

opinion

Aggie spirit still alive

by Mickey Addison

(Author's note: Texas A&M is steeped in traditions, some that are easily 100 years old. Every once in a while, someone challenges these traditions as unpractical or ridiculous. I firmly believe that traditions are the most important part of life at A&M. Without them, we would be just another university. Tradition is what makes Aggies special, and that is what this story is about.)

Late in the fall semester, before bonfire, a freshman lay in his bunk staring at the ceiling. Homework was finished, and taps had been played, so there was nothing left to do except go to sleep.

Now this cadet was no ordinary cadet. He was unhappy. He had begun to think about all the pressures that had been looking him in the face since Freshman Orientation Week, and fish Jones was ready to quit.

The more he thought, the more ready to quit he became. At first it was only the Corps, then studies in general, then he uttered the words that make all Aggies' hearts stop in their chests, "I hate A&M."

No sooner had the words escaped his mouth than a knock came at his door. Jones looked around to see if his roommate had heard, but he was fast asleep (actually, he always was). Then, with a creak, the door swung slowly open, revealing a uniformed figure in a campaign hat. The hallway was shadowy and dimly lit, but Jones could see enough to realize that this was not one of his upperclassmen. Silently a black dog paced back and forth behind the figure. The man stepped into the room: spurs clinked on his senior boots. Jones sat there in amazement, not knowing what to say or do.

"Howdy," thundered the Spirit. "I'm the Spirit of Aggieland, and it has come to my attention that you possess an intense dislike for me. Reveille and I have come to set you straight. C'mon."

Fish Jones had no alternative but to follow. The detail marched rapidly over to Old Main. There, in all her glory, she stood, with students busily burning the midnight oil.

"Think these cadets don't know me?" asked the Spirit. "Not likely. Look around you, boy. Feel me in your gut. Can you feel me, boy?"

Jones shook his head sadly. "No, sir."

"Well then, let's go to a football game. I've got a particular one in mind."

Reveille barked in satisfaction. The date was January 1, 1922. A lone player stood on the sidelines next to the coach.

"Y'know who that man is, Jones?"
"No, sir," came the reply.
"That's E. King Gill, the first Twelfth Man."
Reveille barked excitedly.
"Gill came out of the stands because I called him," the Spirit continued. "Would you do that to help that Fightin' Texas Aggie Football Team?"
"Yes, sir, I, I, think so —"

"You think so!" bellowed the Spirit. "You shouldn't have to think about it!"
The scene blurred and refocused on December 7, 1941. Pearl Harbor.
"Look there, boy. Do you see that man over there in the water? He died to protect you, to protect me; he was proud of who he was, a Fightin' Texas Aggie! He didn't think about sacrifice, did he?"

reader's forum

The scene blurred again to become a list of names: J.V. Wilson, Marvin H. Mimms, Richard J. Dunn, Eli L. Whitney, Horace Carswell, Richard Coke, Earl Rudder, Joe Rount, Charlie Krueger.

"All these men were Aggies, true to their colors. Can you feel me now, boy? Can you feel what they felt?"

"Yes, sir, I can," Jones answered. The Spirit's eyes lit up.

"Two more stops to make, boy. Follow me."

Jones was transported again to the Academic Building, where, under the watchful eyes of Lawrence Sullivan Ross, Silver Taps echoed across a darkened campus. The entire student body stood at attention, silently. Muted tears rolled down the cheeks of his friends.

"Why are they crying?" asked Jones. "Because we've lost an Aggie, boy," the Spirit replied softly. "Our number is diminished by one. Haven't you learned anything yet?"

The Spirit paused, then whispered, "We've got one last stop to make: Bonfire!"

The world exploded. Jones' senses were shattered by an intense, white-hot fireball. Sight was impossible against the blinding glare. A deafening roar assaulted his hearing.

Slowly, Jones recovered consciousness. His senses refocused carefully on his surroundings. Now, through the blinding glare, he could see silhouettes

moving as if in a dream world. Then Jones realized where he was.

The 87-foot bonfire lit up the night sky like the world's biggest torch. Aggies rejoiced in the burning of it, whooping and yelling to their hearts' content. Weeks of hard labor were materializing in front of them. The Spirit touched Jones' shoulder and pointed, saying, "That's me, boy! That's the Spirit of Aggieland! How do you feel about me now?"

