

Tradition — the governing force of our meager lives

"Texas A&M IS tradition." How many times have those words rang in the ears of you students who, like me, have been here since 19-whatever? How many times did you incoming freshmen hear something to that effect during your "indoctrination" at Fish Camp and orientation seminars? How many times have the local airwaves carried a commercial from some bookstore or eatery that claimed to be "an Aggie tradition"?

The song never seems to grow old, does it?

Tradition was the aspect of A&M that really converted me to Aggieism during my first weekend in College Station. I saw the videos. I sang the songs. I yelled the yells. I stood in the lines.

It was like nothing I have ever felt before. And that's the truth.

I quickly developed the impression that the status quo was sacred at Texas A&M. That things were done the way they were because the students here wanted to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors. That change just for change's sake was unethical. Unholy, even.

Those idealistic visions were



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quickly and methodically demolished before my eyes.

I suppose practically none of you would know what I was talking about if I mentioned the "Albritton Tower scandal." The tower in recent years has become just another pile of bricks on campus — with a bunch of bells in the attic that tell students they're late to class during the day, and then tell them they're still awake at four in the morning.

It was much more in the fall of 1984, when I came on the scene. The Albritton Tower was the focus of intense debate from one end of campus to the other.

Mr. Albritton, you see, had donated some unbelievable amount of

money to the school for the purpose of erecting a bell tower with his name on the cornerstone. Harmless, you say. Well, thousands of students and faculty members — including myself — were of the mind that there were plenty of good uses for Mr. Albritton's money, like restocking the library. Why should we erect a huge monument to some Old Ag's ego when we could do something that was actually beneficial to A&M students and the world at large?

But Mr. Albritton earmarked the money for a bell tower. And a bell tower he got.

No other possibility was really an option, I suppose. After all, it was his money. But that didn't keep people from bellyaching.

The rumor, of course, didn't help matters. The rumor that we were getting a bell tower because that other school had a bell tower.

But up it went. And semester by semester, *The Battalion* "Letters to the Editor" torrent slowed down to a slow trickle, and then acceptance reigned on campus.

And likewise, the "women in the band" issue died out. Oh yeah, that

started in Fall '84 also. Bit by bit, people grew used to the idea that the Aggie Band could include female members — once anathema — and still remain the Aggie Band.

But that was a given, I suppose — no matter how many court cases our illustrious Board of Regents spent the University's money on. Remember if you will that the Corps of Cadets as a whole, and before that the entire University, wouldn't admit women.

A&M also was in court, if you will recall, to protect its stance on Gay Student Services. (What a semester that was!) The regents were standing on the idiotic premise that GSS was a purely social club, kind of like a dating service. And it was school policy that social clubs (such as fraternities and sororities) could not be officially recognized.

Of course, it was widely rumored that the regents were perfectly willing to break with tradition by recognizing frats, but refused because it would logically mean accepting GSS as well.

Well, that ship sank in a hurry. And now greks and homosexuals

alike have the honor of knowing that the University higher-ups admit that they do, in fact, exist. And five years later, both groups exist in relative peace. *Relative*, I said.

By the time I ran screaming out of my Biology 103 final that December, I had started to develop quite a new philosophy of tradition. It was, and is, hardly revolutionary. But it is somewhat modified. You can take it for what it's worth.

Tradition, it seems to me, is something to be accepted by each individual — not something to force upon another. One dorm, for example, has a "tradition" of not walking on the grass in front of the All Faith's Chapel. Fine. And its residents have gotten extremely irate when nonresidents have violated this tradition — which they may or may not have ever heard of. Not so fine.

Individuals start traditions. Other individuals follow them. And down the line some more individuals may decide the tradition wasn't such a great idea, and it dies.

And through the say-so's of A&M students through the years, various "never-say-die" traditions have fallen by the wayside, to be trodden underfoot by dozens of liberal arts

majors in Sigma Phi Sigma sweatshirts.

I'm terribly afraid that in clamor and fuss raised over the honor, or not to honor "something," we've forgotten what *really* sets University apart from the others: not the tradition — it's the people who keep (or don't keep) the tradition.

Texas A&M is special because you can walk across campus and make eye contact with people, they might not say, "Howdy," chances are very good they'll say something. Especially if you're something first.

It's special because of the camaraderie that exists between classes and, indeed, total strangers who attend school together — and continues for a lifetime.

It's special because we don't cheat, steal or tolerate those who — at least in theory, even if they do break down in practice — do so.

And those traditions — not cutting, whooping or slamming liberal rag campus paper — are traditions that make Texas A&M my humble opinion, the greatest university in the world.

Twelfth Man, ready to help, stands in support of team

By Richard Tijerina

Of The Battalion Staff

Standing in the hot sun for three hours watching a football game may sound like punishment, but it's a Texas A&M tradition that dates back almost 70 years.

One of the most well-known Aggie traditions, the Twelfth Man began in 1922 when A&M was playing Centre College in the Dixie Classic, the forerunner of today's Cotton Bowl. A student named E. King Gill stood ready to play if the team needed him. The student body now stands from kickoff until the end of the game to show their willingness to help the team.

Like Gill, they represent the Twelfth Man, ready to play for their team.

It was a cold and dreary day in Dallas on the day of that Dixie Classic. A&M was a heavy underdog in the game. Worse, A&M Coach Dana Bible was faced with the problem of an empty bench, many of his players stricken with injuries.

