

Risk and reward: the (lost?) art of hitchhiking

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Abstract: Hitchhikers once queued up along Australian roadsides; now they are rarely seen.

Increasing car ownership, cheap air travel, and a growing ‘culture of fear’, reinforced by widely publicised rape and murder cases, have all played their part in this decline. The figure of the hitchhiker continues to have strong cultural resonance nevertheless, and the practice may yet see a resurgence. This paper examines some of the recurring motifs and paradoxes in the memoirs and anecdotes of American, European and Australian hitchhikers past and present. It focuses in particular on the way their sense of risk is mitigated by following certain ‘rules’, either their own or those passed on by other hitchhikers.

Has anyone heard of Linda Folkard? This nineteen-year-old American was named “Miss Hitchhiker of 1946” by the Bowery mayor in New York, for the 15,000 miles she travelled across the country looking through other people’s windscreens (Schlebecker 1958, 320). The possibility of such an award is unthinkable today, in the United States, or in Australia, where I come from, where hitchhikers—and especially women—have all but disappeared from the roadside, and where mainstream media would never dare to encourage the practice of thumbing. As Rémy Chevalier, who hitchhiked regularly in the US from the 1970s on, writes: ‘Today, if you stick your thumb out on the street, people just look at you like you’re crazy. There’s only two reasons why anybody would hitch today. Either your car broke down and you don’t have a

cell phone [...], or you're flat broke. Only "hippies" hitch in the USA. But it got me around.' (Sykes 2005, 34).

We tend to think of hitchhiking as a counter-cultural practice whose heyday was in the 1960s and '70s, but as Linda Folkard's prize shows, its history goes back much further. John T.

Schlebecker in the United States in 1958, and Mario Rinvoluceri in mid-1970s Britain, attempted short histories of the practice, and both looked back to World War I for its origins, when motor transport was still in its infancy. (Schlebecker 1958, 307; Rinvoluceri 1974, 90-2). There were, of course, earlier incarnations of it, in train and horse-drawn vehicle hopping. And, despite appearances, it is certainly not finished with yet. In our current period of anxiety around global warming and dwindling oil supplies, car-sharing and related strategies are on the discussion table again. Increasing internet activity around hitchhiking suggests that the practice is already seeing a resurgence, though its future might lie in more regulated forms. (Chevalier in Sykes, 35; Digihitch, url: <http://www.digihitch.com/>)

Schlebecker and Rinvoluceri's short histories were based on limited source bases—mainly newspaper archives—and their writers were honest about their limitations and biases in favour of the hitchhiker. Though some aspects of hitchhiking have piqued the interest of sociologists, psychologists, criminologists, and cultural commentators, in the last few decades, no one has attempted to retrace the transnational history of this practice in a systematic, scholarly way (Chesters and Smith 2001; Wechner 2003)¹. In particular, the ways that organisational and

¹ Bernd Wechner, an inveterate hitchhiker living in Tasmania, Australia, has been developing an extensive library on the history of hitchhiking, and generously shares his findings with visitors to the Digihitch website.

governmental histories (insurance, policing, transport industry and administration) intersect with personal histories of hitchhiking deserves closer inspection. The paper I am giving today is one early, speculative step towards a larger project examining the history of hitchhiking and lift-giving in post-war Australia, through a range of written and oral sources. The main sources for this paper are hitchhikers' memoirs and anecdotes; thus, the lift-givers' side of the story remains to be told.

Schlebecker claimed hitchhiking as an American invention, essentially because it was in the United States that car ownership grew fastest: by 1920 there were over 9 million cars on the road, and by 1929 more than 25 million. Writing in 1958, he observed that hitchhiking had already seen peaks and troughs in its popularity and acceptability (Schlebecker 1958, 449; see also John Bartlett in Sykes, 54). Scattered and mostly anecdotal evidence suggests that over the twentieth century, hitchhiking peaked in times of economic necessity—during oil crises, transport strikes, wartime rationing—or when communitarian ideals took hold, for example in the 1960s and 70s when 'hippies' journeyed cheaply around the globe; also in Communist countries, like Poland, where a state-initiated voucher system rewarded drivers who picked up hitchhikers. In the early days, Schlebecker tells us, women and children were avid hitchers, and Grace Small bears this out in her book of memories, *The Hitchhiking Grandmother*: she began thumbing in the 1940s, aged 46, when her children were grown up, and continued until she was eighty: she hitched throughout the States, reaching Alaska, and later tried her luck in Europe. In 1934, Ralph D. Corky Sutherland requested his first lift, alone, at age five! (Sutherland 2004, 4).

