

Friends, relatives answer 'here'

# Roll called for absent Aggies during Muster ceremony

By BUFFY R. DOSKOCIL  
Special to the Battalion

A flickering candle. A tear in the eye. A solemn "here" to momentarily break the deafening silence.

Aggie Muster, one of the most sacred traditions at Texas A&M, is a way for Aggie alumni to relive friendships and days spent at A&M.

Muster began more than a century ago, in 1883, when former students, known then as ex-cadets, met "to live over again our college days, the victories and defeats won and lost upon drill ground and classroom. Let every alumni answer a roll call," as one cadet wrote.

These banquets and parties eventually evolved into the Muster of today.

A solemn ceremony is conducted every April 21 in G. Rollie White Coliseum to honor Aggies who died the preceding year.

Roll is called and a friend or relative answers "here" in memory of the absent Aggie.

Although the largest Muster is on campus, the ceremony is celebrated throughout Texas, the nation, and the world in more than 350 ceremonies.

The April 21 Muster date was set in the early 1900s to celebrate Texas' independence and to honor Aggies

who had passed on.

April 21 marks the day Sam Houston's small band of volunteers defeated Santa Anna's troops, freeing Texas from Mexican rule in 1836.

During World War I, Muster was not held on campus, but Aggies kept the tradition alive by meeting at military posts and even in trenches on the battlefield.

After the war, former students planned a nationwide rally to "meet old friends again and live over the days at College Station."

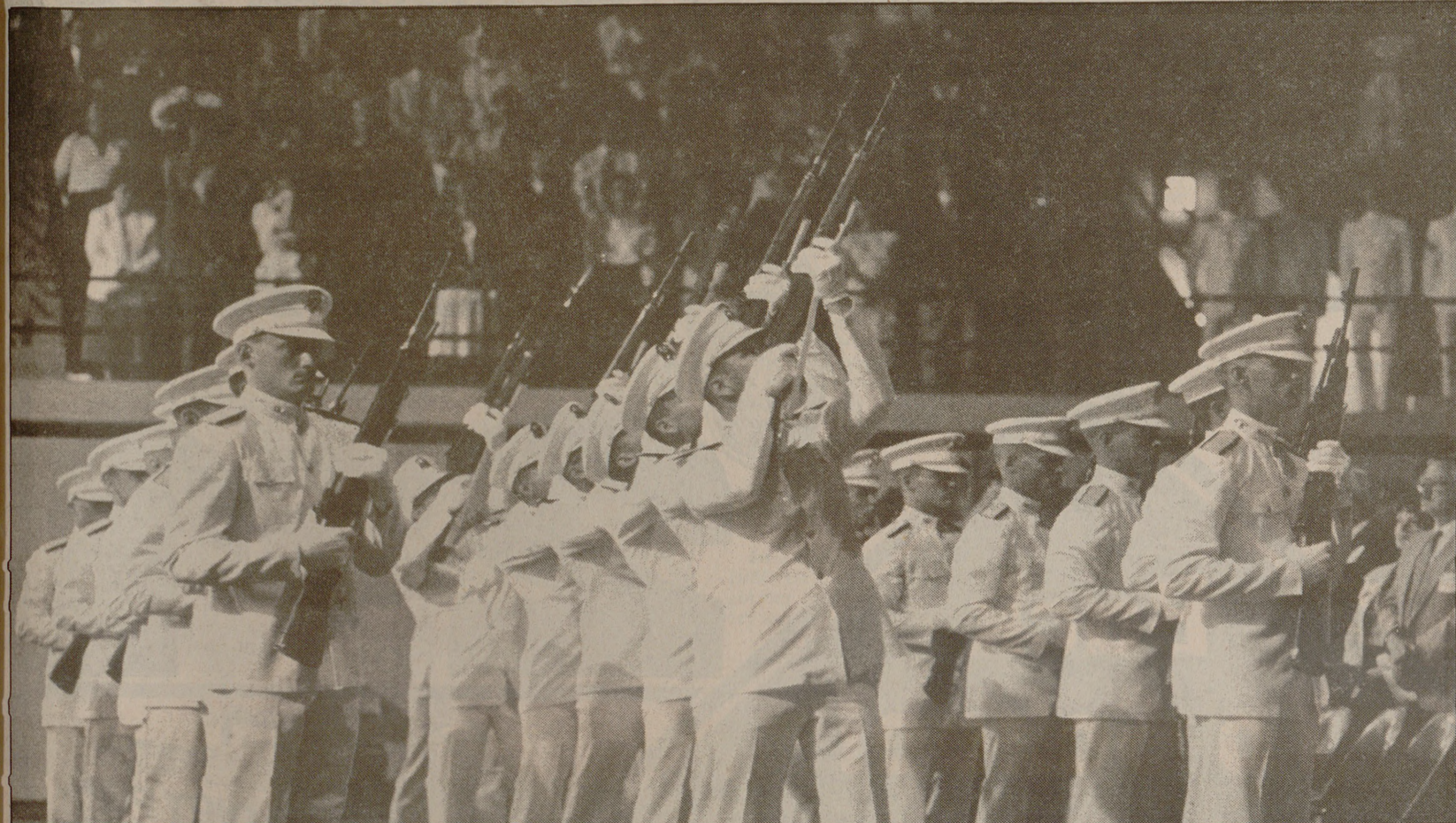
A 1923 issue of Texas Aggie magazine said, "If there is an A&M man

in 100 miles of you, you are expected to get together, eat a little and live over the days you spent at the A&M College of Texas."

