

The History of the Class of 1962

April 20, 2012

Howdy!

At this 50th Class reunion, tradition requires that we pause to examine the history of our time at Texas A&M. So let's walk back through the halls of memory 54 years to a special place we call "Aggieland."

We'll start by setting the scene. In 1958, College Station's population was less than 5,000 (excluding the students). Bryan had about 30,000 residents. "Texas A&M," as we know it today, did not exist. In its place, was "The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas," with an enrollment that fall of 7077 students, of which 3654 were members of the Corps, the lowest number in a decade. Membership in the Corps had been made "compulsory" that fall for the first time since 1954. Naturally, there were no female students. In fact, if there were any eligible young ladies in the BCS area, their parents wisely kept them hidden from us.

The president of the College was Dr. Harrington. Earl Rudder was the vice president. The faculty numbered 599, including 3 women. Colonel Davis was the Commandant of the Corps; Colonel Adams was the Director (some said the "Owner") of the Band; Jim ("the single wing still works") Myers was our football coach; Don Cloud was our Corps Commander; and R. D. "Smokey" Hyde was our head yell leader.

In the broader world, Dwight Eisenhower was President; John Kennedy was a junior senator; the Cold War was raging; the Space Race was on; we all had "draft cards; and "Elvis was King."

For the times, A&M was considered a "highly selective educational institution." To be admitted, the applicant had to be:

At least 16 years of age;

A "male." (This requirement eliminated over 50% of the World's population);

A person of "good moral character" (this requirement had been waived for Class of '61);

A high school graduate or the recipient of some "equivalent level of education (whatever that was);" and, most importantly,

Free of any "contagious or infectious diseases."

The cost of attending A&M was \$310.65 for the fall semester and \$282.00 for the spring.

Let us not forget, this was a world without: cell phones, computers, e-mail, Face Book, texting, or any of the other technological gadgets that current students find essential. There were no room phones or television sets, and very little air-conditioning. But we did have one thing that the current students can only dream about: PARKING! Provided you didn't mind your car occasionally sinking into the mud of the "Navasota Parking Lot."

Our "Fish Year"

Our story officially begins on Monday, September 8, 1958, when 2002 eager, "disease - free" young men reported for "New Student Week." The stated "purpose" of New Student Week was "to get the freshman off to a good academic start." In truth, it was a "crash course" in Corps survival. Here are some of the things we learned that week. We learned: to march; to "speak" (always "howdy" never "hi or hello"); to "whip out" (that is introduce ourselves); to "wildcat and hump it;" to make beds, shine shoes, polish brass, clean rooms, wax floors, properly wear our uniforms; and answer, on demand, "campusology questions" taken from "Herb's Campusology," a little book thoughtfully provided by Shafer's Bookstore. We learned that upper classmen were always addressed as "Mister," and to put a "Sir" at the end of every sentence. We were also taught to always carry a match box, containing the correct number of matches (which was your age + 1), all pointed in the same direction, should an upper classman require a "light."

Another important subject was "bathroom etiquette." Since the Corps' was founded on "the privilege system", the toilet stalls were assigned by class, with seniors getting the coveted one closest to the window. We also learned never, never to flush a toilet without warning those in the shower of the rush of hot water that would surely follow that act. This was accomplished by the "flushor" shouting "crapper" and patiently waiting for the "flushees" to reply by shouting "shoot." Failure to strictly follow this procedure could be disastrous as

the young ladies who stayed in Dorm 2 during the TCU weekend painfully learned.

We quickly discovered that Aggies didn't speak Standard English except in class, around visitors, or when away from the campus (and sometimes not even then). Instead, they used a special language in which a room was a "hole;" a roommate was a "Fish Old Lady;" a floor was a "stoop;" a bed was a "sack;" a pep rally was a "yell practice;" a smile was a "buzz;" and freshmen didn't have "first names" but were always addressed as "Fish Somebody."

Even the food had different names. Meals were "chow;" meat was "bull neck;" eggs were "cackle;" beans were "artillery;" salad was "rabbit;" milk was "cow;" water was "sky;" and dessert was "cush."

