“Softly Call the Muster ...”— Aggie Muster 2019

Monday, April 22nd

5:30 — 8 pm

Social and Dinner

Margaret E. Blizzard
Senior Activity Center
1301 E Tom Green Street
Brenham, Texas 77833

Speaker: Patrick Williams ‘92

Cost: $15 per person

RSVP to

washingtonaggieclub@gmail.com
Dr. Charles Heller ‘72

Charles was born January 4, 1943 in Mission Valley, Texas to Carl and Lillie (Adickes) Heller. He was baptized March 23, 1943 and confirmed May 20, 1956 both at Zion Lutheran in Mission Valley. He was a graduate of Victoria High School, Victoria College, Texas Lutheran College, and received his PhD in Chemistry from Texas A&M University. While at A&M, he met the love of his life Patricia Ann Coffer. They were married June 7, 1969 at St. Paul’s Methodist Church in Bryan. He began his teaching career at Mary Hardin Baylor in Belton. He came to Blinn College on August 16, 1972, as a chemistry instructor. He was later named head of the Natural Sciences Department. Dr. Heller served on the Board of Trustees of Blinn College from 1984-1992. He then returned as professor of Chemistry and in 2014 retired from Blinn College.

Charlie had an appreciation of nature. In 1983, he established Brenham Trees. He ran a successful business, being fully involved. He enjoyed working in his yard, garden and astronomy. He was an avid reader and would get up early in the morning to work on his chemistry theory project. Charlie was a “character” always full of stories. He was always driven to do his best, whether selling tickets for fundraisers with Brenham Evening Lion’s Club, where he served as president or helping on church projects at Christ Lutheran Church where he was an active member. He was a loyal friend and loved by many.

John Billy “Bill” Ragland ‘57

Bill was born on July 23, 1930 to Ossie Clara “Dolly” Crain Ragland and William Cull Ragland in Luling, Texas. He spent his childhood in Mexia, Texas and graduated from Mexia High School in 1948. Bill was always a cowboy and was greatly influenced by his grandfather, John William “Pop” Ragland. He rode to school and delivered papers on horseback. He worked as a racehorse jockey in the summers and spent many hours perfecting his roping skills.

Following graduation from high school, Bill enlisted in the United States Air Force. The Air Force sent him to a veterinary course in Fort Collins, Colorado where he met local girl Mary Ann Rudolph. Bill and Mary were married in 1952. He received orders to report to Headquarters 12th Air Force in Landsberg, Germany where they lived for 2 years. After he was honorably discharged from the Air Force in 1954, they returned to the states and Bill enrolled in Texas A&M University (’57) under the GI Bill. He lettered on the Texas A&M rodeo team and graduated with a degree in Agricultural Education. He remained an avid, long-suffering Aggie fan for the rest of his life.

He worked as a ranch manager in various Texas towns and in 1962 founded Ragland Cattle Company in Tomball. He was part of the evolution of the cattle buying business as it entered the modern era. He ushered in innovations on the management side in addition to designing and building facilities for the efficient preparation of cattle for the feedlot. He moved his business to Brenham in 1968.

Bill was a volunteer for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo for 60 years and was instrumental in starting the commercial steer competition, creating the written exam and conducting the final interviews. He was named as a lifetime director of the Houston Rodeo in 1997.
John Billy “Bill” Ragland ‘57 (continued)

Bill was a director of the American Cutting Horse Association and the National Cutting Horse Association. He spent years competing in cuttings on his beloved horse Sonofadocjoe (Goober) earning over $175,000 in winnings and two Non-Pro World Championships. He also served as a mentor in the sport to many youngsters and teens including his oldest grandson, Matt. In June 2018 he was the 2018 Pioneer Award recipient from the Bluebonnet Cutting Horse Association.

Bill was heavily involved in the Brenham community for 50 years. He coached Little League for 12 years, being the first coach in Washington County to draft a female player. He was involved with the Washington County Fair Commercial Steer competition and was a director of the Production Credit Association. He was a founding member of the Cowboy Church of Brenham.

