AN ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG OLDER ALUMNI OF TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation

by

ANN MARIE ALSMEYER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 1994

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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ABSTRACT

An Analysis of Institutional Commitment
Among Older Alumni of Texas A&M University. (December 1994)
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As resources committed to higher education continue to shrink, administrators must find alternative means of generating financial support. One method is the cultivation of financial and other contributions from alumni.

Texas A&M University has a long history of above-average private support. This qualitative study explores the motivation behind this support among alumni who graduated from Texas A&M 50 or more years ago. These alumni contribute proportionally more than other groups, despite the university's transformation from a small, all-male, military training college to a top-ten research university.

Interviews were conducted during the spring of 1994 with 19 out of 26 class representatives from Texas A&M's Classes of 1925 to 1939. Data from the interviews were unitized and sorted into categories. Five conclusions about the nature of support among older alumni of Texas A&M were reached: 1) these alumni are willing and able to contribute significantly to the university; 2) these alumni view their commitment in terms of individuals, not the university as a whole; 3) underlying the formal military code of behavior during their college years was an informal and contradictory code of behavior that also created feelings of loyalty; 4) the timing of the Great Depression and World War II during the institution's history was the most significant factor in creating loyalty, and; 5) new strategies for generating support among more recent graduates must be created.

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In addition, I want to thank the dear friends I have made in the Department of Educational Administration during the last three years, especially Becky Carr and Sharon Spall. Your professional collaboration and personal friendship have made this process wonderfully fun and exciting. I hope we will be friends long after we earn our Ph.D.s.

Finally, I want to thank my family--my father and mother, Henry and Marie Bennett Alsmeyer, and brothers, David and Charles--for their love and support. And although my paternal grandparents, Henry (Texas A&M Class of 1923) and Susie Thompson Alsmeyer, no longer are here to share this experience, I want to acknowledge their tremendous contributions. Their fortuitous meeting in Texas A&M's Sbisa Hall in 1923 eventually led to my introduction to the university, and thus my interest in this research topic and my career at Texas A&M.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Federal and state support for higher education is shrinking. As the national debt climbs to unprecedented highs, state financial reserves are at their lowest levels in more than a decade (Rush, 1992). The situation facing Texas public higher education is particularly dire:

- Since 1964, the Texas public system of higher education has grown from 57 institutions serving 195,000 students to 116 institutions serving 811,000 students. Since 1988, enrollment on public campuses has grown by more than 116,000. Texas continues to trail other states, however, in the percentage of the population participating in higher education.
- In 1980, just over 45 percent of the state's population was age 30 or older. By 1990, that age group comprised more than 51 percent. The 15-to-29 age group, which provides most of the traditional college students, dropped from nearly 29 percent in 1980 to just under 25 percent in 1990.
- Population growth has been highest among Hispanics, moderate among blacks, and lowest among Anglos. By the year 2000, the population of Texas is expected to exceed 19 million, 44 percent of which will be minority groups.

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Educational Research*.

Most important, state funding for flagship institutions such as Texas A&M remains at pre-1985 levels, despite inflation and the fact that enrollment at the university has grown by 7,000 since 1985 (1992 Master Plan, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Austin).

Thus, Texas public higher education shoulders a triple burden: the segments of the population that are growing most rapidly historically have been underserved by higher education; the age categories that are growing most rapidly traditionally have not participated directly in higher education; and state funding for higher education is lagging dramatically behind funding for other programs.

Faced with these blunt fiscal and demographic data, administrators at many public universities in Texas are giving increased emphasis to a potential funding source that their counterparts at private institutions long have nurtured: their former students. While alumni associations at many major universities for years have served as unique "fraternities" of like-minded graduates oriented toward a particular institution, the emphasis nationwide during the last decade has shifted toward "public policy advocacy" to spur political support for higher education in general (Scalzo, 1992, p. 21). Advocacy has become less an option and more a necessity given the increasingly turbulent political arena in which many public institutions of higher education operate.

Alumni are logical prospects for development and fundraising activities because their very presence at the institution as one-time students often indicates a personal affinity for or orientation toward the institution's characteristics, goals, values, and attitudes (Pascarella &

Terenzini, 1991), and because the career successes alumni enjoy often can be attributed directly to the training received and collegial networks formed while attending the institution (Spaeth & Greeley, 1970). In addition, alumni are the only nontransient segment of the university community (Forman, 1989), the one group whose "self-interest is furthered by their support of the institution" (DiBaggio, 1991, p.12).

This research was conducted with alumni of Texas A&M University. (While Texas A&M graduates consider themselves Aggies for life and prefer to be called "former students" instead of "alumni" or "ex-students," the term "alumni" will be used throughout this study because its meaning is universally understood.) Texas A&M, in College Station, is a top-ten research university with an enrollment of just under 43,000. During the spring 1993 semester, it ranked third nationally in enrollment, but usually ranks sixth or seventh as the number of students fluctuates. Along with the University of Texas, it is one of the state's two flagship institutions, and thus receives interest income on mineral revenues from the Permanent University Fund (PUF). Texas A&M was chartered as a land-grant institution under the Morrill Act of 1862, and now enjoys unique status as a land-grant, sea-grant and space-grant institution (Dethloff, 1975).

Texas A&M currently has a student body that is 54 percent male and 46 percent female, with minority students comprising 12 percent of the total. Texas A&M comprises 11 academic colleges offering more than 120 degree programs. Although the Corps of Cadets has only about 1,600 members out of the student body population of 43,000, Texas A&M produces more military officers than any other institution outside the

military academies. Participation in the Corps of Cadets was mandatory until the mid-1960s, and the student body was exclusively male until 1971.

Statement of the Problem

Statement One

In both percentage of living class members contributing and percentage of total dollar amounts given, alumni who were graduated between 1915 and 1939 (the classes attending the Sul Ross reunion in 1994) contribute more than their share. More than six percent ($280,513) of the unrestricted financial support the Texas A&M University alumni association received in 1992 ($4,628,123) came from just two percent of the total alumni population, the 3,225 living alumni from the Sul Ross classes of 1994. Total alumni giving to Texas A&M's Association of Former Students in 1992 was $24,442,312.

(Until 1986, classes were inducted into the Sul Ross group 50 years after graduation. However, these classes have become too large to accommodate in the reunion facilities, so the years are now staggered. The Class of '39 was formally inducted at the 1994 Sul Ross reunion. The 50th year class continues to have a mini-reunion on campus and is formally recognized during the Muster ceremony. Beginning in 1995, classes will be inducted during their 55th anniversary year.)

The Class of '36 tied the Class of '53 in highest percentage of class members in the Century Club (annual gifts between $100 and $249) with 38 percent, or 93 members. The Class of '32, with 213 living members, was second in percentage of Century Club members, with 35 percent, or 75

members. In terms of most total Century Club members, however, the more recent, larger, classes dominated. The Class of '90 had the greatest number, with 1,233, and the Classes of '86-89 followed closely.

Statement Two

Texas A&M has changed so dramatically during the last half-century as to be virtually unrecognizable. In 1944, the campus infrastructure consisted of 92 buildings valued at $15 million. The student body comprised 7,000 primarily American-born white males, 5,000 of whom were away from school serving in World War II. Students could choose among 20 courses of study, two of which were post-baccalaureate (*Bulletin of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas*, June 1, 1944).

In the fall of 1993, the campus consisted of 227 buildings valued at $2 billion. The student body of 42,988 was 52 percent male, 48 percent female, and represented more than 120 nationalities. Only about 3.5 percent of the undergraduate population were members of the Corps of Cadets. Students could choose among 120 degree options, including 11 master's programs and three doctoral degrees in 11 colleges. In addition, The Texas A&M University System had expanded to include five academic institutions and seven agencies, and during much of the 1970s was the fastest-growing university in the country.

Conclusion

Clearly, the preponderance of support for Texas A&M by older alumni is based on factors other than the university's physical infrastructure, the composition and size of the student body, a particular

ideological orientation, or recency of the collegiate experience. This study will investigate the context of financial and volunteer support for Texas A&M among the alumni group that has experienced the greatest degree of institutional change and personal development--those who graduated prior to 1940.

In addition, Texas A&M is a particularly appropriate institution for this research because of its unique delineation between alumni relations, university development, and athletic fundraising. The Development Foundation was created out of a need assessed by the Association of Former Students in 1953, but from the beginning has been a completely separate entity, as has the Twelfth Man Foundation for athletic fundraising.

Generally, the Development Foundation secures larger gifts than the Association of Former Students, and also nurtures a corporate, non-alumni constituency. The Development Foundation conducted a $500 million capital campaign from 1990-96, although this apparently has not affected the number or amount of donations to the alumni association. The alumni association received a record $4.65 million in 1991, and $4.62 million in 1992.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- How do these alumni perceive their relationship to the university?
- What is meant by "institutional loyalty?"
- How is loyalty demonstrated among these older alumni?

- Has the demonstration of loyalty among these older alumni been constant since graduation, or did an event such as retirement precipitate an increase in support?
- What needs of these older alumni are being met through their support of the university?
- What unofficial roles do these older alumni fill on behalf of the university? (For example, some may act as informal recruiters by encouraging their family members and friends to attend the university.)
- Does support for Texas A&M among these older alumni differ from their support of other organizations and charitable causes?
- Are there ways of increasing support by the university's older alumni?

Limitations

This study has three limitations. First, the sampling method used was chosen in an attempt to highlight similarities and differences among older alumni who support Texas A&M through financial and other means. Therefore, the sampling method neither sought to be representative of the entire population of older alumni, nor to acquire maximum variation. Convenience sampling, a type of purposive sampling that saves time, money, and effort, was used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Second, no attempt was made to ensure generalizability, primarily because this concept is dismissed under the constructivist paradigm.

Participants (initially class agents) were chosen based on their current involvement with the life of the university and support of the alumni association. The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth analysis of support among older alumni of Texas A&M. These alumni were not compared to similar alumni who choose to remain uninvolved.

Third, the concept of institutional support is examined only in the context of older alumni, which comprises only one facet of support for higher education. Support among other demographic strata are not the focus of this study and thus are omitted.

Significance of the Study

The study will be significant in several ways. First, it will provide a rich description of the processes by which older alumni construct meaning from their experiences with the university and the alumni association. From this data can emerge a systematic examination of the opinions and beliefs these former students use as a foundation for their interactions with the university and alumni association.

Second, the study will provide a knowledge base for the alumni association's future programmatic efforts for older alumni. It will provide a forum for the emergence of special needs that previously might have been overlooked by the alumni organization.

Third, it will create a permanent record of contributions and experiences that with the passage of time otherwise risk being lost forever.

Fourth, it will provide guidelines for other alumni organizations in their efforts to create and sustain loyalty from this group. (While this

study will not be generalizable in the way that statistical studies are assumed to be, its findings may be transferable to other similar organizations in certain cases.)

Finally, it will add to the growing body of scholarly naturalistic research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II reviews the scholarly literature regarding current alumni support of higher education; the historical roots of philanthropy; philanthropy in American higher education; the rise of American philanthropy; factors related to charitable giving; the organizational culture at Texas A&M; Texas A&M during the 1930s; and the Association of Former Students. In addition, literature is summarized regarding intellectual and social growth among the elderly; the transition to retirement and reminiscence and old age.

Alumni contributions to institutions of higher education in the United States are substantial. According to the Council for Aid to Education, alumni in 1992-93 contributed $2.84 billion nationwide to their alma maters, comprising the single largest source (27 percent) of the $11.2 billion in private support for higher education. Over the past 20 years, adjusted for inflation, alumni support for has risen 92 percent (*Wall Street Journal*, May 13, 1994).

At the 927 institutions that participated in Council for Aid to Education surveys for both 1992 and 1993, giving was up in 1993 by 5.2 percent (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1994, p. B-1). However, when adjusted for inflation, the increase was only 1.5 percent, prompting one university foundation director to comment, "Higher education has to fight for every dime it gets" (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1994, p. B-1).

Two factors have contributed to this decade-long increase in alumni support, according to a private consultant in fundraising quoted in the May 13, 1987, issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education. First, "alumni of many public universities are quite young, and they are just now coming to a point in their lives when they can give (p. 39). In addition, "alma maters are getting more sophisticated about asking alumni for their support" (p.39).

The latter reason clearly indicates growing recognition by university administration and governing boards that private support is crucial and a commitment to pursue private support from alumni and non-alumni alike. The same Chronicle of Higher Education article notes the increased aggressiveness with which public colleges and universities are pursuing individual donors:

> Fund raising in higher education today is very much driven by the capital campaigns, and any analysis of the major campaigns now under way would show that the great preponderance of major gifts and of total revenue is coming from private individuals (p. 39).

Thus, even greater than the trend of increased giving by alumni to their alma maters is the trend of increased private support for institutions that previously depended almost entirely on state support. While private institutions historically have been aggressive fund-raisers, the benefits of such support only recently have been acknowledged by organizations working on behalf of public universities. As Nicklin (1992, p. A3) observed, "historically, private institutions cornered the market on private donations, while public institutions largely relied on state

support. But over the past several years, a growing number of public colleges and universities, experiencing budget constraints, have become more aggressive about seeking private gifts."

The text from a brochure from the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges is evidence of this awakening:

> . . . Private support spells the difference between the adequate and the truly great institutions of higher education.
>
> Voluntary help from private sources makes it possible for public universities to take advantage of unexpected opportunities to grow. The money can be used to recruit expert faculty or to qualify for a matching gift.
>
> Private investment is the vital ingredient which provides the necessary flexibility so important in building a sound educational program. Much of the up-to-date teaching and research achievements and the cultural activities of public colleges and universities have been made possible through such support.
>
> Today the ordinary is not good enough. The highest level of excellence, realized through private support, is essential.
>
> Private support is the margin of excellence for public higher education.
>
> (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges brochure, 1985).

Private gifts are especially prized by administrators because they have a dimension of both timelessness and timeliness (Leslie & Ramey, 1988). Because state and federal appropriations to public colleges and universities generally are restricted dollars for budget and operation, alumni support most often is in the form of unrestricted dollars that provide a "margin of excellence" as the institution creates a unique niche

with its purpose, mission, and innovations. As financial constraints have tightened in the last decade, this unrestricted support is becoming the only real source of discretionary money and in many cases is assuming the critical role of balancing institutional budgets (Leslie & Ramey, 1988).

While alumni support is increasingly important at both private and public institutions, it has been the subject of relatively little research. Institutional advancement has been recognized as a profession for less than 50 years, yet its roots in the broader context of philanthropy go back for thousands of years, virtually to the beginning of recorded history. One obstacle created by this relative youth is the lack of formal research (Rowland, 1985). According to Rowland, more emphasis has been placed on analyzing the tasks that must be completed in educational philanthropy rather than understanding how the accomplishment of these tasks might be improved. While statistical reports detailing the amount of voluntary support for higher education are plentiful, surprisingly little is known about the attitudes and beliefs that motivate this support.

Historical Roots of Philanthropy

The term philanthropy comes from the Greek term for "love of mankind." Many general definitions exist, but a popular one in recent years comes from Robert L. Payton, who said philanthropy "includes voluntary giving, voluntary service, and voluntary association, primarily for the benefit of others; it is also the 'prudent sister' of charity, since they

have been intertwined throughout most of the past 3,500 years of Western civilization" (Payton, 1984, p. 86).

Philanthropic activity has been recorded for thousands of years, notably in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, dated around 4,000 B.C., which praises those who provide bread for the hungry and water for the thirsty (Fisher, 1986). In the centuries following, philanthropy assumed religious overtones, as in the practice of tithing, whereby ancient Jews donated one tenth of their annual harvest to the poor in the name of the Lord.

Similar forms of organized benevolence also spread among the early Christian church. In about 150 A.D., a Church Fund was created to collect voluntary gifts from members in support of the needy. In 321 A.D., Constantine authorized the bequeathal of money to the Church, and substantial endowments began to accumulate, eventually leading to charitable programs that Marts (1991, p. 7), termed "lighthouses of civilization in those stormy centuries of cruelty and ignorance." As the administration of these endowments became more sophisticated, districts or "deaconries" were established, containing hospitals, orphanages, and an alms office (Marts, 1991). Thus, two cornerstones of society--the hospital and the university--were shaped through the centuries by early Christian charities.

Philanthropy assumed a more secular dimension with the Protestant Reformation and the concurrent rise of Calvinist doctrine that held poverty not so much as the shirking of material goods toward spiritual ends, but rather an indication of exclusion from the elect. The poor came to be viewed with suspicion and scorn, as if their state reflected God's

attitude toward them. This, combined with Great Britain's increased industrialization and urbanization, led to the establishment in 1601 of the Poor Laws, which provided for the collection of public funds to relieve the poor through taxation. The Statute of Charitable Uses established under the Poor Laws became the cornerstone of American secular philanthropy (Van Til, 1990).

American philanthropy dates from the earliest colonists, and while it owes much to its British heritage, from the very beginning it was marked by a "pervading voluntarism that made it decisively different" (Marts, 1991, p. 6). Indeed, as Boorstein (cited in Van Til, 1990, p. 6) noted, "communities existed before governments were there to care for public needs." Thus, the push to meet the needs of a newly created society in an unexplored wilderness, fueled by Christian principles and operating apart from governmental influence, quickly led to an American network of colleges, churches, libraries, hospitals, and other humanitarian institutions created exclusively through philanthropic initiatives.

This emphasis on "conservatism and Republicanism, religion, family, community, and the related values of hard work and good works" continues today, (Marts, 1990, p. xi) and in part contributed to the United States becoming the "most generous nation of all time" (Marts, 1990, p. 12).

Philanthropy in American Higher Education

The establishment of higher education in the United States resulted almost exclusively from the philanthropic gestures of individuals.

Indeed, private philanthropy subsidized the ten colleges established prior to the American Revolution.

Efforts by the Puritan settlers of colonial America to "bring civilization and Christianity to their new frontier wilderness" helped establish Harvard, which in 1636 became the first college founded on American soil (Curti and Nash, 1965, p. 1). It survived that hardscrabble first decade only through the generosity of individuals who viewed such support as a moral imperative. Harvard President Henry Dunster was typical in the sentiment he presented in New England's First Fruits (1643), one of the first publications created for the solicitation of philanthropic support:

> After God had carried us safe to New England, and we had built our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government; One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to become an illiterate ministry in the Churches, when our present ministry shall lie in the dust (Button and Provenzo, 1989, pp. 27-28).

Personal pleas for support of Harvard in the name of Christian charity inspired even ordinary citizens to give what they could: sheep, cotton cloth, a pewter flagon, dishes, a "silver-tipt" jug, and "one small trencher of salt" (Marts, 1990, p. 31). These efforts and others to establish a college in the new land resulted in the Massachusetts legislature appropriating £400. Shortly thereafter, a Puritan minister, John Harvard, died, leaving half his estate and his library to the new college. The grateful benefactors renamed the college in his honor.

While the curriculum and administration at Harvard and other colleges in colonial America were patterned after Oxford and Cambridge in England--so much so that the earliest statues on the Harvard campus were modeled directly from the Elizabethan statues at Cambridge (Button and Provenzo, 1989)--their philanthropic efforts had a distinctly American flavor that characterizes fundraising, development, and alumni programs even today. "Grass roots" philanthropy held that even the most meager gift from the most common citizen was important in maintaining an educational enterprise for the benefit of all. In another illustration using Harvard, the "colledge corne" fund, in which families were asked to donate one-quarter bushel of grain or an equivalent donation of money, raised £2,697 for the erection of Harvard Hall in the 1650s (Curti and Nash, 1976).

In addition, while the bulk of philanthropic support in Great Britain historically has gone to Oxford and Cambridge and loyalty among graduates of other institutions is rare, even during the earliest years of the United States institutions sprang up that represented a relative diversity of Christian creed and mission. As Curti and Nash (1976, p. 22) noted, "the size of the continent, religious differences, rivalries among the colonies, and a willingness on the part of philanthropists to back new ventures fixed on America a system of higher education with the characteristics of diffusion and diversity."

Finally, institutions' dependence on philanthropy--sometimes for their very survival--is a uniquely American trait. Most colonial colleges faced a struggle for existence following the Revolutionary War. Tuition and the sale of scholarships, as well as the meager financial and real estate

appropriations some colleges received from their state and municipality, helped ease the burden. In most cases, however, "philanthropy assumed crucial importance in the selection of survivors. For the colleges that received a constant flow of donations there was permanence and growth; those founded by men whose zeal exceeded their cash assets usually had short lives" (Curti and Nash, 1976, p. 43).

Private support was no less important to the land grant institutions (such as Texas A&M) founded by the Morrill Act of 1862 and necessitated by America's growing population, industrialization and westward expansion. While the land grant idea represented the federal government's first real intrusion into American higher education, there was a limit to how much support the public sector was willing to provide to these vocational institutions with no religious affiliations (Wren, 1983). Philanthropy, primarily through private businesses, was sought to alleviate this shortfall.

Indeed, it was at this point that the marriage of capitalism to higher education first occurred, as the professional world became increasingly secular and specialized. The colonial emphasis on education for the Christian saving of souls yielded a century and a half later to the increasing corporate demand for a trained workforce. Education for the elite at private liberal arts colleges in the East in some ways was overwhelmed by low-cost, practical education for the masses in the rest of the country. Similarly, as the "skills and techniques of fundraising have advanced apace with America's ability to give so has philanthropy progressed, from the begging mission and lottery of the colonial period to today's organized, shrewdly promoted enterprise" (Cutlip, 1965, p. 3).

The Rise of Alumni Philanthropy

Even in the earliest days of American higher education, college administrators recognized that their own graduates were a potential source of goodwill and financial support. In 1792 Yale College created an organization based on class structure and appointed class representatives to serve as liaisons between the university and the alumni body. These class secretaries gathered information that was published in newsletter form and distributed to alumni (Forman, 1990). These efforts eventually led to the creation of two outgrowths shared by virtually all alumni programs today: the systematic solicitation of alumni for gifts, and the establishment of alumni clubs and chapters in cities were alumni reside (Forman, 1990).

The success of the Yale experiment led to the creation of similar programs at other colleges. In its 1821 commencement, Williams College organized a society of alumni so that "the influence and patronage of those it has educated may be united for its support, protection, and improvement" (Forman, 1990, p. 7). Alumni programs sprang up quickly at other colleges: at Princeton in 1821; the University of Virginia in 1838; Bowdoin in 1840; and Amherst in 1842 (Forman, 1990).

The Princeton organization undertook what is believed to be the first fundraising effort coordinated entirely among alumni, when in 1832 it sought to raise $100,000 to build a new telescope and add three professors to the faculty (Forman, 1990). This ambitious effort was not a complete success, however, and only $50,000 was raised.

Alumni programs also were established quickly by devoted graduates of the land grant universities created during the last half of the nineteenth century. Graduates of The Pennsylvania State University created a forerunner to the present-day alumni association in 1870. The University of Michigan founded its alumni association in 1897 and was the first to have a full-time alumni secretary whose salary was paid entirely through alumni contributions. Ohio State began its alumni association in 1911.

