

## Ladies First

### History of first women attending Texas A&M reveals mixed emotions

BY BETH FOCHT  
The Battalion

In April 1960, enrollment at Texas A&M was slightly more than 8,000, making it the fifth largest public college in the state. Handed down from the board of directors was the solution to this enrollment problem — the official admittance of women to the University for the fall semester of 1963.

According to the University archives, 183 women began the school year in 1963. These women faced hardships and hurdles to integrate A&M and brought many "firsts" to the University.

Women can be included in the University's history before this momentous occasion, dating back to 1893, when the first woman attended classes.

Ethel Hutson, the daughter of a faculty member, was a lecture student from 1893 to 1895 and the first woman recorded to have taken classes at A&M.

Eight years later, Ethel Hutson's twin sisters, Sophie and Mary, completed the course work required for civil engineering. They were given certificates of completion but not diplomas.

In 1925, 30 women were enrolled at the University. This was also the year Mary Evelyn Crawford received the first degree awarded to a woman. It was also the last year until the Depression that women were allowed to be enrolled.

The Depression forced the financially strapped A&M to once again open its doors to women.

At this time, the board of directors allowed daughters of faculty and staff members to enroll but not any other women. This led to the first court case in 1933 to let any woman into the University who wished to attend.

Dr. Fran Kimbrough, class of '69 and one of the first women to receive both her bachelors and masters degrees at A&M, said there were conflicting opinions by many people, including herself, about letting women attend the University.

"I definitely had mixed emotions about Texas A&M letting women in," Kimbrough said. "I have lived in Bryan all my life and at first I did not want the change because I thought it would spoil the traditions that I had seen make A&M great, but when I was making the decision to go to college, I knew A&M is where I wanted to go."

Even though women were being admitted to the University, the first years had certain requirements that made women eligible to attend. Only those whose fathers were connected to the University in some way or wanted a specific major only found at A&M, like pre-veterinary or certain engineering degrees, were allowed in.

Kimbrough said the reason she was able to attend was her father's connection with the University.

"My father worked at the Agriculture Extension Service and I wanted

to major in pre-vet," she said. "Most women on campus were professors' daughters or wanted to pursue a certain degree that could only be found at A&M."

Women had many hurdles to overcome during the first years at A&M.

Many had to deal with mixed emotions about them attending the college and all dealt with the inconvenience of the minimal facilities for women on campus.

Kimbrough said a big problem for many was the lack of women's restrooms on campus.

"The main facilities for us were in the Academic Building and we were always complaining that there needed to be more," she said. "We were not required to take P.E.s because the University did not have the facilities for us."

On-campus housing was not made available for women until the 1972-73 school year, when the Krueger and Dunn residence halls were opened to women.

Kimbrough said when she was at A&M, there were no on-campus residences for women.

"Most women lived at home or lived in apartments," she said. "If you were married to an Aggie you could live in married-students housing, but these were the only options women had."

The emotions felt by many students about women attending A&M was also a challenge faced in the first years of their admittance. Women encountered derogatory nicknames, nasty looks and being singled out in many classes because they were the only women present in class.

Kimbrough said she was leery about coming to A&M at first but knowing people made her experience less difficult.

"I had a lot of male friends at A&M, so that made it easier," she said. "Many guys were really great, but some of the looks you got, you knew the feelings were mixed about you being there."



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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JP BEATO AND GUY ROGERS

Pictures from the '68 and '72 AggieLand depict the first women to live in on campus and the reactions of fellow students.

Kimbrough said she felt like she stood out because she was a woman. "I was the only woman in a chemistry class in the big lecture hall in the old Chemistry Building," she said. "Sometimes being the only woman in a class was kind of neat, but it was also uncomfortable."

Kimbrough said the term "Maggie" was used to refer to the women at A&M.

"People called us Maggies, and we weren't — we were Aggies," she said. "This was a derogatory term and it was not a happy term. Some guys meant it mean and some did not, but we did not like it at all."

Not everything was difficult for these first women at A&M. Kimbrough said they enjoyed participating in the traditions, in committees and getting their Aggie rings.

"I participated in various MSC committees including the Host and Fashion committee, along with others," she said. "I had a lot of dates where I went to football games, basketball games and dances."

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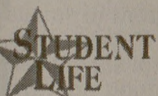
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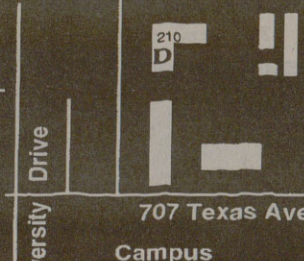
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