Our Promise

THE REDEDICATION OF THE CLAYTON W. WILLIAMS, JR. ALUMNI CENTER

The Association of Former Students rededicated the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center and celebrated a renewed promise to the Aggie Network on Oct. 30 with a champagne toast to the unrivaled Aggie Spirit which permeated the room throughout the evening.
In saluting the past, present and future of Texas A&M, Association President and CEO Porter S. Garner III '79 offered the following tribute: “To the Aggies who walked before and paved our path; To those who preserve the trail today; And, to those who will follow our footsteps; A revered legacy, a proud present and an optimistic future, all united by the Aggie Spirit which lights our way.”

Earlier in the evening Garner paid tribute to the past, quoting Polly Krueger, Class of 1912, who served as Association President in 1924 and who wrote in the Texas Aggie that same year, “I want The Association to help keep alive in the present student body that great heartbeat of the Aggie Spirit that has distinguished us from the common run of institutions.”

Garner noted that very same desire inspired today’s Association Board and staff to boldly envision the present enhancements - designed to improve the functionality and efficiency of both workspace and meeting space and tell the story of Texas A&M and Texas Aggies - and also inspired generous donors to provide the capital funding to make that vision a reality.

He was joined by 2009 Association Chair of the Board, Shelley Potter ‘78, Texas A&M University President, Dr. R. Bowen Loftin ’71, Student Body President, Kolin Loveless ’09, Association Building Enhancement Chair, Jim Thompson’68, and Iowa State Alumni Association President and CEO Jeff Johnson in thanking the individual donors whose gifts transformed the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center into the premier alumni center, which proudly showcases Texas A&M’s core values of excellence, integrity, leadership loyalty, respect and selfless service.

As the program concluded, Garner welcomed Mrs. Reta Haynes, her daughter, Sharon Early, and Clayton Williams ’54.
to join him on stage. Mrs. Haynes and her late husband, Bill Haynes ’46, provided the lead gift for the $17 million enhancement project and, in their honor, the Haynes Ring Plaza bears their name and the 12-foot bronze replica of the Aggie Ring is modeled after Mr. Haynes’ own Class of 1946 Aggie Ring.

Mrs. Haynes placed a few special items—including a letter to the Class of 2046—in a ceremonial box that will be placed in the time capsule inside the Ring to be opened in 2046. Afterward, she joined Garner and the more than 500 who had gathered for the evening in the toast and singing of The Spirit of Aggieland.

Association Chair Shelley Potter ’78 thanked the architects, contractors, Board and staff members who worked tirelessly over the past two years to create a place where Aggies could reflect on the proud past of Texas A&M and future generations would be inspired to carry that legacy forward.

“I truly look at this as a beginning rather than an end,” Potter said. “Our Alumni Center provides an opportunity to build affinity with students who come to order their ring, to utilize cutting edge technology in communicating with the Aggie Network, and creates a home that is a must see destination for all, keeping the Spirit alive.”

She also extended a special welcome to a group of Aggies who were present for the earlier unveiling of the Muster display, located on the Neely Mezzanine.

These 19 Aggies were a part of the well-known 1946 Muster photo taken by James Danklefs ’43 at the mouth of the Malinta Tunnel which, along with the original banner hoisted by that group, serves as the anchor of the Muster display. These men gathered in 1946 to pay tribute to the 25 Aggies who famously mustered on the Island of Corregidor just months before they were captured or killed.

Speaking on behalf of the group during the rededication festivities, Bob Epstein ’44 said, “We never set out to do anything special or memorable that day and never dreamed we were to play such
Renewing Our Promise
Joining Association Board and staff members in saluting these World War II veterans were General Will Fraser '74, Commander of the U.S. Air Force Air Combat Command, who thanked the men for the model of service and sacrifice they provide to those who wear the uniform today, and U.S. Congressman Chet Edwards '74, who told the group their photo hangs in his office in Washington, D.C. Also present were members of the Campus Muster Committee and many family and friends of Aggies present on Corregidor in both 1942 and 1946.

Notable among these special guests were family members of Col. Tom Dooley '35, who was present on Corregidor in 1942 and provided the best account of that Muster which made history and gained national recognition. According to historical accounts from Dooley, the 1942 Muster wasn’t a gathering as many believed, but involved the passing of a written roll, which each Aggie in the vicinity signed.

Student Body President Kolin Loveless '09 noted the Muster display as one of the many components of the building that allow students to learn about their legacy as Aggies and share it with future generations.
“This building was designed to be a home for former students and it stands as a great tribute to your infinite love for Texas A&M,” Loveless said. “More importantly, however, it’s a place where we as a students are drawn to visit and explore. It’s a place where we can bring our families or a perspective student and allow them to see and feel why we love Texas A&M.

Interim Texas A&M President R. Bowen Loftin ’71 added his praise saying, “This space will not only house the Association staff. It has already become a destination for anyone who has an interest in Texas A&M, a place to learn about Texas A&M and get a sense of what the Aggie Spirit is all about.”

Jim Thompson ’68, who served as chair of the Building Enhancement Committee, offered his appreciation to Clayton Williams and all the donors who contributed to the original building project in the mid-1980s, crediting them with creating the foundation upon which the enhancements were built.

“You created a permanent home for The Association of Students,” Thompson said. “We have been drinking water from the wells you drilled and we thank you for your leadership and generosity.”

Throughout the evening, guests enjoyed musical performances by the Singing Cadets and Apotheosis, an a cappella ensemble comprised of Texas A&M students. The groups provided an inspiring accompaniment to the Tribute exhibit in Flores Hall and to the Legacy, Spirit, Tradition, Memories and Network exhibits on the Neely Mezzanine.

As Garner described the additions to the Alumni Center, he offered his hope for what the enhancements would mean to Aggies.

“As you study the words of inspiration...
on our core value walls, I hope you walk away feeling the mission of Texas A&M—to develop leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good—has been accomplished,” he said. “As you view the Muster display, and particularly the photos of those Aggies who gathered in 1946, as you view our Aggie timeline, and gaze at Aggie Rings dating back to 1891, I hope you feel great pride and reverence for the proud past of Texas A&M. As you lead a yell or run onto Kyle Field through our interactive exhibits and share these with your children and grandchildren, I hope you will remember that being a Texas Aggie is indeed many things, and most importantly it is fun. More than anything, however, I hope you feel the Aggie Spirit—a spirit, founded in pride and rooted and tradition, a spirit, not about style or symbolism, but, indeed about substance and support—alive within these walls.”

The Spirit of Aggieland was, indeed,
alive within the walls and throughout the grounds of the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center on Oct. 30 and again on Oct. 31 as The Association welcomed the Leadership Council for its Fall meeting. Afterwards, the Aggie family was invited to tour the Alumni Center and enjoy pregame activities with The Association.

As multiple generations of Aggies—and even a few Iowa State Cyclones—paused to take a photo on the Haynes Ring Plaza, read the quotes on the core value walls, lead a yell in the Spirit exhibit, gazed at a family member’s Aggie Ring or viewed the banner so proudly hoisted by 128 Aggies on April 21, 1946, it was evident that the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center has achieved its mission and was inspiring future generations of Aggies.
Alumni Center Tours

The Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center welcomes guests to tour the historical and interactive exhibits located throughout the Center Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please visit www.AggieNetwork.com for photos and holiday hours.

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