Factors Related to Charitable Giving

Determining exactly when and why individuals choose to give to charitable causes is an inexact science, despite the tremendous research generated. Several variables appear to be significant, however. Johnson and Rosenfeld analyzed Federal Estate Tax Returns (Form 706) filed for 1986 to determine the social and economic factors related to philanthropic decisions. Data from 706 returns show that marital status, gender, social class, and tax incentives are the four most significant predictors of charitable giving, with gender and net worth being the two most important variables for predicting the value of gifts (Johnson & Rosenfeld, 1991, pp. 29-30). Single older women with a higher-than-average net worth are most likely to give to charitable causes.

Leslie and Ramey (1985) have conducted what seems to be the most thorough longitudinal study related to alumni giving. They studied the total amounts contributed annually since 1932 to American higher education, calculating business wealth, personal wealth, and tax

information for this period and noting fluctuations as they appeared. They found that

> alumni are most likely to give when the need is greatest--that is, when the general economy is bad. Businesses and other organizations, on the other hand, are more generous when the economy is running well (p. 25).

Several recent quantitative studies (primarily doctoral dissertations) have sought to identify variables associated with the collegiate experience that lead to alumni giving. The major variables examined are participation in extracurricular activities; occupation and income; major; institutional image; year of graduation; emotional attachment to the institution; receipt of grants or scholarships; marital status; residence hall versus commuter status; post-graduate affiliation with another college or university; post-graduate contact with faculty; recommendation of the institution to prospective students; and alumni publications. While these studies employed a methodology that is mutually exclusive to the methodology used in this research, the findings can shed light on the issue of alumni support.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Undergraduate participation in extracurricular activities appears to be a factor in motivation for giving among alumni. Schreck surveyed six groups of major donors to the Indiana University Foundation who graduated between 1949 and 1975. Donors ranked four philosophical statements that best characterized their attitudes during their

undergraduate years (Schreck, 1985). Nearly 60 percent of the donors classified themselves as "collegiates," who believe that

> an important part of college life exists outside the classroom, library and laboratory. Extracurricular activities, living group functions, athletics, social life, rewarding friendships, and loyalty to college traditions are important elements in one's college experience and necessary to the cultivation of the well-rounded person (Schreck, 1985, p. 42).

Hall (1967) found that such participation was one of four areas of experience related to giving. Similarly, Deel's (1971) analysis of more than 90,000 Indiana University alumni revealed that donors were more likely to have participated in extracurricular activities. Haddad (1986) also found significant differences between donors and non-donors with respect to involvement in student activities.

Occupation and Income

Several studies have examined alumni occupations as a factor in explaining differences between donors and non-donors (Deel, 1971; McKee, 1975; Beeler, 1982; Keller, 1982; Haddad, 1986).

In his dissertation, McKee (1975) found that current occupation affected alumni participation, but not financial support. McKee studied 332 donor and non-donor graduates of Indiana University. Statistically significant differences were discovered for 17 of 19 items selected to test the hypothesis that examined financial support. Among donors and non-donors, there were only two areas of agreement: interest in the university's athletic teams and in the perceptions of treatment they received as students (1975, p. 102). McKee reported that alumni generally

had more favorable attitudes for the university itself than for alumni programming or development efforts. Because there were clearly significant differences among the opinions of donors and non-donors toward the university and its fund-raising programs, McKee concluded that donors held a significantly more positive image of the university than non-donors (McKee, 1975).

Deel (1971) found a significant difference between the 90,000 members and non-members of Indiana University's alumni association with regard to occupational classification. Donors filled occupations that required greater training and provided higher salaries. Similarly, Beeler (1982) found that donors held positions requiring greater levels of skill and responsibility than non-donors.

The first major nationwide survey of the charitable behavior of Americans in 15 years was commissioned in 1986 by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and conducted by the polling firm of Yankelovich, Skelly and White. The survey polled 1,151 Americans age 18 and over. Those with annual incomes greater than $30,000 were oversampled. Weighting procedures were used to ensure a representative sample of the public regarding age, marital status, and area of the country (1986, p. vi). The report concluded that

> Giving both in amount of contributions and as a percentage of income reflected the respondents' perceptions of their income situation. Those who reported that they had only enough for basic necessities gave an average contribution of $250, or approximately 1.3 percent of their total income, to charity. Those who reported that they had a small amount left over gave an average of $510 to charity, or 2.2 percent of their income. Those who responded that they had a moderate amount or a lot left

> over gave $1,120 to charity, or approximately 3 percent of their income (Yankelovich, et al., 1986, p. 11).

The Yankelovich study reported that "the percentage of respondents perceiving the availability of discretionary income increases as household income increases" (p. 11). In addition, ". . . two thirds of respondents with incomes under $10,000 responded that they only had enough for basic necessities while 77 percent of the respondents with incomes of $50,000 or more reported that they had a moderate amount or a lot of money left over to spend on other things" (Yankelovich, et al., 1986, p. 11). Income was surpassed only by church attendance as a predictor of charity giving (Yankelovich, et al., 1986, p. 14).

Curriculum/Major

At Oklahoma State University, Caruthers (1973) found that academic college, specifically business administration, engineering, and agriculture, was a distinguishing characteristic of alumni who provided financial support to the institution. She found that graduates of these programs expressed significantly more positive attitudes toward their undergraduate experiences and contributed more frequent and more valuable gifts to their alma mater.

Deel (1971) found a significant difference between members and non-members of the Indiana University alumni association with respect to college from which the individual graduated. At Butler University, Haddad (1986) studied 288 donors and 205 non-donors. Eleven of 17 variables related to alumni giving were found to be significant. Major college was found to be a significant factor in predicting alumni support;

in this case, liberal arts graduates were found to contribute more frequently and in greater amounts (Haddad, 1986). Beeler (1982) also found that arts and science graduates comprised a greater portion of the donor group than did graduates of the school of management. The non-donor group had proportionately more graduates of the school of management than did arts and sciences.

Institutional Image

McKinney's (1978) survey of major donors, volunteers and non-donor prospects for gifts in excess of $10,000 at the University of Miami indicated that ". . . when the variables selected by non-donors and donors as being essential or very important influences on giving were used to rate the University of Miami, donors rated the university higher than non-donors" (McKinney, 1978, p.p. 102-3). McKinney also found that 'donors and non-donors in each analysis differed significantly in their perceptions of selected University of Miami characteristics" (McKinney, 1978, p. 102). However, McKinney found no indication of a correlation between the "amounts of money given and degrees of positive feelings (McKinney, 1978, p. 108).

In contrast, studies conducted by Carlson (1978) and Allen (1981) found little or no correlation between perception of institutional image and alumni giving. Carlson concluded that maintaining "close contact" with the institution was a more significant predictor of alumni giving than "institutional loyalty" or "other factors." Allen (1981) surveyed small black colleges in Texas and found no significant differences between donors and non-donors regarding "pride in their alma mater." However,

she cautioned that this response may be atypical for other types of institutions because feelings of pride and loyalty among graduates of small black colleges may be more pronounced than at larger, more diverse institutions (Allen, 1981, p. 98).

Year of Graduation

Graduates born in the Baby Boom years of 1946-64 comprise a large proportion of many institutions' alumni. Fund raisers long have recognized that younger alumni who have not yet attained career and economic success tend to give less than their older, more established, counterparts. Goldberg (1987) refuted the popular notion of the stinginess found among the 1980s "me generation" by interviewing development directors at a number of institutions where contributions by younger graduates amounted to more, both in dollar value and in terms of portion of the total alumni population. At Centre College, for example, the Classes of 1969 and 1971 gave more in 1987 than all but one of the classes of the 1950s. In addition, Goldberg found that in 1988, 41 percent of the University of Iowa's donors graduated within the past decade. Beeler (1982) found that recent graduates were somewhat more likely to be donors than non-donors.

Emotional Attachment

In his dissertation, Pickett (1986) determined six important motivations for giving that describe the link between institution and alumnus:

- Belief in values of organizations: people give because they believe in the mission, character, values, and goals of the organization.
- Obligation: a sense of obligation that may stem from social standing or religious beliefs.
- Community position: the degree to which one achieves, maintains or improves his or her social standing.
- Ego needs: the most powerful set of motivators, they include needs for power, success, affection, security and affiliation.
- Self-interest: what donors receive in return for their gift, such as tax benefit, service, or gift premium.
- Self-actualization: the desire to see gift giving as part of living a full human life, in which the joy of sharing outweighs any societal, psychological, or economic benefit (Pickett, 1986, p. 211).

Leslie and Ramey's (1988) study on donor behavior found that motivations of alumni and alumni-institution relationships differ significantly from other groups, such as foundations, corporations, and non-alumni individuals. The close social and emotional ties a graduate feels bear little relationship to the educational benefits the institution provides society.

Gardner (1975), in his study of Harding College graduates, found that donors have a stronger emotional attachment to the institution than do non-donors. In addition, Beeler's (1982) study of 744 graduates of a private, doctoral-granting university in New England, found emotional attachment to the institution to be the strongest predictor of group membership as a donor. His statistical analysis suggested that emotional

attachment contributed more than twice as much as the next highest variable in alumni giving.

Receipt of Grant or Scholarship

Beeler's (1982) research at a private, doctoral-granting institution indicated that receipt of a grant or scholarship was the fourth best predictor of later support. He concluded that students who receive grants or scholarships that do not require eventual repayment later contribute to their alma mater out of gratitude. However, Haddad (1986) found no differences between donors and non-donors with respect to receipt of scholarships or grants.

Marital Status

Statistical data about the relationship between marital status and alumni giving are conflicting. Beeler (1982) and Keller (1982) found no significant differences between donors and non-donors with respect to marital status. However, Deel (1971) found that marital status was a significant predictor of support in his study of Indiana University alumni. He concluded that members of the alumni association who were married contributed greater amounts of money with greater frequency than members who were not married. Fifteen years later, Haddad (1986) also found that marital status was a significant factor in contributions to Butler University.

Resident versus Commuter Student Status

Feelings of loyalty are affected by many factors, including students' living arrangements. Students who live on campus may have greater opportunities than commuters for forming life-long bonds with other students. Chickering detailed several sources of influence on his seven vectors of student development, one of which is living in residence halls (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

However, the quantitative research findings are inconclusive. Hall (1967) found that satisfaction of friendships with other Cornell alumni was one of four areas of the collegiate experience most closely tied to giving. Haddad (1986), however, determined that there was no statistical significance between commuter or resident status among donors and non-donors.

Enrollment in a College or University Following Graduation

Beeler (1982) asked respondents to indicate whether they had enrolled at another institution of higher education after graduation from their alma mater. He found significant differences between donors and non-donors regarding this variable, and concluded that the undergraduate institution was the primary recipient of alumni support, despite later affiliation with other colleges or universities.

Pickett (1977) found that graduate school attendance was a critical factor for quality of donors for private undergraduate colleges. In this case, however, it is logical to surmise that alumni of private undergraduate institutions often go on to graduate or professional school

and thus recognize the value of higher education. In addition, this advanced training often increases their ability to contribute financially.

Post-graduate Contact with Faculty

In his study of Cornell, Hall (1967) analyzed the attitudes of alumni to establish giving patterns and found four areas of experience that appear to play a significant role. One of these was the relationships maintained between alumni and faculty members. Hall concluded that such contact may contribute to a positive feeling of membership or belonging among alumni, and thus increase the probability of giving.

Recommending the Institution to Others

Pickett (1986) found that belief in an organization's values and a sense of obligation are two motivations for alumni giving. Graduates who share their alma maters' values may feel a sense of obligation to inform prospective students of opportunities provided by the institution. Institutional prestige appears to play a role in the formation of these attitudes.

Leslie and Ramey (1985) found similar results in their multiple regression model that examined giving behavior of four groups, including alumni. They found that alumni who recommend the college to other prospective students view their alma mater more favorably and are more likely to become donors.

Impact of Alumni Publications

Carlson (1978) studied giving patterns among four independent institutions in California and found close contact between the institution and alumni to be the most significant predictor of giving.

Similarly, McKinney (1978) and Aug (1987) found significant relationships between readership of the alumni magazine and giving. McKinney (1978) studied factors among select donors and non-donors at the University of Miami and concluded that receiving information about the institution through a variety of sources was a significant factor in predicting whether or not a graduate was also a donor. Aug (1987) determined that the most effective alumni publications inform readers about the institution's plans, mission and philosophy and long-term objectives.

These factors have been found in previous research to contribute to alumni support of colleges and universities. In addition, the institution's organizational culture and the extent to which graduates ally themselves within it is another likely factor, although one that is hard to quantify in traditional scientific research.

Organizational Culture at Texas A&M University

Underpinning the likelihood of increased private support at any given institution is the emotional foundation on which alumni loyalty is nurtured and sustained. Loyalty to an institution corresponds at least in part with an individual's participation in the organization's "saga," or "a collective understanding of unique accomplishment in a formally

established group" (Clark, 1988, p. 36). Events in the organization's history become imbued with emotional affect through retelling among the group's members. Over time, these events can assume mythic stature.

Perhaps because of its steadfast roots in medieval tradition, or because its primary mission is the imparting of knowledge to fresh young minds, higher education relies heavily on organizational myth-making in creating a framework for shared meaning among its constituents. Myth-making tends to be stronger in organizations such as colleges and universities that are "loosely coupled" because they contain a large number of diverse and relatively interdependent components having ambiguous goals (Weick, 1986). Organizational myths provide members with a means of "bonding" and a technique for adapting to this ambiguity (Boje, Fedor & Rowland, 1982, p. 18).

At Texas A&M, the undercurrent of organizational myth runs especially deep. Chartered under the Morrill Act of 1862, the "Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas" opened its doors to 106 male cadets on Oct. 4, 1871. The military orientation that dictated virtually every aspect of students' lives at the college more than a century ago still permeates the university in the form of various traditions and rites of passage, despite the fact that only about 1,600 of the university's 43,000 students belong to the Corps of Cadets. Freshmen, for example, still are called "fish" just as they were in the 1880s, presumably to signify them as "raw, slightly odious, and distinctly questionable being[s] swimming in waters over [their] head[s]" (Dethloff, 1975, p. 102).

Many of the ties that bind students and alumni to the university are wrapped around Texas A&M's myriad traditions. While these traditions nurture loyalty among graduates that often is translated into financial and other support, their beginnings most often are inauspicious, rooted in authentic patriotism and willingness to serve. (It is noteworthy, for example, that more than 20,000 Aggies--about 14,000 of them officers--served in World War II, more than from any other institution except the military academies [Bynum, 1991, p. 321].)

Texas A&M's fabled Twelfth Man tradition was not created by the university's development office or athletic directors. It developed spontaneously during the 1921 Dixie Classic bowl game (forerunner to the Cotton Bowl), in which the Aggies scored an astonishing 22-14 upset over the national championship Centre College team. During the game, Texas A&M suffered numerous injuries, and coach Dana X. Bible called from the stands E. King Gill, a basketball player, to suit up in case a substitute player was needed. Although Gill did not play that day, since 1922 the entire student body has stood during each football game to signify its willingness to serve as the "twelfth man" (Dethloff, 1975).

Similarly, the Muster tradition in which students and former students who have died during the past year are honored each San Jacinto Day evolved from such a ceremony conducted on the island of Corregidor during the Japanese onslaught in the Philippines in 1942. At the height of battle, 25 Aggies on the island gathered at the mouth of a cave to honor their fallen comrades. Within days, all 25 were captured or killed by the Japanese, prompting General Douglas MacArthur to telegraph the *Houston Post* that "Texas A and M is writing its own military history in

the blood of its graduates not only in the Philippines campaign but on the active fronts of the Southwest Pacific" (Adams, 1976, p. 149). Muster was institutionalized in 1923 by decree of the Association of Former Students as an annual event when Aggies, wherever they are, should "get together, eat a little, and live over the days you spent at the A&M College of Texas" (Adams, 1976, p. 152). Today, approximately 300 Muster ceremonies are held each year by Aggies in more than 80 countries.

An aura of overcoming adversity through work and sheer dint of will still hangs over the university, although it is diminishing as more students come from affluent suburbs, drive imported luxury cars and major in business rather than come from rural areas in beat-up old pick-up trucks and major in animal husbandry. Perry (p. 215), in his 75th-anniversary book about Texas A&M published in 1951, emphasizes the university's lean early years in nostalgic, frontier terms:

> This has been the story of a young giant of a college, born in the days when its people had just finished losing their fortunes and their battle flags. It was born, then, in poverty, with a deep sense of that old defeat and a resultant burning passion to show the world who came from the best family after all. . . . If this particular school had been born in a locale blessed with vitality, land mass, and oil, it might have developed a festering, ingrown psyche and never have even begun to mature in the true sense of the word. . . . The sharing of hardships unquestionably gave the old Aggies the same lifelong ties of friendship which the old Chisholm Trail gave its thirst-bitten, Indian-threatened travelers. Its all-male, military-barracks life has given its boys the salty, free-wheeling camaraderie which so often springs up among men disassociated with women. Its poverty-driven urge to grow and do big things, often just to show the world they could be done, has given it the push to overcome its handicaps.

While Texas A&M became a university in 1963, military training was made optional in 1965 and the university became coeducational in 1971,

the student body--which swelled from 14,775 in 1971 to nearly 43,000 by 1993--has remained remarkably homogeneous and loyal to its institutional legacy, a fact that bodes well for continued alumni support. (Much of the university's growth was underscored by the admission of women students. Enrollment soared from 14,775 in 1971 to 29,414, almost one third of whom were women, in 1977. By 1975, enrollment was doubled from 1968, and nearly three times the enrollments of the mid-1960s. During most of the 1970s, Texas A&M was the fastest-growing institution of higher education in the country, according to the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.)

One characteristic that continues to sustain this notion of self-containment and cohesion is geographic insularity (Perry, 1951). The college was built on an open, mesquite-covered prairie where "large herds of deer frequently ran across [the] drill field and for a time a Mexican lion would prowl about seeking prey" (Adams, 1976, pp. 6-7). While all other Southwest Conference schools are located in urban areas, students at Texas A&M were isolated even from the nearby town of Bryan until a trolley service was begun in 1910, and roads remained hazardous for new-fangled automobiles until well into the 1920s (Adams, 1976). While Bryan and College Station today are virtually indistinguishable, remnants of this legacy of isolation remain in the university's philosophical emphasis and commitment of resources to intramural sports and other campus-based student activities.

Texas A&M's unique history, veneration of the past, and geographic isolation have fostered the idea over the decades that students there are a breed apart, making the "Aggie joke" perhaps the most widely known

example of the university's folklore. Like other ethnic humor, Aggie jokes are short vignettes that portray Aggies as "bull-headed, immature, and irrational" (Dethloff, 1975, p. 437) or "aggressive, crude[ly] masculine . . . and superpatriotic" (Bynum, 1991, p. 321).

One researcher analyzed more than 800 Aggie jokes and found that the humor in about one third of the jokes derived from a depiction of Aggies as "literal and unable to understand" the nuances of a situation (for example, Judge: "You've been brought before the court for drinking." Aggie: "Great! Let's get started"); 16 percent from depicting Aggies as "stupid and of low intelligence," ("Did you hear about the Aggie who bought some snow tires but they melted before he got home?"); about 13 percent depicting Aggies as "personally dirty" (How many Aggies does it take to eat an armadillo? Three--one to cut it up, one to eat it, and one to watch for cars"); and about 10 percent depicting Aggies as "naive" (Did you hear about the Aggie who couldn't spell? He paid $20 to spend the night in a warehouse!") (Bynum, 1991).

Over the years, however, this folklore has been used by those affiliated with Texas A&M to their own favor, in such jokes as, "What do you call an Aggie five years after graduation? Boss!"

Texas A&M University During the 1930s

Much the organizational culture and physical structure recognizable at Texas A&M today was shaped during the 1930s, when the respondents in this study were students or recent graduates. This lays the foundation for several findings discussed in Chapter Four.

Several of the most cherished university traditions assumed their contemporary shape and meaning during this decade. For example, the university's mascot, Reveille, is now a registered collie but originally was a stray black-and-white mutt picked up along the highway by students in 1931; the first midnight yell practice, Texas A&M's equivalent to the athletic pep rallies held at other institutions, took place in 1932; and the Aggie senior ring design has remained unchanged since 1933, except when the inscription was updated from "Texas A&M College" to "Texas A&M University" in 1964 ("Traditions at Texas A&M" brochure). The Corps of Cadets tradition of polishing the statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross began in 1933, when student "Newt" Hielscher was reluctant to dispose of some extra brass polish before going home for the summer (Dugan, 1984, pp. 6-7). In addition, it is widely believed that Aggie jokes became prominent during the 1930s, when hard economic times galvanized school spirit among students (Bynum, 1991).

The 1930s also brought administrative and academic changes. In 1936 the board of directors authorized the granting of the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree, and the Doctor of Science degree in agriculture and engineering. In 1939, the departments of aeronautical engineering and industrial engineering were founded.

In addition, the college's physical structure assumed a more modern appearance during this era. Between 1929 and 1937, when the Depression was at its worst, Texas A&M spent $3,165,850 on construction, an amount almost equal to the total amount spent during the college's first half century (Dethloff, 1975, p. 421). Between August 1925 and August 1935,

the physical plant had grown from 69 permanent structures valued at $3.5 million to 109 permanent structures valued at more than $8 million.

Such extensive construction and modernization were made possible during the depths of the Depression because of changes in the distribution of permanent university funds (the PUF) made after the Santa Rita oilfield, discovered on university lands, came into production in 1923. Before Santa Rita, the division of PUF funds between Texas A&M and the University of Texas was not deemed important, because the funds, which came primarily from surface leases and land sales, were nominal (Dethloff, 1975). By 1926, however, Santa Rita was pouring $250,000 monthly into PUF coffers, and royalties eventually totaled $5 million (Dethloff, 1975). After years of wrangling with University of Texas representatives over equitable division of the money, a proposal finally was accepted by all parties: Texas A&M would receive $150,000 for fiscal years 1931-34, and one third of the PUF permanent income thereafter, excluding income from surface leases (Dethloff, 1975). The impact of this new source of funds was apparent in the construction of the 1930s.

Included in this construction were many facilities still used today: Cushing Library (1930); Hart Hall (1930); Walton Hall (1931, praised as "a beehive of activity and the center of student life" in the 1934 yearbook); the System Administration Building (1932, which was termed "undoubtedly the most pretentious building on A.&M.'s campus" in the 1933 yearbook); the Agricultual Engineering Building (1932); the Veterinary Hospital (1932), the swimming pool (1933); and the horse barn (now the pavilion, 1933). Nearly a quarter of a million dollars was spent on modernization of the campus infrastructure, including conversion

from steam heat to hot water (1931); paving of streets (1933); new sewer system and sewage disposal plant (1934); new water system (1934); new incinerator (1934); and power plant additions (1934).

