

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Bumps in the road

Safe travel is easier said than done when it comes to hitting the highway

By Erica York
THE BATTALION

Highway travel is not without its twists and turns, and a ride down a long and winding road can spell doom if drivers don't take some precautions. Just ask Jeff Vest or Justin Minton.

Vest's experience of driving with a fever left him a more careful driver.

"I had a temperature of 103 when I left. The only reason I was driving back to College Station was because I had a test on Monday," said Vest, a senior construction science major. "I was feeling so bad that I just lost focus of what I was doing, zoned out and fell asleep."

Vest, who was only 15 miles from College Station when he fell asleep, said he was disoriented after the accident but not hurt.

"I was so lucky. I came so close to flipping my truck," he said. "I ran into a ditch on the left side of the road after my truck spun, but my truck wasn't damaged at all."

Vest said students should roll their windows down if they start to feel tired while driving.

Justin Minton, a junior recreation, parks and tourism science major, also fell asleep at the wheel on his way from San Marcos to College Station, but was not as lucky as Vest.

"My roommate was asleep in the back and he didn't get a scratch on him, but I broke my scapula and my nose. I had to get 14 staples in my head and 20 stitches in my right cheek," Minton said. "I'm still pulling glass out of my head two weeks after it happened."

Minton said he was trying to do something to keep him awake, but it did not work in time.

"I was waiting for the next gas station to get some sunflower seeds or gummy bears to chew on to keep me awake," Minton said. "I should

have woken up my roommate and made him keep me awake."

Traveling students should plan ahead when taking a road trip, Matt Hasenkampf, a junior engineering technology major, said.

Hasenkampf, who will travel from College Station to Austin and then to New Orleans for the holidays, said there are certain steps students should take before a long drive, such as wearing sunglasses.

"Regularly, I don't wear sunglasses when I drive, but on a long drive, I always plan to have sunglasses since the glare tends to irritate me," Hasenkampf said. "On a long drive, I'll even stop and buy a pair if I forget my good pair."

Hasenkampf said it's important to check the

weather conditions a day in advance and to make sure windshield wipers are working properly. He suggests bringing a flashlight with extra batteries and a spare tire, as well.

Hasenkampf said it's also important to pull over and rest if you are feeling really tired.

"Instead of fighting to stay awake, take a 20-minute break or so to get your mind off the road," Hasenkampf said. "Give your eyes a chance to focus on something other than the road."

Alli Austin, a senior education major, has to make the long drive from College Station to Midland for the holidays. She said she has certain

techniques she uses when she starts getting sleepy on her way home.

"When I start getting kind of tired, I usually bring a Coke with me and drink it," Austin said. "I will also listen to some upbeat music."

Austin said students traveling home should try to avoid driving at times when it is easier to fall asleep.

"If possible, I try to leave early in the morning," she said. "This is so much better because there's light and there's not a bunch of traffic."

Austin said there also are things passengers can do to make trips safer.

"If you're driving with a friend, you should try to stay awake for them,"

Austin said. "Stay up and talk to them while

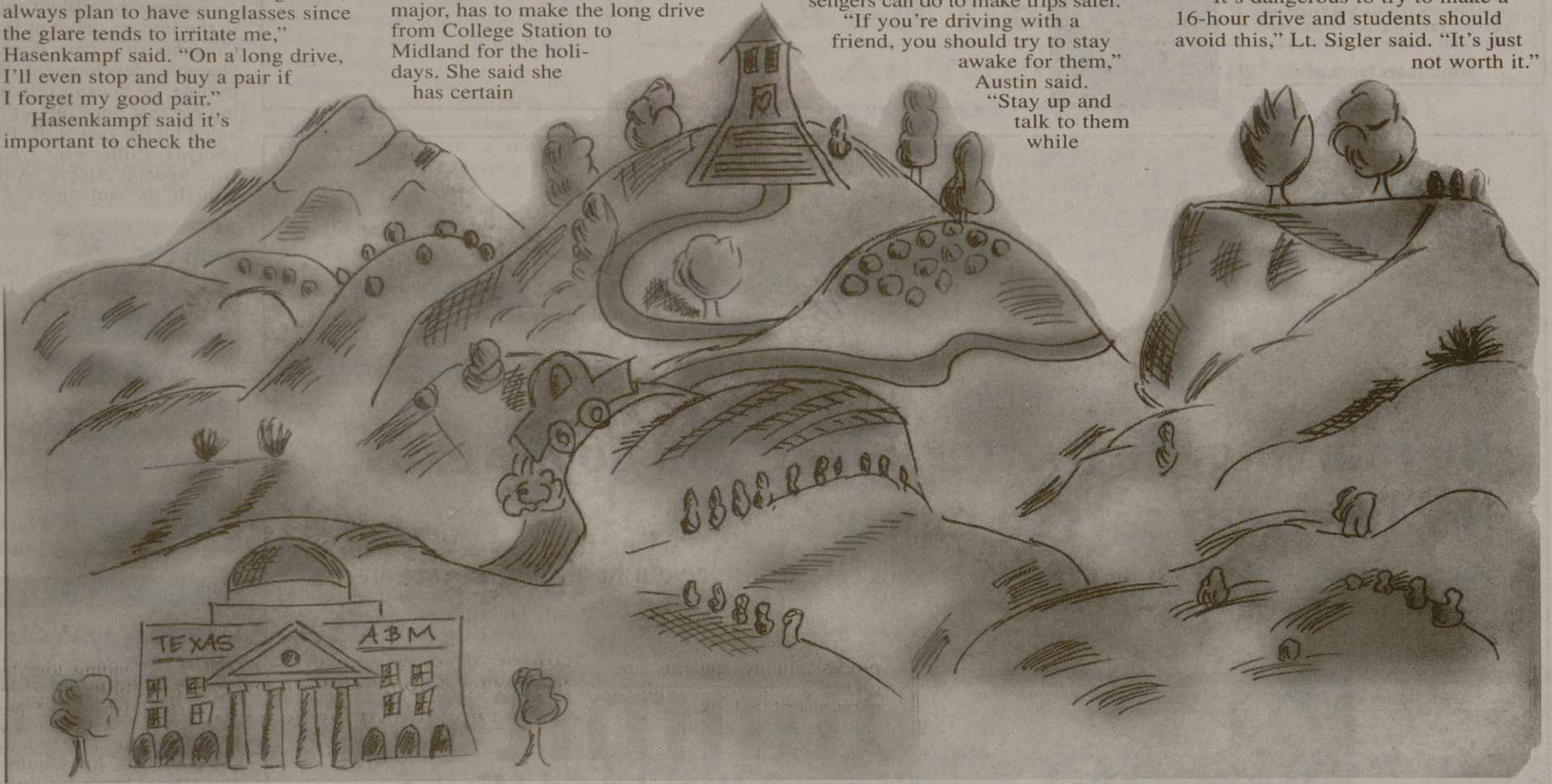
they're driving."