Bill will always be a legendary horseman and businessman. He was a great story teller spinning long tales that were probably partially true. He was very hard working, very opinionated and stubborn. He might modify his opinion, but probably wouldn't actually change it. He wore starched cotton monogrammed shirts and jeans, boots and a felt cowboy hat most days of his life. In his later years, Frances broadened his wardrobe to include polo shirts (less ironing). He loved his family, Texas A&M, a good steak and Blue Bell ice cream. He especially loved Frances -- and Goober and his dog Mike. Although he didn't always show it, he had a deep affection for those in his life and he was loved by many. He delighted in all the children and youth he knew and wanted to support them in any way he could. His faith was important to him. A friend said it succinctly: "Bill was Bill -- all day long."

Dr. H.A. “Bud” Smith ‘66

Dr. Smith was born Aug. 7, 1935, in Jonesboro, TX, to Homer A. and Lucille (Pittman) Smith in a rock house in a cotton field.

He served his country aboard the USS George Clymer while in the Navy in the Pacific.

Dr. Smith earned his bachelor of sciences degree from Texas Tech and Texas A&M University and his doctor of veterinary medicine degree from Texas A&M University.

While serving in the Navy the long tall Texan met and married his wife, Judy Patterson Smith, from Toledo, Ohio. They were married for 57 years.

He practiced Veterinary Medicine in Brenham for 30 years. Bud was honored as the Equine Practitioner of the Year for the State of Texas in 1996 by the Texas Veterinary Medical Assoc. and in 2006 received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine. After retirement he was a track veterinarian for the Texas Racing Commission for 18 years.

Bud was a member of First United Methodist Church, a 50+ year member of the Masonic Lodge, the developmental Counsel at Texas A&M University School of Veterinary Medicine and the Elks Lodge. He served on the Board of Directors of the Boys and Girls Club of Washington County as well as Texas National Bank and Bank of Brenham. He was a member of the local Rotary Club and served many years with Bread Partners of Washington County.

Bud was a quiet person with an abundance of wit and common sense. He was true to the “cowboy way” and valued hard work, integrity and a good story. In his leisure time he as an avid golfer and wing shooter and made sure each of his grandchildren could handle a shotgun. In fact, the last shot he took on Christmas Eve 2018 he proudly connected with a clay bird in front of all his grandchildren.
James Vierus ‘84

James Vierus ‘84 was a reluctant Aggie. Not in the sense that he didn’t love Texas A&M, but in that he wasn’t sure he was good enough to actually be an Aggie. After a few years out of Brenham High, a stint at Blinn College, and working a few odd jobs, James was contemplating going back to school to give it another try. “I’ll never get in,” he told his new bride, Sue ’79. But a friendly bet with Sue would prove fortuitous to James’ Aggie journey. His application was accepted and, per the terms of their bet, he was going to be an Aggie no matter what!

Many of our formative experiences at A&M are realized through our association with one of the many campus organizations, such as the Corps, a fraternity, a club, a team, or a dorm. Attending as an older, off-campus student precluded James from many of these examples, but not from building a strong comradery with fellow students commuting from the Old Washington area. Daily rides into College Station with Rodney & Celeste Dickschat and other friends provided lasting memories, entertaining stories, and strong Aggie bonds that lasted for many years.

Once the commute was over and it was time to get down to business, James slowly began to discover a passion for his field of study. Lessons learned through early struggles in calculus, specifically MATH 151, and other tough classes helped sharpen James’ iron. As the semesters drug on and the class test averages went into freefall, James began posting top marks. Stacks of punch cards, long hours in the computer lab, and inquisitive coding discussions with his father-in-law, Albert Hartstack ‘49, all contributed to a deep love and mastery of the computer programming trade. This passion would burn on as long as James’ Aggie Spirit.

Following gradation in 1984, James’ focus shifted into building a career and a family with Sue. These years included many challenging projects as a programmer at Blue Bell Creameries, some good and bad Aggie Football seasons, and the welcoming of three children, Luke ‘11, Sarah ‘19, and John ’16. James wasted no time in converting these three into die-hard Aggies, instilling a disdain for the “teasips,” making countless trips to tailgates and games at Kyle Field, and gazing at the glow of the Bonfire out along the distant horizon from their home in Washington. While it was never forced or spoken, he always dreamed of seeing them all attend and graduate from his alma mater.

