

## **International Cowboys and Cowgirls**

October 23, 2008

The Aggie bus was filled with 30 students representing various countries. Where were they going on a beautiful Sunday Texas afternoon, some wearing cowboy hats and plaid shirts? Dr. Nora JanJan of the Texas A&M International Board hosted 160 international students at her home in Navasota as a way to introduce Texas history, culture, and traditions.

"We share our home, food, future for our children, hospitality, international experiences, and a bond of being one people of the world", said Dr. JanJan. "Hospitality has been extended to me during my international travels, a home away from home, and this event reaffirms the same values we share. It is wonderful to get so much back from what you give", said Dr. JanJan.

Students were in awe at the beautiful Texas landscape and weather, green pastures and hills, a tranquil setting to meet other international students, Texas A&M faculty, and staff.

Krishna Patwari of India, a first year Industrial and Systems Engineering masters, researched national rankings and blogs, and chose Texas A&M for its top engineering program.

"I knew about the hot weather in Texas and strong cowboys from Clint Eastwood films I watched in India," Patwari said. "I like the tradition of being an Aggie, and the life balance of studies and student activities."

The students laughed at dogs swimming in the pond, took photos and joked of friends riding horses for the first time, relaxed on the dock, fished in the pond, and shared stories about their journey and transition to the United States.

Yi-Chun Chen of Taiwan, a second year student earning a Masters in Educational Technology shared her thoughts of Aggieland before she arrived.

"My impression was that if you did not have a car, you were in trouble and it would be very hot weather," Yi-Chun said. "I did not know students wear maroon shirts everyday, and that they love football so much. The transportation service and REC center are great, Aggie Nights are fun, and the College Station drivers are good and respect pedestrians. In Taiwan, cars are first."

The Chuck Wagon cowboys chef showed students how to make homemade biscuits, smoked barbeque, coffee on a fire, baked peach cobbler from a large pot, and shared the history of how the Texas cowboy used the land to live.

Gwendoline Nyambi of Cameroon, a first year PhD. student in Agricultural Education said she learned about the valuable culture of Texas cowboys, and that they still value traditions in modern times.

"My favorite part of Texas A&M is the supportive faculty," Nyambi said. "They are smart and give encouragement. The Aggie culture is helpful, warm, respectful, and you can ask anything from anyone."

Yu Hong Ping of Beijing, China, an M.B.A. student from Peking University, reflected on the day at the ranch and his Texas experience so far.

"Here it is peaceful and quiet, and in College Station, I have access to the world through the internet and can talk with my family in Beijing," Ping said. "Knowledge of a place is different from experiencing the place; it is more powerful to live the culture instead of just reading about the culture."

## *Outreach*

Yu Hong Ping likes the MSC living room, the Evans Library reminds him of his life in China, and he enjoys the café in the Biomedical Library.

To show their appreciation, students presented JanJan with a grand map of the world, each signing their name and writing thank you over their country. JanJan said she would frame the map and hang it in her home to remember the occasion and everyone she met and was honored. 160 students, faculty, and staff attended the barbeque.

"Texas A&M is a reflection of the world, and college is here to prepare you for the workplace," JanJan said. "Students will be going all over the world for their jobs, and even if they do not leave Texas, they will be working with international colleagues.. So ask your fellow international classmates about their country, issues, or relations, invite them to dinner or your student organization meetings. Texas A&M is a welcoming place to learn; in fact that is what AGGIES stands for, **A**ggies **G**aining & **G**iving **I**nternational **E**xperience & **S**ervice.

If you would like to host an international student for dinner in your home, please contact the International Student Services Office at (979) 845-1824.

**Written by Angelina Fonseca, '06 Marketing, Study Abroad Programs Office**