Not all of these innovations were popular, however. The 1934 Longhorn yearbook (p. 272) termed the switch to hot water heating "an economical move with no regard whatsoever as to the comforts of the students. Not only was hot water heating introduced this year, but also the novelty of turning off the hot water in the showers, just as you stepped under it . . . "

The dramatic changes in the campus landscape during the 1930s also led to symbolic changes in the way students regarded their facilities. New buildings commanded new respect, as seen in an article in the February 21, 1934, issue of the student newspaper that exhorted students to discontinue "atrocious" acts such as cigarette burns in the new furniture and careless markings on walls. Further campus beautification took place in March 1934, when a formal garden was planted on the site of the recently razed Gathright Hall (Dugan, 1984, p. 67).

Even more important in symbolizing the turn from the old era to the new was the beginning of construction on State Highway 6 on the east side of campus in 1931 (Dethloff, 1975). Perhaps more than any other single act, this virtual abandonment of the railroad on the west side of campus represented the end of Texas A&M's pioneering days and the beginning of modern linkages to urban Texas and the world beyond. Related to this, planning was initiated in the 1930s for the construction of Easterwood Airport, completed in 1944 and even today one of only a handful of university-affiliated airports in the country. College Station,

which since 1876 was little more than a train depot, grocery store and post office, became an incorporated city in 1938, which relieved Texas A&M of the burden of providing housing for its personnel (Dethloff, 1975).

The wholesale pouring of resources into the physical plant at the expense of academic programs led Texas A&M during the 1930s to be characterized in part by "academic stagnation" (Dethloff, 1975, p. 442). Library and laboratory facilities were woefully lacking. The chemical engineering program was denied accreditation by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges in 1937, and other engineering programs were given negative evaluations (Dethloff, 1975). These deficits were not addressed until well into the next decade.

While the fortuitous timing of Santa Rita and the redistribution of PUF royalties spared Texas A&M from many of the ravages of the Great Depression, the people who lived, worked and studied on campus often were not so lucky. By 1933, many staff positions were cut and all state employees, even college professors, were forced by the Texas Legislature to take 25 percent pay reductions in addition to the 10 to 20 percent reductions already mandated by the college (Dethloff, 1975). (To help counteract these pay cuts, rent on college-owned housing for staff was reduced.) When the state was broke, Texas A&M employees were paid with warrants redeemable at banks and retail stores.

The student body also suffered the effects of economic uncertainty, despite an average annual student cost of $353 (Dugan, 1984) that made Texas A&M a bargain among Texas colleges and universities. By the beginning of the 1931-32 academic year, the student body had shrunk nearly 20 percent, to 2,584. Many parents--especially those in the rural

farm communities that at that time produced the bulk of Texas A&M's student body--simply couldn't afford college expenses. In November 1931 the Texas A&M Board of Directors halved room and board fees to $15 per semester, but students still gathered to formally protest the $1 charge for uniform cleaning and pressing and 50 cent haircuts (The Battalion, January 20, 1932).

Even these reduced prices made getting a college education impossible for some students, and "project houses" were begun for students who could not afford the expense of dormitories. The project house concept originated with a professor or rural sociology who turned an abandoned home near campus into a home for 12 students. An aunt of one of the students became the "house mother" and cook, and the students themselves brought livestock and food from home to supplement the groceries they bought wholesale (Dethloff, 1975).

This innovative approach was hugely successful. In fact, students living in the project house earned better grades than those who lived on campus (Dethloff, 1975). By 1935 the project house concept was sanctioned by the college, and two years later more than 50 project houses, housing more than 700 students, were in operation (Dethloff, 1975). The idea spread to institutions such as the University of Washington and the University of Oregon, eventually accommodating more than 100,000 students nationwide (Dethloff, 1975).

Creativity and cooperation enabled hundreds of students to remain at Texas A&M, but once they graduated, their employment prospects during the Depression were bleak. Like millions of workers across the country, many took whatever jobs they could find, such as delivering ice or

pumping gasoline. One historian termed student unemployment the "most critical phenomenon" affecting Texas A&M during the Depression (Dethloff, 1975, p. 136); indeed, only one engineering major in the Class of '32 had a job at graduation. Years later, however, one member of the Class of '34 described the difficulty in finding employment in less catastrophic terms:

> Apart from a mention in the home-town paper and our mother's pride, the world took our graduation in stride, never missing a turn. Some, through merit or good fortune, had immediate employment, but many did not. At times, the attitude of the potential employer seemed not so much 'show me' as complete indifference. From lofty seniors, we were at the bottom of the ladder again (Dugan, 1984, p. 178).

In addition, the issue of coeducation, which one report called an "assault on the formerly all-male bastion" began decades before women officially were admitted in 1971 (Dugan, 1984). Rumblings supporting coeducation at Texas A&M began as early as 1933, with the appearance in the student newspaper and the Texas Aggie alumni magazine of letters from former students favoring the admission of women students "when sufficient numbers warranted it, when proper dormitories were provided and when needed courses were not offered at other state schools" (Battalion, September 27, 1933). Alumnus A.S. Porter of Dallas even went so far as to advocate the creation of fraternities and sororities at Texas A&M (The Texas Aggie, October 1933).

In addition, the September 27, 1933, issue of the Battalion reported that female high school graduates from Bryan and nearby Hearne had filed a civil suit seeking admission to Texas A&M. Almost

simultaneously, 11 daughters of faculty members who lived on campus enrolled in Texas A&M during the fall 1933 semester. The October 18, 1933, issue of the Battalion reported this accordingly:

> The doors of Texas A. and M. College were opened for the first time to girl students during the fall term last Thursday when classes met for the Fall and Winter session of 1933-34. . . .
>
> Eleven girls took advantage of the ruling that permitted the enrollment of the daughters of all college employees who reside in Brazos County. . . .
>
> A hearing on the suit brought by the Bryan and Hearne girls scheduled for early October was re-scheduled for October 21, when no members of the A. and M. board [of directors] appeared. Nelson Phillips of Dallas, a judge who appeared for the college, contended that the case should go to the state supreme court, but this was over-ruled by Judge [W.C.] Davis. Col. C.C. Todd of Bryan, former commandant at the college, represented the plaintiffs.

Naturally, the issue prompted debate in the editorial pages of the student-run Battalion. The October 18, 1933, issue printed editorials both for and against coeducation. In "Why Co-Ed?", the editorial board called the college a "he-man's school" but went on to quote the Morrill Act of 1862, (which established land-grant institutions such as Texas A&M) as being created "to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes" (Battalion, October 18, 1933).

"Women," the editorial continued, "wanted to come to A. and M. because of the courses and it is cheaper." The anonymous writer claimed that women were members of the industrial classes, and continued, "Perhaps we've been slow in realizing that men leaving A. and M. no longer compete in a strictly man's world" (Battalion, October 18, 1933).

An opposing editorial contended that allowing women admission would be "unfair" in that it would "precipitate an influx of social-minded males" (Battalion, October 18, 1933). In addition, the article asked rhetorically, "What would become of the waiter-yell leader, the gardener-cadet-colonel, and the candy-man [student who sold concessions in the dormitory] class-president?" (Battalion, October 18, 1933). The article contended that allowing women students would attract an undesirable male element as well: "the champion beer drinker, and the man with the new yellow roadster"(Battalion, October 18, 1933). Men, the editorial concluded, came to Texas A&M to compete, and did not want to hear "the Aggie War Hymn being sung in a high soprano" (Battalion, October 18, 1933).

In "The Co-Ed's Side," one professor's daughter countered with an argument based on economic considerations:

> Now listen, Aggies!--and remember this. There isn't one of us who would be going if our parent's salaries hadn't been cut nearly in half--a 25 percent cut and a raise in prices. We want an education, just as you do; and we're glad to be able to get it here this year because quite a few of us couldn't go anywhere else. We hope it will be pleasant here this year. We want it to be, but we're not here for a lark (Battalion, October 18, 1933).

Still, the writer emphasized that this was a temporary measure, and that "co-education would ruin A. and M." (Battalion, October 18, 1933).

In the 85th district court, Judge Davis granted a continuance to October 31. Col. Todd, representing the college, said that a constitutional interpretation of the issue would be required given that the college was state supported (Dugan, 1984).

When the proceedings began that Halloween, Texas A&M President Walton and Deans Bolton and Winkler, as well as other university administrators, testified regarding the curriculum offered. Perhaps the most telling testimony came from board of directors member Byrd E. White of Dallas, who astounded his colleagues by reporting that he had a letter from the Texas attorney general "stating the constitutionality involved did not exclude women students from the college" (Dugan, 1984).

Sentiment among Texas A&M students apparently remained staunchly anti-coed, however. The November 29, 1933, issue of the Battalion prominently featured coverage of the trial in an article headlined, "A. and M. Likely to Remain a Boy's School," stating, "Mere state legislation cannot tear down that which took 57 years to build."

Two months later, Judge Davis ruled against the admission of women students in a three-point decision, holding that the Morrill Act of 1862 did not prescribe who could or could not attend land grant colleges; that Texas A&M was distinct from the University of Texas and thus could not be held necessarily to the same standards; and that the board of directors could rule on attendance, thus upholding a 1925 resolution "that women not be admitted as students" (Battalion, January 9, 1934).

One 1934 graduate of Texas A&M stated that "after all the to-do in the courts, [women] didn't make that much difference, once the strangeness had worn off. Some were smarter than others, they had to study as we did and were not given undue attention" (Dugan, 1984, p. 164).

The Association of Former Students

The university's alumni organization began as the Association of Ex-Cadets by the members of the first graduating class in 1880, and from its earliest days encouraged school spirit and class rivalry (Dethloff, 1976, p. 103). However, both the alumni group and the college were beset by administrative and financial problems, and the Association of Ex-Cadets was disbanded in 1883 and replaced in 1886 with the Alumni Association of the A. and M. College of Texas.

While a core of loyal graduates was built under this incarnation and several innovations were added that still exist, such as elected "class agents" who coordinate news about each graduating class, ultimately the Alumni Association was unsuccessful. For example, membership in the Association was restricted to graduates of the college, although financial and other hardships precluded many loyal supporters ("former students") from earning degrees. These nongraduates returned to campus in large numbers for commencement and other activities and provided a strong support network statewide.

Over time, those excluded from membership in the official alumni group garnered their own political clout within the college and established their own more "spirited and energetic" alumni organization (Adams, 1976, p. 28). This schism between "ex-cadets" and graduates was laid to rest in 1920, when the alumni association's constitution was amended to include "all students who had attended Texas A&M at least one year and had left in good standing" (Adams, 1976, p. 115). In what the *Bryan Daily Eagle* termed "one of the most far reaching decisions that has

been made . . . in many years," the modern Association of Former Students was born (Adams, 1976, p. 115).

The school spirit and support that long had characterized the college's former students was formalized under the 1925 Association of Former Students constitution, which mandated

> support of benevolent, charitable, and educational undertakings by extending financial and other aid to students of the A. and M. College of Texas; by promoting social, literary, and scientific pursuits; by perpetuating and strengthening the ties of affection and esteem formed in college days; by promoting the interests and welfare of the A. and M. College of Texas and education generally in the State of Texas (Perry, 1951, p. 254).

By 1943 the concept of "annual giving," introduced by Association Director Everett McQuillen, Texas A&M Class of '20, revolutionized the fund-raising and membership recruitment functions of the Association by eliminating the old dues system. Based on his belief that "the amount of your gift is not important; what is important is you," the annual giving philosophy cleared the way for larger gifts and easier membership recruitment (Adams, 1976, p. 162). Since then, every qualified former student has been a "member" of the Association, asked to give to the annual fund rather than pay for membership dues. For the first year after graduation, former students receive the alumni magazine free of charge; thereafter, donations of $50 annually sustain a subscription. All former students receive fundraising and related mailings from the Association, regardless of giving record. The Association of Former Students continues its low-pressure fundraising approach and its emphasis on programmatic offerings for alumni. (In 1953, leaders within the Association of Former Students created what is now the Development

Foundation to handle major-gifts fundraising from individuals and corporations. In 1990, the Development Foundation kicked off a six-year, $500 million capital campaign.)

This philosophy of pride and support created "almost unbelievably enthusiastic support of its members [to become] one of the most remarkable alumni associations in the nation" (Perry, 1951, p. 181). In 1993, Texas A&M ranked eleventh in the nation for alumni support--and second nationally among public universities--with contributions of $29,162,142 (*Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, August 1993, p. 39). In comparison, in 1973 former students gave $1,787,040, and in 1953, the total was $106,968 (Adams, 1979, pp. 165-66).

This support is even more remarkable considering Texas A&M's hardscrabble beginnings and a student body that in its early days primarily comprised farmers' sons from small Texas towns. To one chronicler of the university's history, it indicates that former students "have used their education and industry in post-college years to make long strides in sheer economic well-being," and that they "have apparently never ceased to be grateful to the college which taught them how to better themselves financially" (Perry, 1951, p. 181). According to Perry (1951, p. 181), former students "seem to remember vividly the days when, back in college, a ten-cent piece looked as big as a wheelbarrow, and when, in both blazing heat and blizzard, they had nothing but a canvas tent to shelter them."

The Association has initiated several programs for older alumni during the past decade, such as an "Aggiehostel" program based on the Elderhostel concept in which colleges and universities sponsor noncredit classes and on-campus housing for older adults during summer months,

and a "Traveling Aggies" program that targets no specific alumni age group but attracts primarily those nearing or past traditional retirement age.

The vast majority of alumni programs instituted over the last decade, however, are designed to accommodate the needs of recent graduating classes, which often number between 5,000 and 6,000 members. For example, in 1984, a 16-page tabloid called the *Spirit of Aggieland* was created exclusively for members of the six most recent graduating classes. While this emphasis on recent graduating classes is expected to pay off in increased financial support as these alumni achieve career success, similar logistical and management issues are approaching for the "Sul Ross" classes who graduated from Texas A&M 50 or more years ago. As these classes grow larger and their composition more diverse, new ways of meeting their members' needs and encouraging their financial support must be created.

The Sul Ross classes (named for Lawrence Sullivan Ross, legendary "boy captain" of the Texas Indian wars, governor of Texas from 1887 to 1891, and president of Texas A&M from 1891 until his death in 1893), currently represent Texas A&M's "old guard"--exclusively male, with a college experience infused at every possible step with military training and discipline and an emphasis on tradition and service to country. While these classes comprise less than 5 percent of the university's living alumni, they contributed about 12 percent of the total dollars the Association of Former Students received in 1992 (*The Texas Aggie*, March 1993, p. 4).

Thus, the Sul Ross classes continue to support Texas A&M in dollar amounts disproportionate to the number of former students they represent, even as the university has expanded dramatically its original mission of providing practical vocational and military training to young men.

Intellectual and Social Growth Among the Elderly

The vast majority of research that categorizes alumni by age focuses on building support among recent graduates. In fact, no research could be found specifically devoted to older alumni. The closest research that could be found was by Scarborough (1991), who examined the ways that a university's older-adult programs can create loyalty among all the elderly in the community, not just alumni. How the elderly choose to participate in activities, and how this participation reflects their unique needs, is important in alumni relations, especially given that they often have the most financial and time resources to contribute.

Much research has been conducted about how the elderly develop a sense of self and identity with external entities. While developmental processes among the elderly are a matter of some controversy among gerontologists, three models guide current thought: the universal growth-regression, contextual, and hierarchical life span views (Labouvie-Vief, 1982, p. 151).

The universal growth-regression models define intelligence as one's ability to adapt to changing environmental demands (Lebouvie-Vief, 1982, p. 152). As this definition became operationalized in an era of social

Darwinism and logical positivism, however, its meaning has become restricted to the point of assuming only that which intelligence tests measure (Boring, 1950). Intelligence came to be seen as a distinct biological function easily separable from an individual's capacities as a whole. The mind is presumed to have three irreducible elements from which all intellectual functioning springs: simple reactions, perceptions, and sensations (Boring, 1950). Thus, a hierarchy of behaviors was conceived that combined these three elements into increasingly complex levels, reaching a pinnacle with formal logic. Because these models are able to remove cultural factors through statistical manipulation, they view aging primarily in biological terms. Adulthood is not conceptualized as a developmental period of psychological growth and achievement as youth is, but as a period of relative stability presaging rapid biological decline.

Contextual models, increasingly popular over the last two decades, counter the unyieldingly static assumptions of growth-regression models by acknowledging that cultural influences are part and parcel of an individual's life experience. These models recognize a pluralism of experiences and state that deficit notions are relative only to the standards by which they are assessed. Whereas growth-regression models view intelligence as an aggregate accumulation of information, contextual models take into account cultural influences that also might lead to perceived intellectual decline in later years. For example, Kreps (1977) argued that the perception of inevitable decline was motivated strongly by pressure from labor markets to move older workers out of the work force to create places for younger employees. Adult intelligence thus is seen as

the integration of an individual's intellectual repertoire into his or her cultural setting. Many ethnographic studies in recent years have elaborated this view, with findings that indicate that differences between young and old adults result primarily from professional specialization rather than age (Botwinick, 1978; Lebouvie-Vief, 1979).

In response to criticism that contextual models view later adulthood in terms of adaptation for the purpose of stability, not growth, hierarchical life span models have been developed that derive properties of aging from a general conception of systemic changes along a lifespan--changes that "transform the system from stage to stage in a continuous fashion" (Labouvie-Vief, 1979, p. 164). In contrast to the growth-regression model, however, this view is nonlinear. Rather than simply building an aggregate of information throughout life, in which an individual in essence becomes more adept at processing and retaining information, the hierarchical life span model posits that "different periods [of life] are characterized by dominant modes that supersede and replace earlier ones" (Lebouvie-Vief, 1979, p. 165). Thus, the lifespan can be conceptualized as a series of growth-stability-decline functions. This is significant because it guards against a deficit view of older adulthood, in, for example, studies that show the elderly as less adept than younger people at completing puzzleboards. Each stage of life is characterized by both a progression and a dissolution of skills.

This nonlinear lifespan model probably is of greatest benefit to alumni relations because it recognizes graduates' unique abilities to contribute throughout their lives. Of course, the importance of support should be stressed to students from the earliest possible moment, even

before graduation. However, the unique contributions of older alumni should not be ignored. The transition into retirement years marks a time of great change, and often is characterized by introspection and nostalgia for the past. Fund-raisers can benefit from retirees' years of professional experience and sudden wealth of unstructured time by making older alumni an integral part of the university's fundraising efforts.

The Transition to Retirement

Retirement marks the end of what usually is an intimate, decades-long role between an individual and his or her livelihood. In America, where one's professional position tends to indicate a lifestyle and social status level, and where a professional role often infuses all aspects of self-identification and self-worth, the ramifications of this departure can be particularly acute. Understanding retirement thus requires an understanding of the relationship between people and their jobs.

The peasant economy of the early Middle Ages had no concept of occupational position or employment, and the creation of the guild society in the later Middle Ages brought increased specialization of labor, with the idea of a vocation as a way of life. Only with the Industrial Age did both economic and political bureaucracy grow sufficiently to enable the state itself to become a large-scale operation with resources to support a segment of society in retirement, beginning with English civil service workers in 1810 (Atchley, 1980).

Assembly line production and automation made the production of goods more efficient, so that fewer people were required to create greater

output. In addition, developments in health care over the past century reduced death rates, particularly in infancy, and prolonged life, creating an unprecedented pool of older people in the population. Finally, increased urbanization, individual mobility, and the wage system combined to change the traditional role of family and community, giving individualism more weight in the relationship between the person and society (Atchley, 1980). Government bureaucracy grew to become the political counterpart of the economic corporation, and mechanisms for control of the flow of labor were introduced and spread throughout society.

The primary purpose of institutionalized retirement was--and is--to regulate the numbers of people in the workforce (Atchley, 1980). The growth of corporate and economic bureaucracy, combined with increased urbanization and individual mobility, set the stage for the concept of retirement to evolve from being primarily for those physically unable to work to being viewed as an institutionalized right for support in old age partly as a reward for past service and partly as a result of deferred income during employment years (Atchley, 1980). For example, a study by Ash (1966) demonstrated a substantial shift among American steelworkers' perceptions of retirement during the 1950s. In 1951, the majority said that retirement was justified only for individuals physically unable to continue working. By 1960, the majority of steelworkers reported that retirement was justified based on prior years of service on the job.

In this country, retirement was sold to the public in the early 1900s as a means of supporting those physically unable to hold a job (Atchley, 1980). However, this linkage of retirement to physical inability also

fostered a linkage between retirement and functional old age and incapacity for employment. Thus, when 65 was set as the standard retirement age, the public also inferred that 65 meant old age and feebleness. In turn, this notion was used as justification for the creation of mandatory retirement programs (Atchley, 1980). The linkage of retirement to the incapacity of old age has its basis in governmental policy, not in scientific research demonstrating that those 65 and older are, in fact, generally incapable of meaningful physical or intellectual employment.

The effects of this are twofold: retirement has become so entrenched in American society that virtually all workers consider it an inevitable milestone in their progression through life and a career, and retirement marks the beginning of old age and an assumed loss of personal and professional productivity. As the so-called baby-boom generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) ages and enters their retirement years, however, these traditional notions have been challenged. Recent best-selling books about middle- and old age encourage readers to look forward to and savor their later years (Friedan, 1993; Sheehy, 1993).

This trend is reflected in scholarly work as well as in the popular press. Studies of subjective age identity, the aspect of the self that has been most thoroughly researched by gerontologists, have produced findings that contradict the media's neglect and pejorative portrayal of older Americans. Subjective age identity generally refers to "how a person feels in regard to age, his or her self-orientation within the limits set by his or her own social situation and experience, and the limits of his or her physiological condition" (Peters, 1971, p. 70).

In most research, age identity is established by asking respondents whether the word "young," "middle-aged," or "old" (or "elderly") best describes them. As Cutler (1982) noted, this assessment is strictly descriptive; it carries no evaluative weight, nor does it strictly reflect chronological age. Instead, it provides information about the meanings an individual assigns to growing older.

For many, retirement and subsequent decrease in everyday activities, represents entry into "old age" (Cutler, 1982). Those who have unfinished agendas at work, have high job satisfaction, do not perceive themselves as financially secure, and experience good health are the least likely to view retirement as a positive experience and to identify themselves as "old" (Karp, 1989). On the other hand, those who hold part-time jobs or are active in volunteer and other activities following retirement are much less likely to view themselves as "old," or suffer from depression or other emotional problems (Duncan & Whitney, 1990). Indeed, an active post-retirement life contributes to greater general health and longevity (Palamore & Luikart, 1972).

Reminiscence and Old Age

The transition into retirement often is a catalyst for reminiscence, or life review, as one enters the final stage of adulthood (Marshall, 1980). During the past decade life review has come to be recognized by gerontologists as a positive, healthy tendency that probably serves as a way of coping with one's mortality. (However, Marshall [1980] states that elderly people who have undergone a life review are also much more

likely to have ambitions for the future.) Generally, older people want to make the story a "good" one, not necessarily one of success, fame, and fortune, but one in which meaning is formed and unresolved issues are brought to closure. Marshall (1980, p. 132) refers to this process as the "legitimation of biography."

