

HOWDY, Dammit!

Aggie traditions bring uniqueness and unity

BY BRADY CREEL
The Battalion

Howdy! We are the Fightin' Texas Aggies. As such, we live in a dynamic place called Aggieland, where "the spirit that can ne'er be told" is a staple of life, and that puts us in a league of our own.

There are more out there just like me. We call a red-ass attitude "diversity," and we live Texas A&M for all it is worth because, after all, we are only here for a small amount of time.

Some are here for longer than others, but eventually, we all come and go. However, regardless of our time spent here, we are bound by the thread that weaves the fabric of Aggie Spirit.

That spirit, which exists like a mysterious apparition in the hearts of Aggies, will slap the ass of every student who sets foot on this campus.

Some are smacked harder than others, so each turns a different shade of red — some lighter, some darker — but invariably, it is impossible to experience post-secondary education at A&M without being at least mildly affected. It will strike your heart whether you are willing to accept it, and it usually will shine through in both good times and bad.

But, at Texas A&M, there are two different genres of people — students and Aggies. They are distinctively different. I need not list or discuss the traditions that set us apart because, as the old adage goes, "from the inside looking out, one cannot explain it. From the outside looking in, one cannot understand it."

I pose this question to you: "What about those who are on the inside looking around, blind to what they have around them?"

Many cannot see it, but there exists on this campus another realm, separate from the outside world. It is a place surreal to those who have not found it, but reality for those who have. It is a world in which students are leaders, leaders are mentors and mentors are friends — and everyone is family. It is the realm of "Aggiedom" and the

"other education" at A&M. It is kept alive by a deep passion for being a Texas Aggie.

Granted, A&M is a first-class academic institution. But, for myself and many others I have met during my time here; that is mere coincidence.

When selecting a college, the fact that A&M is an academic powerhouse was just a sideshow, while being a Texas Aggie is the main event.

I am here, first and foremost, because I have, for as long as I can remember, wanted to live the legacy that gives A&M the identity for which it is known worldwide.

Students come to this campus in droves with this same thought omnipresent in their minds.

Some are met at Fish Camp by a group of counselors who at first seem overzealous in breeding a new class of red-ass freshmen. Others just venture, or rather stumble,

onto campus with the world of A&M unbeknownst to them.

There are those who are Aggies first, as am I. Qualities such as character, integrity and charisma become bred into our very existence.

These are virtues of the intangible asset we call Aggie Spirit.

You can stand at Silver Taps next week or at Muster and know exactly what I am talking about. You can even see it as you walk to class, heartily greeting others with "howdy."

Then there is the overwhelming sense of pride that you get as you see thousands of Aggies embrace each other as they sing the War Hymn.

Keep in mind that Aggie Spirit is defined as red ass, not redneck nor dumbass. I think it is important to distinguish them, for they are notably different. Those like me, who cherish the very maroon blood that

flows through their veins, know who they are and what they represent.

And at the moment — the very moment — they slide that Aggie ring onto their fingers, they have plugged themselves into the most allegiant, incredible network with tentacles that cover the breadth of our world.

As long as there are Texas Aggies in this world, there will always be a spirit that can ne'er be told.

Traditions can be annoying and alienating

BY ERIC DICKENS
The Battalion

Hi, my name is Eric and I am an Aggie.

I would have said "howdy," but saying "howdy" ticks me off. I am not a "two-percenter," a "skim-milk Ag" or a "T-sip wannabe." I love A&M and College Station and take pride in my school and community. But there is a very pronounced line between useful traditions that invigorate students and build unity and those that are just plain idiotic.

"Howdy" is the poster child for the second category. Traditions, on the whole, are good things. Silver Taps shows reverence, and yells build fan enthusiasm during games. But just as traditions at A&M can be beneficial to the University and its students, they sometimes can cause more harm than good.

The inability to break tradition, or to do something just because it is a tradition can be disastrous.

More often, though, the problems with traditions are smaller, more interpersonal. A prime example of this is saying "howdy." The student body seems divided on the importance of "howdy" — some think the tradition is a way to keep the A&M campus friendly, while the other half thinks it is annoying and awkward. The truth is, "howdy" does have its place in specialized settings, but the way it is repeatedly thrust into our everyday lives, as well as the attitude of many of the people responsible for the thrusting, is juvenile and counter-productive.

There is nothing inherently wrong with saying "howdy." The official greeting of A&M is like any other group's official greeting — perfectly fine in some contexts. "Howdy" plays an integral part of Midnight Yell Practice and many Corps of Cadets functions, but the word should be kept in the stands and on the Quadrangle.

People who say "howdy" to strangers for no reason other than to be friendly should not be surprised or offended when somebody like me replies with a muffled "hawdy" or simply says nothing. I reserve the right to be anti-social and to not have to be friendly to strangers, especially when that friendliness involves my sounding like I should be on a tractor with a toothpick in my mouth.

Saying "howdy" while walking across campus is a crapshoot, just like any other outgoing behavior. "Howdy" should be saved for events like Midnight Yell Practice, not for when I am trying to get to the other side of campus

and the sun is about 30 feet from my face.

