

A Christmas message for Aggies

Editor's note: This column first was published in The Battalion Dec. 18, 1969, by Bob Robinson, who now works for The Daily Eagle. We hope its message will be heeded.

By BOB ROBINSON

Snowflakes were starting to fill the twin beams of light that pierced the darkness ahead. The forecast on the radio had been correct. It had said flurries of snow mixed with rain, possibly turning to ice.

Bill slowed down slightly and switched on his interior light so he could see the time. He turned the light off.

3 a.m. 50 miles to go. The neon lights of the all-night cafe flashed by him, gone almost before they were noticed. Bill slowed down and then, thinking better of it, speeded up again. He was tired and needed some coffee, but the snow was getting worse and he wanted to get home before it was too bad to drive in.

Only 30 miles to go. Bill swerved his car to the right, barely missing the large headlights that just passed him on the left.

He had been drowsing. He knew he should pull off to the side road and sleep, but . . . Only 20 miles to go.

It is Jan. 18, 1971. At 10:15 p.m. the hall lights of the dormitories on the Texas A&M campus were switched on and off several times, and then left off. Several thousand students began quietly to leave their rooms and walk toward the Academic Building. . .

Jim has just dropped off one of his riders in Texarkana. Spirits were high as the other three lived in western Tennessee and they knew their trip home for the holidays was almost over.

Spirits were also high because all three had accepted an offer of a drink at the one Aggie's home before continuing the trip. The one drink turned into two, and then three.

Jim had assured the Aggie's parents that the drinks hadn't affected him and that he would pull off to the side of the road if he got tired.

. . . the organ music from the Memorial Student

Center settled heavily on the campus, which was growing darker as, one by one, the various buildings went black. The students gathered in ones, twos, and threes around the statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross. Not a word was spoken . . .

A car carrying students to west Texas for the holidays was speeding along Highway 21. It had been raining and the road was slick, but at least visibility, which had been hampered by the rain, was good again.

The road at that time of day wasn't very heavily traveled, so all three looked forward to being able to make good time.

One of the students was telling the other two about the engagement ring he had bought and was going to give his girl for Christmas.

Another, the one in back, had just told his buddies about the coed he'd just met just before the holidays. He was looking forward to seeing his parents again, but for once, he wouldn't gripe too much about the holidays being over.

The car traveled swiftly around a curve and almost immediately came upon a tractor being followed slowly by another car waiting to pass.

The driver was going too fast to slow down, so he decided to go around both vehicles. It wasn't until he got in the other lane that he saw the pick-up truck bearing down on him.

Only the student in the back seat was wearing his seat belt.

. . . the music stopped and for several seconds, not a sound could be heard except for the rustle of a breeze through the branches of the trees surrounding Sully. Then, almost as if it was imagined, the slow, funeral cadence of the Ross Volunteers became audible, then louder, as it came closer . . .

In 1969, we killed over 55,000 people on the nation's highways. In Texas alone, a record number of 3,481 people died. 216,972 were injured.

Col. Wilson E. Speir, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, estimates that 87 people in Texas alone will not live to see the end of the holiday season.

In the last 15 years, seven Aggies died over the holidays as a result of a traffic accident.

Every time someone gets behind the wheel of a car, three things are required: perception, decision, and performance. If the time needed for, or the correctness of, any of these actions are impaired, the possibilities of an accident are magnified.

. . . precision movement followed sharp, but softly spoken commands. The order, "fire," was heard and seven shots pierced the black sky in unison and echoed off the surrounding buildings. Twice more the command was given and twice more volleys of seven rang out . . .

Sgt. Paul Allen of the Department of Public Safety headquarters in Bryan had this to say:

"Most of the time students are in a hurry to get home for the holidays and will take unnecessary chances. The vehicles are heavily loaded and carry a lot of weight that they (the students) are not used to driving with. The whole center of gravity of the car is changed. The braking system is not as effective.

"I suggest they take these factors into consideration and drive accordingly."

. . . a deafening stillness hung in the air several seconds, then the slow, mournful sound of four silver trumpets played Taps. Three times Taps was sounded; first north, then south, and finally, west . . .

Eighty-seven are expected to die between the start of the Christmas holidays and the end of the New Year holiday. Only the persons driving can do anything about it . . .

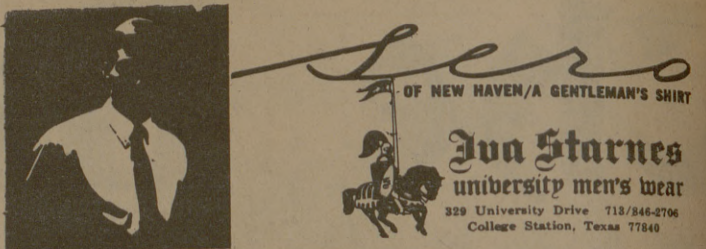
"We urge each individual driver to accept the challenge of proving our estimates are too high. Many holiday accidents can be prevented if Texans will drive safely and realize that no one is immune to a traffic crash," said Speir.

