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THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Tuesday, August 5, 2003

On the road again

Flat tires, wrong directions and no place to stay doesn't stop these students

By Ashley Marshall
THE BATTALION

Zach McMahon has taken more than his fair share of road trips.

In fact, McMahon, fondly known by his friends as Hönnie, has created a Web site about road trips he has taken and is writing a book about his adventures. A seasoned veteran of road trips, Hönnie has driven to Canada, New York, Chicago and various cities in Texas, proving the age-old saying that "getting there is half the fun."

Summer is the choice season of road trips for students, as the atmosphere allows schedules to be more flexible for vacations. But students such as Hönnie believe the fun usually lies in the impulsive journey rather than the final destination.

"We usually just pack up and drive without planning anything," Hönnie said. "It could take away some of the fun if you plan too much."

Hönnie, a senior anthropology major, is part of a group of road trippers who call themselves the McGrishenters, a compilation of the last names of the seven friends who take trips together and journal their experiences. Their eclectic Web site, McGrishenters.com, describes the fun they've had and the predicaments they've experienced on numerous trips around the nation.

Even though Hönnie and his friends have encountered various mishaps, it hasn't deterred them from taking their impulsive, somewhat improvisational trips.

Last weekend, Josh Hargrove, a senior recreation, parks and tourism sciences major, and Hönnie took a trip to San Antonio for a friend's wedding and decided to go a day early to camp out.

When they arrived at Garner State Park, the two found they needed reservations — which they didn't have — and ended up pitching their tent under a high-way bridge by the river.

"We just chilled out under the bridge and played our guitars," Hönnie said.

"About an hour later, a family pulled up that was in the same predicament we were in, so they camped out with us."

Another tent was pitched on a road trip to Boerne when they had no place to sleep. Upon waking in the morning, Hönnie found they were inadvertently in the middle of a golf course with people teeing off all around them.

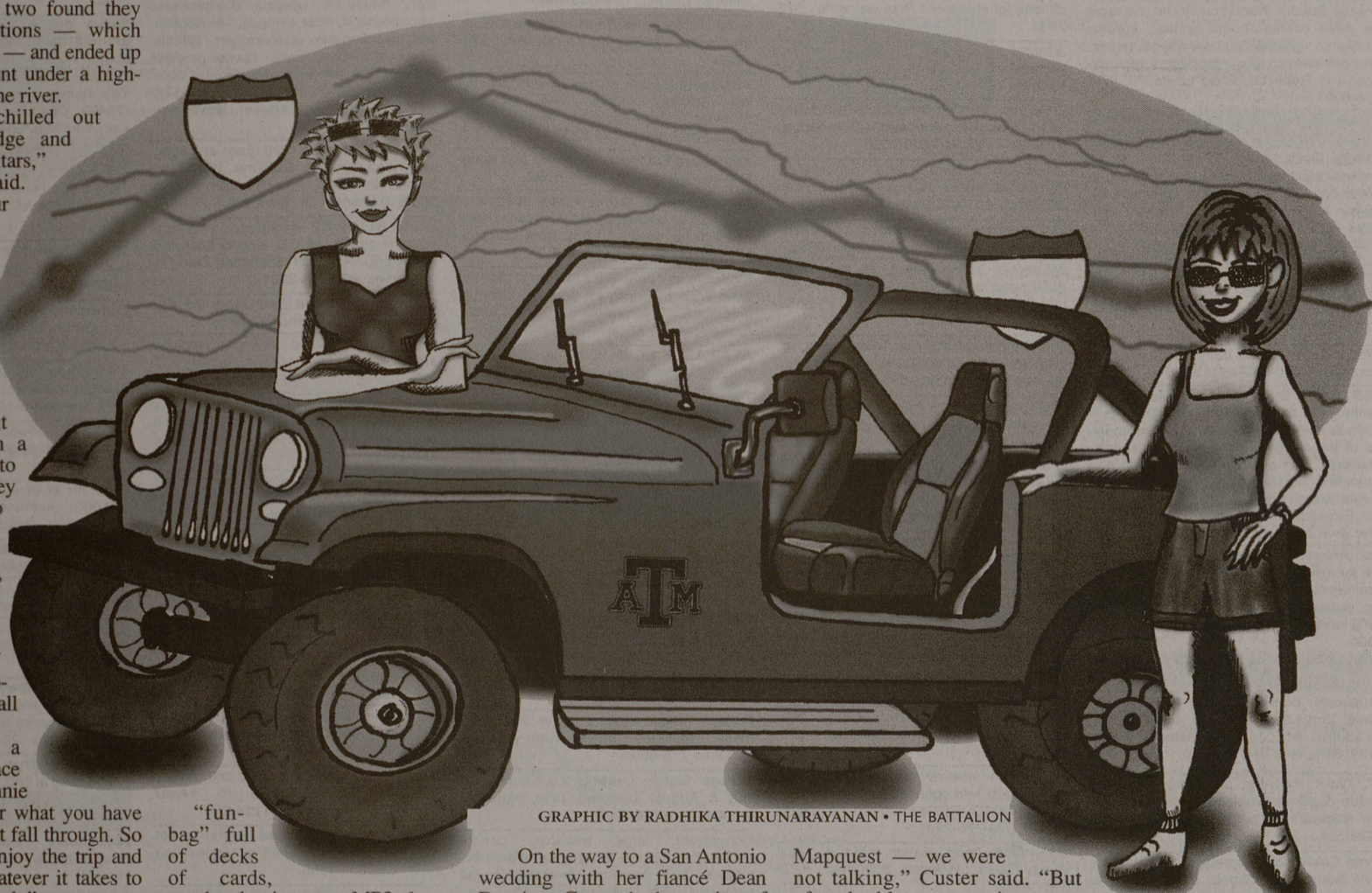
"It wasn't a very discreet place to camp," Hönnie said. "No matter what you have planned, it might fall through. So we just try to enjoy the trip and enjoy doing whatever it takes to make the trip work."

Megan Custer, a senior management information system major, has encountered road trip mishaps as well, but enjoys the time she gets to spend on the road with her friends. Custer has taken four road trips this summer for weddings, and passes the time in cars by talking, reading, listening to music and crocheting.

On a trip to Lubbock, Custer packed a whole bag she termed a

"fun-bag" full of decks of cards, snacks, dominoes, an MP3 player and her marriage-prep books. But, Custer said she mostly enjoys passing the time by talking to her car-mates.

"Sometimes, when you're on a vacation, you spend more time doing activities than talking to the people you're with," she said. "That's why I like car trips — you can get a chance to catch up with your friends and really have good conversations."



GRAPHIC BY RADHIKA THIRUNARAYANAN • THE BATTALION

On the way to a San Antonio wedding with her fiancé Dean Dominy, Custer had a series of mishaps that seemed to come straight out of a movie. After getting bogus directions from Mapquest that took them the wrong way through Round Rock, Custer and Dominy got stuck for hours in Austin traffic, changed a blowout on the highway in their wedding clothes, and ended up missing the wedding.

"We were frustrated with each other and frustrated with

Mapquest — we were not talking," Custer said. "But after the blowout, we just started laughing because we knew there was no way it could get any worse."

Traveling the rest of the trip on the spare tire, Custer and Dominy arrived in time for the reception and laughingly retold the tale of their journey.

Just as Hönnie realized, some road trips don't go exactly as planned, but those incidents usually end up making the trip

more memorable.

"My favorite part is the random things that happen that are a pain at the time, but those are the things that you can look back on and laugh," Hönnie said.

"It's impossible to have a perfectly planned road trip," Hönnie said. "And if you do, it'll be a boring road trip."

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