

The Prospect Bumblebee - Part 2 *by Gwenn T. Fischer*

I certainly have an interesting job as Editor of this wonderful monthly paper. I have the unique opportunity of being in a position to receive criticism and/or praise for the things I do (or don't do, as the case may be).

Last month, many of our readers saw the article that I wrote from the seat of my yellow scooter. No sooner had the paper hit the streets, so to speak, than The Prospect Pages office received a phone message from one of our very observant citizens. As much as I do attempt to do everything in my power to not break the law, this seemingly astute observer decided there wasn't much more to her life than to find fault with my bumblebee lifestyle.

Without leaving her name and/or contact number, she left the following verbatim message on voice mail:

Verbatim transcript of telephone call received at 2:09 p.m. on August 1, 2006

"This message is for Gwenn Fischer. I just read her article about her scooter. I wondered who that scooter belonged to. It's been parked in the striped part of the handicapped parking lot at Oliver's and then over at CVS on the sidewalk. She's not above the law; she does have to abide by all the rules and regulations. The next time I see it parked in a handicap spot, I will indeed call the police and notify them. I expect her to abide by all the rules regardless of whether she feels she has to or not. Thank you."

Now, how's that for policing Prospect? Since I am the Editor and have a bit of time on MY hands at the moment, I get to respond in print to her statement. First of all, yes, I have confessed that I am the scooter that does appear occasionally at Oliver's and CVS. I figure, what's the sense of having a scooter to save money, if I don't use it to run my daily errands around town?

I would adamantly argue the fact, however, that this reader has EVER seen me park in the striped portion of the handicap space at Oliver's, because I've always parked on the sidewalks at both businesses, out of the way of walking traffic. There would

be no reason for me to park the "bike" in or even near the handicap area of either parking lot. However, after receiving this very rude telephone message, I decided to do a little more research on my parking habits. I sought out our Resident State Trooper, TFC Nelson Abarzua, who explained that under no circumstances could the scooter be parked in any striped part of a handicapped area. That particular area is designated with the stripes to allow for easy and convenient access for handicapped drivers.

When I wrote the article last month, something that I didn't mention, that readers may or may not realize is that the moped is put into a "bicycle" category, even though it has a motor. The web offered more information and I uncovered the following: In the State of Connecticut, "bicycle" includes all vehicles propelled by the person riding the same by foot or hand power or a helper motor; and "helper motor" means a motor having a capacity of less than fifty cubic centimeters piston displacement, rated not more than two brake horsepower, capable of a maximum speed of no more than 30 miles per hour and equipped with automatic transmission." [CT Sec. 14-286(e)(2) & (3)]. My scooter falls within this category.

In our discussion, Trooper Abarzua told me that scooters are also not allowed to travel and/or park on sidewalks. He informed me that when I pull into a parking lot, I am required to use a full parking space, one that has been designated for a standard vehicle. In the past, I have purposely not parked it in an open parking space for a couple of reasons. Not only would that take up one valuable car space, but I wouldn't trust that someone might not hit the scooter, doing damage to their car and my transportation.

With a bit more research online, I discovered that CT Sec. 14-286 also states the following, "No person shall operate a bicycle upon or along a sidewalk or across a roadway upon and along a crosswalk if such operation is prohibited by any ordinance of any city, town or borough or by any regulation of the State Traffic Commission issued or adopted

pursuant to the provisions of Section 14-298."

Little did I know how much of a problem trying to be thrifty and economical on my scooter would end up being. I'm not in the habit of breaking the law. In fact, over my life as Editor of this paper, I have written past articles on safety in driving around our small town. So when this caller left this message on voice mail, it really rattled my cage.

I must admit, however, that I'm still confused about the sidewalk ruling. I understand that the law prohibits operating this "bicycle" on a crosswalk or sidewalk, but the businesses of Oliver's Supermarket and CVS are private properties. And I'm not comfortable at all parking my yellow scooter in a full parking space in either parking lot. I've seen how some people in this town drive and park and I am honestly scared that someone will accidentally hit it.

So where does this all leave me? I have one reader ready to call the police and put me behind bars; and another dozen readers at the very least who have come right up to me and commented how much they love seeing me on the scooter. How would the majority of our citizens react if they saw my scooter taking up a full parking space in either parking lot? I tend to think I'd get many more telephone messages reprimanding me about that parking habit.

In the end, if we start to see more and more motor scooters and "helper motor" vehicles on our roadways, I think there needs to be a better clarification on the laws and regulations surrounding them. Since Len Noble, owner of Oliver's Supermarket, has granted me permission, I will park just in front of his store while I do my shopping there, well out of the way of pedestrian traffic. I will run my errands at CVS from that location as well, hoping all the while I don't ruffle the feathers of our self-appointed Prospect police unit.

I thank all of you who did take the time to mention you liked the article. I am still having a lot of fun riding it and will use caution and consideration when parking it around town.

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