

Aggie Thanksgiving

The longhorn-less Thanksgiving of 1994 was no fluke. Aggies will get another chance to really sit down and taste that cranberry sauce in all its bitter sweetness, since we won't be playing t.u. for another week.



ERIN HILL
COLUMNIST

be expected to invest quality time with relatives. There will be no return trip to Kyle Field to provide a rescue from a long day with odd kinfolk. And there won't be an Aggie-Longhorn game on television to occupy your mind, either. It'll be a Bear-Longhorn game in Austin instead. Basically, the only thing that will be bleeding maroon on Thursday will be grandma's undercooked turkey. Of course there is a true meaning behind this holiday, besides gluttony. It is an opportunity to take more time to think about and appreciate now that we won't have Aggie football on our minds. Of all of the major national holidays, Thanksgiving may be the least commercialized. Though there are stores that display merchandise in the hands of smiling buckled pilgrims, merchandising tie-ins with Thanksgiving icons seems to be less prevalent than, say, Valentine's Day, Easter or even the Fourth of July.

It's strange to change years of holiday habits, but with our entrance into the Big 12, who knows what will happen in the football seasons to come? November games against Texas may be a thing of the past.

Aggies may have to celebrate Thanksgiving like the rest of the country — on Thanksgiving Day. Some of us are probably out of practice, having perfected the art of eating a full-course meal in a matter of minutes before heading for Kyle Field to buy 'Pumpkin Chills' from stadium vendors and watch the pregame festivities, such as the Aggie Band spelling out "Stovetop® Stuffing" in perfect formation.

If we are to return to the days of yesteryear when Aggies and Longhorns didn't battle it out on full stomachs, we may need a little guidance on how this holiday is meant to be observed.

It will be hard if the only burnt orange on our minds comes from a pan of overcooked sweet potatoes, but Aggies must find a way to adjust and return to normal Thanksgiving Day observance.

For starters, Thanksgiving in Aggieland now begins on Tuesday before the national observance day, if not earlier. As anyone who has attended classes this week knows, the hallways of our University buildings are nearly empty, except for a few lone stragglers — A&M professors who didn't offer walks.

In years past, students stuck around for Bonfire, and therefore continued to attend classes through Wednesday. No longer will that academic activity be encouraged, however. Now that there's nothing really big burning down, people will start planning their departures the weekend before the big day.

Students won't be able to drink to excess after classes anymore since they have to show up at Mom and Dad's place the next day and start wielding the electric carving knife immediately.

The other big adjustment for Aggies will be the increase in the amount of time actually spent with family members. Instead of just breezing through



This might be because the holiday sentiment — gratitude — unites us, or else it's because there are only so many ways to make turkeys cute. Either way, Thanksgiving Day can actually be celebrated without a lot of money; the gifts exchanged — family and friendship — are intangible. I surveyed four classes of high

school students in Bryan, and asked them to share what they thought Thanksgiving was truly about. Overwhelmingly, and without surprise, the answer was that Thanksgiving was a time to be thankful for family and friends.

"Thanksgiving is a time for families to gather together and be thankful for all the blessings they have. It is a time to remember what our ancestors gave to us," said Daphne, a sophomore at Bryan High School.

No matter where we spend the holiday — a football stadium, college apartment or relative's home — college students can give thanks. Thanksgiving Day doesn't have to be traditional to be special, nor does it have to be special to be a cherished tradition.

More than any game or Bonfire, the most important tradition during this time of year should be gratitude.

Erin Hill is a graduate pursuing a teaching certificate

Editor's note: The following letter was submitted by Dr. Ray Bowen regarding his refusal to sign the Faculty Senate's U.S. and international cultures requirement.



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Office of the President
Ray M. Bowen

To the Texas A&M University Student Body:

I have today (Tuesday, November 21) announced to the Texas A&M University Faculty Senate's Executive Committee that I cannot approve the Senate's current proposal to add required courses in U.S. and international cultures to the University's Core Curriculum.

The reason for that decision is my belief that if it is adopted without a parallel set of administrative controls designed to monitor the implementation of the proposal the University would be harmed by the ensuing controversy. I also am reluctant to create a situation in which the Provost or any other academic administrator must play the role of "curriculum controller" in order to keep the current proposal from evolving, over time, into one that is not the moderate proposal originally made by the Senate.

