

Bill Rea ? No fun having two names

No one ever told me covering the equestrian events at the Pan Am Games was going to cause me so many complications, not to mention frustration.

The fun started a couple of months ago, when I got word that they were going to need a suitable photograph of me; comparable to passport pictures. They also had to be submitted in a certain way and in proper formats dealing with size, etc. I submitted several pictures, and got a series of rejections, for various different reasons. But I was eventually able to come up with something satisfactory

About a month ago, I received a package of material from the Games organizers, containing a card with my picture on it, and directions to go a facility to get the actual badge that I would have to wear around my neck. There was also mention of vest that would have to be worn by anyone interested in taking pictures of the competitions, but more about that later.

The place to go to was on Yonge Street in North York, so I grabbed the documentation I would need, hopped into my car and headed south.

I was asked to produce photo ID, so I handed the lady on the other side of the table my driver's licence. She studied it carefully, then went and consulted someone else. By that point, I knew there was some problem.

My first name is William, and I have a birth certificate to prove it. But like so many people with that name, I have gone by Bill most of my life, including my professional life. Very few people call me by my real given name.

I applied for accreditation as Bill Rea, and I evidently passed the security check. But the people at the media centre told me there had been no such check conducted on a William Rea. One of the officials took the card with my picture on it and tore it up, telling me another check would have to be conducted. He said it would take a couple of days.

I started wondering. Had none of these Pan Am officials ever heard of Bill Clinton (or William Jefferson Clinton, as he was referred to when he was being sworn in as President of the United States)?

This all happened July 2, which was a Thursday. This fellow gave me a phone number of a Help Desk, and suggested I call the following Monday. By then, he said things might be sorted out.

I have been on this planet long enough to know such issues are part of life. My getting mad was going to accomplish nothing, so I accepted the situation as gracefully as I could.

Little did I realize the turns this narrative was going to take.

I dutifully called the Help Desk Monday. Actually, I called a couple of times, and each time, I was told to call back later. So I called a couple of times Tuesday, and Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

One of Friday's calls was really interesting because the person I talked to delved into the matter a bit more, and told me the documentation for the new security check had been submitted the previous day, like one whole week after I had been told it would.

I finally let my impatience start to show.

I do have to say that the people I encountered every time I called the Help Desk were, without exception, very polite, and very understanding when I let my frustration get the better of me.

I spent the weekend and all day Monday making repeated calls and going through this foolishness.

Finally, at 9 Monday evening, I got a call on my cell phone.

?You're good to go,? the woman on the other end said.

I made a quick trip back to North York the following morning and had my badge after about a half-hour wait. It said ?Bill? on the front and ?William? on the reverse. I didn't bother asking. Oh yeah, I remembered to ask about the vest I would need, and was told it would be issued at the venue.

Good timing too. I had already missed the team dressage competition, but I had time to get to the individual show.

I arrived at the equestrian park in Palgrave and walked into the media centre, expecting to be issued with my vest. But life is never that simple, is it?

The lady who greeted me told me I was not allowed to photograph things without my vest, and I told her that I had been told that was where I was to be issued my vest. Such was not the case, and I was evidently not the first person who had been told that. I was further told that another trip to Toronto was in my immediate future, this time to the CNE grounds.

Controlling my temper suddenly became a lot more difficult.

But since the staff the office had obviously dealt with this situation before, they got to work trying to fix me up with something. I just sat at a table, pondering how I was going to explain all this to my wife.

At that point, Venue Photo Manager Grant Black got in the act, and I have to say he's got probably the best PR skills I've ever

encountered. He was able to fix me up with a temporary vest, stipulating I had to return it when I was done for the day ? actually, owing to the heat of last Tuesday, it was a very long and tiring day. I also had a lot of work waiting for me in the office. But I also decided it was probably best to get the trip to the CNE out of the way that evening, and start dealing with any problems that might develop from that.

Of course, there was a major pile-up last Tuesday evening that closed several southbound lanes on Highway 427. But I know Toronto well enough to get around that. Parking at the CNE grounds presented no problem, provided one was okay with parting with \$30 (I wasn't). But I know some of the streets in the area, and was able to park for just \$2. It did mean a five-minute walk with my weary legs to get through the Princes' Gates, and I did it, all the time wondering what new mess was going to be handed me. After the experiences I had been through, I think I could be forgiven for being a little cynical.

I finally found the main media centre and was starting to explain what I was after to the person behind the first desk I came to, when someone hollered ?Bill!? (not ?William,? but ?Bill?).

I suddenly realized that Grant Black gets around as much as I do. He got me my vest in a matter of minutes.

How different would my last couple of weeks have been if someone had realized that Bill is a short version of William. Pity Bill Shakespeare's not around to write a play about it.

And if any of you think I'm exaggerating about this, I'm not. You can trust me. I've passed two security checks in the last month

