



*The Albins—(clockwise) Bill, Julie, Katie and Hollie—and their van.*



Family vacations can be full of surprises, especially when traveling with young children. A trip to New York City with our daughters, Katie and Hollie, proved the unexpected can be a welcome excursion (like free tickets to a Mets game) or an unpleasant diversion (like a visit to the emergency room for help with an ear infection).

Of all the surprises during that trip to the Big Apple, the most memorable occurred on our way home. We had just boarded our non-stop flight to Omaha, and I was quite proud of getting us there without the help of my husband, Bill, who was staying three extra days in New York on business.

*What could go wrong now?* I thought as I pictured our van in the airport parking garage, waiting patiently to take us the last 60 miles to our home in Lincoln.

*The van!* Like a snowflake triggers an avalanche, this caused a rush of panic.

*Where are the keys to the van?* The nose of the plane angled upward as I frantically searched for an answer. Eventually I braced myself, not for a rapid ascent, but for a bumpy landing as I realized the keys were safe in Bill's briefcase—in New York.

## help when you need it

A vacation nightmare: Our van was in the airport parking garage in Omaha, but my keys were left behind in New York City. One call to AAA got us home. —*By Julie Albin*

Regretting my decision to check our carry-on bag with the cell phone, there was nothing I could do until the plane landed in Omaha. When it did, I made two calls: one to my husband to thank him for taking such good care of my keys and then another to AAA.

The AAA emergency roadside service representative who arrived was truly our knight in shining armor. Because the key to our van contained a computer chip, the only way to make a new one was to tow the van to a local dealership and reprogram it to work with a new key. The representative really put my daughters at ease as he worked on the van and maneuvered

it through the cramped airport parking garage.

Our van would not have made it home that night without AAA. I thought about this as I pulled into our garage and breathed a sigh of relief. It was good to be home, and it is great to belong to AAA. ●

Julie Albin, a AAA member for 15 years, is a freelance writer from Lincoln, Nebraska.



### TELL US YOUR STORY

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