

Buying alcohol locally no problem for minor

By ELAINE MERRIFIELD
Jill and I enter the store together, dressed in jeans and T-shirts. She stops just inside the door and looks around, her eyes searching the shelves. She leads me down one of the center aisles, reading the labels until she finds what she's looking for. She selects one of the bottles from the shelf and carries it to the check-out counter.

"How are you girls doing today?" the middle-aged woman behind the counter asks. "Will that be all for you?"
"I believe so," says Jill, carefully pulling a \$5 bill from her jean pocket.

"Looks like ya'll have a few more hours left to soak up the sun," the woman said conversationally.

"Yes, ma'am," says Jill, looking out the front window.

The woman hands Jill her purchase.

"Thank you," she says. "Ya'll come back."

"Thank you," we echo as we leave the store.

Jill, who is 15, has just committed a crime. She is guilty of purchasing and possessing alcohol while underage. She could be charged with a misdemeanor and fined up to \$100. If the woman in the store had known Jill was a minor, she could also be charged and fined up to \$500. She might also be sentenced to one year in jail.

The store could lose its liquor license for up to 60 days. And these are the penalties for first offense. Subsequent offenses result in stiffer penalties.

Although Jill may look older than 15 to some, she probably would have a hard time passing for 18. Even so, she visited two liquor stores, two grocery stores and two convenience stores in Bryan-College Station and was able to buy alcohol at every store without being asked to show proof of her age. She purchased three six-packs of beer, a fifth of bourbon, a fifth of scotch and a bottle of wine as easily as if she were buying soft drinks.

Store owners say they ask for identification if the customer looks under 18. However, almost any of Jill's 15-year-old friends could pass most store owners' inspections.

Inspector Don Ward, of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC), recognizes that many high school students, especially girls, look 18 and that it may be

difficult for a store clerk to judge their ages correctly.

"We plead with the store clerks to check everyone who doesn't look 30," he said.

Most store clerks say they have become fairly accurate judges of age.

"After awhile you develop a sixth sense," said the manager of a convenience store. "If they act nervous or look young, we usually ask to see their license."

The manager of a local liquor store said he asks his employees to use their own judgment.

"If there is any doubt, we ask them to check identification," he said.

Jill was able to purchase a fifth of scotch at this store with no problems.

Jill and another 15-year-old friend and I also visited two of the area discos. None of us carried any identification. We were turned down by the girl at the door of the first place we tried.

The other disco we visited was also checking IDs. It was "drink and drown" night. You paid \$2.50, showed your ID and you could get all the drinks you wanted.

We went to the door and paid our \$2.50 each. The man at the cash register asked to see our driver's licenses.

"We don't have them with us," Jill said. "We left our purses at home."

"Well," he said thoughtfully, "I'll let you in this time, but next time remember to bring your IDs."

"Oh, we will," we said in unison and then walked into the club.

Jill and her friend did not com-

mit a crime until they were served drinks in the club. Then they became guilty of the purchase of alcohol by minors. The bartender, if he knew they were minors, would also be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Texas law states that it is a misdemeanor for a minor to purchase, possess or consume alcoholic beverages unless he is with a parent, guardian, or adult spouse. The first time a minor violates this law he can be fined \$25 to \$100. He must appear in court with his parents or guardian to pay the fine. A second offense brings a fine of \$100 to \$500.

It is also a misdemeanor for someone to sell or make available alcoholic beverages to a minor. If a store clerk knowingly sells alcohol to a minor, he can be fined \$100 to \$500 for the first offense and \$500 to \$1,000 for the second offense. He may also be subject to a one-year jail term. However, the clerk is not liable if he can prove he did not know the buyer was a minor.

The business itself is subject to suspension or cancellation of its liquor license. The suspension may last up to a year depending on the number of offenses.

Jill's mother was hesitant at first about letting Jill participate in the experiment, but as the experiment progressed she became very interested in our findings. She was especially concerned about the ease with which Jill was able to purchase alcohol in stores.

"I wish the liquor stores were as strict about checking IDs as the discos are," she said. "At a disco, \$5 will only buy two or three drinks. But in a liquor store, \$5 will buy a fifth of bourbon."

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2. What is America's oldest state law enforcement agency?
3. What is the only major seaside city in North America set on a natural island?
4. Where is the World Muleshoe Pitching Championship held each year?
5. What is the highest official temperature ever reached in Texas?

6. Where can you find the world's only horned rabbit?
7. What is the world's distance record, set by Plennie L. Wingo of Abilene, for walking backwards?
8. What is the hometown of rock/blues guitarist Johnny Winter?
9. What is the host city of the Annual Black-Eyed Pea Festival?
10. What is the world record, set in College Station, for the tallest bonfire?

1. Chisp, Texas.
2. The Texas Rangers.
3. Galveston, Texas.
4. Muleshoe, Texas.
5. 120° F., at Seymour.
6. The Hall of Horns.
7. Lone Star Brewery, San Antonio, Texas.
8. 8,000 miles.
9. Beaumont, Texas.
10. 107 feet, 10 inches.

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CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

Wednesday
Young Americans for Freedom, Hank Grover, candidate for U.S. Senate, 7:30 p.m., 601 Rudder
Traditions Council, 7:15 p.m., 410 Rudder
Bahai Club, slide presentation, 8 p.m., 104 MSC

Bahai Club, musical presentation, 8 p.m., 104 MSC
Aggie Players, "Rip Van Winkle," 8 p.m., Rudder Forum
Aggie Cinema, "Enter the Dragon," 12 midnight, Rudder Theater

Thursday
Political Forum, Texas Sec. of State Steven Oaks, "Political Participation in the Electoral Process," noon, 601 Rudder
Great Issues, Dr. J. Allen Hynek, "The UFO Experience - A Scientific Inquiry," 8 p.m., Rudder Auditorium
Aggie Players, "Rip Van Winkle," 8 p.m., Rudder Forum

Saturday
University Undergraduate Fellows Symposium, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Zachry Engineering Center, rooms 104 and 105

Friday
Travel Committee, "We Have Never Been Licked," 8 p.m., Rudder Auditorium

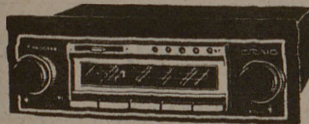
Company D-2 Parent's Day Reception, 6:30 p.m., 230 MSC
Squadron 7 Parent's Day Ceremony, 7 p.m., 701 Rudder
Aggie Players, "Rip Van Winkle," 8 p.m., Rudder Forum
Aggie Cinema, "The Enforcers," 8 p.m., Rudder Auditorium

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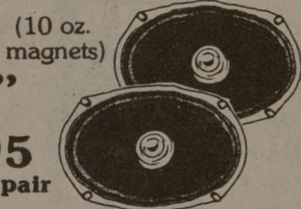
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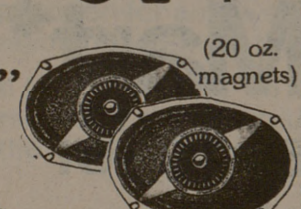
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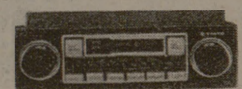
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