

# Aggielife

## A&M students get first-hand opportunity to study as they travel the globe

By Jay Knoum  
THE BATTALION

As soon as Wendy Vinzant got off the plane, she immediately faced one of the toughest challenges Paris has to offer — the airport. Vinzant and the rest of the Study Abroad students bound for Italy swarmed in a chaotic clump in the confusion of the Charles de Gaulle Airport. Their task: to get their luggage shipped to Italy, and reach a hostel on the other side of town.

No problem. "We didn't know it was going to take the entire day to get to this hostel," Vinzant said. The group had to find a place to ship their luggage, not an easy task since they had no idea where they were going and were struggling with a strange language and the unfamiliar metric system.

Once they found the station, they were told that no, they couldn't ship their luggage into Italy, so it ended up going to Zurich, Switzerland. Vinzant said that by the time they finally reached their hostel, they were ready to die.

That was the first day. Vinzant, a junior environmental design major, was one of many students in Texas A&M's architecture program who hopped over the Atlantic last fall on one of the journeys sponsored by the Study Abroad program.

The destination was Santa Chiara, Italy, in Castiglion Fiorentino, which is somewhere in the middle of the country. Vinzant said that even though much of the trip was a test, it was still a blast. In between classes, she traveled all over Italy and Europe, visiting Germany, Sicily, the volcanic islands of Stromboli — "That was a lot of fun, we climbed an active volcano, and watched it erupt at night" — and the city of Prague, just to name a few.

Vinzant said all the new sights and sounds, it made a challenge for the students to keep their minds on their studies. "A lot of people come here with the idea, 'Oh, I'm going to see Europe!' but they do have to study," Vinzant said. "You just have to

realize that there's lots of opportunity to see things and learn things, study as you go."

This is the focus of the Study Abroad Program. As the mission statement reads, "The mission ... is to provide students in all fields of study at all levels a wide range of education experiences abroad."

Mona Rizk-Finne, the director of Study Abroad, wanted to dispel what she called one of the biggest myths about the program — that it is only for wealthy students.

"That's not the case," Rizk-Finne said. "We are very fortunate at Texas A&M, because we have a number of financial aid opportunities and scholarships to help needy students study abroad."

One of these financial aid sources is the \$1 International Student Services fee that A&M students pay each semester.

She said this and other scholarships are need-based, such as the Former Student Study Abroad Scholarship, and the Barnes & Noble's scholarship.

Rizk-Finne said that even though most of the programs during the summer are full with names spilling onto waiting lists, there are still openings in the Spring of '96 Italy program. She said this program would help meet the needs of international studies majors and business majors with an international emphasis.

"At a time when we are living in a global village with economic interdependence, it's incumbent on our graduates to be thinking about including a Study Abroad during their tenure at A&M," Rizk-Finne said.

Many departments work with the study abroad office to allow students this opportunity. These departments are as varied as architecture, English, and wildlife and fisheries.

An ongoing program sends groups of students to the island of Dominica, not to be confused with the Dominican Republic. The program is a course in field biology of the tropics.

On the island, which is covered with rain forest, a field research

center is operated by a consortium of universities of which Texas A&M is a member.

Dr. Jim Wooley, a professor of Entomology who will be going to Dominica on this summer's trip, said the program gives students an opportunity to conduct experiments in a natural setting.

"Some people learn better with a hands-on type program," he said.

David Laurencio, a senior zoology major who went to the Caribbean island last year, said the trip was a lot of work, but the students had time for fun as well.

In addition to countless hours conducting research on programs that they devised in the island's rain forest, the students got to roam about the island.

"The people were open. They would talk to you forever," Laurencio said.

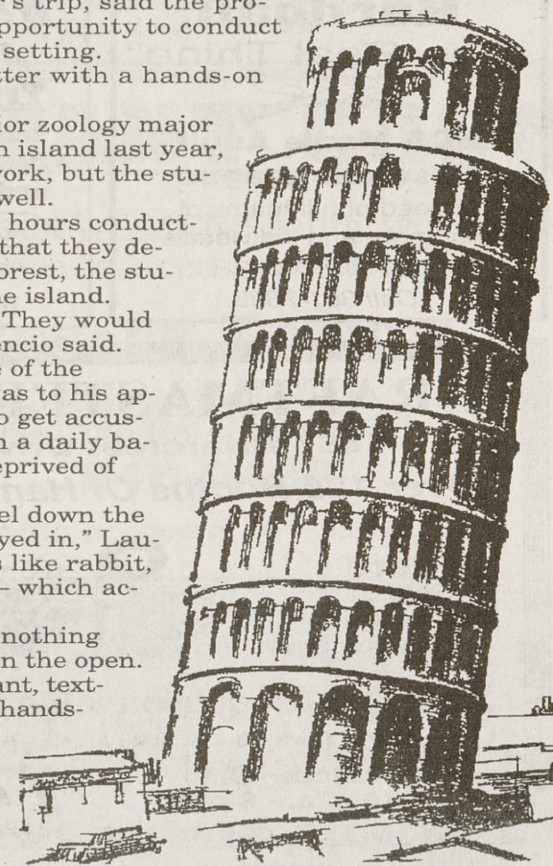
Laurencio said that one of the changes he had to make was to his appetite. The students had to get accustomed to roots and soup on a daily basis, but were not totally deprived of meat.

