

World Wide Traditions

International students get their first taste of Aggie Spirit at I-Camp

By JAMES FRANCIS
THE BATTALION

Texas A&M University is called a world class university, thanks to the help of students who hail from around the world. As these new students enter the University system, many will look to Fish Camp and T-Camp to acquaint them with life at A&M.

But for those starting an academic chapter in the United States, International Camp (I-Camp) offers a specialized helping hand to international students.

Rajesh Kumar, president of the International Students association and a business administration graduate student, said I-Camp reaches many students. "I'm happy to see so many people getting involved," he said. "I gets them excited about the University."

Kumar said that this year, I-Camp accommodations for 150 students had to be stretched for 175 because more people attended than were expected.

Kumar said he hopes to avoid overcrowding in the future by extending the duration of the one-day camp.

"It's basically a question of funds, and one day is a bit short," he said. "We'll try to make it a two-day event later on."

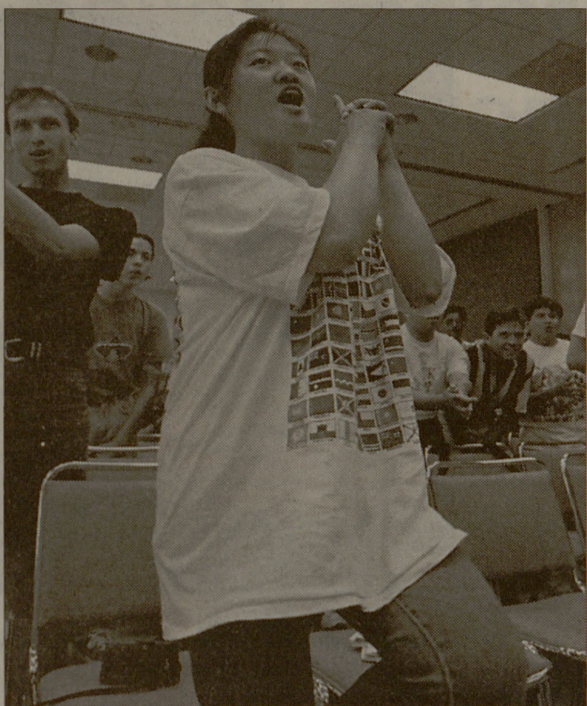
Aside from improvements for the annual camp, the main focus of I-Camp is to ease international students into college life at Texas A&M.

Kumar said I-Camp is meant to encourage international students in school, improve interpersonal skills and teach them about traditions.

"I-Camp is like an initiation rite to Aggieland," he said. "It gives (the students) an idea of what they can do outside of academics."

I-Camp allows international students to learn unique characteristics about A&M and ways to get involved in campus life.

"International students are totally new and lost when they get over here," Kumar said. "For most of



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Fen-Ju Tsai, vice president of the International Student's Association, whoops after yell practice at I-Camp, which took place on Aug. 24.

born in South Arabia.

Shah said coming to Texas gave him time to observe cultural differences between here and his former homes.

"It takes a little getting used to — seeing trucks instead of cars," he said.

Shah said I-Camp introduced him to traditions, including the profound atmosphere surrounding Muster.

"[Muster is] such an idea," he said, "something so simple, yet so meaningful."

Shah said the solemn occasion of remembering colleagues and friends is an overwhelming event.

I-Camp introduces traditions, provides performances, showcases guest speakers and gives the advantage of making new friends.

"I met both my roommates through I-Camp," Shah said.

Anna Becker, a freshman business administration major, said she made new friends and discovered differences in cultural attitudes at the camp.

Becker said College Station is larger than her hometown located in the south of Sweden.

"The people here are lovely and so friendly," she said.

Becker said the trademark Texas climate also grabbed her attention.

"The weather is hotter and more humid here," she said.

Becker said she learned a lot about Texas culture, Aggie songs and A&M traditions.

"I felt it was great, because I met a lot of people from different countries," she said.

From India to Taiwan, individual international students have their own favorite I-Camp memories.

Julio Fajardo, a transfer student from California and industrial engineering major, is originally from Nicaragua.

