



SONOMA STATE COEDS SCHEDULE CARPOOLS

Knuti Van Hoven, left, Christina M'Innes

—SSC Photo by Don Cabral

Hitchhike? Try The SSC Carpool

By CAROLYN LUND

The hitchhike dilemma: how does a college student get to class without a car and there's no public transportation?

The answer: thumb a ride.

Sometimes, it works. Sometimes, though, it leads to rape, assault, injury. And sometimes, death.

Students at Sonoma State College know the problem and are trying to solve it at least temporarily with a Carpool Coordination Switchboard to link those with transportation to those who need it.

Twenty-year-old Knuti Van Hoven, SSC senior, heads a coalition of 11 concerned volunteers staffing and organizing the switchboard operation. With the co-operation of the college, they're manning a telephone, arranging rides and collecting the schedules and itineraries of drivers.

Headquarters is a desk in the lobby of the Commons, campus watering hole and meeting spot. "RIDES" says a sign on the bulletin board beside a map of

the county. Between them is a growing list describing assailants and their cars.

"WATCH OUT FOR THESE MEN" says the heading, and the girls share their bad experiences in an effort to warn others.

Paranoia?

Of a sort, perhaps. More likely it's a response conditioned by the growing awareness that the situation is desperate.

80 Rapes

Approximately 80 female hitchhikers reported being raped last year in Sonoma County. Estimates are that nine of 10 rapes go unreported either because of the stigma of the degrading act or because women get less than sympathetic treatment from law enforcement officials.

For some girls, it's even worse. Last month a Santa Rosa Junior College coed hitchhiked from Larkspur to Santa Rosa. She was raped and strangled, her nude body dumped over an embankment on a remote road. And now another hitchhiking

SRJC student has disappeared. Twenty-year-old Jeannette Kamahle dropped out of sight after leaving her Cotati home last Tuesday morning to hitchhike to class. Miss Van Hoven told The Press Democrat she heard of four rapes during a two-week period, and "I knew somebody ought to do something."

"I can't find a job so I had plenty of time. There was no way I could rationalize not doing something."

She lined up volunteers, got co-operation from the college for use of the Commons location and a phone extension; she got a signup form printed and her group spent three hours stuffing the inserts into The Sonoma, the campus newspaper.

20 or 30 A Day

A few days later she had 100 signups by drivers with space available and the offers were coming in at the rate of 20 or 30 a day from people on campus.

One Rohnert Park resident, Mrs. Althea Sheehan, offered the services of herself, her son (Continued from Page 7 Col. 1)

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and their car to transport students anywhere locally in their free time.

Miss Van Hoven together with her cohort Christina MacInnes, 19, Santa Rosa, devised a way by which drivers are designated by area numbers instead of addresses so they won't be set up as burglary targets. Identification is also required for the protection of riders.

Hopefully, some of the rides will develop into more or less permanent carpool arrangements, but the service is available to anyone who needs a ride—an alternative to hitchhiking.

"If your carpool ride fails to show up, or if your car has broken down—or even if you're just stranded someplace DON'T HITCH!" says the Switchboard registration form.

"Call us at 795-2594. Write the number down someplace where you can find it in an emergency. We'll be there from 7:30 a.m. to 6 at night."

The contacts made during the rest of this school year will lead to an expanded operation next year and until public transportation is available, according to Miss Van Hoven.

Tentatively, the plan is to computerize the operation using campus facilities, making the Switchboard a project for computer trainees.

In the meantime, it's a primitive type of operation, the schedules listed in looseleaf notebooks, a cardboard carton serving as a filing cabinet, thumbtacks scrounged from other bulletin boards throughout the campus.

While most response has been heartening, some has been deri-

sive.

The two girls in charge have been called paranoids by some skeptics.

Female students have revealed rapes they'd not reported to officials in order to add to descriptions of the rapists, however. Their attitude is cooperative.

From their descriptions of drivers who assaulted them, the girls have pieced together the identity of men who may be habitual rapists. Notable among them is one "LeRoy," a black about 40, who drives a blue or green pickup truck and likes to "rap a lot about the girls he's raped and almost killed."

The girls say that the authorities know about "LeRoy," but "LeRoy's still around."

There's negative response to the carpool co-op, too.

Not one or two but 11 men on campus have protested the Switchboard effort, terming the raping of hitchhikers as "inevitable," some said the girl hitchhikers should "relax and regard it as a learning experience."

"Hell, the chicks like it," one said.

Miss Van Hoven, who has hitchhiked since she was 17, was told by a man last week that she "better watch out and not hitchhike any anymore," since forming the Switchboard.

"I've been very lucky, really. I was never in a situation that I couldn't handle.

"Unfortunately, some people's attitude is, if you stick your thumb out you're asking for it.

"It's really rough to get a ride way out here with no bus service, especially when you use your thumb knowing you may be raped, beaten or like her—" and she pointed at the bulletin

board poster of the missing Jeannette Kamahele.

Lack of bus service is a situation she's meeting head on. She's talked with officials of the Golden Gate Transit System and found that service to the SSC campus or re-routing to nearby major roads is not possible under current contract agreements. An intra-county agreement with the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors would be necessary, she was told.

Bus service from Santa Rosa was attempted in 1966 but was not patronized sufficiently and the experimental runs down Petaluma Hill rd. and Hwy. 101 were dropped.

Why weren't they patronized? The theory of SSC business manager R.M.D. Childs is that students either could not afford the fare or were too scattered to commute from downtown Santa Rosa.

Miss Van Hoven plans to broaden the base of her crusade for public transit, contacting senior citizens, Rohnert Park parents groups whose children walk E. Cotati blvd. to school, and others.

"Public transportation through the rural areas of southern and western Sonoma County is non-existent," she said.

"It's a great rural location for a college here, but it has neither local housing facilities nor bus service.

"We can go to school, but we can't live within walking distance and we can't ride to it by bus.

"We're commuters, whether we like it or not. That's why so many of us have to hitchhike," she said.