"We ate dinner in a hotel down the hill from the house we stayed in," Laurencio said. We ate things like rabbit, beef, some dolphin meat — which actually wasn't too bad."

Laurencio said there is nothing like actually working out in the open.

"You can read all you want, textbooks, littledoing the work hands-documentaries," he said. "But it's nothing like actually going out in the forest, getting rained on. It's neat to actually be out, doing the work hands-on."

# STUDY ABROAD



## Freudian Slip prepares to give last dose of improvisational comedy Saturday

By Keryl Cryer  
THE BATTALION

If you think improvisational comedy is only for those late-night study breaks when the remote just happens to land on A&E, you haven't seen A&M's own brand of improv.

Freudian Slip will give their last performances of the semester in Rudder Forum Saturday, May 6 at 7 and 10 p.m.

Diana Hodges, who is in charge of publicity and promotion for Freudian Slip, said the 16-member group has become increasingly more popular on campus with the rising popularity of stage comedy.

"As for improv comedy in this area, this is the only opportunity there is and I just feel that everybody should take advantage of it," she said. "We've worked really hard."

The idea for the improvisational show came from the theater department when students used to experiment with the comedy style just for fun.

"It started in 1989, but at that time, it was pretty much done informally after Aggie Players meetings," Hodges said.

During the fall of 1993, the troupe began to do free shows in front of small audiences in Rumours in the MSC as they learned the basics of producing an improv show. They also donned the title A&M Improvisational Comedy Troupe at that time.

Freudian Slip eventually outgrew the small space in Rumours and moved their performances to the 300-seat Rudder Forum and changed their name in fall of 1994.

The troupe's following has grown to the point where they've started selling tickets an hour before each show to maintain crowd control and still turn over 100 people away from each show.

Damaso Rodriguez, the director of Freudian Slip and one of the performers, said many people don't mind standing for the entire two-hour show.

"That's why we're trying for our final shows of the year, we're going to do two performances to

accommodate more people," Rodriguez said.

But the two shows will not be carbon copies of each other. Since there are no set lines or script, the scenes change every time.

The troupe performs more than 40 types of skits and routines, making a repeat highly unlikely.

"Every improv show is different just because it relies on audience participation and we have different audiences or different themes," Hodges said.

The audiences often suggest the themes or settings for the sketches performed during a show. Popular topics include settings on-campus, such as at Sbsa Dining Hall, and themes related to current news events, especially the most sensationalized.

"We went through a lot of Tonya Harding themes, not that we planned it that way," Hodges said. "That's just how it happened."

The only sketch guaranteed to repeat every show is the closing skit. The performers

always take a popular movie the audience is familiar with and condense the entire movie into a five-minute synopsis, Rodriguez said.

The troupe doesn't just use the audience to give them basic suggestions for their skits, though. They occasionally bring them on stage.

Even with the audience's help and support, Rodriguez said, improvisational comedy is still very difficult to do.

"If you ask most actors, this is probably the hardest thing," Rodriguez said. "It's a lot of pressure. It's kind of like psychological bungee jumping because you're on stage and the odds are against you. The worse that can happen out there is you go and you run out of something to say. That's happened a couple of times. That happens to everyone."

These incidents won't keep Freudian Slip's 10 main performers and 4 newer members who are currently training down, though. Several members are already writing comedy on the side and hope to continue as comedians in the future. Of course, one of their biggest projects is to keep Freudian Slip going after they leave.

"As of May of '96, all of the original troupe members will be wiped out, except for one," Rodriguez said.

"We had an open audition this spring and we'll have another open audition this fall. We're trying to see if we can make this something that lasts after the founding members are gone."

As well as continuing their tradition with new members, Freudian Slip also plans to expand into other spheres and to reach new audiences.

"This summer, we're trying to perform and get some line ups off campus, like at 3rd Floor Cantina or something like that," Hodges said. "Also we're probably going to perform at every session of Fish Camp."



Jason Weiborn/Special to The Battalion

Freudian Slip will give their last performances of the semester Saturday.

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