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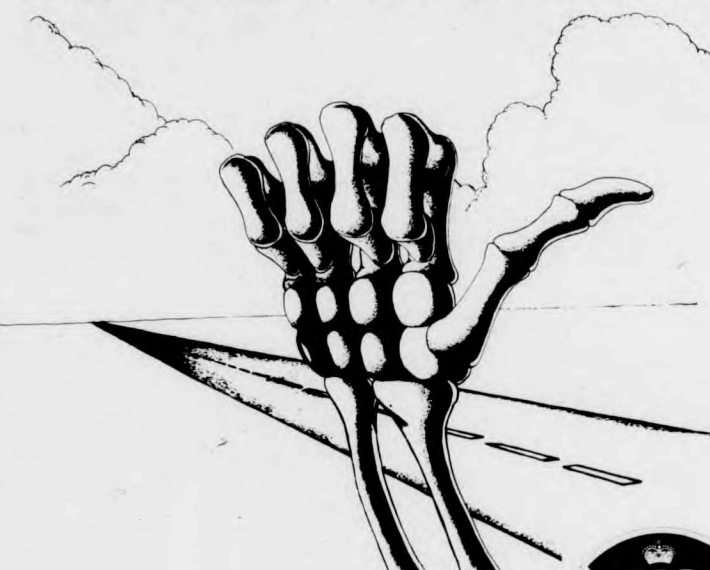
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York U. Bookstore

# Provincial cops give "thumbs down" to thumbing rides

**By Hugh Westrup** discourage hitchhiking. Forty-six billboards throughout the province recently depicted a skeletal hand looming ominously over Ontario highways as part of the Ontario Provincial Police's campaign to discourage hitchhiking. The ad is macabre. Citizens have complained that the OPP is using scare tactics and are fearful that the signs may have a reverse effect.

## GOING MY WAY? TU ME PRENDIS?



ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE COMMUNITY SERVICES BRANCH GENERAL HEADQUARTERS TORONTO (ONTARIO) MINISTRY OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL  
SURETE PROVINCIALE DE L'ONTARIO SERVICES COMMUNAUTAIRES QUARTIER GENERAL TORONTO (ONTARIO) MINISTERE DU SOLICITEUR GENERAL

Among those against the ad is Gillean Chase of Toronto's Rape Crisis Centre. "I'm alarmed about it," said Chase. "I find it so extremist. What it tends to do is set up a situation in which the hitchhiker is now taking a large gamble. Offenders may now feel that their victims have been suitably forewarned."

"It's dangerous to make it seem like the victim precipitated the crime, especially in the case of rape. Among violent crimes, rape has the lowest victim precipitation rate; that is, the victim incites the rape in very few instances—four percent to be exact."

Speaking for the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), Constable Rick Morrison of the crime prevention section of the community services branch said, "we are not trying to instill fear but rather want to make people stop and think about the dangers in hitchhiking."

He said, "the adverse reaction is part of the game. You can't please everyone. I wonder what the complainers' reactions would be if their son or daughter were raped."

"We're asking people to use common sense. We can't stop them."

Mel Lastman, Mayor of North York and recent addition to York's board of governors is an outspoken critic of hitchhiking. He believes the ad is a good one.

"I think it scares people and that's

what people need," he said. "I know the ad will work. My own statements against hitchhiking have cleared the streets."

Lastman opposes hitchhiking but does not think the law works. "Public education of parents and children is the only way. I've recently met with the honourable Tom Wells, minister of education, who has promised to start an anti-hitchhiking program in the schools."

Lastman said university students hitchhike primarily for economic reasons. To discourage student hitchhiking he advocates lowering TTC fares.

Police can stop hitchhikers only if they are found soliciting on the improved or hard surface section of the highway or on highways such as the 401, 400, and Queen Elizabeth Way, where signs prohibiting hitchhiking appear.