While we are on this subject of food, "dining", for freshmen, was primarily a "spectator activity." We were allowed at the table to serve the needs of the upper classmen, and then, if time permitted, to eat. The benefit of this arrangement, however, was that we didn't experience the "weight gain" known today as the "freshman 10," but instead, we experienced the "weight loss" known in our time as the "freshman 20."

When it came to "cush," freshmen had to earn it by answering the upper classmen's questions. The "desirability" of the cush dictated the "difficulty" of the "cush question." If, for example, the cush was Boston cream pie, a typical "cush question" would be something like: "How many tiles are there in the campus swimming pool?" Whatever answer was given was always wrong. On

the other hand, if the cash was "bread pudding," freshmen could have as much as they wanted; sometimes a great deal more than they wanted. Knowing how much you still like "bread pudding," our always thoughtful class agents wanted it served tonight. Unfortunately, the chef couldn't find the recipe.

Upper classmen came in three flavors: sophomores were "wet heads," the "politically correct" term for their status, who had a few privileges and were supposed to train the freshman; juniors were "serge butts," who had more privileges than sophomores and ran the Corps; and seniors were "gods," who had the privilege of doing whatever they wanted. Freshmen were "Fish," and said to have no "privileges at all." But this wasn't strictly true. Freshmen actually had many "special privileges," such as : (i) the "privilege of not doing" things that normal people do; (ii) the "privilege of doing things" for the upper classmen that they were perfectly capable of doing for themselves; and (iii) the "privilege" of waiting for next year.

The rest of New Student Week was devoted to such activities as having our heads shaved by the MSC's eight friendly barbers; receiving our government - issued uniforms, most in "gently used condition;" and buying additional uniforms, books and other supplies. Those who bought their books from "Old Army Lou," also received a "bonus" when they sold them back - a valuable lesson in "accelerated depreciation".

The highlight of New Student Week was "The Speech." An address given by each outfit's CO or First Sergeant on the subject of "Great Aggie Truths." As

we sat in the hall of our dorm, our knees pulled under our chins, our arms around our knees, and our backs to wall, the speaker forcefully told us that: "Highway 6 ran both ways;" one of the men sitting next to us would be gone by the end of the semester; our girl friends had already forgotten us and were "running around with 'High School Harries' who couldn't even pass study hall;" our parents couldn't possibly love us since they had sent us to a place like this;" and finally, the only people who could get us through our freshman year were our "fish buddies."

Now, there was more to this Speech, but these were its positive and uplifting points.

At last, New Student Week was over. Once we had registered for our classes and the College had our tuition money, we left for the safety of our homes.

After a "rotten week-end" spent listening to snide remarks from our friends about our "Fish Hair Cuts," and trying in vain to convince our parents that a tour of duty in the French Foreign Legion would be preferable to attending Texas A&M, it was time to return. As the Campus Water Tower came into view that "fateful Sunday evening," a feeling of stark terror set in. Once inside our dorms, we met our sophomores and the "real fun started" and wouldn't end for nine months.

Now before going any further, it is important to note that this is not a history of the Class of '61. If it was, it would be "short and sadly disappointing."

However, since the members of the Class of '61 "intruded" into our lives so offensively, we cannot simply ignore them. Therefore, this reunion is the perfect time to put aside, once and for all, those hard feelings you may still have toward "this miserable lot." To do so, some old habits must be broken. First, those of you who insist on referring to the Class of '61 as "the most morally perverse bunch in history," need to stop it; if for no other reason than this belief is historically inaccurate. History has proven that the Class of '61, with all its flaws, comes in a distant second to Attila and his Huns. Also jokes such as "One useless man is a disgrace, and 900 useless men are the Class of '61," even if true, are still "tasteless." What can be said about them is that they are "the most persistently depressing group one could ever have the misfortune of encountering."

