

Pinkie Downs Is Walking Aggie Tradition

By TOM HARGROVE
 "Lord, take care of the Aggies tonight and I'll take over again tomorrow." This has been and still is the prayer uttered nightly by Mr. A&M himself — P. L. "Pinkie" Downs.
 At an age when most men are

ready for wheel chairs and hospital beds, this enthusiastic 81-year-old Aggie continues to work faithfully at his job as Official University greeter, never failing to "say a few words about A&M" at any opportunity.

Pinkie Downs is legendary in Aggie lore for his numerous Aggieland antics. He wears nothing but maroon-and-white ties. His garden is well stocked with maroon-and-white radishes, gladiolas and other similarly colored plants. Carrots, onions — in fact, anything bearing the orange-and-white colors of Texas University are strictly forbidden to contaminate his sacred plot of maroon and white. He originated the well-known admonition, "Gig 'em Aggies!" at an A&M-TCU football game.

Once prior to the traditional A&M-TU Turkey Day football game, the annual Aggie bonfire was not quite finished. Pinkie had the cutters come to his yard just off the campus and cut two of his largest trees for extra bonfire fuel. "Everyone thought I was kinda crazy," says Pinkie, "but I knew what I was doing."

Pinkie was destined to be an Aggie. Born in Temple on Feb. 26, 1884, he was influenced at an early age by his namesake uncle, the late Col. P. L. Downs, who was a member of the first graduating class at A&M in 1879. His father, F. F. Downs, a graduate of Southwestern University in Georgetown, approved of his son's decision to come to Aggieland. "I'd wanted to come to A&M from the time I was 12, but they wouldn't take me 'til I was 18," complains Pinkie. He earned money to help pay college expenses by working as a carrier boy on a horseback paper route.

"I left Temple on Sept. 17, 1902, by rail, heading for A&M," recalls Pinkie. "It was only 80 miles, but it took me six hours

to reach College Station. My wife recently made the same trip by plane in about 30 minutes."

As a freshman, Pinkie was placed in Co. C Infantry. "There were practically no dropouts in those days," he recalls. "We started the year with 300 students, including 181 fish. At the end of the year we still had the same 300."

Naturally, fish Downs participated in the first Aggie Muster. "Back then a bugle blew 'Fall In' 15 minutes before classes and we marched to class," said Pinkie. "On April 21, 1903, the Cadet Corps got together and decided to not attend class since it was San Jacinto Day. So, when the bugle sounded, the cadets marched not to class, but to the home of the president, Dr. David F. Houston, and asked to be allowed to establish an annual Aggie Muster to pay tribute to those Texans who died at San Jacinto in 1836 and all Aggies who had passed away. Dr. Houston said if we'd just go back to class he'd turn school out at noon and we could have a muster every year from then on. One of the greatest Aggie traditions started that day," Pinkie recalls.

Pinkie, like many former cadets, also spent his share of Saturday afternoon marching the Bull Ring. "We'd carry that rifle an hour, rest 15 minutes, then start marching again," remembered Pinkie, with more than a faint trace of nostalgia. "Those were the days when A&M was all male and 100 per cent military. I believe those experiences as a cadet were responsible for making me what I am today," he says.

Pinkie was a member of the Class of '06. He holds a degree in marketing and finance, although he now claims he majored in plain ol' Aggie "Good Bull." While a student he was a mem-

ber of the Ross Volunteers and the Sul Ross Literary Society as well as president of the A&M Tennis Club.

After graduation, Pinkie returned to Temple and entered the banking business with his father and uncle. Twenty-eight years later he accepted a position as a National Bank Examiner for the Comptroller of the Currency. He served as a member of the A&M

Board of Directors from 1923-33.

In 1940 Pinkie moved back to the college he loved so well to work with the fiscal department. Since then he has served as Athletic Business Manager, Assistant to the Director of Publicity and Information, University Information Assistant and Official Greeter. He spent five years as a member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Form-

er Students.

Besides his vast amount of work for Aggies, Pinkie is also well-known for the good deeds he privately performs for others without financial remuneration or any expectations of it. He has a particular interest in the 1,200 patients at the Veterans Administration Center at Temple.

The door to the Downs home (See Pinkie, Page 7)



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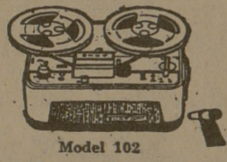
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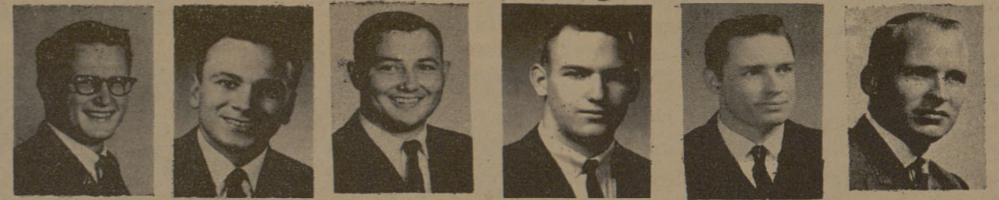
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