

We came, we saw, we shopped

Vacationers forsake traditional tourist attractions for America's shopping malls

America always has taken vacation travel seriously. After all, what other nation on earth can boast of

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Yet Ameri-
have hit a
new low in
choice of
ation desti-
ons: shop-
malls.
Recent sur-
shows that
states, in-
ing Texas,
opping malls
become some of the most visited
ist attractions. It is hard to believe
anyone would take a vacation just to
time at an out-of-state Post Oak
l, but apparently more and more peo-
are planning their vacations around a
to the Food Court.



STEVEN GYESZLY
columnist

Some observers say that shopping va-
cations merely reflect many Americans'
uggle to keep a balance in their every-
lives. However, the problem runs
deeper than this. The recent trend
family vacations at shopping malls
at the very idea of American vaca-
tion's games.

One integral aspect of American vaca-
culture to be swept away by a flood
sidewalk sales is the bonding built by
hallowed traditional family vacation.
can forget the great American road
of bygone days as everyone piled
to the family station wagon and sib-
punched each other for crossing the
inary line dividing the back seat?
And what about all the memorable
otos? Out-of-focus shots of Grandpa
front of the mystery monument can-
be replaced by the picture of the
mily standing next to the mall foun-
in, illuminated by the romantic glow
a department store sign.

Let's face it, nothing brings a family
together than reminiscing about
time little Timmy got sick all over
one of the rides at Disney World, or
then Uncle Joe was chased by a bear
ts 1996 meth
ile camping out at Yellowstone Na-
tional Park.

What kind of memorable stories can
hold about a mall? Aunt Louise scor-
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Close family ties are not the only as-
pect of life that will be lost if more fami-
continue to vacation at malls. The
uniqueness of America itself will be
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Can a mall ever take the place of
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the northern hemisphere where gruel
on the child's menu?

And what about all the other charm-
locales across this nation? The curse
of the small town — too much spare
time, leads to strange hobbies and odd
collections — all on view for anyone
with the quarter entrance fee.

Any visitor to Houston can go to the
Galleria, but it takes a true connoisseur
to visit "The House of Bottle Caps" (not
to be confused with College Station's
landmark "Bottle Cap Alley").
A vacation in America means an un-
expected overnight stay at the strangely
familiar "Motel 6" in Mississippi, or
stopping off at the random fruit festival
destined to be happening at a country-
side near you.

Visiting shopping malls as a primary
vacation destination signals the exhaus-
tion of the American imagination. Ac-
cording to a recent Associated Press story,
in a study of 8,000 leisure travelers to
Las Vegas, 67 percent listed shopping as
their primary activity.

With all the activities that are legal in
Las Vegas, it is a sad, sad day when two-
thirds of the American population
would rather try their luck at a 50 per-
cent off sale, rather than Caesar's Palace.
This lack of creativity will continue to
haunt long after the vacation is over.
Drinking coffee out of the Elvis mug
bought in Memphis lets one reminisce
about Graceland long after the memo-

ries of shag green carpet and peanut-
butter-and-bacon sandwiches fade.
Wearing the souvenir T-shirt bought
at a store in the mall only will remind
oneself that even though you bought the
shirt, you will never look anything like
the people in the ad.

Much like the eternal question of how
the Egg Roll House has stayed open all
these years when it seems no one has
ever eaten there, one can only wonder
why people are willing to travel to
spend their vacation in a mall.

No one goes out of state just to eat at
Arby's, so why leave town just to shop
at another store chain?

By abandoning familiar tourist desti-
nations, Americans abandon a way of
life. Traditional tourist areas are filled
with potential memories.
Shopping malls are filled with power-
walking senior citizens in the morning
and skanky teenagers hanging out until
their moms come to pick them up at
night. It may be a matter of choice, but a
vacation destination should never in-
volve Corn Dog 7.

Steven Gyeszly is a junior
finance major.



Technology tightens border security

Last April, authorities began call-
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decades by millions of Mexicans
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The plan was
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Oct. 1, 1999 as
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immigration
law, but legislation moving in con-
gress could change that. The reason
being that Mexican shoppers are not
expected to buy into the new United
States visa card plan.

In January, however, authorities
seized a building in Ciudad, Jaurez,
and seized more than 400 old cards
that were being rented for illegal bor-
der crossings. This is proof that
America is being taken advantage of,
and a new strategy is long overdue.

The documents being replaced,
most of them bearing outdated photo-
graphs, allow more than 100 million
legal border crossings each year by
business people, tourists and shop-
pers from Mexico, the United States'
second biggest trading partner after
Canada.

The hope is that the new cards,
which the State Department calls
laser visas, will help to screen out
criminal and illegal immigrants and
to possibly expedite the daily torrent
of northbound traffic across the 2,000
mile border.

The laser visas will replace three
documents in current use: business
and tourism visas, which like other
visas the State Department issues
elsewhere in the world allowing travel
to any part of the U.S., and other
border-crossing cards. For 50 years
these cards, authorizing travel within
25 miles of the border for 72 hours,
have been issued by the Immigration
and Naturalization Service only to
Mexicans.