Lt. Rodney Sigler from the College Station Police Department said holiday travel for students can be very dangerous.

"There are three things we need to pay special attention to: falling asleep, drinking and driving and speeding," Lt. Sigler said. "These three things are especially important because they are things we can control."

Lt. Sigler said students should not try to finish long trips in one night.

"It's dangerous to try to make a 16-hour drive and students should avoid this," Lt. Sigler said. "It's just not worth it."

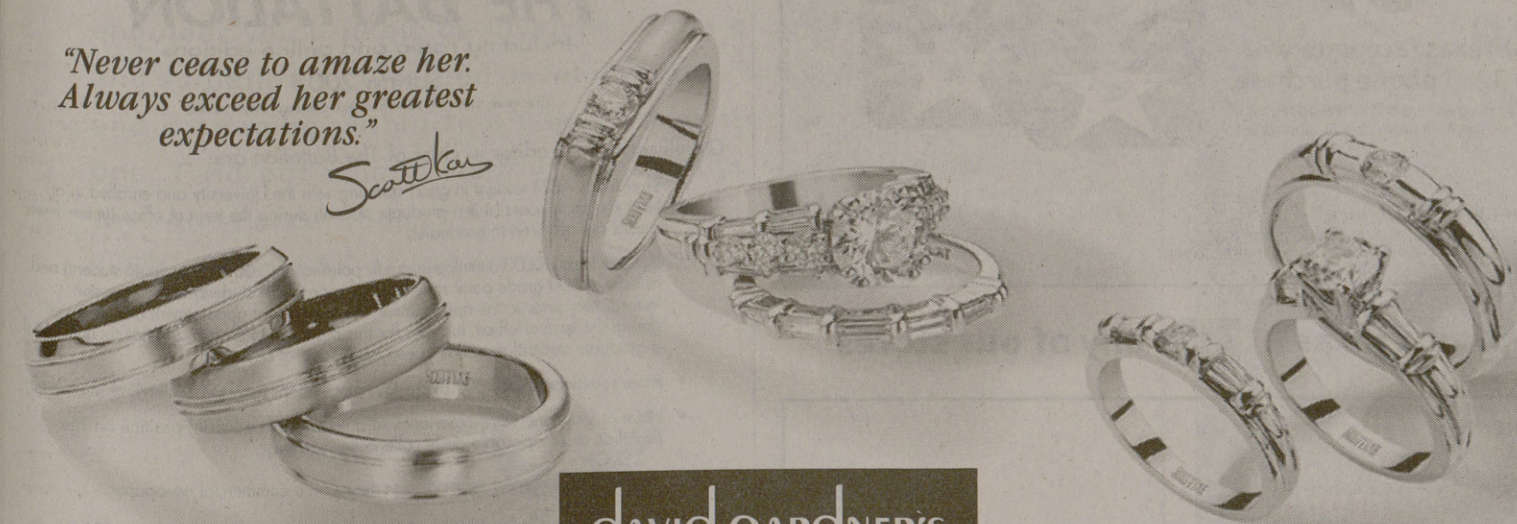


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