Luke gave little resistance, enrolling as a Mechanical Engineering major, and as a member of Company F-2 in the Corps of Cadets. James took great pride in his son’s time in the Corps, attending nearly every march-in, learning as much as he could about the Corps lingo and games, and serving as a pillar of support for downtrodden “fish” during a tough Fall semester. Some of his favorite memories were first meeting Pisshead Vierus during first call for a march-in in 2008, and penning his own lyrics about the F-2 Class of 2011’s adventures on the Quad to the tunes of popular Robert Earl Keen ’78 songs.

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John became the second child to attend A&M, and he followed in his older brother’s footsteps; mostly. He enrolled as a Mechanical Engineering major, and pledged as a member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity. Initially, James was skeptical. However, in a short time he too had pledged his loyalty to SigEp, and had become as active a member in Greek life as he ever had in the Corps. John and his fraternity brothers enjoyed escaping College Station to hang out with James at his famous “Smokehouse” in Old Washington, and James grew to love them all like family.

Sarah was the only child to venture outside of College Station, choosing to attend Texas State University in San Marcos. James took solace in the fact that Texas State shares maroon as a school color, allowing him to continue wearing his A&M gear, and that San Marcos’ proximity to Lockhart provided him ample opportunities to go enjoy some good BBQ. Kidding aside, James was extremely proud of Sarah’s accomplishments at Texas State, but was even prouder when she announced that she had been accepted into the Master’s of School Administration program at A&M this past summer. James was finally 3-for-3.

While he will not be physically present to see Sarah walk the stage this December, James was able to realize a lifelong dream of seeing his entire family join the Aggie Family just before he passed last fall. James lived a life that embodied many of the Core Values of A&M, and adhered to the Aggie Honor Code. His work ethic in his career, his love for his family and friends, and his spirit for life are best embodied by Governor Richard Coke’s famous address to the first A&M students, which adorns the Coke Building on campus, and lives on as a Corps Campusology that all Corps fish must commit to memory.

“...To the students: Let your watchword be duty, and know no other talisman of success than labor. Let honor be your guiding star in your dealings with your superiors, your fellows, with all. Be as true to a trust reposed as the needle to the pole, stand by the right even to the sacrifice of life itself, and learn that death is preferable to dishonor.”
James Vierus ‘84 (continued)

James Russell Vierus was born in Brenham on September 14, 1956, to parents Ernst Hermann and Gladys (Weiss) Vierus. He was baptized November 18, 1956 and confirmed April 14, 1971, both at Eben-Ezer Lutheran Church of Berlin. He was a 1975 graduate of Brenham High School, a 1977 graduate of Blinn College, and a class of 1984 Fightin’ Texas Aggie. On May 19, 1979, James married his high school sweetheart, Sue Hartstack, at Friedens United Church of Christ in Washington.

James worked several jobs before embarking on a 30+ year career as a computer programmer at Blue Bell Creameries. His time there fostered many close friendships and provided great challenges in which he could showcase his great skill and ingenuity. James was known by many as “the guru” and his efficient code and slick user interfaces can still be found throughout Blue Bell today.

Despite his technical prowess, James led a simple, low-tech life at home. Computers were traded for chainsaws and lawnmowers, and code optimization took a backseat to that of the lawn or his vegetable garden. Innovation was reserved mostly for new recipes, and the only wireless connections that mattered were a clear, strong reception of the Michael Berry show or of Polka Time on Saturday mornings.

James cultivated a deep love for sports and the outdoors through his father and friends. He passed this love and wisdom on to his children and reveled in their own successes in the woods, waters, and sports fields. Impromptu hunting expeditions, fishing trips, and backyard baseball games were common occurrence, and victories in any arena lived on for many years in the form of tall tales or elaborate stories.

James was a careful purveyor of eclectic décor and other oddities. These exhibits were on full display in a backyard shed known as “The Smokehouse” which he developed into a sanctuary of music, BBQ, entertaining, stories, and deep conversations. As he filled its walls, The Smokehouse increasingly began to resemble James as a person; fiercely independent, and welcoming of all.