He said he was introduced to the traditional howdy and gig'em calls at I-Camp and learned a great deal about the Memorial Student Center.

Fajardo said his most memorable event was a speech he heard during camp.

"(The guest speaker) talked all about being an Aggie, and the connections that we have to make in life," Fajardo said.

Fajardo said he recommends I-Camp to international students.

"I give it an eight or nine out of 10," he said.



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Students from across the world learn how to "hump it" during I-Camp.

then, football is soccer."

Kumar said he helps with the camp and enjoys the experience because he understands first-hand what it is like to be an international student at A&M.

"I've been here for just a year," he said. "This was my way of giving back to what I was given last year."

Kamran Shah, I-Camp director and junior computer engineering major, was commended for doing a great job by Kumar.

Shah, who has lived in six different countries on four continents including Europe, Asia and Africa, was

T-Camp

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out comfortable and are not stepping on the campus cold turkey."

Like Fish Camp, T-Camp features mixers, competitions and Discussion Groups (DGs) so students can get to know each other and make new friends.

Behind-the-scenes work at the camps is done by the "T-Team," a group of students who work on the activities, act as yell leaders and teach traditions.

Carabeth Johnston, T-camp director of staff and a senior education major, said the overall goals of T-Camp are basically the same as Fish Camp.

"Fish Camp training is proba-

bly more extensive because they have four times as many people as we do at T-Camp," Johnston said. "But we're both trying to motivate the students and get them involved."

Johnston began working with Howdy Camp Mash Crew, a group similar to T-Camp's T-Team, for two years before she began her work at T-Camp.

"Most people work their way up from T-Team to co-chair, then to director of staff," Johnston said. "I just applied last September because I really wanted to get involved on campus and chose to be a director so I could work with it on a different level."

Dunn said the number of peo-

ple attending T-Camp has grown over the past few years.

"Our first summer, we had about 60 people," Dunn said. "That number has risen to between 350 and 400 this summer."

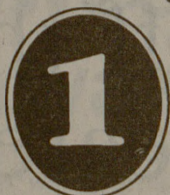
Dunn said the program has made some minor changes over the years.

"I've seen the program grow more than I've seen it change," Dunn said.

Torres said the feeling he gets at the end of a session makes the hard work worthwhile.

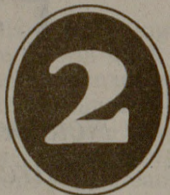
"Watching it come together at the end and not having to worry about how it's going to turn out anymore are the best things about working with T-Camp," Torres said. "It's great just watching the students enjoying themselves."

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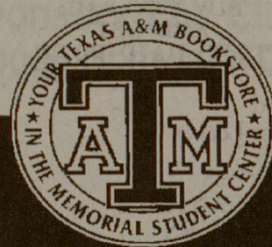
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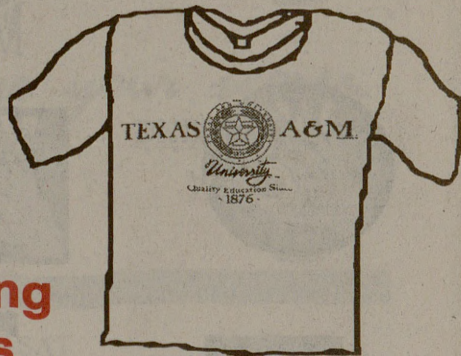
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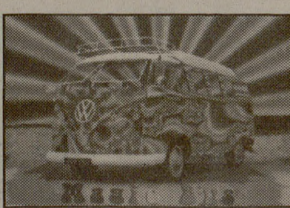
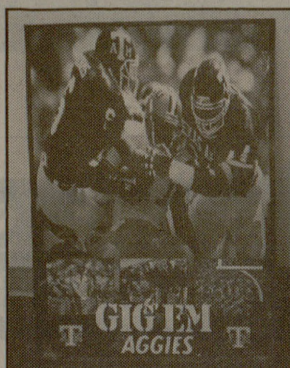
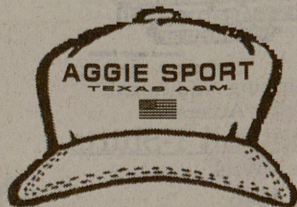
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