

World travel enhances A&M professor's life

BY MICHAEL SCHAUH
Staff writer

"You've heard confidence defined?" Dennis Fisher asks, as he rummages through his desk drawer for an elusive book. "It's the feeling you have before you understand the situation."

From the mountain valleys of Washington to the high deserts of Uzbekistan, the life of Fisher, a

professor of agricultural economics, has proved to be a long course in understanding the situation.

"I've always been interested in how things work, so economics is a fairly natural thing to me," Fisher said, after he recently returned from a three week trip to the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan.

The professor, who grew up in the small town of Mt. Vernon, Wash., got his initial experience in agricultural economics growing up on a farm in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains.

Fisher's father worked in construction, and passed his interest in machinery onto his son.

"By the time I was nine or 10, my dad put me on one of those D-8 Cat [bulldozers]," he said. "Even now, every time I see a piece of machinery around, I want to ride it."

After he graduated from high school, Fisher decided to pursue other interests.

"I come from a really strong Christian home," he said. "My parents were both Christians, and my mother was an extremely gifted Bible teacher."

He entered school at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

"It was a real experience," Fisher said. "I had never been outside of Washington, never lived in a city. My roommate was a farm boy from Kansas. He was absolutely no help to me, or I to him. We were just trying not to get killed, because we were fairly sure we would."

After the death of his grandmother, Fisher returned to Washington, where he eventually decided to pursue a degree in agricultural economics at Washington State University.

"I was one of those students who crammed their four-year degrees into seven years," he said. But after years of working and paying medical

ills incurred by a benign brain tumor, Fisher earned his bachelor's degree, and went on to pursue graduate work at Michigan State University.

This year, Fisher gained a rare opportunity to travel when he was asked by a former A&M student to be an economics consultant in Andijon, Uzbekistan.

"It's about as deeply buried in central Asia as you can get," Fisher said, gesturing toward a small map of the former Soviet Union.

The Uzbek government is trying to make the transition from Soviet communism to a free market economy.

"It's a very difficult move for (the Uzbeks)," Fisher said. "It's such a quantum leap. All of their production decisions were made in Moscow, and now they have to discover everything again." Fisher said he encountered only enthusiasm from the Uzbek citizens.

"I thought I'd run into any number of hard-line communists," he said. "But there was absolutely none of that. They were very kind."

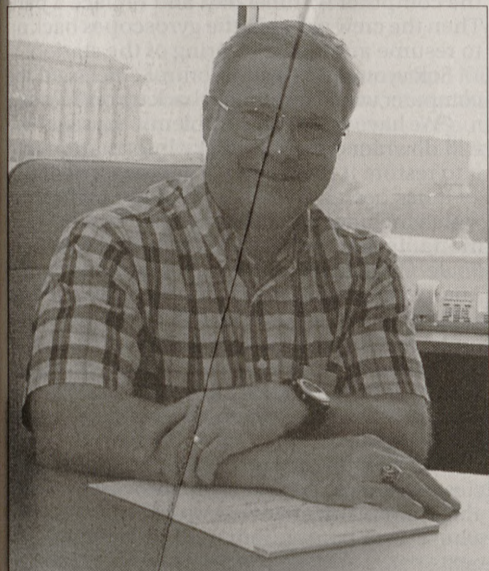
Fisher is now back in College Station, where he has lived with his family for 17 years.

"I love it here," he said. "The school spirit, the friendly people... This has been a good place for me professionally and for my family."

His two children both graduated from A&M. His son, Brian, a pastor at Grace Bible Church, still lives in College Station.

Fisher's only complaint: the hot Texas summers. "I'm used to being able to see snow-capped mountains in the distance," he said. "I won't ever get over that."

"But I enjoy it here. I just can't see ever leaving Texas."



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Dennis Fisher recently traveled to Uzbekistan.

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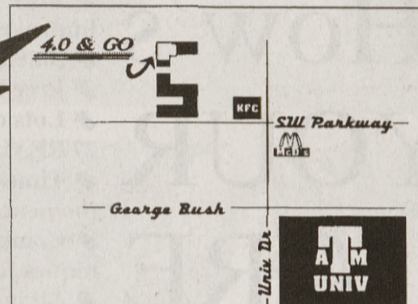
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