THE WOMAN QUESTION:

THE LASTING LEGACY OF COEDUCATION AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

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Literature Review

"The Woman Question" explores the history of women's involvement at Texas A&M University. Few sources detail the expansive history of women at the university, both before the official admittance of women in 1963 and the present. The few secondary sources that exist about this topic will provide valuable insight into the existing research in the field, primarily about the university and the limited perspectives about women on campus. The most influential source in this regard will be a thesis written by Heidi Ann Knippa, a former student who wrote the most comprehensive story of women at Texas A&M. A history of Texas A&M University written by Henry Dethloff will be used to explain the general history of the university. Another source is a journal article entitled "'We Want Aggies, Not Maggies:' James Earl Rudder and the Coeducation of Texas A&M University" which discusses James Earl Rudder's influence as University president during the period of coeducation at Texas A&M, as well as the anti-coeducation protests that occurred during this time of transition. Other secondary sources consulted include books written regarding student activism movements and coeducation across

American university campuses. Primary sources consulted include local sources available to Texas A&M students, including but not limited to: *The Battalion* newspaper, *The Bryan Eagle* newspaper, and *Aggieland* yearbooks. Administration files of the university were reviewed as well. Through these sources, a more representative and complete history of women at Texas A&M is presented and allows for greater understanding of the repercussions of female exclusion before 1963 and how they influence current female students' lives at A&M.

Thesis Statement

While Texas A&M University is not known for having student activism movements that many other universities did in the Civil Rights Era, they did indeed have a student activism movement. Rather than our typical understanding of movement organizing, however, those at Texas A&M centered on exclusion rather than inclusion when it came to expanding the student body. The anti-coeducation movements held at the university stemmed from and resulted in, a culture where women are not as accepted at Texas A&M University as they are at other American universities.

Theoretical Framework

I am taking an interdisciplinary approach that will blend traditional historical methods and archival research with oral history methodology and digital history. My analysis will be guided by gender analysis, which will allow me to explore the tensions that lay at the center of external movements to expand university enrollment and internal, male-led, movements that sought the opposite. As a result of both my source base and my gendered framework, I will write a thesis that illustrates a holistic understanding of this pivotal moment.

Project Description

The history of women at Texas A&M is relatively unknown both within and beyond the university. Stories that do recount this history focus on the maternal nature of women as wives of faculty and students and their contribution to the university as members of wives' clubs. The slow trickle of women into the university is a subject worth examining-- not just for the posterity of university history but because it tells a different yet important story of the 1960s. While students at other universities embraced the free speech movement, protested the Vietnam War, and battled segregation, A&M's student movement took a distinct form of anti-coeducation.

While this student movement may not have been noteworthy in comparison to the other student activism movements in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, it would have lasting effects on Texas A&M. Arguments against women's admission into Texas A&M University are part of a bigger story that shows how essential the movements for coeducation were changing the social fabric of the United States. Many other universities in the United States went through a sexual revolution or student activist movements in which many traditional policies were removed to allow for a more inclusive university. However, Texas A&M never had a progressive movement. Consequently, without this upheaval, many male-centric traditions and policies remain in place at the university and women sit on the sidelines to traditions they were never meant to be a part of.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the women of Texas A&M, past, present and future. Thank you for fighting for my right to be an Aggie and for giving me a cause worth writing about.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Sarah McNamara, for her guidance and support throughout this process, her willingness to help me tell the story of women at Texas A&M, and for encouraging my exploration into the field of Women's History.

Thanks to the staff at Cushing Memorial Library and Archives for guiding me through my search into A&M's past and for their help in finding many of my source materials.

Thank you to my friends who encouraged me to explore a hidden aspect of our university, listened to me recount my findings, and supported me throughout this endeavor.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1964, as the students of Texas A&M University return for another school year, they received their copies of the *Aggieland* yearbooks for the previous school year, 1963-1964. The publication, *Aggieland '64*, served a notable issue for the yearbook since it contained pictures of the very first female students accepted as daytime students. These female students pictured in the yearbook, thirteen in total, were the result of a 1963 decision made by the Texas A&M Board of Directors to admit qualified women into the graduate programs as day students, with undergraduate females under stricter guidelines. The decision to coeducate, a topic that had a long history at Texas A&M, was a unanimous one for the board. However, many of the male students at Texas A&M did not accept the coeducation decision as easily as the Board.[1]

After the Texas A&M board of directors voted to coeducate on April 28, 1963, many current, male students felt as if their beloved, male-only university was doomed. These students chose to make these feelings known, as they booed at the president of the university, James Earl Rudder, during a speech announcing the coeducation decision, formed committees dedicated to the "preservation of Texas A&M" and used student publications to make their opinions known.[2]

In the week after the April 28 decision, the student-run university newspaper, *The Battalion*, published several articles both for and against coeducation and featured many letters to the editor where former and current students expressed their outrage and discontent to the decision. In the May 2 issue of *The Battalion*, the front-page story read "Houston Ex To Continue His Fight Against Coeds" and tells of a former student who pursued "legal loopholes"

[1] Texas A&M University, *The Aggieland* (College Station, Texas, 1964), 488-489; Christopher Bean," 'We Want Aggies, Not Maggies:' James Earl Rudder and the Coeducation of Texas A&M University," *East Texas Historical Journal* 44, no. 2 (2006): 17-27.
[2] Bean, 23-25.

to prevent the coeducation of his alma mater. However, the most infamous image defining the push against coeducation was not even released at the time of the decision, but rather, 16 months later, in September of 1964, when the students of the 1963-1964 school year received their yearbooks.[3]

In the *Aggieland '64* yearbook, the newly admitted coed students' pictures had been placed at the end of the section showing off every student's portraits. On that page, the female students of Texas A&M found themselves divided from the rest of the male student body, not for the first or last time, but perhaps, the most notable time. The page read "Undergraduate Coeds" and portrayed the portraits of the women in the shape of a question mark.

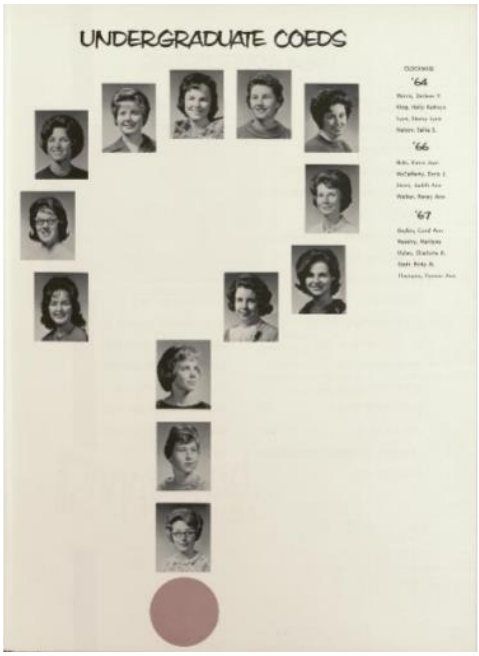


Figure 1. The first coed students of Texas A&M on their yearbook page

The decision to place women students not only separate but in the shape of a question mark confirmed the hostility that female students felt in their first years. By placing the coeds'

[3] "Houston Ex To Continue His Fight Against Coeds," *The Battalion,* May 2, 1963.

pictures on a different page and in the shape of a question mark, the yearbook editors showed how the presence of women on A&M's campus would be questioned and female A&M students would be treated as "others" during their time in college. This discrimination occurred in many different forms at Texas A&M. First, as protests on campus in response to coeducation, then as administrational restrictions on women's admissions, and finally, to exclusion from Aggie traditions. The hostility and ostracism felt by female students through the university's 57-year admittance of women is derived from the initial protest and disdain to allowing women to attend Texas A&M. This contempt for the admissions of female students has been prevalent since the early days of the university but hit its peak when women were first admitted to the university in 1963.

The aversion to coeducation is akin to the student activism movements that occurred in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. While Texas A&M University is not known for having student activism movements that many other universities did in the Civil Rights Era, they did indeed have a student activism movement. Rather than our typical understanding of movement organizing, however, those at Texas A&M centered on exclusion rather than inclusion when it came to the expansion of the student body. The anti-coeducation movements held at the university stemmed from and resulted in a culture where women are not as accepted at Texas A&M University as they are at other American universities.

CHAPTER I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Texas A&M University officially began as the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas in 1876, after authorization by the Texas Legislature in 1871.[4] The Morrill Act donated land to institutions for the purpose of higher education. Texas A&M was a land-grant college and the first institution of higher education in the state. The Texas Legislature chose a strip of land in Brazos County as the site of the college. This area, now known as College Station, was centrally located in the state, close to the farming community of Bryan, and could be accessed easily by railroad. The university held its first term of classes beginning on October 4, 1876, with a student body of 106.[5]

When the university opened its doors to students, admission was limited to white males, a tradition that would not change for 87 years. However, no official admissions policy existed that restricted women from the university during its conception. The language used in the Morrill Act, however, and resulting legislation omits the idea of coeducation all together. Rather, the university's charter orders it to include a military education, and military training was required, forcing Texas A&M to be a distinctly male university from its outset. Women did not apply to the university in its first two decades, however, and it was generally accepted to be an all-male school.[6]

[4] When Texas A&M was first founded, it was named The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas and was referred to as Texas AMC or TAMC. In 1963, the same year as coeducation, the university was renamed as Texas A&M University. Throughout this paper, it will be referred to as Texas A&M University for the sake of clarity.
[5] Henry C. Dethloff, *A Centennial History of Texas A&M University, 1876-1976* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1975), xi-xiii; Heidi Ann Knippa, "Salvation of a University: The Admission of Women to Texas A&M" (MA Thesis, University of Texas, 1995), 4-5.
[6] Knippa, "Salvation of a University", 5-9; Dethloff, 409-10.

