

Highway reflections —

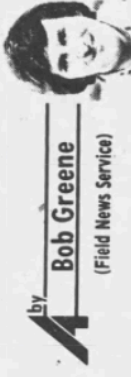
Road signs you might have missed

NEW LISBON, Ind. — Some thoughts on the American road, from a person who has spent the last week riding along the highways of the Midwest:

What ever happened to men and women sitting close to each other in the front seat of a car?

I THOUGHT ABOUT this when I looked into the next car on the highway, and saw a young woman nestled directly next to the man who was driving. It occurred to me that you never see this these days: the driver sits behind the wheel, the passenger sits next to the other door, and that's that.

It used to be a dating custom. A woman would express her degree of affection for a man by how



by **Bob Greene**
(Field News Service)

close she sat to him on the front seat. It was an ideal non-verbal signal. If she moved closer to him, she would like him; if she remained by the door, she was not attracted. A young woman who never would sit next to her date was referred to as a "DDH," which stood for "damn door hugger."

PART OF THIS doubtless has to do with smaller cars; when there was room for three passengers in the front seat, a woman had more space in which to make her statement. In the new cars, though, there is hardly enough room just to sit, much less to move closer.

Most of all, though, I think sitting close to each other in cars is another victim of the sexual revolution. In an age during which men and women leap into bed with the abandon they used to leap into swimming pools, the idea of coyly moving closer to the driver is too quaint and outmoded. It is a subtle signal, and we do not use subtle signals anymore.

Hitchhikers are disappearing, too. There was a time — as recently as 10 years ago — when they were such a common sight along the highway that you didn't even notice them. Now they are so rare that they stand out when you see them; you find yourself wondering about them.

PARENTS USED TO warn their children not to hitchhike because of the dangerous people they might find in the cars that pick them up. I think the reduction in hitchhikers has more to do with the obverse, though. Drivers are now afraid to pick up hitchhikers because of a fear of what the hitchhiker might do to them, not vice versa. In our era of random eeriness, the fellow who might have looked like a romantic vagabond 20 years ago now looks like Charles Manson.

The few hitchhikers I did see last week appeared to have been waiting for rides for hours, and few drivers gave even an indication that they were thinking about slowing down. The phenomenon seems to be dead.

SPEAKING OF DEAD phenomena, the CB craze is over, too. You just don't see any of those CB



Priest and family

The **Rev. Lionel Harnisch** of Herron, Mich., believes that his adopted sons — (from left) Martin, Joe and Gregory — help him to empathize with his

only 80 people lived on the island during the winter and their nearest neighbor was 10 miles away. The boys attended a one-room school that had only seven students.

WHILE THE BOYS have been able to meet more people here and to benefit from additional educational opportunities, there have also been some unpleasant experiences, such as being called names at school for the first time.

"These little kids don't deserve that kind of treatment," says **Harnisch**. "It (the prejudice) has to come from the parents, since it's never something ingrained in the kids. It hurts deeply."

"But my kids have got to find out the world isn't a bed of roses. Even rose gardens have got thorns. What I say is, be proud of what you are."

Harnisch is quick to point out that for the most part the boys have been well accepted by their classmates and by the parish.

Harnisch met with members of the congregation before he assumed the post to make sure they would take him with the kids. They did, although he doubts the vote was unanimous in his favor.

But he thinks the initial uncertainties have been resolved. Parish members continually bring the family dairy products and fresh fruits and vegetables from their gardens.

"If that kind of generosity is any indication, they must be satisfied," he says.

HOUSEKEEPER MARCELLA MARTELL — who

'We are a family' He's 'father' to three boys and a parish

By **Bruce Maxwell**
Staff Writer
Alpena, Mich., News

HERRON, Mich. (NEA) — The 53-year-old father of three is wearing a sweaty blue T-shirt as he works on a van with fancy murals adorning the side panels. A motorcycle and several bicycles stand in front of the garage.

No one would guess that he is a priest. Yet, he is the **Rev. Lionel Harnisch** of St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church. And his three adopted sons make him one of only a handful of Roman Catholic priests in the United States who are also fathers.

HARNISCH DOESN'T SEE himself as a radical. "I don't want to be a maverick," he says. "I don't mind being different; there's nothing wrong with that."

"I don't want to be a rebellious-type person, not in the sense of one who kicks up his heels and tells a superior to go whistle. You can't do that when you're raising a kid."

Harnisch adopted his first son, Martin, in 1972. Martin is now 14.

Eight-year-old Gregory was adopted six years ago, and 7-year-old Joe joined the family three years ago. Martin and Gregory are black, Joe is Korean.

Harnisch says that his superiors did not try to stop him from adopting the children although the church "would prefer you wouldn't be encumbered by this type of obligation."

"It's part of my private life," he says, "and as long as it didn't interfere with my work, they didn't object." **Harnisch** insists that having a family doesn't detract from his work. And he points out that other priests have vocations that take time away from their congregations.

"I can't golf worth beans," he says. "I swing and the ball just sits and smiles back. My whole recreation centers on the kids."

I KNOW PRIESTS whose hobbies are raising dobermans and poodles. They spend as much time and attention on that as other people spend raising children. I'd a lot rather put my salary to a person than some animal."

Harnisch says that having a family helps him to empathize with his parishioners, especially other single parents.

"I know what it is to sit up and worry about a kid that's sick or a kid that's in trouble with his teacher at school," he explains.

The boys also help **Harnisch** in a more personal sense. "To a certain extent these kids fulfill the void of companionship," he says. "You can love your congregation in a very Christian sense, but it's not like when you kneel beside a bed and tuck (your son) in."

Harnisch and his sons arrived in Herron slightly more than a year ago after having lived on Bois Blanc Island, which is off Cheboygan, Wis.

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