

Over the Back Fence
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Pedal to the metal
By Alva Wood

Being built on a steep hillside, our village has lots of winding roads that go up and down. Bicycle racers love it. Going uphill builds stamina. Going downhill gives them an adrenaline rush.

The River City Cycle Racing Club uses our roads as training for the Ironman Triathlon in Penticton. They organize a run through our village almost every weekend.

Unfortunately, the same roads also attract a few of River City's sanity-challenged young men in their hot-rodded trucks and hatchbacks. Going uphill, they leave spectacular snaky rubber tracks on the road. Going downhill, they test their tires' adhesion against centrifugal forces on tight corners.

One young fella with more testosterone than brains missed one corner completely and went flying off the road into the creek. Aside from killing himself, his spilled antifreeze and oil destroyed crucial Kokanee habitat in the creek.

So village residents have been campaigning for lower speed limits.

"That land along the creek is classed as a public park," Lakshmi Ramcharan told Council. "That should automatically mean a reduced speed limit."

"It sets a bad example for our own children," said Nellie Rinehart, whose youngest son John will be coming up for his driver's licence in a year or so.

"It's our road," Terry Brown argued. "Why should outsiders get all the fun?"

Council yielded, in spite of Dunc McMahan's objections. "Kids are always going to kill themselves," he argued. "That's Darwin's Theory of Evolution. It's the process of natural selection, survival of the fittest."

"Possibly," replied mayor Jake Bowers. "But I'd rather they selected some place other than our creek to eliminate themselves."

Council lowered the speed limit to 30 km/hr. Freddie Fallis ordered a dozen new speed limit signs. His flunkies stuck them up every 100 meters.

No one paid any attention.

So last Sunday morning, Lakshmi and Nellie rent a radar gun and display board. They set it up to catch the drivers zooming downhill. They flag down anyone going more than 10 km/hr over the limit.

The first person they catch is Ollie Armitage, rumbling along in his pickup truck. "I've been driving along here for 60 years," Ollie snorts impatiently. "Nobody consulted ME about speed limits!"

The next is Isabella Adams. "What speed limit signs?" she protests, pulled up right underneath one of them.

Lakshmi and Nellie notice that most drivers slow down as soon as they see a radar read-out. But quite a few speed up as soon as they're past the checkpoint.

Nellie notes their licence plate numbers. Then she calls ahead to Moose Green, who's waiting around the next corner with a real radar trap.

All goes well until one of those River City flocks of bicycle racers come hurtling full tilt down the hill.

The radar shows 51 km/hr.

Lakshmi steps out into the roadway, flapping her sari like a Canada goose attempting to take off.

The riders swerve past her, but don't stop. After all, they're training for a race.

But one guy, going past, raises his thumb in a salute, and hollers out, "Fifty-one clicks? Wow, we're movin'!"

"They're more than 20 over the limit," says Lakshmi.

"We'd better call Moose," grins Nellie.

She gets on the phone. "Vehicles coming," she reports. "Travelling 51 km/hr. Unlicensed."

About 20 minutes later, Moose's RCMP cruiser appears around the corner. He rolls down his window as he pulls up. He does not look happy.

The riders did not appreciate being flagged down by a cop, it seems. They gave him a hard time about interrupting a race, blowing their chances to win, and generally interfering with good wholesome healthy activities.

He was not amused.

“Thanks a whole bunch!” he growls as he drives off.

Their radar clocks him leaving at 47 km/hr.