The first fields of study offered at Texas A&M included agriculture, mechanics and engineering, language and literature, and military education. In 1880, the president of the college, John Garland James, intended for Texas A&M to focus in the academic fields of agriculture and engineering, and encouraged people who "wanted a broader and more liberal education they would have to find it at a place other than the A&M College." This focus on the agricultural and mechanical aspects of Texas A&M affected the university up until the 1950s; the combination of compulsory military training and the almost total elimination of liberal arts would create a university that looked much different than the others in the state of Texas.[7]

In 1883, the University of Texas in Austin was founded and served as a coeducational institution from the beginning. The development of a new university, one that was coeducational and did not have compulsory military training, caused Texas A&M's student admissions rates to drop and fueled the rivalry between the two universities that lasts into the twenty-first century. The two competing universities grappled over the university funds and land distributions, and were both under the Texas government, despite having two separate boards. The opening of the University of Texas was not an obstacle for everyone in the Texas A&M System, however; Hardaway Hunt Dinwiddie, the first chairman of the faculty, approved of the opening of the new university as it would allow for A&M to focus on agricultural and mechanical training.[8]

The Campus Girls

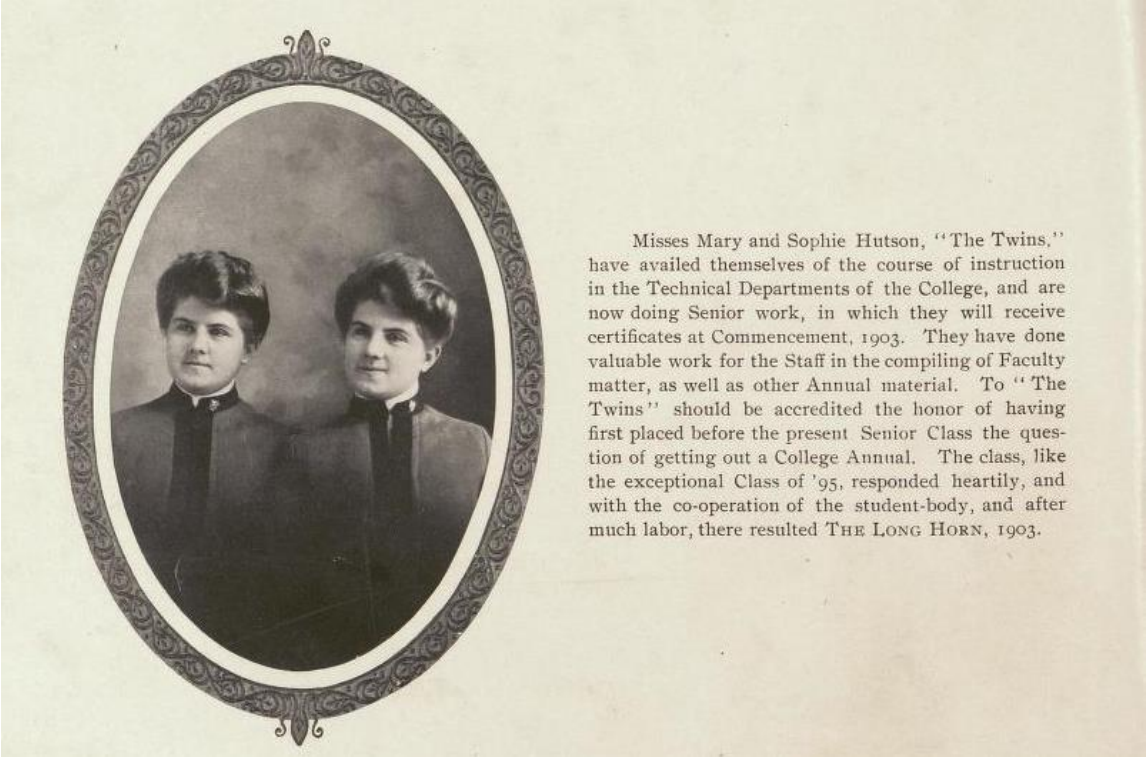
In the 1890s, Texas A&M would receive its first brush with coeducation. There was community support for a women's school in Bryan/College Station and a pamphlet outlining the

[7] Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 40, 73.
[8] Debbie Mauldin Cottrell, "Women and Education" Handbook of Texas Online, Texas State Historical Commission, last modified April 5, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/khwku; Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 79, 95.

benefits to the addition of a women's college to the A&M system was circulated both off-campus and in the community. However, this advocation for the higher education of women failed to convince the Texas Legislature, who designated the first women's college to be in Denton, Texas. This university, Texas Women's University, later became Texas A&M's sister school and fostered a "dating connection" for students at Texas A&M. Despite the lack of a women's college at A&M or the surrounding area, the daughters and wives of faculty and staff were allowed to attend A&M as unofficial students, beginning in 1893. These women, affectionately known as "campus girls," attended classes and received certificates of completion in place of a degree. They were able to apply their earned hours at other state universities and did not partake in the compulsory military training.[9]

These campus girls were welcomed with open arms because they did not pose a threat to the all-male nature of the university. Three women, Emma Fountain, and Mary and Sophie Hutson, referred to as "the Twins" served as the most notable of the campus girls. These women were featured in the front pages of the 1903 Texas A&M yearbook, *The Longhorn*. Under the heading "The Campus Girls," the women are said to have made "the pleasures of cadet life all the brighter" and they have "won a place in every cadet's heart." The Hutson Twins, whose older sister, Ethel, had also attended the university from 1893-95, served on the yearbook staff, and faced no exclusion and held respect on campus. The Hutson Twins were so accepted into the student body, the male cadets gifted them A&M cadet uniform jackets, which they are pictured in the 1903 *Longhorn.*[10]

[9] Knippa, "Salvation of a University", 16-20.
[10] The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, *The Longhorn* (College Station, Texas, 1903), 9-10; Knippa, 20.



Misses Mary and Sophie Hutson, "The Twins," have availed themselves of the course of instruction in the Technical Departments of the College, and are now doing Senior work, in which they will receive certificates at Commencement, 1903. They have done valuable work for the Staff in the compiling of Faculty matter, as well as other Annual material. To "The Twins" should be accredited the honor of having first placed before the present Senior Class the question of getting out a College Annual. The class, like the exceptional Class of '95, responded heartily, and with the co-operation of the student-body, and after much labor, there resulted THE LONG HORN, 1903.

Figure 2. Mary and Sophie Hutson, "The Twins", in the 1903 Longhorn Yearbook

However, these campus girls did not earn their degrees from Texas A&M; the Twins only received certificates of completion at the 1903 commencement ceremony, and Emma Fountain transferred to the University of Texas to earn her degree. Despite the inability to earn a degree at A&M, these women allowed for summer sessions to open briefly for women, and in 1909, the Texas Legislature allowed for regular summer sessions at Texas A&M, with the admittance of both male and female students. However, in 1915, the Texas A&M made the first policy against coeducation of regular sessions when they declined the endowment for a chair for domestic science. They claimed it would "make the college coeducational" even though the all-male rules of A&M would be tested through the 1930s.[11]

[11] Knippa, 20; Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 410-1.

Coeducation in the 1920s and 30s

In the 1910s, during World War I, as teacher shortages occurred on campus, A&M hired its first female instructor, Wanda Farr. The influx of veterans into the university allowed for more wives of students to attend classes as "special unofficial students", with a total of thirty women enrolled in 1925. In the same year, Mary Evelyn Crawford became the first woman to earn her degree from the college. After her graduation, the Board of Directors decided that the family of college employees could be admitted to A&M if they could not receive that same education elsewhere. However, in a move pressured by alumni, they reversed this decision weeks later and ruled that "no girls should ever be admitted to the College."[12]

Mary Evelyn Crawford's degree threatened the all-male nature of the university in ways unimaginable to the Board of Directors. Previously, women treated as special students who were given the "courtesy" of attending the university. The Hutson Twins were described as "extremely attractive" and the male students of A&M enjoyed the female companionship, and treated the "special, unofficial students" as a pleasant addition to their rigorous military training and course work, but when women presented themselves as serious about their education and as equal students, both the Board of Directors and male cadets felt their ideas of an all-male college were endangered. Crawford's graduation as the first female student to earn a degree would serve as a reminder to the student body that the all-male university was almost lost.[13]

No women attended the university from 1925-1933, but the Great Depression in the 1930s caused for faculty salaries to be lowered and the Directors "eased the male-only ruling to the extent of allowing daughters of faculty and staff to enroll in the regular session." These

[12] Dethloff, 412-13; Minutes of the Board of Directors, July 14, 1925, 44.
[13] George Sessions Perry, *The Story of Texas A. and M.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 75, 188; Knippa, "Salvation of a University", 27-8.

women were only admitted for the 1933-34 school year as a way to save money for their families by not attending their original institutions. Eleven daughters applied to attend during this time, and their admission sparked twelve local women not related to faculty or staff into applying for the fall of 1933 as well. These twelve women presented a petition to the Board and were dismissed. Seven of the twelve filed a formal application to the university. All seven were more than qualified to attend the university but were still denied admission. The women now had legal grounds to fight the admissions policy and with their male families' help, they went to court to secure their right to an education at A&M.[14]

The women hired Charles Christopher Todd to defend their case, who argued that the college's policy was blatantly "discriminatory, unlawful, arbitrary and capricious." Judge William C. Davis presided over the case and reviewed various petitions and letters from students, administrators, and parents. Judge Davis ruled that it was the discretion of the Board of Directors to decide upon the admission of women into the university and he believed women were not suited for the education to be received at A&M. It was this case in 1933 that confirmed that A&M was a male-only college, even though women attended the university as unofficial students as early as 1893 and one woman received a diploma from the university in 1925. In 1936, a professor of the university requested for his daughter to attend A&M under special circumstances and was denied. The case in 1933 created the all-male university that would last until the 1950s.[15]

[14] Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 413-5; Knippa, 31-42.
[15] Dethloff, 413-5; Knippa, 31-42; Greg Bailey, "A Time of Resolve: Texas A&M during the Great Depression" (College Station: Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, 2018), 3.