Paramount to all earthly pursuits was James’ belief in Jesus Christ. He worked hard to set an example of faith for his family, teaching children’s Sunday School, serving on church councils, and later joining the Gideons International. He found a spiritual home at Abiding Word Lutheran Church, and treasured the relationships and teachings he experienced there.
Clyde Sommers ‘50

Clyde was born October 11, 1928 in the William Penn Community of Washington County to Oscar Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Sommers and Rhea Maria Horstmann Sommers. He was baptized at Bethlehem Lutheran Church of William Penn, and confirmed at St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brenham. He graduated from The Agricultural & Mechanical College of Texas in 1950, and served in the US Army as a First Lieutenant in the 47th QMC at Camp Rucker, Alabama. On June 18, 1960, Clyde married Daurice Elaine Hill in Corpus Christi, Texas. They were blessed with three sons, Kenneth Clyde, Jeffrey Earl and Ross Oscar. Clyde was a lifelong rancher and farmer with the strength and gentleness of a man who loved the land and had accepted the responsibility of caring for God’s creations. He and his brother, Jack, were co-owners and operators of the Farm and Ranch Supply and also operated the Washington County Gin and Supply Company. He was the Distributive Education Coordinator at Brenham High School for eighteen years and enjoyed being a mentor to his students. Clyde was a devoted husband, father and grandfather, always quick with support and encouragement and an infinite source of wisdom and counsel to his entire family as they were his primary focus. He was a man of great integrity and faith who never complained and trusted God in everything, portraying patience and dignity in every facet of his life. He was a lifetime member of St Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church. Over the years, he was active in the community, serving on various local boards and organizations along with coaching and supporting his sons in their athletic and other endeavors. He had a quick sense of humor and enjoyed traveling with his wife and friends and his grandchildren were particularly dear to him. He was a proud Former Student of Texas A&M and enjoyed Texas A&M sporting events.

Do you have a departed Aggie to add to this year’s Roll Call? Please e-mail us or speak to the registration desk on April 22nd. washingtonaggieclub@gmail.com
Patrick A. Williams ’92 now serves as Assistant Vice President for Development in Academic Affairs working with the Office of Provost on Multi-disciplinary and university-wide funding initiatives. Previously he was the senior director of development for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He identifies, evaluates, cultivates, solicits and provides donor relations support of major gift donors to achieve the major gift fundraising goals for the University. Patrick has been with the Foundation since August 2010.

Patrick also served Greenhill School in Addison, TX as director of major gifts and alumni relations where he assumed responsibility for solicitation of major capital and endowment gifts for the school. As part of his responsibilities he helped lead the advancement team in communications, solicitations, and alumni relations. Prior to joining Greenhill he was at Northwestern Mutual Financial Network as Director of Operations. He served as Director of Marketing and Recruiting for Angell Financial Group and Texas Financial Group-Dallas from February 2000 until opening a new agency for Northwestern on Muster Day 2006.

Patrick is the only Aggie in his fourteen-member family comprised of twelve boys and two girls. He grew up in the small east Texas town of Palestine. As a student at Texas A&M he served as president and social director of Hart Hall, where he is credited with pushing through approval for the first sand volleyball court to be constructed on campus.

He earned a Bachelor of Science in journalism with a concentration in public relations. Patrick brings with him a diverse employment history including a brief stint with the Dallas Cowboys in sales. After leaving a position as Supervisor of Installations for American Airlines travel agencies throughout the nation with Bell Atlantic Business Systems Services in Dallas, he returned to Texas A&M in 1995 to serve his alma mater. He has worked in the university’s department of Financial Aid and the Office of University Relations as a media communications specialist. Before leaving Aggieland he headed up the initiative of The Association of Former Students to impact current Aggies and the larger A&M community as its Director of Campus Programs. In this role he developed Ring Day, Aggie Ring remembrance, Maroon Out, First Yell and Spring Fling programs.

Patrick spends his free time in volunteer work with college and high school youth through Young Life and Campus Crusade. He is past president, member of the board and lifetime member of the Dallas A&M Club, sits on the Leadership Council of The Association of Former Students as an At-Large representative, serves the Association as board member of the Black Former Students network and sits on the board of South Dallas Community Ministries. He has served the Bryan/College Station community as a member of the board of directors of the Brazos Valley United Way.