

Mini-Baja Competition Scheduled for May

Japanese Graduate Student Gives Perspective on American Life

By John Yagecic

Imagine being able to create and run a multi-terrain vehicle. Imagine bringing your ideas from the drafting table to physical reality. Imagine testing, improving, and finally, taking your vehicle to the field of competition to see just how good it is.

Students who participate in the Mini-Baja competition, sponsored by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), don't have to imagine.

Every spring, the SAE and Briggs and Stratton Corporation bring together 30 to 40 colleges and universities to participate in the Mini-Baja East competition.

This year's Eastern region competition will be held on May 11, 12, and 13 at West Virginia State University in Morgantown, West Virginia.

Students who have participated in the past know that this is an exciting and enjoyable event.

"The competition was a blast. I loved it," said Penn State Harrisburg graduate Ed Hein of his participation in the 1987 run.

"It's a great experience," said Tim Wallis, who worked on last year's car and is currently working on this year's entry.

"It gives engineers a chance to get their hands dirty," Wallis said.

Participants design and build a car and then compete in such areas as acceleration, braking, maneuverability on land, maneuverability in water, hill-climbing, chain-pull tug-of-war, and top speed.

"The culmination of all this," said team adviser Terry Kelley, "is the two-hour endurance test on the third day."

In the endurance test, all the teams compete simultaneously on a two-mile track containing obstacles of every form and size, from hills and hair-pin turns to ponds and mud-holes. The car that accumulates the most laps at the end of two hours wins that event.

Cars are also judged on design, safety, cost, weight, and consumer appeal by professional engineers.

Despite all this excitement and practical experience, Penn State Harrisburg teams continue to be small.

"The problem we have is that the students who compete generally graduate shortly thereafter," said Professor William Aungst, chairperson of the Energy Technology and Mechanical Engineering Technology programs and Baja team adviser.

"They can't come back and relate to the students who are here what kind of experience they had," Aungst said.

"We would like to get the juniors involved so that next year we'll have some experienced competitors," he said.

Students who get involved in the competition won't just be playing in the mud, however. They are expected to design and build a quality vehicle.

"We've decided we are not going to compete unless we have a shot at the top 10," said Aungst.

Last year's team, for example, finished their car only a day before competition and had no time to test it.

Aungst and Kelley decided that rather than risk embarrassment or possible injury, it would be better not to compete.

"Testing is the most important aspect of preparing for these events," Kelley said.

After last year's competition, the team tested the vehicle they had built and found several defects.

"We know that this particular vehicle, the way it is designed now, can not be a top 10 car," said Kelley.

Will this year's team have a car ready in time?

"They're behind schedule right now," Kelley said.

With enough student support, however, the team could still produce a winning vehicle.

Although most of the participants are MET students, all students are invited to give their time and skill.

"The competition is great for everyone," Kelley said, "it not only tests engineering skills; it tests common sense."

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By Tammie Jordan

On Oct. 18, Atsushi Nomoto, an MBA student at Penn State Harrisburg, spoke to a small audience of students and faculty in the Black Cultural Arts Center.

Nomoto compared his perspective of Japanese life to American life based on his six months of experience in the United States.

He told the audience that American television does not properly address the current situations in Japan.

"I strongly feel that American students don't know much about the Japanese real situation," said Nomoto.

He depicted typical life and current issues in Japan through uses of Japanese video news clips.

He addressed the issue of Japan's increasing dissatisfaction with its economic situation. Nomoto reminded the audience that Japan, being merely the size of California, contains a population half the size of the United States.

Japan's population centralizes around its major cities which drastically increases property values.

Nomoto said that generally half of the businessman's salary is used toward rent.

"The Japanese house is a rabbit house or much smaller," said Nomoto, emphasizing the housing crisis.

The Japanese cherish the thought of being middle class.

"More than 75 percent of the Japanese people believe that they are middle class," said Nomoto.

He said this belief is inappropriate. In reality the Japanese middle class lags far behind its American counterpart.

The Japanese people tend to keep their living standards as low as possible, said Nomoto.

This practice is based on a Japanese philosophy called "wabi." "Wabi" is a Japanese way of life based on poverty

and simplicity.