CHAPTER II

TEXAS A&M BEFORE COEDUCATION, 1950-1963

Directly after the Second World War, Texas A&M's student admission rates increased as veterans utilized the GI Bill to attend universities. Student admission had bottomed out during the war, going as low as 2,000 students in 1943, but climbed following the end of the war, reaching 8,651 in the 1946-47 school year. However, when veterans finished their college careers and graduated the university, the high admissions rates dropped rapidly. A&M lost 1,100 students from 1949 to 1950, while other Texas universities suffered the same fate; the University of Texas lost 1,700 students from 1950-1951, while Texas Technological College, now known as Texas Tech University, suffered a loss of 500 students.[16]

However, both the University of Texas and Texas Tech University recovered from their student admission drops, while Texas A&M's rates fell behind. For the first time in the history of Texas A&M, admissions rates began to fall while the other universities rose. From 1950-1953, A&M's student body dropped from 6,675 to 6,198. In the period from 1951-61, other Texas universities grew at over 5 times the rate A&M did. Texas A&M was suffering from stagnation.[17]

Texas A&M Century Study

A study to find the root of and combat the stagnation was completed in 1961. This study, from the Texas A&M Century Council, evaluated A&M programs and policies. This study found

[16] Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 490; Knippa, "Salvation of a University", 47.
[17] Dethloff, 532; John A. Adams Jr, *Keepers of the Spirit: The Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M University, 1876-2001* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 185.

that A&M's student admission stagnation could be attributed to multiple factors. First was the fact that A&M no longer was the only school that offered course work in agriculture and engineering, followed by the segregation of gender, the only all-male university in the state at this time, and lastly the insistence of the compulsory military training. However, these findings "failed to be reflected" in the final version of the report and the Board of Directors only tried to fix one of these issues, and in the fall of 1954, they halted the compulsory military training that so defined Texas A&M.[18]

When Texas A&M discontinued the military training, many were concerned about the future of the university. President David H. Morgan reassured the student body that the Corps would continue if the students allowed it to. The student body grew from 6,257 in 1954 to 7,474 in 1957. However, despite this growth, the Board of Directors voted in November 1957 to reverse its 1954 policy and restore compulsory military training for all freshman and sophomore students, beginning in the fall of 1958. The student body rate dropped back down to 7,077, losing almost 400 students in a year.[19]

The fluctuation in student admission rates surrounding the compulsory training can be best explained by a survey conducted in the spring of 1954. This survey, "Student Attitudes Toward Aspects of the A&M College of Texas" was sent to incoming freshman, current freshman, sophomores, juniors and those who left the university. The surveyed students reported that their main discrepancies with the university and the reasons why students left the university were due to the strictness of the Corps of Cadets and the lack of female students. When students answered questions about how the college could improve, many said to coeducate the university, including on response that said "It wouldn't do any good to answer any of the questions [in the

[18] Dethloff, 532; Adams, 185.
[19] Adams, 185, 191, 196.

survey]. Until A&M becomes co-ed it is going to keep 'going down' like it has for the last several years." Many students in the 1950s, especially freshman, agreed that coeducation was the way to get A&M to return to its former glory.[20]

The Fight for Coeducation, 1953-1958

Despite the declining rates, the Texas A&M Board of Directors still refused to coeducate. One state Senator, William T. Moore, who graduated from A&M in 1940, took matters into his own hands. On March 3, 1953, he introduced a resolution to the state Senate calling for the coeducation of his alma mater. This resolution surprised the administration of A&M, including President M. T. Harrington, who said Moore did not consult the Texas A&M Board before his proposal. Moore argued that among the universities in the state of Texas, "everyone gets coeds but us." Moore met a challenge to his resolution, Senator Searcy Bracewell, class of 1938, who argued that this resolution was "knocking down 75 years of tradition." Bracewell convinced the Senate to shoot down this bill, with a vote of 28 to 1, the sole opposing vote cast by Senator Moore. Moore refused to give up and predicted that the university would coeducate within the next ten years, a prediction that would come true with the coeducation decision passed in April of 1963.[21]

The Board of Directors felt pressured by the proposal of Moore's bill to allow for the coeducation of Texas A&M and vehemently opposed it. President Harrington issued a statement saying that only the Board of Directors should be allowed to make decisions regarding the university and that A&M had survived an attempt to coeducate once, in 1933, and would

[20] Melvin Brooks and John Bertrand, "Student Attitudes Toward Aspects of the A&M College of Texas, Spring 1954" (College Station: Basic Division, 1954).
[21] Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 551; "Senate Passes A&M-Coed Resolution: Completed Surprise President Says," *The Battalion*, March 3, 1953.

continue to do so. He also claimed that A&M's declining admission rates were "negligible", a drop of 477 students, or 7% from 1950-1953.[22]

President Morgan encouraged the coeducation of Texas A&M, much to the dismay of now-chancellor Harrington. He argued that the coeducation of the university would allow its student admission rates to rise again and allow A&M to "embrace its future success." President Morgan's insistence on coeducation created a rift between him and Chancellor Harrington. Morgan's views were deemed too radical and liberal, and he had "made more changes in the College than most former students could swallow." He was disliked by many associated with the university, and because of this, he offered his resignation in December of 1956. Chancellor Harrington became both Chancellor and President of the university in 1957 and he vowed to continue the single-gender education of Texas A&M. [23]

The fight for coeducation would continue in 1958, when an editorial published by *The Bryan Eagle* advocated for the coeducation of A&M, claiming that "the world changes and A&M must change with it." This editorial would cause a storm at Texas A&M and prove that 1958 would be a pivotal year for coeducation at the university. The Texas A&M school newspaper, *The Battalion,* published an editorial about the gradual steps that could be taken to achieve coeducation on January 8. The next day, *The Battalion* staff found several hundred copies of their newspaper burned in their office, while the editor of the newspaper, Joe Tindel, found 100 copies of the paper torn up in his room. These beginnings of the anti-coeducation protest at Texas A&M would be influential for the history of coeducation of the university.[24]

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[22] Knippa, "Salvation of a University," 52-3; Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M,* 532.
[23] Dethoff, 551-4.
[24] "Coeducation Needed at Texas A&M Now," *The Bryan Eagle*, January 5, 1958; "An Editorial: Steps to Co-education," *The Battalion*, January 8, 1958; "Angry Students Burn Battalion in Coed Revolt: Cut Papers Piled in Editor's Room," *The Battalion*, January 9, 1958.

Anti-Coeducation in 1958-1959

These early anti-coeducation protests took violent forms and were much less structured than the protests that would take place in the 1960s. After Tindel's editorial was published, the student body called to remove him from *The Battalion* Staff, and the Student Senate voted 11-5 in favor of Tindel's removal. However, Tindel's editorial had the intended effect on the students of Texas A&M. After the publication of Tindel's editorial, another student, William Boyd Metts, filed the charter to form a new student club called the Aggie Association for the Advancement of Coeducation (AAAC). Metts, a freshman, stated in *The Battalion* that the club's purpose was "to learn the percentage of Aggies interested in coeducation."[25]

Mere days after the announcement of the new coed club on campus, the Corps of Cadets took the matter of coeducation into their own hands. On the night of January 15, 1958, a group of cadets approached Metts, asking him to reconsider the formation of his student organization. Later that night, unidentified Cadets threw an ammonia bomb into Mett's dorm room, hospitalizing him. Bombs made from firecrackers had been thrown into his room on two previous occasions since the announcement of the AAAC, but after the dangers posed by the last one, Metts rescinded his charter and the AAAC was killed before it had even started. Metts claimed that the organization never meant to advocate for coeducation on campus, rather, just as a way to gauge how many students would be in favor of coeducation. Regardless, it seemed that the students of Texas A&M in January of 1958 were not ready to discuss coeducation.[26]

However, while the students of Texas A&M adamantly opposed to coeducation, this reemergence of the discussion of coeducation for the first time since the 1933 anti-coeducation

[25] Knippa, "Salvation of a University", 69; "Coed Boosters to Organize," *The Battalion*, January 14, 1958.
[26] "Charter Filed With Activities By Coed Club," *The Battalion*, January 16, 1958; "Co-educational 'War' Breaks Out on Campus: 'Bombing' of Metts Kept Up," *The Bryan Eagle*, January 17, 1958; "Coed Club Killed by Founder Metts," *The Battalion*, January 17, 1958.

court case led to more women attempting to enter the university. On the same day that Metts announced the decision to end his new coed club, Myrna Gray, the wife of a part-time student, filed her application to Texas A&M. Gray had only two semesters left for her degree in Biology from East Texas State College and her family could not afford to send her out of town to finish her degree. She never believed that she would be admitted, but she told *The Battalion* that if the Board denied her entry, she would pursue legal help. In an unsurprising decision, Gray's application was rejected. This rejection birthed another court case after the college rejected two more women, Lena Ann Bristol and Barbara Gilkey Tittle. For an unknown reason, Gray withdrew from the case before it started, leaving Bristol and Tittle against the Texas A&M administration.[27]

