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Students advised to plan ahead before going abroad

By TROY HALL
Of The Battalion Staff

Students interested in traveling to Europe were provided with abundant information at "Europe on a Student's Budget" sponsored by the MSC Jordan Institute for International Awareness Tuesday evening.

Over 50 students attended the seminar by Alan Horst, regional manager for the Southwest Region of Council Travel in Austin, Texas.

The U.S. dollar has slid in Europe during the past two years, so it is important for students to know how to save money, Horst says.

The seminar provided the prospective student travelers with information that will prepare them for the travel abroad, as well as information on transportation and daily expenses.

Horst says it is important to plan ahead when traveling abroad.

The first step is to apply for a passport, international student identification card and a hostel membership card.

When applying for a passport, Horst says to allow at least four weeks for processing. He stressed that it is important to purchase the international student identification card, because it provides many student discounts and medical insurance.

To stay in hostels, a student must become a member to American Youth Hostels.

While a U.S. passport does not expire for ten years, the international student identification card and AYM memberships must be renewed annually. Horst says that even students graduating in May are still classified as students if they venture to Europe the following Summer.

Planning an itinerary that fits the amount of time for the trip, is also important. "You won't see a lot of Europe if you're not prepared," he says.

By researching guide books, such as the "Let's Go" series published by the Harvard Student Agencies, get-

ting familiar with maps of the area and learning important phrases from foreign language phrase books the student should prepare the student for the trip, he says. "The guide book part of traveling preparation is essential to the trip."

Once the itinerary is planned, it is now time to decide what transportation to use. Horst recommends contacting the Council or a travel agent to coordinate the transportation, because they have the knowledge to plan the most efficient transportation means that shorten travel time.

The Eurail Pass is the most popular means of transportation for college students, but Horst explained that there are several different types of Eurail Passes available ranging from 15 day to two months.

He suggested several other alternative methods of traveling in Europe. Car rentals are one alternative. He recommended applying for an international drivers license and renting the car before leaving the U.S.

Another alternative is public transportation.

Horst says European public transportation is really reliable. Everyone uses public transportation in Europe as the primary means of transportation.

And Horst did not rule out hitchhiking. Hitchhiking is a safe and viable option in Europe.

How the student packs could make or break the trip. It is important to pack as light as possible when traveling to Europe, he says. Purchasing a soft-sided convertible backpack-side bag is the best luggage. The student will also need a small carrying pouch for valuables as well as a concealed neck wallet or money belt. Horst says he has heard of several horror stories of students having their valuables stolen, because they didn't take the necessary precautions.

Traveler's checks are the safest form of money. They can be re-

placed if lost or stolen and also a better currency rate in Europe, he says. He stresses to take a minimum amount of cash. A major credit card is good to have in case of an emergency, but he says not to use too much, because credit card exchange rates make the trip cost more.

While staying in Europe, there are many options for housing accommodations. With the hostel membership, students can stay in dormitory style housing for very inexpensive prices. These youth hostels cost between three and ten dollars.

Budget hotels are an option as well. These accommodations are usually double occupancy and range between 20 and 25 dollars a night. European colleges and universities, monasteries and nunneries are also options. Horst says the travel agents provide information and ratings for many of the hostels and budget hotels, but believes the best way to find places to stay for the night are fellow travelers.

"When in Rome, do as the Romans and eat what they eat," says Williams, a senior political science major from Friendswood and a member of the MSC Jordan Institute.

If you don't ask people what they are eating, a traveler will find themselves living on bread and cheese, he says.

He says to eat around university campuses, because the coffee shops and universities are geared for students year round.

"It is important to splurge on a good meal every once in a while he says. Many Europeans spend their entire night out eating.

Horst says planning is the key to an enjoyable trip to Europe.

For more information concerning traveling abroad, the Texas A&M Study Abroad Office. They have applications for necessary documents as well as general information about Europe.



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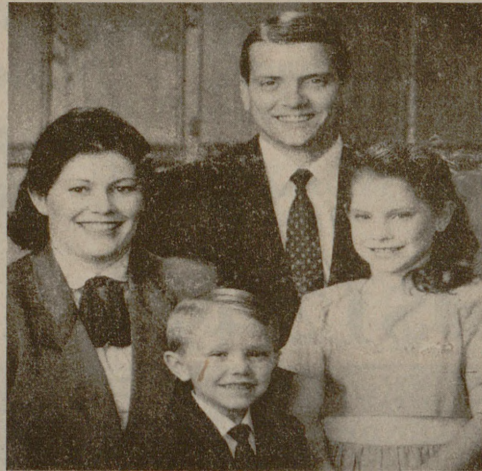
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A Change for the Better!

Jury convicts winery worker of six murders

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. (AP) — Ramon Salcido was convicted of six counts of first-degree murder Tuesday for a string of seven bloody wine-country slayings, including the killings of his wife and two young daughters.

He was found guilty of second-degree murder in the seventh slaying.

The 29-year-old former winery worker could be sentenced to die in the gas chamber at San Quentin Prison when the jury returns for the trial's penalty phase. Under California law, multiple murder is one of the "special circumstances" which can justify a death sentence.

Salcido sat quietly as the verdicts were read in San Mateo County Superior Court. He was also found guilty of two counts of attempted murder and cleared of one count of attempted voluntary manslaughter.

German held hostage, embassy negotiates

OAXACA, Mexico (AP) — The German Embassy asked Oaxaca state officials Tuesday to negotiate with political activists who were holding a German consular agent hostage to demand a meeting with President Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

Five unarmed members of the National Independent Committee took German consular agent Wolfgang Wilczek hostage Monday in a peaceful occupation of the office Germany shares with the diplomatic corps of Italy, England, France, Canada and the United States in the southern Mexico state capital of Oaxaca.

"My only request is that state authorities do nothing that could harm Mr. Wilczek," German charged affairs Immo Von Kessel said in a telephone interview in Mexico City.

He said German cultural attaché consul Gunter Jacob traveled Oaxaca, 250 miles southeast of Mexico City, on Tuesday.

Von Kessel said that he asked the state government in telephone calls Monday night and Tuesday to continue negotiating with the group and not send any commando operation.

Octavio Cruz, spokesman for the five men who took over the office said the National Independent Committee demanded that the German Embassy put pressure on the Oaxaca Gov. Heladio Ramirez to seek a presidential audience for the committee so its members could plead for the release of a collaborator jailed in June.

"We're not going to leave the office until they answer our demands," Cruz said in a telephone interview from the occupied office.

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