

Silver Taps provides final farewell to fellow Aggies

By Sam B. Myers
Reporter

Lights begin to go out around the A&M campus. The silence is broken by thousands of footsteps all headed towards the same building for the same purpose. Aggies gather outside the darkened Academic Building. The mass of people begin to crowd around the statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross to honor a fellow Aggie who has died. The majority of the crowd never met the person they are there to honor.

It is 10:30 p.m. and the Ross Volunteers, dressed in their distinctive white uniforms, begin their slow, steady march to the center of the crowd. Those gathered remain silent; nothing is heard except the footsteps of the RVs.

The RVs come to a stop and, divided into three groups of seven, they begin their 21-gun salute.

"First order . . . ready . . . aim . . . fire!"

Birds flutter away as the blast reverberates across campus.

Once the 21-gun salute is no more than an echo in the mind, three buglers from the Aggie Band begin to play "Silver Taps." The song is played three times — to the north, east and west.

With the last notes of "Silver Taps" still ringing across campus, those in attendance begin to leave in silence.

The ceremony of Silver Taps is finished — a final farewell has been given to students who have lost their lives during the previous month.

It is believed that the first Silver Taps, one of the oldest of Aggie traditions, was held in 1898 for Lawrence Sullivan Ross. Ross was governor of Texas from 1886 to 1890 and president of Texas A&M from 1891 to 1898.

Since then Silver Taps has changed, but the reason for the ceremony remains the same.

The first Silver Taps ceremonies were held in front of Old Main,

which stood where the Academic Building stands. Silver Taps was later moved to Goodwin Hall. The ceremony was moved to its current site in 1918.

The flag in front of the Academic Building was first flown at half-mast on the day of Silver Taps during the 1920s. All flags on campus now fly at half mast for Silver Taps and Aggie Muster.

The song "Silver Taps," a special arrangement of Taps, was written by Col. Richard J. Dunn in the 1930s.

Chimes were rung before the ceremony from 1955 until 1973. After

Quarters is over, I should be in bed but there's something I have to do you both first. I'm sitting here at a desk with tears in my eyes and thinking more about life itself than I ever have before.

"I'm not crying because of what I'm going through — but rather because I've experienced tonight what A&M is all about. Mother and Dad, we're one big family here and now I know what it means to be an Aggie. Tonight was Silver Taps."

"In case you don't know what it is, I'm going to tell you and you've got to listen. Any time a student loses his life — no matter how — an assigned date soon afterwards have what is called Silver Taps. Everyone gathers in front of the Academic Building, in front of which a flag pole on which Silver Taps notices are posted.

"No one says a word from the time we leave the dorms until the next morning. All is quiet and all the lights on campus are turned off. Even lights on the Coke machines are covered.

"At 10:30, when everyone is in place in front of the Academic Building, a firing team fires a 21-gun salute in honor of those who died. Then buglers play Silver Taps and it's over.

"Tonight I experienced one of the most solemn feelings I've ever had and feel so good inside. Mom, Dad — it was just like God Himself was there with us. I guess you're wishing I would grow up and quit carrying on like this over Silver Taps — but was so, I can't even tell you how it was, there's nothing else like it.

"Be careful and I love you both. D.C."

Three weeks after Don Coward wrote this letter Silver Taps was held again. This time the ceremony was held for Coward and two of his friends who were killed in an automobile accident.

I'm not crying because of what I'm going through — but rather because I've experienced tonight what A&M is all about. Mother and Dad, we're one big family here and now I know what it means to be an Aggie. Tonight was Silver Taps.

— Don Coward in 1968

the renovation of the Memorial Student Center in 1975, chimes were used again.

Silver Taps is held the first Tuesday of each month, if a student or graduate student has died since the previous ceremony. September's Silver Taps is the only exception — it is held on the second Tuesday.

Notices of the ceremony are posted at locations around the campus and at the base of the flag pole in front of the Academic Building.

In October 1968, a freshman wrote this letter to his parents after attending Silver Taps.