My actions, however, should in no way be construed as an indication that I do not strongly support the educational emphasis that was the basis of the proposal. As citizens of the late 20th and coming 21st century, it is mandatory that all of us be aware of the contributions made by individuals from cultures other than our own. Our present curriculum offers literally hundreds of courses that can help enhance our understanding and appreciation for those around us and around the world. I urge all of you to take advantage of those courses and the many other opportunities offered on our campus for interaction and education.

I also am concerned about the possible negative impact this decision might have on our minority students, some of whom view the acceptance of the Senate proposal as a symbolic acceptance of their importance and our desire to have diversity. Allow me to assure you that I remain fully committed to all of our students — and equally committed to having an ever-increasing number of minority students in attendance here. This decision does not detract from either my personal or Texas A&M's institutional goal of having a university that truly represents the splendid diversity of our state and nation — an institution in which all are welcome and share fully.

Sincerely,

Ray M. Bowen
Ray M. Bowen



MAIL CALL

Faulty definitions from columnist

Once upon a time there was a columnist named Chris Stidvent took it upon himself to try and define Elephant Walk and Bonfire, and their true meaning.

In his Nov. 20 column, Stidvent stated, "It appears that mushy tomatoes are at least as important to some people when they think of Elephant Walk as the official parts of the tradition are."

Stidvent also went on to say, "It appears alcohol is at least as important to some people when they think of Bonfire as our school spirit is."

It appears to me that anyone who has to go looking for definitions of two of A&M's most sacred traditions is not quite qualified to write about them.

No one person can ever begin to put a formal definition upon such sacred events.

The day that any one person can sit down and write out what E-Walk and Bonfire are about is the day A&M becomes just another university.

That's what Texas A&M is all about — following in the footsteps of Aggies who have come before us, and upholding the things that they held important.

By doing this, we thereby create a different meaning in each of our own hearts regarding each of those definitions.

I think the search for true meaning in A&M tradition is best described by the following statement: "From the inside looking out, you cannot explain it. From the outside looking in, you cannot understand it."

I believe it is a disgrace to past, present, and future Aggies to associate such meaningful events with anything less than those ideals that always have been and always will be the fabric of our University.

So, I would suggest to Stidvent and his "neighbors" who personally associate E-Walk and

Bonfire with rotten eggs and getting drunk that maybe you should try to find a university you can better understand. Perhaps t.u. would do.

John Jordan
Class of '96
accompanied by 41 signatures

Bonfire more valuable than trees

This letter is in response to Marthanne Payne Aleman's Nov. 20 column. I don't see the reason why she is so anti-bonfire.

Aleman's an Aggie, we're all Aggies, and as such, we should support the many traditions that make Texas A&M so special. One of them is Fightin' Texas Aggie Bonfire.

I'm sure that most Aggies love it. I have very strong feelings about it, because it is my favorite of all the traditions here.

Aleman's letter claimed that Bonfire destroys "a service to mankind" by cutting down all those trees. I just have one question: Have you ever heard of Replant?

Yes, we replant all those trees cut down for Bonfire, so that we don't take away any "service to mankind" after all.

As soon as I read the title of this guest column, I realized that this was something that I could not handle. I'm sure that many students here felt the same way.

Should we let something that has been a tradition at Texas A&M since 1909 die, just because we have to cut down trees for it?

If you ever worked on Bonfire you would know how it feels.

If you don't feel the same way about Bonfire as most, if not all, Aggies feel about Bonfire, then I'm really sorry.

Juan Rodriguez
Class of '99

Groding out E-walk trashes tradition

Got a little question for ya, Aggies! What tradition has become an endangered species over the last few years?

Elephant Walk is indeed the correct answer.

Why? Because in the not so distant past, juniors have felt it necessary to "grode out" the seniors as they walk around campus reliving their memories. This is bad bull, Ags.

In the first place, not-yet-seniors are not supposed to know what an elephant is. et alone that they are walking around on campus reliving their last days.

Secondly, groding the seniors is not a tradition and never has been one.

If you read the letters of Old Ags or listen to their stories, the underclassmen respected the seniors and let them walk in peace.

Finally, the weekend which E-Walk precedes is important to the University as a whole. Thousands of parents and guests will be on campus for Bonfire and the t.u. game.

Do you really want to trash our campus in time for all those people to see it?

Do you want Longhorns to see our campus looking tackier than theirs?

