

Cab Gab by Abe Mittleman

As the old year 2006 rolls out and the New Year 2007 rolls in I'd like to say a few words from the complaint department of Cab Gab.

First, I'm sick and tired of looking for a place to park so I can take a toilet break on Sunday. Ever since they made the parking meters free on Sunday not only have I found it near impossible to find a parking place, neither have hundreds of other motorists in Manhattan.

As a result, not only are the legal spots all occupied but most of our taxi relief spots are occupied illegally by unauthorized vehicles. This drives me nuts! What's even worse is that they are doing it with impunity!

Here are some examples: E16th street just west of Union Square. At this location there is a rather large taxi relief stand. Both sides of the street from the corner to about seven or eight car lengths in are for taxis. There is enough room for 14 to 16 taxis. Just about any Sunday that you go there you will see private vehicles occupying all the spaces. They do this with impunity. This is an out rage.

Over the last two years more and more locations that we were able to rely on have disappeared. Other examples are, The Munson Diner on 49th and 11th avenue and The Market Diner on 43rd and 11th avenue. Both these locations had easy access if you could fight through the traffic to get to them. Now they are gone. A gas station on 59th and 11th that many of us relied on with a place to park easily on the premises is now a construction site. A residential building in its place is the end of that. Recently the Mansion Diner on 86th and York avenue with a taxi stand just outside has now been closed indefinitely for renovation.

We only hope that whenever they reopen they will be as accommodating to us as they have been in the past. Certainly the Green Kitchen on 77th and 1st avenue with a taxi relief stand just outside the door isn't as friendly now as they were before they closed for several months for renovation. Then there is the Kipps Bay diner on 29th and 1st avenue. There is a taxi relief stand outside with room for two taxis that is more often than not occupied by unauthorized vehicle or another. I don't go in there anymore. The night manager doesn't let taxi drivers use the facilities. So, what good is a taxi relief stand there!

I don't understand why this problem isn't addressed. I can't be the only driver that has noticed this.

This is just as important as the lack of health insurance. It is this problem that exacerbates the former. Not having a toilet available when you need one can result in serious damage to your kidneys and other organs. It is not healthy. It is a miserable way to operate a taxi. You should feel comfortable when you drive. You should not be in a state of panic.

Is this problem ever going to be dealt with? Are the people who have some ability to help ever going to put themselves in our position and think of what we go through? Perhaps they figure that it's not really their problem. They have a toilet to go to when they reach their offices at City Hall or the TLC. They have a toilet in the building where they work, They have one anytime they need one. WE DON'T.

Now that I've gotten that off my chest. I want to say a word or two about one of my pet projects.

It's been a little over a year since a program to give incentive for taxi drivers to take fares at the taxi stand on Main Street and Roosevelt Ave in Flushing has been in effect. During the weekdays drivers are given shorty tickets that are redeemable at either JFK or La Guardia airports. This has been a major success.

But as far as I'm concerned, the overall objective has failed. There are still illegal livery vehicles lurking. When the program is not in effect after 9pm and on weekends these vehicles crawl back out of their rathole and infest the taxi stand.

Ok, so you can't pay a dispatcher to be at the stand 24hrs a day 7days a week. But you can take these illegal vehicles off the street for good. If that were done then the medallion taxis would continue to work at the taxi stand. They would also be available to do the rest of the street business in Queens as they should be. When is this going to happen?