A climate of fear surrounds the practice in most developed countries today, and 'rough'

guidebooks, which twenty or thirty years ago might have suggested it as a mode of travel and offered tips on how to go about it, now actively counsel readers against it. We can attribute this in part to the internationally publicised case of Ivan Milat, the Australian serial killer of hitchhikers—a gruesome story of young, mostly European, travellers picked up over the late 1980s and 1990s, murdered and buried in Belanglo Forest in New South Wales. The global impact of this story has been reinforced and extended in time by its dramatisation (and fictionalization) on big and small screen, for example in the documentary *Born to Kill: Ivan Milat* (BBC, 2006) and the blockbuster horror film *Wolf Creek* (Dir: Greg Mclean, 2005). The unregulated, spatially dispersed nature of hitchhiking, which places it outside the market-oriented tourist industry, means that no reliable statistics are available with which to counter media-hyped horror stories.

As well as cautionary tales, there are clearly social and economic forces at play in the recent decline in hitchhiking. Car ownership has grown dramatically in the West, since the 1970s in particular, and many families now own two or more cars. This means that drivers are increasingly likely to identify hitchhikers as members of a non-car-owning underclass—the criminal, the mentally ill, or voluntary misfits seen as undeserving of ‘charity’ in the form of a lift. The extreme discounting of domestic airfares has played its part, too, and this is especially true in Australia; airfares are often cheaper than long-distance coach and train fares.

There are also significant physical obstacles to hitchhiking, the foremost being the ever-lengthening and widening freeways from which pedestrians are banned and where stopping is strongly discouraged. In Australia, we can add to this the particular spatial challenges of a vast,

dry land whose population density drops dramatically in the interior. Tony Horwitz, who hitchhiked through the centre of Australia in 1987, writes at one point:

I have entered the twilight zone of Australian cartography. From now on the map will be filled with mirages: there will be un-rivers [...], lakes that are not lakes[...], and towns that are no more than water-towers. (Horwitz 1989, 43).

This means that the listless hitcher might actually die of exposure or thirst, and the commitment from both driver and hitcher is therefore greater than in more populous countries, where exit possibilities are relatively frequent. But this didn't stop hitchhikers in Australia in the past, when there were even fewer cars on the road; indeed it was often seen as an exhilarating challenge, a risk worth taking.

The matter of risk, though implicitly present throughout hitchhikers' travel accounts, is most often addressed explicitly early into the story, with a brief justification or explanation for the risk-taking, as though to get it out of the way. In books of short anecdotes, like Sykes' *No Such Thing as a Free Ride*, it becomes apparent, and is hardly surprising, that those who have a scary experience the first time usually never do it again (like Stephen R. Bissette in Sykes, 64-71). Longer memoirs are written by those who, encouraged by decent first lifts, go on to hitchhike over great distances. While they may have some unpleasant rides and close shaves along the way, this does not stop them hitchhiking.

The first sentence in Anne Péchou's 1981 unpublished memoir of her hitching trip through Indonesia and Australia reads: 'To those who ask whether I'm scared of going so far away on my

own...'², followed by a tale of narrowly escaping being raped by a stranger in her own home in central Toulouse, France. She claimed to prefer getting out into the world and facing danger on her own terms (Péchou 1981, 1). Grace Small, after escaping a hairy situation in a car with three men (one of whom warned her to run because he didn't like what the others were planning), went straight back out to the highway and thumbed another ride (Small, xiv). She tells this story in the first few pages of her book. Tony Horwitz puts it this way:

Hitchhiking is a big leap of faith for both parties. The driver has no way of knowing if you've just climbed the wall of a maximum security prison. You have no way of knowing if he's a mugger, rapist or worse (Horwitz, 12).

In other words, most hitchhikers are very conscious of the possible dangers: drunk or speeding drivers, rapists, murderers. They decide to do it anyway. Many describe themselves as optimistic by nature (Glinfort, 115; Péchou, 66). Oftentimes, they experience extraordinary hospitality and kindness from lift-givers, and this convinces them that trusting strangers is, for the most part, worthwhile (Glinfort, 168; Péchou, 67; Cosey Fanni Tutti in Sykes, 76). The risks are significant, but so are the rewards. Small says simply: 'Hitchhikers take chances' (Small, 99).

