

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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Can't hardly wait

Fake IDs hold opportunities and consequences for underage college students

By Katie Wigginton
THE BATTALION

Chris Mitchell finally has the night off to party after four days of work, lectures and tedious homework. He gets to the bars and can already see the line getting longer by the second.

It is bombarded with people he knows, and he is already scoping out the girls to meet and greet during the night. He can hear the beginning of his favorite familiar song starting to play. His anticipation builds.

The night is quickly passing by, and Mitchell finally makes it on the other side of the door. And as he watches his friends gleefully skipping away to the dance floor or straight for the bar, he is asked to leave. Chris has just been carded.

False identification has been a way of nightlife for college and high school students for as long as Aggies have been hearing the same speech introducing the Aggie Band.

With technology changing daily, fake IDs tend to be a serious problem for the Bryan-College Station police.

Despite the scenario, Mitchell, a junior sports management major, has never faced this problem or the allegations that come with it.

Mitchell obtained his older brother's ID at the age of 15 and had no difficulty receiving clearance from bars in numerous towns including Dallas, Denton and College Station.

"They would just look at my age and face and let me right in," Mitchell said. "I eventually became really popular at my high school."

Aside from the popularity, Mitchell's fake ID eventually became problematic when it was confiscated by a police officer one night. He managed to not have a permanent record kept on the offense.

"It raises a lot of liability on us," said Chris "Smookey" Lindsey, manager of Hurricane Harry's. "With individuals and

their knowledge of technology, it is becoming very hard to catch them. It is a big problem because it leads to bigger problems of underage drinking."

The manager of Salty Dog, David "Slim" Boorhees, shares this same view.

"It is a big problem due to the big college town and the matter of trying to get that first drink," he said.

Like the checkers who looked at Mitchell's ID, the system of checking IDs at the door is still fairly systematic. Some popular night spots of Aggieland have different requirements beyond the typical checkpoints of date of birth, expiration date and comparison of the picture to the cardholder.

"I sometimes ask for a signature to compare them to the driver's license," said Jimmy Meyer, an assistant manager of the Texas Hall of Fame and senior biomedical engineering major.

The Salty Dog often asks for a credit card or University identification card.

Detection is easy for those who know what they are looking for. Some of these easy detectors that can be embarrassing include scratching off words from IDs bought at cheap flea markets, font sizes being different, the background color not matching and overlaminating the ID.

Attempting to cut and paste pertinent information onto the ID of a legal friend has passed the eyes of the door checkers. The most comical of all are the tips from parents calling the club to warn that their own children will be appearing later in the night with a fake ID.

"I haven't seen an ID yet that can't be caught," Meyer said. According to Cory Cassell, manager of the Dixie Chicken, something as simple as the

on the back of the license being dotted, when it should not be, is easy for a trained checker's eyes to spot.

So a person is caught at the door. Now what? That seems to depend on where he is caught.

"We give the option of calling the cops and have them run the license through the checking machine or they have to leave immediately," Lindsey said.

Meyer said the Texas Hall of Fame has a paid constable on the premise and the checker will automatically hand the person over to him. Cassell offers the same option of either leaving the premise or calling the police to interfere. Boorhees tries to keep the atmosphere as peaceful as possible by simply asking the person to leave.

Now that the person is in the custody of the police officer. What can legally happen to him? According to Section 106 of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Code, it is a Class C misdemeanor to be charged with misrepresentation of age by a minor.

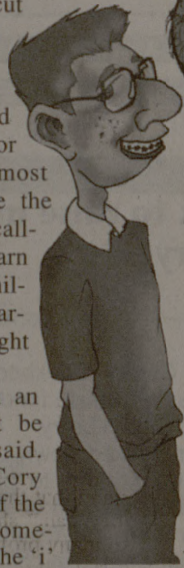
The punishments an officer can give include a fine between \$250 and \$2,000, jail time for up to 180 days or both. He can also punish the minor with eight to 12 community service hours if it is his first offense and suspension of his license for up to 30 days.

Even though Mitchell escaped legal trouble, he said, "I do think fake IDs are a big problem for College Station, and kids should just wait ... you'll be 21 soon enough. Plus it takes the fun and anticipation out of your 21st birthday when you've already been doing it for so long."

Lindsey offers the simplest and clearest advice possible: "It's just always best to be honest."

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—Chris Mitchell
junior sports management major

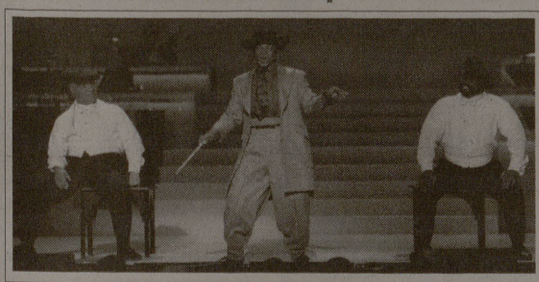


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