The budding court case allowed for the discussion of coeducation to continue on A&M's campus, with a Senate referendum and a debate on the issue. The Senate referendum called for a student body vote on the issue, and out of the 3,716 votes on the issue, 66% voted no for the coeducation of Texas A&M. When asked if the students "would be in favor of allowing wives of students and the wives and daughters of faculty and staff to attend class at A&M", the vote was only 55% against. However, this vote in the student body had little effect on the court case and the feelings of the administration.[28]

The case, *Heaton v. Bristol*, and the lawyer defending the women, John Barron, followed the precedent set by the case in 1933. Barron argued that the A&M admission policy violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in the Constitution, and the women, more than qualified to attend the university, were only rejected on the basis of gender. Out of the

[27], "Student's Wife Tries for A&M Entry: Application Filed in Sudden Move," *The Battalion*, January 17, 1958; Knippa, "Salvation of a University", 71-2.
[28] "Aggies Vote 'No' to Coed Question: Heavy Ballot Sees 2,478 Opposed," *The Battalion*, February 12, 1958.

nation's 69 land grant universities, A&M was the only one not coeducated. The Board of Directors responded and claimed that they still reserved the right to determine their university's admissions policy and returned to the 1933 decision that reaffirmed its position to decide. However, William McDonald, the judge presiding over the case, himself a former student of the university ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and claimed that "A&M's all-male admissions policy denied the plaintiffs equal protection under the law." McDonald ordered the university to admit Bristol and Tittle and any future women that applied, and the coed students would be exempt from the military training. Immediately, the Board of Directors filed an appeal to a higher court in Texas that prevented the enrollment of any coeds.[29]

The 1958 court case was rejected by many of the members of the Bryan-College Station area, and effigies of Judge McDonald were hung around campus bearing signs that read "Judge McDonald – A True Aggie?" Barron, the plaintiff's lawyer, received many threatening phone calls in the days after the verdict was announced. Many of the students of A&M despaired at the coeducation verdict and felt that the traditions and school spirit of the university would be lost with the admission of women. Even the former students of the university vocalized their disapproval for coeducation.[30]

In September of 1958, the appeal from Texas A&M was heard and the coeducation decision reversed, ruling in favor of the Board of Directors and confirming their absolute power in the admissions policy. The plaintiffs with John Barron appealed against the new decision but were refused, leaving the anti-coeducation policy in place. The next year, Barron led a new case for more women who refused from the university, but Judge McDonald was forced to rule

[29] Knippa, "Salvation of a University", 76-9.
[30] "Judge Effigy Again Hanged in Protest," *The Battalion,* March 21, 1958; Knippa, "Salvation of a University", 80.

against coeducation, citing the higher court's decision. The case eventually made its way to the United States Supreme Court but was refused. A&M remained an all-male institution.[31]

President Rudder and Coeducation

On March 26, 1960, James Earl Rudder was inaugurated as the president of Texas A&M College, after serving as its vice president for three years. Rudder planned to return A&M from the tumultuous past few years and improve its future. The threat of a declining student body posed itself as the biggest issue that needed to be resolved immediately. The student body in 1962 consisted of 8,100 students, the largest student body since 1948. However, this number seems minuscule in comparison to the University of Texas and Texas Tech; Texas A&M was only the fifth largest university in Texas. Rudder and the Board of Directors ordered another Century Council study of the university. However, the Century Council would sidestep the idea of coeducation and place it among the lowest concerns of the university. They claimed the best way to improve the college was by focusing on research and faculty. In the Century Council Study in 1962, they determined that the Board should focus on the quality of the students entering rather than the quantity. However, a subcommittee in the same study addressed the all-male military nature of the university as the biggest flaw in its admissions rate.[32]

In yet another study conducted, the Faculty-Staff-Student Study on Aspirations found drastic changes were necessary to "end outdated policies" referencing the military training and the all-male student body. This study showed that while the majority of the student body opposed coeducation, faculty and staff supported the issue 6:1. The committee determined that "the… negative policy toward coeducation constitutes a major obstacle to academic excellence and

[31] Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 560.
[32] Adams, *Keepers of the Spirit,* 207; Knippa, "Salvation of a University," 92-3.

institutional stature." After the studies conducted on behalf of the Board of Directors and President Rudder, the administration composed a plan for the future of A&M, entitled the "Blueprint for Progress," but this plan had no evidence on the admission of women.[33]

However, behind closed doors, the decision to coeducate Texas A&M drew nearer. In 1959, the Board of Directors had been made up of primarily veteran Directors, but by 1962, only three of the nine members were veteran directors, and many of the new members of the Board held more progressive views than their predecessors. The findings from the various study were leaked to the press and the public pressured the decision of coeducation even more. In the summer of 1962, the Texas Commission on Higher Education announced they planned to investigate the all-male admissions policy of A&M, and one female member said that she believed "women are the only things left in the state who [were] being discriminated against." In May of 1962, an informal vote polled approximately 48% of the student body, who voted 50.9% in favor of coeducation, for the first time in the history of the university.[34]

The decision to coeducate the university finally seemed plausible. *The Battalion* uncovered that the Board of Directors had been meeting secretly in the fall of 1962 and the spring of 1963. The newspaper claimed the Directors only met informally, but they discussed the prospect of coeducation. *The Battalion* also reported that the coeducation vote was slated to take place at a board meeting on April 27, but the Board denied these claims. However, to the delight of *The Battalion* staff, the Board did vote on April 27, a unanimous decision in favor of the

[33] Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 562-4; Knippa, "Salvation of a University," 94-95.
[34] Knippa, 95; "Students Vote 'Yes' to Name Change, Coeds; Favor Non-Compulsory Corps: 48.2 Per Cent Cast Poll Votes," *The Battalion*, May 19, 1962.

coeducation of Texas A&M. The admission of women as official students for the first time in Texas A&M history ended the 87-year historic all-male admissions policy.[35]

[35] "Board Denied Coeducation Vote Due; Issue Discussed Only Informally, Directors Claim," *The Battalion*, March 21, 1963; "Doors Open for Kin, Grads But Not for Area Women," *The Bryan Eagle*, April 28, 1963.

CHAPTER III

LIMITED COEDUCATION AT TEXAS A&M, 1963-1971

After the Texas A&M Board of Directors' decision to coeducate the university, it seemed for a moment that the battle fought for decades for women's rights to attend the university had ended. However, this new coeducation of the university, as remarkable as it was, limited the women who could attend the university. On the morning of April 27, 1963, the Board of Directors announced that

> Effective June 1, 1963, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas will admit qualified women on a day-student basis to all graduate programs and to Veterinary Medicine [and] effective June 1, 1963, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas will accept on a day-student basis the wives and daughter of faculty and staff, the wives of students in residence, and women staff members to the undergraduate program.

This limitation would prove controversial and a "hollow" victory, because it refused to admit qualified women to the undergraduate program. Local women without ties to the university had been fighting for their admission to Texas A&M since 1933. Many women felt excluded by this new ruling, despite the strides that had been made for coeducation in general. [36]

The Bryan Eagle provided an example of this restrictive ruling on the front-page the day after the decision was announced, April 28, 1963. The front-page picture shows three women sitting on the Texas A&M sign. These three women, Kathy Blackburn, Kathy Blackhurst, and Carol Ann Hill gave the camera a thumbs up for the approval to coeducate. All three women were of college-attending age, with hopes to attend universities to further their education.

[36]"Doors Open for Kin, Grads But Not for 'Area' Women," *The Bryan Eagle,* April 28, 1963; Knippa, "Salvation of a University," 100.

However, out of these three women, under the Board's restriction, only one was eligible to attend A&M. Kathy Blackhurst, sitting in the middle, was the daughter of an A&M professor. The other two women were ineligible to attend the university and gave a face to the plight of many of the local women in the Bryan/College Station area.

