Paging Through A&M’s History

By Stephanie Jeter ’06

Every family has a story. His revolves around A&M. Though not a former student himself, “I’m surrounded by Aggies,” said Paul Broussard. His lineage, the whole span of his family tree, runs through one University. Had he been able financially, Broussard would have followed the path, too. But, unable, “when my son finished up high school, I asked him if he would consider reestablishing the tradition that I broke,” he said. Mike ’97 was happy to oblige, as was daughter, Sarah ’01.

Paul had a child at Texas A&M University from 1993 to 2002. “Somewhere in 1996, I started trying to figure out how I could bond with Texas A&M myself,” he said. He’d sent his children and his money; he had relatives who wore the Ring, but what was his bond? “I am really a fan of yearbooks,” Broussard said. “I was in the Groesbeck antique store in 1996, just browsing, when I found a 1928 Longhorn.” And that’s where the story begins, with a yearbook. In a way, that’s where Texas A&M’s story begins, too.

In basic form, a yearbook represents the school during that period,” Broussard said. “In the Groesbeck antique store in 1996, just browsing, when I found a 1928 Longhorn.” And that’s where the story begins, with a yearbook. In a way, that’s where Texas A&M’s story begins, too.

The pursuit of books mirrored his pursuit of knowledge. “I discovered there was another yearbook that I didn’t have. One that was prior to the 1903 Longhorn,” he said.

Unlike what he’d been told, and despite the 1903 yearbook being titled as the first volume of A&M’s yearbook tradition, an even older annual was printed in 1895, Broussard said.

“There’s some interesting history about that, if you have time to listen,” he said.

“Back in 1895, there was a professor of history, and his name was Dr. Charles Hutson,” Broussard said. Dr. Hutson had three daughters.

“The first daughter’s name was Ethel,” Broussard said, and she’s considered the first female to ever attend Texas A&M. She was also the “ringleader,” Broussard said, for getting the school’s first yearbook—The Olio—to print in 1895.

In England, “olio” is a name given to select collections of music and literature, Broussard said. Put together 115 years ago by Ethel and her recruited team of almost a dozen cadets, Broussard said during his research, he read there were only seven Olios in existence. After months of rummaging, he bought his from an antique dealer in Bryan.

After Ethel came her twin sisters, Sophie and Mary Hutson. Under their leadership came the first volume of The Longhorn. All three Hutson sisters played a major role in getting the tradition of yearbooks started at Texas A&M, Broussard said.

While collecting, he also noticed that the year 1945 didn’t get a book because of a wartime-induced paper shortage “but they made up for it in 1946, when they printed two,” he said.

He’s met all sorts of Aggie legends in those books, like Chef Sbisa, the culinary chef from New Orleans who came to A&M in the late 1800s, for whom the present-day cafeteria Sbisa was named; or A&M’s only Heisman winner, John David Crow ’58, who won the award in 1957.

“I’ve read all through A&M,” he said. “I’m very proud of Texas A&M.”

He keeps all 108 in a two-tier bookshelf in his office. He’ll have visitors come by to look up their grandparents; Broussard is their link to the past. But, for him, the books, chronicled and well-tended to, are a connection to a continued future with Texas A&M.

Paul Broussard has one of just a handful of existing copies of A&M’s first yearbook, The Olio, which was published in 1895.

Texas A&M’s yearbook was called The Longhorn before the name was changed to Aggieland.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAUL BROUSSARD