Contrary to popular belief, hitchhiking is illegal. Section 121a of the Highway Traffic Act, states:

"No person, while on the roadway shall solicit a ride from the driver of a motor vehicle, other than a public passenger conveyance."

A roadway is defined as, "the part of the highway that is improved, designed or ordinarily used for vehicular traffic, but does not include the shoulder."

Morrison's review of the cam-

aign's history revealed that few guidelines for the style of the ad were ever set out. Two years ago, a poster contest, open to all educational institutions in Ontario, was initiated asking students to "design a crime prevention poster stressing the dangers of hitchhiking."

No additional criteria for the design of the poster were specified then or during the judging of the 872 entries. The winner of the contest was 15 year old Kenneth Herman from Thunder Bay.

Ten thousand copies of the poster were reproduced and distributed to schools in Ontario, however, public protests weren't heard until Claude Neon Ltd. One of Canada's largest sign manufacturers, it gave the OPP free space for 60 enlargements of the poster. It is Claude Neon's policy to provide available billboard space for charities, community projects and police and fire prevention departments.

The impact of the posters will be difficult to assess. Only since January of this year has the OPP been collecting statistics on the incidence of crimes related to hitchhiking.

Reports from the first six months show that, of the 42 reported offenses, 27 were committed by the hitchhiker and 15 by the driver.

How have York students reacted to the "hand of death"?

John Millard, science 3, a regular hitchhiker on Steeles Avenue, believes that the danger referred to in the OPP ads is exaggerated.

"There's no danger to hitchhiking in this area although I would never hitchhike downtown and I don't think that women should hitchhike. I hitchhike from York to Yonge Street because it's faster than the TTC, you get to meet people and it saves money. Last year I spent only \$1.50 on bus fares."

Cam Gourley, arts 2, said that he chuckled the first time he saw the poster. "I don't hitchhike often, but don't feel it's too dangerous for me. It's faster than the bus. I don't recommend it for women. I have known of a rape due to hitchhiking."

The association between rape and hitchhiking was foremost in the minds of those interviewed about the OPP ad.

Commenting on this, Chase advised, "its not that women shouldn't hitchhike but they should become fully aware there is a correlation between rape and hitchhiking. We suggest that she never accept a ride with more than one man and that she check out her feelings about the man."

If she has a negative reaction about him, she should not accept no matter how silly she feels in refusing. Also, check the door handle, and be aware that the best defense is self-defense."



Which of these men would you give a lift to? James Brennan, above, disguised as a member of the attaché case generation, got a ride almost immediately to Bay and Bloor. In more typical student garb, below, he developed a strained thumb.



Tony Polyzotis photos

## Rules of thumb

- Do not hitch-hike at TTC stops!
- Women, don't hitch-hike alone, especially in the dark hours.
- Men, hitch-hike with a woman - your chances of getting a speedy ride will increase immensely.
- Smile. Hurling curses and obscene gestures at motorists who speed by with their horns blaring is self-defeating. The best attitude to adopt towards drivers is, "If you don't do it, somebody else will."
- When you leave in the morning, be prepared for drastic changes in weather, such as rain, blizzards and temperature drops.
- You can pick up a sticker with the word "York" emblazoned across it in York's colours (what else?) at the CYSF office, 105 Central Square.
- For optimum conditions hitch-hike to York during rushes which precede nine and ten o'clock classes.
- Watching all your fellow Yorkites pass you by as you thumb out of the university can be very depressing.



Some solidarity! Anyways, try late in the afternoon or at 10 in the evening when Atkinson classes get out, especially on Sentinel Road (going south out of York). Sentinel and St. Lawrence Boulevard (leading to Keele St.) are your best bets any time in the day. Shoreham Drive (leading to Jane Street) is a write-off.

- If by some chance, you are driving to or from York, pick up as many clean-looking hitch-hikers as your vehicle will hold. By a mysterious but true law of the universe, this will improve your luck next time!

