Introduction: Olekcii and Oleksandr Trebenko's speech about their experiences hitchhiking in California last year called back memories for our next speaker, Graham Seibert.

It's late afternoon on a summer day in 1962 in Los Angles.

Where are you going?

Portland

Portland! That's 1500 km away

Yep. I'll be traveling all night.

Well hop in, I can take you as far as Ventura

We talked a little while. He's a pleasant guy. He says "how would you like a beer?" I'm thirsty, besides which I'm young and naïve. I say, sure

So we go to his house, which happens to be along the way. We sit in his living room and drink our beer. He asked me about my life – what am I studying in college, the usual stuff.

Then he says, "you know, you're a nice-looking boy." At that point I get nervous. "I wish the girls thought that. Sometimes it's difficult."

He said "yeah, girls are so much trouble. You're much better off with guys. Guys know what guys want. Girls don't have a clue, and they're just not always interested."

At that point I said oooh I just want to get outta here. So I politely made my excuses and asked him to bring me back to the highway. He was a gentleman about it, and I left. I caught another ride up to Portland. But that experience repeated itself about three times. There was a pattern. He got me thinking. Was he wrong?

Let's put this in the context of the times. In the 1960s it was common knowledge that you, the Soviets, were going to get into a nuclear war with us in the world is going to in the anyhow. There was no point in having children. We weren't religious – there any church demanding that I get married and have a family. My parents probably wanted grandchildren, but they had lots of homosexual friends and would have accepted it. Playboy magazine had taught us that it was all about sex, not about family. This was the beginning of the era of sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll.

So, if it's all about sex, what's the easiest way to get it? It should be obvious to anybody with a brain that girls were not the easiest way to go. If society was not pushing you to find a woman and get married, why would you want to put up with them?

I looked at this is an intellectual question. However, anybody I wanted to talk with about it got nervous, so we never got very far discussing it. This may have been the beginning of the sexual confusion in American society that has only gotten worse over the last 50 years.

I'll tell you another story about homosexuals and hitchhikers. My college friend Angel Wilking married another friend, Bill Blanton. By about 1966 they had two little kids. Angelle started getting nervous. Bill was coming home with weird sexual diseases. This was before AIDS – everything could be cured with penicillin. But it wasn't a good sign. He was spending more time away from home. She confronted him, and it turned out that he had a number of boyfriends on the side. She had to leave him.

She and her children moved back to be with her family in Louisiana. She got in touch with John Paul Stevens, the college boyfriend she had left for Bill, and he was still interested. John Paul had gone to Canada to get away from the Army, but he drove down to Louisiana to see her and possibly get married.

He picked up a hitchhiker in Texas, who murdered him in a cruel way. Murdered him and hid the body – he just disappeared, leaving Angelle to wonder. A few years later the murderer was drunk and in jail and he confessed to a cellmate. They found the body and solved the mystery.

I quit college, started to work, and bought my own car and motorcycle. I stopped hitchhiking of course, and I was increasingly careful about picking up hitchhikers. After I married and had a family I simply didn't do it anymore. It was a stupid risk to take.

Life goes on, those children grew up, poisoned by the increasingly toxic American society. I divorced and came to Ukraine.

In an odd twist, we hitchhike again. Anybody who owns a car in our little corner of Kiev, Russanovsky Sad, is a neighbor and is probably trustworthy. When we missed the marshrutka, Oksana will wave them down and asked for a ride. She is very bold about it. She has gotten to know several of our neighbors this way.

We have come full circle, from an open and trusting society in California of the 1960s to an open trusting society of Ukraine 50 years later, where hitchhiking once again make sense.