

Aggielife

Women at

Story by Meredith Hight

Graphic by Brad Graeber and Brandon Bollom



At Right: Today's female leaders, ready to take A&M into the next century (from left to right) are **Amy McGee**, Speaker of the Student Senate, **Kelly Garrity**, Deputy Corps Commander, and **Laurie Nickel**, Student Body President.

Below: **Sonja Faye Oliphant** was the first female veterinary student at Texas A&M in 1963.

A tradition for 35 years



AGGIELAND FILE PHOTO

SEE WOMEN ON PAGE 7.

Women know to appreciate love and honor our men, but we also know that a fix Eve got us in in garden of Eden. Let's not let that happen at A&M."

Gordon Wisenbaker, Class of '65, in a letter dated May 8, 1963 to Texas Governor John Connally, opposing the admission of women to his alma mater Texas AMC.

Wisenbaker was not shy about voicing his unhappiness with the decision of the Board of Directors in April 1963 to admit women to the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas.

In 1963, TAMC was changed to TAMU and the A&M did not stand for Agriculture and Mechanical anymore.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the decision, which allowed "qualified A&M students on a day-student basis to all graduate programs and to the school of Veterinary Medicine."

A&M would also admit to undergraduate programs "qualified women who were either A&M staff members or the wives or daughters of students and college employees."

After 92 years as an all-male military institution, the leaders of A&M had decided to open its doors to women.

The decision ran under such headlines as "Tradition Shattered" in the *Dallas Times Herald*, and was greeted with dissension by many former students, one of whom turned in his Aggie ring in protest.

In a *Houston Post* article from Apr. 28, 1963, several students shared their reactions. Howard Conner, Class of '65, said he thought of A&M on the same level as West Point, and could not imagine West Point going co-ed. West Point was the first military academy to accept women.

The student body president, Sheldon Best, said in the article he "was really disappointed, and hoped against hope that they wouldn't do it."

However not all reaction was negative. Colonel Eugene C. Oates, Class of '41, did not find fault with the ruling.

"Maybe I've been away too long, but I frankly don't see anything wrong with it," he said.

Dr. Sara Alpern, associate professor of history, said the decision came down as part of a national civil rights and women's movement and also as a reaction to legal and economic pressure.

"We had legal pressure to admit women. We were experiencing economic loss by not accepting women," she said. "For example, our growth was 29 percent compared to 70 percent at the University of Texas. That affected our Permanent University Fund."

The Corps of Cadets did not organize a protest or demonstration in reaction to the decision from the board. That could be because Gen. Earl Rudder, president of the University at the time, orchestrated the students' activities to minimize their free time.

A letter from Bill Bammel Jr. and Gene Edelman, both Class of '65 and representatives of Company F-1, describes a series of events that prevented students from having a say in the matter.

The two men wrote the letter in response to Texas newspapers that described the atmosphere at A&M as "calm." In the letter, they said they felt the papers insinuated the students were happy with the decision.

Bammel and Edelman argued that the Board of Directors made its decision on a Saturday. On Friday, the Corps of Cadets had been given a dismissal from Saturday Drill for the first time that year. Most students went home, unaware that the directors meeting was taking place.

Need A Lift?

Join us at First Baptist Bryan this Sunday!

On Campus Bus Pick Up 9:15 a.m.

Quad • Commons Fish Pond

Welcome Back Brunch Free Food!

Texas Avenue at 28th Street Just 4 Miles North of University Drive

www.fcb.com

The longer you wait... The BIGGER it gets!

THE LEGENDARY

RUN DMC

JUST ADDED

APPEARING LIVE

JERRY JEFF WALKER

PAT GREEN

The AG KICKOFF

Also ROGER CREAGER

WEDNESDAY

SEPT. 23, 1998

VANILLA ICE

Limited Amount of Tickets Available at: MSC, Rothers, Dudley's, Disco Round or 1-800-333-7188