As freshmen, our daily lives were closely regimented. A typical day started with "First Call" at 6:30 am, and ended with "Lights Out" at 10:40 pm. In between, there were three mandatory formations, classes, weekly yell practices, and a three-hour compulsory study period known as "Call to Quarters" or "CQ." Of course, "Lights Out," did not mean sleep. Rather, it marked the start of our nocturnal duties such as "laundry detail, mail detail, and, floor waxing." And there was always time for individual and group "constructive criticism sessions" with our helpful sophomores. As for the week-end (or what there was of it), it started after Saturday Drill and ended at 7:30 on Sunday evening.

To freshmen, the most important things were: "sleep or 'sacking out;' mail; and getting the heck out of this place as often as possible."

As for "sacking out," the best places to grab a quick nap were the couches at the MSC; the YMCA lounges; Cushing Library; and best of all, class, particularly the main lecture hall in the Chemistry Building with its air-conditioning.

"Mail," or the ritual of "checking the mail," was of primary importance. In our time, the only contact most of had with the outside world was by letter. Therefore, we faithfully checked our post office boxes at least twice a day. If we found a letter in our box, even if it was just advertising, the trip was a success. And if the letter was from a young lady, the day was made, unless it was a "flush letter." A "flush letter" was A&M's version of a "Dear John Letter," and these letters started arriving shortly after the fall semester began. On reflection, there must have been a book somewhere that prescribed the proper "form" for a "Flush Letter" since these letters all said the same things, including the writer's declaration of "respect" and "promise of undying friendship" for the unfortunate recipient.

Since a freshman was required to have a "pass" to leave the campus, "getting out of town" was a challenge. The starting point in the "pass process" was one's assistant squad leader. In other words, fate had placed your social life in the hands of some 19-year old sophomore with extreme self-image problems. Even, if you got a pass, you still had to find a "ride" unless you were lucky enough to have a car. The going rate for a ride, regardless of the distance, was \$1.00 each way. On each trip, an "experienced driver" tried to

cram at least five passengers into his car. With gas going for 20 cents per gallon in most places and 17 cents in Waco (the site of "the 30 Years Gas War"), this could be "a money-making proposition."

Here's what else happened that fall.

- After the first 12 days of school, 248 members of our Class had left, putting the size of our Class at 1754.
- Football season was disappointing. The team posted a season record of 4 and 6. However, there were "two upsets," one against Baylor and the other against Rice, both on the road.
- In early November, mid-term grade reports were released and mailed to our parents. According to these reports, 852 freshmen were failing one or more courses. Of that number, 20 freshmen were failing four courses, and 8 were failing five courses (including Military Science and P.E.). These reports were so "distressing" as to prompt Vice President Rudder to tell a meeting of seniors and juniors that "the freshmen need to stiffen their backbones and bring up these deficient grades." Joining in the chorus, the Battalion editorialized that the so-called "Grade Point Army" had "failed" and "stronger discipline was needed."
- As Thanksgiving approached, we started building our first Aggie Bonfire. This was the first time that the Bonfire had to be completed in four days. Therefore, Friday and Monday Classes and Saturday Drill

were dismissed so that we could labor in the cutting and stacking areas from "sun up to sun down," and then "guard" the "stack" at night without "academic distractions." By the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, the Bonfire was finished and we burned it that night.

- The Austin Corps Trip that year was not memorable for the game, A&M 0 and TU 27, but instead for the weather. What started out as a cool, sunny November day, by half time, had turned into a winter storm, complete with rain and sleet, which soaked us to the bone. Adding to our "misery" was the knowledge that our parents would be waiting for us at home with our mid-term grade reports in hand. From this experience, we did, however, learn this "Great Aggie Truth." Only Texas A&M could "screw up Thanksgiving!"

With Christmas approaching, it was reasonable to think there would be "less tension in our daily lives." This was not to be. Instead, we were given the "additional privilege" of serenading the seniors and juniors with Christmas Carols each night after CQ, under the unprofessional direction of the Class of '61. The traditional holiday song, "Rudolph the Brown Nosed Serge Butt," was a particular favorite that year.

After Christmas vacation, we "reluctantly" returned to the campus; finished our classes; tried to study during "dead week;" took our finals; and then went home to await the results.

