

Hollywood stop sign

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There's a stop sign on a north/south street heading out of the subdivision where I live.

It's a four-way stop meaning cars in all directions have to stop. There is no real need for this stop sign at all. The street running east / west has a cul de sac on one side and very little traffic on the other side.

All this really means is that you have to come to an unnecessary stop 100 yards before entering a main road.

Whether I like this stop sign or not doesn't matter ? it's there.

Several years ago, it was common practice for pretty much everyone in the subdivision to slow down, then proceed past the stop sign. I was no exception.

One morning I went out to get a coffee. On the way home, I approached the stop sign, and did the usual, what we used to call a Hollywood stop. You don't quite come to a full stop but sort of roll through, as there is no traffic around at all.

As I casually passed through the intersection, I looked to the left and saw an OPP cruiser parked near the other end of the street.

I knew I was busted before the red lights even came on.

Sure enough, it pulled out and turned on the lights. I pulled over.

A female police officer approached the window and said something to the effect of, ?You rolled right through that stop sign.?

I didn't argue or complain. Why would I? I knew I was in the wrong. The officer was doing her job, and she was acting cordially and responsibly.

She gave me a ticket for failing to come to a complete stop.

It turns out someone who lived close to that intersection complained to the police that no one was stopping properly. The police did their job and assigned an officer to monitor the intersection and hand out tickets to people like me, who treated the stop sign like an inconvenience.

The result of that ticket was me coming to a full stop every time I approached that intersection. I also noticed everyone else did as well, so word got around. I also come to a full stop at every other stop sign I come to, whether or not the driver behind me likes it.

Due to complaints about noisy traffic, the City of Barrie has come up with a plan to have local volunteers on the street to start measuring noise levels and reporting people with loud vehicles. They will record license plates and report them. The owner of the vehicle will receive a traffic complaint warning.

This is going to be a disaster. For starters, there aren't than many loud vehicles. If you are that bothered by a loud car passing by, maybe you should cut down on your caffeine intake.

Every Harley-Davidson owner in the city is going to be getting a letter because, more often than not, you hear a Harley well before you actually see it.

?Loud pipes save lives? is their motto, and there's a lot of truth in that.

Then who are these volunteers going to be? Well, every neighbourhood seems to have that one guy who is a self-appointed critic. He's the guy who calls the by-law officer because his neighbour's hedge is two inches over the legal limit or because another guy parked his car three inches too far into a no-parking zone. He will be the guy complaining when you are watering your plants because some of the spray blew onto his driveway or because an apple dropped from your tree into his yard.

That is the type of person who will volunteer to stand on a street corner measuring the loudness of everyone else's vehicle.

Do you sense trouble here? How would you like to be driving down the street and see neighbour Bob pointing his device at your vehicle and writing down your license plate?

Nothing good will come from this type of traffic monitoring. The only thing that may happen is Bob receiving a brick through his front window some night by a guy who wasn't too pleased about being reported because someone thinks his car is too loud.

And neighbours like Bob won't stick to the rules. They are the type that will be writing down license plates because they ?think' it's too loud, even if the sounding device doesn't say so.

Traffic police are out there for a reason. They have the badge and authority to direct and control traffic and issue fines if necessary.

Leaving this job to a local neighbourhood traffic enforcement wannabe will never work.