World War II again brought Mustering Aggies together in foreign lands and under battle conditions.

Twenty-five men led by Gen. George Moore, Class of '08, had Muster on Corregidor Island in 1942, 15 days before the fall of the island. It also was reported that two men held Muster in a submarine.

Through the years, Aggie Muster has become symbolic of the great loyalty that binds Aggies to Texas A&M and to each other.



Battalion file photos

Relatives and friends join hands as they light candles during roll call for absent Aggies at Muster. (above) A candle burns for each name that is called until the floor of G. Rollie White is outlined with light. The Ross Volunteers fire a 21-gun salute in honor of the deceased during Muster. (left) This honor guard of cadets also participates in Silver Taps during the fall and spring semesters.

## Elephant Walk marks end Seniors make traditional trip around campus

Elephant Walk is a yearly tradition at Texas A&M marking the "death" of graduating senior class members.

During the event, graduating seniors — otherwise known as "elephants" — wander around campus holding hands and joined in links and lines.

While this is supposed to be a solemn time to remember experiences at A&M, Elephant Walk usually ends up wild and messy since passersby and the seniors themselves delight in using eggs, shaving cream and mud to mark one another for the occasion.

The tradition began as a ceremony for seniors wanting to walk around campus reflecting on college life as they prepared to enter the "real" career world.

Later, a twist was added to the ceremony when a lone junior stood in the window of his dorm room and acted as though he was "killing" the "dying" elephants. The act caught on and since has grown.

Today, graduating seniors still roam campus during Elephant

Walk, but members of the junior class "stalk" elephants with squirt guns, shaving cream and other weapons.

Wrestling matches often break out and a few members of both classes invariably are tossed into the nearest fountain.

Controversy came into play when some students broke their arms, legs and ankles. In Fall 1987, the councils of the Classes of '88 and '89 strongly discouraged juniors from wrestling the seniors and urged the preservation of Elephant Walk.

In the past, Corps of Cadets members participating in the walk on the quadrangle, or the quad, has been characterized by physical contact and activities such as wrestling, shaving cream bombs and egg throwing.

The path varies yearly, but it traditionally begins at the statue of Gen. Lawrence Sullivan Ross in front of the Academic Building, meanders around to the Chemistry Building fountain, Fish Pond and Kyle Field and ends at the site of bonfire.

## A&M senior rings provide visible symbols of tradition, unity, worldwide recognition



By ELIZABETH ELAM  
Special to the Battalion

If there is one thing that binds Aggies together besides endless hours of grueling courses on the same campus, it's tradition.

The most recognizable and sought-after symbol of tradition is the coveted Texas A&M senior ring.

All over the world Aggies are rec-

ognizable by the large gold ring worn on their fingers.

Stories abound about former A&M students finding other Ags by recognizing their rings and becoming fast friends in remote regions of the world.

The rings also have been known to find their ways home from wars, the bottoms of lakes and burglars.

The senior ring celebrated its centennial last year. The first ring was designed by E.C. Jones, Class of 1894.

In 1899, some A&M students got together and composed what is essentially the same design used today.

The uniqueness in the Aggie ring is that students only can choose a few minor cosmetic varieties when the ring is ordered.

Following senior verification, students can choose a rose or antique finish, a diamond on top of the shield and the inscription inside the ring.

The shield on the ring's top sym-

bolizes protection of the good reputation of the alma mater. The 13 stripes on the shield refer to the 13 original states and symbolizes the intense patriotism of A&M students.

The five stars on the shield represent phases of student development: mind, body, spiritual attainment, emotional poise and integrity of character.

The eagle represents agility and power and the ability to reach great heights.

The seal of Texas graces one side — a five-point star with a wreath of oak and laurel leaves surrounding it. This represents strength, but the desire to use that strength peacefully.

On the other side is a cannon crossed with a saber that represents the Texan determination to fight for home and family. On the same side the Texas flag is unified with the American flag.

Part of the ring's uniqueness is the fact they are protected by a ring committee formed in 1931.

The senior ring also is protected by a requirement that students complete 95 hours, 30 of which must be at A&M, with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0.

When an order is placed, the ring must be paid for. Women's rings currently are about \$150 and men's rings are \$250.

After students receive a senior ring, only one more may be ordered in their lifetime, no matter what the excuse.

The day the rings arrive, seniors rush to the Clayton Williams Alumni Center to pick them up.

Grins are contagious as students slip the large gold rings on their fingers for the first time. A fairly new step in the tradition is "christening" the ring.

The "ceremony" takes place at Northgate and the proud owner of the ring drops it into a pitcher of beer. The entire pitcher of beer is drunk until the ring slips into the owner's mouth.

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