When we returned for the spring semester, our ranks had thinned. The enrollment had dropped to 6,131, the lowest in the previous four – year period. A total of 807 freshmen had left. What's more, of the freshmen who did return, 46% were on "scholastic probation."

Here are some of the things that happened that spring.

- During that cold, wet winter of 1959, a bright spot was "basketball." Under Coach Bob Rogers and his assistant, Shelby Metcalf, A&M compiled a 15 and 9 season record (the best record in 27 years), which included two victories over TU, one by a score of 73 to 29.
- The "Fish Ball" provided a much needed break from "our dreary routine," and our "Fish Haircuts" didn't seem to bother our dates at all.
- That semester's "High School Weekend" – The weekend that was devoted to tricking gullible high school students into coming to A&M - - was considered so important that the Battalion published a special editorial captioned "The Future of A&M Depends on the Class of 1963." They must have already given up on us.
- And the Aggie baseball team, coached by Tom Chandler, won the Southwest Conference Championship.

Finally the end of "our fish year" was in sight. On the night before Final Review, the seniors and juniors "beat" our "handles off (the painful effects of which we took home with us)," and the mood became more relaxed. The

morning of Final Review, however, brought a severe disappointment. It rained and Final Review was "cancelled." So instead of our "Fish Year" ending on the Drill Field, it ended when the "outfit whistle jock" announced that "everyone now could step up a class." Two weeks later, finals behind us, we left for the summer knowing that, despite the odds, "we had made it!" Now we could throw our matches away.

Our Sophomore Year

The "fall of 1959," was a time of "change." Under the "new corps reorganization plan, the number of outfits was reduced from 53 to 38. Some outfits simply disappeared. Others were "merged" into outfits with very different cultures. Even the outfits that survived "reorganization," often were assigned new upper classmen who had their own agendas.

Gone were the historical outfits with their unique names and guidrons, replaced by impersonal designations such as "A-1 or F-2." Even in the Air Force, which used a numbering system for its squadrons, a "Squadron 2," for example, might still exist on paper, but it wasn't the same squadron as the year before.

Also the administration announced these changes:

- Freshmen would now wear the "caps without braid" – previously a "junior privilege;
- The "Fish Peak" would be discontinued, thus making our Class the last to wear it;

- All Classes would wear two "AMC insignias" on their collars instead of the old branch brass;
- "The "Pass System" would be eliminated; and
- A "Demerit System," administered by the Military Department, would determine who marched in the "Bull Ring" and for how long.

For historians, this announcement marks "the precise point in time" when "Old Army Went To Hell!"

Here are some of the other things that happened that fall:

- 976 members of our Class returned for their sophomore year, many on "scholastic probation."
- The 1st Regiment (now the 1st Brigade) was moved to the "New Area" so its members could benefit from associating with the Air Force, the Band, and the Corps Staff. In its place, the 2nd Regiment (now the 2nd Brigade) was moved to the "Old Area" and never heard from again. Actually, the 2nd Brigade quickly learned that living in the "Old Area" was the "best deal" in Corps.
- General Rudder was now President of the College and Dr. Harrington was Chancellor.
- After the first two weeks of classes, only 12 members of the Class of '63 had left. Furthermore, as reported by the Battalion, no freshmen went to the College Hospital after "All College Night (the first yell practice)" for

treatment of "mental or physical exhaustion" as opposed to the 38 that had done so in the fall of 1958.

- Football left something to be desired. The team posted a 3 and 7 season record with no "conference wins."
- According to that fall's mid-term grade reports, the Class of '63, you know "the future of A&M," distinguished itself by posting grades that placed 54% of its members below a 1.00 GPA.
- Bonfire weekend was plagued by bad weather; the weakness of the Class of '63; and the "unusual leadership techniques (or lack thereof)" of the Class of '61. Despite these obstacles, the Class of '62 completed the Bonfire and saved this important tradition.

Here are some of the things that happened that spring.

- Once again basketball was successful. Coach Rogers' team posted a 19 and 5 season record, and at one time was ranked as high as 8th in nation. More importantly, the team was lead by our classmate, Carroll Broussard, a member of the All Southwest Conference team that year.
- "Morning formation" was made "optional," and all Classes were permitted to wear civilian clothes after retreat on week days and 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays, thus ending the old "15-Mile Rule."