The construction of an autobiography is a selective process guided by some basic cognitive processes (Greenwald, 1980). First, there is a tendency to be self-focused, viewing the past as a play in which the self was the leading player (Greenwald, 1980). Second, there is a tendency to be "self-aggrandizing," to shape recollection to make one's self look good whenever possible. People perceive themselves as responsible for their good fortune, but shift blame for failure onto other people or situations (Greenwald, 1980, p. 181). In addition, situations of success are recalled much more often and clearly than situations of failure. Third, people tend to be "self justifying" historians in that they try to preserve and confirm that which is already accepted and established, and disavow any conflicting information (Greenwald, 1980, p. 187).

In addition, the past becomes rosier as more time goes by. Field (1980), for example, analyzed data collected over 40 years and found that reports of childhood happiness became more positive as more time passed. This change occurred regardless of sex, age, education, occupation, or intelligence (Field, 1980).

For the purposes of this study, it is important to remember that Hyland & Ackerman (1988) differentiated between self-reported reminiscence that arises spontaneously as an internal dialogue, and autobiographical memory that is prompted by someone else. Both

involve voluntary recall of personal experiences, but those which arise spontaneously act as acknowledgment of and preparation for death, while those prompted by an external cue "might have no functional value for the individual except compliance with the request of the experimenter" (Hyland & Ackerman, 1988, p. 39).

Implications for This Study

It appears as if college and post-retirement old age are similar life-changing transitions, and alumni professionals can use these similarities to encourage financial and other support among older alumni. Whereas college graduates leave campus to embark on new social and professional lives, recent retirees also face many opportunities for growth and change. Alumni directors can couple whatever anxiety recent retirees might feel about their new-found freedom with their tendency toward reminiscing to establish links within the university. Retirees' expertise can be put to good use at the same time that nostalgia can be generated to show how the "torch" has been passed to younger generations. Given that members of the baby-boom generation are approaching retirement age, alumni directors would benefit from a thorough understanding of the transitions that occur later in life.

Summary of Chapter II

The foundation for modern philanthropy was laid during the earliest days of recorded history, generally as systematic Jewish and Christian practices of collecting alms for the poor. As Western society became

increasingly industrial, secular, and urban during the late eighteenth century, charitable efforts also were undertaken by the government, as in the Poor Laws adopted in England in 1601.

Philanthropy in the United States has much in common with its British predecessor, yet from the beginning has been characterized by a uniquely American blend of Christianity, emphasis on individual effort and reward, and mutual cooperation to create and oversee institutions relegated to governmental control in other nations. Thus, the churches, libraries, schools and hospitals that in many countries are inseparable from governmental influence often originated entirely as a result of voluntary philanthropic initiative in the United States.

American higher education owes much to philanthropy; indeed, such venerable institutions as Harvard, Yale, William and Mary and Columbia owe their very existence to the generosity and vision of individuals. As American higher education matured and grew increasingly sophisticated, individual institutions created development and fundraising offices and alumni programs to solicit charitable donations from wealthy individuals, corporations, and graduates. Historically, alumni programs have been held in less esteem than development programs, which typically generate more and larger contributions from a broader constituent base. In addition, public institutions typically have not been as aggressive as their private counterparts in soliciting alumni donations.

In recent years, economic, political and demographic factors have made alumni support of public institutions increasingly crucial. However, institutional advancement as a profession is less than 50 years old, and relatively little research has been conducted to determine the

factors that contribute to such support. Most of the research conducted so far has analyzed the quantitative and comparative aspects of alumni support among colleges and universities, but has not explored the attitudes and beliefs that generated this support.

Texas A&M University enjoys tremendous support from its former students. In 1993, Texas A&M ranked eleventh in the nation for alumni support--and seventh nationally among public universities--with contributions of $29,162,142. Those who graduated 50 or more years ago contributed more, both in total dollar amounts and in percentages of class members, than the alumni body as a whole. However, Texas A&M has changed drastically during the past half-century, transforming from a small, all-male, military college emphasizing practical vocational training in agriculture and engineering, to a top ten research university with 43,000 students. This research seeks to discover why these alumni remain so loyal to an institution that has changed so dramatically.

Inquiries such as this benefit from a review of the literature on aging and life transitions. Generally, the transition into retirement has marked the beginning of old age, and the elderly are depicted in the media and elsewhere as slow, feeble and unproductive. Gerontological research and the views of the elderly themselves, however, often do not support this assessment. Continued activity, whether employment or volunteer work, can alleviate feelings of helplessness and contribute to a satisfying and healthy old age. From a fundraising point of view, it makes sense to actively solicit the opinions and actions of this group of alumni, because they generally have more time and financial resources to contribute. In addition, a "life review" process generally takes place at this point.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Freshmen often arrive on a college campus "eager, enthusiastic, and serious" about the academic and intellectual experiences they anticipate (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969, p. 89). However, longitudinal studies reveal that by the time they graduate, a larger percentage of seniors feel that their greatest satisfaction had come from "other sources" (primarily interpersonal activities and personal growth) than from their academic pursuits (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969, p. 89). These intangible, difficult-to-quantify factors contribute to support of an institution following graduation.

As Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) acknowledge, "the relationship [between alumnus and institution] goes beyond simple financial support and often enters the realm of the emotional. Alma maters frequently use the words *loyal, faithful, love,* and *giving* in musically describing one's presumed lifetime bond to an undergraduate college or university" (p. 1).

Ironically, Perry (1951, p. v), recognized this when he dedicated his 75th-year anniversary history of Texas A&M--an attempt to uncover the institution's historical "reality"--to

> something that never wholly existed in fact: the A. and M. that is remembered by its students. To them this college has meant living experience, an intimate time of life, a place where comradeship was found, work was done, and where the foliage of the imagination flowered now by day, now by night, a time and place where food tasted a certain way, where one read or wrote love letters, feared examinations, or felt now and again that high

> excitement which comes from the convictions that one's life is maturing in a sane and positive direction. All these are in a sense secret things, emotions that have had one cast and hue in one person's heart and may well have been different to all others.

This recognition of the vagaries of the Texas A&M experience has continued into the present. Henry Dethloff, a professor who chronicled Texas A&M's history in three books commissioned for the university's centennial in 1976, wrote, "I never met a non-committal Aggie or one who had no opinion about any given aspect of Texas A&M. . . . [But] what it means to be an Aggie, it must confess, I never fully understood. It does in part, I know, involve a very deep love, loyalty and affection for the institution" (Dethloff, 1975).

Alumni support can be quantified in terms of dollar amounts and hours of time contributed. However, those data are made more meaningful when included with a greater contextual understanding of the individual "cast and hue" that led to such collective "love, loyalty and affection." Thus, this study is best served under the naturalistic paradigm.

Using Naturalistic Inquiry

The naturalistic paradigm of inquiry was used to gather and analyze data. The naturalistic method was chosen because, as Merriam (1988, p. 6) states, "the selection of a particular design is determined by how the problem is shaped, by the questions it raises, and by the type of end product desired." The decision to use a constructivist framework was based on the contradicting philosophies guiding logical positivism and constructivism.

Logical positivism, under which inquiry traditionally has been conducted in the "hard" sciences, is based largely on the hypothetico-deductive model of scientific method. This model embraces the hallowed scientific notions of generalizability, objectivity, and validity. Embedded in these concepts, however, are several assumptions that long remained unchallenged.

First is the assumption that "truth" is singular, readily ascertained by like-minded inquirers who travel along the lone correct path of discovery. Correct application of the scientific method invariably will lead inquirers to the "ultimate conclusion." Second, "truth" is permanent, an external manifestation that can be ferreted out through experiments that handily delete "irrelevant" influences. (In the social sciences, these often include language and culture.) Third, "truth" is an all-or-nothing proposition independent of humanity. Human endeavors such as the formulation of opinion, values, and thought are irrational, cannot be externally tested, and thus cannot be trusted.

These assumptions undergird the "hard" sciences and are largely responsible for the tremendous advances in medicine, physics, engineering, and related pursuits over the past half century. Indeed, without this faith in a static world in which external causal variables can be isolated and manipulated, modern understanding of the physical world would be random and fragmented.

These assumptions do not translate as efficiently into the social sciences, however. The confused belief that "science" is a singular enterprise with a single technique has stalled scientific understanding of the social sciences.

Ultimately, the issue rests in two diverse views of science. The first, which applies to the physical sciences, holds that the function of science is to

> establish general laws covering the behaviors of the empirical events or objects with which the science in question is concerned, and thereby to enable us to connect together our knowledge of the separately unknown events, and to make reliable predictions of events as yet unknown (Brathwaite, 1953, p. 1).

The second, applicable to the social sciences, states that science is a discipline or activity "aimed at improving things, at making progress" (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 8). Understanding, not generalization, is the central goal of this study, and one of qualitative inquiry's "important procedural principles" (Conrad, 1992, p. 169). While alumni support of Texas A&M can be quantified in terms of total dollar amounts given and the benefits these donations make possible, such a study cannot capture the human element that propels such support. The real problem in this study must be shaped in terms of affective, emotional terms such as pride, loyalty, and involvement. As Conrad (1992, p. 179) notes, "the essence of understanding is more enticing to the researcher than *post hoc* explanations or conclusions."

These concepts best can be understood through a holistic research approach that takes into consideration the complexities of the college experience, personal and professional developments in the years following graduation, the adaptations required by retirement and old age, and the impulse to contribute to one's alma mater. Because these experiences are subject to the vagaries of the human condition, they

require the use of a methodology that "automatically assumes the existence of multiple realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 73).

The naturalistic (or constructivist) paradigm subsumes five axioms or assumptions inherent in this study. First is the axiom that "there are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). Texas A&M signifies a shared construction far more meaningful than simply the bricks and mortar that comprise its buildings. To understand 60 or more years of life through which an institution has been deemed worthy of financial and other support requires a methodology that acknowledges subtlety, depth of meaning and a consideration that meaning can change over time.

The second axiom states that the researcher and the researched interact with and influence each other (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researcher necessarily must influence the respondents; merely expressing an interest in an alumnus's opinions and behavior creates an interaction that influences the study's outcomes.

The third axiom rejects the possibility of generalization, stating that "only time- and context-bound *working hypotheses* are possible" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). Indeed, the experiences of alumni whose shared construction is a single university cannot be translated as representative of all alumni experiences. While some of the research findings may be transferable to other similar institutions, that determination is not incumbent on the original researcher, but rather on the individual who later seeks to apply the findings in a different context. (Of course, a later application of the finding is dependent on the inclusion of thick description and the overall quality of the original case study.)

The fourth axiom concerns the relationship of knower to known, and assumes that "all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). Temporal proximity cannot always be assumed to signify cause-and-effect relationships, especially when respondents are asked to describe actions and opinions that span more than a half-century.

Finally--and perhaps most important for the purposes of this study--is the axiom that "inquiry is value-bound" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). The philanthropic gestures of Texas A&M's oldest group of alumni cannot be plucked from the "real" world, shorn of nuance and reduced to a number with a standardized, nontemporal meaning. Indeed, a large part of this study will be dedicated to understanding the value systems that guide alumni behavior, making "value-free" inquiry not only impossible, but wholly undesirable as well.

Lincoln and Guba call the paradigm that calls for interaction, not isolation, among players, "constructivism" (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Constructions are created

> through the interaction of a constructor with information, context, settings, situations, and other constructors (not all of whom agree), using a process that is rooted in the previous experience, belief system, values, fears, prejudices, hopes, disappointments, and achievements of the constructor. To fall back on the terminology of the philosophy of science, constructions come about by the virtue of the interaction of the knower with the already known and the still-knowable or to-be-known. (p. 143)

In contrast, the conventional positivist view considers reality as independent of the observer's interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The single reality, free from human bias and founded on cause-and-effect

relationships, is sought. Behavioral scientists who espouse the conventional paradigm manipulate players or their environments in an attempt to uncover this "universal" manifestation of reality.

Research Design

Instrumentation

The investigator was the primary data-gathering instrument, in accordance with the constructivist methodology that states, "the researcher, by necessity, engages in a dialectic and responsive process with the subjects under study" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 44-45). The researcher entered the inquiry as a learner on par with the players she interviewed and observed. Like them, she initially lacked constructions of the salient considerations regarding alumni support. Flexibility and training in constructivist research allowed the researcher to adjust to the respondents' varied and numerous realities, evaluate the interactions, consider respondents' tacit values and beliefs, and guide the study as it took shape.

The researcher received a B.A. degree in English from Hendrix College in 1984 and a M.Ed. in higher education administration from Texas A&M University in 1988. She has worked as a typesetter, journalist, editor, and marketing coordinator. In addition, from 1984-86 she was a class programs coordinator with Texas A&M's Association of Former Students, and thus is at least somewhat familiar with the staff members and programs of the alumni association under consideration in this

study. Her three primary contacts at the alumni association also were employees there when the researcher worked there from 1984-86.

In addition, the researcher has personal ties to Texas A&M. Nine members of her immediate family are graduates of Texas A&M, including her grandfather, who received a degree in 1923 and for many years was a class agent heavily involved with alumni association activities. The researcher lived in College Station from 1962 to 1976 and again from 1984 to 1994, and thus has witnessed first-hand many of the tremendous changes in the landscape and mission of the university.

Sites, Respondents, and Sampling

Texas A&M's Association of Former Students was a primary site for observing the institutionalized, formal aspects of alumni relations. The researcher gained initial entree with Texas A&M's alumni association, the Association of Former Students, during July 1993, when she discussed possible dissertation research topics with the two associate executive directors. In September 1993 she summarized this particular project in a four-page memo to the two associate executive directors and the class programs coordinator, who oversees reunions.

Entree and rapport were aided by the fact that the researcher had worked in the class programs division from 1984-86 and was familiar with the personalities and interests of the staff members involved and with the basic day-to-day operations of each office. Each of the staff members had worked in similar capacities when the researcher was employed by the association. Thus, the problems encountered in the "bit of bargaining and the negotiation of some . . . role" generally required in establishing trust

and access were considerably lessened (Crowson, 1992, p. 184). Initial communication generally dealt with the nature and purpose of qualitative research and the benefit of this study to the alumni association, not the establishment of trust itself. The overall sentiment echoed that of one staff member who remarked, "I don't know what you're out to prove when the numbers speak for themselves, but we'll help you out with whatever you need."

One kind of sampling was criterion-based (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Initial respondents were those who, through financial and other means, voluntarily expressed support for Texas A&M. Data were gathered initially through letters to the Sul Ross class agents (elected representatives from each class who gather and distribute news from their classmates) informing them of the study and asking for their participation. Letters also were sent to the three Sul Ross officers who coordinated the March 1994 reunion. Class agents and Sul Ross officers were those listed in the March 1993 issue of *The Texas Aggie* magazine.

Purposive sampling also was used to identify older alumni supportive of Texas A&M. Respondents from among the class agents and Sul Ross officers were interviewed and asked to suggest other potential respondents, thus creating a loop of purposive sampling that identified participants who otherwise might have been overlooked (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Introducing the Study to Respondents

Initial groundwork was begun in July 1993 when the researcher interviewed staff members of the Association of Former Students

(specifically, the two associate executive directors and the class programs director) regarding possible dissertation topics. Without knowing the specific nature of the research, the researcher explained the basic premises of constructivism, the use of observations and interviews, and the relevance to scholarship in alumni affairs. Memoranda explaining the purpose of each meeting and, later, action steps agreed upon during each meeting, were sent to the appropriate staff members to provide a paper trail of action and a thorough explanation of the process.

Letters were mailed to the Sul Ross class agents on November 22, 1993. This and all other correspondence can be found in the appendix. During the week of November 29, 1993, the researcher telephoned these class agents to solicit their participation and to arrange preliminary interview schedules.

Developing Interview Questions

Prior to each interview the researcher considered questions that might provide insight into the topic, but only the most general "grand tour" questions were framed. Each participant was asked slightly different questions, as appropriate. The questions fit into several broad categories: 1) the respondent's background; 2) the respondent's conception of Texas A&M; 3) ways the respondent has demonstrated support and loyalty to Texas A&M; 4) what needs the respondent is meeting through involvement with Texas A&M; 5) informal roles the respondents fill on behalf of Texas A&M (such as informal recruiters of students); 6) how support for Texas A&M among these respondents might differ from their

support of other charitable causes, and; 7) ways of increasing support among older alumni.

Data Collection

Interviews

Data came from three sources: interviews with respondents; observation of participants at reunions; and analysis of records and documents. Interviewing proved to be a superior data gathering technique because of its flexibility; the opportunity to observe nonverbal behavior; inquirer control over the direction of questioning; spontaneity of participant; and completeness of information gathered (for example, respondents can grant additional interviews if subsequent data indicates gaps or omissions); investigator control over length of interview and other conditions; and greater complexity of questions and their interrelatedness (Bailey, 1978). In addition, because interviews provide personal, one-on-one contact, they might have been less intimidating to these elderly respondents than traditional positivist data collection tools.

Relatively unstructured interviews elicited responses that were most likely to identify the respondents' true thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences involving Texas A&M. The researcher relied on her tacit knowledge of Texas A&M, the alumni association, and the respondents to establish levels of comfort and trust. Each interview ended with an informal member check in which the participant was asked to verify, amend, and extend the constructions, reconstructions and speculations offered.

The interviews were conducted from late November, 1993, until mid-March, 1994. Twelve took place in Bryan-College Station, a popular retirement spot for former students. Seven interviews were conducted in three cities across the state. Most interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes or offices or at the Sul Ross reunion (held at the College Station Hilton). One interview was held in the Clayton Williams, Jr., Alumni Center and one was held at a church where the respondent and his wife do extensive volunteer work. Most interviews lasted an hour and a half, although two lasted more than two hours. The respondents' advanced age, and in some cases physical frailties, often caused them to become fatigued after about 90 minutes, so the interview was terminated under guidelines provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985). At the close of each interview, the researcher shared with participants a brief summary of the major emergent themes. In cases where additional time seemed warranted, appointments were made for future interviews. The researcher mailed a formal letter of thanks following each session. Respondents who lived out of town also received Texas A&M coffee mugs as a token of appreciation.

Interview data were recorded in a stenographer's spiral notebook. Later--usually before the next interview--the contents were typed into a computer file and printed for unitizing on 3 x 5 index cards. The data in the notebooks were coded to record the source, route, and date of acquisition. Noteworthy quotes (such as those that seemed to suggest further areas of inquiry in the future interviews) were highlighted, as were key phrases, the interviewer's immediate reactions, and information about the environment (Spradley, 1980).

Data were recorded exclusively through note-taking. Electronic recording devices were not used out of the fear that such equipment might intimidate respondents. In addition, electronic recorders and cassette tapes are subject to a variety of potential problems that might jeopardize the transcribing process.

Informed consent was obtained prior to or shortly after each interview. The consent form contained information specifying: 1) the study's purpose; 2) intent and measures taken to ensure confidentiality; 3) specification of voluntary participation; 4) notice of the right to withdraw from participation at any time; 5) agreement to allow quotation without attribution, and; 6) permission to contact later if additional clarification or information were needed (see appendix).

Participant and Unobtrusive Observations

Formal and informal class reunions provided the primary context of observation. As in most cases, participant observations in this study were "more incident and opportunistic . . . than long-term and structured" (Conrad, 1992, p. 185). The researcher observed each planning meeting for the Sul Ross reunion, several informal "mini-reunions" and the Sul Ross reunion. The specific information gleaned from one-on-one interviews could be put into context and verified (or discredited) through observations. However, because there was no other linkage among the respondents other than their support of Texas A&M (for example, they did not work together in the same organization), the opportunities for reaching conclusions based on observations alone were minimal.

Observations of nonverbal communication during unobtrusive observations were valuable in suggesting relationships and social hierarchies that could not be ascertained from interviews alone. The three dimensions of nonverbal communication most closely observed were kinesics, paralinguistics, and proxemics. Kinesics includes body movements, facial expressions, eye movement, and posture (Knapp, 1972). Paralinguistics describes vocal characteristics such as pitch and speed of speech, enunciation, use of pauses and silences, speech errors, and rhythm (Cathcast & Samovar, 1974). Proxemics, the use of social and personal space, takes into account room size, seating arrangements, and proximity to others in the room (Hall, 1966). Nonverbal factors supplemented information gathered through interviews.

Records and Documents

Alumni association publications (*The Texas Aggie* magazine, class newsletters and brochures), internal documents (memoranda, job descriptions and departmental goal statements), and university publications (yearbooks and annual reports from the 1930s) also provided data. In addition, books chronicling the history of Texas A&M and the Association of Former Students were used to provide a broad context.

Documents such as these were vital in formulating a conceptual sense of the organization, its staff members, and its past, present, and future. However, this research was not controversial and there was unlikely to be any secret documentation among the alumni association staff members that could shed any light on the issue of support by these older alumni. Therefore, documentation in this research assumed the

role of a formal record (as in the publication of dollar amounts given by class) or clarification (such as found in the histories). Documents provided much-needed information, but were secondary to interviews in both quality and quantity of data. See Appendix A for a complete listing of documents used.

Researcher Reflexivity

Reflexivity allows the investigator to become aware of and articulate to the audience the underlying epistemological assumptions that undergirded the formulation of methodological considerations and findings. In this way the issue of bias can be addressed and incorporated into the overall study.

The researcher kept a reflexive journal describing in great detail her experiences during this research project, and a methodological log. These tools were kept throughout the research to help ensure trustworthiness. Specifically, the journal included a daily schedule and record of logistics (when, where, and with whom interviews and observations were conducted), the elaboration of personal values, beliefs, frustrations, joys and speculations that emerged as greater insight was gained, and rationales and decisions for using the chosen methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Peer Debriefing

Two peer debriefers, both doctoral students in the process of writing their dissertations, were selected. They already had agreed to act as each other's peer debriefer, and had begun consultations nearly a year before

this research project was begun. When the three collaborated on a research project that dealt with the graduate experience and the constructivist paradigm, this researcher was included, and the group became a trio of peer debriefers. Each peer debriefer was familiar with Texas A&M and had at least cursory knowledge of alumni association programs.

The researcher met with her two peer debriefers following each interview, observation, or discovery of documentation. Most debriefing sessions involved conversations, discussions, and question-and-answer periods, but documentation was provided as occasionally requested to substantiate the topic of discussion. The topic of discussion, the debriefers' "hunches" about the meaning of developments as the study progressed, and issues for further study uncovered during the sessions were recorded in the investigator's journal.

The formal act of peer debriefing was facilitated by the deep friendships that already had developed among the three women during the course of their full-time graduate work. One of the women had begun a year earlier than the other two, and subsequently graduated earlier. The other two acted as her peer debriefer and auditor as they began their own dissertations in earnest. The benefits of this initial collaboration became the topic of a research paper they co-presented at a national education conference in April, 1994. The weaving together of professional and research interests with personal interests--meeting for lunch, attending social functions together, sharing confidences and insights into the drudgery and elation of full-time doctoral work--was one of this researcher's most cherished memories of graduate school.

