

# AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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## Where have all the howdies gone?

*Students wonder whether the traditional Aggie greeting is fading*

By Crystal Polasek  
THE BATTALION

Just a quick glance and they had passed him by. Not a smile, a wave, a greeting or even a second look. They hurried off, appearing unconcerned about welcoming a new student to the campus. Brian Hujowski, a sophomore biology major, compared his first day at college to being on a busy street in New York City.

"I was told I'd come here and everyone would treat you like family. But the truth was no one cared whether I felt welcome," Hujowski said. "I remember thinking to myself, 'I am supposed to be in College Station, not Grand Central Station.'"

Hujowski spent much of his freshman year at Texas A&M with only a few friends he had known in high school. He said it wasn't homesickness that made him feel isolated but that fellow Aggies didn't really exemplify the type of camaraderie he had heard all Aggies possess. He heard true friendliness existed on campus, not just on the football field.

"I spent two weeks in Aggieland before I heard someone other than a Corps member or Fish Camp counselor say howdy to me," Hujowski said. "I wondered, 'where had howdy gone?'"

Many A&M graduates and visitors have asked the same question. They say the greeting is not extended as openly on campus today as it was in the past.

Amanda Barnett, Class of 1988, said she believes the howdy tradition is a vital part of being an Aggie and, after visiting campus recently, fears it is facing extinction.

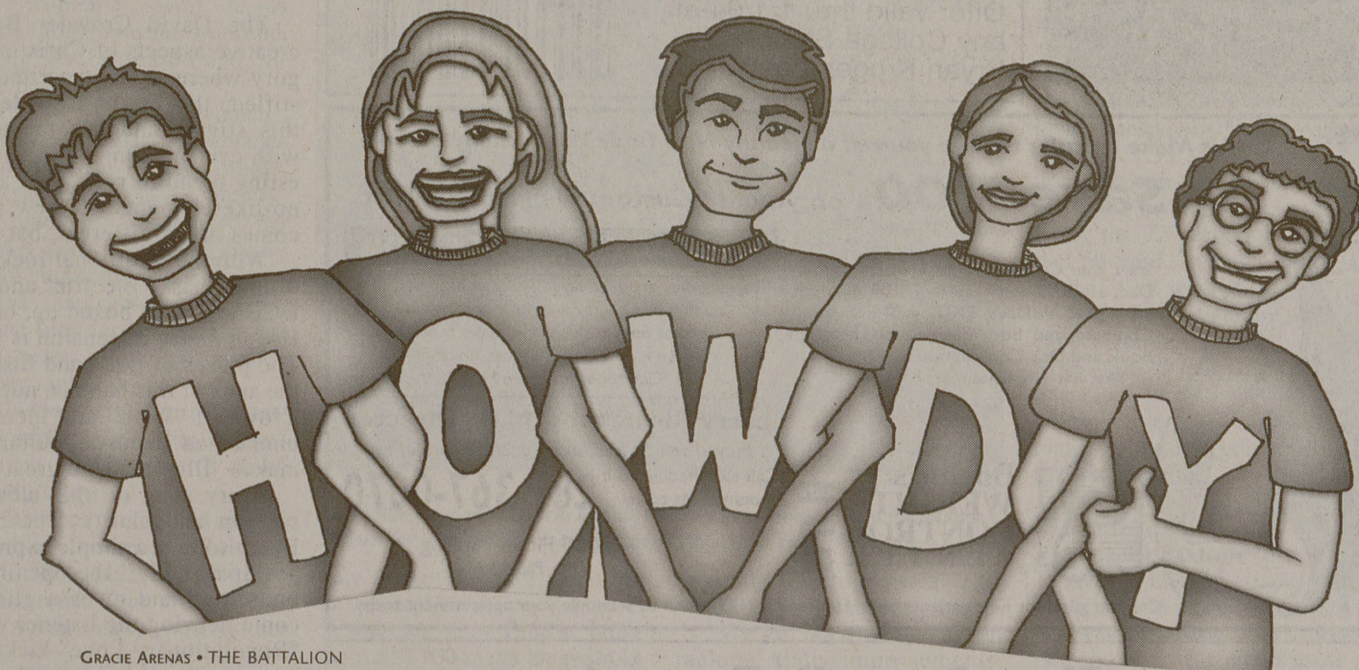
"I hadn't been on campus during the week since I graduated, but when I got here, it didn't feel like Aggieland. I walked from the (Memorial Student Center) to the Pavilion without having anyone say a word to me," Barnett said. "I said 'howdy' to a few people. They didn't even say it back."

Kurt Johnson, Class of 1996, remembered visiting the campus as a high school junior. He said the feeling of welcome was almost overwhelming because everywhere he went, Aggies would say howdy and look him in the eye.

"Ultimately, I decided to come to A&M because everyone was so friendly," Johnson said. "I wanted to be a part of the family here, and I think a lot of students come looking for that fellowship. When I felt depressed, I just walked around on campus and some fellow Aggie would talk to me or at least say 'howdy.'"

It may be true the howdy tradition is not carried on today as it was in the past, but while some Aggies want the tradition to thrive, some say they don't care if howdy exists at all.

"I know people will tell me I am a 2-percenter for saying this, but I don't really care if people say 'howdy' or not. I don't have time to stop



GRACIE ARENAS • THE BATTALION

and say 'hi' to every person I see on campus. I am too busy for that," said Steven Trent, a junior business management major.

Aggies who share Trent's indifference toward the tradition include Jessica Madison, a sophomore environmental science major.

Madison said she doesn't mind if people don't talk to her on campus and isn't too worried about the howdy tradition lasting. She said there are other traditions that are more important.

"Why can't we worry about Bonfire instead? Howdy isn't a very big deal. People say it now and then and there are shirts that say it," Madison said. "Why bother to say it to complete strangers? What is it supposed to mean anyway?"

Traditions Council says the word "howdy" has come to symbolize the friendliness of the A&M campus.

Jenny McBee, a senior chemistry major, is a member of Howdy Ags, a student organization that seeks to promote the howdy tradition on campus. She said howdy is in trouble and desperately needs to be said more among students. McBee also said there is more to howdy than friendliness.

"It preserves the camaraderie between us and keeps the Aggie spir-

it alive for everyone," McBee said. "It's a way of saying 'Hey, I'm an Aggie too! I'll be here for you if you ever need help,' or 'Hey, hope you have a good day. It's great to see you.'"

McBee said Howdy Ags was formed because there has been a severe decline in the use of the howdy greeting since 1997. She said it is rarely heard during the week just passing on the sidewalks and it should be used more.

To promote the howdy tradition, Howdy Ags has designated members to walk around on campus with coupons for free T-shirts. Aggies are encouraged to say howdy to people as they walk to class, and if they happen to greet a member of Howdy Ags, they could win a free T-shirt.

"I think it's a great idea. I don't want to see the tradition die before I graduate. I don't want to be in the class who failed to uphold an Aggie tradition," said Brittany Nickleson, a freshman English major.

"I don't want to greet someone in 20 years and just say 'hi.' I want to say 'howdy' because it means I am a true Aggie who cares about making sure people feel welcome around me. No one should feel lonely around an Aggie."

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