**MUSINGS OF AN AGEING WOMAN (6)**

More peeves

I guess as I age, the list of pet peeves will continue to grow. My latest one is automatic sprinklers. That I should develop an intense dislike for those mean mechanical gadgets is surprising as I enjoy looking at the luscious, well-manicured lawns and smelling the fragrant flowers of the landscaped communities in my neighbourhood. And I know that such perfection can only be achieved at the cost of regular watering and feeding but does it have to include my person?

The landscapers in their thoroughness, place the sprinklers to rotate in such a way that every square inch of lawn and sidewalk is thoroughly inundated. They obviously took a cue from boxing, that the strike and follow-up strategy is one-two punch While one sprinkler goes from left to right, the other goes from right to left, criss-crossing each other to ensure that no spot is missed. My challenge when walking, must now extend beyond balancing and staying vertical to include staying dry. To achieve all three is quite a feat. It involves observing the motion of the opposing sprinklers as they gracefully arc their spray through the air, determining the interval between one sprinkler moving away from the sidewalk and the other approaching it, guesstimating the length of drenched sidewalk and maximum speed that I could achieve with the aid of my cane and then timing my “rapid” advance between the synchronized sprays as the skills acquired in childhood skipping, especially double dutch, stand me in good stead. As annoyed as I may be, it does bring back fond memories of childhood even as I mourn the loss of youthful abilities.

To be fair, most of the irrigation by community landscapers is done late at night or early in the morning, the exception being hot summer days when the sprinklers will come on during the day. Then the landscapers will look at me with wry but amused sympathy as there is little that they cold do. It is the individual householders who I think should time on a meatrack down under (as a friend of mine would say), for they imperil pedestrians by spraying not only the sidewalk but the street as well so that one is forced to either walk in the middle of the street or cross entirely to the other side. What is worse is that sometimes the householder would be in his garden and be totally unmoved by the plight of the suffering pedestrian. There ought to be a law similar to that about parking on sidewalks for they both put the pedestrian at risk of injury.

My last peeve follows on from the sidewalks under watery siege. It is uneven sidewalks. After successfully dodging water on the sidewalks, I must then navigate those sidewalks with raised pavers. One paver just a half inch taller than the others is enough to send me, or any unsuspecting mobility- challenged person, sprawling. It really does not take much of an unevenness. Indeed, to the less keen-eyed, the sidewalk may actually look level. Same problem occurs with hotel floors that are not even, as I learnt to my cost at a conference. Fortunately, I just tripped but did not go completely down but another participant did. I have since learnt to look down all the time whenever and wherever I walk. My choice in later life, may have to be between a humpback and a grave fall. Meanwhile, however, I am considering hiring myself out as a spirit level for I am as good as the rolling bottle that tilers use to determine if their tiles have been levelly and well laid.