

What is New Bedford Street-Parking “Courtesy?”

[Neighbor 1: Let me borrow some sugar.

Neighbor 2: : I apologize, but I’m out of sugar.

Neighbor 1: Well, go to the store and get some sugar so I can borrow some.

Neighbor 2: I don’t want to: go to the store yourself!

Neighbor 1: You’re being discourteous!]

Neighbor 1 sounds pretty discourteous to me, but perhaps I’m taking my sugar analogy too far. I must confess that I’m fairly new to street-parking from my home, but I’m not new to the concept of courtesy. To me, street-parking courtesy in New Bedford has come to mean actions like the following:

***Park close to the sidewalk because there’s limited space for vehicles to pass.**

***Park as close as you can to your home whenever possible because other people need street-parking space too.**

***Do not park too close to the vehicles in front and behind you because they need enough space to safely get out.**

***Do not park on the sidewalk or on the side of the street where no parking is allowed because that’s utterly rude to pedestrians and neighbors.**

***Do not park beyond the white line or too close to driveways so those with driveways can safely exit onto the road.**

***Park quickly because it’s rude to hold-up traffic.**

***After parking, look before you open the car door because it’s**

impolite to scare the daylights out of a driver who doesn't want to crash into your car door.

I'm sure there are other acts of New Bedford street-parking courtesy that I'm missing, but I'm really hoping that it does not include the following:

***Do not park near your house because it's discourteous.** *[Do what?]*

***If you have a driveway that only fits one car, do not park near your house with your second car because that's discourteous.** *[But I thought I was supposed to park near my home?]*

***Do not park near your house if you do not drive your vehicle every day.** *[Are you my neighbor or my warden?]*

***Do not park on the same street of your house if the only street-parking spot available is in front of a neighbor's home that doesn't have a driveway.** *[Bless your heart.]*

***Do not park in the street-parking spot closest to your house because your neighbor says you shouldn't.** *[Last time I heard, you don't own the street!]*

***Do not park near your house when there are single women who rent apartments next to your home.** *[Bleep. Bleep. Uber-bleeping BLEEPER!]*

Within a week or two of moving in to our newly purchased New Bedford home, one of our neighbors approached my husband about street-parking. His entire argument about not parking in particular street-parking spots was predicated upon the fact that he rents to single women. I am a married woman. Do I by proxy have less of a right to park in a safe parking spot near my home because I'm married, or does that simply mean a woman needs a man to walk her to her car every time she drives? And here I thought the idea of a "damsel in distress" was a

backward Southern sentiment.

A week later, another neighbor asked us to move our vehicle because he had just purchased a home and had not gotten to park in front of his house since the purchase. My husband and I complied with this request as often as possible.

About five months later, we invited extended family to live with us. Within days the same neighbor aggressively confronts our female cousin and tells her that she can't park in his spot. Does she have less of a right to park there because she isn't a homeowner? The same neighbor parks on our sidewalk where no-parking is allowed several times before receiving a citation. Two days after the citation is given, the other neighbor with "single-women tenants" approaches my husband and tells him that we are being discourteous by parking on the street near our neighbors' houses.



Observe the picture above. The one in front is our second

car, a vintage Jaguar that I drive when I need to. The picture was taken from the bottom of our front porch. No, I don't drive the Jaguar every day because I'm a writer: does that mean I should park on another street? It seems to me that if parking near your home is a major issue, then you should purchase or rent a home where you know you will have parking – or, at the least, not try to manipulate your neighbors to comply with the number of steps you feel you should have to take to reach your front door.

I may not bake homemade cookies for everyone who lives near me, but I would certainly let any of them borrow some sugar. On the other hand, I will not make a special trip to the store to buy sugar any more than I will park out of my way to appease a whiny neighbor. If that makes me discourteous, then pet my head and call me crazy.

I suspect that New Bedford street-parking “courtesy” varies widely by street and neighbors. Let's see: comment and share your stories!
