

# Semi-centennial fair celebrated fifty years



Marion T. Harrington, President of Texas A&M College 1950-53. Courtesy University Archives.

By DON MIDDLETON and JOHN ADAMS  
Battalion Staff Writers

Well, Governor Dolph Briscoe made it official, the Centennial Celebration is on. A less than capacity crowd in the Rudder Center auditorium listened as the Governor read the proclamation which begins a year of hundredth-year festivities.

Some people have wondered why the Centennial was inaugurated on Groundhog Day. There's been speculation that if we crawled out of our holes and saw our shadows, we'd turn around and go back to sleep for another 100 years. Not to worry, we saw plenty of people running the obstacle courses to class the day after.

And don't think that you're the only Aggie who ever had to suffer

through a little construction. When President W.B. Bizzell made a speech to the June graduates of 1916, he called for an expansion of college facilities and an increase in enrollment to 2,500 by the year 1926. Imagine, 2,500 students. And even then folks were wondering if a student body of that size was good for A&M.

When the Semi-centennial rolled around, quite a few of Bizzell's ambitions had come true. There weren't quite 2,500 Aggies in attendance, but no less than 17 major buildings had sprung up on the A&M campus.

As a prelude to the 50th Anniversary celebration, Bizzell quit. Thomas O. Walton was appointed to fill the vacancy in the front office on Sept. 1, 1925, and was formally inaugurated during the Semi-centennial fair the following Spring.

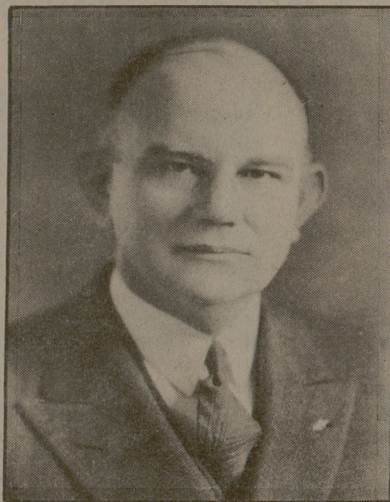
The celebration was a three day affair prior to commencement in June. There were speeches, luncheons, memorial services and a lot of good will. Institutions of higher learning from all over the world, 103 to be exact, sent words of congratulation and best wishes for the future. They represented countries on every continent, except Antarctica. Thirty-three foreign states in all wished the Aggies a happy 50th birthday.

But of course the farmers weren't satisfied to rest on their laurels, and after the hoopla died down, they were off and running to get the school in shape for its 75th birthday.

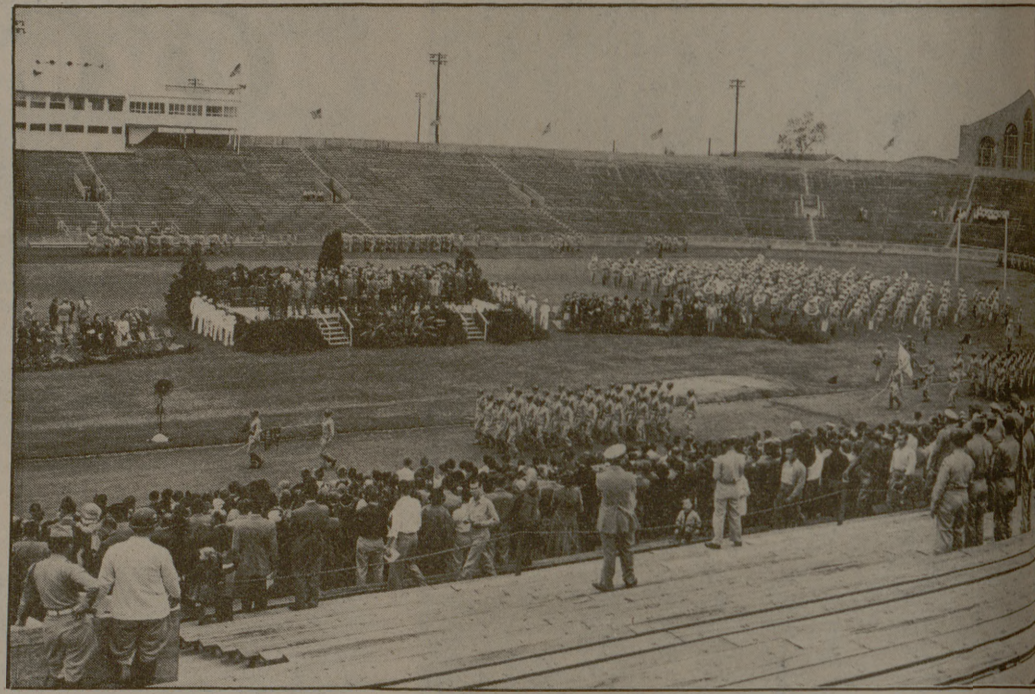
When President Frank C. Bolton's term of office came to an end in mid-1950, there might have been some history-minded Aggies who marked the day as the unofficial beginning of the 75th anniversary.