"Dear Mom and Dad, "Right now it's 11:00 and Call to

SCOTT & WHITE CLINIC, COLLEGE STATION
1600 University Drive East

Audiology

Richard L. Riess, Ph.D.

Cardiology

Dr. J. James Rohack

Dermatology

Dr. David D. Barton

Family Medicine

Dr. Art Caylor

Dr. William R. Kiser

Dr. Walter J. Linder

Dr. Richard A. Smith

Dr. Kathy A. Stienstra

Dr. Robert Wiprud

General Surgery

Dr. Frank R. Arko

Dr. Dirk L. Boysen

Internal Medicine

Dr. Valerie Chatham

Dr. Alton Graham

Dr. David Hackethorn

Dr. Michael R. Schlabach

Obstetrics/Gynecology

Dr. James R. Meyer

Dr. William L. Rayburn

Dr. Charles W. Sanders

Occupational Medicine

Dr. Walter J. Linder

Ophthalmology

Dr. Mark R. Coffman

Orthopedic Surgery

Dr. Robert F. Hines

Otolaryngology

Dr. Michael J. Miller

Pediatrics

Dr. Dayne M. Foster

Dr. Mark Sicilio

Plastic Surgery

Dr. William M. Cocke, Jr.

Psychiatry

Dr. Steven Kirk Strawn

Psychology

Dr. Jack L. Bodden

Radiology

Dr. Luis Canales

Urology

Dr. Michael R. Hermans

Health Education

Sally Scaggs, RD

Call 268-3322 For Appointment

R1

Rudolf Nureyev will dance just a few places in America this year.



One of them is right here.

Rudolf Nureyev is one of the greatest, and certainly most famous ballet dancers of all time. Since his world-rocking "leap to freedom" from the Soviet Union in 1961, he has electrified the world of dance. He has danced with all the world's great companies, including the Paris Opera Ballet, which he now directs.

MSC OPAS 16 will present Rudolf Nureyev and Friends, the Paris Opera Ballet, as just one of the seven great performances on this season's Music Series. In addition to his performance here, he will host an informal reception after the MSC OPAS performance.

Only OPAS 16 season ticket holders will be guaranteed tickets to this sure sell-out. Don't wait for single tickets and miss this rare opportunity. OPAS 16 season tickets are now on sale for the Music Series, and for the Theater Series, which will bring six hit Broadway performances including "My One and Only" and "A View From The Bridge". Order yours today.

Tickets on sale at the MSC Box Office, Rudder Center, Credit card order by phone 845-1234.



This season we bring you the world.

MSC Opera and Performing Arts Society • Memorial Student Center of Texas A&M University

Aggie ring represents effort; only seniors eligible to order

By Anita Arnold
Reporter

The Aggie ring, a symbol of hard work, has been one of Texas A&M's traditions for almost 100 years.

The oldest known Aggie ring belonged to the Class of 1889 and featured the letters AMC intertwined on the crest. But in 1894, E.C. Jonas designed a ring that included the current symbols.

"The design of the Aggie ring is as deep in symbolism as it is in tradition," Class Ring Director Carolyn Swanzy said.

Found on the top of the ring is a shield that symbolizes protection of the alma mater's reputation. The 13 stripes in the shield signify the 13 original states and stand for the patriotism of graduates and undergraduates of A&M.

The shield contains five stars that symbolize the phases of student development including the mind, body, spirit, emotions and integrity. Finally, the eagle is a symbol of agility, power and the ability to reach great heights and ambitions.

The State Seal of Texas is found on one side of the Aggie ring. The five-pointed star has a wreath of olive leaves around it which stands for achievement and a desire for peace. Live-oak leaves make up half of the wreath and symbolize the strength to fight.

The leaves are joined at the bottom by a circled ribbon to show the need of joining the two traits to accomplish one's ambition to serve.

The other side has an ancient cannon, saber and rifle that stand for the men of Texas who fought for the land and defended homesteads. The saber is a symbol for valor and confidence, and the rifle and cannon represent preparedness and defense.