- And we took the required tests for our advanced ROTC contracts, and prepared to become “juniors” by buying our “serge uniforms” and “captain midnight greens (most in ‘gently used condition’).”

At last, Final Review arrived and this time it didn't rain. On the second time around the Drill Field, we wore our serge and white belts with the “stacked” belt buckles and said goodbye to the Class of '60.

Our Junior Year

When our junior year started, only 488 members of our Class remained in the Corps.

Here are some of the things that happened that fall.

- A new center of culture, known as “The East Gate Lounge,” opened on Texas Ave. This “understated bistro,” with its “stark decor and avant-garde atmosphere,” soon became the gathering place for the “local intelligentsia.” There, by “the soft light of the twinkling beer signs,” all great issues were discussed; all questions were answered; all problems were solved; and all “contract checks” were spent.
- The new “Corps Brass” was introduced for the first time at “All College Night.”
- Because of “crowd control problems” which resulted in “a lack of social courtesy” at the Midnight Yell Practice held before the TCU game, Midnight Yell Practice was moved, on a “temporary basis,”

from The Grove to Kyle Field. Of course it never returned to The Grove.

- The “Dallas Corps Trip” that fall will always be remembered for the most “boring football game” in A&M history. The final score was A&M 0 and SMU 0. However, out of despair, a “new tradition” was born – kissing your date on first downs (either team’s first downs). The “Austin Corps Trip” wasn’t much better. The score was A&M 14—TU 21. For the season, the team’s record was 1 win (Trinity), 6 losses, and 3 ties.
- Faced with pressure from the Legislature, the administration formed a “committee of 100 distinguished Texans,” known as the “Century Council,” to study and make recommendations regarding “the future of the College.”
- Construction of the Bonfire that fall was again plagued by bad weather and the weaknesses of the Classes of '63 and '64. Never the less, under our leadership, it was again successfully completed.

Here are some of the “events” of the spring semester.

- The basketball team finished second in the SWC with a record of 16 and 8, beating every other conference team at least once.
- The movie, “We’ve Never Been Licked,” which had been lost for years, opened at Guion Hall for a three-day run. By showing this classic film which depicts A&M life in the 1930s, the administration

apparently hoped to "raise student morale" by cinematically proving that things used to be worse.

- That spring, a letter appeared in "The Daily Texan," (TU's student news paper) from a group called "The Texas A&M Committee for Supporting the Tower Jumping Tradition at Texas University." In this letter, the Committee strongly advocated "a swift return of this time-honored tradition to the TU campus." If, however, narrow-minded officials at TU would not reopen the Tower's observation deck so this tradition could continue, the Committee graciously offered TU students the use of the Academic Building for this purpose.

As the spring semester ended, we prepared to become seniors. We bought our senior boots, most of them "gently used," and at Final Review, proudly wore them knowing that we had earned the right to do so. Just as Final Review was ending, a "miracle occurred." Suddenly, the sun was brighter, the sky was bluer, and the birds sang more sweetly. Why? BECAUSE THE CURSE OF THE CLASS OF '61 HAD BEEN LIFTED FROM THE LAND, AND THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST WERE NOW IN CHARGE.

OUR SENIOR YEAR

The summer before our senior year was mainly devoted to "military training." Those in Army ROTC went to "sunny Fort Hood" for six "fun – packed" weeks of "outdoor activities." Those in Air Force ROTC were scattered among air force bases from Florida to California. A small group of our Classmates spent

that summer in Quantico, Virginia, participating in the Marine Corps' Platoon Leaders Program. Our Class distinguished itself in all of these venues. And upon returning home, we found that our Aggie Rings had arrived.

When we returned to the campus, only 344 members of our Class remained in the Corps.

Here are some of the things that happened that fall.