Assurance of Confidentiality

This research sought to uncover processes of perceptions and experiences that shaped the respondents' involvement in the life of Texas A&M. Very little of the information disclosed was sensitive, controversial, or difficult to obtain. Still, participant anonymity was important in assuring that information was freely given. Participants were guaranteed that the specific source of responses would be held in strictest confidence as stipulated under the Helsinki Recommendations for Research Involving Human Subjects (Texas A&M Office of Graduate Studies).

In compliance with the consent form signed by each respondent (see appendix), the researcher followed the following standards to assure confidentiality: 1) identification of all participants through a number code; 2) handwritten notes, rather than electronic devices, used to record interviews; 3) original field notes stored in a locked filing cabinet and not viewed by anyone except the researcher; 4) omission of identifying descriptions or details of participants; and 5) omission of details that could attribute quotations to specific individuals. The original interview notes were stored in a locked filing cabinet and accessible only to the researcher.

Member Checks

Member checks, in which data were clarified, amended, expanded, and confirmed, were conducted after all the interview data had been transcribed from the handwritten notepads to computer files. All interview data, including direct quotes, data regarding the environment,

and the researcher's comments or thoughts on items for future reference, were transcribed. The computer files were formatted to accommodate 3 x 5 index cards when printed. Information gathered during interviews with Sul Ross reunion coordinators and class agents, both facts (dates and places) and perceptions (feelings and beliefs) was checked with the interviewees to assure the data were correct.

Audit Trail

Each peer debriefer conducted a research audit with a process and purpose similar to a financial audit. Specifically, the audit trail was created through the peer debriefers' examination of the following: 1) raw data (second-generation interview notes, reflexive journal, and methodological log); 2) data reduction and analysis procedures (method for unitizing data); 3) data categorization and analysis techniques (the structure of categories, themes, and patterns) and; 4) external materials or documents that support or clarify findings.

Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis process was cyclical and dynamic, and helped uncover the emerging research design. In addition, it provided a more focused framework for analyzing findings. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method for discovering theory from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), through three steps: member checks, unitizing data, and categorizing and elaborating on patterns (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Unitizing Data

Unitizing data is the crucial step in transforming interview notes into manageable chunks of information so that patterns can be established. First, interview notes were transcribed from their handwritten original source onto computer files. Second, the files were formatted so they could be affixed to 3 x 5 index cards when printed. Third, the notes were broken into "units" of data, or the smallest fragment of information from which meaning can be obtained. Fourth, the notes, still on computer files for convenience, were numbered and coded by source of information, site, respondent, and date, then printed and affixed to 3 x 5 index cards. Approximately 863 cards, or units of data, were created in this process.

Coding

All information unitized on index cards was coded to ensure confidentiality but provide an appropriate trail for locating the original source. Each card received a numerical code that enabled the researcher, as the only one with access to the original notes, to locate the original source. As stipulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the code directed the researcher to information source, type of respondent, interview site, and collection episode (first, second, or third interview, and so on).

Categorizing and Discovering Patterns

The second step in the constant comparative method leads to the establishment of patterns among the unitized data. The process unfolds in several steps: the researcher selects the first index card, studies it, and places it into a pile to be created using cards with similar data, thus

forming categories. The researcher selects the second card, studies it, and either places it with the first card, if it contains similar relevant information, or starts a new stack. Eventually, each card is analyzed so that piles of similar information are created. Miscellaneous cards that do not appear related to any category are put in a separate stack. The process is repeated several times until the researcher is confident that all patterns have been uncovered.

Stacks that contained at least ten cards were examined and a category for them was created. A propositional statement was identified to characterize the properties that linked them and combined into a decision rule. The rule, or predominant linking characteristic, was written on a separate card and put on the top of the stack for identification. Each card in the stack then was analyzed under the decision rule to determine continued inclusion or exclusion from the stack. If a card's continued inclusion could not be justified, it was placed either in the miscellaneous stack of cards or was used to begin a new category. These steps were repeated until each card was processed.

Each category set was reviewed until all cards were used. During this step the miscellaneous cards were categorized, set aside or discarded (if irrelevant). Finally, categories were compared so that possible linkages between them could be found.

What follows is an example of the process, using a data card picked at random from the completed categories. This card reads:

> 508
> **3-4-94. Office. 5.2**
> "Drowning out" was what they called it when they'd dump a bucket of cold water on someone who was asleep. In my senior year we lived in the basement of Milner. The president of Sun Oil was in

> town and stayed in our dorm. Sure enough, that night the juniors had a drowning out spree. I don't know if they got the president of Sun, but there was plenty of commotion and ruckus surrounding it. I was the junior officer so on Monday morning I got fussed out. It didn't seem to matter--some boys still got hired by Sun Oil.

The code indicates that this is card number **508** (out of 863); **3-4-94** means that the interview occurred on March 4, 1994; **Office** means that the interview occurred at the respondent's place of work; and **5.2** means that this is the fifth respondent interviewed, and the second time he was interviewed.

The card initially was added to the stack of cards broadly categorized as "Student Life," because it describes an event that took place while the respondent was a student at Texas A&M. As the categories were more narrowly defined, it became part of the stack called "Student Hazing/Pranks." In addition, because I later realized that the card contained more than one unit of data, I noted that it also should be included in the "Professional Network" category (containing all cards that related both to Texas A&M and getting a job) and the general "Student Life" category, because he mentioned his role as junior officer in the Corps of Cadets. (Only about 15 cards were too broadly unitized overall.)

An example of a card in the "Miscellaneous" pile is 646. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1:

> When I was the band president, [then Texas A&M President] Rudder got enough money from the state to build a new mess hall. He requested enough extra money to get the new band hall built, too.

The final 25 categories were (from most cards to least): student life (general) (69 cards); professional life; post-graduate involvement with Texas A&M; student hazing/pranks; Texas A&M today; Sul Ross meeting (organizational meeting); student life: influence of professors, majors and courses, academics; Aggie spirit/camaraderie/networking; Why A&M? (why chosen over other colleges or no college at all); Great Depression and effects of poverty; changes at Texas A&M; World War II; family life (adulthood); family life (childhood); student life: physical environment; student life: socializing, recreation, student organizations, sports; student life: travel and transportation; being class agent (opinions); children; aging and retirement; how became class agent; current problems at Texas A&M; loyalty defined; other civic, recreational and charitable involvement and; miscellaneous (19 cards).

Identifying Themes

The researcher, based on her experiences and the contributions of the peer debriefers, identified relevant themes and patterns uncovered during the unitizing process.

The researcher then wrote a preliminary report based on her findings and distributed it to members of her doctoral committee. As described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the report contained the following: 1) an explication of the problem under study; 2) a thorough description of the context or setting within which the inquiry took place and with which the inquiry was concerned; 3) a thorough description of the relevant transactions and processes observed in that context; 4) a discussion of the saliencies identified with the site (elements identified as important and

studied in depth); and 5) a discussion of outcomes, which most usefully might be described as "lessons to be learned" from the study (pp. 362-363).

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Ensuring trustworthiness is crucial to the constructivist research process. Indeed, the perceived lack of trustworthiness by practitioners of other paradigms is perhaps constructivism's most stinging criticism (Crowson, 1992, p. 179). Trustworthiness covers all areas ultimately brought to bear on the study's integrity: its truth value, plausibility, rigorousness of design and method, and the credibility of both data and researcher. The four trustworthiness criteria used in constructivist research were operationalized: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility, which corresponds to the positivistic notion of internal validity, assesses the "truth value" of an inquiry. Several techniques for this assessment were incorporated into the study: activities that increase the probability of producing credible findings; activities that provide an external check on the inquiry process; and activities providing for the direct test of findings and interpretations with the human resources generating them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301).

First, the researcher conducted prolonged interviews and observations to increase the probability of producing credible findings. Although each interview lasted about an hour, many respondents were

interviewed several times until the information seemed complete and all major questions were answered. Interviewing on more than one day allowed the researcher to account for changes in mood and disposition that might affect the nature of the data given and allowed for the construction of complex multiple perceptions by each respondent. Observations of class reunions, where the participants interacted among themselves and most directly confronted the issue of their support of Texas A&M, allowed the researcher to create a context and focus for the data gathered in interviews.

Second, peer debriefing provided an external check of the inquiry process. The two peer debriefers created a structured process by which the researcher could discover and address her own biases, explore meaningful findings, clarify her interpretations as they emerged from data, and discuss possible future direction. Peer debriefing sessions were built into a process of collaboration established in support of another research project the three had generated. Each session was allotted to one of the three researchers, with the other two acting as peer debriefers. This helped meet the debriefing needs of each researcher.

Third, member checks provided the best test of findings and interpretations because they looped directly back to the original data sources. Each respondent was given the opportunity to review the data gathered following each interview. This gave participants a chance to provide additional information or amend or clarify information already provided. Conversely, the process allowed the researcher a process for confirming her emerging constructions of the realities influencing the respondents' support of Texas A&M.

Fourth, triangulation, or the use of "multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories" was used throughout the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305). The fundamental premise of triangulation is that "somehow the weaknesses embedded within each single method will be compensated for by the strengths of the other(s)" (Conrad, 1992, p. 189). Information on specific events, practices, and policies that seemed relevant to alumni support was coded and stored for later verification. Each event, incident, or issue thus identified was subject to further investigation and corroboration by at least two additional sources. Each person involved in a specific incident under question was contacted where possible. Alumni association documents provided additional perspective of historical events, formal organizational response or stance, and ramifications of incidents. In all cases, information that seemed unlikely or in any way questionable was verified by at least two independent sources.

Transferability

Transferability, which corresponds to the positivistic notion of external validity or generalizability, is an avenue through which the researcher forms working hypotheses that may be applicable in other settings if the "fit" between settings is appropriate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The constructivist paradigm holds that truth statements are context bound and thus cannot be shifted indiscriminately from one context to another.

To determine the degree of "fit" between settings, the investigator provided "thick description" surrounding each interview and

observation so that future researchers can ascertain transferability among contexts. "Thick description," a trademark of constructivist case studies, was created for each interview and site observation. Descriptive information included the detection of any personal biases, interpersonal relationships, possible influences created by respondents' education, career, family history, and geographic location, and their attitudes, expectations, opinions, and emotions concerning Texas A&M and their involvement with the alumni association. The ultimate determination of transferability rests with future researchers.

Dependability

Dependability, which corresponds to the positivistic notion of reliability, is a process check that helps ensure stability of the findings over time.

The process of this study was guided by the use of two peer debriefers, women who also were doctoral students in the Department of Educational Administration. Their roles as peer debriefers were aided by the friendship that had developed between them and the researcher, and by their familiarity with Texas A&M. Debriefing meetings were held after each interview, observation, or discovery of documentation. Most debriefing sessions involved conversations, discussions, and question-and-answer periods, but documentation was provided as occasionally requested to substantiate the topic of discussion. Discussions included not only the study's progress and next steps, but explorations of the researcher's "hunches" or intuitive feelings about the nature of her findings.

Methodological considerations also were discussed with her committee chair and other members when additional expertise was needed.

Confirmability

Confirmability, which corresponds to the positivistic notion of objectivity, is a product check that helps assure that data, interpretations, and findings are grounded in the context from which they came (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that confirmability best is determined through an audit trail similar to a financial audit. The audit trail used in this study allowed the external auditor to examine how data were collected and analyzed and how interpretations and findings were formulated. The auditor had access to the reflexive journal, second-generation interview notes, documents and methodological log. In addition, all documentation was discussed at length to answer any lingering questions or fill remaining gaps. The audit confirmed that the processes used in the inquiry were appropriate for the methodology (see Appendix B).

Another method of assuring confirmability that was incorporated into this study was the process of researcher reflexibility and introspection as described previously. The researcher's reflexive journal documents changes in attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and the process by which constructions were created and molded. In addition, it provides a log of important activities, schedules, and dates that otherwise might have been forgotten with the passage of time.

Summary of Chapter III

In the present research, the temptation remains to seek a single reality, based on the *a priori* assumption that alumni who benefit personally and professionally from their experiences at Texas A&M reward the institution with financial and other support, and similar support among all alumni can be motivated by isolating the factors that "cause" a rewarding collegiate experience. A survey could be distributed to label these causes: teachers who care for their students; involvement in extracurricular activities; a strong sense of community in residence halls and off-campus quarters; and so on. Through statistics, research could be conducted that would satisfy the positivists. However, a fundamental question remains: so what? These categorizations give no insight into the experience of real humans, and how their opinions and beliefs shape their reciprocal relationship with their alma mater. These categorizations are desolate and barren, exercises in triviality, that leave nothing for future researchers. Thus, a contextual, interactive exploration is the most appropriate means of examining this complex relationship.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to answer certain questions in an effort to understand the factors that contribute to institutional commitment among many older alumni of Texas A&M University that seemingly is greater than could be explained by their numbers alone. The questions are:

1. How do these alumni perceive the university and their relationship to it?
2. What is meant by "institutional loyalty?"
3. How is loyalty demonstrated among these older alumni?
4. Has the demonstration of loyalty among these older alumni been constant since graduation, or did an event such as retirement precipitate an increase in support?
5. What needs of these older alumni are being met through their support of the university?
6. What unofficial roles do these older alumni fill on behalf of the university? (For example, some may act as informal recruiters by encouraging their family members and friends to attend the university.)
7. Does support for Texas A&M among these older alumni differ from their support of other organizations and charitable causes?
8. Are there ways of increasing support by the university's older alumni?

Chapter Four will answer these questions individually. A more complex analysis that weaves these answers together to create new theories and insights will be given in Chapter Five (Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations).

Participants

Interviews with 19 class agents and Sul Ross officers in the classes of 1925-39 were conducted between December, 1993, and April, 1994. While the Sul Ross classes technically comprise those who graduated 50 or more years ago, actual induction into Sul Ross status has been staggered since 1986 because the classes became too large to accommodate at the Sul Ross reunion. The Class of '39 was formally inducted at the 1994 Sul Ross reunion, and beginning in 1995, classes will be inducted during their 55th anniversary year. Therefore, members of the classes of 1940-44 were not interviewed because they have not yet participated in the Sul Ross reunion.

Although the total population of class agents and Sul Ross officers as listed in the March 1993 *Texas Aggie* magazine was 30, six of these were dismissed from the very beginning, upon the recommendation of Olive DeLucia of the Association of Former Students, because Alzheimer's or other debilitating physical problems made interviews with them impractical. These six never were contacted. Thus, the population of class agents and Sul Ross officers with whom interviews could be conducted was 24. Of these, three indicated after initial contact that they could not participate because of poor health, and two class agents who

declined to set up interviews after the initial correspondence and three telephone requests to do so were not interviewed. Interviews were conducted with 19 of the 21 class agents (91 percent) who were willing and able to participate. All respondents live within a 300-mile radius of Texas A&M.

The information presented is based on interviews conducted at respondents' homes, offices, the Clayton Williams, Jr., Alumni Center at Texas A&M, or during the Sul Ross reunion. The youngest respondent was 74 years old, and the oldest 89.

Before retirement, respondents held jobs that included bank president, pharmacist, owner of major real estate brokerage firm, personnel director for international Fortune 500 company, agricultural specialist, high school principal, army chief of staff for logistics, investment manager, rancher (two respondents), oil company executive (two respondents), university administrator (two respondents) and owner of an engineering firm (three respondents). At the time of the interviews, several respondents had part-time or full-time jobs as a real estate broker, insurance underwriter, or rancher. Four respondents earned master's degrees, and one earned a Ph.D.

On several occasions, respondents who could not recall details directed me to read *The History of the Great Class of 1934*, written by Haynes Dugan on the occasion of the class's 50th anniversary in 1984. While Dugan is neither a class agent nor a Sul Ross officer, he is well informed about life at Texas A&M during the 1930s, and his writing is used to supplement answers to research questions as appropriate.

Another respondent declined to be interviewed in person because of serious illness. However, he mailed me a copy of a family history he had written as a hobby, which directly answers many of the protocol questions. This information was treated the same as interview data, complete with a member check to ensure it was used in the intended context.

Research Questions

Research Question One:
How do these alumni perceive the university and their relationship with it?

Reasons for Attending Texas A&M

Many of these alumni formed impressions of Texas A&M long before they first set foot on campus. Indeed, their reasons for attending Texas A&M instead of another institution--or no institution at all--indicate that the college during its first half-century had lived up to its land-grant promise and achieved a reputation for providing hard-working but financially struggling young men with a practical education, with the added benefit of leadership training through the Corps of Cadets. Virtually all the respondents cited some combination of Texas A&M's low cost, good reputation, and quality vocational training as their reasons for becoming Aggies.

The most common reason given for attending Texas A&M was its low tuition and fees, especially important to these respondents as the economy collapsed during the Great Depression (for example, 229. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 318. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1; 485. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2; and 620. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1)

The cost was further reduced for some through scholarships, student work programs, and other concessions, such as free laundry service or permission to sell snacks in the dormitories (266. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 543. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1; 750. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2). In addition, while the military aspect of life at Texas A&M may have appealed to some for patriotic or career reasons, at least two respondents had in mind more practical considerations: wearing a uniform every day cut down on clothing expenses (416. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1 and 485. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2).

Interestingly, the "Aggie network" of whole families whose allegiance rested primarily with Texas A&M had taken root even before these alumni were college-age. In fact, one respondent already was a third-generation Aggie by the time he graduated in the late '20s--his grandfather had been a member of the very first class admitted to Texas A&M in 1876, although he left before graduating to pursue a career in law, and his father had studied there but also left before completing a degree. Coincidentally, the respondent's freshman roommate at Texas A&M also was a third-generation Aggie whose grandfather had been a member of the very first class.

Many parents encouraged their sons to attend Texas A&M for practical reasons, such as career training or because they knew its isolation and military discipline seemingly left little temptation for boyish high-jinks. "I enjoyed going to my high school library and looking at annuals from UT," said one respondent, "I'd look at the photos of the athletes and dream about being like them. But I had some relatives who attended UT, and they were very socially active and flunked out. My parents didn't

want me to end up like that so they steered me to A&M" (484. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2).

Another class agent told a story that reflects the work ethic Texas A&M symbolized even before the Depression:

> My dad insisted I come to A&M, even though he was not an Aggie. I said, 'Why A&M?' and he said, 'I've hired many engineers in my day. The Rice graduates always want to do more research before they begin work. The Texas graduates only want to know, 'What am I in charge of and when will I get promoted?' The Aggies just want to know, 'What's the job and when do I start?'" He greatly admired that can-do spirit (653. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

Practical job training that could lead to a good job immediately following graduation was another reason these alumni chose Texas A&M (230. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 364. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 529. 3-10-94. Sul Ross. 13.1; 621. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1). This was especially important in families in which the respondent was the first to earn a college degree (261. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 622. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Still, the decision to attend Texas A&M was surprisingly hit-or-miss for many Aggies of that era. One class agent described sitting around a campfire one night many years ago with several Aggie deer-hunting buddies, reminiscing about how fate had led them to College Station:

> One fellow said his girlfriend's daddy had agreed to finance his way through A&M. Another said [he went to A&M] because he wanted to be a farmer, and one said because he wanted to be an engineer. One fellow, though, said it was all because he got on the wrong train! It was [name] from one of the wealthiest families in all of Mexico. He had come to visit his brother in San Antonio, and thought he was on the train to Austin to go to UT. Instead, his brother had put him on the train to College Station! (709-710. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1)

To these respondents, then, the belief that Texas A&M provided high-quality, low-cost, no-nonsense vocational training shaped their initial perceptions of the college and influenced their decisions to become students there.

Student Life at Texas A&M: Hazing and Pranks

When asked what student life at Texas A&M was like half a century ago, each respondent first mentioned either the hazing they endured as freshmen or the hardships wrought by the primitive facilities and geographic isolation of the campus. The latter will be dealt with in the next section.

This response was typical: "What was it like to be a student then? Hazing! No one knows when it got started, but it was well into place by the time I got here [in early '30s]. If they did the same things now, 75 percent of the freshmen class would leave in the first week!" (365. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1). Another simply wrote, "The hazing: it was for real" (798. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1).

Many respondents were aware of the treatment they could expect as freshmen before they entered Texas A&M, either through the stories of Aggie friends and relatives (702. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1; 740. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2) or through reputation. In fact, one respondent and another incoming freshman spent their first day and a half on campus locked in an out-of-the-way room in Leggett Hall, without food, water, or ventilation during the stifling August heat, trying to "hide from sophomores" (741. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2).

Sophomores were responsible for most of the physical hazing. It was their job to whip lowly freshmen into shape worthy of becoming sophomores, and because they had most recently endured hazing themselves, what resulted was simply a chain of physical punishment that grew by one link with each passing year. Freshmen were hazed simply because they were freshmen, the "lowest form of life," as one respondent said, adding that "upperclassmen constantly impressed us with that fact" (487. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2).

Hazing took many physical forms, from running laps and doing push-ups to the point of exhaustion in the middle of the night, to being paddled at the slightest provocation. While often "brutal" (694. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1) and applied seemingly at random (492. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2), each form of hazing was deeply ingrained into the college's culture, and was accompanied by specific rituals and incantations. Even the paddles had names and were elaborately decorated (702. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

Other less ominous forms of hazing occurred at all times of the day and night, except during "call to quarters" study time each evening (368. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1). These included "calling all upperclassmen 'Mister,' cleaning their rooms for them, waiting for them to get first grabs at the food in the mess hall, and dozens of other little amenities" (796. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). Another remarked, "All [seniors] did was put their clothes on--[freshmen] did everything else for them before we could go to our first class after breakfast every morning" (367. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1).

Often these tasks were approached in a way that created the greatest amount of upheaval. For example, one class agent recalled the demands of his company commander, who went on to become a notable World

War II hero, long-time member of Congress, and the namesake of a prominent campus building:

> He would make freshmen do everything, even pull off his senior boots. We couldn't use a boot jack because it would crush the heel, so we had to use our hands. If there were 30 freshmen and he yelled that he needed his boots taken off, all 30 had to answer the call, and the last one there got the detail. So instead of just disturbing one of us, he'd disturb all of us! We also did his laundry once a week (369. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1).

Sometimes hazing or horseplay was carried out for ostensibly instructional purposes. For example, one class agent told of an occasion when he and another freshman were ordered to steal the door from the room of two sophomores who repeatedly locked their door despite regulations prohibiting this. The freshman and a friend slipped down to the room late one night and took the door off its hinges, but did not carry it very far before they were caught.

As the class agent recalled with a chuckle:

> [T]he night sergeant stopped us and said, 'Where are you going with that?' and we said, 'We were ordered to take this to the Assembly Hall,' and he asked us what our names were, and my buddy said, 'Smith,' and I thought I'd be clever, and I said, 'Jones.' He said, 'Who do you belong to?' and we said, 'Troop D,' and he marched us up to our commanding officer and said, 'Do these boys belong to you?' and our C.O. said, 'I've never seen them before in my life!' It was a while before we lived that one down (704. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

Competition among military units of all ranks also led to a form of hazing. While it did not result in blatant physical injury, as paddling did, this form had significant ramifications nonetheless. Many of these pranks had nicknames and prescribed steps for execution as well.

