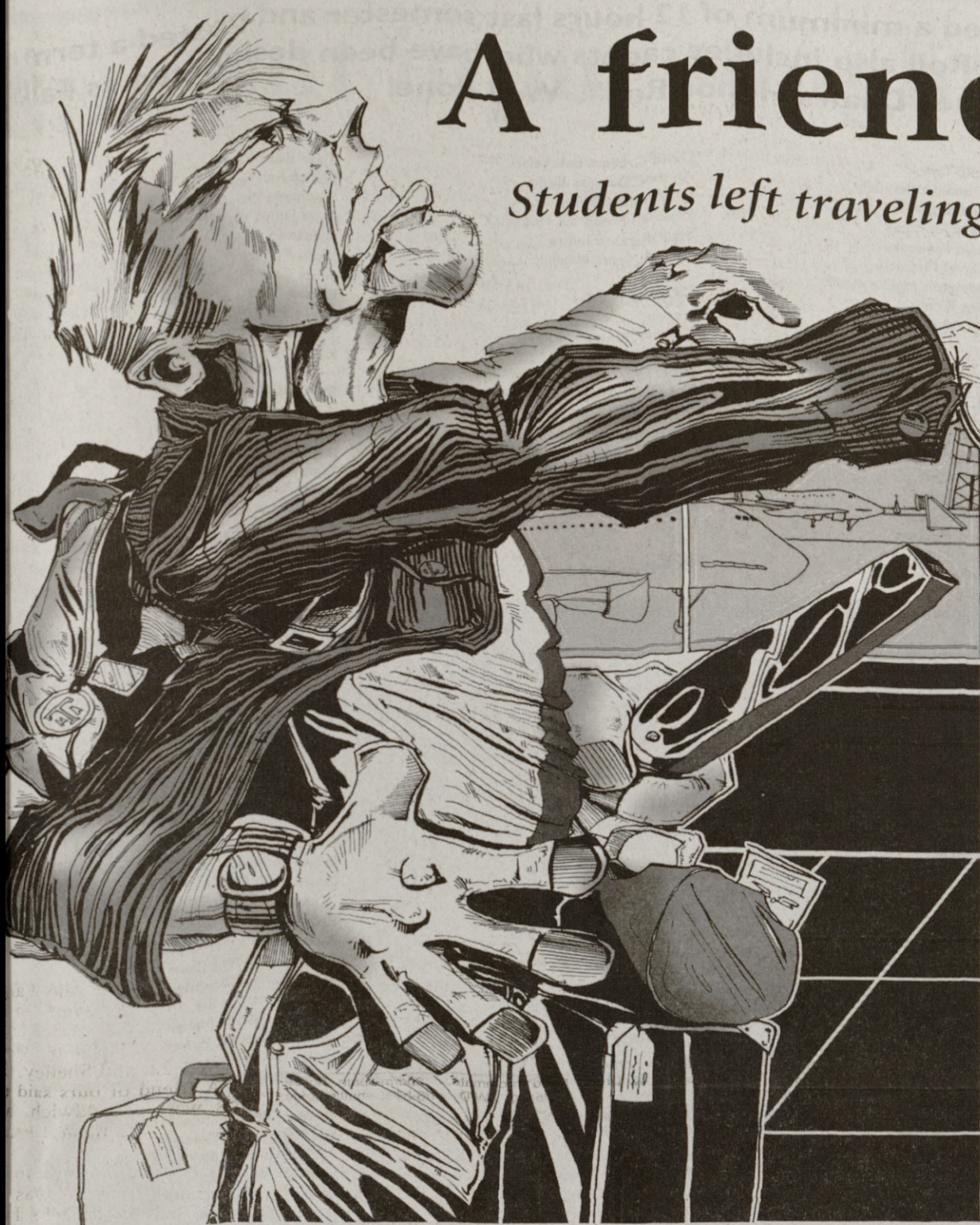


## A friendlier sky?

Students left traveling anxieties behind for holiday break



In December, as final exams wore on, College Station became an increasingly desolate place. With worn spirits, most Aggies returned home for the holidays. A month later, this once-empty college town is coming back to life.



KATHERINE TUCKER

A popular topic of conversation after the break is always Christmas vacation. This year, Sept. 11 terrorist attacks hanging over the head, the prospect of taking Christmas vacations was uncertain.

However, recent content feelings with airport security have reestablished Americans' confidence in traveling. Rather than being discouraged to travel in light of Sept. 11, students showed a greater interest in travel.

