

BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

## A World of Knowledge

Students earn class credit, experience other cultures through Texas A&M Study abroad programs

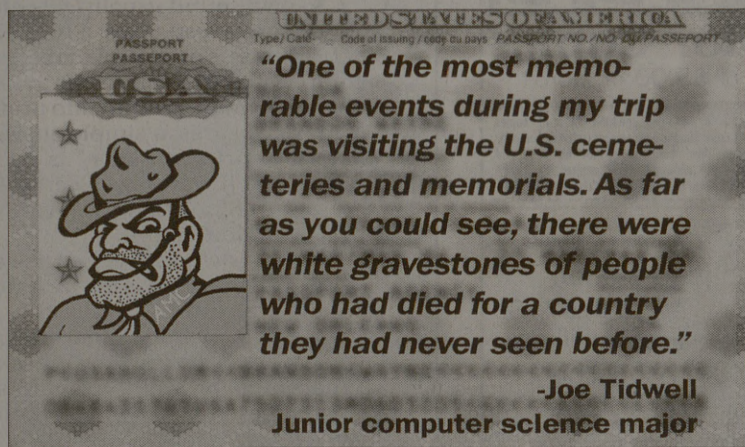
By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ  
The Battalion

This summer while most students were busy with jobs, taking classes and building up their résumés with internships, a group of Texas A&M students were experiencing life in other countries. Cathy Schutt, program coordinator for the study abroad programs at Texas A&M, said 249 students travelled to France, Italy, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Costa Rica this summer to gain an international experience. Schutt said study abroad programs provide students in all fields of study a wide range of educational experiences. Many students find that travelling abroad gives them a better understanding of the world. Joe Tidwell, a junior computer engineering major who studied abroad in Normandy, France this summer, said "France was a lot different than I expected," said Tidwell. "It wasn't as post industrialist as I thought it would be, but a lot more agrarian." Tidwell said the common stereotype of the

French being rude to Americans was unfounded. "I thought they were going to be rude to me, but they were mostly nice," Tidwell said. "Only in the big cities such as Paris was there more of a problem." By travelling to foreign countries, students get to see places they can only read about in books. Tidwell said a part of his trip was so inspirational, it made him consider joining the military. "One of the most memorable events during my trip was visiting the U.S. cemeteries and memorials," Tidwell said. "As far as you could see, there were white gravestones of people who had died for

a country they had never seen before." Tidwell even got a chance to learn more about Texas A&M history by travelling to France. During his trip he learned about General James Earl Rudder's participation in the D-Day attack during World War II. While travelling abroad, students are also able to take a few classes beneficial toward their majors. Jason Binford, a senior management major who traveled to Mexico City for the summer, was even able to complete an internship. "I made a lot of contacts during my internship with the American Chamber of Commerce in Mex-

ico City, which will be very beneficial to me when I graduate in December," Binford said. "I was able to learn more Spanish." Other than taking classes and working, students studying abroad are often able to take weekend vacations that are comparatively more expensive if taken from the U.S. "One weekend we travelled to Oaxaca, which turned out to be great because there was a festival going on we didn't even know about," Binford said. "We were able to stay in a hotel for really cheap, 50 pesos a person, which turns out to be about six bucks in American dollars." Studying abroad also can give students a chance to learn how people of another culture live by staying with host families. "My host family was the greatest," Binford said. "We lived above their restaurant and were cooked some of the best home-cooked Mexican meals." After living in Mexico City for 10 weeks however, Binford said his trip made him appreciate living in the United States. "Compared to a lot of the poverty I saw in Mexico City, I realized how good we have it here in the U.S.," Binford said.



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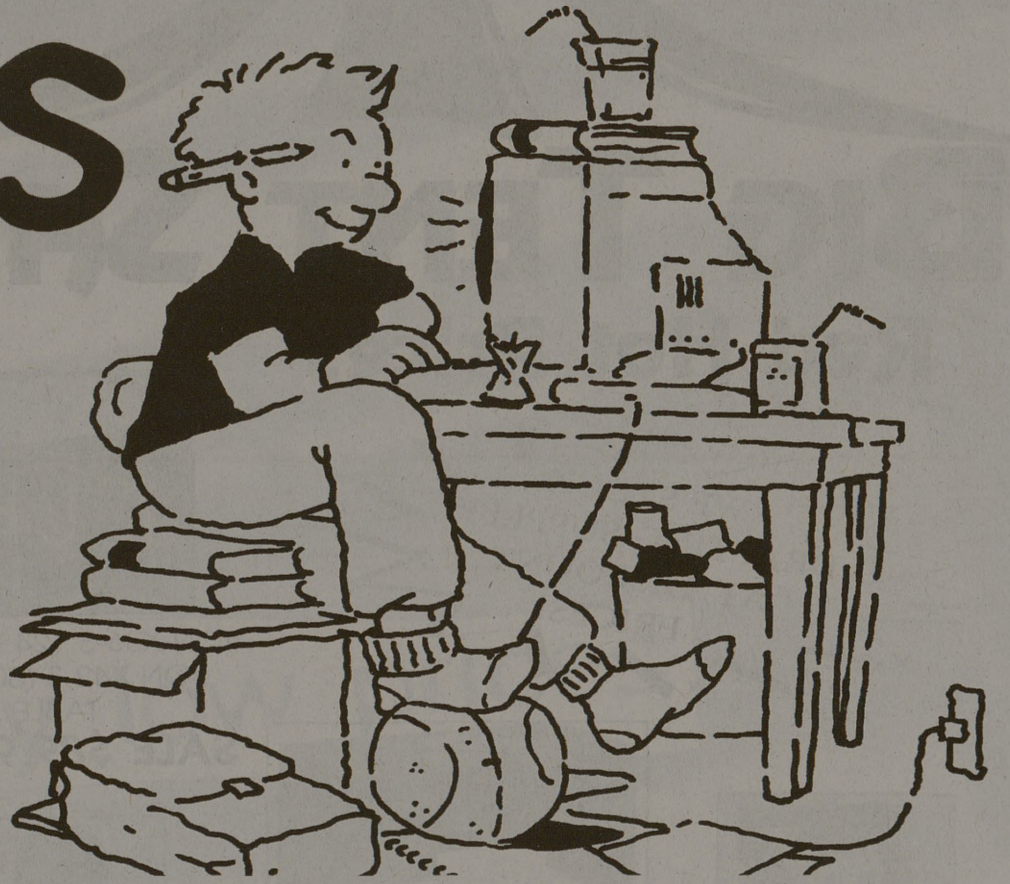
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