

International students find support

By BRYAN BLANTON
The Battalion

Texas A&M's history is grounded in a military tradition that drew Sung-Young Park to this University. "I have grown to enjoy the traditions here at A&M, especially the military traditions," said Park, a mechanical engineering graduate student from Korea. "In Korea everyone has to serve in the military, and I enjoy being at a university that has military history." With enrollment close to 44,000, A&M is an institution that attracts students from around the world. Park is one of more than 3,300 international students from 114 countries at A&M for Fall 2000 — 400 more international students than were enrolled one year ago. A&M recognizes the contributions of international students and has set up the Outstanding International Alumnus Award, one of the most prominent awards offered to international students. The award honors A&M graduates who were not U.S. citizens when they were students and achieved prominence in their

fields while remaining committed to A&M. The award, along with events such as International Week in March, helps international students feel welcome in Aggieland and educates the rest of the student body about the cultures represented at A&M. International Week, hosted by the International Students Association (ISA), is a week-long celebration of cultures with displays, cuisines, talent shows and fashion. When international students are accepted to A&M, International Student Services (ISS), an office of International Programs for Students, coordinates services and programs for the students and their dependents. "Our office is obligated to keep records on them," said Margit Garay, assistant director for International Programs for Students. "We copy all of their immigration papers and passports and put them on file." ISS also provides support concerning employment, personal matters, immigration, and family and financial matters.

The ISS is responsible for helping international students adjust to the United States and the University. The ISS also represents international students' interests on a variety of campus committees and through involvement in the community. International students have access to services such as immigration services and advising, which reviews applications, evaluates financial resources and represents the University on immigration-related matters. Personal advising is also available to international students. The advising sector of the ISS helps students adjust to a new home and country. It also advises students in such matters as dealing with academics, health and personal or family tragedies. Students are represented by a liaison for international students, who advocates their best interests. The liaison encourages students to take an active role in leadership opportunities and provides links with government, business and University officials. Community and campus outreach activities are provided by the ISS.

Nearly 80 student organizations on campus are devoted to international students. One of which, the ISA, provides International Camp — a version of Fish Camp for international students. Monica J. Pena, president of ISA and a senior industrial engineering major, said International Camp helps international students become familiar with A&M to make them feel more comfortable. "I attended the camp provided by the ISA, and it helped tremendously," said Remi Salam, an industrial engineering graduate student from India. "The ISA helped me personally, not only learn about the cultures of Texas A&M, but it made me feel as if I fit in a little more here at the University," Salam said. "We want to help students learn about the Texas and the United States cultures," Pena said. "Along with the many programs we provide, our main mission is to promote cultural awareness throughout the community and let all international students learn from each other."

REACTION

Continued from Page 1
meaning of Bonfire or the unity of the Aggie family. "All of my friends and loved ones came to me as if I had experienced a loss in my own family," Krause said. Hornburg said he had a similar experience. "People who weren't Aggies that didn't even know me came to offer their support to me," Hornburg said.

"They all understood how it was such a terrible thing that affected [all Aggies]," When Muster came in April, it was a profound experience for many. "I made it my ultimate goal and duty as an Aggie to attend Muster this year," Krause said. "I asked to answer 'here' for anyone who was not already represented by family or friends at the Muster. Much to my surprise, they handed me Timothy Kerlee Jr.'s candle. I

couldn't believe my eyes. It moved me so much I had to sit down and compose myself. I softly answered 'here' for Tim. It was the proudest moment of my life, surpassing even my own graduation from Texas A&M." Across the board, most Aggies feel the Bonfire collapse has brought the bonds of the Aggie community closer together because of the outpouring of emotion has been felt so strongly among Aggies everywhere.

"It has obviously devastated the Aggie family, but it has also brought the Aggie family much closer," Krause said. "The unity and strength of Aggies everywhere has grown tenfold." For many, the pain will continue for years to come. Debra Beckmann of Waco, whose daughter Kara was a friend of Bonfire victim Jamie Hand, has sympathy for the families who lost sons and daughters. "Our lives have been

changed because the innocence of college life is gone," Beckmann said. "We have since become acquainted with Jamie's parents and this has helped Kara, but also brought home the fact that these wonderful parents are living without their daughter, and if her pain is bad, think of theirs." "Throughout this horrendous ordeal, it was re-emphasized to us just how special Texas A&M is," Billimek said.

BRISON

Continued from Page 1
The committee worked with Dr. Sylvia Grider, an associate professor of anthropology, who wrote the message that will appear on a plaque to be put in the park. The 12 poles are in place. A cast aluminum plaque will be placed at the base of each pole, listing the victim's name, hometown and class. A likeness of Grider's plaque will be revealed at the ceremony because the original is not finished. The ceremony will be led by Royce Hickman, president-CEO of the Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce and former president of the Association of Former Students. Dennis Maloney, a

College Station councilman, will present the city's memorial to the families of the 12 victims. Timothy Kerlee Sr., father of Timothy Kerlee Jr., who died in the Bonfire collapse, will unveil the memorial. Public parking is available at Olson Field with shuttle bus service to the ceremony. Funding for the light poles came from the Hotel/Motel Fund, which is local revenue from taxes on hotel and motel rooms. In case of rain, the dedication will be moved to Rudder Auditorium. The College Station Historic Preservation Committee aids in the collection and preservation of history related to the city of College Station and promotes knowledge of the city's history to the residents.

CEREMONY

Continued from Page 1
and Memorial Student Center will begin distributing the candles at midnight. The remembrance will be held regardless of weather, and Houser said though she is optimistic about the event, she knows that memories will flood back to the student body. She said she hopes the bickering about Bonfire can be set aside so the campus can be unified in paying respect to the victims of the collapse. "Tonight is going to be focusing not on the future of Bonfire, not the issues surrounding Bonfire or the controversy of Bonfire," she said. "It is going to be focused on the horrible, in-

credible tragedy that happened last year and the awesome display of the Aggie spirit that came out of that." "Tonight is going to be focusing not on the future of Bonfire, not the issues surrounding Bonfire or the controversy of Bonfire." — Schuyler Houser, Traditions Council Chairwoman
Houser said the Univer-

sity cannot bypass the first-year anniversary without acknowledging the memory of the collapse. Houser said no Aggie is more valuable than another, but she believes students have a special tie to Bonfire because the Aggies died creating a monument to traditions, which is why students become so emotional about the Bonfire collapse. "Many people identified with the Bonfire tradition, and therefore felt themselves identifying with those people," she said. "Aggies have a very strong emotional attachment and sense of pride in this tradition. The most important thing to remember is that you are part of a family and part of a team. This is something we won't forget."

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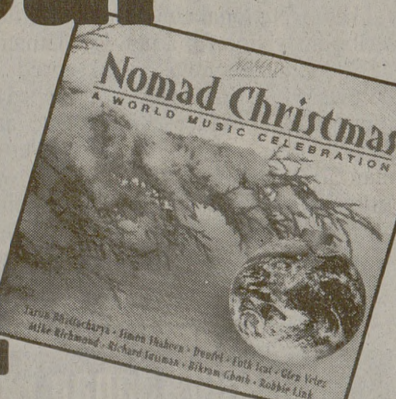
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Commemorates those who lost their lives and were injured in the Texas A&M Bonfire collapse on November 18, 1999.



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2300 Welsh Ave., College Station