

## = Traditions of Texas A & M University =

The traditions of Texas A & M University are a key aspect of the culture of Texas A & M University . Some of the school traditions date to the 1890s , shortly after the opening of the school , while others have been introduced more recently . These traditions encourage current students and alumni ( Aggies ) to cultivate the Aggie Spirit , a sense of loyalty and respect for the school , and dictate many aspects of student life , including how to greet others , how to act at an A & M sporting event , and what words a student may use in conversation . The most visible tradition among senior class students and alumni is the wearing of the Aggie Ring , whose design has been relatively unchanged since its introduction in 1894 . Not all Aggie traditions are recognized by the university , and some , like Bonfire , have been discontinued for safety reasons . Texas Monthly states that the students ' respect for school traditions and values is the university 's greatest strength .

Incoming students are generally first exposed to traditions when they are greeted with the official Texas A & M greeting " Howdy " . Since the 1950s , incoming students have been offered orientations , led by current students , which teach the various traditions , songs , and yells in current use . On campus , the Texas A & M University Corps of Cadets is known as the " Keepers of the Spirit " for its staunch defense of Aggie traditions . A subset of the Corps , the Fightin ' Texas Aggie Band , is the official marching band of the university .

Many school traditions revolve around sporting events , especially football . Before games , university yell leaders host yell practice , similar to other schools ' pep rallies . Instead of cheers , students learn yells . Since 1922 , students , known as the 12th Man , stand throughout football games , symbolizing their willingness to step in and assist the team . The official mascot , a dog named Reveille , is present at most official university activities , including sporting events .

## = = Aggie Spirit = =

Current students and alumni at Texas A & M University , nicknamed Aggies after the school 's agricultural roots , are known for their loyalty and respect for their alma mater . They cultivate " the Aggie Spirit " through " an almost religious devotion to the traditions " of the school , some over 100 years old . As Texas Monthly noted , " Every Aggie is a self @-@ appointed guardian of the Aggie spirit , eternally on the alert for signs of slippage . " To Aggies , Texas A & M is " not just a university but a ... family , ... defined and united by a unique culture . " The school song is titled The Spirit of Aggieland , and proclaims in its first verse that the " spirit can ne 'er be told . "

The Texas A & M culture is a product of the university 's founding as a rural military and agricultural school . Although the school and surrounding community have grown , and military training is no longer required , the school 's history has instilled in students " the idealized elements of a small @-@ town life : community , tradition , loyalty , optimism , and unabashed sentimentality . " This respect for Aggie traditions and values is the university 's greatest strength .

Many of these traditions are part of what Aggies call " The Other Education " , activities designed to make students well @-@ rounded and " moral , ethical people " . Students who attend Texas A & M feel " that they receive ' more ' from Texas A & M than just the knowledge one acquires from the formal classroom and books . " Freshmen are introduced to these traditions and to the Aggie spirit at Fish Camp , a four @-@ day extended orientation retreat held during the summer . Current students organize and run Fish Camp , leading sessions on the Aggie Spirit , school yells , and other school traditions so that new students can " begin the process of feeling part of the extended Aggie family . " Fish Camp began in 1954 as a simple camping trip involving several new students and Gordon Gay , a former Student Activities director . The program has since evolved to accommodate approximately 70 % of incoming freshmen ; over 5 @,@ 600 Texas A & M students attended in 2008 . The program has been emulated by several schools , including Virginia Tech . In 1987 , Texas A & M established a parallel orientation for summer and fall transfer students called Transfer Camp , or T @-@ Camp . Howdy Camp also serves as a campus orientation program . Modeled after T @-@ Camp and Fish Camp , it is intended for freshman and transfer students who enter A & M in the spring semester . Students who choose not to participate in The Other Education are

known on campus as " 2 Percenters , " because going to class is only a small portion of experiencing Texas A & M.

= = = Howdy = = =

Many incoming students at Texas A & M choose to attend the campus because they feel that the students are friendlier than those at other universities . This perception is created partly by the Aggie tradition " Howdy " , the official greeting of Texas A & M University . Students are encouraged to greet everyone they pass on campus with a smile and a howdy . Howdy is the preferred method for a speaker to get a large group 's attention , as the members of the group are expected to return the " Howdy " back to the speaker .

= = = Gig ' em = = =

Aggies today will often end public addresses and emails to other Aggies with a hearty " Thanks and Gig ' em ! " . The " Gig ' em " tradition began at a 1930 Midnight Yell Practice held before the football game against the Texas Christian University Horned Frogs . In an attempt to excite the crowd , Pinky Downs , a 1906 Texas A & M graduate and member of the school 's Board of Regents , asked " What are we going to do to those Horned Frogs ? " Using a term for frog hunting , he answered his own question , " Gig ' em , Aggies ! " For emphasis , he made a fist with the thumb extended . The phrase and hand signal proved popular , and it became the first hand sign of the Southwest Conference . Gig ' em is also the name of one of the school yells , which is used during football kickoffs .