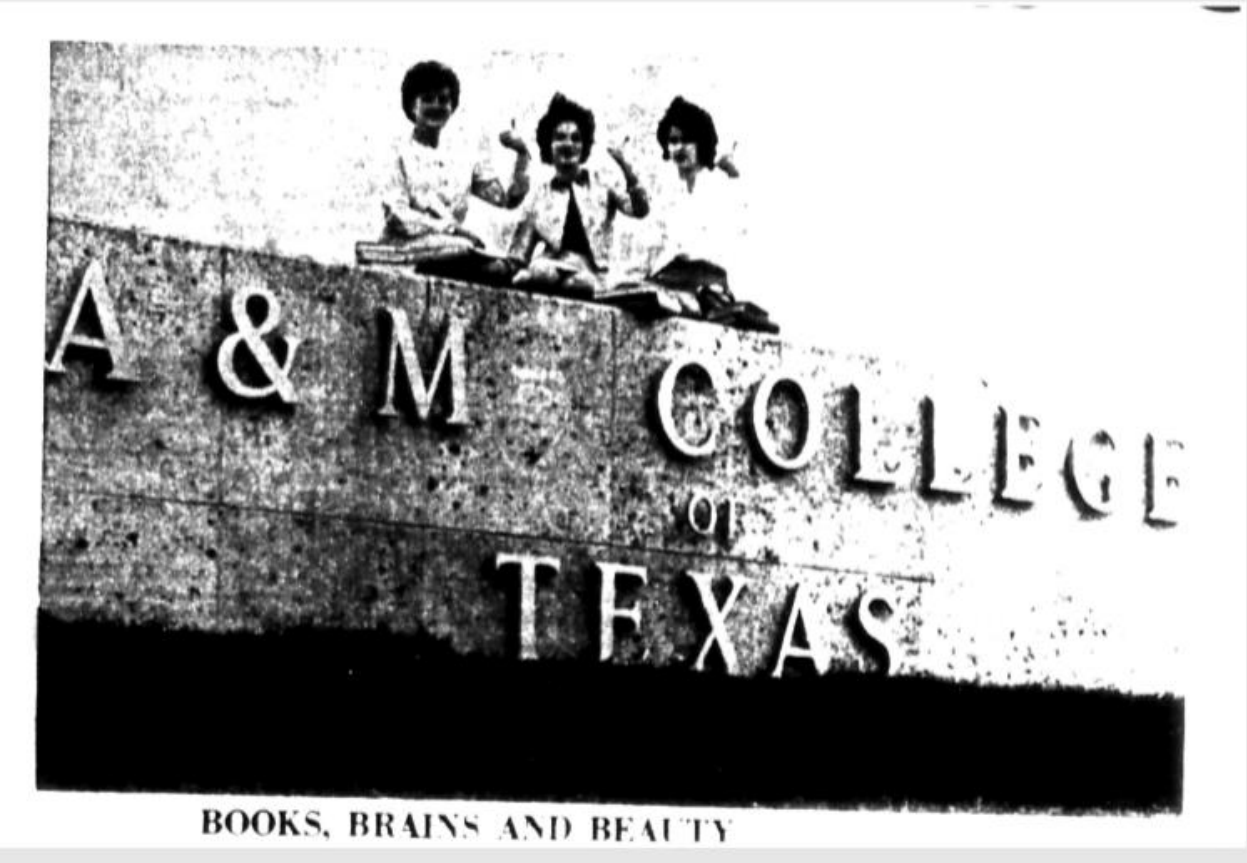

Figure 3. Bryan Eagle Front-Page Picture, April 28, 1963

The restrictions placed on the admission of women into the undergraduate program would shape the first years of coeducation at A&M and prove that the decision to coeducate the university is not as progressive it appeared to be.

Administrational Response in Spring of 1963

The administration, when deciding to coeducate, did not plan on opening the university to women as a progressive action. Sterling Evans, the President of the Board and a veteran member,

became a controversial figure in the decision to coeducate. Evans admitted that the Board was divided on the issue of coeducation before the decision was announced. Evans told *The Bryan Eagle* that A&M was not "too encouraging for women students" and the university had no plans for female dormitories or women-exclusive courses. Women who registered to attend Texas A&M in 1963 signed a form proving their relation to either a student or faculty at the university. This form also required the new coeds to agree that if the university reversed its decision to coeducate, they would voluntarily withdraw with no plans to pursue legal restitution.[37]

The limited coeducation of Texas A&M derived from previous female students admitted: the Hutson sisters and Mary Evelyn Crawford. These women, related to A&M professors or married to students, created the precedence that influenced the 1963 decision to coeducate. These women in the early 1900s posed no threat to the university, and the Board of Directors promised that the new coeds in 1963 would not "bring sudden or drastic change to the school." The admission of the female relatives of students and current faculty also served to reassure that A&M would maintain current faculty and stop their declining student admission rate. The student body had 1,800 married men out of 8,100 students, and by allowing the wives of the married students to attend the university, the Board of Directors secured the attendance of those students. Many members of the faculty also complained about their daughters being unable to attend the local university, and some professors left A&M for that reason. By allowing women to enter the university, even on a limited basis, the Board of Directors appeared progressive to the female population and maintained its student body and faculty, while hoping to appease the male students.[38]

[37] "Coeducation Called 'Expedient' Measure," *The Bryan Eagle*, May 3, 1963; Knippa, "Salvation of a University," 106.
[38] Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 568; "Doors Open for Kin, Grads but Not for 'Area' Women," *The Bryan Eagle*, April 28, 1963.

We Want Aggies, Not Maggies: Student Protest to Coeducation

Despite the very limited coeducation to the university, many of the current students at Texas A&M in 1963 were outraged at the Board's decision to coeducate. Immediately, the students wondered what influence the coeds would have on their beloved institution. To combat this fear, President Rudder held a meeting with the Corps of Cadets on April 29, two days after the announcement, to address the issue of coeducation. In this meeting, he told the cadets that the decision to coeducate would prevent the loss of students to other Texas universities and that the future of the Corps was bright regardless of the admission of women. The students booed and hissed at the president of their university and chanted "We don't want to integrate" in response to Rudder's speech.[39]

This unhappiness from the male student body would not end there. In the week following the coeducation decision, the students protested in various forms. A group of freshmen from the Corps of Cadets Squadron 11 shaved their heads as a form of defiance in response to coeducation. Various signs were hung on campus, including one that read "stabbed in the back by the board of directors" found draped on the statue of Sullivan Ross in the Academic Plaza, and another one protested the Board's decision hung from the water tower. Margaret Rudder recalls an effigy of her husband, President Rudder, that burned in front of their house on campus after the decision to coeducate was announced. [40]

[39] Bean, "We Want Aggies, Not Maggies," 23; "A&M Cadets Boo Rudder," *The Austin-American Statesman*, April 30, 1963.
[40] "New Army?" *The Battalion*, April 30, 1963; "Coed Signs 'Decorate' Texas A&M," *The Bryan Eagle*, May 2, 1963; Haskell Monroe, ed., *James Earl Rudder: In the Words of His Wife, Margaret Rudder* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2002), 70.

Forms of protests in the days immediately following the coeducation decision would travel off-campus and out of College Station to the State Capitol Building in Austin. Many former students of the university held the same animosity to the Board's decision as the current students did, and one alumnus made it his mission to protect his alma mater. Representative Will L. Smith served in the Texas House of Representatives and soon proposed a bill in the House to block any "persons other than male" from attending Texas A&M. Many of the current students supported this venture, and two groups from Texas A&M traveled to Austin to support the anti-coeducation bill. The Committee for an All-Male Military Texas A&M and the Senior Committee for the Preservation of Texas A&M marched on the Capitol building in protest of coeducation. These groups were made up of men from the Corps of Cadets, but also contained former students and members of A&M's Mothers' Clubs. The protesters chanted "we want Aggies, not Maggies" as Rep. Smith presented his anti-coed bill to the House. This protest was not recorded in *The Battalion*.[41]

The bill failed twice in the State House of Representatives, but the push from former students to reverse the coeducation decision grew rampant. A former student from Houston used his position as a radio host to broadcast his anti-coeducation sentiments and hire lawyers to fight the coeducation decision. Petitions concerning prospective students were circulated in high schools around the state. Former students encouraged the anti-coed student groups previously mentioned, and former students would continue to support anti-coeducation until 1965.[42]

Students on campus remained hostile to the idea of coeducation for the rest of the spring semester and the summer before women started their college careers at A&M in the fall semester

[41] Bean, "We Want Aggies, Not Maggies," 24.
[42] "Anti-Coed Bill Fails Once Again," *The Bryan Eagle*, May 8, 1963; "Houston Ex to Continue His Fight Against Coeds," *The Battalion*, May 2, 1963; Bean, "We Want Aggies, Not Maggies," 24.

of 1963. Many letters to the editor were published in *The Battalion* in that time frame, arguing a similar theme: the admission of women to Texas A&M would ruin the traditions of the university. In one letter from the August 8, 1963 issue of *The Battalion*, a former student argues that the new coeds will not "want any part in destroying one of our state's most cherished, traditional institutions." Students removed their Aggie Rings and continued to express their discontent on campus until 1965. Petitions were circulated on campus to try to pressure the Board of Directors and President Rudder into removing coeds from campus, to no avail. Women finally received a permanent place on Texas A&M's campus. The student reactions to coeducation at Texas A&M should be considered similar to the progressive protests that occurred on other college campuses in the 1960s. While the Texas A&M protest did not fight for progression, it captivated the entire community and created a culture that would persist at the university.[43]

"Maggies" on Campus, 1963-1971

While many of the male students of Texas A&M protested the coeducation of their university, the women eligible to attend the university rejoiced at the decision. Within two days of the April 27 announcement, a dozen women submitted their application to attend A&M. These women had to prove their relation to a student or faculty member and agree to withdraw when if the coeducation decision was reversed. In the fall of 1963, there were fifteen total women enrolled. Female student admission rates grew significantly in the years to follow during limited

[43] "Sound Off," *The Battalion*, August 8, 1963; Knippa, "Salvation of a University," 109-110; "Rogers Blasts Faculty Coed Position; Favors Student Petition," *The Battalion*, March 26, 1965.

coeducation; 183 women in the spring of 1964 to 321 in the spring of 1965. By the end of limited coeducation in 1971, over 1,700 women were Aggies.[44]

Women had proved in the time of limited coeducation that their presence on the Texas A&M campus would not ruin the traditions of Texas A&M, but yet, they still were treated as "others" at the university. A three-part opinion piece written by a Battalion staff writer in February of 1970 explained the exclusion women faced at Texas A&M. Pam Troboy wrote that all coeds agreed that "after seven years of limited coeducation, there is a problem." Troboy described the feelings the coeds harbored, that women were ignored and looked down upon in their classes and were catcalled and taunted simply for being female students. Troboy told the story of one coed who believe that A&M had a "reputation for friendliness, but the 'student leaders' say one thing about tradition and do another. If you see a senior in the corps, particularly corps staff, you might as well forget it, he'll never speak to a girl." Single women were especially susceptible to the misbehavior of male students. In Troboy's editorial, another woman discussed the difficulties of being taken seriously as an unmarried female student, "they gave us the impression that if you're not married you're nothing" and that the male students did not think an unmarried female student was "respectable". The coed students during limited coeducation found the atmosphere as hostile because of their gender.[45]

Female Aggies also faced exclusion from the oldest A&M traditions. Pam Troboy also addressed the lack of female representation in student government in 1970. While coed students wanted to run for positions in A&M's student government, they found their campaigns and their exposure to the students mainly focused on their gender rather than their qualifications. Many

