

Feedback on peeves



The WordchipperSM

by Larry Gauper • #302

Wordchipper@Gmail.com
Blog: www.Wordchipper.com

Publication: June 23, 2011

I heard from a number of readers of my pet peeve list which I ran in this space a couple of weeks ago (*Wordchipper* #300, available on *The Extra's* website). Most agreed with nearly all of my gripes, but there was one item on the list that aroused disagreement from several readers: my concern that some people might be abusing the handicapped parking privilege. I mentioned how I sometimes see those with handicap permits pull into a blue-lined space, jump out of the car, and beat me to the store. I dared to raise the point that some people who have permits just might not deserve them.

A couple of readers angrily told me I was wrong and it was interesting hearing those views. In my defense, the point I was trying to make was that those who *need* permits should have them and if there are drivers out there who have secured a permit fraudulently or through some easier-than-it-should-be process, hey, that's not right. And these drivers are taking up space needed by those who medically require it. For folks who do have medical challenges requiring them to park as close as possible to their destination, permitted spaces need to be available. God knows—and I realize—that I may need one myself someday.

One of the criticisms of my “parking peeve” was exceptionally thoughtful and informative. It was from a reader whose friends know her as Annie Bee and she apparently has had quite a bit of experience with this subject.

Annie writes: “I could give you over 30 examples of people who appear to be well, healthy, and agile who truly and definitely need to have the accommodation of parking close. Many of these people hang out in the parking lots until one of the designated parking spots opens up.

“Seven weeks ago I attended a funeral for one of the persons I worked with. Three days before he died he had endured being cursed at by someone who thought he didn't belong in a handicap reserved space, getting the bird from another person at a later time that same day, and, two days before he died, he found a nasty note on his windshield when returning to his car at yet another place. Yes, people with *invisible* disabilities – and some with visible ones– suffer from all sorts of abuse because of people's mistaken judgments (and thoughtless or mean behaviors). This man died while out doing his errands: after sprinting as usual into a store, he became faint and blue. An ambulance was called, but he died on the way to the hospital. He had his handicap sticker for only eight months, because he held out against it—and against the advice of his doctor—for over three years. He didn't want the stigma, and he knew his disabilities were invisible.

“For most people handicapped parking permits are not as easy to get as you might think. Yes, a few may find their way around all the restrictions, but the fact remains that a medical doctor, often a specialist, must document the need for it and certify the disability. There is paperwork involved and the permits do expire and require renewal, all of which often means additional doctor visits, costs sometimes not covered by insurance.

“Finally, I would like to note that you are not alone in making judgments [about handicapped people with parking permits]. Not only do able-bodied, healthy people judge others to be undeserving of such parking privileges or misusing them, but other people *with disabilities* also judge and misjudge. Too often we judge by *appearances*, and yet appearances are more often than not deceiving. I hope you come to a more compassionate view, and with your great talent with words and exposure to the public you will help others to become more compassionate and less judgmental over all.”

Annie, I've learned something from your comments and, as a result, readers won't see that peeve on any of my future lists. I'll stick to check-out lines and politicians. Thank you so much for reading my column, your kind words, and for taking time to give me your helpful insights.

I also heard from Brad Stephenson, owner of B. D. S. Books in downtown Fargo, who had a number of pet peeves of his own to share. What bothers him are some of the things local publications, including *this* one, are doing or not doing. Read all about it, right here, next week!