

ON THE MOVE

Hit the road, JACK! (and Jill)

Have you ever viewed a comedy movie or skit depicting a nervous first-time driver, with his or her instructor getting ready to crawl out the car window?

Sure, maybe you got a good chuckle or two. But the laughs probably stopped quickly when you got your learner's permit, and found out that that stuff is more true-to-life than you'd ever dreamed!

Last summer's driver-education school for Julie Bennett offered additional material for a humorous driving skit. According to Julie, students who knocked over rubber cones on the driving course were required to pick the cones up, kiss them and apologize to them.

"A friend of mine hit the cones several times," recalled Julie, 17, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Elmira.

Which means that person is now well prepared for going on dates — provided somebody else drives.

Kelly Emerson relates another moment of infamy involving a friend who was new to driving.

"The dad sat in the front seat, and the mom sat in the back seat holding a rosary — and when she got out, she was shaking," said Kelly, 17, a youth-group member at St. Christopher's Church in Chili.

Another St. Christopher's teen, Jenna Earley, has gone through similar moments of anxiety with her mom.

"I'll be 500 feet before a stop sign, and she'll go, 'JENNA, PUT ON YOUR BRAKES!'" said Jenna, 16, who got her learner's permit at Christmas.

St. Christopher's Barb Stork, 16, is glad she didn't cause her mother the same level of anxiety.

"My mom was pretty calm. I have an older brother who's already been through it, so she's got it out of her system," joked Barb, who received her license a month ago.

Actually, in many cases the parents are eager for their children to get behind the wheel.

"My mom couldn't wait. It was easier for her, because now I could run errands," Kristin Swanson, 17, said. Kristin, from the Catholic Community of Mt. Morris and Nunda, earned her license last April.

Practical reasons also led to Julie Bennett receiving her license this past September. Her father, a diabetic, requires occasional transportation for medical purposes. Meanwhile, her mother has never driven.

Julie, 17, said she now drives "all the time" and her mother is

happy about the situation as well.

"She likes it a lot because she and I can go places now," said Julie, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Elmira.

Kenny Miller, 16, also helped make life easier for the family when he obtained his license last October.

"It's more convenient for us because I'm involved in a lot of sports," explained Kenny, a parishioner in the Catholic Community of St. Anne and St. Gregory in Palmyra and Marion. "I drive a lot of my teammates to practices and games, so it makes it more convenient for other parents, too."

Kelly of St. Christopher's got her license so she could have simpler transportation to her part-time job. She remembers the day she passed her road test in the same way adults might remember their wedding day: "July 1, 1994, at 1 o'clock."

Kelly, 17, said she practiced feverishly to get her license.

"I drove everywhere. If we went out to dinner, I drove. If we went to my grandmother's, I drove," Kelly recalled.

Yet even though she's been a licensed driver for nearly 19 months, Kelly still feels like a beginner in some respects.

"I cried after the first time I was on the expressway. And I still hate the expressway to this day," she stated.

However, Kelly also admits that the condition of her car — a 1984 Chevy Chevette with 100,000 miles on it — may influence her disdain for the fast lane.

"My car starts shaking at 50 (miles per hour), and everybody else is going 70," she remarked.

Dealing with winter conditions is another major challenge for these first-time drivers. Kristin in Mt. Morris reasoned that if you learn to drive at this time of year, "then you're ready for anything."

"Winter is when you really learn to drive," Kelly agreed. Julie in Elmira said she drives "very slowly" during these months.

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"I'll be 500 feet
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Jenna Earley, 16

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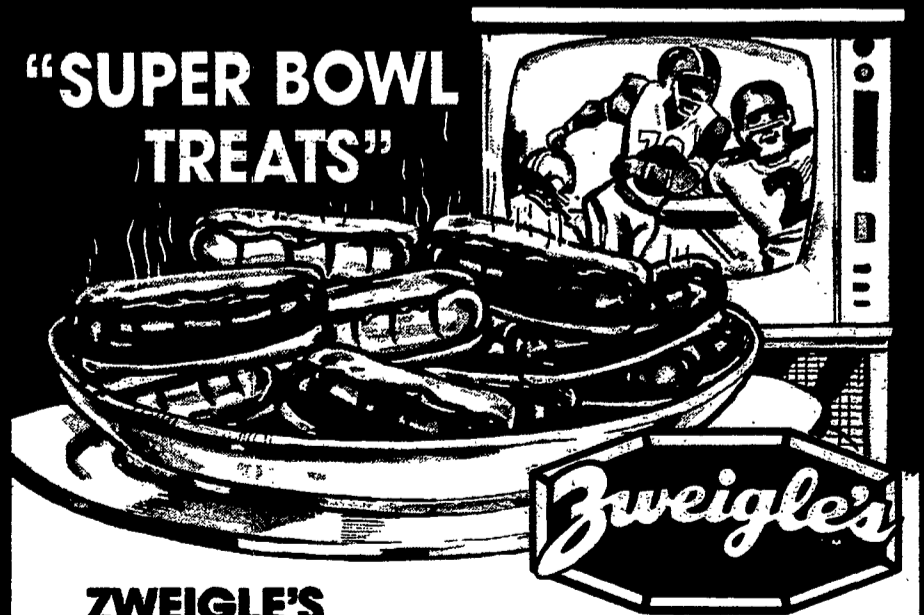
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