The university 's traditions council recognizes another possible origin for the expression . The word " gig " is used in the US Army to indicate an infraction of the uniform code , and the A & M cadets used the same vocabulary . New cadets would quickly learn to fear being " gigged " during inspection for having unshined shoes , unpolished brass , or a non @-@ aligned " gig line " .

= = = Aggie Ring = = =

The most visible way for graduates of Texas A & M to recognize each other is by the Aggie Ring . The Aggie Ring is worn by current students and alumni , and is one of the most well @-@ known symbols of the Aggie Network . The first Aggie Ring was designed by E. C. Jonas in 1894 , and the design has remained relatively unchanged since- the only major change came when the school 's name was changed from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas to Texas A & M University in 1963 .

The Aggie Ring cannot be purchased unless specific requirements are met : a current student must be in good standing with a minimum 2 @.@ 00 GPA on a 4 @.@ 00 scale . In addition , the student must have completed 90 hours of coursework , including at least 45 hours at A & M. Graduate students may receive a Ring after 75 % of their graduate coursework is completed . If your graduate degree requires a thesis , your Ring will be delivered on Aggie Ring Day if the thesis has been defended by the deadline set by the Office of Graduate Studies . If the thesis has not been defended by this date , the Aggie Ring will be held until the qualification is met . A Ph.D. student may receive their Ring if they have completed all formal coursework in the degree plan , has a cumulative GPA of 3 @.@ 0 or above , has successfully completed the residency requirement , has successfully passed the preliminary exam , and has an approved research proposal on file . A Ring may be purchased upon graduation if a student , either undergraduate or graduate , did not meet these criteria while pursuing the degree .

The top of the Ring depicts an eagle and shield . The shield at the top of the Ring symbolizes protection of the reputation of the alma mater . The thirteen stripes in the shield represent the thirteen original states and symbolize patriotism . The five stars in the shield refer to the facets of student development : mind , body , spiritual attainment , emotional poise , and integrity of character . The eagle denotes agility , power , and ability to reach great heights .

On one side of the Ring is a large star , borrowed from the seal of the state of Texas . The oak leaves symbolize strength . On the other side of the Ring are a cannon , a saber , and a rifle , symbolizing Aggies ' preparedness and valor in defending their land . The crossed flags of the United States and Texas symbolize allegiance to both nation and state .

Traditionally , students wear their Rings with the class year facing them to signify the fact that their time at A & M is not yet complete . At the annual Ring Dance , or at the end of the student 's collegiate career , the student turns his Ring around so that the class year faces away , symbolizing readiness to " face the world . "

Many students receive their Rings on Aggie Ring Day , which is held at the Clayton W. Williams , Jr . Alumni Center three times yearly . Aggie Ring Day is a special time for Aggies , their family and friends to celebrate being a part of the Aggie Network . The Association of Former Students gave out over 11 @, @ 000 Rings at Aggie Ring Days in 2012 .

For decades , though unsanctioned and discouraged by the University , an unofficial tradition among willing students involves " dunking " the newly acquired Aggie Ring . The Ring is dropped in a pitcher of beer and the student chugs the entire pitcher and catches the Ring in his or her teeth . The Dixie Chicken , among other bars , has been one of the more popular venues for dunking Aggie Rings , though it no longer endorses the activity . Some students choose to dunk their Rings in alternative substances , including ice cream or nonalcoholic beverages .

= = Honoring the deceased = =

In keeping with the idea that all current students and alumni comprise a family , Aggies have created two traditions to honor members of the Aggie family who have died . Aggie Muster is held annually to honor any current students or alumni who died during the previous year , while Silver Taps is held monthly as a special tribute to deceased current students .

According to the Houston Chronicle , " perhaps the best , most meaningful Aggie tradition of all is one you wish never happened . " While students at many schools prize their individuality , " Aggies are all about unity and loyalty . When an Aggie falls , the family comes together to remember . " This remembrance occurs annually on April 21 as Aggies observe Muster , a solemn event to honor current students and alumni who died during the previous year . Over 300 Musters are held around the world , with the largest taking place at Reed Arena on the Texas A & M University campus . All Muster ceremonies feature the Roll Call for the Absent . As the names of the deceased Aggies are called , a family member or friend answers " Here , " and lights a candle , to symbolize that although their loved one is not present in body , his or her spirit will shine forever .

