

RULES of THUMB

or



What it's like to hitchhike in S.C.

Female Bodies Found

This is just one of the many headlines that have appeared in Santa Cruz in the past few weeks. More than eleven women have been reported missing so far. This number includes two women whose bodies were discovered weeks later, dismembered - one on the Santa Cruz beaches and the other in the mountains behind the University. In all cases, the last time a woman was seen was before she was going to hitch hike. Nine of the women were hitching to or from Cabrillo College and two were hitching from UCSC.

What can we do? Because of the inadequate public transportation system many young people are forced to hitch hike to get around. There is a desperate need for more public buses with extended routes so that we can get to where we're going safely and women will not have to risk their lives hitching.

In the meantime it is crucial for women to be aware of what is going on, and to take

the following precautions to prevent the same thing from happening to themselves or anyone else.



1) If you are on a bus and you see a woman hitching, ask the driver to stop for her and pay her way yourself. Women who have cars should go out of their way to pick up women hitch hiking and take them as close to their destination as possible.

2) If you must hitch hike to get around, don't hitch alone! Always try to have a friend hitching with you, but remember that hitching in pairs or with a dog does not always ensure safety. It is possible for a strong man or more than one man to overpower two women, and dogs have been known to run away. They can, however, act as a deterrent.

3) Be discriminate about who you take rides with. When at all possible, take rides with women. Rely on your intuition; DON'T be afraid to turn down a ride if you have any suspicions at all about

the driver or other people in the car. If a man or men stop for you ask where they are going. If they hesitate or give a vague or weird answer, DON'T GET IN!

4) If you do take a ride, check out the car before you get in. A good rapist-deterrent is to write down the license number or the car before you get in, while the driver can watch you doing it. Check how the driver reacts to this: if he gets up-tight, refuse the ride. When you open the door, check the door handle - make sure it can be opened from the inside. Look at what make and model the car is, and any distinguishing features it might have (dents; etc.). If you are hitching to or from the university, check to see if the car has a university parking sticker or a temporary sticker.

5) When you are hitching, carry as defense weapons keys, pens, lighted cigarettes, a can of hair spray or oven cleaner to spray into an attacker's face, and if you are attacked do not hesitate to use these things. Do not carry any weapons that you don't know how to use (like a knife) because it could very easily be taken away and used against you.

6) ALWAYS have a clear destination in mind, and know beforehand how to get there. Get a street map of the area and study it so you can't be fooled by a phoney "short cut".

7) Once you're in the car and you start to get suspicious of the driver there are several

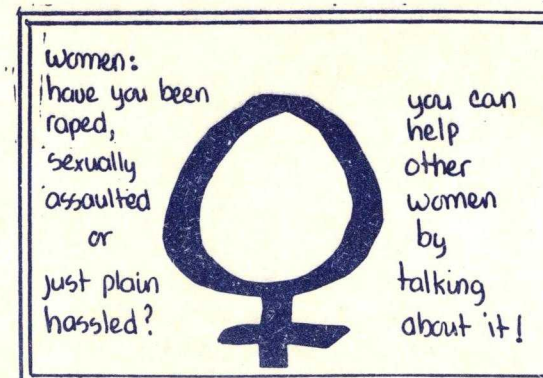
things you can do. If you're in town or any place where there are stop signs or signals, wait until the car stops and get out quickly. If you're on a highway or road where there are few stopping places, ask to be let out at the next convenient place. Be firm: don't say "I think this is where I get out," but rather, "Let me out here". You should, however, be prepared to jump if he won't stop. One woman got away by opening up the glove compartment and throwing the contents in the assailant's face, taking him by surprise and thus giving her a chance to escape. Of course every situation is different and what we are stressing is not that there are definite rules to follow, but that you should always be open to innovation and be able to use whatever methods are available to you at the time.

8) If hitching in an area where there are other hitch hikers, and a woman driver stops, explain to the male hitch hikers that it is important for women to be picked up by other women as men do not get raped that often.

9) If you do find yourself being abducted and for some reason none of the above methods work try talking him out of it. Try the "I'm really disappointed in you, you've shattered my faith in humanity, I didn't think you were that type..." line. Flattery has worked for some women. If there is a threat of a weapon, call his bluff; this has been

successful against one rapist in Santa Cruz (who first approaches women for a ride, usually to the Catalyst, then says he has a weapon and is going to rape you (the woman).)

The police and press will always advise women to submit to the wishes of an attacker. But, in some cases women who have resisted, have not got raped. The best advice is to feel out your part-



icular situation - if there is no weapon, resist, if there is and he says he just wants to rape you, don't. Just remember that you can resist in some cases. If resistance does fail and you are raped, remember to get the license number and description of the rapist and as soon as possible call the RAPE LINE 426-8295 This is a number that will connect you with Women Against Rape, a support group that will help a woman who has been hassled, molested, or raped with the red tape of the police department and the hospital if necessary. They will also use the information you have to warn other women hitch hikers about known rapists.

OF COURSE it is vital for all women who hitch hike to realize that women are NOT just being raped, they are being abducted and killed. ONCE A RAPIST HAS COMMITTED MURDER IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT HE WILL GO BACK TO MERELY RAPE. So it is most important to not let yourself get into a position where you can't escape. The moment you have any suspicions, ACT UPON THEM. Too many women have not acted upon their suspicions until it was too late.



THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Contrary to popular belief, the police departments that are employed for the protection of our community do not have the skills and crime-solving abilities as shown on Dragnet, Adam-12, or any other T.V. series. Our police are, for the most part, interested in keeping their noses clean and not actually solving people's problems. This is especially evident in the police attitude towards women who have been raped. Police do not view women who have been raped as citizens whose rights have been infringed upon, but rather as "sluts" who have asked for it.

In an interview with Lt. Scherer of the Santa Cruz Police Dept. last summer, the blame for rape was placed entirely on the woman. "Anything you do to make yourselves attractive to a male is putting you in a position of being subjected to males," he said. The Lieutenant said that a woman who sticks out her thumb is asking for trouble by virtue of the fact that she is a woman. "Face it, anything you gals do is to make yourselves wanted (by men)". So hitch hiking is a form of soliciting instead of the most inexpensive method of transportation? Another interesting insight given to us by the Lt. is that if a woman knows someone in the police dept., her case is more likely to be worked on. With this type of attitude, it is no wonder that very little or nothing is done after a woman reports a rape.

In early December a woman reported a rape and gave a description of the rapist which matches the description of the man now believed to have raped seven women since that time. This information was not released until last week, after two more women were reported missing. If it has been known since last December that there is a certain person around the area committing rapes (and surely they have more descriptions), then why hasn't this information been published? Why

hasn't the police department acted? The answer to these questions is simple: the police are convinced that rape is the fault of the woman, and therefore do not feel obligated to help or protect us.

It is up to us, the citizens of Santa Cruz, to make them responsible. We can do this by demanding that they take an active part in investigation of ALL reported rapes and disappearances, that they release valuable information to the public, that they patrol well-traveled hitch hiking routes, maybe even give women hitch hikers rides when they are seen on lonely streets. If we get together to demand police protection instead of police harassment, the police will have to become more responsive to the people.

