

Sgt. Bilko

By James Collins

Champ the big bay gelding, was tired and tossed his head to let Tom Healy know it. Champ figured their tour of duty would be over shortly, but they still had another hour until they went back to the stables. Tom shifted in the saddle and continued to guide Champ alongside the parked cars while he visually scanned the parking meters. Mounted police filled many duties for the New York Police Department including parades and patrolling large parks. Crowd control was much easier with a massive 1200-pound horse pushing in on a mob with those great hoofs and the steel horseshoes clanking on the road next to the people. Today, however, they were on parking enforcement. The noise of New York City traffic on Seventh Avenue and 52nd St. and the smell of exhaust fumes tried the patience of both horse and man. Tom was also tired. As the pair trotted to the front of an expensive hotel, Tom spotted a big Cadillac, with the motor running, parked in the no parking/ no standing fire lane. Nothing aggravated Tom more than a wealthy New Yorker flaunting his money but not willing to pay a few bucks for parking.

Tom brought Champ to a halt, dismounted and reached into his hip pocket for his parking ticket book. He walked around to the back of the Cadillac and started writing down the license plate number. Just then, he heard a shout, "Officer, officer wait a minute. I didn't do anything wrong." Tom looked to his right and saw a small thin man wearing glasses, attired in a three-piece suit with a hat running as fast as he could towards him. He immediately recognized him as a television actor former vaudevillian, Phil Silvers. In the mid-1950s, a favorite comedy TV show known as Sgt. Bilko, starred Phil Silvers. In the show, Bilko played an arrogant, overbearing; know it all Sgt. who was a manipulator and a conniver. It was the actor himself coming up on a dead run.

"Officer, no need to write the ticket, I just got here and stepped inside to get change for the parking meters."

"Change would do you no good. There are no meters here. This is a no parking zone and a fire lane," responded Tom as he continued to write the check.

"But officer I just got out of the car. I left the motor running to let you know I was coming right back," pleaded Silvers.

"In a fire lane, there is no parking and no standing. The minute you pulled the car in and stepped out, you were in violation of the law," replied Officer Healy as he continued to write the ticket.

Phil Silvers continued to plead his case and it sounded like some of the lines from his acting show. Officer Healy calmly continued to write out the ticket.

In a final plea, Phil Silvers extended his arms down and out from his sides with his palms facing the police officer as a supplicant and whined, "Don't you recognize me, I'm Sgt. Bilko!"

"Well, I'm Cpl. Healy and here's your ticket."

THE END