[44] Knippa, "Salvation of a University," 120.
[45] Pam Troboy, "Coed Life at A&M—Part I: Non-Acceptance by Student Body a Problem, Girls Say," *The Battalion*, February 25, 1970.

female students refused to run for student government positions out of fear of embarrassment, with one female student saying "girls can't make it here" when asked if she was planning to run for student office. Women were also excluded from some of the oldest Aggie traditions and had to force their way in to be respected and accepted. A *Battalion* article from October 6, 1964, tells of five "Maggies" who joined Aggie Bonfire for a day. These Maggies told *The Battalion* that they helped with Bonfire as a way to prove that "girls at A&M can and intend to be a part of" student life and Aggie traditions. The Maggies discussed the Aggie Spirit and claim that women were also part of it, not just the male students. The Maggies reassured *The Battalion* that they loved A&M for its traditions and did not intend to endanger those traditions through coeducation. One woman, Ann Seward, told *The Battalion* that she and the other coeds did not "want female Yell Leaders and women in the Aggie Band." The Maggies also agreed that full coeducation of the University, if done too quickly, could eliminate Aggie Traditions, and advocated for a slow rate of coeducation. [46]

During the period of limited coeducation, both the coed and male students were unsure of what coeducation meant for the university. No one at the time knew if coeducation was permanent, not the coeds, the male students, nor the administration. Male students still felt obligated to protect their university and its all-male traditions, and amid the confusion, many students committed to the exclusion of women on campus and from traditions. The confusion and exclusions felt at this time can be best summarized in the 1963-1964 Aggieland yearbook, the question mark that both excluded the coed students from the rest of the student body and questioned what coeducation meant at the university during this time. As coeducation continued

[46] Pam Troboy, "Coed Life at A&M—Conclusion Girls Searching For Place in Student Government," *The Battalion*, February 27, 1970; Michael Reynolds, "Tree Spells Spirit for 5 Maggies," *The Battalion*, October 6, 1964.

past 1963, the administration became more lenient about who could attend the university, but in official admissions policy, coeducation was kept limited.

Administration Response, 1963-1971

Even though the Board of Directors decided on the limited coeducation of wives and daughters in April of 1963, they dealt with a harsh response to coeducation. President Rudder received much of this response, mainly when he addressed the A&M student body. It is unknown how Rudder felt after he was booed by the Corps of Cadets on April 29, but he addressed the anti-coeducation sentiments many times in the months following the April decision. In a speech given to the students who were protesting the Board's decision, Rudder tells the students that he does not understand the anti-coeducation sentiment expressed to him. He tells the men that "this action should not come as a surprise to you" since the student newspaper published many articles in the weeks before April about the Board's upcoming decision to coeducate. Furthermore, Rudder claims that the current students had not protested on the issue prior to April 1963, so their grievances with coeducation in September were not valid. In the speech, despite the limited coeducation and the requirement of new coeds to agree to withdraw if the decision was reversed, Rudder said that "there is every reason to believe that [the coeducation decision] is final" and that there is nothing students can do because the Board made the decision. Rudder's rhetoric seems very certain about coeducation, but yet, coeducation at Texas A&M was limited to a very small population of women.[47]

Limited coeducation had little effect on the traditions and student body in the years following 1963. Female students still found themselves excluded, even by the administration. In

[47] Earl Rudder, "Students protesting Board of Directors' decision to admit co-eds to Texas A&M on a limited basis" (Speech, College Station, TX, September 26, 1963).

a speech given at the Harold Dunn Prestige dinner on May 7, 1964, President Rudder tells the story of a former Aggie, Harold Dunn, and hopes that "young men" from Texas A&M might follow in in his footsteps. Earlier in the speech, he acknowledges the changes at Texas A&M since Dunn attended, including the change of coeducation. Rudder's rhetoric of "young men" showed that Rudder still thought of A&M as an all-male school.[48]

Despite Rudder's all-male rhetoric, in December of 1965, he was given the authority by the Board of Directors to allow women in on a case-by-case basis. This meant that if any local women could not receive the education she could get at Texas A&M from another university, she could attend A&M. The president of the Board of Directors, H.C. Heldenfels, made it clear that this decision was not leading to the full coeducation of Texas A&M. He stated that he did "not favor complete coeducation" and that the rest of the Board felt the same way. By allowing for a case-by-case admission policy for coeds, A&M was able to avoid full coeducation.[49]

In 1966, Heldenfels announced that the university would not allow unlimited coeducation until it was challenged in court. This announcement came after the Attorney General Waggoner Carr called A&M's limited coeducational policy "discriminatory." Carr told the Board that they would have to make a decision soon about the state of coeducation at A&M. Despite the accused discrimination, both A&M administrators and the majority of students were happy with coeducation in 1966. A poll taken by *The Battalion* showed that 63% of students preferred limited coeducation over an all-male school. However, 61% of students supported limited

[48] Earl Rudder, "Harold Dunn Prestige Dinner Speech given at Amarillo Country Club" (Speech, Amarillo, TX, May 7, 1964).
[49] Tommy DeFrank, "Rudder Given Authority By Board To Scrutinize Coed Applications," *The Battalion*, December 1, 1965.

coeducation over full coeducation. Despite the strides made from the initial protest in 1963, the idea of full coeducation was a tricky subject for the administration.[50]

From the spring of 1966, all applications from qualified women were approved, making coeducation "limited in name only." The Board maintained the façade of limited coeducation out of fear of protests against full education that would mirror those of 1963. The student body population rose by over 6,000 students from 1963-1970 and female students made up 9% of the student body in 1970, compared to 2% in 1964. In September of 1971, Texas A&M finally announced that they were a "coeducational university admitting all qualified men and women to all academic studies on the same basis" making the university coeducational in all regards for the first time since it opened in 1876.[51]

The period of limited coeducation served as the most impactful time in the history of coeducation at Texas A&M. Limited coeducation was seen by local women as a weak push for coeducation, while many students and alumni of Texas A&M found it to be too drastic of a change for their university, but the administration held firm in their faith for the decision. The growth of the student body during limited coeducation proved that the stagnation was caused by the all-male military nature of Texas A&M. The full coeducation in 1971 allowed for an environment for women to foster and grow, no longer hindered by limited coeducation and the fears that surrounded it.

[50] "Little Coeducation Change Seen," *The Battalion*, March 3, 1966.
[51] Knippa, "Salvation of a University," 126; Dethloff, *History of Texas A&M*, 570.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEGACY OF COEDUCATION FROM 1971 TO THE PRESENT

Female students on Texas A&M's campus continued to be left out in the years following 1971. Even when full coeducation became the official A&M policy and the percentage of women rose, female Aggies still faced discrimination in different forms on campus. This discrimination ranged from exclusion from some of A&M's oldest student organizations to lack of coed housing on campus to lack of women-specific healthcare to something as mundane as a lack of female restrooms. While women were unhindered in the role of academics, they still had not achieved full equality as Aggies.

Coed Dorms

The first female dormitories on Texas A&M's campus were not approved until 1972, 9 years after women were admitted as students. By that time, women made up 17% of the student body. Before the 1972-1973 school year, coed students were forced to find their own accommodations off-campus. Dunn and Krueger Halls served as the first coed dorms, with women sharing the building with the male students. The creation of on-campus housing for women moved 712 girls to the university's campus, 26% of all female students, and created a 53% increase in coed enrollment. Female students embraced living on-campus, and many confirmed that it created a deeper feeling of school spirit. After coed housing, male students

accepted the women as their peers and fellow Aggies for what seems like the first time since 1963.[52]

However, coeds still pointed out flaws in their new housing situation that the male students did not have. In an open letter published in *The Battalion* in 1972, Jan Gregory acknowledged the problems with the new coed housing. Gregory stayed in a non-coed dorm during her pre-registration and found that dorm much nicer and more accommodating than the coed ones on campus. She pointed out that the coed dorms cost more than the all-male ones on campus and expressed that she "should have an option to choose cheaper on-campus housing." She also called attention to sexist coed policies regarding curfews that male students did not have, "freshmen women had to have their parents sign a curfew card if they wanted to stay out" past curfew. She further states that "no freshman male acquaintance of mine had to suffer this indignity" and claimed that being able to choose your dorm "would mean that women would be treated like people and would actually be trusted" and "would represent progress in achieving dignity for the women of Texas A&M." While having coed dorms served as a step in the right direction for coed equality on campus, the A&M administration still limited coed students' choices.[53]

In 1974, a coed freshman who ran for Vice President of Rules and Regulations argued that by not having full coed dorms, meaning dorms where men and women live next to one another, men and women are not able to form friendships, rather, it maintained "the usual dating-type relationship between men and women" and by allowing coed dorms, a healthier environment would be built for the women at A&M. Men and women would not live in the same

[52] "School Year Preparations Include On-Campus Women," *The Battalion*, August 16, 1972; "Coeds Feel like 'Brothers'," *The Battalion*, September 20, 1972.
[53] "Listen Up – Coed Shuns Dunn; Praises Keathley," *The Battalion*, February 2, 1973.

dorms, alternating floors until 1987 and gender-specific housing still exists on-campus in the present, although students have the option of choosing which dorm they live in.[54]

The Minerva Plan: Women and the Corps of Cadets

Although women were freely admitted to the university in 1971, they still found themselves eliminated from the oldest student organization on Texas A&M's campus, the Corps of Cadets. However, after the passage of Title IX in 1972, which barred discrimination based on sex in the programs held by colleges and universities, the president of Texas A&M, Dr. Williams, as well as the Commandant of the A&M Corps of Cadets, Tom Parsons, knew it was a matter of time before they would be forced to allow women into the Corps. To combat this, Commandant Parsons advised Corps staff to develop a plan to address the admission of women into the Corps. This plan, drafted by six junior members of the Corps, was named the "Minerva Plan", after the Roman Goddess of Wisdom. The Minerva Plan would take three decades to come to fruition. It consisted of three phases: first, the introduction of women as day-students in the Corps, then the assimilation of women into a uniformed outfit, with a final phase of adjustment in the Corps. This slow introduction was attributed to the fear of women ruining the all-male traditions within the Corps of Cadets but was necessary in light of Title IX.[55]

In the fall of 1974, this first female unit named the Women's Detachment or W-1, began their day-student basis, meaning they were in the Corps but not assigned to a unit on the Quad on campus. Fifty-one women joined this new unit. The W-1 women did not have uniforms and were only distinguishable by nametags, but still participated in training drills and were enrolled in

[54] "Rules and Regs Need Pairing, Consolidation," *The Battalion*, March 29, 1974; Rodney Rather, "RHA Works for Coed Housing," *The Battalion*, September 25, 1986.
[55] Adams, *Keepers of the Spirit*, 246-8.