Perhaps the decline in hitchhiking and lift-giving is evidence that, in Australia and the US and many (but not all) European countries, trust in strangers, and willingness to take personal risks, has disintegrated to an unprecedented level? It is not uncommon to hear people who hitchhiked around the world in earlier times, say that they would never do it today. Grace Small writes: 'Hitchhiking is not safe anymore' (Small 105). Elo Glinfort, in the introduction to his memoir, writes: 'One day, ... Per and I reminisced about a hitchhiking trip we made together in Europe in

² I have translated all quotes from Anne Péchou's memoir from the original French.

1949. At the end, [Per] remarked, “You certainly couldn’t do that today. People have changed!” Glinfort wondered if this were true; he could not believe ‘we have lost that much of our humanity, our trust and our concern for others as the media and film industry seem to intimate’ (Glinfort, 6-7). On a travellers’ internet forum at Bootsnaill.com, one experienced hitchhiker (pseudonym ‘Groo’) had this to say in January 2008:

Hitching in N[ew] Z[ealand] in the 1960's was a delight. Hitching led to stays at peoples [sic] houses, the creation of new friendships [...] I also hitched in Australia and my experiences were similar.

Today I think that the risks are greater and I would never recommend hitch hiking in any country. I certainly don't think that Australia is any more dangerous than anywhere else, probably safer than most, but even if carnal or murderous intent is absent you can never be sure of the effects alcohol or drugs may have had on your prospective driver.

That said, I hitchhike regularly.³

According to sociologist Frank Füredi, talking about the UK but extrapolating to Western society more generally, a ‘culture of fear’ has taken over, in which free-floating fears attach to almost every aspect of existence, and ‘every conceivable experience has been transformed into a risk to be managed’ (Füredi 2006, 8; Bourke 2005, 71). In this environment, the hitchhiker’s (and lift-giver’s) choice to trust the stranger is significant: it has become a rare and rebellious act. Füredi uses the decline in hitchhiking by students in his British university town as an example of the way the ‘culture of fear’ has taken hold. ‘Instead of regarding the act of offering a ride as a

³ URL:
<http://boards.bootsnaill.com/eve/forums/a/tpc/f/424098755/m/24600363416/p/2>.
Posted 22 January 2008 04:18. Accessed 4 April 2008.

sociable, even altruistic, gesture,' he writes, 'it is now interpreted as a prelude to a crime.' (Füredi xix-xx). For Füredi, the peddling of fears by insurance and security industries, media, and other bodies who profit from people's anxiety, has led to a breakdown of community cohesion and trust.

There are some places where a hitchhiking culture lives on, most markedly, it seems, where Communist government policies on resource-sharing are or were once in place, like Cuba and the former Eastern bloc. Robert Reid, in 'Bulgarian Hitchhikers: Have car, find company' writes:

Lonely Planet makes a habit of warning against hitchhiking in its standard text section in the back of guidebooks; ignore that here. Bulgaria practically begs you to do it - or at least [to] pick people up. It's an everyday means of getting around for people who often lack their own transport. Grandmas pile bags into cars on the side of highways, lone children hold out hands to stop strangers' cars to get to school - the only fear is whether or not the driver will be playing chalga - nauseatingly joyful, relentless, bouncing disco music.⁴

Clearly, economic necessity plays a key part here, as it does in Cuba, where petrol shortages, overcrowded public transport and limited car ownership are driving factors.⁵ In the capitalist world, growth in national and personal wealth over the twentieth century has brought with it a

⁴ URL: http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travelstories/article/bulgarianhitchhikers_0107/. Accessed 31 March 2008.

