

Season's Greetings



Jeff Garza and Gina Steubing look at a window display.

RICHARD S. JAMES/The Battalion

Inexpensive gift ideas to keep you out of the red

By YVONNE SALCE

It's that time again — the time college students see how far they can push the limit on their credit cards.

Forget about writing a check. Just because the tattered and torn checkbook survived another semester and you still have checks left, that doesn't mean there's money in the account.

Think about all the people you have to buy Christmas gifts for: girlfriend, boyfriend, mother, father, sister, brother, best friend, boss, grandparents, the roommate-you-can't-stand, the roommate-you-can't-stand and the professor-who's-failing-you-a-week-before-graduation.

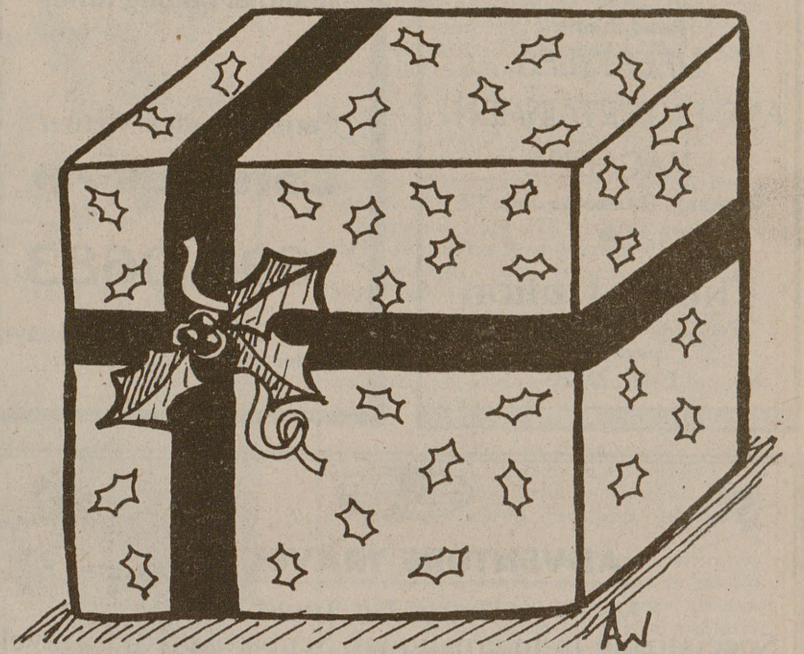
At this rate, there's no way selling your books could possibly buy gifts for all these near and dear people.

Jean Law, director of counseling for the Consumer Credit Counseling Services, says even before gift buying, students have a lot of holiday expenses, such as travel, clothing and entertainment.

"Planning ahead for the holidays could mean less last-minute expenses," Law says.

Law suggests guidelines to prevent entering the new year with new debts:

- Make a list and stick to it. Decide whether or not you need to give as many gifts and set a price limit.
 - Be creative and draw names with large families or groups of friends.
 - As far as credit cards, be careful with cards that read "No payments until February." Don't go into delayed billing if you have no idea where the money is going to come from.
 - If you do use your credit card, plan on paying the bill soon. "I've dealt with people who are still paying off Christmas debts from 1988," Law says.
 - Limit your credit to one card.
- Melinda Loggins, account executive for TRW Credit Data Services, says self control is the key to preventing credit card debts.
- "A lot of people do abuse their credit cards during the holidays," Loggins says.



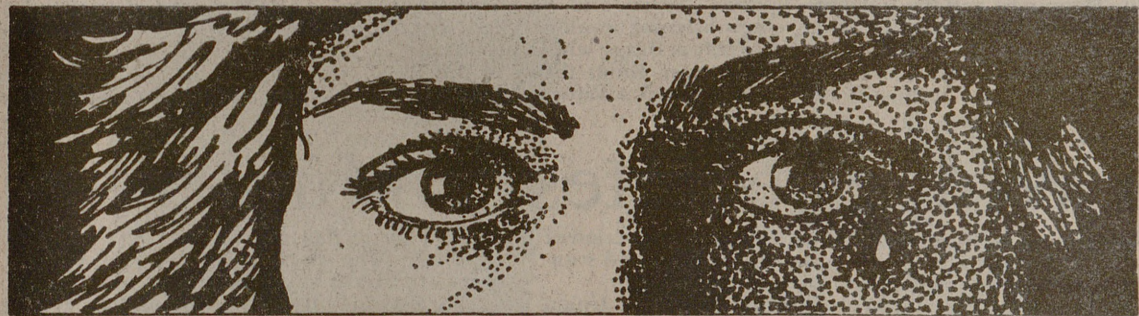
Students should beware of applying for instant credit, she adds. Major department stores usually offer instant credit within 15 minutes to students.

