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THE BATTALION AGGIELIFE

Tuesday • April

Aggies' class project to give mercy in Asia



Derek Demers

By MICHAEL SCHAUB
THE BATTALION

The assignment: draft plans to convert a 600-foot ocean liner into a hospital that will provide indigent Asian people with free health care.

The time frame: five weeks.

It might not sound like an ordinary class assignment, but for senior environmental design majors Manon Sora Koestoer and Ryan Garcia, the conversion was just another final project.

"We'd work all day and all night," Garcia said, "and then maybe go play some pool."

"And then go back to work again," Koestoer said.

Koestoer, 23, and Garcia, 22, designed plans for the ocean liner *Asia Mercy* as the final project for their Architecture 485 class.

The plans for the liner were commissioned by Mercy Ships, a nonprofit organization based in Lindale, Texas.

"I was talking about Indonesia with Professor (George) Mann," Indonesia native Koestoer said. "I told him there were 3,000 inhabited islands there. [Mann] thought it would be a good idea to design a ship that could access all the islands to provide health care."

Koestoer and Garcia came across Mercy Ships' web site while surfing the Internet one day.

"We called them, and it turned out they had the same idea we

did," Garcia said.

Mercy Ships maintains liners that serve Africa, the Caribbean and South America. In about 20 years, the company treated more than 70,000 people and performed more than 4,500 operations, at no cost to patients.

Don Stephens, president and CEO of Mercy Ships, said Mann contacted him about Koestoer's suggested project two days after he decided to expand Mercy Ships to Asia.

"This project is one of the reasons I think students select Texas A&M University," Stephens said. "It will give A&M international status in the area of humanitarian assistance."

The students researched the project and drafted preliminary designs in four weeks, and drew the final design in 10 days.

"We started late and finished early," he said. "We had three weeks of nothing but research."

Neither of the students had designed a ship before, Koestoer said.

"You have certain restrictions," Garcia said. "You can't go outside the lines."

"We can't extend the area," Koestoer added. "It's fixed like that. We can't grow it; we can't shrink it."

The students were assisted by Mann, a professor of architecture, and Kaname Yanagisawa, a visiting scholar in architecture.

"These two students were determined to do a lot of work in a short period of time," Mann said. "This is extremely important for the students and the world they will serve."

Mann previously assisted students in the College of Architec

ture in 1995, when the signed plans to convert plane into a flying eye. The project was profiled in *Mechanics magazine*.

"[Mann] is awesome," said. "He supervised us ited amount. I think amazed we could get this out supervision."

Koestoer and Garcia their final plans to the Ships' office in Lindale. Ships plans to bring the Korea to present them a company that is sponsoring

The *Asia Mercy*, with of 800 passengers, will be craft in the Mercy Ships. The students have about their five-week Koestoer said.

"The most exciting this is going to be real," a one-in-a-million oppor

Garcia said he hopes Bryan's KBTX-TV, will find a job.

"I like the fact that good in my portfolio," "I liked working on it, good job."

Mann said perhaps exciting aspect of the project tangible effect it will humanitarian assistance.

"A lot of exciting things by accident," he said. "ways tend to be Thomases, but you've got right thing. And this was thing to do."

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