⁵ According to digihitch.com, in Cuba, 'private cars officially are not allowed to have foreigners in their car. This makes it difficult to hitch-hike in the way we are used to in other countries'. In other words, the hitchhiking culture is a local one, not for the benefit of (relatively) wealthy tourists. URL: <http://www.digihitch.com/world/Central-America/Cuba> [accessed 6 April 2008]. However, according to another hitchhiking website claims that 'It is perfectly legal for foreign tourists in Cuba to partake in hitchhiking, although often priority may be given to Cuban nationals at an official hitchhiking pick up point.' URL: <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/articles/article/Cuba/Cuba-Hitchhiking-Guide/255> [accessed 6 April 2008]

culture and landscape shaped by private automobility, which tends to break down local community connectedness. With this comes an increased distrust of the other, and especially of the carless (Urry 2006, 19). But this development is by no means uniform throughout the West. There are some wealthy countries where hitchhiking is more prevalent and accepted today than in others: New Zealand, Israel, Ireland and Germany, for example. What are the factors determining these differences? Studying changes in patterns of and attitudes toward hitchhiking in different countries or regions would be one way of testing the geographical, temporal and socio-cultural specificities of (or exceptions to) Füredi's grim tableau, in which fear becomes 'our default response to life itself' (Füredi, ix).

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In the context of histories of tourism and leisure, hitchhiking is of interest for more than its risk profile. It is a form of travel whose practitioners operate deliberately and self-consciously outside of the market economy—though of course they rely on the co-operation of drivers who *do* operate within that economy, a paradox in itself worthy of examination. Hitchhiking's unregulated, unrecorded, spatially dispersed nature means the practice has remained impervious to the commercialisation and institutionalisation that other forms of 'alternative' tourism have undergone. In this way, it has carved out its own unique space in travel history, and yet it intersects with and is affected by other touristic developments. Think, for example, of the dedicated hitchhikers' common complaint that 'grey nomads' towing caravans never stop for them, or their expressions of contempt for safe, easy coach tourism. Anne Péchou writes:

I settle into the voyage as others settle into a house... In one month, I have learnt to love my own company so well that I flee with impatience any contact with other tourists who will tell me about their purchases, the sights they've seen and their return home. (Péchou,

50).

At one point, Tony Horwitz submits to the ‘disgrace’ of taking a bus, when a lift is not forthcoming (Horwitz, 226-7; see also Parry, 96-8). On the other hand, the growth of an industry around backpacking, which developed out of an earlier, hitchhiking ‘drifter’ culture (Cohen 2004, 54-57; O’Reilly 2006, 1014; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, 841), provides cheap accommodation for hitchhikers, on those nights when sleeping out is not an option, or when the lift-giver fails to offer shelter.

Hitchhiking is full of paradoxes like this. The deliberate abandonment of control over timetable (and even, sometimes, over destination) lends a unique unpredictability to the hitching trip. Historian Philip Conford found this entry in his diary from 1966: ‘Was heading for Bristol, but a bloke offered me a lift to Yorkshire, so I took it’ (Sykes, 141; see also Tony Hawks in Sykes, 29). This unpredictability can be experienced alternately (and even simultaneously) as freedom from the obligation to be anywhere at a particular time, and as enforced, frustrating passivity. In his 1981 ode to the hitching life, *Eye of the Spud: Hitching and Freedom etc in Australia*, Australian Gerard Mahoney writes:

If not handled correctly, the occasional long roadside wait can lead to melancholy and frustration and even the first signs of misanthropy. But after some experience and a few wasted hours, I discovered that waiting for a lift not only should, but can be productive and enjoyable [...]

There are [...] literally hundreds of amusements available to you, ranging from consciousness-raising and apocalyptic iconoclasm right through the spectrum of human experience to masochism and self-immolation. Some of these you should be able to invent

yourself (Mahoney, 38-9).

The random rhythm of the journey, with long waits between lifts in remote and often un-picturesque places followed by intimacy with strangers, can be awkward, illuminating, comforting, and sometimes scary. Tony Horwitz writes of a ‘paranoid clarity that comes to those who stand alone by the road, for hours’, and describes hitchhiking as

at once the loneliest and most social of occupations. One moment you’re stranded by the highway, as rootless as a piece of driftwood. The next moment you’re thrust into someone else’s car, someone else’s life. Where the driver goes you will follow (Horwitz, 13, 52).

This repeated sequencing of extreme solitude and intense companionship demands particular strategies for psychological and physical survival. But what seems difficult, even unbearable at times during the trip, is often represented in hitchhikers’ accounts as the very thing that draws them back again. Indeed, they experience it as a test of character, and often characterise their journey as a rite of passage—no matter what their age or circumstances. And this is a rite of passage that many want to re-enact, particularly when they feel themselves being swallowed up again by the workaday world of the city. (Horwitz, 5, 210; Pécou, 70, 85, 91-2).