The first Aggie Muster was held June 26 , 1883 , seven years after the school opened . Rather than a memorial service , the event was intended as a reunion to allow alumni to gather and remember their college days . During the day , the alumni also established a " Roll Call for the Absent " to honor their classmates who could not attend . In 1889 , the gathering was moved to April 21 and became an official school holiday , set aside for the annual cadet track and field competition . On April 21 , 1903 , the tradition evolved into a celebration of Texas 's victory at the battle of San Jacinto . Gatherings would include field games and banquets so Aggies could reflect on their days in Aggieland .

The field day events were cancelled in 1922 , although alumni were still expected to congregate annually for camaraderie and to remember their fellow Aggies . The March 1923 Texas Aggie urged , " If there is an A & M man in one @-@ hundred miles of you , you are expected to get together , eat a little , and live over the days you spent at the A & M College of Texas . " The event received worldwide attention during World War II , when 25 Aggies " mustered " during the battle for the island of Corregidor .

Students who die while enrolled at Texas A & M are also honored at Silver Taps , a ceremony held , when necessary , on the first Tuesday of the month . This tradition began as a memorial for former Texas A & M president Lawrence Sullivan Ross . In the modern incarnation , on the morning of Silver Taps , a small card with the deceased student 's name , class , major , and birthdate is placed as a notice at the base of the flagpole in Academic Plaza . At 10 : 15 p.m. , all lights on campus are

extinguished , and Albritton Tower begins to chime hymns . When the music begins , students gather in silence in front of the statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross at Academic Plaza . At 10 : 30 pm , the Ross Volunteers march into the plaza and fire a 3 @-@ volley salute . Buglers stationed at the top of the Academic Building then play a special rendition of Taps , known as Silver Taps . The song is played three times ; once to the north , once to the south , and once to the west . It is never played to the east , " because the sun will never rise on that Aggie again . " Once the buglers have finished their tribute , the crowd disperses . Generally , students remain silent until reaching their homes .

= = Texas A & M Corps of Cadets = =

The Corps of Cadets ( or the Corps ) is known as the " Keepers of the Spirit " for its staunch defense of Aggie traditions . The Corps is a link to the early days of Texas A & M 's history , when all students were required to be members and receive military training . Although Corps membership became voluntary in 1965 , as of 2001 it was the United States ' largest uniformed student body outside the service academies , with an enrollment of 2 @,@ 318 cadets at the beginning of the 2006 ? 2007 school year .

Members of the Corps have served in every armed conflict fought by the United States since 1876 , and over 225 have served as Generals or Flag Officers . Many members participate in ROTC programs and earn commissions in the United States Armed Forces upon graduation . As of fall 2012 , the Corps is composed of three Air Force Wings , three Army Brigades , and two Navy and Marine Regiments , in addition to veteran @-@ based outfits , as well as the Fightin ' Texas Aggie Band , whose members may be affiliated with any military branch . Among its notable units is Parson 's Mounted Cavalry , the only mounted ROTC unit in the United States . The Ross Volunteer Company , the oldest student @-@ run organization in the state , is the official honor guard for the Governor of Texas . The Fish Drill Team , a precision , close @-@ order rifle drill team composed entirely of Corps freshmen , represents the Corps and A & M in local and national competitions . They have won the national championship almost every year since their creation in 1946 , and have appeared in several Hollywood productions with prominent roles in the movies A Few Good Men and Courage Under Fire .

Members of the Corps are often referred to as " C.T.s " or " B.Q.s " . While these terms originally stood for " Cadet in Training " and " Band Qualified " , respectively , they are more commonly and derisively used to abbreviate " Corps Turd " and " Band Queer " . Freshmen in the Corps are required to " whip out " to upperclassmen . This tradition requires the freshmen to extend their hand and introduce themselves to the upperclassman . From then on , they are expected to know the name of the person to whom they " whipped out . " The tradition applies only to upperclassmen in the Corps , and not to " non @-@ regs " , students who are not in the Corps .

One of a senior cadet 's " most cherished possessions " are his Senior Boots . Only seniors are allowed to wear these knee @-@ high riding boots , and most consider receiving their boots to be a rite of passage . All Senior Boots are custom @-@ made to fit the cadet and are a dark tan to brown color . Students wear their Senior Boots for the first time after Final Review as juniors while saluting the outgoing seniors . Final review is the last activity that Corps members participate in as a unit . This full military review takes place at the end of the spring semester on Simpson Drill Field , and is in two parts . The entire Corps march past a reviewing stand , which consists of high @-@ ranking military and university officials , for inspection . The Corps then returns to their dorms to change into the uniforms they will wear the following year , with the juniors donning their Senior Boots . The freshmen , sophomores , and juniors then march in formation past the reviewing stand , which is now filled with the senior cadets , saluting their former leaders .

