

Texas A&M University — Celebrating 125 Years

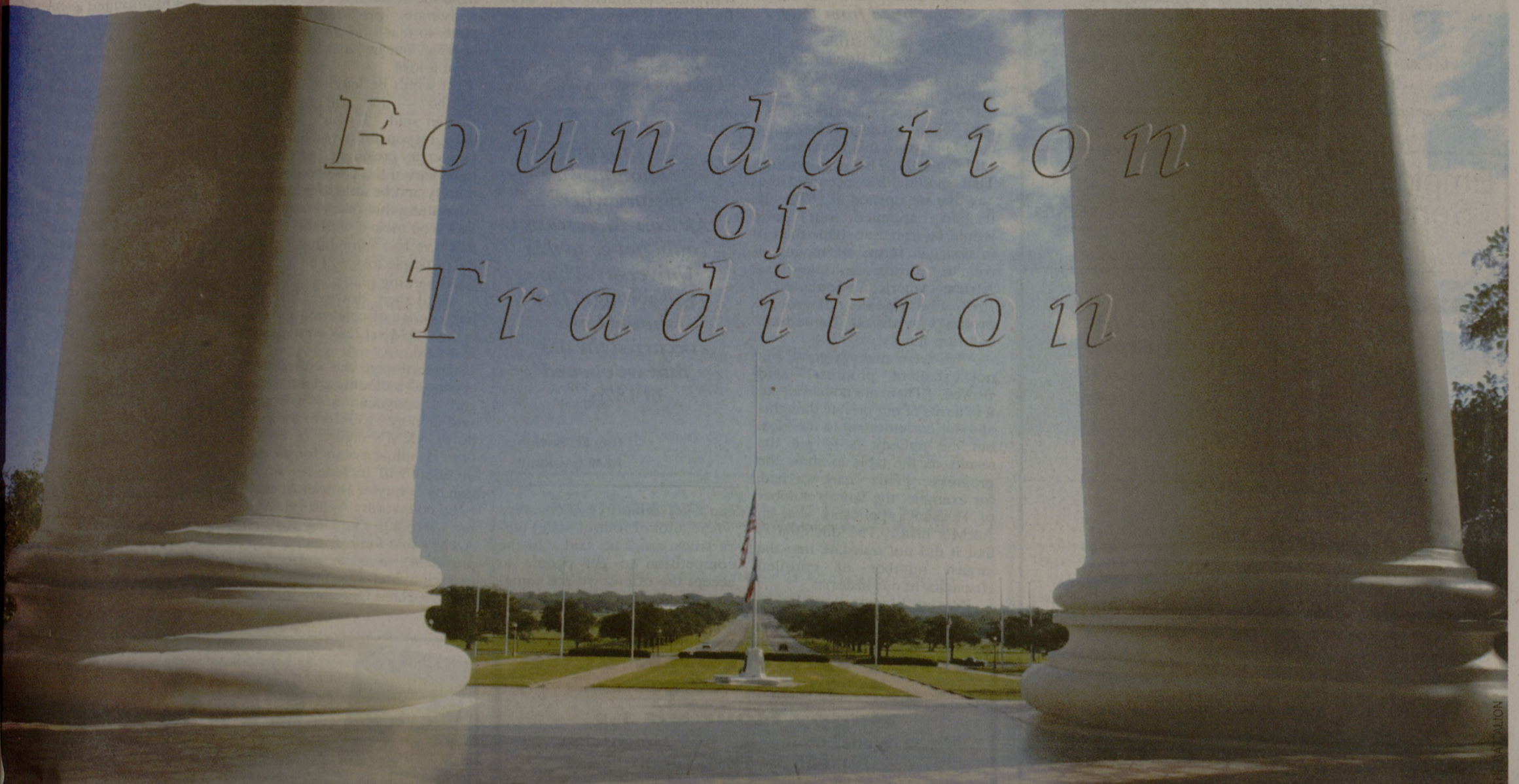
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Texas A&M celebrates 125 years

Convocation, birthday bash commemorate anniversary

By EMILY HENDRICKSON
THE BATTALION

A&M College of Texas opened its doors as the first public institution of higher learning in the state of Texas 125 years ago, tomorrow. Events celebrating the anniversary are planned for the duration of the year and will begin Oct. 4 with academic convocation.

"This is an opportunity for students and faculty to come together as a community to think about the past and future," said Janis Stout, dean of faculties and associate provost.

Convocation will begin in Rudder Auditorium at 2:30 p.m.

The featured speaker at the convocation is Harold Shapiro, president of Princeton University. A symbolic check will be presented to President Dr. Ray M. Bowen from the University Development Foundation as a symbol of all the monies raised from the past year, Stout said.

"It is a signature, formal occasion, and students might find it interesting and we encourage them to attend," Stout said. "Inviting representatives from other universities to attend important occasions is a practice that many universities follow."

Invitations were sent to all four-year universities in Texas, some two-year universities that A&M has special relationships with, the Big 12 universities and land grant colleges. As a result, more than 160 representatives will be traveling to A&M from across the nation, including representatives from France, Switzerland, Costa Rica and Mexico, said Nancy Sawtelle, director of administrative services.