For example, one popular stunt was "drowning out," or dumping several gallons of cold water on someone who was asleep (508. 3-4-94.

Office. 5.2). One class agent remembered "drowning out" fondly, calling it "one of the more fun [practical jokes] that we did. If you've never been hit in the face with five or ten gallons of water at 2:00 o'clock in the morning when you're dead asleep, you just haven't lived yet!" (807. 11-29-94. Family History. 20.1). Another recalled a time when a "drown out" could have had long-term consequences:

> In my senior year we lived in the basement of Milner. The president of Sun Oil was in town and stayed in our dorm. Sure enough, that night the juniors had a drowning out spree. I don't know if they got the president of Sun, but there was plenty of commotion and ruckus surrounding it. I was the junior officer so on Monday morning I got fussed out. It didn't seem to matter, though--some boys still got hired by Sun Oil (508. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2).

Students erected elaborate barriers to protect themselves from such pranks, but inevitably the pranksters grew more creative as well. In one dorm where the doors and windows were bolted shut against these intrusions, some clever Aggies took a fire hose to the roof and snaked it down the flue where the heater had been removed for the summer and thus "drowned out" the sleeping occupants (810. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). Others rigged a window to make it look secure after they had removed the bolts, then returned at 1:00 a.m. with buckets of water (809 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1).

Some students relied on individual initiative to prevent getting doused. One, for example, always chose the top bunk because "I knew the others couldn't throw water that high. Those beneath me got soaked quite often while they were asleep--that's some way to wake up! Still, I

learned to roll over with my mattress around me real quick" (589. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1).

Other practical jokes involved leaving animals such as ducks or cats in the rooms of students who had left campus for the evening or weekend. One class agent told of some enterprising students who coaxed a donkey in their victim's room:

> The boys managed to open the locked door and shut the donkey up, then jimmy the lights so that when the occupants came in after dark, they would bump into the donkey while trying to get the lights on. When they came in they had had a few beers, and you can imagine the sensation of feeling all of that hair while feeling for the lights! (811. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1).

Several respondents mentioned a particularly elaborate hoax known in Aggie lore as "the band murder," which was perpetrated in the fall of 1932 and aimed at ending a vicious long-term quarrel between a sophomore and a junior who were band officers (see for example, 706. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1). Their mutual animosity reached "almost the point of combat," so the band seniors told the band freshmen that suitable replacement officers would be chosen from their class. As described by a member of the Class of '34,

> This was undertaken in all seriousness. Applications were submitted to the seniors, followed by an impressive hearing at which the applicants were grilled, notes taken and the whole affair took on the aura of a court martial. Two-edged questions of the 'When did you stop beating your wife?' nature, but not so innocent, were put to the applicants, after which the more gullible were chosen for stripes.
>
> The new 'non-coms' [non-commissioned officers] went about their business with alacrity and submitted to . . . a paddling. It was then that the juniors called a meeting of the freshmen and proposed that in the cause of peace and amity, steps should be

> taken to control the bad blood existing between the quarreling sophomore and junior, as well as to ease hazing. The latter suggestion was met with warm approval.
>
> There then burst into the room, covered with blood, the sophomore antagonist who, collapsing in the throes of death on the floor, declared he had been stabbed by his junior opponent. It was a dramatic moment.
>
> In bereavement, the juniors then took up a collection for flowers for the burial of the deceased. As most of the freshmen had no money, checks on the fiscal office were accepted.
>
> Shortly thereafter, Capt. Harry of the military department arrived, accompanied by the sheriff of Brazos County, to conduct a hearing and investigation. The fish [freshmen] sergeants were stripped of their stripes for allowing the murder to occur and the murderer to escape, while the sheriff held that the checks collected for flowers were funds to aid the escapee and he would have to take all of them to jail in Bryan. It might be said that the potential jailees were perturbed.
>
> Whereupon the murdered person, covered with cow blood, revived, an act which went far in relieving tensions and dispensing calm (Dugan, 1984, pp. 52-53).

Some "completely ridiculous" pranks were conducted primarily to relieve the tedium of everyday life (805. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). For example, students would race through a dormitory and steal all the shoes they could find, then tie the laces together and fling them across telephone wires or line the ledge of the Academic Building with them (586. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1). Other students would "mob the trains" that stopped near campus, rushing on board with brooms and sweeping all the trash out in a matter of minutes, startling the train's passengers and crew alike (570. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1). One class agent attributed this silliness

to youthful frivolity and the fact that there was no other entertainment available at the time, "just school and each other" (346. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2).

From the very beginning, according to these respondents, hazing was seen as fulfilling a larger purpose than mere punishment for real and imaginary transgressions (694. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1). Texas A&M students and administrators alike at the time viewed hazing and practical jokes as "an investment" that taught the respect for authority and the law that was necessary in a military career, and thus allowed hazing to continue unchecked despite regulations forbidding it (366. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 740. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2).

As one class agent said, "The authorities made gestures at stopping [hazing] but down deep in their hearts they knew that it was a good thing in a lot of ways" (799. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). This systemic tolerance extended to some respondents' families, even those without first-hand experience of life at Texas A&M. One class agent's mother, initially horrified by the bruises her son revealed while home for Thanksgiving as a freshman, came to accept hazing as a necessary evil and later admonished another mother who complained about her own son's ill treatment (492. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2).

According to these respondents, hazing created a common denominator of experience for incoming freshmen, removing all gradations of family wealth and background. One class agent put it especially well:

> "[Hazing] was truly a leveler. It placed all of us on the same level. And any cockiness that any of us might have had as

> high school seniors was quickly dispelled, when we had to bend over for a little sophomore, maybe 50 pounds lighter than we, and let him apply a 1" x 4" board to our seat, with all the swing that he could muster, then have to straighten up, turn around, shake hands with him and tell him 'Thanks.'" (800. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1).

In addition, hazing built feelings of confidence and self-esteem once previous conceits had been stripped. Many respondents spoke of those who entered Texas A&M at the same time but buckled under the pressure of hazing and eventually left the college. "Those of us who stayed felt superior and it gave us more motivation to stick it out," observed one respondent (491. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2).

These respondents also were virtually unanimous in their belief that hazing built a social structure based on class year and military affiliation to replace the allegiances that military life removed. Freshmen knew that upperclassmen lived by different rules and highly structured social codes, so power could not be diffused among them equally; rather, each class had to create its own conception of what to do and how to act (347. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2; 493. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2). Of course, many behaviors were passed down from year to year--including hazing--but only after those in superior positions deemed such a transition appropriate. This nurtured feelings of loyalty for upperclassmen while simultaneously planting the seeds for feelings of superiority (366. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 803. 11-29-94. Family History. 20.1).

Reflecting on life in an all-male, military college, one class agent who later lived among several different cultures in a high-level administrative post noted, "[T]he problem . . . is that you get too close, so that anyone who's even a little different becomes suspicious. I was in

Troop C Cavalry, and we knew we were the best in the world. Those fellows in Troop D were a little strange. That's what happens when you don't know people. They seem different, and different is bad" (309. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1).

Finally, these class agents reported that hazing taught students respect for authority while at the same time teaching tactics for undermining it (420. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1). Punishment based on defiance of rules became a "game, a fun game really, and it never ceased to be that for me and I'm sure the rest of my companions, for as long as we were there" (797. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). Another respondent made a similar observation, saying, "It was more about learning the game and how to get by than anything physical" (705. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1). Freshmen would create elaborate plans to provoke upperclassmen, then relish the solidarity created when forced to suffer the consequences (566. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1).

In conclusion, hazing left a lasting impression on these respondents, many of whom spoke of it first when asked about their college experiences. While hazing--which college administrators officially prohibited but tolerated to virtually all excess--often was described as brutal and random, overcoming it was viewed as an integral part of collegiate success. Less severe than hazing were pranks such as "drowning out," which helped relieve the tedium of their military regimen.

Many respondents said these experiences provided lessons in leadership and respect for authority that contributed to their later military

and professional success, as well as created bonds of shared hardship that have lasted a lifetime (218. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Student Life at Texas A&M: The Physical Environment

In addition to hazing, many respondents vividly described their college years in terms of the hardships created by Texas A&M's geographic isolation and lack of amenities such as running water (in some dorms; see 457. 3-3-94. Home. 21.1), electric or gas heating (808. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1) and centrally located toilets and showers (771. 4-15-94. Letter. 17.2). In addition, a surge in enrollment in the late 1920s meant that most dormitories were housing more then twice their intended capacity, and some freshmen were assigned to live in tents and hastily constructed one-room shacks (an area nicknamed "Hollywood") that were designed for two students but usually housed three or four (567. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1; 771. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2).

Most often, these hardships were remembered affectionately as an inconvenient way of life but one that forged lasting friendships and since has been lost forever (218. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1). One class agent's remark explains the peculiar charm of this rugged living, but also might indicate why hazing grew to such proportions--"we could create our own little world with no outside influence" (345. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2).

First and foremost, Texas A&M was built in the mid-1870s in the "middle of nowhere" (345. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2), and even 60 years later very little dotted the prairie landscape except for mesquite bushes and an occasional coyote (Dethloff, 1975). A row of five or six modest wooden shops and a post office lined University Drive on the north side of

campus and catered to the college crowd, but to buy anything beyond the bare necessities required a trip to Bryan (148. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1). A second small shopping area was added when Jersey Street (now George Bush Drive) was completed on the south side of campus in 1930 (148. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1), and Wellborn Road to the west was built using mules and pick-axes the next year (325. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2).

One class agent, who grew up in a major city, recalled that his first glimpse of the campus filled him with "such a lonely feeling, a feeling of abandonment in the middle of nowhere" (499. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2). Another remembered, "When I first got to campus, I wondered if I'd made a huge mistake! It was a barren place then; we had to carry everything, including wood for the fire and water to wash with" (654. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

This isolation made travel, even the five miles to Bryan, difficult (502. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2). Students were not allowed to keep automobiles on campus until the early 1930s (316. 2-2-94. Home. 9.1; 564. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1), and until the late '30s only a handful of students could afford them anyway (153. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1). The solution was the "Toonerville Trolley," nicknamed for a popular cartoon, which made regular runs between College Station and Bryan (152. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1). By the end of the decade, the trolley had lost favor to the more popular automobile, and went out of business (151. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

If going to Bryan was "a real excursion" (502. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2), then going home for holidays and the summer break represented even more of a challenge. Indeed, the obstacles were so formidable that many students

found travel home during bad winter weather impossible (352. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1).

When the weather permitted, upperclassmen, who had more lenient privileges, went

> nearly everywhere in Texas and sometimes beyond. Sometimes our destination was home, sometimes with a fellow Aggie for a visit with his parents, occasionally another college--we had no money to pay for lodging--and at times we left with no place in mind. Anything to get away! (Dugan, 1984, p. 45).

The train was one travel option, although it was considered expensive (325. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2). Regardless of the cost, train travel during winter could be uncomfortable and time consuming. One respondent told of a 15-hour ordeal of train travel to out-of-the-way depots while going home one December when the Trinity River had frozen and the ferry was unable to cross at the usual spot (352. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1). Today, the same trip by car would take about two hours.

By far the more popular option was hitchhiking, either to Bryan or more distant destinations (153. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1). Students would line up along Highway 6 (Texas Avenue) at the campus entrance in front of the System Building and hold up a sign naming their intended destination. Sooner or later, a driver headed that way would stop, because "fortunately for us, they took an Aggie uniform as a sign of respectability" (Dugan, 1984, p. 44). Dugan (1984, p. 44) continued, "The distances an Aggie could cover and the things he could do in a weekend with a raised thumb and a couple of dollars in his pocket were amazing!"

Respondents agreed that this was a "real good system--a real cooperative effort" that lasted well into the 1950s (155. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Even today, the student services division at Texas A&M offers a "share-a-ride" program based on this principle.

Sometimes, Aggies would try to use their wits to save money. One respondent told of a potentially ill-fated trip:

> At Christmas time that year [1929] when we started to go home it was snowing heavily and hitchhiking was almost out of the question. Money was scarce, but I bought a ticket to Houston and rode the train, along with a lot of other Aggies.
>
> In Houston, when I started to buy the ticket to New Willard, I remembered something I had learned in those bull sessions. I bought a ticket to Humble, which was just 18 miles from Houston. This would get me on the train and after the conductor took up the tickets I would just stay on to New Willard, thereby saving about 85 cents in train fare! My plan began to fail, however, when the conductor didn't get around to taking up tickets until we had passed Humble!
>
> There were two ways to go: crawl outside at the coupling of the cars and hang onto the steps til he came by, or hide under the seats. I chose the seat hiding route. Another Aggie chose the outside and nearly froze. When they pulled him in after the conductor passed he was coated solid with ice and snow and could hardly talk (820. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1).

Regardless of the destination, Aggies grateful for the opportunity to leave campus often would wait until last possible moment to return, sometimes spending all night on the road or railway and arriving on campus just as the first classes of the morning got underway (355. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1).

Opportunities for communicating with those outside College Station also were limited. Certain dorms were prestigious not because they contained a telephone, but simply because they were near the Aggieland

Inn, where there was a phone (345. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2). Thus, as difficult as travel was, it provided a vital link to the outside world.

As noted earlier, housing accommodations on campus were far from luxurious. Students fortunate enough to have running water often had only wood-burning stoves for heat, and vice versa (456. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1). Freshmen were responsible for gathering firewood and stoking the fire or supplying pitchers of water in the rooms of upperclassmen (771. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2). Each room on campus, whether in the hastily erected shacks known as "Hollywood" or in the new Hart Hall or Walton Hall, was equipped simply, with "bunk beds, a study table, two cane bottom chairs, and a small clothes closet in the corner" (745. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2).

Similarly, facilities around the rest of the campus were functional but not opulent. One popular spot for campus social life was the "Y"--the YMCA building--which still stands on the northwest corner of the Academic Building. It contained a snack shop, barber shop, reading room and game room, as well as the radio station WTAW and housing for a few professors (Dugan, 1984, p. 24).

"Cultural events" such as movies and formal debates were held in Assembly Hall, a "big wooden structure" that was across from the "Y" (503. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2). One respondent remembered gathering there to listen to football games on the radio. To get a better idea of what was going on, "we [would] put a sheet up on the wall and stick pins in it to show the plays" (504. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2). Assembly Hall was a crude structure, both inside and out, but remained popular nonetheless.

"[illegible]f the seats lacked cushions," wrote Dugan (1984, p. 18), "and the atm[illegible]phere was just short of rowdy before the lights dimmed, and the ventilation [was] lacking--it was a welcome respite after a long week."

In some ways, it is logical that respondents mentioned these two factors--hazing and the college's isolation and rough-hewn facilities--first when asked about their experiences at Texas A&M. Together they fostered a culture, a "sum total effect" (313. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1), that rewarded individual initiative while simultaneously creating a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Not a single respondent mentioned Texas A&M's academic climate as a motivating factor when describing his college years. Indeed, it appears that even the college's faculty and administrators actively discouraged intellectual debate and curiosity (332. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2; 422. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1). One class agent told of a chemistry professor who had an interesting philosophy: "He always told us, 'If you keep quiet during class, I won't know how much you know, so I'll probably pass you. One man three years ago kept opening his mouth and had to fill it with how much he didn't know, so he didn't pass'"(509. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2).

Even today, these respondents believe that Texas A&M blends the best of their rugged conditions with an academic emphasis they did not experience to provide today's students with a unique--and more importantly, superior--education when compared to similar universities (see for example, 389. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 671. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1; and 738. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

Reaction to Change at Texas A&M

Of course, Texas A&M did not forever remain a bastion of all-male military training. During the era when administrators at other universities were coping with the ramifications of racial integration, the controversial issue at Texas A&M in 1971 was the admission of women students.

This was not the first time the issue of coeducation had been raised at Texas A&M. Nearly 40 years earlier, when several of these respondents were attending the college, there had been what one class agent called "a dummy lawsuit, set up so that it couldn't possibly win, so a precedent would be set for future cases [concerning coeducation]" (275. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1). The details of this case are given in Chapter II.

With only one exception--a class agent from one of the older classes represented in this study--these respondents said they either were in favor of admitting women students at the time the controversial policy was implemented, or initially were against it but over a period of years changed their minds.

Today, all but one of the respondents said they fully support and encourage women students, and several said that letting women in was the "best thing that could have happened" at Texas A&M (221. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 551. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1; 609. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2). Another said that "In some ways I think the girls are doing a better job of continuing the traditions and Aggie spirit than the boys. They seem to have latched on to it more, and consider it more important" (344. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2). Two other class agents favored coeducation because they remembered their own daughters' disappointment when they were not

allowed to become Aggies (274. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1; 587. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1).

Whether these respondents are typical of most older alumni of Texas A&M, and whether their attitudes have changed considerably since their college years, is not known. However, one clue regarding the early vehemence with which coeducation was criticized can be found in the 1934 Texas A&M yearbook (p. 282), which shows a drawing of lingerie delicately draped over army-issue bunk beds and a desk. The accompanying text reads in part,

> Shall silk hose, chemise, and other unmentionables of feminine attire take their place beside the sweat shirts, shorts, and the other goaty garments of the male clan on the clotheslines of A. & M. College? We, the masculine element of A. & M., say NO! Shall the click of high heels blend its echo with the clash and clatter of boots and spurs in the corridors of our heretofore worthy institution? We again say NO! Mingled with the lusty "NOES" of two thousand grim-lipped and determined Aggies came the announcement from the courts of our state that they would permit a continuance of the alarming trend towards femininity at our beloved Alma Pater. Co-education, was, however, given a brief day in our college life, and then, unmourned, died.
>
> Co-education at A. & M. is, for the present, a thing of the past. Another decade will perhaps bring another attempt, but for the present Aggies are men among men. God rest your souls, little lassies, and some day you may grow up to be Aggies--but not today. Girls, we cannot live without you, but we will be damned if we'll agree to live with you!

One respondent who graduated in the 1930s explained the situation in this way: "Being all-male when I was a student had a great deal of meaning. There is a special camaraderie that develops in such close-knit situations, when you live together, study together, eat together. But even

then we knew that eventually it would have to change" (308. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1).

Regardless of whether this sentiment was shared by all students in the 1930s, most respondents said they recognized by the mid-1960s that coeducation at Texas A&M was inevitable (479. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1; 662. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1). One respondent said that without this "integration," the college would have "withered on the vine" by now (221. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1), and another called being all-male in the late 1960s a "stumbling block" that prevented progress (663. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

One class agent's response was typical: "I was not opposed to letting women in. I felt it was high time we shared with them . . . A&M could not have been much more than a regional farm school if they hadn't made the decision to let women in and make the Corps optional" (388. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1).

Some respondents attributed the controversy to their classmates' unrealistic and sentimental desire to avoid change at any cost. Not only did these respondents discourage protests concerning coeducation, such as a petition and a letter-writing campaign to the Texas Legislature, they sensed from the beginning that these efforts were doomed (662. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

"There was no good reason to stay in the dark ages," said one. "A lot of people protested, but they were too sentimental about the good old days that in fact were terribly hard" (113. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1).

Another class agent, who in the 30 years following graduation had lived in several different countries and was affiliated with a major research university when coeducation occurred at Texas A&M, said,

> By that time I realized that we would be limiting our future by remaining all-male. I knew from my experience at [another university] that the future was in research, in becoming more sophisticated. Even in the 1940s and '50s, our all-male and military emphasis was too noticeable. Other schools were making progress and we were falling behind (307. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1).

Several respondents overcame their initial opposition to coeducation at Texas A&M, primarily because they learned from the experience that women "have proven their worth in leadership positions" (442. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1). Another laughingly cited his changing ideas about women in general: "Back then I was inclined to believe they belonged with their home and family. Now I think [coeducation is] the best thing that happened!" (551. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1). Another spoke of his three daughters' disappointment that they could not become Aggies when they reached college age (276. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1). One class agent simply said of women, " I think they're a great way to decorate the campus!" (582. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1)

One class agent, who happened to be doing some consulting work in the room adjacent to the Board of Regents quarters when the decision to allow women was made final, recalled with a laugh:

> [The day] the board voted to let women in, [Texas A&M President Tom Harrington] was tickled to death. I saw him in the hall immediately after it was decided, and I said, "Tom, I think it *stinks*!" I probably shouldn't have been so vehement with my boss, but that's how I felt! (616. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

The admission of women students occurred within a few years of other changes that radically altered the nature of Texas A&M, and many respondents saw these changes as interrelated. What it meant to be an Aggie also changed when Corps of Cadets participation was made optional in the late 1960s, and when the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas became Texas A&M University--with the "A" and the "M" standing alone--in 1968.

All but one of the respondents said that these changes were profoundly positive, and that whatever initial apprehension they felt evaporated as the years went by. "These changes were personified by the name change--[after it became a university] Texas A&M was no longer known for agricultural and mechanical training alone. Indeed, it had been known facetiously for years as 'Texas Athletic and Military College' (597. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2). Another remarked that prior to these changes, "A&M was going down, down, down. They did what they had to do" (552. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1).

The lone respondent who admitted his wish that Texas A&M had remained all-male cheerfully stated that he did think the university had "come a long way" since his experience there in the mid-1920s (618. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1). Indeed, as I gently probed his beliefs, much of his consternation seemed aimed at the parallels I made between the admission of women students and the university's tremendous growth and gain in prestige. This dapper and articulate gentleman, who had earned a master's degree at one of the world's top engineering universities, accused me of "bias," saying my line of questioning, "assumes that [Texas A&M] would not have become [a major research

university] without these changes in the Corps and in letting women in" (640. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1). He explained:

> Have I changed my mind [about being so opposed to admitting women students]? Not one bit. Mind you, I'm not saying that A&M is not a better place because women are here, I'm just saying my preference would have been to retain the all-male and military focus. I don't have enough information to make any other judgment (617. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

This respondent continued to hold fast to his position, and yet refused to speculate about the relative advantages and disadvantages of Texas A&M during the 1920s and currently. Finally, he simply concluded, "Whether these things are good or bad, I don't know. I don't have enough information to say. I know my own personal preference is that nothing had changed (641. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Perceptions of Current Problems at Texas A&M

These respondents' perceptions of Texas A&M did not solidify upon graduation. While most of them recalled their college years in vivid detail, these memories alone do not shape their perceptions of Texas A&M. Even recent changes with less far-reaching implications than the admission of women or the transformation into a major research university were acknowledged readily and elicited opinions.

Behind these respondents' views that Texas A&M continues to offer a more meaningful collegiate experience than other universities (833. 4-18-94. Telephone. 8.2; 642. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1) lies recognition of certain problems. As one class agent said during a week when allegations of financial mismanagement among top Texas A&M administrators

surfaced, "We have to be careful in saying that everything's fine--just by reading the newspaper you can see that it's not" (735. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

"I recognize that it's not all wonderful," echoed another respondent. "We can't turn a blind eye to the negative things--the athletic scandals, the Corps scandals, what's going on now with the Board of Regents" (828. 4-18.94. Telephone. 10.2).

The primary problem facing the university, according to a majority of respondents, is managing the enrollment growth from the 1970s and '80s that today makes Texas A&M the nation's third-largest university (780. 4-14-94. Letter. 19.2).