= = Fightin ' Texas Aggie Band = =

The Fightin ' Texas Aggie Band ( also known as The Noble Men of Kyle , The Pulse of Aggieland or the Aggie Band ) is the official marching band of Texas A & M University . Composed of over 400

men and women from the school 's Corps of Cadets , it is the largest military marching band in the world . The band 's complex straight @-@ line marching maneuvers are performed exclusively to traditional marches . Some of these maneuvers are so complex , some computer programs used to create marching drills say they cannot be performed because they require two people to be in the same place at the same time .

Since its inception in 1894 , its members , known as BQs ( for Band Qualified or Band Queer ) , eat together , sleep in the same dormitories , and practice up to 40 hours per week on top of a full academic schedule . The Aggie Band performs at all home football games , some away games , and university and Corps functions throughout the year . Other events in which the band participated include inauguration parades for many United States Presidents and Texas Governors , major annual parades across the country , and the dedication ceremony for the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library .

= = Sports traditions = =

= = = 12th Man = = =

Aggie football fans call themselves the 12th Man , meaning they are there to support the 11 players on the field . To further symbolize their " readiness , desire , and enthusiasm " , the entire student body stands throughout the game . In a further show of respect , the students step " off the wood " ( step off of the bleachers onto the concrete ) whenever a player is injured or when the band plays the Aggie War Hymn or The Spirit of Aggieland . At the end of the Aggie War Hymn , fans sway back and forth , causing the upper deck of the stadium to move . The Aggie War Hymn was named the No. 1 college fight song by USA Today in 1997 .

The 12th Man tradition began in Dallas on January 2 , 1922 , at the Dixie Classic , the forerunner of the Cotton Bowl Classic . A & M played defending national champion Centre College in the first postseason game in the southwest . In this hard @-@ fought game , which produced national publicity , an underdog Aggie team was slowly defeating a team which had allowed fewer than six points per game . The first half produced so many injuries for A & M , Coach D. X. Bible feared he would not have enough men to finish the game . At that moment , he called into the Aggie section of the stands for E. King Gill , a student who had left football after the regular season to play basketball . Gill , who was spotting players for a Waco newspaper and was not in football uniform , donned the uniform of injured player Heine Weir and stood on the sidelines to await his turn . Although he did not actually play in the game , his readiness to play symbolized the willingness of all Aggies to support their team to the point of actually entering the game . When the game ended in a 22 @-@ 14 Aggie victory , Gill was the only man left standing on the sidelines for the Aggies . Gill later said , " I wish I could say that I went in and ran for the winning touchdown , but I did not . I simply stood by in case my team needed me . " A statue of E. King Gill stands to the north of Kyle Field to remind Aggies of their constant obligation to preserve the spirit of the 12th Man .

In the 1980s , the tradition was expanded as coach Jackie Sherrill created the 12th Man squad . Composed solely of walk @-@ on ( nonscholarship ) players , the squad would take the field for special teams performances . This squad only allowed one kick return for a touchdown by Texas Tech 's Rodney Blackshear . Sherrill 's successor , R. C. Slocum , amended the tradition in the 1990s to allow one walk @-@ on player , wearing the No. 12 jersey , to take the field for special teams plays . The player is chosen based on the level of determination and hard work shown in practices . Coach Dennis Franchione continued Slocum 's model , while also keeping an all @-@ walk @-@ on kickoff team that played three times in the 2006 season .

12th Man Towel The 12th Man Towel was created in the fall of 1985 by Rusty Riley and Kyle Harris , then president and vice president of the 12th Man Student Aggie Club , respectively , with the help of Gary Leach and Larry Leach , then club secretary and treasurer . The concept was presented to the Aggie Club faculty managers Harry Green Jr . , executive director of the 12th Man Foundation , and Jackie Sherrill , Texas A & M University athletic director and head football coach . Once their

