

# Opinion

## With cars, bad things happen in battalions

Somebody once said that bad things happen in threes. He was an optimist. Here at *The Battalion*, we've found out this semester that bad things happen in, well, battalions.



Sue Krenek

We're talking car problems here. More specifically, a little thing we call the *Battalion Car Curse* (BCC), a plague that has decimated the staff's vehicular resources this fall.

This is hardly the first time we've acted, or been acted upon, as a group. Normally it's restricted to consuming mass amounts of alcohol as a group, but on one memorable day last fall no fewer than seven Battguys and Battgirls found it necessary to throw themselves out of a plane. That fiasco, which came at the urging of fanatical skydiver and now-editor Sondra Pickard, took its toll in injuries: Radical columnist Karl Pallmeyer took out several of the ligaments in his knee, and *At Ease* writer Nancy Neukirchner sprained/bruised/otherwise mutilated her wrist. Needless to say, we haven't been skydiving as a group since then.

But at least the parachuting experience involved free will. The automotive chaos that has befallen us this semester can be explained only as the work of a malevolent spirit, or at least a Pallmeyer-hater who waited a semester too long to exact his revenge.

The first phase of the curse concerned Major Malfunctions. This got started before school was even in session, when photo editor Tracy Staton tried to bludgeon a large truck with her small Mustang. It worked.

Then, on the first day of classes, we got a call from assistant city editor Curtis Culberson. Curtis was MIA on his way back to College Station from San Antonio. Various other editors were asserting that as soon as he showed up here, he'd be *DOA*. Curtis, as it turned out, was in the thriving metropolis of Dime Box, where his car had broken down. A rescue team was dispatched to save Curtis. His car wasn't so lucky, having major amounts of cracked metal that required a near-rebuild of the engine.

Managing editor John Jarvis was up next. He managed to ride his motorcycle into a car at a blessedly slow speed, mangling both the bike and his knee.

Curtis got his car back on Thursday. On that same bright and beautiful

morning, city editor Rodney Rather meandered into the newsroom and calmly called the police to report that he'd rolled his truck on the way to school.

Several explanations and one frantic editor later (Sondra saw the truck by the roadside and thought Rodney was dead), we found out that Rodney had rolled the truck for no apparent reason. No alcohol involved. No other cars involved. Obviously, a curse was working.

Rodney's truck entered the limbo of insurance appraisers and repair shops, a place where time loses all meaning and becomes the estimated time of repair multiplied by three multiplied by the number of parts they have to order. Rodney rented a scooter. (If you saw something that looked like a scarecrow on a Spree, that was him.)

The Major Malfunctions were over, but the Nasty Inconveniences (big and little) had just begun. Staff writer Lee Schexnaider had to rent a car to cover the pope's San Antonio visit because his own truck is terminally cursed. *At Ease* writer Staci Finch got stuck at the Austin airport after her rental car deal fell through. *At Ease* editor Karen Kroesche raised ridiculousness to new heights by managing to run out of gas on campus and having us come get her. (She now carries a gas can in her trunk.)

News editor Robbyn Lister tried to deal with a continually leaking radiator. Assistant city editor Jean Mansavage had to have her carburetor repaired. Copy editor Alan Sembera left his truck in gear on a driveway and watched it roll into a tree. Clerk Kellie Copeland had a flat. Assistant news editor Kristin Theodorsen had to replace the clutch in her truck. Clerk Tami Tate got stranded several times by an overheating engine. And the list goes on, too numerous to mention.

By now five or six weeks had gone by. Rodney got his truck back, triggering the next phase of the curse. This time it was my turn.

I came bounding downstairs from apartment to car, late for class as usual. I opened the door, threw my stuff inside — and did a double-take. My red tape case was no longer under the seat. Denim jacket, also gone. I checked the glove box. JVC tape player, gone. Radar detector, gone.

Then I saw the door, or rather, the space between the door and the rest of my car. The window stood out from the car body by a good two inches, souvenir of a thief with a crowbar. (No wonder I didn't hear glass breaking.) Visions of astronomical repair bills danced in my head. I called the cops and shivered — now jacketless — while I waited for them to arrive.