Marion T. Harrington filled the post vacated by two-time President Bolton, but before he was officially inaugurated the 75th birthday party drew the full attention of 14,000 well-wishers.

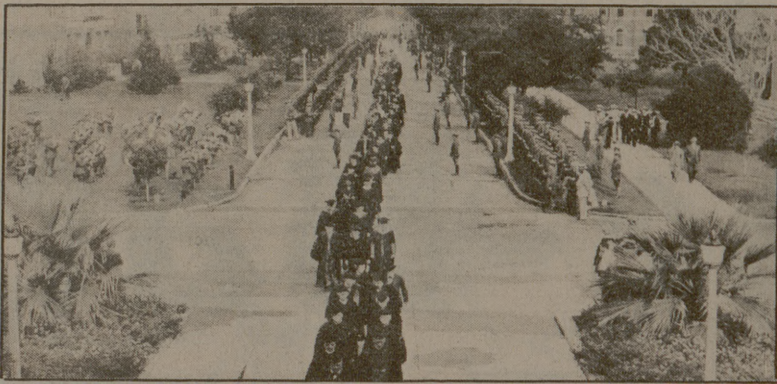
On hand to help the Aggies celeb-



Thomas O. Walton, President of Texas A&M College 1925-1943. Courtesy University Archives.



75th Anniversary celebration, October 4, 1950, on Kyle Field. Courtesy University Archives.



Commencement procession down Military Walk to Guion Hall during the Semi-centennial celebration, June 1926. Courtesy Archives.

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Barbecue picnic on the lawn outside Kyle Field during the 75th Anniversary celebration. Courtesy University Archives.

1950 was a landmark year for A&M in several ways, not the least of which was the completion of the 18-hole college golf course. Also, the Memorial Student Center was completed and began operation that year. It might be interesting to note that both the "C" and the golf underwent face-lifts before the Centennial year. Then again, it might not.

The director of the MSC in 1950 was a young man named J. Wayne Stark, who was instrumental in the design, construction, and operation of the "Campus Living Room." Under the watchful eyes and helping hands of Wayne Stark, Aggies have planned and taken part in a myriad of activities for 26 years, including sipping coffee in the cafeteria before, during and after classes. Wayne Stark is something of an Aggie tradition in himself.

Also that year the University Archives was established. They're the folks who furnish all the photos and much of the information found in this column. We might as well take the time and space to express our profound thanks for all the help they have been to us in filling this space from week to week. It sounds like we're signing off for good, doesn't it? No such luck.

On Nov. 9, 1950, Harrington was installed as head Aggie. The main

speaker for the inauguration was Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, then president of Columbia University. A couple of years later he resigned that job to take up residence in the White House. Also in the stage party was the president of the Board of Directors of the A&M System, G. Rollie White of Brady, Texas.

That brings us to 1976. It kind of sneaked up on us without advance warning since President Jack K. Williams didn't resign last year, in the grand tradition of his forebears. However, most of us suspected something was up when all these buildings started going up

everywhere and the crowds at the bookstore at the first semester got bigger.

In all honesty and seriousness, President Williams has done much to A&M in his short here and he deserves to stick a little longer to see how he turns out.

One sad note in an otherwise happy story. One man whose achievements and contributions to the A&M Centennial are measure by his contemporaries not be present to join in the celebration. Earl Rudder was the force behind much of the dynamic institution that is now beginning to blossom the A&M University. Perhaps watching the progress of the he loved from another vantage point. And so the big celebration. Here's to another 100 years old Aggie Spirit.

**SLOUCH Jim Earle**  
"It used to be sick grandmothers, every student who is absent now says that he's been celebrating the centennial!"

**The Battalion**  
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