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## AGGIE GOODBULL

# The Return Of Rooster's 'Aggie Nugget'



Ronald "Rooster" Rinnert '54 recently got a new Aggie Ring, thanks to the New Boston, Texas, chapter of FFA.

**Ronald "Rooster" Rinnert '54** graduated with an Aggie Ring and an Army commission. The poultry science major from New Boston, Texas, came from a line of agriculturalists, but was first in his hometown to serve on the Texas FFA state officer team. "Let me lay the groundwork for this story," he said.

In his 77 years, Rinnert has experienced true life, he said. Though characterized with good and bad, the overwhelming theme, he said, has been joy. Due in part of that joy, "I gave away my Aggie Ring," he said. "I did. I took my Texas Aggie nugget, looked at it and said 'OK, buddy. You've been with me for four years,' took it off my hand and I sent it off.

"I'll just sort of start telling my story there, OK?"

After graduating from Texas A&M in 1954, Rinnert entered the U.S. Air Force as a second lieutenant stationed in Okinawa, Japan, became a Christian, and—when his responsibilities to the Air Force ended—a missionary to the people of Okinawa and the soldiers stationed there.

The narrative here can either be long or short, Rinnert said. After a young Japanese girl told him how she was abandoned by her family because she was a Christian and refused to participate in ancestry worship, it shook him. An alcoholic, Rinnert

poured his bourbon down the toilet and made a decision to stop trusting in his own abilities. "One day I was saluting my captain, the next, a missionary in training," he said. Though eyes still targeted 20/20, it was his heart that now saw his surroundings. And it broke.

"I wasn't a rich boy," he said. His salary as a second lieutenant wasn't much before, and now, out of the service, he didn't have even that. But there was a group of missionaries printing Bible lessons for a few near-forgotten nations near Mongolia. They needed help, and Rinnert had the means to give it.

It wasn't money, he said, but his "deeply honored and respected" Aggie Ring. "And what was so precious to me, I sent it to those people." His hand was empty, but "there was a happiness in my heart.

"And," he said, "I never saw my Aggie Nugget again. That was in 1958. It was gone, gone, gone, I like to say."

Rinnert spent most of his life as a missionary with his wife in Okinawa serving the soldiers on base, but when it came time to move on, New Boston was always home. He continued preaching and got a part-time job at Wal-Mart as a people greeter. "I've had a wonderful time for 19 years," he said. The Wal-Mart in New Boston draws

people from all over East Texas, and Rinnert has always been great at making friends. With the two jobs together, Rinnert became quite well-known in the area and his hometown FFA chapter asked him to come and speak about the mission field, his career in FFA and Texas A&M. He told them everything—from his ag teacher who thought "me, the shortest boy in high school, had the guts and determination to be a good Aggie," to his work in Okinawa and giving away his Aggie Ring.

Inspired, the New Boston FFA chapter, along with their ag teacher and all the town's former students, came together to buy Rinnert a new Ring. The FFA chapter invited Rinnert to come back to the high school, called him up before the group and handed him a small maroon box.

"They said, 'You've got your Aggie nugget back. It's been returned to you,' and 100 memories flooded my mind." Rinnert said. It's a treasured gift from friends, he said.

"I've lived two or three lifetimes," he said, "and if my life ended soon, it would be successful because of all my dear friends and all those people along the way the Lord has blessed me with. And the Aggies. Once an Aggie, always an Aggie. It's in our blood." 🐔