

AggieLife

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THE BATTALION

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HOWDY!

Students, survey cite decline in use of traditional Aggie greeting

By KENDRA KINGSLEY
THE BATTALION

For freshman business major Ashley Bell, exchanging the time-honored greeting of "howdy" with other Aggies has shifted from A&M's standard salutation to a campus-wide mating call.

"The only people [who] have ever said 'howdy' to me were either in the Corps or using it as a bad pickup line," Bell said. "It's just an easy way to show your interest in another student."

Bell is not alone in noticing the greeting's amorous appeal.

Hong Chu, a junior international studies major, said the traditional welcome has become so strongly employed as a flirtation device that a gender bias has resulted.

"I have never had a girl say 'howdy' to me," she said. "Even though it's supposed to be a general greeting, I think some people feel weird exchanging something that might [have a romantic connotation] with someone of their own gender."

In addition to the absence of same-sex howdy exchanges, many students have simply ceased the tradition altogether. Chu said she noticed a definite decline in the customary greeting when she moved out of the dorms.

"Whenever I lived on campus, I heard people calling out 'howdy' on a regular basis," she said. "Now that I'm off campus this year, it's a different story. I haven't had one person say

['howdy'] to me since school started. People are on cell phones way too much, and since it's been raining a lot lately, everyone's busy trying to stay dry and get to class."

Because a sense of urgency often accompanies the start of each semester, students are often too absorbed with their personal agendas to think about engaging in one of Aggeland's oldest and easiest traditions.

Dustin Timmermann, a sophomore environmental design major, said students are more oblivious to keeping the howdy legacy alive than ever before.

"My dad took me to Aggie football games when I was younger, and it seemed like more people paid attention to the howdy tradition than they do now," Timmermann said. "Since I've been going to school here, I've noticed that other students seem to be more focused only on where they're going and what they're doing. They don't think twice about keeping up the tradition."

The fading exchange of an Aggie custom is startling given the publicity the campus has received for its tradition-rich culture.

Nathan Gatewood, a sophomore mechanical engineering major, said the exchange of "howdies" is rapidly decreasing in spite of the constant emphasis placed on A&M's time-honored practices.

"Fish Camp is the perfect example the school tries to [promote] the Aggie spirit early on," Gatewood said. "It teaches new freshmen to say 'howdy' and to keep the tradition alive, but after the beginning of

the year the only people who say it are either in the Corps or people who are trying to impress visitors."

While the howdy drought may stem from a gender gap or hectic schedules, Anthony Vasser, a senior electrical engineering technology major, said 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse is the underlying reason for the greeting's decline.

"Bonfire was the most unifying event for most students on campus," Vasser said. "The Corps has managed to [maintain] its unity, but the rest of the student body seems more distant, which may explain why howdy has decreased."

Although different theories struggle to decipher the reason for the decrease in Aggeland's mantra, a few indisputable facts remain.

As part of a statistics project, Megha Patel, a sophomore genetics major, decided to determine the factors influencing the "howdy" decline. Patel, along with four classmates discovered factors such as Corps membership, gender and location each had an impact on whether or not a student would exchange howdies with a tester.

"While our group only recorded 'howdy' responses [as opposed to 'hello,' 'hey' or 'hi' responses], our analysis concluded that the Corps response rate outnumbered the non-Corps response rate [87.68% to 51.74%] and males responded significantly more than females," Patel said.

Their findings also ranked locations

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Breakaway offers Bible study and music

By HEATHER CAMPBELL
THE BATTALION

What began as a group of four college guys meeting in their living room to study the Bible has grown into a group of 4,000 to 6,000 students now meeting every Tuesday in Reed Arena.

Breakaway is a non-denominational weekly Bible study. Gregg Matte, director and weekly speaker helped start Breakaway in 1989.

"Our main goal is to introduce students to a relationship with Jesus Christ and help them grow," Matte said. "We desire to present a real Jesus in a real world."

Matte said Breakaway is geared toward college students. He said it is a very relaxed atmosphere where students can get away from the pressures of college life.

Gretchen Lochry, a junior kinesiology major, attends Breakaway on a regular basis.

"I like it because when I'm there during worship I can sense God's presence," Lochry said.

Everett and Benard met at Texas A&M and continue in music ministry together.

"Ever since we started singing together, the Lord has been doing incredible things and blessing us with cool

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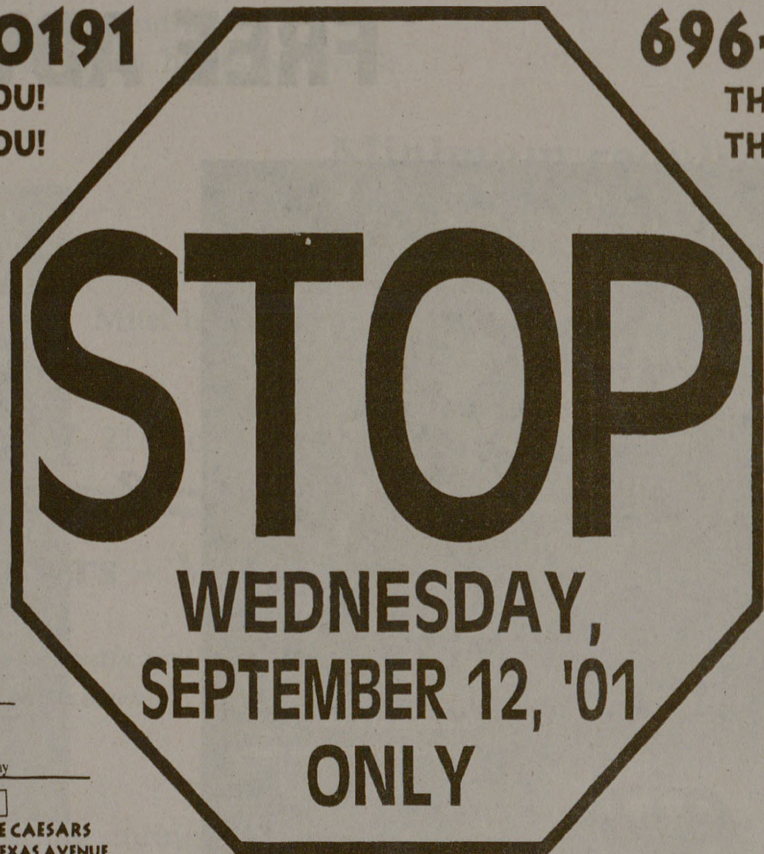
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