Aggies' class project to give mercy in Asi

Mercy
Aircraft
the la
hospit
at sea fee

Photo
Derek Demers, T

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 c
signed plans to convert a
plane into a flying eye
The project was profiled
lar Mechanics magazine.

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

Koestoer and Garci
their final plans to
Ships' office in Lindale
Ships plans to bring the
Korea to present them to
pany that is sponsoring
The *Asia Mercy*, with
of 800 passengers, will be
craft in the Mercy Ships

The students have
about their five-wee
Koestoer said.

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

Garcia said he hope
ject, which has been pr
Bryan's KBTX-TV, will h
find a job.

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

Mann said perhaps th
exciting aspect of the pro
tangible effect it will hav
manitarian assistance.

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