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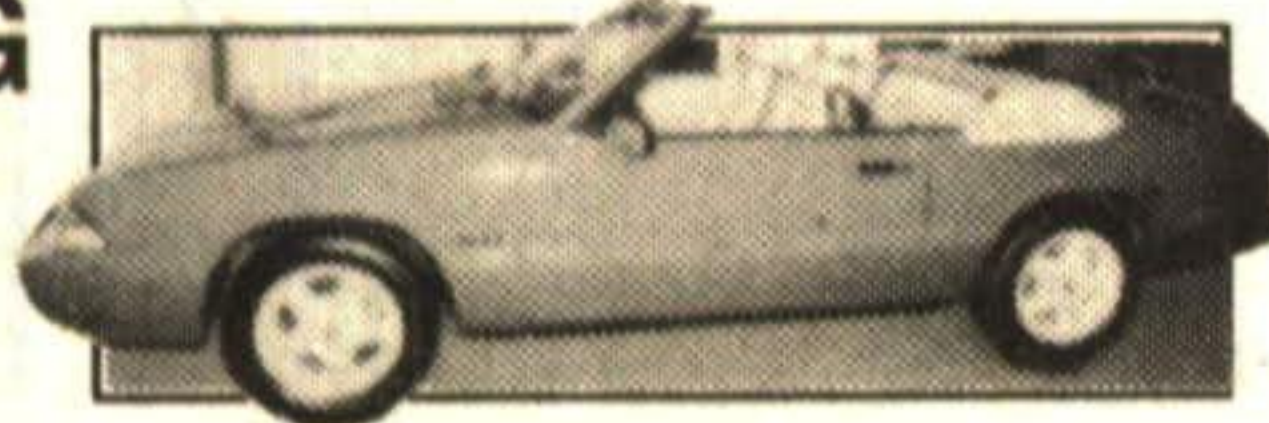
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I-75 nightmare trip

By LISA TALLYN
Staff writer

The drive home from Florida usually takes Irene and Jim Zilio two days, but thanks to last weekend's devastating snowstorm that hit the eastern United States it took the Georgetown couple five days to make it back to Halton Hills.

Irene Zilio says they left for home from St. Petersburg at about 8 a.m. Saturday and hit bad weather right away.

"The winds were 60 mph in the Tampa area and water was coming right over the Howard Franklin Bridge when we crossed it," said Zilio. She added that the resort she was staying at offered them the hospitality suite to wait out the storm, but they decided to head home.

"The worst of the storm was starting when we got to Atlanta."

They continued on U.S. Interstate 75 until about 6 p.m. when they decided it was time to start looking for a motel for the night.

"We went off on three ramps and tried at various motels, but they were all booked." Irene says they continued driving north. "The road was sheer ice. Traffic, three deep, was virtually at a standstill. It took us about 15 minutes to move three inches."

At 11 p.m. the lights in their 1986 Caprice began to dim. Then they went out, but the Zilios continued northward relying on the lights from neighboring cars.

"Just outside of Calhoun, Georgia our car quit, so we pulled off the road and thought we would have to sleep the night there," she said.

But a family from Tifton, Georgia, heading to Chattanooga in search of snow, stopped and offered to drive the Zilios to the next cutoff so they could find a hotel.

"That was at about midnight. It took us fifteen and a half hours to go seven miles."

They made it to the the next cutoff and took the last room at the motel there at about 3:30 p.m. Sunday. They shared the room with the family from Tifton.

After they got off the highway Zilio says the National Guard closed it and didn't reopen it again until 5 p.m. Monday.

"There was about eight or nine inches of snow there, and the family (from Georgia) went out and laid in it. That was the first time they had ever seen snow."

While there it was almost impossible to find food. At one restaurant all they had left was coffee and two pieces of pie. Irene says it was also difficult to find a phone and money was scarce.

"They wouldn't take VISA there, it was a very small town. We didn't have enough money to pay to have our car fixed."

She said a Michigan woman she had met that morning at breakfast, lent them \$200 to replace the alternator in their car. The family from Georgia wouldn't leave for home until they were sure the Zilios were on their way.

"You hear all these nasty things about the people in the U.S., but I never met such great people."

She wired the money back to the Michigan woman, and plans to keep in touch with the Georgia family who rescued them.

Police Blotter

Car scratched

Police report a willful damage under \$1,000 incident to a vehicle. The damage was caused between 8 a.m. March 1 and 4 p.m. March 17. Scratches were discovered on one side of the vehicle. It is not known when or where the damage took place.

Arena assault

An assault level 1 charge has been laid against a Georgetown man following an incident at Gordon Alcott Memorial Arena last Sunday afternoon. According to police, at approximately 5 p.m., two Georgetown males were followed by several youths after leaving the arena and one of the males was grabbed by his ski jacket and lifted off the ground in the parking lot. He was punched in the head and throat area twice and dropped to the pavement. The suspect was later arrested and charged with assault.

Rexway break-in

Two bottles of beer were removed during a break and enter incident on Rexway Dr. in Georgetown early this week. Police report that sometime between 10 a.m. Monday and 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, unknown persons entered the house through a basement window leading to the laundry room. Once inside, the culprit(s) removed two bottles of beer from the refrigerator, police said, adding it is believed the person(s) spent the night in the owner's Volkswagen van parked in the garage.

Car vandalized

Police report a property damage incident at Memorial Arena in Georgetown early this week. A car had been borrowed by a friend and parked at the arena between 9 p.m. Monday and 7 a.m. Tuesday. The complainant returned to the vehicle to discover \$350 worth of damage to the car.

Hit and run

A total of \$600 in damage was caused to a vehicle during a hit and run incident on Delrex Blvd. in Georgetown Monday afternoon. Police report that the damage, a dented/crushed front left corner, was caused between 1:30 and 3 p.m.

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