

Old Aggies still at home in Kyle Field

They laughed, screamed, yelled, and whooped 'til the Richter scale hit six. Folks, the former students are back in town. These eternal Aggies led the cheers and struck up the music at the Alumni-Varsity football game, Saturday. And they had a ball doing it.

Their hair may be flecked with gray, and their belts are let out a few notches more, but their eyes tell the story best. "We're home."

Words like spirit, tradition, great memories and just plain great popped up repeatedly in conversations with the former yell leaders and former Aggie Band members strutting their stuff at the afternoon game.

"We're putting up a great fight," bragged former yell leader Joe Mackler on the play of the Alumni team. "I just enjoy seeing all these guys play again. It brings back great memories."

Gerald Betty, Class of '73, a residential builder in Lubbock, silently mouthed the words to the Aggie War Hymn as he led the cheer. Smiling, and breathing a bit heavy, Betty said he couldn't remember when the arm movements changed in leading the cheers. The older yell leaders swing their arms straight up and down.

"I think the old way is harder to do," Betty said. "I guess some Ag got tired of waving his arms and sort of changed the cheer by accident."

Betty ran out to his position for another cheer and yelled over his shoulder, "this year we're going to the Cotton Bowl."

Joe West, Class of '54, is one of the old guard. He leaned against the front of the stands and chatted with friends sitting nearby. A bead of sweat trickled down his face, but West looked ready for anything.

"It's been 30 years since I did this," West said, "so I've had to re-learn my cheers. We had a dry run before the game, and we were all reasonably close."

On the student side of the field, approximately 118 former Aggie Band members fiddled with their instruments or studied their music sheets between songs. Dressed in white T-shirts and matching white ball caps emblazoned with the former student's association emblem, these Aggies really stood out from the crowd.

David Marion, class of '65, steadied his bass drum with his knee and smiled. The game had ended but Marion seemed reluctant to leave. As the other band members gathered up various instruments and relatives to leave, Marion stood there thoughtfully.

Jim Adams, class of '62 and '86, stood a head shorter than Marion but smiled just as widely.

"The only time I play," Adams said with a smile, "is when the Aggies play."

Marion watched the swarm of people on the field after the game and seemed to be drinking the whole experience in.

"This is the best experience in the world," Marion says softly. "The heartbeat won't ever quit in Aggieland."

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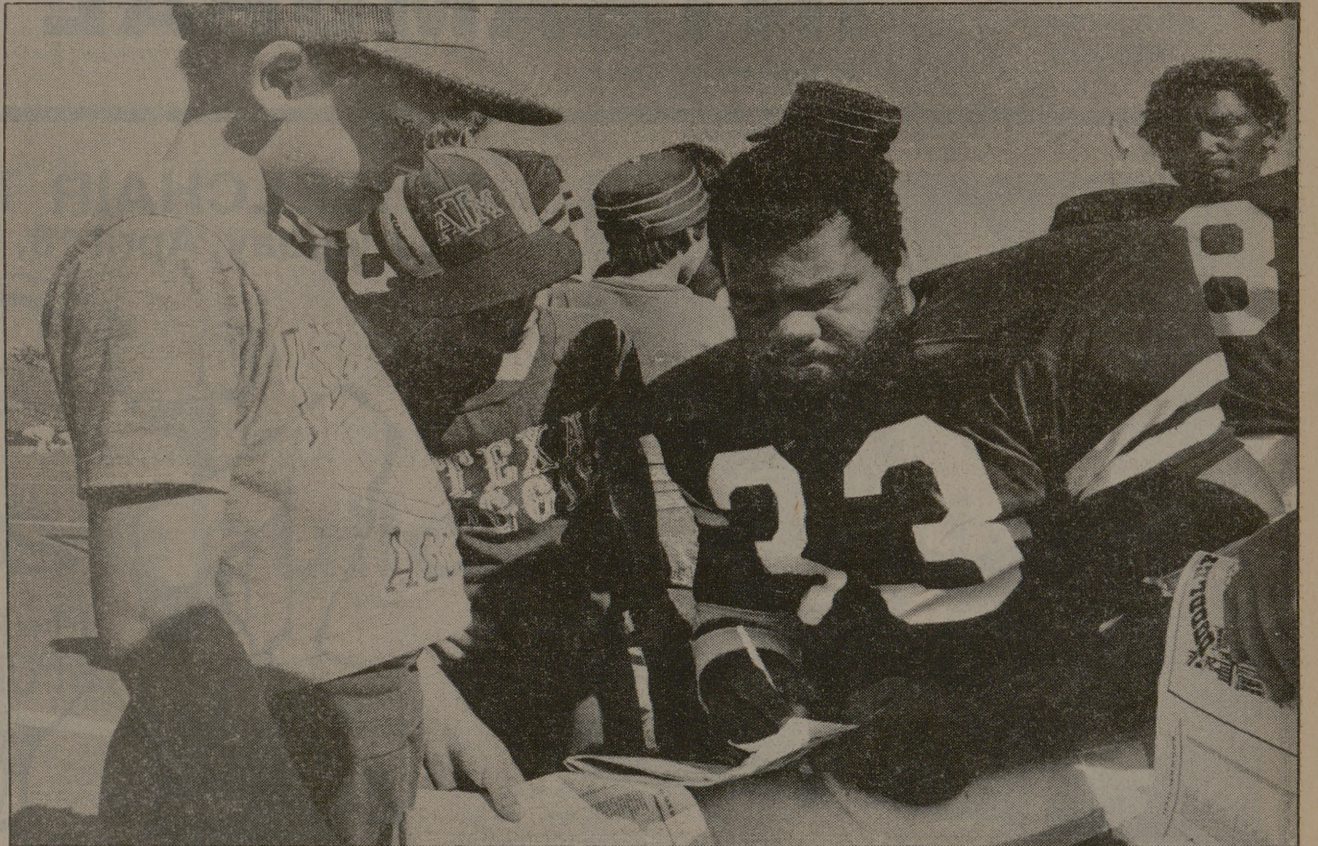


Varsity quarterback Kevin Murray grimaces as Texas A&M trainers look over his knee. Murray

tore a ligament in his knee when he was sacked by five alumni defenders.



Former yell leader Joe Mackler leads the former "12th Man" in yells as his son stands by.



Former Aggie running back George Woodard signs autographs.



Former Aggie Band member J.K. Hennigan, an industrial engineering professor, plays while Barbara Roberson holds his music.