This is true, to a degree, of all travel experiences, from the carefully planned tour coach experience to the thrill-seeking exploits of extreme sports. But what I would argue is peculiar to hitchhiking, is that there is no reliable template for the voyage ahead, beyond its very unpredictability; *anyone* (or no-one) might offer a lift, from a long-haul truck driver (if s/he’s ready to flout company insurance rules) to a CEO in a sports car, to a teenager in a stolen, hotted up V8. The trip might be slow or fast. There might be sleeping out under the stars (or the rain), or luxurious accommodation and food offered by a host. This uncertainty, at once exhilarating

and scary, lies at the heart of the experience. (Gabriel Morris in Sykes, 30-33). P  chou writes: ‘It is one of the great joys of life, these morning departures in an unfamiliar part of the world, when I leave without knowing where I’ll end up. The uncertainty makes my heart speed up, the novelty sharpens my gaze’ (P  chou, 119).

But no matter how much the hitchhiker might seek liberty from the constraints, time pressures, and anxieties of modern life, at some point in all the memoirs I have read, the writer refers to ‘rules’ or ‘principles’ they have learnt or devised. In other words, they still feel the need for a measure of control, at the very least over their own way of being, in space, and in relation to others in the world—for this is all they can control in the circumstances. Some rules or principles are expressed with irony. According to Gerard Mahoney: ‘schedules just don’t work in practice. This can be summarised in the MALAPROP theory, that is Mahoney’s Analytical Law of Arrival Probability Principle, which states: The likelihood of hitching from A to B in a given time is inversely proportional to the urgency involved.’ (Mahoney, 1-2). For Tony Horwitz, the First Commandment of Hitchhiking is: ‘Thou Shalt Not Make a Plan’ (Horwitz, 93).

Naturally, the rules vary enormously between individuals; indeed, they sometimes contradict each other entirely. For example, Grace Small learnt her ‘rules’ from a man she met in a rooming house on her first trip in 1946, but not before he gave her a ‘scolding’ for doing it at all.

“First”, he said, “You never walk. Second, get away from the town to put your thumb up [...] Third, never accept short rides. Stay put. Wait for someone going a long way.” (Small, 58).

Not walking suited Small, for she liked to travel dressed in her Sunday best, which helped elicit

sympathy from drivers. In wet weather, she even carried a newspaper to put under her muddy shoes so as not to dirty her hosts' cars (Small, 57). Others consider walking essential, as a sign to drivers that they are willing to work at getting somewhere, that they are not lazy cheapskates—which is how many seem to see hitchers. Mahoney perfected walking backwards with his thumb out, so that drivers would both see his face, and acknowledge his labours (Mahoney, 14).

All hitchhikers tend to agree with the no hitching within cities rule; Elo Glinfort acknowledged this was 'dictated more by a realization of its futility than by any lofty ideals' (Glinfort, 139). Hitchhiking at night is a no-no, unless truly desperate (Péchou, 66; Small, 89). Another rule that all seem to observe is the 'no queue-jumping' rule, which dictates that where several hitchhikers are standing along a stretch of road, the last arrived walks to the far end of the line; Mahoney makes this his first 'lesson' to other hitchers, and considers anyone who breaks it to be committing 'a most heinous breach of hitching etiquette' (Mahoney, 11; Small, 77; Tutti in Sykes, 76, 142).

There is much disagreement though, over whether or not one should decline short rides in the hope of a longer lift. Glinfort and his companion Per's rule in 1949 was 'never to refuse a lift, as long as it was in the right direction' (Glinfort, 85). As two strapping young men, they had less to fear than, say, a woman travelling alone. Grace Small, in the States, hitching her way south in the winter in the early 1950s, followed her mentor's rules and was more choosy. She wanted to have a comfortable ride across the Siskiyou Pass.

I watched for a car that would be certain to have a heater in it. It also had to have California license plates so I could be sure it would get me over the pass. I turned down

every offer until a car came that met my requirements (Small, 84-5).

Despite being so fussy, she managed to cover a lot of ground. It must have been the little hat with the veil.

