



A New Tradition

EVERY NAME, ANSWERED WITH ‘HERE’

BY SUE OWEN '94

The names of 1,640 Aggies rang out over the Texas A&M campus as the sun rose on Muster Day 2018.

For nearly two and a half hours, Association staff and volunteers took turns calling the roll and answering “here” for each. Their voices were broadcast live via outdoor speakers and livestreamed globally online.

It was the first time in at least 75 years—and possibly ever—that a complete Muster roll of Aggies was called in a single place.

But it won’t be the last.

Porter S. Garner III '79, President and CEO of The Association of Former Students, said, “Hosting the Worldwide Roll Call in the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center allowed us to ensure that the name of every Aggie included on the roll call was read and recognized with a ‘here.’”

“It is important to the families of these Aggies and to this sacred

tradition to make this an annual part of our Muster.”

Volunteer readers at this inaugural Live Worldwide Roll Call included the university president, Michael K. Young, and the chancellor of the A&M System, John S. Sharp '72.

“It was tremendous,” said Col. Harvey Haas '59, who took part on behalf of all the Aggies he represents as president of the Sul Ross Group (A&M Classes that have marked 55 years or more since graduation). “It got it out to the entire world, and we made sure that every name was called.”

ROLL CALL LINKS

- Video: See how the livecast came together at tx.ag/rollcallATA
- Replay the live roll call: tx.ag/here
- Find which Muster will call a particular Aggie’s name: tx.ag/WhichMuster

Though it's commonly believed that the student-run campus Muster calls all Aggies' names, records show no signs that's ever been the case.

During the days Haas was a student, for example, it was typical for the cadets' Muster to call only enrolled students' names—perhaps eight or nine names in all, usually read out by the head yell leader, with each student's best friend answering "Here."

The student Muster still focuses on local Aggies. Today, the names called are primarily current students and other members of the campus community (see tx.ag/criteria). That makes it very much like the other 300-plus Musters around the world: local ceremonies calling local names.

And because every Muster uses its own methods to decide which names it will call, there has always been a chance some names would not be read anywhere.

The first name called on 2018's roll had a particularly suitable Aggie sound to it: Lawrence Sullivan Ross Suber, Class of 1913.

But why was a Class of 1913 Aggie being called in 2018? Such cases are actually common: This was the first time The Association had been notified of Suber's death.

When someone emails SilverTaps@AggieNetwork.com with the news that an Aggie has passed away, Association records assistant Ann Duyka compiles that information with research including obituaries and the most recent address she can find.

That work creates both the Worldwide Roll that is updated daily online (tx.ag/RollCall) and the Silver Taps listings in this magazine—two services that would not exist without Association members' donations.

Duyka has performed this essential record-keeping labor for nearly two decades at The Association. On April 21, she was among those who called names at sunrise.

"It was an honor," she said.

Though the Aggies listed were familiar to her, she focused tightly during the reading itself.

"I wanted to read each name with respect, so I concentrated on each name and tried to not think about anything else."

The live reading was not designed as a Muster gathering, but as it turned out, a few dozen people did come to the Alumni Center to listen—some standing on the Haynes Ring Plaza outside, others entering to listen via the building's public address system.

April 21 has been a gathering day for Aggies since the 1870s, beginning as a San Jacinto Day celebration on campus. By the late 1920s, some of these events included roll calls of former students who had passed on. A 1928 campus roll call named 23 former students.

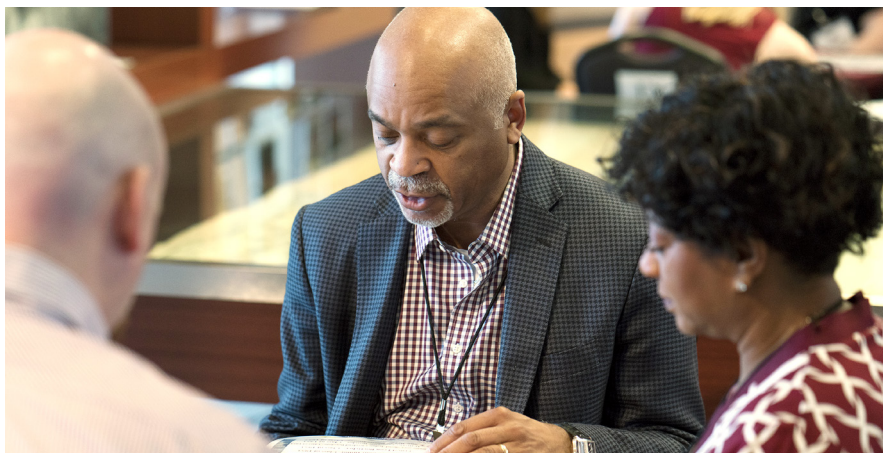
When Association head E.E. McQuillen, Class of 1920, sent out the first Muster packets to local chairs in

1943, the roll of names they contained was the A&M men known to be on Corregidor Island in 1942. The 1944 Muster packets McQuillen sent out included a roll of "recently deceased Aggies."

By 1977, the Muster packets sent out by The Association included a list of 274 names and said, "Call the names of those from your area."

In recent years, the Worldwide Roll has contained more than 1,500 names annually. A large local Muster such as that held by the Brazos County A&M Club may call more than 150 names, but none attempts the entire roll.

The Association now takes that on as a trust, in keeping with its mission of perpetuating the ties of affection and esteem that keep Aggies united.



The Association of Former Students' 2018 Chair of the Board of Directors Jimmy Williams '83, Ph.D., and his wife, Valerie Williams, came in from Pennsylvania to participate.



Readers were divided into groups of four, each reading 30 names as the others in the group responded 'Here.' From left in this group are Dee White, Claire Garner '21, Robert H. White '81 of The Association's Board of Directors and Porter S. Garner III '79, President and CEO of The Association.