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ETCETERA

Tales of parking lot terror

Feel like you're putting your life on the line to get a bag of milk? Do you increase your deductible every time you need to pick up your dry cleaning?

Share your tales of shopping terror by letting us know where you've encountered the "world's worst parking lot." You can fax us at (905) 294-1538 or e-mail us at newsroom@econsun.com

In this first instalment, reporter Roy Green risks life and limb during a visit to the parking lot of the White Rose plaza in Newmarket.

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

There are no yield or right-of-way signs in the plaza at Yonge Street and Mulock Drive in Newmarket. The lines marking the parking spots have all faded and, worse, so has the stop sign leading on to Mulock. Instead of red, it is a sad yellow and you have to be right next to it to read the word "STOP."

At the narrow Yonge entrance, one encounters traffic headed north, south, east and west in an area barely 20 feet by 20 feet.

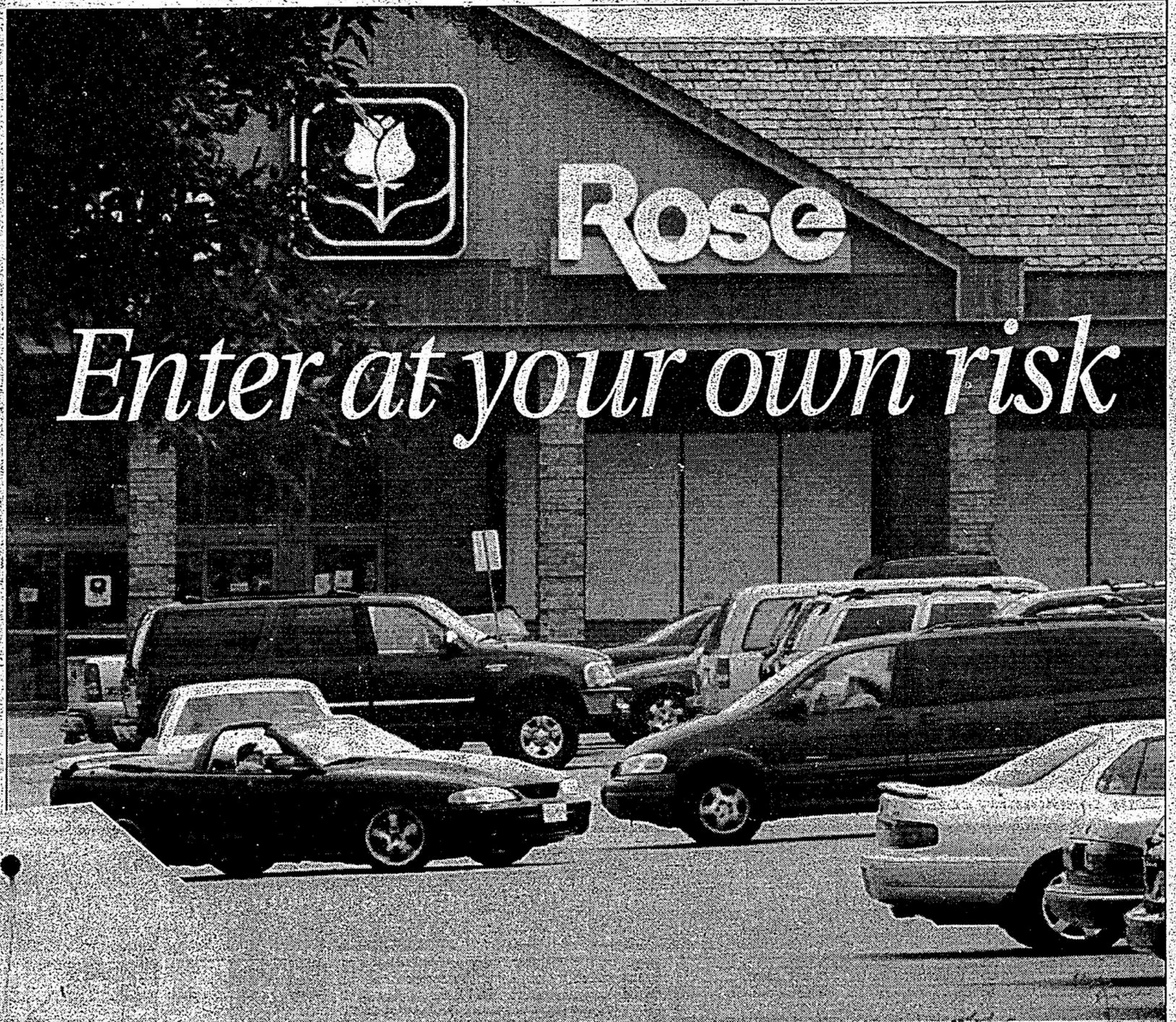
"I'll bet I've seen five accidents in a year," says Vicki Sutton, an employee at Mail Boxes Etc. in the plaza. "At Yonge Street, you've got people coming north from the Weston plaza meeting cars trying to enter and exit — someone's going to get killed."

