

Girls who hitchhike in front of the high school

By Cliff Berman

Is hitchhiking dangerous?

Five students were hitchhiking on Highway 9 across from the entrance to San Lorenzo Valley High School one morning last week. All five were girls in grades nine, 10, and 11.

Students—both boys and girls—hitchhiking across from the high school are a common sight during the week.

Renee Castor, one of the five girls seen hitchhiking last week, said she hitchhikes "a lot."

She said she does have qualms about hitchhiking, but that she considers the person that stops to pick her up before she gets in the car.

Asked when she would not accept a ride, she answered that she would not get in a car with "three guys. I look for empty bottles on the seat, things that are obvious," Renee added.

Even though Renee has turned down many rides, she has been picked up sometimes and had to demand to be let out when the driver has made advances.

Renee said she has never been physically assaulted in any way, but that a number of drivers have made "inferences" while other drivers have "come right out and asked."

Renee said she gets out of school earlier than most students at a time when there isn't a bus running. According to Renee her mother has told her to be careful when hitchhiking.

Renee said that she would take the bus if it were available.

Of the other girls seen hitchhiking last week, Kelly Saso said that she never hitchhikes alone.

Kelly said that she takes the bus sometimes, but that hitchhiking with friends can be more fun.

"The bus takes too long. Hitchhiking is a good way to meet people," said Kelly.

The girls talked about ways of protecting themselves and one said that

two or three times upon hitchhiking with others at night, she has carried a knife.

The girls agreed the best protection for them is to hitchhike in the company of a boy.

Linda Coulter said she hitchhiked to Yosemite with a boyfriend once and repeated the idea that hitchhiking is rewarding because of the people that you

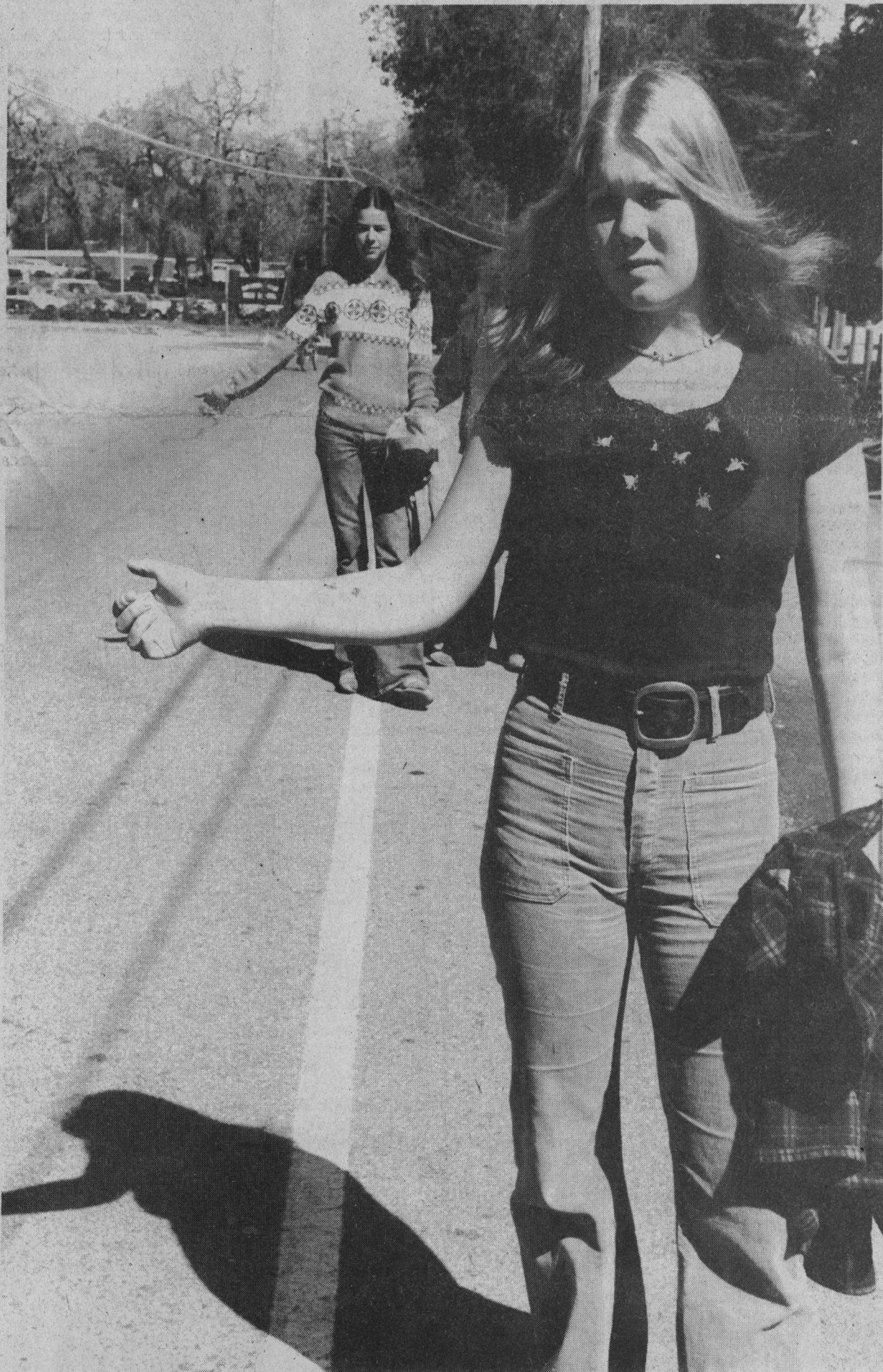
meet.

According to a recent estimate by School Superintendent Donald Rhodes, between 30 and 50 students hitchhike home or to some other destination regularly after school.

Rhodes said that these students are entitled to take the bus, but evidently most prefer to hitchhike.

"I don't think it's something the schools should regulate," Rhodes said. "I think whether a student hitchhikes or not should remain a parental decision."

"I don't feel that the schools should step in unless it becomes an immediate danger in terms of traffic. I suppose if there were 200 students hitchhiking it could become dangerous," Rhodes added.



Renee Castor (foreground) and Linda Coulter, two of the many SLV High School students who hitchhike frequently along Highway 9 in the Valley.

You'll be able to dial 911 for help soon

By Bob Ligon

By June of next year, if all goes as expected, Valley residents will be able to get immediate emergency help simply by picking up the phone and dialing 911.

The service is to be part of the county's new centralized communications system.

The 911 dispatcher, who will be located in Santa Cruz, will "hot line" the message to the appropriate emergency agency that will send the help requested.

If the correct address is given, help will be on the scene within minutes.

But what if the address is the wrong one? There are, for instance, 18 Redwood street names in the San Lorenzo Valley-Scotts Valley area alone.

There are 12 Madrone street names and five Madrona street names.

An effort is being made to try to avoid complications resulting from this fact, but quite a few Valley fire officials feel that what's being done is "too little, too late."

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