

Boggling  
BroadcastThe U.S.' gas  
obsession

**O**n a recent conference trip to St. Louis, Mo., our journalism class spent a few late hours experiencing night-life in Delmar Loop, a suburban district. But just as a pack of us were hurrying across a street, we stopped dead in our tracks, transfixed on something rather remarkable. Just ahead, an impressively low \$1.78 gleamed from the yellow light-up panel of a Shell station price board. And being the devoted photojournalists we are, several of us pulled out our handy cameras in the middle of the road as frigid winds whipped our faces and glaring headlights blinded our eyes to capture this most breathtaking sight.

Yes, it's true. The cost of gas is dropping, and we Americans are going bananas about it. As prices free-falled to a three year low on Nov. 20, news headlines across the nation proclaimed the phenomenal occurrence. After suffering the summer trauma of \$4-a-gallon prices, Americans were craving cheaper gas. But no one expected the national average to sink below \$2 a gallon just last month.

In most of our lives, places we go and things we do revolve around gas, it was no surprise that a wave of gratitude and relief swept through countless American households when gas prices went down. Only a few months ago, under the tension of over-priced gas, Americans drove 10.7 billion less miles than they did one year ago when the costs had been lower. As gallon rates began dropping drastically in recent weeks, the director of Oil Price Data Information Services went so far as to describe the long-awaited sub-\$2 as "crossing the threshold... an important psychological barrier."

In truth, gas has become quite the national obsession. We are not only obsessed with this fossil fuel itself, but also with its cost: how high it soars, how low it plunges. In fact, it seems the expense of gas is often allotted priority coverage in the media as Very Important News.

Americans have become so heavily dependent on gas that it's almost a drug. When there isn't enough, we mope around, complaining about having to take "stay-cations" and cut back on empty errands. Through this web of gas-ly obsession, we've forgotten that some of the best things in life come without gas. We've forgotten that vacations can be just as rejuvenating without having to fly long distances and that while Hummers may give us pride, walking gives us good health.

But as ridiculous as it may sound, MVHS sometimes has its own version of this gas-like frenzy as December rolls around. Call it a fad, obsession, or mania. Whatever it is, the holiday season morphs into a season of finals, and happy holidays turn into a time of happy studying. We end up donating more hours to textbooks than we do dollars to charity. Grades become our fuel, our gas, our complete obsession. And like those who forget about having fun when gas prices are high, we forget to relax and be a part of that Christmas cheer when finals draw near.

So remember, while December is the month for desperate cramming, it's also supposed to be a season of celebration and gift-giving. Just like expensive gas doesn't have to mean a great loss of joy, neither do imperfect exam scores. Take some time off from the frantic hysteria that comes with finals to light some candles, appreciate some caroling, and above all, enjoy some life.