Our campus is one of the nicest in the country, and groding out the seniors means groding out the campus, too.

The walk has been cleaned up tremendously in the last few years, and last year there were very few instances of groding. But the administration is watching closely.

If the juniors do not keep it clean, E-walk, an Aggie tradition, will be in danger.

So, please leave '96 alone. Come out to junior activities and celebrate becoming the leaders of the 12th Man with the rest of '97.

If you are an underclassman, please respect the seniors as well and stay away.

Don't trash the tradition. Keep E-Walk clean this year, as it was in Old Army Days, so that the Class of 1997 can walk.

Let's keep this tradition.

Courtney Lyons '97
vice president, Class of 1997

Beatles' influence more than hype

The current Beatles Anthology that Thomas Arnold dismissed as hype in his Nov. 21 mail call letter, is simply a last farewell and much-deserved tribute to the most influential artistic and social phenomenon of the 20th century.

The American music industry in the early 60s was largely a commercialized, fabricated and superficial mush.

Following the tragic deaths of Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran, Elvis's draft into the Army, Chuck Berry's imprisonment in 1956 and the Jerry Lee Lewis scandal, it seemed as if the Rock and Roll spirit pioneered in the 50s by these men was fading.

However, the indomitable spirit of rock was kept alive in the burgeoning music scenes of the English cities of London, Manchester, Newcastle and primarily Liverpool.

Leading this glorious rescue charge into America was a group of musicians from Liverpool, the Beatles.

They created a rich, musical revolution with a tremendously creative approach to songwriting, both lyrically and musically, that challenged the conventional notions of disposable pop music.

There have certainly been talented artists since the Beatles, however none of those artists have been as influential.

From Oasis to Melissa Etheridge to Tom Petty and the late Kurt Cobain, the Beatles' music touched many.

I wonder if Arnold has ever written any timeless music. Ask me about the Beatles "a year or two from now," and I'll say one thing: Magic.

Jorge Uceda
Class of '94

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald. A valid student ID is required. Letters may also be mailed to: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald Fax: Texas A&M University (409) 845-2647 College Station, TX E-mail: 77843-1111 Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

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EDITORIAL

CULTURE CRASH

Bowen's decision to reject the cultures proposal will hurt A&M.

At last, the decision has been made. With one decision, Texas A&M President Ray Bowen finally put to rest a debate that has been raging across the University for more than two years.

In a letter Tuesday to the Faculty Senate, Bowen said he cannot accept the Senate's proposal to implement a six-hour cultures requirement in the University's core curriculum.

Bowen's decision is disappointing and shows that the University is willing to succumb to political pressures at the expense of improving education.

Throughout Bowen's letter to the Faculty Senate, he contends that the Senate's proposal is "sensitive," "well-planned and moderate," yet he refused to approve the plan because he fears that if passed, a cultures requirement might evolve into something radical and that outside support for the University would decline.

In a letter to the entire student body, Bowen asserts that, "it is mandatory that all of us be aware of the contributions made by individuals from cultures other than our own."

Bowen is correct in this statement. However, if he thinks that this knowledge is "mandatory," Bowen has a responsibility to mandate it.

In his letter, Bowen said that he had received "approximately one hundred irate letters, twenty to thirty irate telephone calls, and approximately five hundred concerned conversations with people opposed to a 'multiculturalism' requirement at Texas A&M."

The only opinions that should be considered in deciding on such a proposal are those of the current students, the faculty and the administration.

However, at least a decision has finally been made. For far too long, the fate of the cultures requirement has remained in limbo, and this stalling has proven unproductive to all involved.

The Faculty Senate should be commended for its action throughout the debate. It is the one institution that has remained firm and consistent with its vision and recommendations.

The Student Senate, however, has shown a lack of cohesiveness and an inability to take a firm stand behind a decision.

The proposal the Student Senate eventually adopted was extremely weak and served no purpose other than to escape criticism of the organization's inactivity. As a result, the Student Senate has shown the student body that there is a reason for the organization's lack of power.

After two years of heated debate, Texas A&M now finds itself back at a starting point. Race relations on campus still need work. And many students are graduating with no real understanding of cultures beside their own.

The Faculty Senate's proposal was a step in the right direction that should have been followed by other organizations.

Because both Bowen and the Student Senate have chosen not to follow, no progress will be made. And as a result, the University and the quality of our educations have been slighted.