And so my car entered the limbo of insurance appraisers and repair shops. Assistant city editor Amy Couvillon offered to loan me her scooter while my car door was being squished back into shape. Knowing that the the car-repair gods have a sick sense of humor, however, I got my ancient Volkswagen from home and hoped the thieves would have sense enough to know there's never anything of value in a Volkswagen.

Amy wasn't so lucky. That Friday, driving her scooter to school, she had a blowout at 40 m.p.h. on Texas Avenue.

The scooter went one direction, and Amy went the other — toward the street. The scooter lost some lights and mirrors; Amy lost some skin off her arms, a now-torn pair of jeans and, temporarily, the use of one ankle. The BCC had become the BC&MC — *Battalion Car & Moped Curse*. But Amy got out of several days of work, a quiz, two tests and a graphics project. So the wreck was a small price to pay.

That was two and a half weeks ago, and things have been fairly calm since then. Just a few minor malfunctions, like Tracy, Rodney and I driving to Harlingen with no cap on the oil

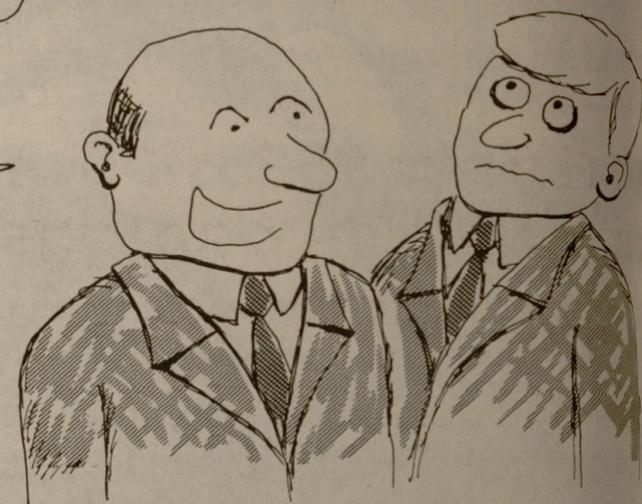
reservoir, and Curtis breaking the armrest in Tracy's much-abused Mustang. A few minor embarrassments like Jean's car stalling in the middle of Jersey Street. And, of course, the present ticket-and-tow threat that comes with parking illegally behind the McDonald building.

But it's time for *Batt* staffers to be the alert again, because the BCC&M is about to start stalking a new victim.

You see, I get my car back today. **Sue Krenek is a senior journalism major and opinion page editor for The Battalion.**

MY BROKER IS CHICKEN LITTLE AND HE SAYS...

THOMAS THE BATT © 1997



## Stock market crash means the end of the world is nigh

Naturally, all of you want to know what's happening to the stock market and, more important, why. Well, you've come to the right place. I've been studying this problem, off and on, for the better part of two days now and I think I've got it figured out.



Donald Kaul

The market did not merely crash, it disappeared, like an incautious bather who wades out too far into the ocean. One moment it was there, full of life; the next it was gone. And now we stand at the water's edge, pointing at the spot where it went down, hoping it will reappear.

Why it happened is another matter, far more complex.

Some say it was a much-needed correction in a continuing bull market. These are the same people who look upon the Visigoths' sack of Rome as urban renewal. Others say it is the beginning of an economic recession. I take a third view.

I think it's the end of the world. There have been a lot of signs lately, strange happenings that bode ill. For example:

Last week London suffered a hurricane. We're talking London, England, here. Ever hear of a hurricane in London before? Jamaica is hurricanes; London is fog. When the wind gets up to 100 mph past Buckingham Palace, strange things are going on.

The Minnesota Twins won the World Series. Not since the 1944 St. Louis Browns has a worse team than

Minnesota appeared in the Series, and the Browns had World War II as an excuse. The Twins are no better than the 10th best team in baseball; moreover, they play in an abandoned roller skating rink. They shouldn't even be in a World Series, let alone win it. Something's wrong.

And last week, in my neighborhood, the cock croweth thrice before the dawn and a snow-white owl flew across the moon. I live in the suburbs.

Could all that be a coincidence? Naw. The end is near. God is punishing us for our sins.

