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Even Henri Cartier-Bresson was a total newb once.

And Philippe Halsman.

And Annie Leibovitz.

Dorothea Lange... same deal.



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Help yourself by helping others



VICTOR VARGAS

Want to give something back to unthankful strangers? Feel comfortable working in a cult-like environment? Don't worry, I'm not asking you to accept Jesus as your savior—I just need you to volunteer.

Volunteering really is the rewarding experience people say it is—albeit in a masochistic sort of way. By giving up some of your free time to help strangers, you'll meet others who share your interests and are forced to talk to you.

Plus, virtually every volunteer organization hosts events and parties in order to get their minions to have a blast and forget about the horrible amounts of work they did for free.

Even if fun and socialization aren't your things, the volunteer sector has a lot more to offer. It increases your chances of getting scholarships, allows you to gain contacts that will give you an edge in your future career, and gives you hands-on experience that you won't get by writing about how Fielding and Richardson hated each other.

But perhaps the most important lesson you'll learn is how dumb people are—yourself included.

So long as you know what you want, there's a volunteer organization for

you. By helping groups like the Flair Bartending Club, they'll tell you how they got all of their brilliant sponsorship deals.

Protest and watchdog groups like Green Peace and Amnesty International will teach you how to stand in street corners without getting cold and how to make effigies of President Bush.

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Even if you're completely stumped on where you want to volunteer, Circle K is an organization that actually puts people into positions at other volunteer organizations—that's right, there's actually a volunteer group dedicated to collecting bodies for other volunteer groups.

There's always a strong demand for volunteers, but you shouldn't be assume that there won't be obstacles.

People working at Orientation and Campus Ambassadors may seem to humiliate themselves by singing "Green and Gold" to death, but both groups require any new volunteer to go through a strict application and

interview process. Fraternities and clubs are particularly bad for mismanaging the people who come in—but if you show some initiative, skill, and lots of patience—they'll treat you like gold. Even a place desperate enough to get me to write this article for them at the eleventh hour wouldn't publish my *Five-Minute Facebook Notes*—yet.

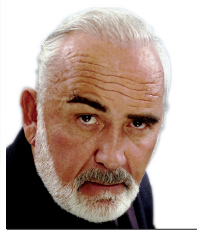
Now imagine a world without volunteering, like something out of an Ayn Rand novel. A place where people do everything for their own benefit and the idea of helping anyone out for free is not only foolish, but considered harmful to the very person you wanted to assist.

There'll be no more Red Cross members coming to save you when your community burns down, and say goodbye to student groups giving out free candy and toys at the clubs fair too. All of these things will one day be gone unless someone as psychotic as yourself gives up your time to a cause.

But the most important thing to remember about volunteering is that you should flaunt it as if it were a cherry-red Ferrari. People will think that you're awesome because you helped the Music Club fix its equipment, or that you're the Anime Club President that took the club from having a negative treasury balance to a projector-renting juggernaut.

But the best part is that lots of organizations are willing to spend the cash to inflate your ego. Because in the end, volunteering isn't about helping your fellow man, it's about getting ahead of him.

Parkades a bad idea; add on to the LRT



BRIAN GOULD

"Even ignoring the fact that expanding the LRT is cheaper, the production of the cement required for the parkade, along with its actual construction, would generate large volumes of greenhouse gasses. Not to mention the fact that a parkade requires riders to drive."

Due to the ballooning costs of the south LRT expansion, the Transportation and Public Works committee has recommended deferring development of the \$60-million park-and-ride at Century Park to stay on budget—a decision that will benefit Edmontonians more than they may realize.

For the same price, ETS could add an intermediate station to the LRT, build an aerial tram from downtown to Old Strathcona, or buy 140 new buses to serve ten times the riders in one trip as the parkade would serve all day.

More concerned about the cost of living than that of a bus pass? That same \$60 million could also be used to build affordable housing for more people than the parkade has stalls.

At this price and location, building parking to boost ridership is like subsidizing luxury condos to create affordable housing and then drawing names out of a hat without looking at incomes. This would result in more people living in affordable housing, but few of them would actually be benefitting from it.

All things being equal, less parking at LRT stations means lower ridership—and 1200 stalls is a lot of parking. Unfortunately, not all things are equal, and parking doesn't directly equal ridership or driving reductions.

Stantec's report on the Southgate park-and-ride states that 1.2 transit riders use each stall (lower than the average car at 1.4 occupants), and of those, "50 per cent would otherwise use transit." That's only 0.6 new riders per stall.

Even with some 40 000 new riders, the LRT will have room for several times more, while a parkade would overflow the day it opened. And for every ten cars turned away, the ETS loses six riders who would've just taken the bus if there was no parkade to begin with but are now being forced to drive downtown.

Even ignoring the fact that expanding the LRT is cheaper, the production of the cement required for the parkade, along with its actual construction, would generate large volumes of greenhouse gasses—not to mention the fact that a parkade requires riders to drive. When you do the math, it becomes apparent that this parkade wouldn't reduce driving by a single kilometre.

The previously scrapped Southgate lot closer to downtown would've actually increased driving. Even though the average car trip has been reduced by two thirds, twice as many people drive in three times the cars. More regular car drivers also means more people using cars to drive everywhere else, and taken together, this is a net loss for the environment.

Edmonton taxpayers would pay \$120 each for this loss, with the vast majority never using the lot anyway. Even those who do ride transit would still suffer through fare increases and service cut-backs to encourage driving. So if this parkade hurts the LRT, the environment, the transit rider, and the taxpayer, then only the white-collar worker is left to benefit.

LRT with parking speeds nine-to-fivers from the 'burbs to downtown. It

also helps them suck the life out of downtown as they leave early instead of sticking around or living downtown. What good is revitalization without people?

Park-and-ride lots work in developing suburban areas with plenty of land and inadequate density for transit service, not in rapidly maturing neighbourhoods. Greater distances by train mean that driving is actually reduced. More land means more parking on much cheaper surface lots, which can then be flipped to a developer when the land values increase, funding an LRT extension and parking even further out. Conversely, a six-storey parkade will always be a parkade.

Despite all this, most people will say stop scrimping and do it anyway. Others float the idea of charging for parking, but imagine trying to run this as an independent business.

Even at \$14 a day, it would take over a decade to break even on the parkade. Who in their right mind is going to pay \$14 a day to park in the suburbs—plus ever-increasing fares—when they can get parking for less than half of that downtown? Or for free?

\$14 dollars a day would pay for a cab to and from the station, and instead of wasting land on parking, we could build affordable housing with coffee shops, newspaper stands, and day care—true transit-supportive development.

So a big thank you is owed to council for pinching pennies; you might not know it, but you just saved us all a fortune.