

中秋節 八月十五日



Mike Snodderley/Index

Members of the Society for Sino-American Studies and other students play Mahjong at the Mid-Autumn Festival celebration at Thousand Hills State Park. The celebration included moon cakes and other Asian cuisine, storytelling, music and Chinese chess. Senior Chris White said moon gazing is one of the most important elements of the Chinese holiday. The weather Sunday, however, limited visibility of the sky.

Moon Festival promotes home and harvest

Yearly autumn festival celebrates family, fosters Sino-American values

Sara DeGonia
Assistant Features Editor

Americans stared fixedly at their televisions when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon and marked the surface with our nation's flag.

The Chinese were watching for something else, said Julie Minn, professor of language and literature, referring to a traditional Chinese tale.

Minn said the Chinese scanned the moon footage for a princess. According to Chinese folklore, the princess, a wood-cutter and a rabbit are believed to live in the shadows of the moon, Minn said.

"The top [shadow] is the palace for the princess, and the side [shadow] is the tree," she said. "So next time, watch the moon."

Minn shared the Chinese story Sunday with students under a picnic shelter in Thousand Hills State Park.

Senior Chris White said that Sunday marked the observation of the Mid-Autumn Festival, or Moon Festival,

the second-most important Chinese holiday of the year.

"They celebrate it on the year's fullest, brightest moon, which in Chinese cultures symbolizes togetherness, the family," White said.

Students celebrated the festival at Thousand Hills on the exact day of observance, the 15th day of the eighth lunar month by the traditional Chinese calendar, he said.

White said the holiday is celebrated in any location worldwide where Chinese culture holds sway, which is why it is important to recognize at Truman.

"I've been trying to work on bringing an authentic, East-Asian experience," he said. "... I also want to expose students like myself who don't come from an Asian background."

The observance included several components of a traditional celebration, such as Chinese food and decorative lanterns, White said.

"We've got moon cakes, which are what they celebrate the holiday with

in China," he said. "... The traditional moon cakes have an egg center."

In addition to the authentic cuisine, White and his co-organizers provided holiday-appropriate activities, including Chinese chess and Mahjong.

"Of course, one of the main objects of the holiday is to watch the moon and be in awe of its fullness," he said.

Sophomore Jeff Morgan attended the festival despite the looming storm that prevented the attendees from observing the moon.

"I wanted to see the park, and this is an interesting event," Morgan said. "... I'm well-rounded. I like to look at all cultures and see what they're like."

Morgan said he was slightly familiar with the Moon Festival and its related to the fall crop gathering.

"I'm pretty sure it's associated with what we call the harvest moon, which is the biggest moon of the year," Morgan said.

The Society for Sino-American Studies sponsored the festival. White is the vice president of the organization.

"I volunteered to be in charge of this festival," White said. "... I actually started working on it before the summer, but my daughter was born, and I got a little distracted. And I was in Japan all summer long."

White said SSAS is only in its third year of existence at Truman, so it is still a small organization. He said that since late fall 2004, under the presidency of senior Steven Chau, the group has set more ambitious goals.

"We really want to get more Truman students excited about East-Asian culture," White said.

Chau said he thinks experiencing Asian culture is a positive way to step outside of the academic realm at Truman and expand one's worldly knowledge.

He said he wants the Mid-Autumn Festival to be an annual event for SSAS.

"It is a good experience to try different cultures and to try to understand how other people think," he said.

SSAS meets at 7 p.m. Wednesdays in Baldwin Hall 346.

Chinese Symbols

The first three symbols represent the Chinese words for middle, autumn and festival. The smaller symbols below depict the date of the Mid-Autumn Festival, the 15th day of the eighth month of the traditional Chinese lunar calendar.

Source: Chris White



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