

# Aggie ring product of evolution, tradition, love

By DON MIDDLETON and JOHN ADAMS, JR.

Get ready to exercise your brain. America has the stars and stripes, the Olympians have the torch, Phi Kappa has its key, Betty Grable has her legs, and Texas A&M has its Aggie Ring. If you said a cowhide bench was wrong. If you said the Aggie Ring is the product of evolution, born out of tradition and love for an institution.

The desire for a symbol to represent a student's days at A&M was first expressed in early 1889. The end result of the wish was a unique but now forgotten ring. The design selected had the letters "AMC" intertwined across its face and surrounded by four small diamonds. It was cast in solid gold. Only two of these rings exist today. The distinctive design was used only for the class of '89 and never cast again.

Five years passed before the forerunner of the present ring was born. Under the direction of Ed-

ward C. Jonas, '94, Commander of Company "C," and business manager of the Battalion, suggestions for the design of a class ring were solicited. From these suggestions Jonas drew up the preliminary design.

Approval by the 32 member class soon followed. Ten dollars was collected from every senior in order to contract a New York firm to cast the gold rings. Two weeks before the June commencement the first consignment of rings arrived.

All were delighted with the ring's

design and appearance. But an inquisitive senior and chemistry professor P. S. Tilson, '89, ran a test in the chemistry lab to determine the gold content of the ring. To their surprise, they found it had been weighted and plugged with lead. A close look at the other rings in the first shipment revealed the same impurities.

With commencement only two weeks away, reordering the whole shipment was impossible. So each senior was forced to reorder his own ring. Most members of the class of '94 had their new ring by 1897.

After considering many possible ring designs, the class of '95 selected the same ring their predecessors wore. And the ring remained unchanged until 1899 when a committee headed by Josh B. Sterns and R. J. Porter met to discuss design changes and the contracting of a new company to cast the ring.

"After much friendly argument," Sterns recalls, "we rearranged the designs and selected a combination composed of the seal of Texas on one side, a cannon and two crossed muskets on the other side. On the top oval we placed a spread eagle with A.M.C. around the top rim and a space for 1899 below."

During the discussion much concern was expressed by E. L. Martin to have the classes of '00, '01 and '02 adopt the same design in order to "perpetuate the design as the class ring for the succeeding years."

The Linz Brothers Jewelry Company of Dallas offered to quote the junior, sophomore and fish classes lower prices if they would meet and

vote to approve Martin's idea. With the possibility of the price per ring being raised to \$10.50 all classes concurred.

The ring remained unchanged during the next 30 years. Year after year each class agreed on the 1894 design for their class ring with only minor changes — a saber and a rifle instead of two rifles, the cannon pointing right instead of left or the eagle facing east instead of west.

In 1933 college president T. O. Walton appointed an official Senior Ring Committee to oversee the handling and any design modification that seemed agreeable with the students. The consensus was that unless controls were exercised the ring and its heritage would prove meaningless. Prior to 1933 many companies manufactured the ring and practically anyone could obtain a "bootleg" copy.

A five year contract was awarded to Star Engraving Company of Houston in November, 1933 to begin making Aggie rings with the class of '35.

In 1934 the state and national flags were added as background to the crossed rifle and saber. The words "A&M College of Texas — 1876" were also added around the crest.

In 1939 the Registrar's office began distributing the ring in order to exercise tighter controls on those who were permitted to purchase it. 1943 saw the ring enlarged and the seal raised. When Texas A&M College became Texas A&M University in 1963 the ring underwent a corresponding change.

An estimated 75,000 students and

former students today proudly wear the symbol of Aggie heritage and tradition. Fierce loyalty has caused many to protect and honor its meaning. There are many stories of rings being found on battlefields in Europe, Korea and Vietnam. One member of the class of '45 lost his ring while on a fishing trip near Corpus Christi in 1952. A year later it was found between two dead Communist soldiers in Korea by another Aggie, class of '50.