approval was given , Rusty and Kyle found a manufacturer in New York City through a local distributor in Bryan , Texas , and authorization was given to sell the towels on campus by school management and Chic Sell , who had the concession rights in Kyle Field . The first 1 @, @ 000 towels were purchased and delivered in time for the first home game of the 1985 college football season . Kyle and Rusty , along with a handful of Aggie Club members , sold the towels for \$ 2 each in makeshift booths at strategic locations within Kyle Field . It was an immediate success , with all towels being sold at the first game . The A & M Yell Squad initially resisted the towels , claiming the Aggie Club was breaking tradition , but the Battalion staff supported the concept and began a successful selling and media campaign to help the towel gain acceptance throughout the A & M student body . Rusty worked with the Head Yell Leader on accepting the towel and once the Yell Squad accepted it , a press conference was held with Rusty , Coach Sherrill , and the Head Yell Leader . As the football season carried on , the 12th Man Towel continued selling in large quantities . The Aggie Club hired students to sell the towels at the MSC and on Aggie Club property , which at the time was located right outside of the main entrance to Kyle Field . The towel also gained an important supporting cast when Coach Sherrill 's 12th man kick @-@ off team squad began carrying them to motivate the student body in the stands . The 1985 regular college football season ended with a home game versus the Texas Longhorns . At that game , a sea of white 12th Man Towels filled the stadium , cheering the Aggies to a 42 @-@ 10 victory . The Aggies went on to win the Southwest Conference Title and defeat Auburn in the Cotton Bowl on January 1 , 1986 , with the 12th Man Towels proudly displayed to a national audience . During the 1988 Cotton Bowl Classic , which A & M played against Notre Dame , another towel was a point of contention . Twice during that game , Warren Barhorst , a member of Sherrill 's 12th Man Kickoff Team , tackled Heisman Trophy winner Tim Brown , and then grabbed Brown 's towel and waved it over his head . An infuriated Brown tackled Barhorst , earning himself a 15 @-@ yard unsportsman @-@ like conduct penalty .

Because the students are always waiting for the opportunity to support their team , they are also willing to take the credit for the team 's good deeds . A popular Aggie tradition is that " when the team scores , everybody scores " . Whenever the Aggies score points during the game , students kiss their dates .

Seniors wearing either their Senior Boots or Aggie Rings are also encouraged to join the " Boot Line " . As the Fightin ' Texas Aggie Band leaves the field after their half @-@ time performances , seniors line up at the south end of Kyle Field to welcome the team back onto the field for the second half .

= = = Yells = = =

Unlike many schools , which have a large group of cheerleaders to rally their fans during sporting events , Texas A & M has five student Yell Leaders . Consisting of three seniors and two juniors , historically all male , the Yell Leaders are elected to their positions annually by the student body . These students do not perform gymnastic feats , but instead use hand signals , known as " pass backs " , to direct and intensify crowds . After the signals are passed through the crowd , the Yell Leaders give the signal to " hump it " , where the crowd leans forward and places their hands on their knees to maximize the noise . The Yell Leaders have a dozen yells that they can choose from depending on the situation . While some yells are designed to praise and motivate the team , others exist solely to make fun of the opposing side .

Students practice the yells at Midnight Yell Practice . Held at Kyle Field at midnight the night before a football game , Midnight Yell is similar to a pep rally . Over 20 @, @ 000 Aggies attend each session , practicing the yells that will be used in the following day 's game and generating an excitement for the game . At the conclusion of the yell practice , the stadium lights are extinguished and fans kiss their dates . This is also done as practice , because Aggies are expected to " mug down " , or kiss their dates , every time the football team scores on the field . Sports Illustrated named Midnight Yell as one of the " 100 Things You Gotta Do Before You Graduate . "

Aggies practice their yells again after each football game . If the team is victorious , the freshmen in

the Corps of Cadets capture the Yell Leaders on Kyle Field and march them across campus to be dunked in Fish Pond . The wet Yell Leaders then make their way to the YMCA Building , where the Fightin ' Texas Aggie Band and members of the crowd join them for a short yell practice in preparation for the next week 's game . If the team is " outscored " or " runs out of time " ( Aggies never lose ) , a mini @-@ Yell Practice is held in Kyle Field before the crowd disperses .

The most well @-@ known Aggie yell is the simple " Beat the Hell Outta " the opposing school . In writing , this is often abbreviated as BTHO . For the annual game against the University of Texas at Austin ( no longer played after A & M 's 2012 move to the Southeastern Conference ) , students yell " Beat the Hell Outta t.u. " Booing is strongly discouraged , and an upset Aggie will instead hiss their opponents or the referees . If a referee call is especially egregious in the minds of the Aggies , the Yell Leaders will call for the " Horse Laugh , " a yell that ends with a stadium wide hissing .

