

A Fork in the Road

Students cope with maintaining post-high school friendships

By Heather Campbell
THE BATTALION

The "good ol' days" of high school can cause long-term relationships or bitter breakups among students. For Melissa Johnson and Kristin Wong, however, their friendship has not remained the same.

Johnson, a speech pathology student at the University of Texas at Dallas, and Wong, a nursing student at Baylor University, began their friendship in elementary school. It's neat to keep in touch with old friends, because they are the ones who really know me from growing up," Johnson said.

Some students stay friends through the thick and thin as they adjust to college; others move on and old friendships fade. It's funny how we're growing up together and nothing has changed," Johnson said. "We see each other now and pick up right where we left off. I've had some of these friends since first grade, which is rare. My favorite memory of seeing high school friends in college was last May at my engagement party. As I looked around, it made that day even more special. All of my close high school friends were there to celebrate with me."

Johnson said she expects her friendships to change after she marries her fiancé in May, but expects to stay in close contact with her friends.

"My bridesmaids are my closest friends from high school," Johnson said. "It shows the impact that high school friends have had on my life. Even though we're all growing up and graduating, we will always keep in touch. I have no doubt that after lasting this

Keeping an old friendship alive, especially if it ranges across cities or states, can be difficult. Lauren Pearson, a nursing student at Oklahoma University, said long-lasting friendships are a two-way street.

"Everyone in my group of friends made it a point to pursue the friendship," Pearson said. "It has to work both ways. Each person in the friendship needs to try to keep in touch over the years, or it won't work."

Johnson and Wong said even though their friends come from different universities across the nation, they make a pact to see each other every semester.

"Our friends are at OU, A&M, Baylor and UT," Wong said. "What makes the friendships so special is that the distance has made us appreciate the time we get to hang out and have fun. Every semester we plan a road trip and meet at one of the colleges."

Pearson said she enjoys longer semester breaks when she can join her friends on trips or meet them in Dallas.

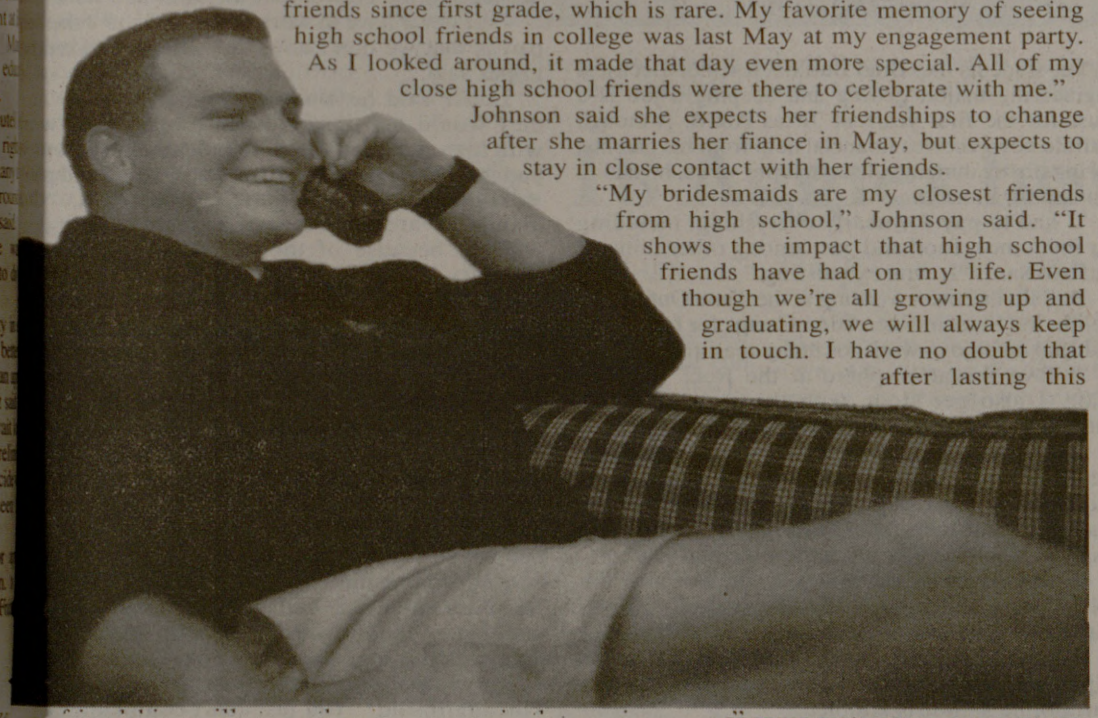
"We have gone to the beach, skiing, lakehouses and other trips throughout our college years," Pearson said. "This Christmas, 10 of us from other colleges and even different states piled in one car like we used to do in high school. It was fun because we just went random places, and it reminded me of old times. You know you're in the presence of true friends when everyone can act crazy together and reminisce."

Some students find significant changes force friendships to dissolve. The saying "in with the new and out with the old" came true for Luke Lechler, a senior outdoor education major. He said different aspects of college life caused his bond with friends to weaken.

"After my first year, [my friends and I] went to dinner and a movie, and it just wasn't the same," Lechler said. "I realized that we were heading different directions in life. Distance was one factor that separated us, as it forced me to meet new people and try new things."

Lechler said his independent personality made it hard to keep old friends.

"I didn't go home as much so that made it more of a challenge to keep up with them," Lechler said. "We just moved on and sought different things in the world."



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