These class agents speculated that the very qualities that attract so many students may be difficult to maintain as enrollment climbs and the student body becomes more diverse (478. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1; 649. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1; 783. 4-14-94. Letter. 19.2). As one respondent said about Texas A&M's growth, "You can't be all things to all people. Now there's the gay thing and everything else. By trying to help everyone, you end up not helping anyone" (734. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

Related to this is the issue of leadership, primarily regarding adherence to the university's land grant mission (733. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1) and the purpose of higher education (602. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2). Many respondents believed that the current trend toward increased sensitivity to issues of diversity and multiculturalism is misguided and diverts attention away from a "true" educational focus. Said one, apparently unaware that "globalism" could constitute a moral value, said,

> In my day at A&M, we got moral values as well as an education. In fact, they were not differentiated. Now if you ask any

> professor if it's their duty to inculcate moral values, they'll talk about the global environment, diversity, multiculturalism, that kind of stuff, which tends to isolate and balkanize (604. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2).

Respondents generally were sympathetic to the plight of individual administrators facing these issues, but spared no wrath for the decade-old faculty senate. In many cases, the faculty senate was seen as wielding inordinate power within the university (against which individuals are helpless), and as created for the sole purpose of stirring up controversy where none before existed.

One class agent called the faculty senate a "marvelous screw-up" that dabbles in "politicking at its worst--creating factions and ignoring the fundamental reason for being--to educate students" (610. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2). Another, much older, class agent was even more blunt, calling the faculty senate "nothing but a bunch of left-wing, hare-brained troublemakers [who] ought to spend that much energy on teaching, not being politically correct" (647. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Despite these and other perceived problems (256. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 366. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 476. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1; 613. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1), these respondents remain optimistic about Texas A&M's future. The institution should not be shielded from public scrutiny or criticism, many said, but neither should the recent negative publicity be "blown out of proportion" (782. 4-14.94. Letter. 19.2). After all, said one class agent who was a television broadcaster for many years, "I know that they are looking for the bad news because the good news does not make as exciting news" (781. 4-14-94. Letter. 19.2).

The respondents were unanimous in their belief that the current problems Texas A&M faces will be resolved satisfactorily and that the institution will "continue to go in the right direction" (389. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1). Another simply said, "Texas A&M had great leadership [during its formative years]. This leaves a mark that is always remembered. We'll continue to have great leadership, too" (220. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Summary of Research Question One

These respondents chose to attend Texas A&M for practical reasons, most often to learn a trade or because it was the least expensive institution they could find. Student life during the 1920s and '30s was difficult. Hazing and primitive conditions took precedence over academic pursuits, and the influence of the Corps of Cadets infiltrated every aspect of college life. Years later, college life was remembered fondly, but these hardships were not romanticized.

In addition, these respondents generally favored the radical changes that contributed to the Texas A&M of today, such as the admission of women students, making Corps of Cadets membership optional, and changing the name from the "Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas" to "Texas A&M University." They were knowledgeable and opinionated about recent activities such as the trend toward multiculturalism and the role of the faculty senate.

Research Question Two:
What is meant by "institutional loyalty?"

Without exception, respondents mentioned the concept of "loyalty" when describing their thoughts and actions regarding Texas A&M, yet

they had difficulty defining the term. Other researchers have encountered similar difficulties regarding the notion of "loyalty" in higher education (DiBrito, 1991; Scarborough, 1991).

Like former Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun's approach to obscenity, respondents had an "I can't exactly define it, but I know it when I see it" attitude typified by this sequence: "Even though it's a large part of our lives, we don't think about it very often. [Loyalty] can be difficult to define, even though we all talk about it and recognize it" (830 and 831. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2). When asked to define "loyalty," other respondents prefaced their remarks with "Well, that's a good question" (846. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3) and "That's a tough one!" (838. 4-18-94. Telephone. 9.2).

Despite this initial reticence, certain characteristics emerged from the definitions given. Loyalty was understood by respondents as encompassing much more than blind faith, either in a person or in Texas A&M. It is complex and demands the presence of respect, which is not easily won. "Loyalty is difficult to define, because at a place like A&M it's based on very rich, complex things. It's easy to simplify it, but that's a mistake," noted one respondent (670. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1). According to another, "loyalty also means admiration, respecting something. Wanting to be part of something" (839. 4-18-94. Telephone. 9.2). "When you're loyal to something, you are interested in it and care about what happens to it," commented another class agent (832. 4-18-94. Telephone. 8.2).

In addition, loyalty is nurtured through a mutual relationship that is characterized by "devotion" (838. 4-18-94. Telephone. 9.2) and "care and

concern" (832. 4-18-94. Telephone. 8.2). This devotion spurs action: "I'd say [that] to be loyal means a certain amount of commitment, caring about the welfare of someone or something, and trying to influence that welfare in positive ways" (821. 4-18-94. 10.2). This respondent continued, "[Loyalty] means mutual influence--you see something that attracts you and makes you want to be loyal, and in turn you hope to do whatever you can to help" (822. 4-18-94. 10.2).

For these alumni of Texas A&M, loyalty to the university means more than simply supporting the sports teams or prominently displaying one's diploma. Loyalty began with a way of campus life 50 years ago that made Texas A&M unique. Over time, these alumni perceived that this way of life was not only different, it was *better* than comparable experiences at other colleges and universities. As Texas A&M came to be seen as better than other institutions, these alumni viewed their collegiate experiences as being better for having chosen Texas A&M. Other universities are forced to rely on "gimmicks" to generate alumni commitment, while Texas A&M was seen as nurturing loyalty throughout the collegiate experience, as this response indicated:

> Other schools try to imitate A&M, but they can't be successful. It's not a gimmick. At A&M, it's based on something deep that stems from the principles of the university itself. A&M attracts a certain kind of student, one who admires and respects these principles and is willing to keep them alive (671. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

At times the concept of loyalty tied directly to the presence of the Corps of Cadets: "At schools where there is not this kind of camaraderie [as in the Corps] they don't have this kind of loyalty," said one (721.

3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

For these alumni, loyalty to Texas A&M is based on an experience that integrated social, academic, military, and professional endeavors. As one class agent said, "Loyalty to A&M is built on more than simple nostalgia, or the kinds of experiences typical during the college years. At A&M, the Corps was the academic side, and the social side, and every other facet of life" (698. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

In addition, this seamless social, academic, and military experience provided opportunities for loyalty that these alumni carried with them after graduation. Ties to the university were not based on recency of experience. One's classmates shared all aspects of college life and often went on to become professional colleagues as well. These bonds created a tight Aggie network in some professions, and even today feeds current notions of Aggie loyalty. For example, one class agent reported that

> My co-worker is a UT graduate, and all his sons attended A&M. I asked him why they were so loyal to A&M, and he said, 'I've watched them during school and after, and I've seen that usually the guy in charge is from A&M, and usually he'll only hire Aggies.' He thought that having a strong network was as important as getting a good education (672. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

Even old age (as in the Sul Ross activities) and death (as in Muster) provide outlets for the strengthening and demonstration of loyalty. One respondent recognized the development of this continuum as "very shrewd," with the advantage that it "lets people maintain a sense of loyalty throughout life" (859. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3).

Said another respondent, "One thing that stands out [regarding loyalty] is the notion that Aggies are Aggies, always, even at their deaths. None of this ex-student stuff. It creates a bond that remains strong, even between old and young," (843. 4-18-94. Telephone. 9.2). Another shared a similar insight: "At A&M, [loyalty] means there's a total experience of being an Aggie, not just learning a trade. Aggies care about what happens at A&M and to other Aggies, not just while they're students but all though life" (833. 4-18-94. Telephone. 8.2).

Despite this strong linkage of the past to the present, these alumni vehemently refuted the notion that their loyalty might stem in part from a view of their collegiate experiences that has become increasingly romanticized and nostalgic as the years since graduation passed and Texas A&M changed. They still remember vividly the "hard and at times cruel existence" (853. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3) created at Texas A&M by internal factors such as hazing and strict military discipline and by external factors such as the Depression and impending world war.

Yet, with the exception of one of the oldest respondents, whose fondest wish would be for Texas A&M to revert to being all-male and military, these alumni described their feelings of loyalty toward the university as evolutionary or at least changing over time. They are loyal to the living embodiment of the Texas A&M of today, not simply their shared experiences. Whatever initial resistance to change there might have been among these alumni has been tempered by a belief that Texas A&M retains a uniqueness that will create the same depth of loyalty among students today.

"Despite [its changes], A&M offers things that no other school can," adds a respondent. "There's still a sense of loyalty and unity. As long as it's based on what's going on instead of nostalgia for the past, it will be fine. I even think the fraternities and sororities have been a good addition" (736. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

Another respondent extended the issue to loyalty among Aggies in general:

> I think one reason A&M is so successful in its pursuit of alumni loyalty is that it's been an evolutionary process. In order for loyalty to develop, things can't just stand still. What people are loyal to is an image.
>
> In the case of Texas A&M, the image was nurtured and pampered and allowed to change and grow along with the university (847-850. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3).

Thus, these alumni believe that their feelings of loyalty stem from the unique--and in their opinion, better--experiences they had as students, when Texas A&M's isolation and military emphasis created tremendous overlap of social, academic, military, and professional training functions. The professional and social bonds created at Texas A&M allowed these alumni to carry ties to the university long after graduation, even into old age and death.

This loyalty is not merely oriented toward the irretrievable past, however. With only one exception, these alumni recognize and embrace the changes at Texas A&M, believing that "the good things were kept, and adapted. . . . This allowed the university to become an outstanding academic institution, yet still retain the flavor of days gone by, when it

wasn't strong academically but was strong in other ways" (856. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3).

Many of the traditions that link the past to the present have helped Texas A&M maintain an image of uniqueness and camaraderie that encourages alumni loyalty despite tremendous growth and radical change, and despite the fact that "in many ways Texas A&M is similar to other large land-grant universities" (862. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3). This would seem to bode well for the nurturing of support among future alumni. One class agent described the bonds between young and old in the midst of change especially well:

> You see 80-year-old men at football games or reunions, feeling that things haven't changed since they left campus. You see Corps members marching in and know what that's all about. At the same time, you see the 'civilian' students who might not know much about the Corps, but they know it's their Aggie heritage and they respect that. And the rest of the world sees that Aggies are proud of their history and traditions, and think that's oddball, but respect it (860. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3).

Summary of Research Question Two

While these respondents initially found the concept of loyalty difficult to define, each considered it an integral part of his relationship with Texas A&M. In addition, these respondents felt that loyalty among graduates of Texas A&M always has been particularly strong, and remains stronger than at other institutions despite the tremendous changes the university has undergone.

These class agents felt loyal to the institution that provided them with an education, and to their classmates, whose shared experiences

went beyond academics and into all aspects of life, including social, recreational and Corps of Cadets functions.

The discipline of military life and the isolation of the campus helped create traditions that extended beyond the four years of college life and into the professional world, which gave these alumni links to Texas A&M for decades after graduation. In addition, these respondents said that the unique aspects of student life at Texas A&M helped create fraternal bonds, and even feelings of superiority, that link all alumni regardless of their year of graduation. This feeling of loyalty is reciprocal and creates a desire to give back to the institution.

Research Question Three:
How is loyalty demonstrated among these older alumni?

Serving as Class Agent

First and foremost, these respondents mentioned their service as class agents when discussing how they demonstrated their loyalty to Texas A&M. This was equally true of those who have been class agents since graduation (252. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 713. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1), as well as of those who became class agents only in recent years because infirmity or long-distance moves after retirement ended the original class agent's ability to meet the demands of the position (572. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1).

Perhaps this study's emphasis on alumni relations made these respondents think first of their work as class agents. However, their answers also indicate that being class agent fulfills a need for ongoing social interaction and usefulness that other indications of loyalty, such as

financial support, simply cannot. For example, this respondent's answer was typical of many when asked to describe the benefits of being a class agent:

> I'm a class agent because I care about my friends who are Aggies, and I want to keep in touch with them and know what's going on in their lives. I'm also a class agent because I care about Texas A&M and want to do something to help in any way I can (840. 4-18-94. Telephone. 9.2).

During the era when these respondents graduated from Texas A&M, the senior class president typically became the class agent. (Today, class agents, usually three per class, are elected by seniors.) Some of these respondents have served as class agent for 60 or more years without interruption under this structure (252. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 713. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1). Another respondent was asked to serve by the then-director of the Association of Former Students, "not through any real distinction," but because the senior class president, "a star baseball player," showed no interest in being class agent (253. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1).

Several have been class agents for so long that they have lost count of the years. One class agent seemed genuinely perplexed when asked how long he has served, and laughed heartily. "Lord, I don't know!" was his reply (548. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1).

More often, these respondents became class agents because they were asked by Association of Former Students representatives or by class members to do so many years after graduation. A sense of duty, combined with honor at having been the one selected, spurred respondents to assume these responsibilities. Most never considered turning down the request. "They asked me to do it, so I did," was a common refrain (572.

3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1; 840. 4-18-94. Telephone. 9.2).

Practical considerations of old age usually entered into the process, as health problems or death contributed to the need for a new class agent (213. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 572. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1; 632. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1). For example, one respondent became class agent just before his 35th-year class reunion, when the then-director of the Association of Former Students called and explained that the current class agent was "feeling puny" and asked if he would replace him. He has been class agent ever since (90. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1).

Likewise, some respondents "inherited" the position when long distances, illness or death kept the original class agent from performing his duties, as in this case:

> I came to be a class agent in a roundabout way. Back then it was customary for the class president to be it. [Name] was our president and class agent for a long time. He lived [in another state] and asked me to help since I was closer to the action. We were very close, in the band together. He later died, so I'm it (432. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1).

Other Ways of Demonstrating Loyalty

In addition to their service as class agents, respondents cited their financial contributions, their participation in A&M Clubs (local scholarship fund-raising organizations), Sul Ross reunions and 12th Man Foundation (athletic fund-raising) activities, and attendance at campus events such as AggieHostel and football games as tangible indications of loyalty (179. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 210. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 383. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 534. 3-10-94. Sul Ross. 14.1; 615. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1; 666. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1; 824. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2).

For some, desire to help the university overlapped with professional interests. One respondent, who became class agent a few years ago when the previous class agent died, considered his professional life to be interwoven in a mutually beneficial relationship with the university when his firm became involved in a major remodeling and expansion program on campus (660. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1), although he laughingly admitted doing the same kind of work for Texas A&M's archrival, the University of Texas. Similarly, another class agent considered the engineering consulting work he had done over the years at Texas A&M to be one outlet for his loyalty to the university (631. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Summary of Research Question Three

When these respondents were asked how they demonstrated their loyalty to Texas A&M, most of them first mentioned their service as class agent. Some had been class agents since graduation, assuming the role after being senior class president. Others had become class agents in more recent years, upon the illness or death of the previous class agent. These respondents agreed to become class agents out of a sense of duty and because they felt honored at having been selected.

While they also demonstrate loyalty in other ways, such as through financial support and professional work done on behalf of Texas A&M, these respondents especially enjoyed their class agent responsibilities, primarily because of the social interaction they offer.

Research Question Four:
Has the demonstration of loyalty among these older alumni been constant since graduation, or did an event such as retirement precipitate an increase in support?

These respondents, as well as millions of Americans during and just after the Great Depression, faced college life and first forays into the work world that were colored by hard economic times (293. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1; 333. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2). Often, these alumni graduated already feeling indebted to Texas A&M for the vocational training that would qualify them for a good job when such jobs were scarce (160. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 823. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2).

For many, this debt was literal as well as symbolic. In 1930, the Ex-Students' Association began a Student Loan Fund, in which the Association and many well-established former students loaned money to needy students at minimal interest rates (in many cases, as low as 1 or 2 percent) (181. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1). This fund was praised as "invaluable in this year of economic stress and need," and an "investment in the boys [that] is one of the most appealing and far-reaching phases of the work of the Association" in the 1932 *Longhorn* yearbook.

The timing of the Great Depression, combined with the all-encompassing influence of the Corps of Cadets and the fact that many class presidents went on to become class agents, created feelings of loyalty that these respondents recognized and responded to shortly after graduation and throughout their lives. Indeed, the only aspect of giving that seems to have increased with time is the value of their financial contributions to the university.

The ability to participate in Texas A&M activities, however, was determined largely by geographic location. One older alumnus who recently was named a class agent admitted that moving to New York immediately after graduation and living there for many years "made it hard to keep up ties with A&M" (533. 3-10-94. Sul Ross. 14.1). He emphasized that this was not by choice, and that "now that I'm back in Houston I can participate in more A&M activities" (534. 3-10-94. Sul Ross. 14.1). Another class agent blamed his military career, which took him to Washington, D.C., and Europe for many years, as the main reason for his inability to become involved in A&M Clubs until recently (480. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1).

One respondent found distance to be no such impediment to maintaining ties with Aggies--he single-handedly organized a Muster in Kunming, China, when he was designing a highway system there in 1945 (664. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1). "Word got out, mainly through word of mouth, and we ended up with 12 or 14 Aggies there" he recalled (665. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

Respondents who embarked on traditional Aggie careers in engineering or agriculture, and who remained in Texas or adjoining states, found it much easier to remain connected to the university. Usually this activity centered on A&M Clubs, and these respondents quickly moved into leadership positions, often serving as president more than once (175. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 431. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1).

In one case, the camaraderie that developed through one of the larger A&M Clubs spilled over into an annual "nonfund-raising, non-academic, non-purpose" party at his home, for Aggies from all over the country.

"This year [1994] will be the 28th one," he explained. "The whole purpose is just to have a good time. We've had coaches, A&M presidents, professors. Everyone pays their own way, and there aren't any speeches, just a lot of razzing. It's just a party" (427. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1).

Many respondents also have been involved in organizations devoted to specific components of college life, such as an advisory council within the College of Engineering (677. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1) or the group created for former members of the band (626. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1). One class agent told of the need he perceived that resulted in creation of the Aggie Band Association in 1968:

> [The newsletter for band members who graduated between 1935 and 1941] started when I got a phone call one day saying that Colonel Dunn, who was band director when I was there, was in the hospital, so I went to see him. We always got along real well, always joking back and forth. I thought we needed to get the word out so others might send him get-well cards. I started sending out cards and soliciting addresses, and pretty soon we had a network going, with people asking about other people, or saying 'Old So-and-So's living here.' I continued until two or three years ago (444. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1).

The connections to Texas A&M that continued to flourish in the decades following graduation also played a big role in these respondents' lives upon retirement. Several moved to Bryan-College Station after retirement to be closer to the university's social, athletic and cultural offerings (128. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1; 193. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 826. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2).

One long-time resident noted, "About ten or 12 of us [class agents for older classes] used to live here in Bryan-College Station. It's less now

[because of recent deaths]" (124. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1). These and others formerly affiliated with the university have formed the "Was Club," which a respondent laughingly described as a "very high level group of retirees" who meet in the coffee shop in a Bryan grocery store every Saturday morning "for coffee and gossip. I'm surprised you haven't heard of it!" (129. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1).

Summary of Research Question Four

These respondents, at least, have maintained ties with Texas A&M consistently since graduation, although a few said that their involvement waned when they moved to other states and countries. The Great Depression and World War II strengthened these ties, because of financial help some respondents received from former students, and because of the opportunity to take into actual combat the military training they received during their college years.

Most of the respondents had been active in their local A&M Clubs and other organizations with ties to the university, such as the Aggie Band Association, (founded by one respondent) and college-level advisory councils. In addition, several respondents moved to Bryan-College Station upon retirement to take better advantage of the university's social, cultural and athletic offerings.

Research Question Five:
What needs of these older alumni are being met through their support of the university?

As noted in Chapter Two, Pickett (1986) found six important motivations for giving that describe the link between institution and alumnus:

- Belief in values of organizations: people give because they believe in the mission, character, values and goals of the organization.
- Obligation: a sense of obligation that may stem from social standing or religious beliefs.
- Community position: the degree to which one achieves, maintains or improves his or her social standing.
- Ego needs: the most powerful set of motivators, they include needs for power, success, affection, affiliation and security.
- Self-interest: what donors receive in return for their gift, such as tax benefit, service or gift premium.
- Self-actualization: the desire to see gift giving as part of living a full human life, in which the joy of sharing outweighs any societal, psychological or economic benefit (Pickett, 1986).

The data revealed instances in which respondents support Texas A&M in part to help meet certain personal needs that fall within these categories.

Several respondents said they were active in the Association of Former Students because they strongly believed in Texas A&M's mission and values and wanted to make others aware of them (188. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 261. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1). For example, one class agent said, "I want to

pass the benefit of my experience along to today's students, and let others outside College Station know how remarkable the institution is" (824. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2).

In addition, many class agents became involved because they felt a need or obligation to pay back the institution that they said contributed so much to their lives (190. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 333. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2; 661. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1; 772. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2). "I'm a class agent because I care about Texas A&M and want to do something to help in any way I can. They asked me to do it, so I did," was a typical response (840. 4-18.94. Telephone. 9.2). Another expressed it this way:

> Texas A&M has given me many things I cherish: professional training, lifelong friends . . . my experience there taught me how to be the best I can be in many areas, not just a job, but in life. It taught me how to respect people and work together to accomplish things. Because of that, I try to help Texas A&M in any way I can (823. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2).

As previously noted, in many cases this debt was literal as well as symbolic, arising out of the obligation to repay low-interest student loans generated by the Ex-Students Association during the Great Depression (181. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Arising out of this sense of duty, however, was a seemingly genuine sense of joy related to Pickett's (1986) use of the term "self-actualization" to describe gift giving as "part of living a full human life, in which the joy of sharing outweighs any societal, psychological or economic benefit." The following is a typical comment:

> I'm [involved in alumni activities because I'm] trying to pay back in some small way what was given to me half a century

> ago, but I get a lot of joy out of that, too. The more I give, the more I get back (825. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2).

Perhaps the most poignant examples of personal needs that were met through support of Texas A&M related to Pickett's (1986) "ego needs" related to "affection, affiliation and security." For many respondents, Texas A&M and the people encountered there provided a powerful sense of belonging and participation that has not diminished over time (625. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1; 720. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1). Said one:

> Most of the kids in ag[riculture] came from farms. I came from the wrong side of the tracks in Houston. So I got here and learned that instead of fighting for every scrap, we could work together. I consider A&M the first real home I ever had (326. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2).

The same respondent later elaborated about his childhood:

> [Going to A&M] lifted me up. It let me associate with a whole different class of people. I never would have gotten that chance without an education. Why, I remember growing up in miserable circumstances. Bootleggers were everywhere, and even little kids less than ten years old were running whiskey. I wanted a better life and didn't mind working for it (341. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2).