While we talk, a car enters the T-intersection from Mulock and immediately crosses into the left lane to facilitate a left-hand turn, forcing another driver trying to exit the plaza to hit the brakes.

"There are no lanes," says Sutton. "No yield or merge signs or right-of-ways. My customers are always complaining. It's crazy."

It's a busy plaza — most people know it as the White Rose plaza, after its main tenant — containing such high-traffic attractions as the Beer Store, Swiss Chalet, a CIBC branch, Coffee Time Donuts, Great Canadian Bagel, a variety store, dry cleaner, a popular Chinese restaurant and, of course, White Rose.

Its most daunting feature is the two rows of parking spaces taking up the middle of the



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Above, near collisions and parking chaos make up a normal day in the White Rose plaza parking lot at Yonge and Mulock in Newmarket. Left, this stop sign in the same plaza has faded and become nearly unreadable.

entire length of the plaza.

If you enter from Mulock heading for the Beer Store, for instance, you're inclined to steer right into the closest space — even though it means crossing two lines of east-west traffic traversing the plaza. If you want to park right in front of the Beer Store, you have to cross another two lanes of east-west

traffic.

There are often too many cars going in too many different directions.

"I find it really bad," says Newmarket's Pam Murray as she enters the bagel store. "There are no lines."

And Elaine Luck, exiting the dry cleaner, agrees. "I was almost hit trying to back out. It's especially bad at night because there are no lights and you can't see."

But no one, it seems, has launched any official complaints.

"Under the site plan agreement, we impose a number of obligations on the owner, such as marking parking spaces, making sure they are clearly delineated," states Sue Plamondon, the Town of

Newmarket's director of legal services. "If it reached a level below acceptable, there are some opportunities to have it corrected, but I'm not aware of any complaints."

Plamondon said the town has tried to improve plaza parking lots on at least one occasion.

"When an application was made to add Montana's Restaurant to the parking lot on Yonge Street where Chapters is located, we encouraged the landowner to change the layout in a way to make it easier for access to the plaza immediately to the north at Yonge and Davis Drive."

Newmarket Mayor Tom Taylor says he has not heard any complaints about the White Rose plaza. "Sometimes, the

problem we bump into is with change in usage. When a plaza is established, the layout and the traffic flows are approved by council; the tenants might change to a store generating higher traffic volumes. Then you're stuck with, perhaps, the original layout not being able to handle the new volumes."

Supt. George Kydd of York Regional Police is also unaware of any problems in the plaza. "Because it is private property, we wouldn't even become aware of it," he says. "It's not uncommon for a lot of these not to be reported to us. It would have to be fairly serious damage, otherwise we would encourage the participants to exchange information and carry on their way."

The owners of the plaza were unavailable for comment.