Gill, a basketball player and former football player, was called down

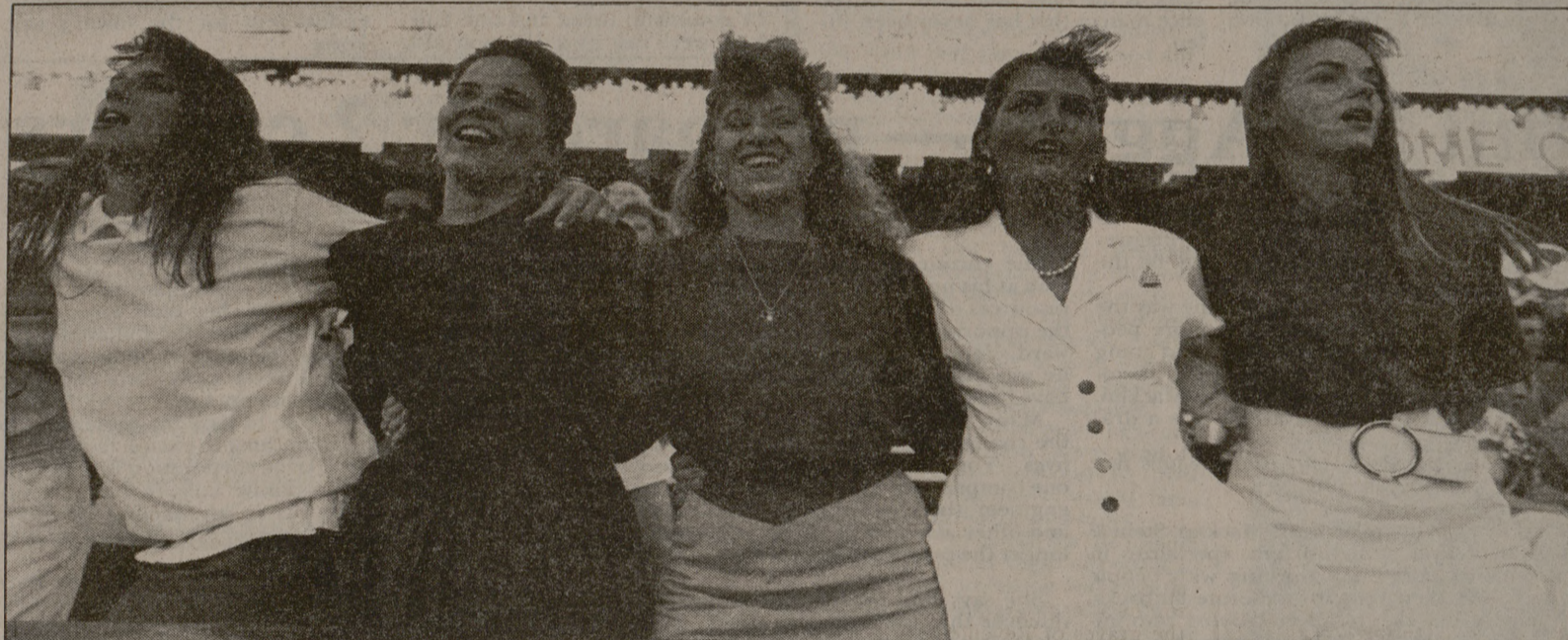
to the field and asked to suit up by Bible. He was shielded by blankets as he donned an injured player's uniform.

Although Gill never entered the game, he stood ready on the sideline and his presence gave the Aggie team the confidence to upset Centre College 22-14.

Gill wasn't the only student to suit up for the football team that day and no one is sure exactly when the Corps of Cadets started standing at games, but now it's a tradition that the entire student body stands and Gill is remembered as the original Twelfth Man.

The tradition was taken one step further when former A&M Coach Jackie Sherrill in 1983 started the Twelfth Man Kickoff Team, using student volunteers with no athletic scholarships to cover kickoffs during A&M home games. The idea came to Sherrill in Fall 1982 when he first visited the site where the Aggie Bonfire was being prepared.

Gill died of a heart attack in 1976 at the age of 74. A monument of Gill in his 1922 football uniform stands near the entrance to Kyle Field.



The dates of the five yell leaders put their arms around each other and sway to the music of "Saw Varsity's Horns Off" at the 1988 Texas A&M-Louisiana Tech game. Fans at A&M football

games stand during the entire game to symbolize their willingness to go onto the field and help the team if needed. This Twelfth Man tradition began in 1922.

Ozfest marks golden anniversary of movie

CHITTENANGO, N.Y. (AP) — It's not exactly somewhere over the rainbow, but this central New York village promises a resemblance to the magical land of Oz.

About 20,000 people travelled to this community of 3,600 people, 15 miles east of Syracuse for its annual Ozfest Aug. 14, which this year celebrated the golden anniversary of the movie, "The Wizard of Oz."

It's the biggest day of the year for Chittenango, the birthplace of Oz creator L. Frank Baum, said Ozfest Chairman Beverly Brickner.

The day was marked by a parade and other entertainment, people dressed up as characters from "The Wizard of Oz," and an appearance by the 73-year-old actor who played the Munchkinland coroner, Meinhardt Raabe.

The first Ozfest celebration was in 1978.

"For seven or eight years now here took it seriously, but now everybody realizes this is all worthwhile," she said.

The village now has visible signs of its Oz connections: a yellow sidewalk in the business district signs featuring Oz characters on the edge of the village; and Oz-inspired business names such as Aunt Em's Kitchen (which sells Oz cream), Emerald City Bowling, Over the Rainbow Crafts and Tin Man Confection Co.

Baum lived in Chittenango a few years after his birth in 1856. Brickner would like officials to put up a bronze plaque at the house where she has hopes of building an Oz museum.

"I'd like to even see us build Emerald City here," she said.

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