

standard Muster service. A 1944 committee report in the Archives estimated that 22 minutes would be needed for the 1944 Muster, plus the time for the speaker's speech.

That year marked the first formalized campus Muster, the prototype of today's ceremony. Jake Hamblen, Class of '27 and then president of the Association of Former Students, told the gathering in Guion Hall, where Rudder Tower stands today, that A&M was a big "fraternity," referring to Aggies' brotherly spirit.

From 1944 into the early 1950s Muster was held at various places in College Station, sometimes on campus, sometimes off.

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower gave the Muster speech in Kyle Field in 1946. He praised the ROTC system at A&M for developing leaders such as those who helped win the war.

Several times in the past, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, the state legislature has passed concurrent resolutions commending A&M's spirit of patriotism for celebrating San Jacinto Day and Muster.

In the mid-1950s the Muster ceremony was moved to a location as ironic today as it was appropriate then: the Memorial Student Center's lawn. Students would sit on the grass on the north side of the MSC during the ceremony.

Rain-soaked grass drove Muster to G. Rollie White Coliseum in 1959. There Rep. Olin E. Teague predicted, in his Muster speech, that the students present would see men on other planets within their lifetimes.

During the latter part of the 1960s, weather permitting, Muster took place on the System Administration Building's lawn. It was there, in 1964, that Earl King Gill, Class of '24, told Aggies the true story of the original 12th Man.

In 1969, Houston attorney Mayo Thompson, Class of '41, made *Eagle and Battalion* headlines with his Muster speech when he criticized militant hippies, yuppies and the use of civil disobedience.

More recently, in 1974, Muster coincided with Parent's Day weekend, drawing a record attendance of 10,000.

Ten years later, in 1984, Easter fell on April 22. The Muster Committee debated whether to change Muster's date that year, fearing a small turnout during Easter weekend. But convenience gave way to tradition and Muster remained on April 21.

Jim Jeter, associate executive director of the Association of Former Students, says the Muster Committee, a branch of Student Government, has been organizing Muster since the 1970s, with the Brazos Valley A&M Club's help. The Association of Former Students, once responsible for organizing campus Muster, now concentrates on coordinating other Musters worldwide, he says.

Muster Committee Chairman Beth Baker, a senior exercise technology major, says the 37-member committee is responsible for the entire Muster ceremony, from selecting a speaker to planning public relations.

"We basically put on the whole Muster program," she says. "A lot more goes into it than people think."

A sub-committee asks faculty and staff members for speaker suggestions, Baker says, and then slowly narrows the list of candidates down to the top 10. This year the committee invited Ronald Reagan to speak, but he declined. Reagan also declined an invitation to speak in 1985.

Gerald Griffin, Class of '56, Houston Chamber of Commerce president and former director of the Johnson Space Center, will speak at this year's Muster in G. Rollie White Coliseum. Baker expects the usual-sized crowd, about 8,000 people, to attend.

Each year the committee considers the possibility of having Muster outside, Baker says. But the chance that one day of bad weather could turn seven months of planning into chaos outweighs the benefits of a nostalgic, outside Muster, she says.

However, the 1½ hour ceremony will be slightly different this year than in previous years. In addition to the regular program, The Singing Cadets will sing "The Muster Song," written by Margaret Rudder, widow of J. Earl Rudder. Rudder was A&M's president from 1959 to 1970.

The committee is also selling Muster coins this year. Each coin has a soil sample from Corregidor Island in its center, Baker says, thanks to a process developed by a former student.

Organizing Muster has several inherent problems, Baker says, including selecting speakers, maintaining a budget and making students aware of Muster. But her biggest worry is being absolutely sure the roll call is done without mistakes.

"One thing that I'm really scared of happening is someone getting the wrong name, or someone's name being left off," she says.

Names, it seems, are what Muster is all about. But, as important as the names are to family and friends, they're only symbols, more for our own good than for the good of those to whom they belong.

Whether their names are called or not, whether someone answers for them or not, in spirit if not in body, Aggies are always here.

That is what Muster is all about, and that is the rest of the story.



Photo courtesy of TAMU Archives

President Eisenhower is awarded an honorary doctorate from A&M during the 1946 Muster by General A.D. Bruce '16.



Photo courtesy of TAMU Archives

rate Muster in 1946.



Photo courtesy of TAMU Archives

Lawrence Wallace '03 (second from right) attends the 1969 Muster.

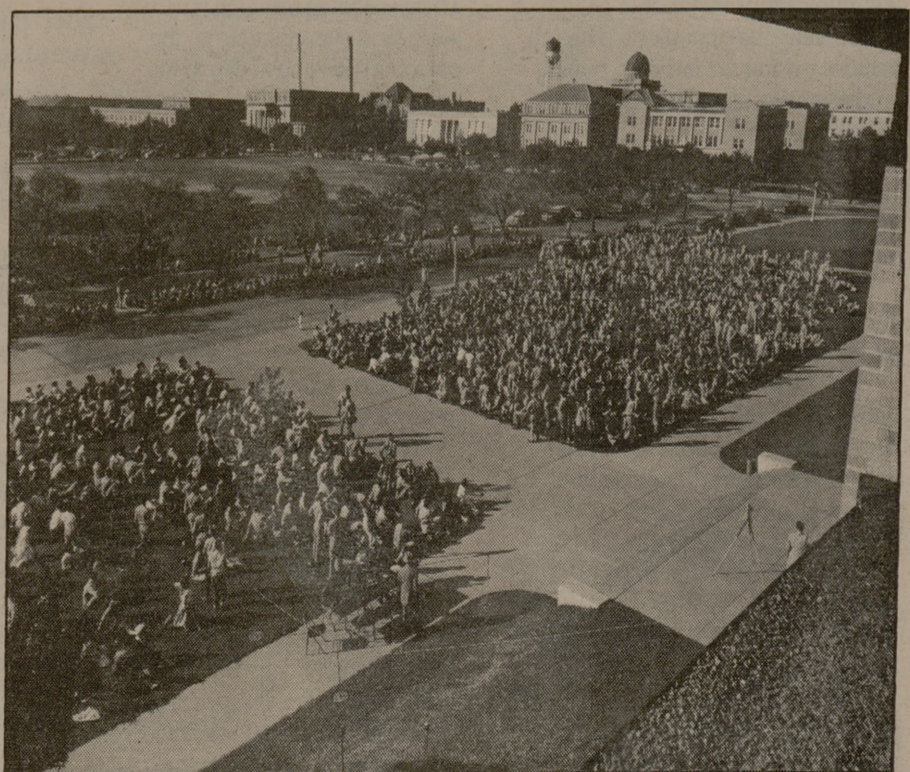


Photo courtesy of TAMU Archives

Students sit on the lawn of the Memorial Student Center in the 1955 Muster ceremonies. In the 1950s, this seemed an appropriate location for Muster.