## Passport by Brad Meslin



Radio York disc jockey, Brad Meslin, becomes Excalibur's first foreign correspondent with this issue. Meslin, embarked on a year-long, 40-nation round-the world trip, will write a more-or-less regular (depending on jet-lag and culture shock) column for Excalibur, describing his travel experiences, giving a few do's (and a few don'ts) for the would be world-traveller.

This week, Meslin talks about dysentery, paradise, and Genghis Khan.

**EZURUM, TURKEY** — To try and record a trip of over 30,000 miles, spanning four continents and taking upwards of a year to complete, in space of a few short articles, is probably very nearly impossible.

Certainly if it can be done, it won't be by me — instead I'm going to try and relate different impressions and experiences as they affect me.

Hopefully from these, you'll be able to get a general feeling about the 40-odd countries I should be visiting.

First though, I should explain some of the basic preparations involved in a trip like this. It's not as simple as the "package" - tour mentality" that so many of us are used to, would have us believe.

The dozen or so necessary documents (passport, international student's card, hostel card, vaccination certificate etc.) may each take a few days to get.

Before I left, I felt like a pincushion from the 15 needles that every world traveler should have, some, like Gamma Globulin being more than a little painful.

Then there's everything from booking a flight, to buying a pack, to wading through reams of written medical opinion to find out which medicines to take, finally, on the day of departure, a dozen other things pop up making the moment that huge DC-10 takes off, one of memorable relief.

However, the realization hits that I must be crazy, as the range of all too familiar horror stories comes flooding into my head. It seems that

everyone is a self-proclaimed expert on world travel as they constantly caution; "If you don't get attacked by Genghis Khan's descendants, the screaming Ghurkas, as you go through the Khyber Pass, then for sure you'll get malaria, amoebic dysentery or the plague."

Or "Did you know that Katmandu, Nepal is the hepatitis center of the world?"

To counter these encouraging words of wisdom however, there are a few (very few) optimists who keep coming up with cliches like, "No one who travels through Asia ever returns unchanged", or, "One year in Asia is worth 10 years of the formal education in the West."

The perfect place to rest up for an overland trip through Asia and South Pacific, Los is a miser's dream. It becomes very difficult to spend \$5 a day including accommodation, food, drinks and entertainment.

Weeks drift effortlessly by with long days spent lying on a 2-mile long white sand beach. Beside a crystal-clear azure coloured bay, contemplating life, your travels, your navel. All in all it is hedonism at its best.

But after 3½ weeks, even paradise can become boring and with Asia just around the corner, "the fever" begins to pull you slowly at first, but eventually one word begins to dominate your thoughts: Istanbul. "Gateway to the East" as it says in all the travel brochures. Every overland traveler coming from Europe must pass through this 2500 year-old city with its 1500 Mosques, and of course I was no exception.

After several days of just trying to comprehend a city that boasts residents of every nationality on earth among its 5,000,000 inhabitants, the first leg of the journey East begins with a two day cruise among Turkey's Black Sea coast to Trabzon, 900 miles from Istanbul, Trabzon is the easternmost Turkish port before Iran.

Another three or four days by bus will take us past Turkey's highest peak, Mt. Ararat on through Iran to its capital, Tehran.

A couple days there and then it's on to western Afghanistan where we've heard it's possible to buy a horse and ride 300 miles through the mountains and desert, to Kabul. If the screaming Ghurkas don't get us, who knows?



## TODAY

FIRST MEETING  
STUDENT CHAI CAMPAIGN

2:30 p.m.

Jewish Student Federation

RM 101 Ross

GET WITH IT!

The STUDENT CHAI CAMPAIGN is the student fund-raising program at York University for the benefit of the United Jewish Appeal of Toronto. Money raised supports Jewish education and social welfare services in Toronto, social welfare and immigration services in Israel, and needy Jews throughout the world (through the Canadian Jewish Congress).

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