After each yell , students make a noise and a hand motion that is known as a wildcat . Each class has a separate wildcat , and students caught " pulling out , " or using the wildcat of a higher class , are often forced to do pushups as punishment . Freshmen raise their hands above their heads and yell " AAAA " . Sophomores , symbolically pushing back on the seniors , chant " A ! " five times , waving their hands up and down in front of the torso with their index fingers extended and thumbs perpendicular . Juniors yell " A ! A ! A ! Whoop ! " wrapping their left hand over their right fist , with both index fingers extended and pointing towards the ground , " shooting the ground " once for each " A " and holding the position on the " whoop ! " As a symbol of their expert marksmanship , seniors yell a single " A ! " and then " Whoop ! " while interlocking their fingers with their index fingers extended and pointed into the air . At the same time , the left foot is raised and tucked behind the right knee . The fingers are interlocked rather than covering the right hand so that the Aggie Ring is visible .

= = = Mascots = = =

Texas A & M 's official mascot is Reveille , now a purebred Rough collie . The first Reveille , a mixed breed dog , was adopted by students in 1931 after they found her on the side of the road . As of 2015 , the current mascot is Reveille IX . She is considered a Cadet General , the highest @-@ ranking member in the Corps of Cadets , and must be addressed by cadets as " Miss Reveille , ma 'am . "

Reveille accompanies her handlers , members of the E @-@ 2 unit of the Corps of Cadets , everywhere , including classes . It is a long @-@ held tradition that if Reveille decides to sleep on a cadet 's bed , that cadet is required to sleep on the floor . In truth , however , this only applied to the early mascots who were allowed to freely roam the campus . The contemporary mascots , certainly since the 1980s and likely earlier , are under the constant supervision of the Mascot Corporal and not allowed to freely roam about the cadet 's quarters . Another tradition is that if she chooses to bark in class , that session is cancelled . Upon the death of a current or former mascot , a full military funeral is held at Kyle Field , which usually attracts several thousand mourners .

Texas A & M also has an unofficial mascot , Ol ' Sarge , who is displayed only in graphics . Ol ' Sarge is portrayed as a tough @-@ looking corps drill sergeant and is considered one of the many icons representing Texas A & M 's long standing military history . The drawing was first seen in the 1940s , when The Battalion ran a caricature of one of the Yell Leaders . That caricature , of a rough and tough military man , quickly became used throughout campus .

= = = The Spirit of ' 02 = = =

The Corps of Cadets marks any Aggie scores during football games by firing The Spirit of ' 02 , a 3 @-@ inch M1902 field gun 3 @-@ inch ( 76 mm ) . Issued to Field Artillery Units of the Reserve Officers ' Training Corps between the World Wars , the gun was believed to be one of several that were hidden by Corps members to prevent them from being scrapped during WWII . The Spirit of ' 02 was found buried in a ditch by students cutting wood for the annual Aggie Bonfire in the fall of 1974 . Only the rusted steel rims from the wooden wheels were showing above ground . Students

mounted antique wagon wheels on the axles and brought the gun back to a place of honor in the Quad . Cadets later restored the gun , which has been fired to celebrate touchdowns since 1984 .

= = = Maroon Out = = =

One of Texas A & M 's newer traditions is Maroon Out , which began in 1998 . The football team had ended their 1997 season with a lopsided defeat to Nebraska in the Big 12 Championship Game . Kyle Valentine , Class of 2000 Junior President and a member within Class Councils , noticed how united the Nebraska fans seemed , all dressed in red . He proposed to Class Councils the idea to " Maroon Out " Kyle Field for the October 10 , 1998 rematch against Nebraska by selling a low @-@ cost , high @-@ quality maroon t @-@ shirt . This resulted in the sale of 31 @,@ 000 Maroon Out shirts , leading to a temporary national shortage of maroon colored t @-@ shirts .

The Aggies defeated Number 2 Nebraska 28 @-@ 21 , the first time in six seasons that Nebraska had lost a regular @-@ season conference game . The Daily Nebraskan noted that " A game that was dubbed a ' maroon @-@ out ' for Texas A & M fans proved to be lights out for Nebraska . The fans dressed themselves in maroon T @-@ shirts in an attempt to wash out the red and white that opponents have gotten used to . It worked . "

Since then , one football game each season is dubbed an official Maroon Out and discounted maroon t @-@ shirts are for sale for fans . Through 2010 , Texas A & M has been 7 @-@ 6 in Maroon Out games , beating 6 teams ranked in the Top 25 , despite being the underdog in each of the games . The basketball team has a similar tradition , called a " White Out , " where fans are encouraged to wear white t @-@ shirts .

Perhaps the most memorable Maroon Out moment was not maroon at all . After the events of September 11 , 2001 , five Aggie students wished to help honor America . They decided to ask the attendees of the next A & M football game , which would be held at Kyle Field on September 22 , 2001 , to wear patriotic colors . The colors would be divided by deck , with the upper deck wearing red , the middle deck wearing white , and the lower deck in blue . Within a five @-@ day period the students had contracted with several printers to create special t @-@ shirts which read " Standing for America " and the date . Despite initial concerns about not being able to sell enough shirts to be effective , the students sold about 70 @,@ 000 of these shirts , raising over \$ 150 @,@ 000 for the relief efforts .