ROTC. The W-1 unit also allowed for the first female staff officer at A&M, Army Lieutenant Theresa Holzmann. These women were nicknamed "Waggies" which distinguished them from the other coed students, who were still referred to as "Maggies." Waggie became an insult in the Corps.[56]

Much like when women were first admitted to the university, the female cadets faced hostility from not only male cadets but also from non-Corps people: other coeds, civilian students, alumni, and even professors. People were furious with the admission of women into the Corps because it symbolized the end of an era of tradition at A&M. Students and alumni believed that allowing women into the Corps was the final nail in the coffin for the historic Texas A&M. After the start of the 1974 fall semester, *The Battalion* newspaper received many opinion pieces claiming W-1 would never be accepted into the Corps. One senior, Philip Bertholf, wrote that students, especially those in the Corps, reject the women because "they do not possess the Corps' pride and spirit." He claimed the Corps lowered its standards to allow female members, and women did not have the drive or strength necessary to perform the training in the Corps. Bertholf named his piece "W-1 Never Earn Respect" and it appeared that many others agreed with him. Another opinion piece asserted that women could not handle the training the male cadets suffered through and that allowing women into the Corps was only done to prevent a lawsuit. [57]

The women in W-1 were mocked on campus, even after it was clear their unit remained permanent in the Corps. These women dealt with pig manure being dumped into their rooms, their signs being destroyed, and on one occasion, a piglet let loose in the showers of some

[56] Adams, 248.
[57] Adams, 248; Philip Bertholf, "W-1 Never Earn Respect," *The Battalion*, October 30, 1974; John J. Vanore, "Challenge Issued to W-1," *The Battalion*, November 19, 1974.

members of W-1. The first year of W-1 was so hostile, 28 out of 53 women dropped out of the Corps. This number is significant when compared with the normal dropout rate of 29%, while women had a rate of 53%. Women in the Corps suffered in their first year.[58]

The slow introduction of women in the Corps would prove detrimental to the W-1 unit's acceptance. Their lack of uniforms hoped to create an acceptance that was not forced, but instead, it distanced the "Waggies" from the rest of the Corps. They were unable to participate in many Corps activities and were not seen as truly part of the Corps without their uniforms. W-1 also did not live in a designated dorm on the Quad, as the other Corps units did, and this separation led to rejection by the male cadets. In the fall of 1975, women were given uniforms, and in the fall of 1976, W-1 received a dormitory in the Quad. "Waggies" still faced discrimination after 1975, senior female cadets were not allowed their senior boots until 1979, were not admitted into the Aggie Band until 1985, and still suffered from sex discrimination well into the 1990s. "Waggies" were not deterred by their rejections, however, many women claimed they wanted to be cadets, not a female cadet and did not view their gender as a hindrance like so many others.[59]

Melanie Zentgraf

By the late 1970s, the only organizations women faced intentional exclusion from were in the Corps of Cadets. Female cadets became vocal about three issues: lack of female leadership, sexual discrimination in the way male cadets treated them, and access to special units such as the Ross Volunteers and the Aggie Band. The last concern proved the most necessary to solve, as

[58] Lisa Messer, "Women Cadets Celebrate 20th Year in Corps," *The Battalion*, November 17, 1994; Adams, *Keepers of the Spirit*, 249.
[59] Kathy Brueggen, "Corps Women Move Slowly into Military Participation," *The Battalion*, September 17, 1974; Adams, *Keepers of the Spirit*, 249.

their exclusion from the special units led to further discrimination. School administration noted by November of 1978 friction between the male and female cadets in the form of verbal abuse and refusal to perform class privileges to upper-class female cadets. The inequality became publicized outside of campus by Melanie Zentgraf, a junior cadet. Her story was spread across the nation as she talked of the discrimination in the Corps: things such as manure, foul-smelling liquid, and dead animals were thrown into the rooms of female Cadets, the inability to join special units and Zentgraf recounts a story of her wearing senior boots and being forced by 20 male cadets to remove them. Zentgraf's experiences with discrimination forced her to resign as an officer in her unit and caused her grades to drop. Her story and struggle became one of the first major cases outside of athletics to invoke Title IX.[60]

In May of 1979, Zentgraf filed a suit on behalf of her and the other female cadets. She claimed that "policies, practices, and customs of the Corps of Cadets violated the Fourteenth Amendment… and Title IX." The Texas A&M administration attempted to reach a settlement, but Zentgraff and her supporters demanded a "public admission by the university that there was discrimination against women in the Corps." The university administration and Board of Regents agreed to defend the suit with vigor and the university denied "that discrimination has taken place" and that they had "no indication that the majority of women feel they [were] harassed or discriminated against" in the Corps. In the year before the suit was filed, the Commandant of the Corps established a committee to review the tensions between men and women in the Corps, a committee that included Zentgraf. The issues found by the committee were not solved before Zentgraf filed her injunction.[61]

[60] Diane Blake, "Columnist Blasts Corps," *The Battalion*, March 21, 1979; Adams, *Keepers of the Spirit*, 255.
[61] Adams, 256; Kim Tyson and Diane Blake, "Women Charge Discrimination; Corps Suit Seeks Injunction," *The Battalion*, May 16, 1979.

The suit did not end until 1985, five years after Zentgraf graduated from the university. Throughout the suit, A&M maintained that the suit was unwarranted and Zentgraf met hostility in her final year on campus. The peak of this hostility occurred at her commencement ceremony, where Zentgraf, as the last to receive her degree due to her last name, began walking the stage and was met by booing and hissing in the crowd. She approached the president of the university, Jarvis E. Miller, and took her degree from him and extended her hand for him to shake like he had all of the other graduates, but he refused. According to a faculty member, President Miller told her "no way I'm going to shake your hand." Board members after the commencement ceremony agreed with President Miller's decision, due to the uproar Zentgraf had caused on campus. The court case was finally completed in January of 1985, almost six years since it was filed, and decreed that any cadet, regardless of sex, could join any activity or organization in the Corps. It also called for the elimination of references to male-only programs, officially ending any all-male rhetoric the university had since 1876. Women were now allowed to join any Corps unit or organization if they qualified. [62]

Exclusion from Traditions

While women were now legally allowed to join any on-campus organization, they were still discriminated against in some of the oldest traditions. Most traditions, which began as Corps traditions, but expanded to included civilian male students, excluded women even after the 1985 Zentgraft ruling. Some exclusive traditions include yell leaders, Bonfire and football traditions.

[62] Adams, *Keepers of the Spirit,* 256-7; Haskell Monroe, Mary Helen Bowers, July 21, 1999, Box 1, Folder 25, A&M Heritage Preservation Oral History Program, 1998-2002, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, College Station, Texas, United States.

Yell leaders, a practice only at A&M, consists of upperclassmen selected by the student body to lead yells during different events. These students, historically all-male, are some of the most famous students on A&M's campus and yell leaders are respected by their peers. In 1975, four years after full coeducation of A&M, the Student Senate voted to remove the word "male" from the yell leader list of requirements. The Student Body Vice President at the time, Jeff Dunn, explained the decision did not mean to allow a female yell leader, rather the Senate agreed "no elected position on this campus should include a written discriminatory policy against women." Dunn further asserted that in 1975, "the student body [was] overwhelmingly against having female yell leaders" and that a woman had no chance of winning the election. [63]

Dunn was correct in saying that no women had a chance of becoming a yell leader. Since women were admitted to A&M in 1963, no female has been a yell leader. During the Zentgraf trial, the issue of female yell leaders arose again on campus, with many people arguing against it. Three women claimed that allowing women to be yell leaders would ruin the traditions of A&M. One of the biggest arguments against female yell leaders is that they would be the equivalent of cheerleaders, and A&M was proud to not have cheerleaders. An editorial in 1975 claimed that women would be distracting as yell leaders and could not handle leading a crowd of 8,000 cadets. However, women who run for yell leader did not want to be perceived as cheerleaders and only ran out of the love they had for the university. Sarah Findlay, who was the first woman to run for Yell Leader in 1981, told *The Battalion* that she did not aim "to prove that a woman can be elected yell leader" and that it was not a woman's issue. Another woman who ran in 1990 agreed with Findlay, saying she did "not want to be a cheerleader… I want to be a Yell Leader." Neither women were elected, and only a handful of women have run since, the most recent

[63] Jeff Dunn, "VP Explains Yell Leader Resolution," *The Battalion*, March 12, 1975.

running for the 2020-2021 school year. Women have been unable to break into one of the university's oldest traditions and most visible to the outside world.[64]

Another tradition that excluded women after full coeducation is the Texas Aggie Bonfire. The bonfire, which burned before Texas A&M's game against the University of Texas, symbolized the Aggies' "burning desire" to beat their rival. Bonfire began in 1907 and became an elaborate building process sponsored by the university. When women were first admitted to the university, a group of women participated in Bonfire as proof of their school spirit. However, women could not join Bonfire officially until 1974, when they were allowed into the stack site, and could not participate in cutting down trees until 1979, with the first women partaking in 1981. In the early 1980s, the Bonfire Reload Crew and Women's Bonfire Committee (WBC) formed and consisted of women who were responsible for preparing lunches and selling concessions at the Bonfire site. The head of the WBC was called a "pinkpot" and oversaw the preparation of food for Bonfire. Many women who served in these organizations began so because their boyfriends were members of Bonfire. Women were also delegated to the roles of "Bonfire Buddies" where members from female dorms were paired up with male Corps students.[65]

Since women's admission into Bonfire, there have been various instances of sexism on the Bonfire site. In 1987, two female photographers from the *Aggieland* yearbook claimed that they were harassed at the Bonfire site when they tried to take pictures for the yearbook.

