

Myth-conceptions about driving: do you follow rules or rumours?

Ruminations and illuminations on parking and passing on suburban streets: a reader shares his views

The day we moved into our new home in Winnipeg was a momentous one. The only calm individuals were the two gentlemen hauling in our stuff, who smiled the entire time, even when they told me someone just backed in to our car.

You read that right. We'd been in our new neighbourhood about two hours, and met the first neighbour... by accident, shall we say. Yes, we found out the hard way about the "no parking" side of the roadway.

You see, the moving van blocked the sign warning us we couldn't park on that side of the street. Being from Vancouver, where there are no such restrictions, we never thought twice about it. My neighbour across the street assumed there would be nothing in her path as she reversed from her driveway. Minivan, meet compact car.

I'm relating this story as it ties in nicely to an email I received from a reader, asking me to write a column on



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the proper way for two vehicles to pass each other if there happens to be a parked vehicle on the (hopefully correct!) side of the road.

A reader writes

Here's his letter:

"Yesterday I was driving home on your average residential street, where there was room for two "cooperative" drivers to meet and pass safely, even though there was a car parked along one curb.

Winnipeg drivers seem to believe that those drivers on the "parking" side of the road must yield to oncoming traffic, i.e. pull over into a break in the row of parked cars so that the person

travelling on the "no parking" side can whiz past unobstructed.

"Actually, there is an equal duty on both drivers when meeting an approaching vehicle to share the available roadway, and often that available roadway is what's left over after you subtract the space taken up by snow banks or parked vehicles on the roadside. In summer, there is usually still enough room for cooperative drivers to pass by each other safely. Obviously this available space decreases when snow banks block part of the roadway, too.

"At any rate, yesterday I was following a vehicle down the "no parking" side of the roadway. There were cars parked along the curb, and a few more approaching us. The complete moron ahead of me apparently felt he owned the road. A couple of cars made it by but I guess the last car was one more than he could handle. He literally jammed on

his brakes and swerved to his left directly into the path of this oncoming vehicle, completely cutting him off. I guess he was reinforcing his misguided message of complete lane ownership. The oncoming car hit the binders and missed him by only a couple of feet. Then the moron started yelling out the window! I couldn't believe my eyes.

"So anyhow...perhaps you could consider a column in future reminding drivers to share the roadway space that is "available." That doesn't mean you get half of the entire roadway. You only get half of the open space available. The Highway Traffic Act puts an onus on both drivers, so they shouldn't charge down the roadway thinking they own the road!"

I'd like to thank that reader for a timely driving lesson.

His point is well taken. The roads are narrow enough, and once the snow piles up, navigating them can be tricky, indeed. Obviously, courtesy (and

maybe self preservation) indicates that if you're a driver facing parked cars in your lane and an approaching vehicle in the other, it's easiest to get out of the way and pull into a break between the parked cars, if there is one. However, it's certainly not mandatory for you to do so. It is mandatory that both drivers make a reasonable effort to share the available road space. Drivers in the "non parking" lane should remember that.

In fact, both drivers should know that if there really is not room to pass safely, BOTH should stop and, if needed, help each other get past. What a concept.

That's it for this week. Until next week, be **RoadWise**.

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