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THE BATTALION

Page 3A • Thursday, October 2, 2003

Around the world

A&M senior Mary Beth Decker's takes on MTV's "Road Rules: South Pacific"

By Lauren Smith
THE BATTALION

When she arrived at Shadow Canyon for MTV's "Road Rules/Real World" auditions, Mary Beth Decker was number 700 in line, so she did what any bartender in a hurry would do: she walked right up to the front of the two hour line, telling everyone who was waiting that she worked at Shadow Canyon bar.

Whoever said cheaters never win was mistaken, because of the 25,000 coeds who flooded auditions across the country for MTV's Real World/Road Rules auditions, Decker was selected. After an intense interview process, Decker, a senior agricultural journalism major, went from bartending at The Tap in College Station to sitting on a flight headed for "Road Rules: South Pacific."

When Decker decided to attend the RR/RW auditions at Shadow Canyon, she saw the show as "an excuse to take a break from reality," no pun intended.

"I wanted to get away," Decker said. "Life is short, and I am all about the now since I am pretty spontaneous. I am always looking to do something different because I get bored really easily."

The first stage of the interview process is all luck because you just sit at a round table giving your opinion on everything from gun control to interracial relationships, Decker said.

"It worked really well for me because I have something to say about everything," she said.

Decker was the single person from her group of 20 at the round table who was asked to stay and fill out an eight-page application that took four-and-a-half hours to complete.

"It was open bar, so that was nice," Decker said. "I guess they do that so you will be open and really honest on the application."

After receiving a call from MTV that same night, she began a series of videotaped interviews.

"They would call me at night and want a video tape the next day," Decker said. "I am pretty sure that I spent \$250 on making tapes and missed two tests throughout the process."

Two short weeks and one phone call later, it became clear that she would not be registering for next semester courses because she was headed for the South Pacific to meet her fellow cast members.

"You sign a contract saying you will do either Road Rules or Real World and when I got called, I thought I was going to Paris for Real World," Decker said. "I remember getting really scared about the idea of Road Rules because I knew I would be faced with my biggest fears."



JOHN LIVAS • THE BATTALION

Mary Beth Decker, a senior agricultural journalism major and cast member of "Road Rules: South Pacific," hangs out at The Tap, where she bartends at night.

The six cast members of "Road Rules" live in a Winnebago with three cameramen, one sound technician and one microphone technician who are constantly present for the 10 weeks the show filmed in Fiji, New Zealand and Australia.

"At first, the cameras were so overwhelming because they are inches from your face all of the time," Decker said. "You get used to them by the third day, and I cannot imagine living being worried about them because that would be miserable."

Every cast member had to have his microphones on at all times, from the time the first person woke up until the last went to bed.

"If you are in the middle of a conversation and a battery goes dead, the mic guy would come up behind you, lift your shirt up and put a new battery in," Decker said. "You felt almost like a human robot."

One of the more awkward situations Decker encountered in front of the cameras was being out at a club and having cameras on her. The cast,

however, did not get to reap any special benefits from its MTV affiliation.

"When you are in Fiji, you cannot say 'we are with MTV — hook it up' because they do not know what it is," Decker said.

There was not much frivolous spending for the cast because they were on a budget of 15 American dollars per day, although they would occasionally trade a meal for a night of drinking on the town. Keeping in touch with loved ones was also virtually impossible because they each had only 10 minutes of cell phone time per week.

Many speculate on whether the drama on reality television shows is real or just crafted through editing and encouragement by producers. This reality star said all the drama on this past season's "Road Rules" was natural and completely self-created.

See Decker on page 4A

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