The Bonfire light illuminated the Spirit for the first time and Jones saw him completely. His old, faded, wool-green uniform and dusty boots stood in stark contrast to his polished brass. On his chest rode an impressive display of campaign ribbons, representing battles from Belleau Wood to Khe Sahn. Any place Aggies had fought was represented on the Spirit's chest.

Proudly sitting next to the Spirit, Reveille bathed in the brilliance of the bonfire. Head held high, as if at attention, she stared squarely into Jones' eyes. Deep black, her eyes reflected the extent of her pride.

But it was the Spirit's eyes that Jones would remember for as long as he lived. They burned fathomlessly, unquenchably maroon.

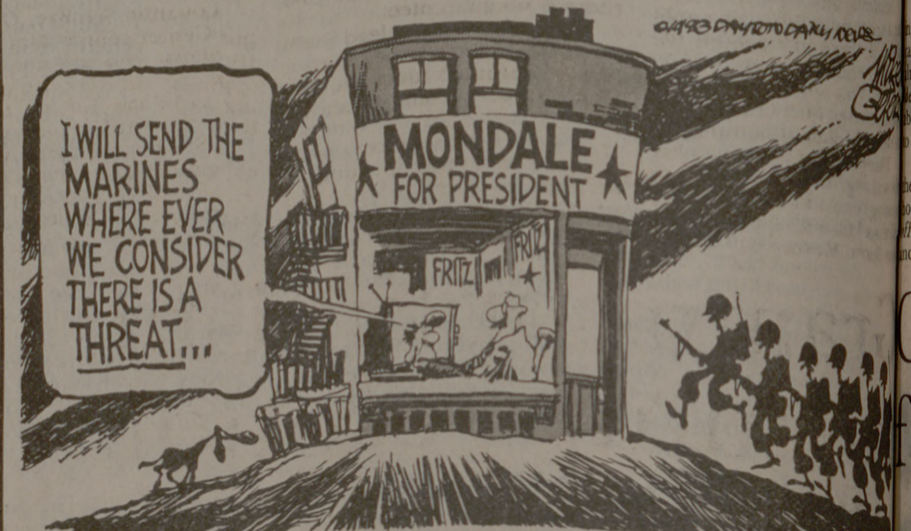
"Time for you to get some sleep, boy. I think you understand now."
Jones did not hear him, because now the tears were rolling uncontrollably down his cheeks.

When Jones awoke, his pillow was tear-stained and soaked. Had it been a dream? Yes, it had been, but...

Jones glanced at the floor. On it were the dusty footprints and pawprints of his midnight visitors. On the door handle hung a dusty campaign hat. It had once been a dark greenish-brown, but time had weathered it to a faded maroon.

Editor's note: Michael Addison is a freshman computer science major in Squadron 16. This story is not intended to spark more controversy over traditions. Instead, in the spirit of Christmas, it is to remind us how Texas A&M began, what it stood for, and where it's going now.

Portfolio:



Letters: Critical letter called 'irrational'

Editor:
It can often be interesting and thought provoking to read the opinions of those who disagree with statements offered in The Battalion. However, when constructive criticism is forgotten and personal attacks replace rational objections, a dissenter simply discredits his view and appears ridiculous.

I am addressing this comment to Jim Harris, who disagreed with Dave Scott's contention that Aggie tradition may have hurt the Aggies in the t.u. game. Although I do not necessarily agree with all of Mr. Scott's statements, I believe his opinion gains credibility when those who disagree with him write narrow-minded, irrational responses.

I fail to see what Mr. Scott's view has to do with him being "fond of" Moscow, as Mr. Harris assumes. I also fail to see why his opinion merits an assault with an ax handle or being run over on Highway 6 by Mr. Harris. Statements such as "you are no doubt one of those lazy bums" who only who only know how to "bitch and

complain and make excuses" only succeed in making Mr. Harris' statements appear more absurd.

Although the issue of what constitutes a "good Ag" is a topic that has been beaten to death this semester, I would like to suggest that tolerance of other's opinions and open-mindedness are qualities more of us should strive for. In my attempt to do this, I would like to suggest to Mr. Harris that while he is certainly entitled to his opinion, he should consider the nature of his objections when he presents them to others.

