

Parking fees: do we get our money's worth?

By Linda McCarty

As the Fall Semester draws to a close, commuters can again look forward to purchasing a brand new, bright orange parking decal in January. Fifteen bucks is a small price to pay for the privilege of parking in Capitol's modern, convenient lots for another four months. And then again, maybe not.

Parking lot fees do not fund

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**John Sheridan
1973 graduate**

snow removal. In fact, the \$24,000 to \$25,000 collected from Capitol commuters per year doesn't even stay on campus. Instead, it is pooled into a universal

parking lot fund at University Park. All Penn State satellite campuses and University Park contribute to the fund and must request funds as needed for parking lot construction and repair only.

Dr. Jerry South, director of Student Affairs, explained the logic behind the universal fund.

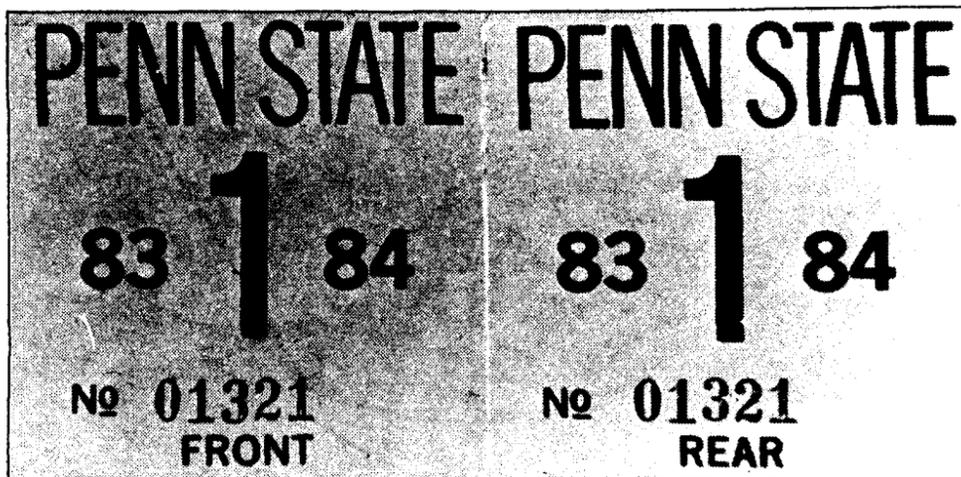
"In order to understand this concept you have to look at the cost of building a parking lot, which can run approximately \$600 per space," he said.

"It allows smaller campuses to construct parking lots without having to borrow money from University Park."

Although a well kept secret, this concept has been disputed.

In 1973, a group of concerned commuters, outraged over the \$7.50 fee per-term to park, prompted SGA to initiate a boycott of all parking stickers.

"We found that Capitol was getting the short end of the stick," said John Sheridan, accountant, 1973 Capitol Campus graduate and vice president of



SGA at the time of the controversy.

"You have to look at how much is put into the system, how much you will need to draw and then you'll find the problem."

According to Sheridan a major flaw in the universal fund concept is the large commuter population attending Capitol Campus. If this is then compared to a much lower percentage of commuters who attend University Park, who thus contribute a proportionately lower amount to the fund, the imbalance becomes much clearer. University Park must repair and construct parking lots for faculty and visitors who are not required to purchase a parking sticker, and that money must be drawn from the universal fund.

On March 8, 1973 the Capitol Campus Reader (1973 student publication) reported that SGA passed a resolution calling for a boycott of the \$7.50 term fee. Sheridan initiated the proposal text:

"Be it resolved that no student, resident or commuter be required to purchase a sticker. Citations would be reimbursed by the SGA office..."

It was reported that Sheridan said he took such drastic action after having consulted George Dressler (administrative officer at the time) about a possible reduction of the fee. Sheridan quoted Dressler as saying there was no way the fee could be changed prior to the fall term of 1973, due to Penn State bureaucracy.

However, Dressler proved wrong in round one against Capitol commuters.

A week later, C.C. Reader reported that provost Robert E. McDermott, faced with the threat of a boycott, decided to reduce the fee to one dollar. He said that he had agreed for a long time that the fee was too high and took such action to call attention to University Park authorities.

Upon hearing McDermott's decree of the fee cut, SGA voted to stop the boycott.

But the buck-a-sticker sale did

not last long.

Said Sheridan, "Because we made such an issue over the matter, they agreed to put it under study and reduce the fee to one dollar, but after we graduated, it went right back up."

Ten years and fourteen dollars later, the parking lot variables remain virtually unchanged, with the exception of maybe an extra variable. We share our parking lot with Fruehauf Trucking.

An observant commuter may notice the dozen or more cars parked in the rear of the lot behind the Olmsted Building. The cars are owned by visitors and or employees of Fruehauf Trucking. They, however, are not required to purchase a sticker.

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**Dr. Jerry South
Director, Student Affairs**

Head of Police Services Chuck Aleksy explained that we have an agreement with Fruehauf.

"They can use our lot and we can use theirs when we need it," he said.

But this may not be a smart business venture for Capitol.

Aleksy said that he had only seen the lots filled twice since he came to Capitol in 1975. Once, he recalled, was when the Nittany Lions landed at the Harrisburg International Airport.

He later said, "Personally, I would like to see the money stay here at Capitol." So would I.

But it doesn't. Isn't it a shame that 1973 commuters lost round two against Penn State burueaucracy?



Photos by Jeffrey G. Shatzer