The convocation itself is a procession from Cushing Library to Rudder Tower, where faculty, staff and students will march together. Faculty will be dressed in their formal graduation regalia.

"It is a fun, festive occasion. More than

300 people will be in the procession," Stout said.

A 125th anniversary coffee is going to be held the morning of Oct. 4 from 8 to 10 a.m. at the G. Rollie White Coliseum. Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to come, said Rose Sauser, with University Relations. A new video of the history of A&M will be shown. Also, a new portrait of Sterling C. Evans will be unveiled in the recognition suite in Evans Library at 11 a.m.

On Oct. 3, a birthday bash will be held to help students celebrate the University's anniversary. Events will start with a barbecue picnic sponsored by Food Services from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. on O.R. Simpson Drill Field. Aggie Bucks and meal plans will be accepted. Beginning at 6 p.m., bands and student groups will perform until 12 a.m., when an Old Army-style Yell will be held on the steps of the YMCA building, according to Veronica Saenz, chairwoman of the 125th Celebration Student Committee. At the yell's conclusion, the Brazos County Aggie Mom's Club will serve coffee and donuts, Saenz said.

"This event is for any student who wants to come and be a part of the 125th celebration," Saenz said.

A Black Tie 125th Anniversary Celebration Gala will be held in Reed Arena starting at 7 p.m. The Gala is by invitation only.

Bowen reflects on time at A&M

By KEVIN BURNS
THE BATTALION



BOWEN

Focusing on Texas A&M's 125 years of tradition-rich history, University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen just wants to "stop [his] normal activities and talk about issues which will affect [Texas A&M] in the future."

Yet it is Bowen's experience as a former A&M student that plays a heavy role in defining his appreciation for the campus of today.

"A&M in those days was a very good, solid kind of regional university," Bowen said. "The graduates in agriculture and the graduates in engineering were highly regarded within Texas. Nobody had any problems getting jobs."

The Corps of Cadets, a symbol of A&M's heritage, also played a major role in defining Bowen's strong ties to the campus.

"The Corps was a big deal, and a lot of the graduates were spending some time in the [service]," he said. "The feeling of threat was so significant people thought it was natural [to] spend a little time in the military."

Beyond the armed services, Bowen said he is confident that he and his fellow Aggies were well prepared for their careers.

"There is no doubt that I would be able to be successful in engineering practice," Bowen said. "I went to Cal Tech from here [and] didn't doubt my ability to work at that level."

Although Bowen regarded the university highly at that time, A&M has grown in prestige and notoriety, he said.

"What you learned when you got out of Texas was that most people didn't know [A&M's] academic strength," Bowen said. "That's what's really changed in the last many years."

As the president of one of the largest universities in the United States, Bowen said, the success leading into the monumental 125th year anniversary has stemmed from the talents of those who paved A&M's history.

"When I came here, A&M was on a strong pathway to having even greater academic recognition for the strength of all its programs," Bowen said. "I've done little to change that, since I've been blessed with the opportunity to sustain the good work of people that came before me."



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AGGIELAND
Ray M. Bowen was the deputy Corps commander in 1958.

Bonfire played major role in 90 of A&M's 125 years

By ROLANDO GARCIA
THE BATTALION

When the first Aggie Bonfire burned in 1909, it was a haphazardly built pile of wood and trash. Ninety years later, when the stack collapsed, killing 11 students, one former student and injuring 27, it had evolved into a 55-foot-high, layered structure of cut logs requiring tens of thousands of manhours to build.

Originally built off campus after a victory over the University of Texas (UT), the event became a Thanksgiving staple and came to symbolize

Aggies' "burning desire" to beat archrival UT. The event moved to campus in the early 1920s, and the stacks grew bigger and bigger. In 1946, students began using a "center pole" to build a taller stack. The tallest Bonfire ever constructed was in 1969, when it stood 109-feet, 10-inches high. Since 1970, Bonfire was restricted to a height of 55 feet and a width of 45 feet.

Bonfire moved from O. R. Simpson Drill Field in 1955 to the front of the Memorial Student Center, where it remained for 37 years. In 1992

it moved to its most recent location, at the intersection of University Drive and Texas Avenue on the polo fields.

The construction of Bonfire required months of preparation beginning with "cut," when students would go to a forest site designated to be cleared, and they cut the wood using axes. While some equipment and cranes were used during "stack," most of the work was done with manpower. Built like a layered cake, each log was lifted with pulleys and tied vertically in place with wire. The event was student led, with the design and

construction supervised by student leaders known as "red pots." The stack collapsed in 1994, but no one was injured and Bonfire was rebuilt within a week with the help of former students and burned on schedule.

But Bonfire, and Texas A&M, would never be the same after 2:42 a.m. Nov. 18, 1999, when the stack collapsed. A special commission, tasked with investigating the cause of the collapse, concluded that structural design flaws were the result of a "tunnel vision" approach by the University that

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