Susan Franklin '87

'Good Ag' letter full of cliches

Editor:
I had almost forgotten why I was so dissatisfied with A&M earlier this semester, but thanks to that "hardcore redneck, ever livin', ever lovin', Rock the good Ag, beat the hell outta t. u. and two percenters" Texas Aggie fan, it has all been brought back to me with striking clarity. I'm speaking of course of that "right-wing conservative farm boy who drives a truck, drinks beer, and listens to George Strait and Charlie Pride," Jim Harris. Take a bow, Jim. You've managed to incorporate just about every Aggie-ism into the text of one letter. Truly amazing! What is this anyway? The A&M cliché festival?

I might bring to your attention that you left out of your self-description terms like "narrow-minded yahoo with the ideological depth of Soldier of Fortune magazine." I realize that I'm making a rather generalized judgment based on a limited knowledge of your actual character, but hey, if you did the same to Dave Scott, why can't I?

The fact that I disagree with virtually everything you said is beside the point. What I really object to was the way you and a lot of other people state your opinions in The Battalion. It sounded like you used the Aggie Lexicon the way most people use a thesaurus. What are you trying to do, broadcast your ignorance and complete lack of originality? You're entitled to your opinion and the right to

express it, but for God's sake, at least legitimize it by using your own words.

You really have this thing about violence, don't you? "Warm your backside with an ax handle" and something about running over Dave Scott on Highway 6. You're an aggressive guy, Jim. I mean, why don't you and Preston Abbott form a posse and just shoot the bastard?

It's really a shame, because I've met some great people here who have become very dear friends of mine, but there are simply too many Cro-Magnons like you here for me to stand. Highway 6 does run both ways and at the end of this semester, I'm going to "get the hell outta A&M."

Michael Barry '86

'World class' has no meaning

Editor:
This semester we have added yet another trite phrase to the A&M vocabulary. Now, joining the ranks of such past favorites as "two percenters," "good Ag," "Highway 6 runs both ways" and "keep off the MSC grass," we have the omnipresent "world class."

In recent weeks we have read letters to the editor defining "world class" as: doing more research, doing more teaching, having a winning football team, having a bell tower, allowing religious speakers on campus, restricting religious speakers on campus, giving finals to graduating seniors, exempting graduating seniors from finals...

In short, the term "world class" describes anything the speaker likes. Anything the speaker dislikes is definitely non-"world class."

Next time you hear someone say the words "world class," listen to what they are really saying. If it is a student, just replace the words with "good bull" and you'll retain the full meaning. If it is an administrator, remember that anytime someone needs to coin a buzzword to justify a course of action, the person is probably afraid that the action cannot stand on its own merit.

Undergraduates need to start feeling a little chill down their backs every time someone in the administration uses those high-sounding words.

Chip Heath '85

Driving, drinking don't mix

Let's add a line to the Aggie code of honor that deals with lying and cheating and such.

It should say: Aggies do not drink and drive nor do they tolerate those who do. The Christmas break is traditionally time for heavy drinking. Last New Year's Eve one area resident had a few too many and killed a former A&M student in a car accident. In the spring semester a drunk driver through a red light and killed the passenger of a Texas A&M student as they were crossing a street.

People need to realize alcohol and automobiles do not mix.

Party hosts need to accept responsibility for their guests' drinking. They are beginning to examine the liability hosts for their guests who drink and drive. And hosts should set a good example and drink in moderation.

Hosts can take responsibility by putting a damper on holiday season. Time is a factor in reducing the drinking alcohol, so before the party ends, the liquor cabinet should be closed. The perfect time for guests to enjoy others' company — and for the host to stop drinking to partially sober up — is during the party.

If a guest drinks too much, call a taxi, have guests car-pool or invite them to spend the night at your home.

"About one person per month in Brazos County due to drunk driving," says Dr. Kirk Brown, president of Brazos Valley Chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, "and the percentage goes up during the holiday season."

So have a merry but safe holiday season. If and when you do drink, drink in moderation. And when your friends drink too much, please have the courage to stop them from driving. Battalion Editorial Staff does not want to spend another Tuesday night at Taps.

— The Battalion Editorial Staff

The Battalion

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