= = Aggie Bonfire = =

Aggie Bonfire was a long @-@ standing tradition at Texas A & M University as part of a college rivalry with the University of Texas at Austin , known as t.u. by Texas A & M students . For ninety years , Texas A & M students built and burned a large bonfire on campus each fall . Known within the Aggie community simply as Bonfire , the annual fall event symbolized the students ' " burning desire to beat the hell outta t.u. " The bonfire was traditionally lit around Thanksgiving in conjunction with the festivities surrounding the annual college football game between the schools .

The first on @-@ campus Aggie Bonfire was burned in 1909 , and the tradition continued for the next 90 years . For almost two decades , Bonfire was constructed from debris and pieces of wood that Aggies " found , " including lumber intended for a dormitory that students appropriated in 1912 . The event became school @-@ sanctioned in 1936 , and , for the first time , students were provided with axes , saws , and trucks and pointed towards a grove of dead trees on the edge of town . In the following years the Bonfire became more elaborate , and in 1967 the flames could be seen 25 miles ( 40 km ) away . In 1969 , the stack set the world record at 111 feet ( 30 m ) tall .

While the Bonfires of the 1960s were constructed in five to ten days , working primarily in daylight , by the late 1970s a more elaborate construction schedule had been implemented . Construction began in late October with " Cut " , with several weekends devoted to cutting down the logs with axes . The logs were brought to campus during " Load . " In early November , crews began " Stack " , a three @-@ week period in which the logs were wired together and Bonfire took shape . Near the end of stack , known as " Push " , students worked around the clock in rotating shifts . Although



between two and five thousand students participated in the construction of Bonfire each year , most of them were unable to devote themselves full @-@ time to the task , and many worked only one or two shifts . While participating , the students wore " grodes , " old t @-@ shirts , jeans , and boots . By tradition , grodes were either not washed until after Bonfire burned or not washed at all .

In 1978 , Bonfire shifted to a wedding @-@ cake style , in which upper stacks of logs were wedged on top of lower stacks . The structure was built around a fortified centerpole , made from two telephone poles . Although tradition stated that if Bonfire burned through midnight A & M would win the following day 's game , with the introduction of the wedding cake design Bonfire began to fall quickly , sometimes burning for only 30 or 45 minutes .

At 2 : 42 AM on November 18 , 1999 , the partially completed Aggie Bonfire , standing 40 feet ( 10 m ) tall and consisting of about 5000 logs , collapsed during construction . Of the 58 students and alumni working on the stack , 12 were killed and 27 others were injured . On November 25 , 1999 , the date that Bonfire would have burned , Aggies instead held a vigil and remembrance ceremony . Over 40 @,@ 000 people , including former President George H.W. Bush and his wife Barbara and then @-@ Texas governor George W. Bush and his wife Laura , lit candles and observed up to two hours of silence at the site of the Bonfire collapse . The Bonfire Memorial was officially dedicated on November 18 , 2004 .

Bonfire was postponed until 2002 to restructure it to make it safer . Delays in the development of a safety plan and a high estimated cost ( mainly due to liability insurance ) , led A & M president Ray Bowen to postpone Bonfire indefinitely . Despite the university 's refusal to allow Bonfire to take place on campus , since 2002 a non @-@ university sanctioned Bonfire has burned annually . Known as Student Bonfire , the off @-@ campus event draws between 8 @,@ 000 and 15 @,@ 000 fans .

= = Elephant Walk = =

Every November , in the week of the football game against the University of Texas , the senior class gathers together for Elephant Walk . The seniors link arms and " wander aimlessly " through campus . The University of Texas game was always the last football game of the regular season , so Elephant Walk has come to symbolize the end of the seniors ' " usefulness " to the 12th Man and the passing of the torch to the junior class . In a reference to Elephant Walk , seniors in their last semester of study are often called " dead elephants . "

Elephant Walk began in 1926 , when a group of students decided to take one last walk around campus to remember their experiences at the school . Because they walked single file , with a hand on the shoulder of the person in front , an observer remarked that they " looked like elephants , about to die . " The day now begins at Kyle Field with a yell practice and speaker , and then the senior yell leaders lead the class through campus . Leaders of the graduating class also announce the class gift at Elephant Walk .