. . . Silence again reigned. Silver Taps was over, though not the feeling of sadness in each Aggie's heart as he walked quietly back to his dormitory. There was something no longer quite right about the last couple weeks, the Christmas season, the season of joy and happiness. An Aggie was gone . . .

The house was dark. The Christmas tree stood dark and forgotten in the living room. Friends and sympathizers had left long ago.

A mother was weeping silently. A sad, quiet father was doing his best to console her.

Neither of them could understand why their son hadn't been a little more careful, taken a little more time on the trip home.



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Marine reserve officers group formed here

A chapter of the Marine Corps Reserve Officers Association, the third for Texas, has been formed in Bryan-College Station.

The local chapter has been named in honor of the late Maj.

Gen. Bruno A. Hochmuth, 1935 Texas A&M graduate who was killed in a 1967 Vietnam helicopter crash while commanding the 3rd Marine Division.

Texas A&M President Dr.

Jack K. Williams, who served as a captain in the Marine Corps during World War II, was elected honorary president of the local MCROA chapter.

Lane Stephenson was elected president, with Dr. Frank Davis named vice president and Michael Coe secretary-treasurer. Stephenson and Davis are members of the university's faculty-staff. Coe is a first lieutenant on active duty but currently completing his degree requirements here.

Stephenson said the organization welcomes any Marine officers who are currently in, or have been associated with, the Marine Corps Reserve, along with any retired or former Marine officers who served on regular active duty.

The other two MCROA chapters in the state are in Dallas and Houston.

FOR BEST RESULTS TRY BATTALION CLASSIFIED

Sophomore sweetheart forms ready now; deadline Jan. 22

Applications for Sophomore Sweetheart are now being accepted, Bill Darkoch, publicity chairman for Sophomore Weekend, said.

Applications are available at the Student Programs Office in the Memorial Student Center, at Mrs. Patricia Self's office in Room 103, Nagle Hall, and from Sophomore Council Representatives.

Required with the applications are two snap shot photos and one studio photo. They will be accepted until January 22, 1971, at the Student Programs Office.

Five finalists will be chosen from the applicants and will be

presented at the Sophomore Ball, Feb. 6, 1971. The winner will be crowned at the ball. Applicants are not required to be A&M students.

Nuclear Engineering receives \$26,000

The Nuclear Engineering Department has received a \$26,000 U. S. Atomic Energy Commission grant to conduct a program for college teachers entitled "Summer Institute in Nuclear Power Reactors and Their Environmental Effects."

Dr. R. G. Cochran, department head, will direct the program.

The Battalion

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Letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced, and no more than 300 words in length. They must be signed, although the writer's name will be withheld by arrangement with the editor. Address correspondence to Listen Up, The Battalion, Room 217, Services Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

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An Open Letter to High School Juniors and Seniors:

In selecting a college, what are your main considerations: A winning football team? A lot of parties? A continuation of high school?

Or do you want a quality education, a real step forward to emotional and educational maturity, and a school you can be proud of for the rest of your life?

Texas A&M is such a university. An individual can come to Aggeland and get any kind of degree. Among the colleges on campus are engineering, agriculture, business administration, liberal arts, science, education, architecture and environmental design, geosciences, and veterinary medicine.

The discipline involved in these studies, the faculty, administration, and the entire atmosphere breed maturity. And try to find an Aggie who isn't proud to say where he's from. Have you ever seen a former student who didn't flash his ring when asked where he went to college?

A&M has been the subject of many good-natured jokes and jeers, but the scales are tipped the other way by many positive facts. Consider these: the only institution in the state that is sea-going (Texas Maritime Academy), the largest cyclotron in the Southwest, one of the busiest and most powerful nuclear reactors on a campus in the nation, computer facilities which give A&M the largest memory unit of any Southwest educational institution, master's degrees in 100 fields and Ph.D.'s in over 60, extensive overseas programs, the major source of medical and dental students in the Southwest, enrollment of one of every 10 Americans studying veterinary medicine, and a list of distinguished graduates that won't stop.

Spirit. That's a big word around here. Some others fill the vocabulary, too. Unity. Excellence. Pride. Friendliness. Tradition. Change. Campus rest (as opposed to unrest). These and others tell the story of A&M.

Where else can one go where, instead of riots and marches on the administration, there are two massive yell practices per week supporting the football team, even though we were 2-9? Where else does one hear a friendly "Howdy" from everyone they pass on campus? These things are part of A&M. As a student in college, one should have pride in what makes up his school. This is Aggeland, and this is what A&M stands for.

So, if important items on your list of goals are good education, pride in where you are, and unity and maturity, try Texas A&M University. If you are a senior, there is still time to make the decision. As a junior, you have more time to consider . . . Think about it.

Message courtesy of J. E. Loupot

MERRY CHRISTMAS . . . DRIVE CAREFULLY . . . SEE YOU IN JANUARY

PEANUTS



TRADE WITH LOU - MOST AGGIES DO