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# Crossing Main

**Editor's Note:** *Here's a slice of urban life we couldn't resist printing. Though it takes place in Asbury, it could easily have occurred in any of the triCities. And Chaz Valenza, the author, was so passionate about the subject the day he came by triCity office to pitch us the story we felt we couldn't let him down by not publishing it. An accompanying guide to every crossing on Main Street in Asbury is a bit much for our limited newshole, however. E-mail us and we'll send you a copy if you like.*

**ASBURY PARK** - I had cause to wonder recently, was I so lacking in smarts that I couldn't cross a street without a cop giving me a summons? If you think it can't happen to you, beware and read on.

I've crossed Main St. in Asbury Park, at the intersection of Springwood Avenue & Lake Avenue, nearly every work day morning for over a year to catch the train. Ditto the opposite direction on the way home each night. It turns out, I've done it wrong every time. This information was graciously bestowed on me by an Asbury Park Police Officer in the form of a summons for "obstructing traffic."

Jay Walking, right? Wrong. I was in the crosswalk. Against the light? No, the green force was with me, but as always the stubborn "DON'T WALK" signal at this intersection never turns to "WALK."

He pulled up and asked, "Did you see..." and in a flash I wondered if I was a witness to a crime. I was, my own. He continued, "the DON'T WALK sign?"

"Yes," I blurted out (never blurt toward a police officer), telling the absolute truth and quickly adding, "but it never says WALK." I meant no disrespect, but hey, I crossed at the green... and not in between.

For the sake of good community relations between the writer and the powers that be in Asbury Park, I will refuse to mention which of us had a stick in the wrong orifice. Let's just say it was six a.m. and one of us may have been heading toward or missed a stop for coffee across the street.

Never say never. I returned home with a video camcorder and played "docu-filmmaker" for the next forty minutes, the lenses' never blinking eye focused on the intersection and the stubborn DON'T WALK sign. People struggled to cross the street against it. Motorists felt the DON'T WALK gave them the right-of-way to make left turns, not to mention very diminutive "pauses on red." Kids asked me what I was doing, wanted to be on camera and, boy, those kids loooooooked goooood! Adults told me they had never seen WALK for all the times they had crossed there.

Figuring forty minutes of shaky-cam DON'T WALK, and people walking just the same, would prove my point in court, while at the same time boring everyone to tears, I was about to stop filming. Then, the train arrived. I decided reactions to my plight by fellow commuters might add a nice touch. This turned out to be a good idea or a bad one depending on your point-of-view, because just then a savvy commuter strode up to the corner, pressed that all powerful thing known as "the crossing button" and the sign magically glowed WALK.

Have you ever known even one of those buttons to work! I was dumb-struck, crushed. I looked at the green steel pole beside me, there at the crosswalk of my demise. No button. I looked around. How could I press a crossing button if none was there? Then, in my mind's eye I saw the Police Officer. Yes, he was laughing. "Look further," he said, with a sinister grin. To my right, about 15 feet away, on the new aluminum pole, was the button that he surely intended to disclose as the turn of the screw at my trail.

I paid the \$44 fine the next day.