The crossed flags of the United States and Texas recognize the dual allegiance to the nation and state.

Aggies had a chance to show this allegiance with the start of World

War II. Because so many cadets left for the war, the number of rings ordered dropped from 1,937 in 1943 to 639 and stayed at that level until the war ended in 1945. The order then jumped to 1,131 and has increased consistently with the growth and progress of A&M.

In 1963, when the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas changed its name to Texas A&M University, J.B. Sterns, Class of '99, started a permanent collection of rings to represent every class from the A&M College of Texas. Sterns collected rings for each class from 1899 to 1964. The Memorial Ring Collection will eventually include rings through the 21st century and are kept in the Clayton Williams Alumni Center.

Prior to 1933, several manufacturers were making and distributing the ring and anyone could order one. The Senior Ring Committee was formed to standardize the design of the ring and control its distribution. This control helps to preserve the tradition and integrity of the Aggie ring.

The L.G. Balfour Co. has produced the Aggie ring since 1948, and it can only be ordered through the Ring Office located in the alumni center.

"Before a student can place an order for a ring, a check form must be filled out so the Ring Office can make sure the student meets the requirements," Swanzy said.

To qualify for a senior ring, a stu-

dent must have completed 95 hours and have a 2.0 cumulative grade-point average and be in good standing with the University.

Transfer students must have 30 hours completed at A&M along with the other requirements.

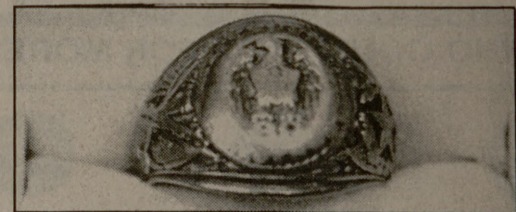
"When a student places an order the hours must be completed and a record except for in November and April," Swanzy said. "During the months students are allowed to make prepayments; however, orders are not processed until grades are posted for the semester."

The rings are custom-made in Massachusetts factory and are produced until the orders arrive, she said.

"The orders take two to four months to fill depending on the number of rings ordered," Swanzy said. "And the price of the ring fluctuate according to gold prices."

Traditionally, the A&M undergraduate wears his ring with the class number toward him. At Ring Dance in the spring, the ring turned so that it no longer faces the Aggie, but faces the world.

While the ring design is filled with symbolism and tradition from years gone by, another tradition is quickly finding its way into the hearts of Aggies. Many seniors are now dropping their rings into the bottom of a pitcher of beer as an initiation to the ring. According to followers of this new tradition, the ring can be removed until the beer is consumed by the owner of the ring.



1935 Aggie Ring

ADVERTISING INDEX TRADITIONS SECTION D

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|------|
| Aerofit..... | 9D | OB/GY..... | 4D |
| Animal World..... | 4D | On the Double..... | 5D |
| Brazos Valley Safety Agency..... | 5D | OPAS..... | 2D |
| Copeland Floors..... | 10D | Professional Computing..... | 11D |
| Diet Center..... | 11D | Schroepel..... | 11D |
| Douglas Jewellery..... | 5D | Scott & White..... | 2D |
| Engineering Office Supply..... | 10D | Student Affairs..... | 8D |
| Farmers Market..... | 3D | Superior Auto..... | 10D |
| First Baptist Church..... | 4D | Swensons..... | 10D |
| Gadzooks..... | 5D | Texas A&M Bookstore..... | 6,7D |
| Grace Bible Church..... | 5D | Twin City Bargain Furniture..... | 4D |
| Grapevine..... | 5D | Valley Cyclery..... | 12D |
| Joses/Zarapes..... | 10D | Wesley Foundation..... | 9D |
| Keyzers..... | 10D | Whataburger..... | 11D |
| Loupot's..... | 1D | Yesterdays..... | 5D |

CALL BATTALION CLASSIFIED 845-2611