Nomoto said his people suppress themselves everyday. They work toward personal satisfaction rather than material gratification.

He said the Japanese worker is loyal to one job while the American worker tends to jump from job to job, climbing the financial ladder.

Nomoto admits that Japan's young people are departing from the traditional "wabi" philosophy.

"The young people have been consuming more and more," said Nomoto. "They respect the European cars like a BMW, a Mercedes, or a Volvo. They are being westernized."

Nomoto cited various changing traditions as another disturbing issue facing the Japanese.

The elderly parents, once the responsibility of the eldest son, are now being cared for by the housewife. Changing culture has drawn the men into the business world.

In some instances, the aged are sent to institutions rather than being cared for by the family, said Nomoto.

Another tradition that is slowly changing is male superiority in Japanese culture.

Women are beginning to receive more opportunities, but Nomoto said it isn't easy for the woman to enter the business world.

In comparing his personal perspective to American lifestyles, Nomoto noted that Americans take a lot for granted.

He told his audience that, in Japan, he had to rent a parking space in order to park near his home. Now that he's in America, he enjoys the luxury of free parking.

Nomoto's presentation was well-received by an interested audience. A reception followed with a sampling of Japanese food specially prepared by Nomoto.

The next meeting of the Capital Times staff will be held Friday, Oct. 28 at 2 p.m. in W-337. If you cannot make this meeting, please let the editor know.

The Brass Comes to Campus

By Karen L. Peiffer

The Brass arrived on campus Oct. 12! The Trinity Brass Ensemble, affiliated with Trinity Lutheran Evangelical Church in Camp Hill, gave a reverberating concert in the Gallery Lounge.

The Ensemble performs for Trinity Lutheran Evangelical Church on special holidays such as Easter and Christmas and can make even the most sleepy member of the congregation wake up and take notice.

Members of the Ensemble say the group's music fills the church with a tingling excitement and provides that extra special touch to the worship

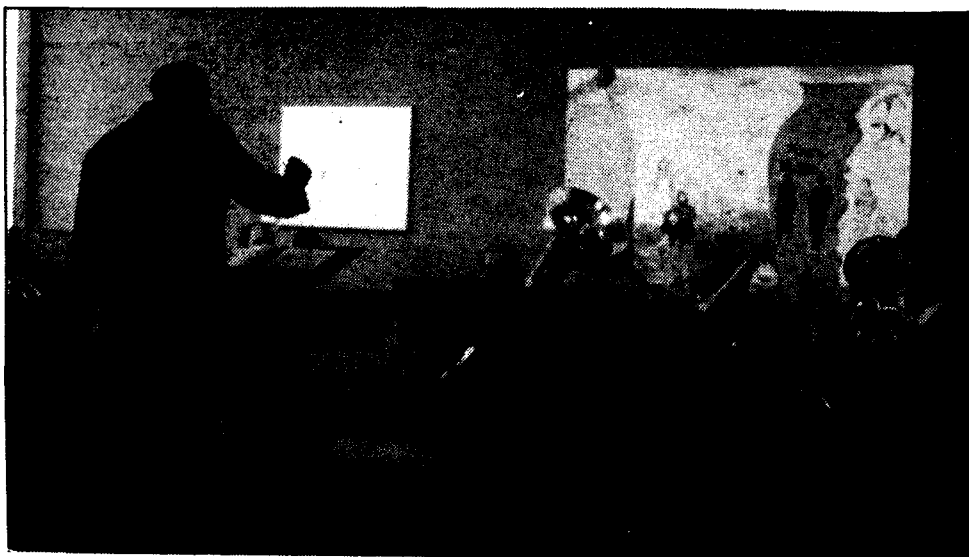
services.

On the afternoon of Oct. 12, the Ensemble performed a wide range of musical numbers from marches to sacred music and from classical to novelty pieces.

For the benefit of those in attendance, the group also performed the Penn State alma mater.

Under the direction of accomplished organist and director Robert W. Nelson, Ensemble members include: Richard Ammon on baritone; Kenneth Decker on trumpet; Vanessa Rickert on trumpet; David Schreffler on trumpet; Nathan Ward on trombone; Michael May on

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Trinity Brass Ensemble performs in the Gallery Lounge.

Photo by Karen Peiffer