Of course, there are also stories that tell of the lighter side of Aggie rings. In 1967 the \$6 million dollar Cyclotron was completed and operation begun. One Aggie decided to inaugurate the new atom smasher and perhaps gain a valuable keepsake by exposing his ring to the alpha particle beam. Instead of getting a mildly radioactive memento he got a ring with half the crest melted by the 65 million electron volt beam. The ring had to be kept in a lead strongbox.

Wherever Aggies go, the ring serves as a binding link with other former students. It provides ready identification with the good old college days and the comradeship acquired while at Texas A&M.

For those of you who have never been told the whole story of the symbolism of the Aggie Ring, here it is:

The shield on the top of the ring

symbolizes protection of the good reputation of the Alma Mater. The 13 stripes in the shield refer to the 13 original states and symbolize the intense patriotism of graduates and undergraduates of A&M. The five stars in the shield refer to phases of development of the student; mind or intellect, body, spiritual attainment, emotional poise, and integrity of character. The eagle is symbolic of agility and power, and ability to reach great heights and ambitions.

One side of the ring symbolizes the Seal of the State of Texas authorized by the Constitution of 1845. The five-pointed star is encircled with a wreath of olive or laurel leaves symbolizing achievement and a desire for peace, and live oak leaves symbolizing the strength to fight. They are joined at the bottom by a circled ribbon to show the necessity of joining these two traits to accomplish one's ambition to serve.

The other side with its ancient cannon, saber and rifle symbolizes that the men of Texas fought for their land and are determined to defend their homeland. The saber stands for valor and confidence. The rifle and cannon are symbols of preparedness and defense. The crossed flags of the United States and Texas recognize the dual allegiance to nation and state.

## Series planned for fall

# Lots of lecturers visit A&M

Texas A&M is not lacking in its share of visiting lecturers outside of the classroom.

The major lecture series, which students attend at minimal or no charge, are the Centennial Visiting Professors Series, Great Issues, Political Forum and the University Speakers series.

Many academic departments sponsor visiting professors. These lectures are usually announced in classes. Speakers also come to A&M to participate in Continuing Education short courses.

Information and speaking times of Continuing Education speakers are available from that office, located on the eighth floor of the Rudder Tower.

The Student Conference On National Affairs (SCONA) is held annually on campus. Nationally-known speakers address one issue from many viewpoints during the week-long student gathering each

spring. These lectures are open to A&M students.

The Centennial Visiting Professors program is still in the formative stages with invitations and dates still being worked out by the vice-president of academic affairs office. Lecturers who are coming include Dr. Charles Drake from Dartmouth's earth science department, Dr. Charles E. Kellough who served as director for the Soil Conservation Service, and Dr. Norman Borlough who is a Nobel Prize winner in biology.

Great Issues, a student-run lecture series, deals with different aspects of American or international life by sponsoring speakers with expertise in their field.

The Great Issues speakers for this fall will speak on problems facing the cities. The list of speakers and their subjects include Nicholas Gage on organized crime, September 23; Elmer Cooper on trans-

portation, September 28; Michael Harrington on social programs, October 21; Robert Kukla on gun control, November 10 and Norman Shields on gun control, November 16.

Political Forum, also a student-run series, has a sketchy schedule because of the election year. The group has received commitments from Rep. Alan Steelman for late September and Carl Albert for October.

The University Speakers series is conducted by a University committee and speakers have not yet been chosen. The speakers will be chosen by the Evans Library staff and the faculties of Geosciences and Liberal Arts and approved by the committee. Four speakers will be chosen to lecture at regular intervals during the academic year. One of the speakers chosen will be an A&M professor.

# Area prepares for students

Texas A&M University initiates Aug. 30 what promises to be its busiest school year yet.

Fall semester classes start the last Monday in August, with a preceding week of preparation. This week includes delayed registration, a

## Texas tourists spending less

AUSTIN — Last spring's auto visitors to the Lone Star State enjoyed Texas more but spent less, according to the state's quarterly visitor industry report.