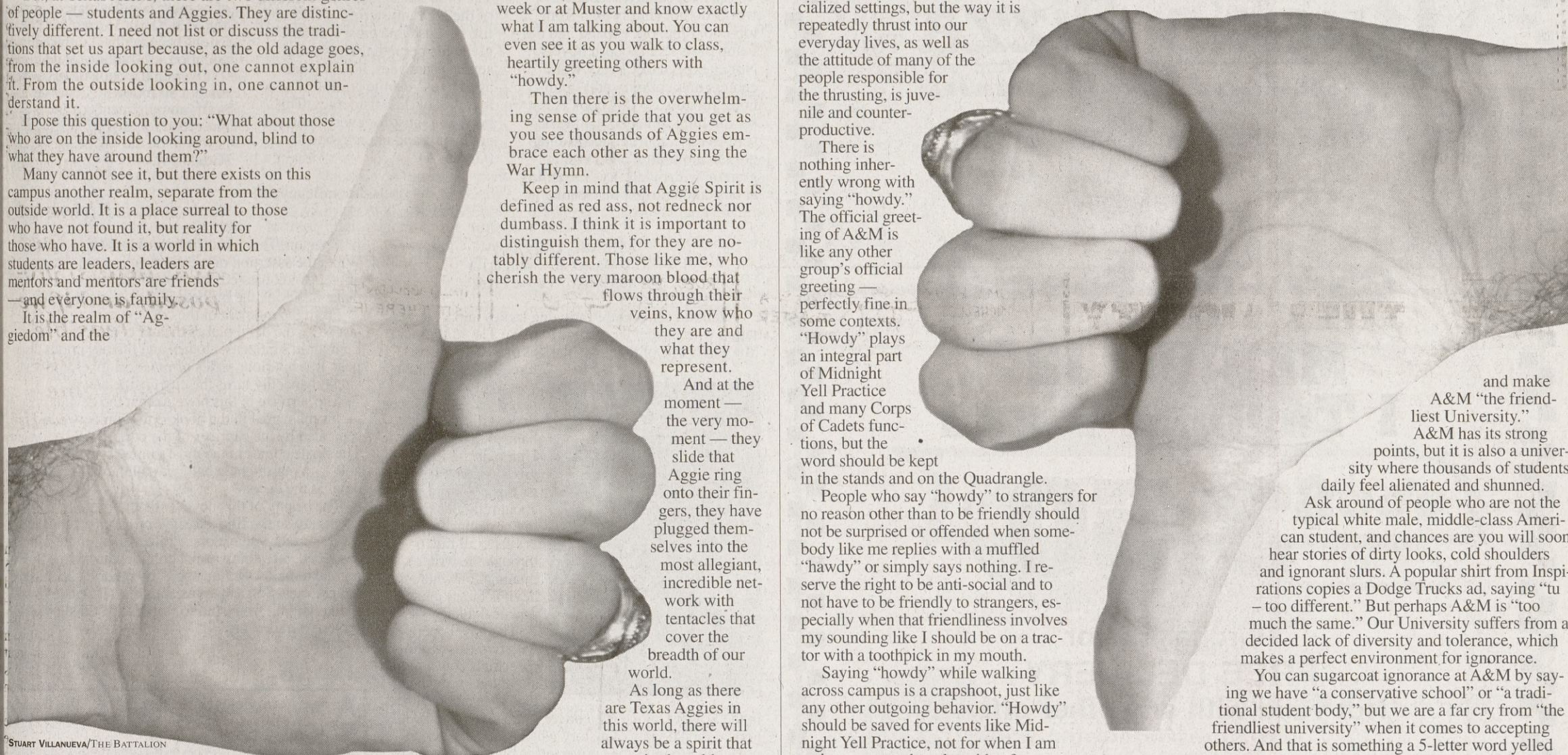
At no other time is the annoying nature of "howdy" on full display like it is during Howdy Week. Passing out stickers is par for most events, but Howdy Week seems to bring out the zealot in some students. Forget being anti-social, I just want to get through the MSC or Commons Lobby without having somebody jump in front of me yelling "Howdy!" or a sneaky Howdy Ags! member slap a sticker on my backpack without asking.

And while giving me a sticker I did not ask for is an effective way to make me change my mind, the human chains of people spilling out "howdy" on their shirts really makes me want to embrace the word as they further clog the walkways on campus.

Then there is the Howdymobile — a sad group of people driving around campus yelling "howdy" at nobody in particular. In the degree of pointlessness, the Howdymobile is right up there with the time, during my freshman year, my dorm crew chiefs dragged me and my "new buddies" around campus yelling foul-mouthed and idiotic dorm yells at the brick walls of rival dorms.

The most juvenile part of "howdy" and Howdy Week is the naive way their supporters believe the tradition will truly help student relations on campus

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STUART VILLANUEVA/THE BATTALION

— Justin Best
Corps of Cadets
Scholastic Sergeant

its simplest form, the program requires cadets to complete part of their degree plan by their freshman year to be promoted to sophomore status in the Corps of Cadets. Scholastic Sergeant Best said the forum was a good step toward improving cadets' education. "We will look at the ideas (the OC deans) proposed, and if we see a feasible way to implement some changes, we will," he said.

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AGGIElife (ISSN #1055-4726) is published weekly on Friday during the fall and spring semesters and on Thursday during the summer session (except during exam periods) at Texas A&M University. Paid at College Station, TX 77840. POSTNET: 77840-1111. Changes to The Battalion, Texas A&M University, Station, TX 77843-1111.

The Battalion news department is managed by the University in the Division of Student Media, Department of Journalism. News offices are at 124 Bell Building, Newsroom phone: 845-3313; Fax: 845-3314; Email: battalion@hotmail.com; Web site: http://battalion.com. Publication of advertising does not constitute endorsement by The Battalion. For campus, local, and regional advertising, call 845-2696. For classified advertising, call 845-2696. Advertising offices are in 015 Reed McDonald, and offices are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, Fax: 845-3678.

AGGIElife is a part of the Student Services Center. Student to pick up a single copy of The Battalion for mail copies 25¢. Mail subscriptions are \$60 per year (fall or spring semester) and \$17.50 for the semester. Payment by check, Discover, or American Express card.

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