I knew we were in trouble last month when I visited the Ralph Lauren store in New York, a clothing store housed in an old mansion on Fifth Avenue in the swankiest part of town. There I saw a cotton sweatshirt selling for \$77.50, plus tax. The only thing to distinguish it from any other sweatshirt was the polo player on the breast and a thin stripe of color around the waistband. And people kept elbowing me aside to get at them. It struck me that any society whose members pay 77 bucks for something to sweat in was badly in need of chastisement.

Nor is the sweatshirt the most egregious example of this phenomenon. The children's section of a Christmas catalog from one of the high and mighty department stores features \$5,000 mink teddy bears and toy cars for as much as \$14,500. You can pay \$1.5 million for a one-bedroom apartment in New York (good location) and what we used to term a "starter home" in California will set you back three- or four-hundred thou.

Where spending becomes that lavish and self-indulgent, disaster lurks. As the Bible (Bad News edition) says, "Behold! God doth not suffer Yuppies gladly."

People keep asking if the current situation is as bad as 1929, when the stock market collapse took everything with it. In my opinion, it is not. It's worse.

In 1929 we had a smart man as president of the United States. So you will of Herbert Hoover's efforts, they were made by a man who was paying attention. Today we have a president who is very nearly brain-dead.

Mr. Reagan's performance at the market's disappearance Monday was pathetic. In times like these, when the sky is falling, one expects a leader to come before the microphones and address the nation some words of wisdom, perhaps comfort. He could have said, "As Joe Biden once said, we have nothing to fear but fear itself." Instead we get him on the run, yelling out the roar of a helicopter, saying that he guessed people were cashing in on profits. No wonder they hardly ever hear him out of his cage.

I'll bet that when the Reagan administration ends, there will be truly terrifying stories by White House insiders, illustrating how disconnected from reality this president has become.

I lost some money in the market Monday; not much, just my life savings or saving as I now call it. I put a call to my broker but he didn't call back. I wanted to know what route this crisis take home from school.

My mother called, though, and my mother who has been urging me to get out of the market ever since I got out. And she didn't say I told you so. She said: "Don't worry, Honey, it comes to worst I can always move with you and we can live off my Social Security." I think I'll get the guest bedroom ready, just in case.

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## Mail Call

Go read the classifieds

EDITOR:

This letter is in response to the "Where's the punchline?" letter written by Joseph Kachmar on Oct. 23. Mr. Kachmar, you should immediately take action! Jim Davis' "Garfield" characters have no "between-the-eyes" spaces either! For that matter, you should contact Charles Schultz as well; his "Peanuts" characters have been the same age since 1957. What's worse, Charlie Brown has been bald for the same amount of time.

I don't want to change how you feel, Mr. Kachmar, but I thought a graduate student might find more worthwhile things to do than criticize the artwork of a college newspaper's cartoon. Aside from that, I at least hoped a graduate student would be able to understand one.

Dan Barlow does a fine job at submitting understandable strips daily. Next to the syndicated "Bloom County," "Joe Transfer" is the most realistic and humorous comic *The Battalion* has. And if Mr. Barlow chooses to draw his characters with facial hair (although the only bearded character I know of, Joe, has recently shaved) and large muscles, so be it. For goodness sake, Mr. Kachmar, stay away from art museums. Picasso paints noses where ears belong, and I don't want you to end up in a padded cell!

Perhaps a strange analogy, but artists are like umpires: If you don't like it, you're out! If it bothers you that much, read the classifieds instead.

Alan Lively '89

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

### The Battalion

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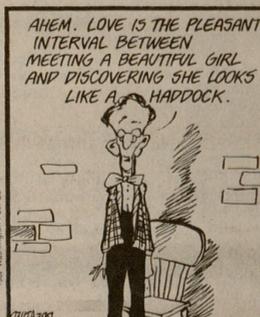
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### BLOOM COUNTY

In the absence of the striking union characters, Bloom County management officials will be temporarily providing the day's waggish entertainment.

Today: Mr. Will J. Knudson, Asst. Director of Accounting



Full Jew... 30 Day... (excluding... We have... jewelry...