think this practice is widespread, cheating has been brought to his attention by indignant students. They complain of neighbors who obtain stickers under false pretenses. These kind, concerned citizens however, never disclose the

Occasionally one hears students boast of their prowess at beating the system. Parking services does little to deter these people other than a perfunctory check.

Carrol admits, "This is not a wise practice, but it is irksome. Then again I don't see myself as every student's conscience." Would you rather have a place in heaven or a place in Zone X?

Please, not in Zone X! Otherwise known as the Jubilee Auditorium lot, it has a capacity of about 800 cars. By 9:00 a.m. some people will swear there is only one spot left — the one furthest from campus. One student moaned that it takes her fifteen minutes to walk from there to HUB.

Finding one's car in that maze can be difficult. Another student calls Zone X the Sahara Desert. She explains, "After classes each day I crawl to the door of every car but alas, it is not my car, merely a mirage." I can sympathize. One day it took an hour of frantic searching through that vast lot before I found my car.

The reason assigned lots are filled is that the system works on a delicate balance. That is, 6000 permits are sold for roughly 5200 spaces. This doesn't include visitor parking, which doesn't operate on an arbitrary basis but rather an intuitive one.

"We sell as many visitor permits a day as we think we can," said Jim Carrol. "The parking attendants can usually tell by 11:00 a.m. whether there is adequate space for daily visitors."

"As it gets colder, visitor parking is more readily

available," adds Carrol, "thanks to foreign cars that don't start in winter."

Plug-ins are a highly valued item. Again, they are awarded on the allocation system. Top priority are university staff, professors, and physical handicapped people. All people in these categories can obtain one if they want, whether or not they need one.

Next are the out-of-town students. Of 1000 who applied, 200 to 300 were refused plug-ins. There are 3000 plug-ins but most of those went to the top priorities. "1000 is a heck of a lot of people who live or say they live out of town," says Carrol. "But when considering

Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Ardrossan, etc., the figure seems reasonable."

Jeeps and four wheel drives seem to be least affected by the parking shortage. They just crawl over the curb, through the bushes, and park on the median. Ten dollar parking fines do get expensive, however.

In an average month over 1000 university parking fines may be issued, not to mention those issues by the city in surrounding areas. Residents in areas surrounding the university requested two-hour time limits on parking. Rumor has it that Windsor Park retains its own resident commissioner.

Then there is meter parking.

One student can't bear to leave his car alone at home. Thus, his university life is regulated by meter-feeding times.

When Gordon Perry, director of campus security and supervisor of parking services, learned I was doing a story on parking, he said, "Oh, you're writing a tragedy."

He says the "parking blues" are caused by lack of space. However, an expansion of parking facilities isn't planned for the future.

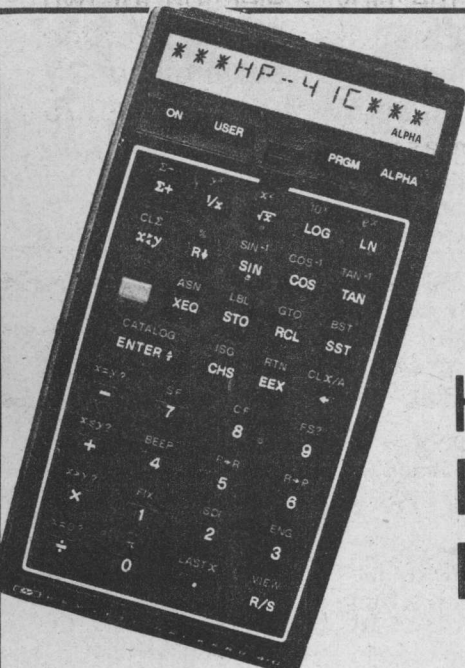
"The parking lots are self-supporting. Therefore winter parking must make up for the lag in summer parking," says Gordon Perry.

"If a new lot was built there is no question prices would go way up," adds Carrol. There would also be a shortage of parking while it was under construction because it would take over a zone."

"The University Hospital has plans to build a multi-storey car park," says a hospital source. There will also be parking in the new hospital, which will lighten the load on university parking. Whether the university will have access to the hospital's car park is still unknown.

Carrol says he believes the system is running well. The only real hassle occurs during the first few weeks of term. Usually a couple of hundred stickers are unclaimed and must be redistributed quickly. Then the parking office is besieged by a constant stream of people appealing parking decisions. Parking is just one part of the wondrous mass of red tape called university. Fortunately, the parking problem is only temporary — with higher gasoline prices it may well disappear.






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