

Traffic ticket trauma

Isn't it awful to be stopped on the side of the road embarrassed as all get out while a police officer gives you a speeding ticket?

I was informed I was being charged to wit; exceeding the speed limit by not more than 20 and not less than 10 miles per hour in excess of the limit of 50 miles per hour.

Your heart sinks when you realize you've run afoul of the law.

Anger begins to seethe deep down in your chest as what seems thousands upon thousands of errant drivers speed by at super-sonic speed undetected, unchallenged, Scott free.

The officer asked me politely to step out of the car to look at the reading on the radar clock. I've always had difficulty telling time ever since grade one or two in school but I gently nodded to him as much as to say I understand. I really didn't.

While writing out the ticket he mentioned "He just didn't know what the Inspector was going to say about this."

I opened my trap before I put my brain in gear. "Surely, now you don't have to go up all the way to an Inspector over being 12 miles per hour over the limit," was my retort. He didn't take kindly to my words.

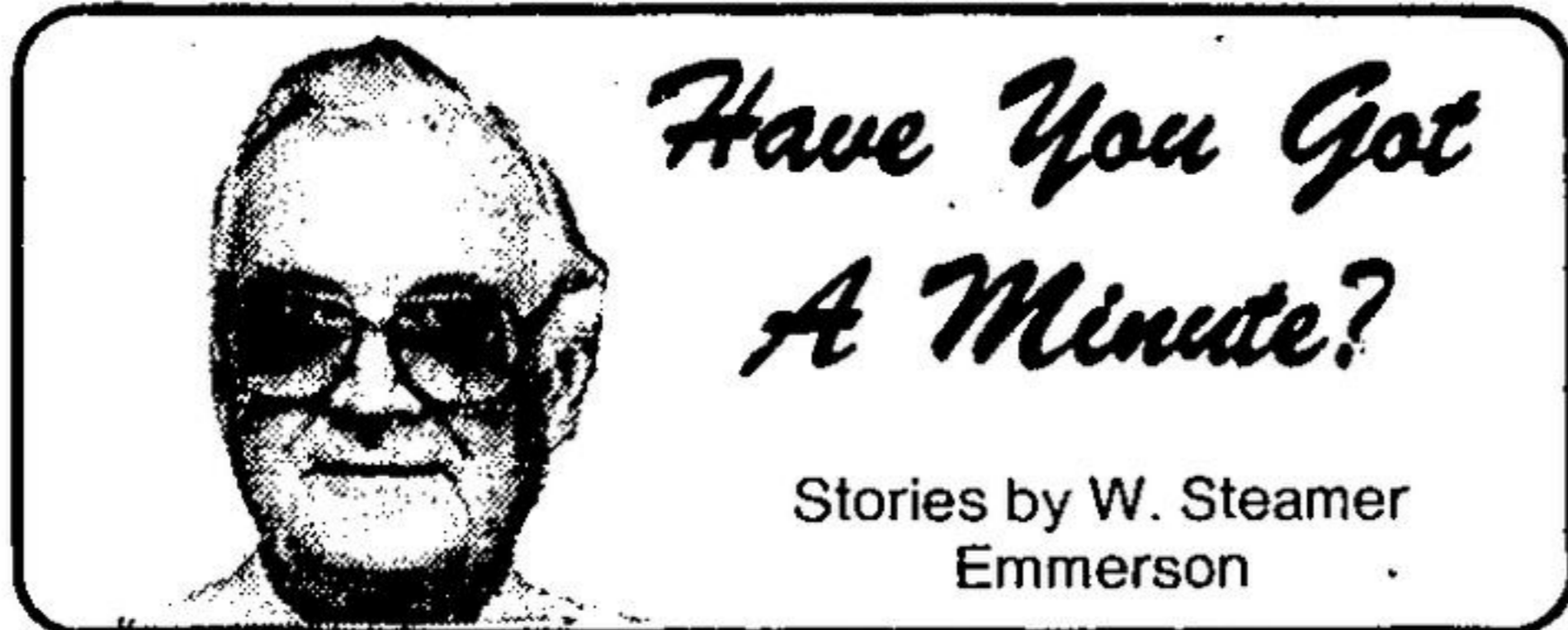
He took an extra few minutes to check my car out and I was suspicious he was hoping to nick me again for some infraction.

Instead of shutting up and getting on with my business I decided to explain to the Inspector if the officer would kindly tell me where he was.

He didn't take kindly to my suggestion of a trioka meeting of himself, me and the Inspector. I was told to get going and if I wanted to talk so much tell it to the judge.

By George, good advice arose out of a ticklish situation. That's exactly what I'll do. Tell it to the judge.

I should have saved the time and money. The judge was a rapid-fire, no nonsense, get through the list then go home type. He didn't suffer fools glad-



Have You Got A Minute?

Stories by W. Steamer Emerson

ly. In that crowded courtroom all I heard was him loudly exclaiming, "Guilty, pay the clerk." Somehow I naively felt the would certainly pay attention to me when I wanted to call the Inspector to the stand so I could cross examine him like the TV lawyers.

Surely he would size up in a moment that I was really a babe in arms and those thousands of speedsters that went unnoticed should be the ones in his courtroom. Not I.

If you think I ruffled the feathers of the police officer the day I was clocked and charged you should have been there to see the fur fly when the judge and I got going.

No one told me you were to stand up when he came in. No one told me how cases were conducted. I had no idea of cross-examination. Goodness, I was a novice at trial proceedings. My ignorance soon came to the fore. Good gracious, I was in over my head.

After the officer gave his brief, concise testimony I had to be told by the judge I could cross examine the officer before he left the stand. By this time I'm willing to change my plea to guilty just to get out of there.

I didn't know what to do or say so I decided to wade in and hope for the best.

I asked the officer if the Inspector was in the courtroom. "No, sir, he is not." "Why not?" I asked in my best voice. The judge interrupted and asked if the Inspector was to be called as a witness. Dumb me said "Yes, I would like to ask the Inspector what he had

to say when the officer discussed my case with him."

Heavens to Betsy everyone in the judicial system in that courtroom including the judge knew I was an incompetent and ill prepared.

The Inspector was not in the courtroom, had not been subpoenaed as a witness by me and the judge had run out of patience over a \$16 traffic ticket. My case fell apart. I threw myself on the mercy of the court.

The judge gave me a sharp lecture that driving was a privilege, not to be abused. Why on earth I gave him a shot that driving was an ordeal I don't know. I couldn't believe my own ears when I heard my own voice offering up a statement contradictory to the judges.

When he thundered he found me guilty and to pay the fine and costs I inadvertently blurted out I thought the fines levied were an excellent fund-raising method.

By this time the case behind mine was already in process (I'll say this much, they were fast), when the judge returned his attention to me.

He told me to pay the fine and he didn't want to ever see my face again in Ottawa ever.

Once when I toyed with the idea of seeking the local nomination as the M.P. to go to Ottawa I thought of the judge's words. He struck me as a man who meant what he said with the memory of an elephant.

I've never been to the Parliament Buildings.

I'm afraid I'll be trapped sure as Hades.



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