

## Timothy Doran Kerlee, Jr.

# The Spirit Of The Twelfth Man

Other... Laugh



**T**im Kerlee died as Tim Kerlee lived: devoting himself to the school he loved. At 17, Kerlee was a proud member of the Tradition-rich Corps of Cadets—a first-year student who had enough credits to be classified as a sophomore. And on his hospital bed, his outfit solemnly placed a sign of reverence and respect to their fallen comrade: a pair of senior boots and a saber. Said Corps spokesman, Joseph Mills, Squadron 16 wanted Kerlee to be comforted, to feel good, to know they were caring about him and realize that he was part of their outfit.

Kerlee was counted among the critically injured for almost two days before becoming the twelfth Aggie to die from wounds suffered when Bonfire collapsed. He had remained trapped upon the stack, refusing to submit to his own pain, bravely directing rescue teams to others who had fallen beneath the logs. His heroism symbolized the man he had become at such a young age.

The Bonfire that never burned was not mentioned during Tim's memorial service, but throughout the service Kerlee was poignantly and dramatically linked to the Spirit behind the Tradition of the 12th Man, symbolizing the 43,500-member student body that "stands ready" to help whenever there is an Aggie in need.

Tim, the son of Tim, Sr., and Janice Kerlee, had scholarship offers to many schools, but the Bartlett, Tennessee, native chose Texas A&M because of the reputation of the university's engineering program. "He loved the school the first time he visited it," said Jennifer Dyer, a family friend.

Charles Anderson, Senior Pastor at A&M United Methodist Church, said Tim touched the lives of everyone who knew him. "When someone dies, there is a lot of pain, there's shock, the pain of goodbye, the pain of loss, but the worst pain of all, I think, is the pain of unfinished business," Rev. Anderson said. "There are some words you

should have said, love you wanted to show. There's a young life of seventeen not being finished. But know this: God is not finished with Tim yet."

Janice Kerlee remembers her son: "Tim would do anything to get people to smile. He was always reaching out to others, including everyone in whatever activities he was involved in. He was always the type of person we all strive to be.

"Tim loved people. He wanted people to feel good about themselves, I think because he felt good about himself. He was an encourager.

"He was a very involved student in high school. He received many academic honors, but the thing I'm most proud of was his involvement in an organization called Bridge Builders. The organization was awarded a 'Point of Light' by President Bush. The mission of Bridge Builders is 'to develop among high school students, a group of future leaders who can lay aside individual social, economic and cultural differences, and work for the benefit of all.' This organization, this mission statement, say the most about who Tim was, and how he should be remembered. He was one of only 14 students in his class to be selected to join this organization. He had to be nominated by multiple teachers to participate."

"I think that on Friday," said Rev. Anderson, "God came into the ICU at St. Joseph Hospital and said, 'Kerlee, are you tired?' And Tim, being a good Aggie, said 'Yes, sir, I'm tired, sir.' He was an Aggie 'til the end."

"Tim really, really loved being at Texas A&M," said his mother. 🐾

*There is an Endowed Scholarship fund set up through the Texas A&M Foundation in Tim Kerlee's name for out-of-state students who wish to enroll in Mechanical Engineering. For more information, call 1-800-392-3310.*