"Suppose a student goes through the mall and applies for every credit card," Loggins says. "Those inquiries are reported on their credit history as a red flag for future creditors to see."

Fortunately, there are gifts just about every college student can afford — gifts under \$20.

- Gifts for men:**
- Christmas boxer shorts, cotton \$13, silk start at \$28
 - Remote control cars and trucks, available in toy stores, \$19.99 and up
 - Leather wallets, \$15
 - Knit muffler, \$10
 - Nerf football, Nerf basketball and hoop, \$6.99
- Gifts for women:**
- Cosmetic organizer, \$14
 - Hair accessories, clips and bows, \$4
 - Polyester "silk" scarves, \$8

- Polyester "silk" panties, 3 for \$10
 - Leather gloves, \$19
 - Lace ankle tights, rib stirrup tights, \$6.75-\$10
 - Exercise videos, \$9.99
- Gifts for anyone:**
- Bart Simpson dolls, \$2.99-\$19.99
 - Christmas decorated socks, \$6
 - Videos, \$9.99
 - Compact discs, \$9.99 and up
 - Compact disc storage box, holds 24 CDs, \$9.99
 - Jump ropes, \$2.99-\$19.99
 - Hand weights for working out, \$6.99
 - Windmere's Flexible Body Massage, \$9.99
 - One-cup Espresso Machine, \$24.99
 - Portable headphone stereos, \$19.99 and up
 - Gift certificate to McDonald's, \$5; TCBY, \$5; Plitt Cinema, \$1 and up.
- Other gift ideas include: Christmas ornaments, daily planners, calendars, picture frames, pets, poinsettias, wine and cheese, chocolates and cookbooks.



Unmet expectations cause blue Christmas holiday

By PAMELA LEE

If Christmas isn't always a merry time of year, the "holiday blues" may be the cause.

The holiday blues, psychologists say, are stressors related to holiday depression. The blues can be caused by a lack of sleep, improper nutrition, loneliness or unmet expectations.

"People have expectations of what Christmas should be," says a sociology lecturer. People don't always get the gifts they want or the closeness of their family, and this makes them depressed, Sandra Linton says.

Counseling psychologist intern Noel Rather says students should look at their expectations of the Christmas holiday and be realistic. "You can never have the perfect Christmas," Rather says.

To alleviate stressors from the holiday blues, Rather says, "First, look at your expectations of Christmas and be realistic. Second, realize that unresolved family issues are going to still be there when you get back.

"Third, prioritize. Take time out for yourself. Fourth, don't expect a perfect Christmas. And fifth, if you can't spend the holiday with family, get together with friends."

Linton says, "Finding a nursing home or mission where you can give to others minimizes the holiday blues."

Holiday blues come around the same time students are trying to finish up school, she says. They are wrapping up grades and will have to deal with their parents again. This can be stressful.

Linton says other people get depressed because of the change in

Tips to brighten the holidays

The following is a list of ten ways to brighten your holiday, courtesy of the Student Counseling Service Center:

1. **Avoid the blues by not going into the red.** Set up a holiday budget and stick to it.
2. **Avoid chasing your tail.** Set up a holiday time budget.
3. **No need to be a martyr.** Share the holiday responsibilities with others.
4. **Don't talk to the ghost of Christmas past.** Avoid living in the past.
5. **No need to be Mr./Mrs. Lonely.** Spend the holidays with

someone you care for.

