

Over the Back Fence
For Friday April 25, 2008
Approx 620 words

Getting even
By Alva Wood

Veejay Ramcharan has been having some difficulties with the village administration. Veejay has the only tow truck in town. So when the bylaw officer tickets a vehicle for parking in a No Parking zone, Veejay tows it away.

With more people driving through the village to get from somewhere to anywhere, Veejay's towing business has grown. Strangers don't believe that a village as small as this would actually have parking regulations.

So Veejay hauls their vehicles down to the impound yard in River City, and invoices the village offices for his services.

On one of those trips, he salvaged an illuminated sign from a campground that had been sold to a developer for a destination casino, whatever that is.

Veejay brought the sign back, and mounted it on a pair of posts on a concrete footing out in front of his garage.

The building inspector came around. "Where's your building permit?" he demands.

"It's not a building," says Veejay.

"You put concrete in the ground, you need a permit," says the inspector.

Veejay goes down to the village offices. He fills out an application. With a gazillion details.

"Your sign's too high," says a village engineer.

"You have height restrictions for signs?" Veejay demands.

"We have regulations for everything," says the engineer.

Veejay lowers his sign just enough to scrape under the regulation.

"The pole's still too tall," he gets told.

"Your regulations are for signs, not for poles," Veejay tells him.

Then they tell him it's too bright. Veejay hears some gobbledegook that sounds like lumens per square Newton-meter, at 127 decibels, 80 proof, corrected to 15 degrees C, 19 times out of 20.

He doesn't understand. But he removes one fluorescent tube anyway. The sign flickers constantly, but now it's dim enough.

Last Friday afternoon, Veejay hauls another parking infraction down to River City. On the way home, he stops at the pub for a beer.

The next table is filled with village staff who have been attending a regional district meeting. Any other day, these meetings run through dinner, on the expense account, of course. On Fridays, amazingly, they always finish early.

Veejay can overhear them discussing him.

"That bugger's always looking for a loophole in our regulations," grumbles the building inspector.

"Have you seen all the junk cars behind his garage?" asks another voice. "We need a bylaw against auto wrecker's yards in our downtown area."

"Immigrants," whines someone else. "They just don't do things our way."

Freddie Fallis chimes in. "It's damn hard to budget," he says, "when I never know how big a towing bill I'm going to get any month. I hate writing out that cheque requisition."

"And I hate approving it," mutters administrator Henry Hill, "especially when it's for my truck."

There's a round of laughter. Everyone's heard how Veejay towed Henry's pickup truck after he left it for three hours in a No Stopping slot in front of Erma's Coffee Shop and Bakery. With a village logo on the door, he thought he would be exempt.

Veejay quietly finishes his glass of beer. "Bring a jug of whatever beer they're drinking over there," he asks the waitress.

Veejay carries the brimming jug of beer over to the staff table. "With my compliments," he says. "No hard feelings, eh?"

Then he heads for the door.

At the payphone outside the door, he calls the River City RCMP detachment.

“Just a tip,” he says. “About an hour from now, there’s likely to be several slightly inebriated drivers coming out of the pub here.”

“They’re all driving little white pickup trucks,” Veejay says. “With ‘Village of Schist Creek’ decals on the doors.”

He was quite disappointed when they took taxis home and came back the next day for their trucks.