

# Hitchhiking on rise; safety measures proposed

By Deb Gray

It's been one of those mornings.

Your bike tire is flat, the car battery won't turn over and your roommate left for class 10 minutes ago. What do you do?

Stick out your thumb and hitch.

The number of hitchhikers in Lincoln is increasing according to Capt. John Miller of the Lincoln Police Dept. However, no estimates of the exact number of hitchhikers are available, he said.

According to the City attorney's office, until two years ago a city ordinance prohibited hitchhiking. In October 1973, the City Council abolished the law. Now persons may hitchhike if they are more than 16 years old and stay on the curb while thumbing.

Since the liberalization of the ordinance, complaints about hitchhiking have increased, Miller said.

"We have had situations when people have been molested on several occasions," he said. "And sometimes motorists who stop for hitchhikers block traffic and cause accidents."

Miller said most assault victims are female.

Becky Pasco expressed the "hitchhiking

paranoia" revealed by eight of the 10 women interviewed.

"Sure I've been scared hitching," said the 21 year-old pre-law student. "I've never been physically harmed. I've just had to listen to a lot of snide comments and threats."

Once a guy left me off 50 miles from where I wanted to go," she added.

What measures are underway to guarantee hitchhiking safety?

California's Marina County, across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco, plans to start a program to insure safe hitchhiking. According to an article in the July 20 *National Observer*, the plan is called the Neighborhood Transportation System (NTS).

NTS will require drivers and hitchhikers to pay \$3 to have their names checked for presence in police files.

After a person is pronounced "not dangerous to others," the applicant, whether driver or hitchhiker, receives a four-by-eight-inch plastic card with his picture and identification on one side. The driver writes his destination on a blank portion of the card, which he displays on his visor. While thumbing, the hitchhiker flashes his plastic

card showing his destination.

When a driver meets a thumber, they compare destination cards. The hitchhiker doesn't have to enter the car. At ride's end, the hitchhiker gives the driver a coupon redeemable for gasoline or merchandise, according to the *National Observer*.

Marina County didn't originate organized hitchhiking, the *National Observer* said. Fort Collins, Colo., started such a program six months ago. Police there called it a "success."

Poland, whose "autostop" program was the basis of the Marina County plan, has been protecting hitchhikers since 1958.

Two local female hitchhikers said they favored the NTS program.

"I think it would be a lot safer," said Sandy Whitmore, 18. "Right now I'm never sure who's picking me up and where I'm going to be let off."

One man also voiced NTS support. "I've never really hitched in town," said Don Robertson, 23. "I've always seen it as a means of long distance travel."

"But I think this is a good idea," he said. "It's good that the driver can get something in return for his driving."

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Letters of application and nomination should be sent to Ombudsman Search Committee, 308 Admin. Bldg., by September 27, 1974. Committee members are: Dr. Larry A. Braskamp, 2116; Professor John W. Goebel, 3366; Ms. Loah B. Moe, 2102; Ms. Debbie Logan, 432-8853; Ms. Jody Schwindt, 467-2423; and Mr. David Howlett, 2581 or 475-1047.

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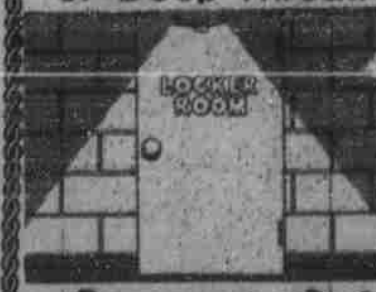
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