- The enrollment of the College reached 7,694, of which 4200 were in the Corps. This was the largest enrollment since 1949.
- The army units were "reorganized" into three brigades, and the Commandant's office announced that there would be "no more fish haircuts." Instead, freshmen would be expected to have "military flattops."
- The "Fort Worth Corps Trip" ended with TCU coming out on top 15 to 14. The "Houston Corps Trip" was worse. The score was A&M 7 Rice 21. This made it a "clean sweep" for the Class of '62 -- eight Corps trips; eight games; one scoreless tie; and seven losses.
- Since it was a senior privilege not to work on the Bonfire, most of us left the campus after "The Elephant Walk," not to return until it was time to burn it.
- Our final football game at Kyle Field ended the same way the other three TU games had -- TU out scored A&M 0 to 28. After four losing seasons, Jim Meyers was fired. In a "bitter interview" with Dan Jenkins

of "Semi – Tough" fame, Meyers said: "[I]t is hard to recruit at A&M. There is nothing to do at College Station." Hank Foldberg was hired as Meyers' replacement, and the rest is history.

When the spring semester began, we were no longer "living for next year." Our time here was coming to an end.

These were some of the "events" of our last spring together.

- The basket ball team finished its season with a 15 and 9 record, and Carroll Broussard was honored as an All American.
- A joint faculty and student committee recommended to the Century Council that: co-education be established; military training be made "voluntary;" the Corps no longer be a "residential unit;" and the name of the College be changed. A student poll on these same issues, participated in by 48% of the student body, produced similar results. However, these matters were no longer our concern.

Finally, May arrived and with it the "Senior Ring Dance." As tradition required, our dates turned our rings so that the "62" faced outward to the world. It is a pleasure to have so many of the lovely young ladies who participated in that event with us tonight (hopefully with the same guys!).

Then it was May 26, 1962 – Graduation Day. At 8:30 we graduated (or some us did any way) in G. Rollie White. At 2:00, we marched Final Review; listened to the strains of "Auld Lang Syne;" and, fighting back the tears, took the salute of our outfits as they marched by for the last time. Later that afternoon,

234 of us returned to G. Rollie White to be commissioned as second lieutenants in the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps. Then it was finished, and the rest of our lives had begun.

CONCLUSION

After leaving A&M, one of our first stops was military service. Members of our Class served with distinction in the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. Some made "the profession of arms" their life's work, and they did it well. Eleven members of our Class became "Flag Officers": 10 generals, 5 Army and 5 Air Force, and 1 Admiral.

The Vietnam War touched us all in some way. Sadly, 8 members of our Class made the ultimate sacrifice for our country while serving on active duty during this period. We may never know all the circumstances of their service, but we do know the dignity of their death. They died performing their duty, as Aggies have always done, and in so doing, they honored us all.

After military service, we married, raised families, pursued our careers, and served our communities. However, despite how busy our lives were, a "force" always drew us back to A&M. That "force" was "the Spirit." In recent times, it has become "fashionable" in some quarters to explain away the "Spirit" by saying that from outside no one can "understand it," and from inside no one can "explain it." We know better. Those who have lived "the Spirit" know that it holds "no mysteries." At its core, the "Spirit of Aggieland" is simply love: love of God; of country; of family; of friends and neighbors; of "fish buddies;" and yes,

love of our College where we learned the lessons that shaped our lives. In part, this love is evidenced by the \$ 24 million, 316 thousand dollars in gifts, bequests, and pledges, we have made, individually and as a Class, to A&M.

The world has turned many times since we met that first formation in 1958. The sights, sounds and experiences of those distant days are now wonderful memories, watered by tears and nurtured by the laughter and smiles of yesterday. With the passage of time, our Class has become smaller. Many good friends are gone. But tomorrow, in the beauty and serenity of Muster, our most treasured tradition, we will think of them again. And if we do so in our hearts, free from the "clutter" of the conscious world, they will be "forever young."

So tonight we can say, with just and lasting pride, that for 54 years, the men of the Class of '62, have lived, loved, worked, made mistakes but learned from them, fought, won and sometimes lost, but never quit, and because of all these things became greater, better men. WELL DONE CLASS OF '62. WELL DONE!