The travel industry suffered tremendously after Sept. 11. According to the Air Transport Association, (ATA) passenger volumes were down 17 percent in 2001 compared with 2000. The unpredictability of the American passenger strained airlines, making December a volatile month in the already weak airline business. Fortunately, confidence returned as passenger volumes decreased only 11 percent. With an emphasis on family and fun, Americans are rebuilding a nation with their patronage through travel.

Whether students are returning home, taking ski trips or beach vacations, the travel industry depends on them. In the past semester, students were bombarded with glitzy flyers advertising refreshing ski vacations and relaxing beach getaways.

With cheap airfare and hotel accommodations available, students were unwilling

to pass up this great deal. Whether students were experiencing anxieties from the pressures of school or from the fear now associated with flying, this did not keep them from indulging in much-needed vacations. Terry Trucco of the *New York Times* said travel agencies also depend on students to look to the beaches for a "warm, familiar escape from a troubled world." The "troubled world" that students are escaping from is not only the stress of schoolwork, but also the stress of coming home. An entire month back in the house

with mom and dad merits a vacation. Travel agencies confirm that business was not hurt this holiday season. Spencer Curry, a travel advisor for STA Travel, said their business has picked up since mid October, and he is expecting their best travel year yet. As spring break approaches, students have their minds on far away places, not on staying at home. A time of recovery was needed and a holiday spent with family provided comfort, but a spring break spent at home is no student's dream vacation.

The travel industry was saved by the resiliency of travelers everywhere. Whether enticed by cheap fares or a renewed sense of security in America, passengers filled 85 percent of flights this holiday season, according to ATA spell out. As the travel industry rebounded during the holiday, the recent "fly anxiety" is being put to rest.

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Katherine Tucker is a sophomore general studies major.

## Media should accept left lean



JONATHAN JONES

There are some things so obvious as to be beyond dispute: Texas is the best state in the Union. Tech fans have behavioral problems, and there is a long liberal bias in the major media establishment.

This bias, intentional or not, too often has influence on what can and cannot be said on the air and in print. Americans are increasingly turning toward other outlets that fill a niche in the marketplace for more fair and varied coverage, especially on the Internet.

The big three news outlets are entrenched bureaucracies resistant to change. As such, criticism of the major media networks and charges of bias provoke fierce denials, most famously from Dan Rather of CBS News. This is part of the reason viewers are turning elsewhere. It is no secret that Rather, who has attended Texas Democratic fundraisers, is not one of conservatives. Should he

be intellectually honest and say so, viewers would have no doubt where he is coming from as a journalist and respect him for being honest enough to admit it influences his work. Since a report can never include complete information due to so many word choices available in the English language, bias is inevitable. By not recognizing that fact and continuing to claim he "calls it straight," Rather and other journalists lower their credibility.

Bernard Goldberg, an Emmy award winner and former CBS News reporter, has experienced firsthand the wrath of stepping outside the major media orthodoxy. His best-selling book, *Bias*, chronicles the powerful institutional culture of arrogance that pervades his former employer. Former colleagues have labeled him a traitor, one even calling him "a no-talent hack." Goldberg writes that among the big three news networks, more liberal views are seen as mainstream, reasonable and enlightened. Conservative, family-orientated positions held by a sizable number of Americans living between the

coasts, far from the media glare, are viewed as backwater and extreme. That is part of the reason why viewers are turning in large numbers to other outlets, especially Fox News, that take both sides seriously.

Rather, for example, seems to believe he plays no favorites, stating so on many occasions. However, speaking from the news anchor's chair of similar legislation from different angles in early 1996, he illustrates, as happens regularly, that this is not the case.

"President Clinton is giving some election year help to America's ranchers and farmers," Rather said. "The President took action today to try to boost cattle prices, which have fallen to their lowest levels in ten years." In contrast, he reported of "the hush-hush plan afoot in Congress (by Republicans) that could make your milk prices sour. CBS News has been told that a secret deal is making its way through Congress that would increase the additives in your milk and increase the retail price of milk about 40 cents a gallon."

Rather is a dedicated journalist, but his creativity and credibility is marred by the influence of personal political views, which will always taint reporting. It would be better for Rather and all journalists to acknowledge that bias is unavoidable. Something must always be left out, certain descriptive words must be chosen and correctly presenting the views and actions of others is a very subjective enterprise. Simply acknowledging this increases credibility, because viewers can take bias into account as information is processed. There is no question the media as a whole is liberal: a Freedom Forum survey found that 89 percent of journalists voted for Bill Clinton in 1992. There is no organized conspiracy to shut conservative opinion out but stubbornly clinging to the status quo will cause frustrated viewers to turn elsewhere.