The rules are about trying to ensure a measure of physical safety, as well as attracting good, long lifts. But in all hitchhikers' memoirs, there is the recognition of an essential moral element as well, an awareness of the lift as an exchange, not monetary but social (Tutti in Sykes, 76).

Hitchhikers acknowledge an obligation to entertain or listen to the driver, and in some cases to keep him/her from falling asleep at the wheel, even to share the driving when requested to do so. Regular hitchhikers develop a strong sense that they are giving as much as they are taking. 'Once you have your ride', Mahoney advises, 'be flexible in your role as travelling companion. The driver has done you a favour by picking you up, so try to make him glad he did. Gauge his attitude. Does he want someone to talk to?' (Mahoney, 19). Anne Péchou hears from an Australian truckdriver about 'his loneliness, the difficulty of making contact, the drugs he has to take to stay awake at the wheel' (Péchou, 93). Grace Small, a proselytising Christian, began to see herself as a counsellor to lost and lonely drivers. About one lift, she wrote:

He was uptight; I could not figure him out [...] By the time we got to Cottage Grove, his troubles just poured out. The years totalled many that he had not talked about his unhappy childhood. Now, he trusted an old woman when he would not have trusted a "holier than thou" preacher, let alone a "formally trained social worker". It really surprised me. [...]

Finally, he seemed to have hope and began to talk positively. I knew then why I had started hitchhiking before daybreak. "Things don't just happen; they are planned" (Small, 191).

The fleeting nature of the connection, and the intimate space of the moving car, are conducive to

confessions. The flipside of this is that the passenger may not always want to hear what the driver has to say: hitchhikers often report having their ears bashed by drunks, xenophobes and misogynists (Lars Therkildsen in Sykes, 64; Mike Leigh in Sykes, 92-93). They rarely dare to disagree with the lift-giver because they don't want to lose their ride; this can make for an uncomfortable trip, and it illustrates the way power relations can operate within the 'owned' space of the vehicle, that home away from home.

The overriding impression, though, from reading many memoirs and anecdotes, is of the extraordinary hospitality that many hitchhikers receive from drivers, a hospitality that extends well beyond the lift itself: long detours made, guided tours, accommodation offered, home-cooked meals. I have a story, which I will tell even if it blows my tenuous claim to objectivity. On her tour of Australia in 1980, Anne Péchou had a companion, a ten-year-old girl, Alice. That girl was me. We were picked up in the bush by a truck-driver one evening, when we were beginning to worry about where to sleep (eternal optimists, we travelled without sleeping bag or tent). The driver, a very kind man, dropped us several hundred kilometres later at a motel in Murray Bridge, South Australia, in the middle of the night. When we woke, we discovered he had paid our bill, and left us a note with his address, asking only that we send him a postcard. His name was Bob. And yet, despite positive memories like this, in the current climate, I would not consider sending my own children on such a trip.

I finish with another little tale to demonstrate the conflicted responses hitchhiking evokes. At the time of the recent transport strikes in Paris, I posted a message to H-France, a French history internet forum, asking whether anyone had seen people hitchhiking. I received a flood of

responses. Most were from people who had very fond memories of their hitchhiking experiences, and were sorry it seemed no longer to be possible in the way it once had. There was a strong nostalgic tone to most of the messages. But one person wrote to me about a horrific close shave she had had hitchhiking, and where all the others had posted their messages publicly, hers was marked confidential (so I will not talk about the details of the experience). This brought home to me the fact that reading memoirs of confirmed, long-term hitchhikers can give a skewed perception. People who have been sexually assaulted or robbed while hitching are much less likely to talk publicly about their experiences. Apart from the pain and difficulty in discussing these things, the fact that they hitchhiked is likely to induce an 'I told you so' or 'What were you thinking?' from listeners. So, in talking about the glowing memories of many, I must always keep in mind the ugly experiences of the few.

This clash of nostalgia and fear is potent material for the researcher. Any activity that once seemed possible and now seems unthinkable demands a closer look; it will surely tell us much about broader social, cultural and economic developments, and variations within and between nations and the peoples who travel through and across them. It is also time to balance the flood of memoirs being published by hitchhikers, with an oral history of lift-givers, in particular truck and commercial drivers who have worked over long enough periods to see changes in the frequency and social profile of hitchhikers. This is what I hope to undertake in the years to come.

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