Based on a tabulation of more than 10,000 questionnaires completed by travelers from out of state who came to Texas during the spring quarter, spending per person per day was down 18 per cent from the same period last year. However, the unexpected frugality of those tourist and business visitors was partially compensated for by an increased length of stay that averaged 89 days.

Although the number of questionnaires returned was almost double that of the comparison period in 1975, total visitor volume is not measured in the quarterly reports. Such totals can be determined only on an annual basis, and are reported in the state's year-end visitor industry survey.

Except in the categories of spending and length of stay, other data in the report show almost identical parallels between the two springtime periods. Origins, destinations, purpose of visits and other details are very similar.

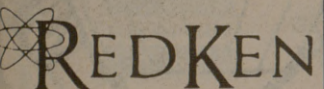
To see if reduced spending is a continuing factor, tourist industry watchers will be awaiting the summer-quarter report which covers the greatest surge of the state's visitor year. That report will be issued in September.

The current analysis of the spring quarter is available free from the Travel and Information Division, State Department of Highways and Public Transportation, Austin, Texas 78701.

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makeup conference for new students, various orientations, a workshop for resident hall advisors and a Memorial Student Center "welcome back" picnic.

Commanders Conference for Corps of Cadets student leadership is part of the fall semester preliminaries.

University officials expect a fall enrollment of nearly 28,000, including a freshman class that could surpass the size of Texas A&M's entire student body of 1960-61.

The projected gain by the nation's fastest growing institution of higher learning would be an increase of about 10 per cent over the 25,247 enrollment last fall. Enrollment increases of 2,000 or more students have occurred since 1972.

Harbingers of the influx showed up last week. They were mostly graduate and married students with youngsters to enroll in public schools.

The sudden increase in local populations also has merchants and businessmen on the move, preparing and stocking for the increase in customers. Santa Anna Trejo, with a firm located near the campus, said

the change will be almost overwhelming at first. Almost three-quarters of the fall enrollment will reside off-campus.

The 1976-77 enrollment includes the 101st class to start classes at the Centennial-celebrating Texas A&M. Dr. Billy Gene Lay, admissions director, said 7,800 new undergraduate students are expected, counting freshmen and transfers.

A&M gets a fairly accurate indication of the new group through summer conferences. The sessions held throughout the summer enable new students to become academically oriented, preregister and prepare for the semester start with University officials on an individual basis.

New undergraduate students had to apply for admission by July 31, the first such deadline in recent years.

Fall semester activities will include several centennial-related events. A number of Centennial Academic Assemblies are planned, along with the Oct. 4 special centennial convocation.

Texas A&M was formally dedicated on Oct. 4, 1876. First term enrollment totaled 48 students.

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MUSHROOM	1.75	2.35	3.60	4.65
PEPPERONI	1.75	2.35	3.60	4.65
BEEF	1.80	2.40	3.70	4.85
SAUSAGE	1.80	2.40	3.70	4.85
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PEPPERONI & MUSHROOM	2.00	2.65	4.00	5.15
PEPPERONI & GREEN PEPPER	2.00	2.65	4.00	5.15
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GREEN OLIVE	1.95	2.70	4.10	5.20
BLACK OLIVE	1.95	2.70	4.10	5.20
GREEN PEPPER	1.95	2.70	4.10	5.20
ANCHOVY	2.15	2.85	4.55	5.75
SLICED TOMATO	2.15	2.85	4.55	5.75
MUSHROOM	2.15	2.85	4.55	5.75
PEPPERONI	2.15	2.85	4.55	5.75
BEEF	2.20	2.90	4.65	5.95
SAUSAGE	2.20	2.90	4.65	5.95
DOUBLE CHEESE	2.20	2.90	4.65	5.95
CANADIAN BACON	2.30	3.00	4.80	6.05
PEPPERONI & MUSHROOM	2.40	3.15	4.95	6.25
PEPPERONI & GREEN PEPPER	2.40	3.15	4.95	6.25
BEEF & CHOPPED ONIONS	2.45	3.20	5.05	6.45
SAUSAGE & MUSHROOM	2.45	3.20	5.05	6.45
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