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[64] Kirstin Haas, Kelli Thomerson, Analisa Vinson, "Women in Band: Attack on Tradition," *The Battalion*, October 15, 1984; Alan Killingsworth, "Female Yell Leaders: The Trip to the Pond Will Be Getting Longer," *The Battalion*, February 13, 1975; Kathy O'Connell "Woman Seeks Senior Yell Leader Slot," *The Battalion*, March 30, 1981; Julie Myers, "Woman Seeks Place as Senior Yell Leader," *The Battalion*, March 20, 1990.

[65] "History of Bonfire and the Bonfire Memorial," Remembering Bonfire, Texas A&M University, accessed March 27, 2020, https://bonfire.tamu.edu/history/; Michael Reynolds, "Tree Spells Spirit for 5 Maggies," *The Battalion*, October 6, 1964; Linda Sippola, "Bonfire: Pinkpots Work in Name of Fun and Tradition," *The Battalion*, October 25, 1985; Katharine Deaton, "Bonfire Buddies: Bonfire Workers Find Inspirations in their Peers- and their Gifts," *The Battalion*, November 14, 1995.

According to *The Battalion*, the male Bonfire crew shouted "get the females off the perimeter" after the photographers entered the site to get closer photos. The Bonfire staff claimed no one was allowed inside the perimeter without a legitimate reason, and it had nothing to do with the gender of the two women, however, while the women were escorted out, another photographer from the Aggieland, a male photographer, entered the perimeter to take pictures and was not forced to leave like the women were. This incident created an uproar in the university. A member of *The Battalion* staff recounted a similar story in which she was removed from the site. In the weeks after, *The Battalion* received countless letters to the editor regarding the incident, and one senior, Paul Schwarz, explained the situation. Schwarz said that the male Bonfire crew were chauvinists, women could not handle the amount of work required to build the bonfire, and said that "women are not wanted in perimeter… you are of no use to us in there." The newspaper received more letters to the editor about Schwarz's comments. Two women agreed with Schwarz, saying that Bonfire was a men's organization because of the way the men acted. Another woman wrote that in Bonfire, "women must earn respect." After this incident, the sexism at Bonfire continued. In 1995, Kathryn Noser, a senior member of the WBC, told *The Battalion* that at the Bonfire, "sexism is everywhere, and you do what you can to deal with it." By 1995, women adjusted to hearing sexist comments at the site. After the collapse of the 1999 Bonfire, the organization was no longer university-sanctioned, and less written information exists about the treatment of women in Bonfire.[66]

Outside the long-standing Aggie traditions, women still were treated differently than men. In 1973, the Senior Boot Line, where seniors lined up on the football field before the first

[66]Lee Schexnaider, "Female Photographers Say They were Harassed by Bonfire Crew," *The Battalion*, November 4, 1987; *The Battalion* Editorial Staff, "Men Will Be Boys," *The Battalion*, November 4, 1987; Paul Schwarz, "We Don't Need Women at Bonfire," *The Battalion*, November 11, 1987; "Mail Call," *The Battalion*, November 18, 1987. Katharine Deaton, "WBC Strives for Equal Opportunity at Bonfire," *The Battalion*, November 10, 1995.

game of the season, removed women for standing with them. Male members of the Corps of Cadets verbally harassed the women, screaming "get those Maggies out of here," spitting tobacco juice on them, and one woman was kicked by men in boots. The general atmosphere of Texas A&M remained sexist towards women, even in the twenty-first century. Jorge Barrera, a student and President of the Residential Hall Association in 2002, when asked if Aggie coeds were treated fairly, told the interviewer that some of the women "let themselves be treated really badly," and were called slurs by the male students. He further said that the "old school" residence halls, the all-male ones, should remain the same. After decades of coeducation, women still encounter exclusionary treatments into the turn of the century.[67]

[67] "Listen Up- Civilian, Coed Recognition Asked," *The Battalion*, October 2, 1973; Haskell Monroe, Jorge Barrera, April 11, 2002, Box 1, Folder 10, A&M Heritage Preservation Oral History Program, 1998-2002, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, College Station, Texas, United States.

CONCLUSION

Women faced countless instances of discrimination at Texas A&M, both before and after the university became coeducational. They faced exclusionary practices that restricted them from attending A&M from the founding of the university in 1876 to the legalization of full coeducation in 1971. While 1963 is the date that the majority of Aggies recognized as the date of coeducation, the admissions policy in 1963 was highly exclusionary and was not adjusted until 1971. After 1971, women still faced exclusion from student organizations on campus, as well as from some of the oldest university traditions.

As women continue to push for recognition at A&M, there is hope for equality in the future at the university. Diversity measures have been implemented through the administration, and the administration and the student government have fought cases of bigotry and sexism. Women have become more influential in Texas A&M's student government and in the 2018-2019 school year, five women served as the leaders of some of the most prominent sections of Texas A&M. Two of these women held important roles in the Corps of Cadets: Mia Miller, who served as the first female Mascot Corporal, and Rose Marshall, who served as the first female commanding officer for Parson's Mounted Calvary, a special unit that Melanie Zentgraf hoped to coeducate through her court case.[68]

However, there is more to be done to completely end the legacy of women's exclusion. As previously mentioned, there has never been a female yell leader on campus, and some famed traditions, like Bonfire, are still discriminatory towards women. Texas A&M's student body is

[68] "Diversity Plan," Office for Diversity, Texas A&M University, accessed March 30, 2020, https://diversity.tamu.edu/Diversity-Plan; Savannah Mehrtens, "Leading Ladies of Aggieland," *The Battalion*, August 19, 2018;

still male-dominated, a fact that differs from many other universities. In 2001, 48% of the student body was female, while only 47% of enrolled students in 2019 at Texas A&M were female. The majority of college students in the United States (56%) are female, leaving A&M to differ greatly. The difference in enrollment rates can be traced back to A&M's history of anti-coeducation, leaving the university to be considered as not diverse enough for many students. The legacy of coeducation has affected the status of Texas A&M in the present.[69]

The climate of Texas A&M improved greatly for women since 1963 and it became a university that was so protested in its history. Many students and alumni thought that by admitting women into the university, Texas A&M would not be as prominent and as respected as they knew it. Haskell Monroe, a former A&M faculty who conducted interviews for A&M Heritage Preservation Oral History Program told a former graduate student of A&M about a conversation he had with another former student, Bill Clayton. Clayton told Monroe that "he had opposed coeducation privately, but never said so publicly." Monroe asked why Clayton opposed coeducation, to which he responded that he "was afraid that they wouldn't have real school spirit" then Clayton asked Monroe if the current women at A&M had Aggie spirit. Monroe responded that "if anything, they might have more spirit than the men." Clayton told Monroe that he was the grandfather to three Aggie women. Clayton, once an opposer to the coeducation, agreed that coeducation did not change the school in the way the anti-coeducation supporters feared it would.[70]

[69] "Enrollment Profile, Fall 2019," Data and Research Services, Division of Enrollment and Academic Services, Texas A&M University, accessed March 30, 2020, http://dars.tamu.edu/student/enrollment-profile.
[70] Haskell Monroe, Carolyn Adair, August 3, 1999, Box 1, Folder 2, A&M Heritage Preservation Oral History Program, 1998-2002, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, College Station, Texas, United States.

Despite the strides made by women into Texas A&M, women are still ostracized in the history of the university and forced themselves to fit into the already existing traditions at A&M. Women have been unable to create or claim any of Texas A&M's traditions or history as their own. Female students at A&M were never allowed to occupy any space that was not given to them. Women, when given allowance into existing traditions were still excluded within those traditions, in the form of women-only units in the Corps of Cadets and the development of "pinkpots" or women-specific committees in Bonfire. Women who fought to attend the university craved to be a part of the Aggie Spirit and strived to be "true Aggies." However, these women should not have to fit into the definition of what it means to be an Aggie, rather, with the coeducation of the university, the definition of an Aggie should have been accommodated to include the women who attended.

Women never posed a threat to Aggie traditions or to the A&M way of life. Their presence at Texas A&M only proved that the traditions were unwavering and would not adhere to the female students on campus. Women at A&M forced their way into the defining traditions of Aggieland because they wanted to be considered Aggies, and because of this, women today attend a university that has not truly included them as students. In the 57 years women have attended A&M, they have supported the university, and hold it in the same regards all other male students do. Women answered the question, "what does it mean to be a woman at Texas A&M," by confirming that there is no difference between men and women at the university. Women have shown that they belong at this university because of their ability to conform to the male-centric traditions without altering them to become more inclusive. Until this fact is confronted by A&M students and administration, women are forced to be on the periphery of the history of the university they cherish.

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