= = Service projects = =

Texas A & M provides many opportunities for students to participate in volunteer and service activities . Students at Texas A & M originated The Big Event , the largest one @-@ day student @-@ run service project in the nation . The annual event began in 1983 after the Texas A & M Student Government Association passed a resolution encouraging students to show their gratitude to the community by giving of their time . From its beginnings of six individual students wanting to contribute back to the local community , The Big Event has expanded to allow over twenty @-@ two thousand students to participate in over 2500 jobs , such as raking leaves , painting houses , and trimming trees . The concept for The Big Event has spread throughout the nation , and as of 2015 , 110 schools across the nation participate each year including 1 middle school , 2 high schools , and 68 universities . The 2008 Big Event attracted 10 @,@ 600 students who worked a record number of 1 @,@ 000 jobs .

Aggies also participate annually in Replant , a one @-@ day environmental service . In 2006 , 1

@, @ 000 students participated , planting 250 trees in three public parks . The event has been an annual tradition since 1991 , when the Texas A & M Environmental Issues Committee began planting trees to replace those that had been cut down for Bonfire . Although Bonfire has been officially disbanded , Replant continues . Its goals are now to beautify the Bryan @-@ College Station area and to " creat [ e ] harmony between students and the residents . " In 2000 , the group planted twelve live oak trees at the Texas A & M Polo Grounds in memory of the twelve victims of the 1999 Bonfire collapse . That year the group was awarded the Community Forestry Award from the Texas Forest Service . The group provides their own trees , grown at the Texas A & M Riverside campus in Bryan , Texas and has its own Student Government committee .

The Corps of Cadets annually conducts the March to the Brazos , a 14 miles ( 20 km ) round @-@ trip road march that serves as both a ceremony to transfer leadership as well as a fundraiser for the March of Dimes . The Corps hold various fundraisers and solicits donations throughout the year . On a Saturday morning , generally in April , each year , all members of the Corps gather at the Quadrangle , near their dormitories , and march en masse across campus and down Highway 60 to Texas A & M 's Animal Science Teaching , Research & Extension Complex near the east bank of the Brazos River . There , the cadets learn who will fill each leadership position for the following year . The current seniors are allowed to ride a bus back to campus while the newly promoted cadets lead their outfits back to campus . The event is the largest and most successful student @-@ run fundraising event in the United States for the March of Dimes . In its first 27 years , from 1977 through 2003 , the event raised a combined US \$ 1 @. @ 3 million .

= = Asking for luck = =

Many students believe that they will do well on exams if they make an offering to Lawrence Sullivan " Sul " Ross . Ross , the president of Texas A & M in the 1890s , is credited with saving the school from closure . Affectionately known as " Sully , " many believe him to be " the embodiment of Aggie Spirit and tradition . " A & M legend states that Ross would often tutor students , and as payment would accept only a penny for their thoughts . At exam time his statue , located in Academic Plaza , is often covered in pennies .

Another spot in Academic Plaza is also believed to be lucky . Tradition says that if a couple walks together under the branches of the Century Tree , one of the oldest trees on campus , they will eventually marry . If the proposal takes place under the Century Tree , the marriage is supposed to last forever .

= = Privileged words = =

For much of its first 100 years , Texas A & M was a small , all @-@ male , military academy . The school became coeducational in the 1960s , and membership in the Corps of Cadets became voluntary . In military tradition , privileges are meted out as one climbs the ranks , and Texas A & M has several such traditions . The most obvious are the uniforms worn by the Corps of Cadets . Corps members wear different uniforms for each year , culminating in the prized Senior boots .

Vocabulary is also restricted by class . Freshmen may not say the word Pisshead , a nickname for sophomores . Juniors are known as " Serge Butts " , so neither freshmen nor sophomores can say any form of either word ( accordingly , words such as " button " must be replaced with roundabout euphemisms , such as " circular fastener " ) . Juniors are also the first class to be allowed to say " Whoop ! " Seniors , known as " Zips " for the black and gold braid on their garrison caps , which resembles a zipper , have reserved the word elephant and all forms of the words " death , " " dying , " " shoot , " or " reload " in reference to the traditions surrounding Elephant Walk . However , saying the phrases " pass away , " " decease , " " fire , " " load again , " etc . , are all acceptable substitutes .

Students caught " pulling out " , or saying words that are reserved for other classes , are forced to " push . " Traditionally , this means the students must do a " class set " of pushups , one for each year of their class . The Class of 1945 did only 45 pushups and an extra pushup has been added for

each subsequent year ; the Fighting Texas Aggie Class of 2012 now does 112 . Pulling out privileges of the class directly above is considered " Good Bull " , but pulling out two classes or more is " Bad Bull . " Members of the Corps of Cadets generally take privileged words more seriously than non @-@ reg students .