



Off Schedule

...BILL SAVER

"BECAUSE I was in a hurry that evening, the 'L' and bus ride home from the office seemed to take longer than usual (although it actually hadn't). This was a Friday night and I had planned to take the family to a movie we all wanted to see. Jack, our teen-age son, and Penny, our eight-year-old daughter, had very solemnly promised the night before they would hurry home from school on Friday to help Kitty, my wife, with some of the household chores (putting their own rooms in order) so we could have an early meal and be on our way without delay.

" 'Is the chow ready?' I shouted as I came through the door to let them all know I was home.

" 'It will be soon,' Kitty called from the kitchen, 'but all our well-laid plans didn't work out like we thought. It doesn't take much for youngsters to forget faithfully-made promises.'

Delaying Distractions

" 'What's the matter. Aren't they here?' I asked.

" 'Oh, they're here now, all right. They're cleaning up their rooms, but they were both late in getting home from school so we're behind our schedule,' Kitty replied. She added: 'There were too many distractions along the way. Jack couldn't get past the vacant lot where the boys were playing ball and Penny must have minutely inspected and priced every fish and bird in that pet shop near her school.'

" 'Careful planning of a project helps,' I said, 'but it's no assurance something won't go wrong. Your experience with the kids reminds me of some of the things that happen to the CTA.'

" 'What possible connection could Jack and Penny coming home late have with CTA?' Kitty exclaimed with a surprised look on her face.

" 'No direct connection,' I answered, 'but there is a parallel. For instance, a considerable amount of preliminary work is done before a schedule for a line is drawn up or revised from time to time. Surveys and traffic checks are

made by the Schedule Department. Vehicles and men must be made available by the Shops and Transportation Departments to leave from their starting points at definite pre-determined times so that there will be no long waits for patrons at any point along the line and so that rider traffic will be distributed evenly among the buses or cars.

Delaying Incidents

"However, in spite of everything that is done beforehand, it takes only one thing out of the ordinary—which can't be foreseen or anticipated—to throw a monkey wrench in the whole works. A fire along the route can disrupt regularity of service or force a detour from the regular route. Exceedingly heavy traffic on the streets disrupts service. Double-parked or stalled automobiles or trucks delay buses or streetcars. Rain, snow or sleet slows down other traffic—speed is dangerous under these conditions—so CTA vehicles slow down, too.

"And traffic is getting worse,' I continued. 'Automobile and truck registrations in Chicago are now at an all-time high and increasing every day. Of course, there is very little trouble maintaining 'L'-Subway schedules as the trains travel either over or under street traffic.'

"Before Kitty could comment on my discourse, Jack and Penny came tumbling helter-skelter into the kitchen, shouting, 'We've finished our work! Let's go, Mommy and Daddy! We want to be there when the picture starts!'

"Now, calm down,' Kitty shushed them. 'Supper is ready and we'll have to take time to eat it slowly. Besides, if we're late for the start of the show, you both know whose fault it was!'

"With sheepish looks on their faces, the kids subsided and quietly took their places at the table."

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Bill Saver



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