6. **Find your holiday roots.** Rediscover the true meaning of the holidays.
7. **Grin and bear it.** When you have to spend the holidays with problematic people, make the best of the situation.
8. **Have yourself a merry little Christmas or holiday.** Think positive.
9. **Pace yourself like you would running a marathon.** Get proper rest, exercise and nutrition.
10. **Take a holiday vacation.** Even if it's only in your mind.

their normal structure. "With all the free time, people sit around and think about all their problems," Linton said. "Instead, see what is missing from your life and try to provide it."

Before heading home for the holidays LOCK UP!

By DONNA BANSE

The holiday season has arrived and finals are just around the corner. For most students, the end of final exams marks the beginning of Christmas vacation.

Before students leave town for the holidays, the University Police Department and College Station Police urge students to take precautions against the theft of belongings.

For students living on campus, the ground floor of residence halls is the most vulnerable, said Officer Betty Lemay of the University Police Department Crime Prevention Unit. Students often leave windows open or unlocked and a criminal can enter the hall very easily, Lemay said.

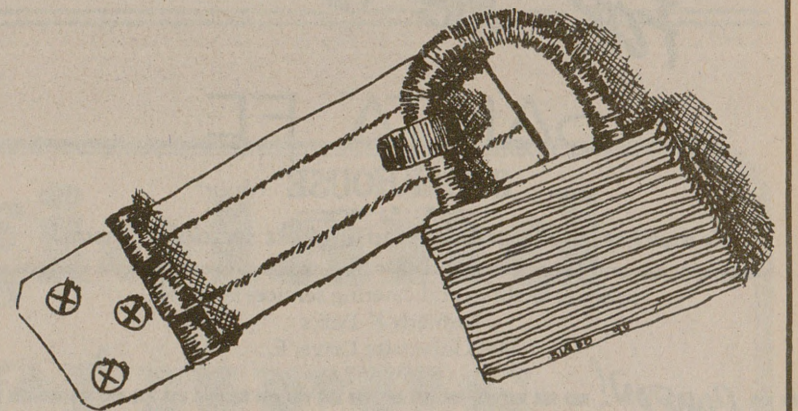
Lemay offers some tips for students leaving for the holidays:

- Label or engrave all valuables, including textbooks, with a driver's license number.
- Take home valuable items like televisions, VCRs or computers.
- Take pictures of any valuables remaining in the room to insure proper identification in case a crime occurs.
- Check windows located by plants to make sure the window is locked properly.
- Secure bicycles to bicycle racks with a case-hardened steel lock. The lock should be secured through the bicycle frame to the rack.
- Bicycles, mopeds and motorcycles can be parked in the parking area in front of the UPD building. This may be safer because UPD officers can keep an eye on the bikes.

"During the holidays, residence halls are patrolled daily by officer's to make sure all windows and doors are locked," Lemay said.

When the students are gone, the UPD's work load is lightened, said Lemay.

"We have the advantage of being able to concentrate our patrol on the buildings and residence halls," she said.



Students living off campus should also take precautions to prevent crime.

Officer Craig Anderson, a crime prevention officer for the College Station Police Department, offers some safety tips to students who will leave for the holidays:

- Make sure good deadbolts are installed on all exterior doors. Be sure to secure the deadbolt when leaving the apartment.
- Install track locks on windows to make it difficult for criminals to gain entry. Nails may also be inserted into the window frame to keep the window from being opened from the outside.
- Engrave all valuable items with a driver's license number. This will aid the police if the item is stolen and then pawned.
- Lock valuables in the closet.
- Install anti-lift devices on sliding glass doors. These bolt the doors

together and prevent a criminal from lifting the doors out of the tracks.

- Store any valuable jewelry in a safe deposit box.
- Install timers on apartment lights and televisions to give the appearance that someone is living at the residence.
- Stop daily papers and any other deliveries.
- Inform the police department before leaving town. Police officers will patrol apartment areas to check for burglary or unusual activity.
- Notify a friend or neighbor that you are leaving.

The home safety devices are inexpensive and can be purchased at local hardware stores, Anderson said. "If you discover your home has been burglarized, don't touch anything," Anderson said. "Just dial 911 and the police will come out and take fingerprints."