On the other hand, the new laser
uses CD-ROM technology to store a
digital photo, fingerprint and other
data. The laser visas will be valid for
10 years, unlike the old cards, which
were good for a lifetime of use.

The old visas were issued without
the expiration dates in at least 15 dif-
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photographs of middle-aged Mexi-
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make attempts to compare cards with
bearers' faces difficult for border offi-
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taken advantage of for too long.

The replacement of the old border
crossing cards, mandated by a 1996
law written to tighten border con-
trols, has many Mexicans upset by a
\$45 possessing fee, despite American
assurance that most holders of the

document will qualify for the new
ones. Fearing that their applications
may be denied, many say they cannot
or will not buy the \$45 laser visa
cards.

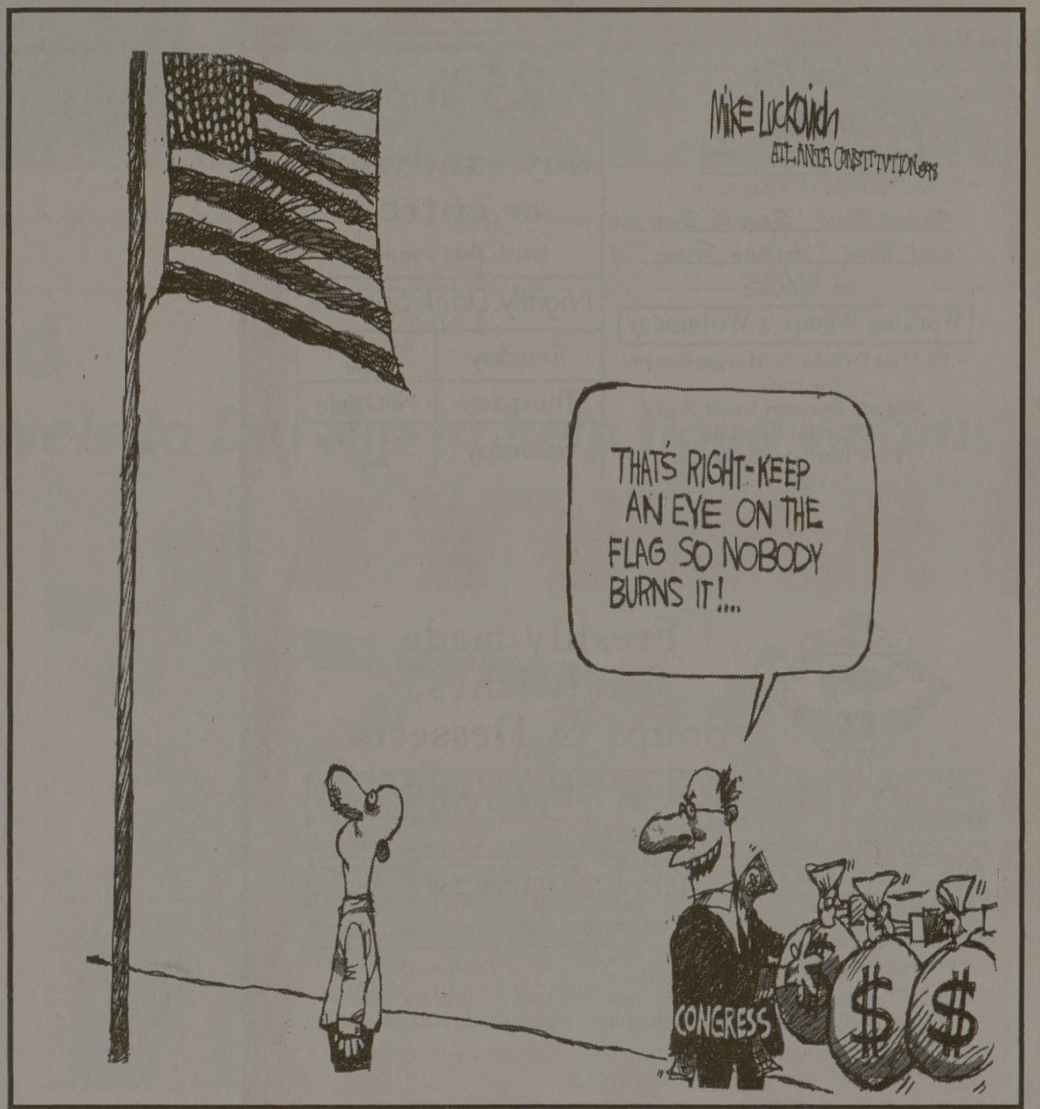
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One would think the Mexican con-
sumers could shell out an additional
\$45 with all of the money they are
saving by shopping in the U.S. The
main reason for their hesitance to ad-
here to the new plan is the fact that
many of the millions that are entering
the U.S. each year are doing so illegal-
ly and have been for the last five
decades.

The fact is, those who hold the old
cards and have not abused their privi-
leges should not worry. Since they are
not the problem, they are assured a
new visa.

Admittance into the United States
should be considered a privilege. The
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the many who are taking advantage
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Guests should not be able to deter-
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Rich Paddack is a junior
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August 5
Wednesday • August 5, 1998
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