Jonathan Jones is a senior political science major.

## A parenting state New driving laws unreasonable

On Jan. 1, the Texas government put on its parenting hat and passed Senate Bill 577, which introduced the Graduated Driver License Program.



JENNIFER LOZANO

According to the Department of Public Safety, the GDL creates two phases of driving requirements for those under the age of 18. Grandfathered out of all phases of the new graduated system, a few lucky teenagers who receive either their instruction permit or provisional license before Jan. 1 escape the effects of the law.

The first blow of the new GDL law is the rise of the minimum age from 18 to 21 for the licensed passenger who accompanies a permit-holding driver.

Also in phase one of the GDL program, applicants under 18 must hold an instruction permit for a minimum of six months before they are issued a provisional license. Only then can an applicant graduate to phase two.

In phase two, a provisional license holder may not have more than one under-21 non-family member as a passenger in the car for the first six months.

Also, the applicant may not drive between midnight and 5 a.m. unless driving is necessary for employment, school, school-related activities or a medical emergency.

However, if a licensed operator accompanies a provisional license holder over the age of 21, the time and passenger restrictions are removed.

According to the *Austin American-Statesman*, the new license law is intended to reduce fatalities caused by new drivers and carloads of teenagers who are on the road late at night.

Although there are clear benefits to the GDL program, concerned parents could enforce these laws at their own discretion for their children. Since there is no way for law

enforcement agents to instinctively know the age of a driver, they will simply have to use a hit or miss system to determine if a driver is breaking the law. This will inevitably result in a number of inconveniences for drivers over 18 who will be stopped for absolutely nothing.

According to the *Dallas Metro*, these laws have also created debates for parents whose children have late night jobs or live in rural areas where at least one senator has claimed that the new licensing program is unwanted and unneeded.

The GDL program is too broad and leaves no room for varying, valid circumstances. For instance, the new law would create quite a hindrance for the many students who are still 17 years old when they begin college.

Supportive parents are the real enforcers, said Allen F. Williams of the non-profit Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. It is

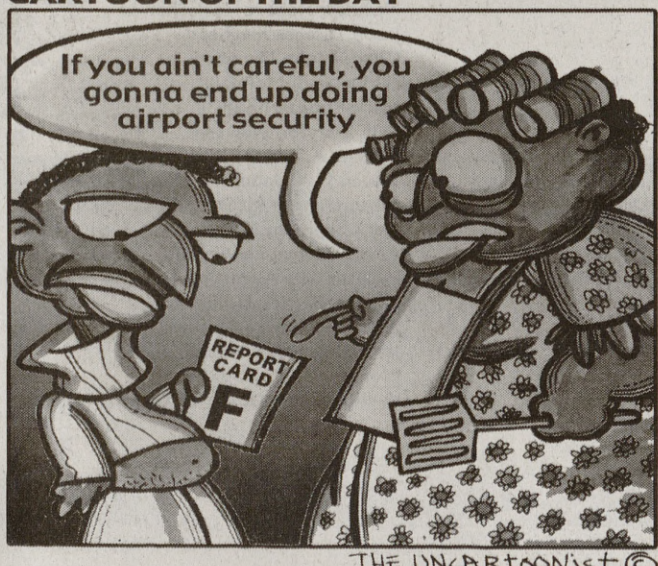
these parents who will be toting their teens from late night football games and accompanying them for a six-month period to supervise their driving. Unfortunately, these are the same concerned parents who would be doing the same thing regardless of the new GDL program. Other parents will still be too preoccupied to notice if their teen is obeying the new law.

It is a given fact that fatal car accidents are often the result of newly licensed teenage drivers who are distracted by their friends. However, many fatal car accidents are also the result of adults being distracted by passengers, cell phones or the stereo. Many states have passed cell phone laws already. Is the next step a restriction on the use of car stereos?

Although the GDL program may appear to be a benefit, it is not the government's responsibility to assume that all teen-age drivers are irresponsible and dictate when and where a newly licensed driver may drive. Parents should always be the ones with the ultimate responsibility.

Jennifer Lozano is a junior English major.

### CARTOON OF THE DAY



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