One class agent, who recently moved with his wife to Bryan-College Station from another state, had a similar response when asked if the move was part of their long-term retirement plans. "Oh yes, we wanted to get back to what we thought of as home all those years, even though neither of us is from here," he replied emphatically (191. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Summary of Research Question Five

The data revealed several personal needs that the respondents felt were met through their support of Texas A&M. These needs corresponded in part with Pickett's (1986) six motivations for alumni giving. First, these respondents felt a strong allegiance to Texas A&M's mission and goals and wanted to help communicate them to others. Second, they felt a sense of obligation or duty to try to repay Texas A&M for the benefits they received through their collegiate experiences. Third, they conveyed a sense of genuine pleasure and joy derived from their philanthropic efforts on behalf of Texas A&M. Fourth, their experiences at Texas A&M gave them a powerful sense of belonging, affection and affiliation that they enjoy sustaining even decades following their official departure from campus.

Research Question Six:
What unofficial roles do these older alumni fill on behalf of the university?

These respondents fill official roles on behalf of the university through service on college-level advisory councils (677. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1), boards of trustees of branch campuses of The Texas A&M University System and various positions in the Association of Former Students, as well as serving as class agents (515. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2; 680. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1). In addition, many fill official roles with the two other fund-raising organizations at Texas A&M, the 12th Man Foundation (for athletic fund-raising) and Development Foundation (for major gifts fund-raising) (179. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 824. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2).

These official areas of service are significant, but they do not tell the whole story of these respondents' work on behalf of Texas A&M. These respondents described other, unofficial, roles.

First, these respondents acted as informal goodwill ambassadors for Texas A&M, communicating their enthusiasm to friends, co-workers and others willing to listen. Sometimes, respondents were eager to share their excitement with others after attending an especially enjoyable event, such as Aggie Band concerts in their hometowns (784. 4-14-94. Letter. 19.2) or participating in campus-based events such as AggieHostel (similar to the Elder Hostel program, but exclusively for Texas A&M former students) (684. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

These respondents assumed this role cheerfully and seemed surprised at the suggestion that this sharing of enthusiasm alone might benefit the university. One class agent likened it to "missionary work," adding "I want to . . . let others outside College Station know how remarkable the institution is" (824. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2).

Related to this, these respondents acted as informal student recruiters through individual or family contributions to scholarship funds (105. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1; 615. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1) and through recruiting efforts with their company (674. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1) or local A&M Club.

One class agent remembered the recruiting efforts he helped with many years ago, when he was president of an A&M Club in an adjoining state:

> We had a goodly number of students [enrolled in Texas A&M from his town]. Often we'd take [local high school] students for

> weekend campus visits, to let them see the place and see firsthand where we got our feelings of loyalty and pride. We'd have a regular caravan of cars on the highway between [his town] and College Station.
>
> We'd bring high school kids . . . during football game weekends, so they could see what life at A&M was all about. It made a tremendous impression on them, whether they chose A&M or another school. We'd spend the weekend on campus, then go back home (176-177. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Many respondents bragged about the loyalty to Texas A&M that spans generations in their families and were especially pleased to see their own children follow in their Aggie footsteps (343. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2; 387. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 430. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1; 521. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2; 643. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

"I have two sons and three granddaughters that have finished [at Texas A&M] and two more grandchildren there now, and married (two years ago) a classmate's widow! How much more Aggie can one get!" exclaimed one respondent (792. 11-29-94. Letter. 20.1). Said another, "[My son, a mid-'60s Texas A&M graduate] has the spirit of Aggieland in his blood" (645. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Two class agents described their own and their daughters' disappointment when their daughters were not allowed to attend Texas A&M because it was all-male. "It nearly broke their hearts," remembered one (274. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1). Another said that this was remedied in part by the fact that all three of his daughters married Aggies (547. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1).

Others as parents were less influential, preferring to let their children choose their own alma maters (519. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2) or failing to convince their children that Texas A&M was the school they should

attend. One respondent spoke with disdain of his daughter's choice of a nearby regional state university over Texas A&M. "We said, 'Jesus, honey, [that university is] nothing but a high-powered babysitter,'" he recalled (342. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2). Ever optimistic, these respondents hold high hopes that their grandchildren will be "future Aggies" (528. 3-10-94. Sul Ross. 13.1; 667. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

Finally, these respondents have assumed the unofficial--for most, apparently even subconscious--role of guardians or gatekeepers of the university's unique culture. As explained in greater detail in Chapter II, feelings of loyalty correspond at least in part with an individual's participation in the organization's "saga," or "a collective understanding of unique accomplishment in a formally established group" (Clark, 1988, p. 36). Virtually every aspect of life at Texas A&M has changed radically since these alumni were students and yet they give support to the university that is disproportionate to their actual numbers. These respondents' comments indicate that Texas A&M's "unique accomplishment" was transforming into a major coeducational research university rather than remaining exactly the same and "wither[ing] on the vine" (221. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Still, Texas A&M retained during this change

> the things worthy of loyalty, such as camaraderie and commitment to excellence. . . . But other things that were exceedingly detrimental even in my day and completely appalling today, such as hazing, were quietly done away with. They may still exist, but no one puts any credence in them (851. 4-19-4. Telephone. 3.3).

This respondent--the only one who recognized on his own the public relations value of this blend of tradition and modernity--said this was "actually very savvy, although I'm not convinced it was preplanned. It more or less just happened . . . " (858. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3).

Thus, these alumni often were first-hand witnesses at the birth of many modern-day traditions at Texas A&M, such as the twelfth man and others described in Chapter II. Events that occurred when these alumni were students have assumed a mythic stature among today's students that provides these respondents stability in the face of dramatic change.

This role of cultural guardian extends into unlikely places. For example, the Christmas card that one class agent and his wife sent out recently featured a photo of them posing with Aggie collie mascot Reveille V, juxtaposed onto a photo of the original black-and-white mutt Reveille. "Reveille One meets Reveille Five," the caption reads, "Greetings from Reveille." Another class agent has devoted an entire wing of his luxurious home to Aggie memorabilia, displaying prominently not only photos of him and his two older Aggie brothers in their student days, but also photos of "sacred" campus locations where traditions such as bonfire originated. Still another class agent displays several dozen similar photos along his staircase walls.

Summary of Research Question Six

These alumni fill three important unofficial roles in addition to their numerous official positions with the Association of Former Students, 12th Man Foundation, Development Foundation and in different disciplines and branch campuses.

First, these alumni act as informal goodwill ambassadors for the college, sharing their enthusiasm whenever and with whomever they can. Second, they act as informal student recruiters, in many cases influencing their own children as well as local high school standouts to attend Texas A&M. Third, they serve as guardians or gatekeepers of the university's organizational culture, keeping the worthwhile traditions from their era alive in the face of the university's dramatic growth and change.

Research Question Seven:
Does support for Texas A&M among these older alumni differ from their support of other organizations and charitable causes?

All but two of the respondents, one of whom devoted most of his time to managing his small ranch, were active in a variety of civic, professional and social organizations in addition to the Association of Former Students. Several others had been forced to decrease their involvement because of ill health, much to their regret (297. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1; 443. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1).

This response is typical: "My wife and I are very active--we're involved in about 25 different organizations, from NARF [retired federal employees], American Association of Retired Persons, agricultural extension service retirees, to the Westerners [ranchers]. We even go bowling regularly" (130. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1). Another class agent responded similarly:

> Since we retired, my wife and I like to belong to every club in town. Well, that's not quite true, but we try to stay active in the things that interest us. We love to travel, too. We've been to 60

> countries and have sailed around the world on the QE2 twice. In June we're going to Normandy to commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-Day (576. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1).

Most continued to be active in civic organizations such as Rotary International and Kiwanis (193. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 514. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2; 676. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1). One class agent matter-of-factly described his 57 years of perfect attendance at his town's bi-weekly Lions Club (550. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1).

In addition, most respondents and their wives still devoted considerable time to church activities (443. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1; 550. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1). Others mentioned their involvement in professional activities (91. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1; 675. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1) and one just began his thirty-fourth year of service on the Baylor College of Medicine's board of trustees (676. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1). Another respondent is a long-time member of the board of directors of one of The Texas A&M University System's branch campuses.

Several class agents were active in various World War II veterans groups (99. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1; 576. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1) and one spent six years writing a detailed history of his squadron's involvement in the war (196. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Still, most respondents valued their Texas A&M-affiliated activities over others. One long-time class agent thinks this is because the relationships formed as students have endured for decades, even as other facets of life have changed. Another said he believes that this generation of Aggies treasures their relationships with other people, not merely the traditions that they helped establish or the campus that has grown so

impressively. As this class agent said about the 40 or so classmates who attend the Sul Ross reunion every single year, "They just can't get away from the camaraderie" (125. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1).

Summary of Research Question Seven

Overall, these respondents had been very active in various civic, professional and religious organizations through the years, and remained as active as their health would allow. However, they considered their involvement in Texas A&M activities more important and with greater fondness than most other activities. One respondent attributed this to the life-long friendships that had been forged while he and his classmates were students at Texas A&M.

Research Question Eight:
Are there ways of increasing support among the university's older alumni?

Old age presents unique problems and challenges, according to these respondents. Even those whose overall health is good often lacked the stamina they enjoyed in previous decades and found their energies devoted to more carefully selected philanthropic and recreational activities (297. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1; 441. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1; 681. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

In addition, these respondents tempered the freedom and financial security they found in retirement with a pragmatic recognition of their own and their classmates' mortality (384. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 434. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1). One class agent elaborated on this perception and his

belief that older alumni's limited future makes their support of Texas A&M grounded largely in nostalgic terms:

> "[Being class agent] is not so much about raising money. Hell, these fellows have plenty of money and if Randy [Matson, Association of Former Students director] or someone else picked up the phone and asked, they'd get whatever is needed. Raising money is a large part, but a larger part is cultivating the nostalgia, keeping the past alive and building on it, and communicating. That's what keeps these fellows coming back [to the Sul Ross reunion] year after year, and what makes them misty-eyed when they hear the War Hymn" (635. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Even among long-time class agents, "keeping the past alive" through fund-raising efforts, newsletters and formal and informal reunions has become increasingly difficult, primarily because of declining health and other priorities that become more important in later life (302. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1; 473. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1; 681. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

Not only does overseeing class projects become more difficult with advancing age, but so too does maintaining the peer network that facilitates a project's success (76. SR1. 12-6-93. CWC. 1; 215. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 254. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 573. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1; 615. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1). "We have no news anymore; we're out of touch as people start to pass away and move as they become ill," was a common response (471. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1). "Three years ago I got the notion that I wanted to know what those [classmates] who are still alive are doing," said another. "I got 30 out of 50 responses, and we put together a newsletter. It was a big effort" (636. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Another responded similarly, adding, "Our days of big [class] projects are over" (303. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1). He continued:

> There's still a core group of my classmates who come to Sul Ross every year, no matter what. I hope we get a good group to represent the class this year, but each year it gets harder and harder. There's no way of knowing beforehand who's going to be able to make it. [A classmate] comes every year, but he fell and hurt his hip at the Hilton last year and was bedridden. He called last night and said they just can't make it this year (305. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1).

In addition to ailments commonly associated with old age that respondents felt hindered participation by older alumni, some class agents pointed to specific logistical concerns. For example, unlike those elected to represent the younger and larger classes, many of these respondents had served as class agent for decades and had grown weary under the responsibility. Said one,

> It used to be that the class president became the class agent. Our president was a fine fellow and always came to our activities, but he wasn't too interested in working with class projects. There should have been some kind of rotation for class agents (301. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1).

Another said that in his case at least, assigning two class agents led to confusion regarding channels of communication. "[E]ach class should have one [class agent] who's in charge and one who's his helper. I guess it's from my military career, but things are always more efficient when there's one clear channel" (474. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1).

Finally, another class agent termed accomplishing his self-directed class fund-raising goals a "chore" in the midst of university-wide alumni fund-raising efforts (549. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1). He felt he could have met with greater success if he and his co-class agent had been left to their own devices to raise $150,000 from their classmates. "I think [the

Association of Former Students] went about it wrong," he explained. "They wanted us to find 150 people to give $1,000 each. It had to be $1,000 or nothing. People didn't like being told what to do. Now it's funded but it was slow going. For a long time we only had about 20 who gave" (549. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1).

In other matters, these class agents were unanimous in their praise for the Association of Former Students staff members, and for Olive DeLucia, who for nearly three decades has overseen class programs, in particular (517. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2; 633. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Many class agents said their jobs were made easier because "Olive does most of the work" (433. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1). One respondent, who freely admitted his reluctance to enter the computer age, said, "I can give [Olive] a handwritten outline and she makes it into a class newsletter. I try to compensate in other ways, like she's always been partial to [wife's] homemade jelly, so I'll bring her some" (382. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1).

Summary of Research Question Eight

These respondents said that fund-raising and organizing class activities were their primary responsibilities as class agents. However, when the factors that motivate them to serve as class agent were explored in greater depth, they came to realize that generating feelings of nostalgia among older alumni was equally important. Only one respondent, a very polished and articulate attorney who had held state-wide public office, had recognized previously the interplay between fund-raising and the importance of nostalgia (635. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

Ironically, some of these respondents reported that declining health forced them to curtail their involvement in the life of the university, just when, presumably, their support of the university in response to appeals based on nostalgia could be their greatest. In addition, these elderly respondents said that keeping in touch with a network of college friends had become increasingly difficult as their peers retire and move to a new city, become ill and are forced to withdraw from society, or pass away.

Related to this were problems with the class agent system itself that made their jobs more difficult. The class agents said that logistical concerns, such as the lack of a rotation system for class agents, the lack of role definition in classes with two class agents and interference by other fund-raising entities might preclude greater participation by older alumni of Texas A&M.

In addition, these respondents praised the work of Olive DeLucia, long-time class programs coordinator, and other staff members at the Association of Former Students.

Summary of Chapter IV

These respondents shared many beliefs and opinions. Indeed, in some cases they were virtually unanimous in their responses to interview questions. For example, most chose to attend Texas A&M because they felt it could offer them a quality vocational education and a means of improving their lot in life. Similarly, many were the first in their families to seek a college education, and were attracted to Texas

A&M's low cost. Most of the respondents came from families of meager income, and most came from rural Texas towns.

This homogeneity continued once the respondents arrived on campus during the 1920s and '30s. Primitive facilities, isolation from other towns, and a harsh code of military discipline affected all students, and the uniforms and crew cuts students were required to don made individual differences difficult to discern.

The respondents were unanimous in their reminiscences; while they remembered college life fondly, the hardships they experienced as students were not romanticized. However, these hardships created lasting bonds of friendship and camaraderie, and many respondents attributed their career success to the "can-do" attitude necessitated by the rigors of life at Texas A&M.

Life was hard, particularly during the Great Depression, but through hardship the respondents learned lessons about life that they believe were more valuable than their academic preparation. This created a profound but rarely articulated sense of loyalty to Texas A&M, which the respondents felt obligated to act upon following graduation. It also laid the foundation for today's highly touted "Aggie spirit," the belief that Aggies share a culture that makes them not only different from students at other universities, but superior as well.

Over the decades, the respondents have demonstrated their loyalty in a variety of ways. The most obvious examples are their service as class agents and their financial contributions, which are higher relatively than those of other alumni groups. However, this study revealed other demonstrations of institutional commitment. These respondents also act

as informal goodwill ambassadors, spreading enthusiasm about the university whenever and with whomever they can. In addition, they act as informal student recruiters, either by influencing their own children and grandchildren to become Aggies, or by actively recruiting high school students in their towns. Related to this, they serve as guardians or gatekeepers of the university's organizational culture, blending the best of their experiences at Texas A&M with the radical changes in the university's size, scope and mission that have occurred since their departure.

As a group, these respondents also were very active in other civic, religious, and charitable organizations, and had been throughout their adult lives. They reported feeling a sense of obligation to serve in leadership positions when asked.

These responses hardly were surprising, given the extent to which Texas A&M's organizational culture attracted young men who already shared many qualities, and uniformly shaped their experiences as students. If anything, this explains the tremendous success of the Association of Former Students' traditional fund-raising approaches.

In contrast, the data also contradict common perceptions regarding several issues. Even greater fund-raising success might be possible if this new information were incorporated into programs for older alumni.

Because of the strict adherence to military order and discipline that these "old Ags" endured as students, they generally are viewed as ultraconservative and unwilling to support even minor changes at Texas A&M. This study revealed that this perception is inaccurate.

Most notably, these respondents generally favored the radical changes that contributed to the Texas A&M of today, such as the admission of women students, making Corps of Cadets membership optional, and changing the institution's name from the "Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas" to "Texas A&M University."

In addition, without exception they were knowledgeable about current events at the university and in society at large. Many distrusted trends that they felt gave power to the university faculty and administration at the expense of students (such as the growing impact of the faculty senate) or detracted from the university's "true" educational mission (such as a multicultural curriculum). However, these opinions generally were informed and rational.

This finding can benefit fund-raising and other institutional efforts in two ways. First, it indicates that these graduates have sought out opportunities to participate in the life of the university, even beyond the scope of participation that is solicited by the alumni organization and others. These respondents have created opportunities for involvement where none seem to exist.

Second, this finding indicates that these respondents actively seek information to keep them abreast of current events at the university. None of the graduates interviewed for this study preferred to view the university in nostalgic, romantic terms colored by the passing of five decades. Instead, they each recognized and, with one exception, supported even the most radical changes that have occurred at Texas A&M in the last half-century. Administrators can use this finding to create fund-raising programs that blend the best characteristics of Texas A&M's past

with exciting prospects for its future. These alumni do not oppose change blindly, but they actively seek to keep informed about the changes that do occur before embracing them. Therefore, administrators also should communicate regularly with these graduates, and recognize the futility of ignoring negative information. Texas A&M has known a great deal of scandal and controversy during the early 1990s, which should be addressed thoroughly and unapologetically in promotional publications for these alumni.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand better the institutional commitment among the 3,225 living alumni who graduated 50 or more years ago from Texas A&M University. This issue was approached through analysis of a discrepancy: the two percent of the living alumni population represented in the classes of 1915 to 1939 contributed more than six percent ($280,513) of the unrestricted financial support the Texas A&M University alumni association received in 1992 ($4,628,123). Also noteworthy is that these financial contributions are merely a tangible form of support that symbolizes a much deeper connection these alumni feel to the university. These respondents without exception were eager to contribute to their alma mater by serving as class agents, participating on fund-raising and academic committees, attending athletic and cultural events on campus, and recruiting family members and friends to be students. Thus, financial support is simply one measure of support, and alumni historically have supported Texas A&M to an extent virtually unprecedented among similar public universities nationwide (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 18, 1994).

However, Texas A&M has changed in virtually every way during the last half-century, transforming from a small, all-male military and vocational training college to the nation's third-largest research university, with women making up 48 percent of the student body.

The study was conducted using the methodology of constructivist inquiry, which is premised on five axioms that are directly counter to the

assumptions of traditional positivistic research. Naturalistic inquiry assumes that "there are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically;" that the "evaluator and the evaluand interact with and influence each other;" that "only time- and context-bound working *hypotheses* [as contrasted with generalizations] are possible;" that "all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects;" and that by definition "inquiry is value-bound" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37).

Interviews with 19 out of 22 class agents (representatives who coordinate class newsletters and reunions) and Sul Ross officers (who coordinate the annual reunion for those who graduated 50 or more years ago) in the classes of 1925-39 were conducted between December 1993 and April 1994. In-depth interviews were conducted in four Texas cities at respondents' homes, offices, the Clayton Williams, Jr., Alumni Center at Texas A&M, or during the Sul Ross reunion. The youngest respondent was 74 years old and the oldest 89.

Eight research questions guided this study:

1. How do these alumni perceive the university and their relationship to it?
2. What is meant by "institutional loyalty?"
3. How is loyalty demonstrated among these older alumni?
4. Has the demonstration of loyalty among these older alumni been constant since graduation, or did an event such as retirement precipitate an increase in support?
5. What needs of these older alumni are being met through their support of the university?

6. What unofficial roles do these older alumni fill on behalf of the university? (For example, some may act as informal recruiters by encouraging their family members and friends to attend the university.)
7. Does support for Texas A&M among these older alumni differ from their support of other organizations and charitable causes?
8. Are there ways of increasing support by the university's older alumni?

Conclusions

Conclusion One:
Older alumni are willing and able to make significant contributions of their time, efforts and financial resources to Texas A&M.

The data clearly show that these older alumni are willing and able to contribute significantly to Texas A&M despite the dramatic changes that have occurred there during the half century since their student days. Contrary to popular belief, most of these "old Ags" claimed to have supported the major changes that helped transform Texas A&M from a small, all-male vocational and military training college to an internationally recognized research university. These changes included making the Corps of Cadets optional, admitting women students and changing the institution's name from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas to Texas A&M University. Indeed, with one exception, respondents believed that Texas A&M would have "withered on the vine" if these changes had not been made (221. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 551. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1; 609. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2)

In addition, these older alumni did not base their perceptions of Texas A&M exclusively on nostalgic memories of their college years. While respondents remembered their college years in vivid (and sometimes harsh) detail (702. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1), they also continued to stay well informed of campus events after graduation. Most respondents got information about the university through the *Texas Aggie* alumni magazine, class newsletters (which these respondents as class agents are responsible for producing) and their hometown A&M Clubs. Many also reported hearing about the university through media coverage of scandals involving the Corps of Cadets, the athletic program and financial improprieties by top administrators (782. 4-14-94. Letter. 19.2).

Certain unique components of Texas A&M's organizational culture facilitate communication with and participation by alumni long after graduation. For example, the annual Muster ceremony provides a unique blend of commemoration of Aggies who have died with a celebration of Aggie camaraderie and provides an outlet for former students to maintain communication with each other and the university, even if they live thousands of miles from campus (859. 4-19-94. Telephone. 3.3). In addition, many older alumni look forward to the special reunion held exclusively for their classes each spring (125. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1).

The conclusion that these respondents are eager to contribute to Texas A&M is not unexpected, given that they were chosen because of their current roles as class agents or Sul Ross reunion officers. In addition, this study did not address institutional commitment among "typical" members of these classes, other than to report studies that show

that Texas A&M's overall alumni support consistently ranks in the top ten among institutions nationally.

However, the research also uncovered a variety of other formal and informal roles these alumni fill on behalf of the university. Formal roles include serving on college-level advisory boards, on councils for the Development Foundation (major gifts fund-raising) and 12th Man Foundation (athletic fund-raising) and on boards of directors for branch campuses of the Texas A&M University System (824. 4-18-94. Telephone. 10.2). Informal roles include acting as student recruiters, either through individual initiatives, company programs or through local A&M Clubs (105. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1; 615. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1; 674. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1) and as goodwill ambassadors, "helping spread the good news" about Texas A&M to others (343. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2; 387. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 430. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1).

Texas A&M was not the only recipient of these respondents' time, money and energy. They also were active in a variety of other civic, religious, recreational and charitable causes, although the common ailments of old age caused some respondents to curtail their involvement (297. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1). Most were active in civic organizations such as Rotary International and Kiwanis (193. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 514. Office. 5.2) and in church administrative and social functions (443. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1; 550. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1). Many also gave their time and resources to special-interest groups, such as World War II veterans organizations (99. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1) or bowling leagues (130. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1).

This finding can benefit alumni program coordinators, who generally concentrate their fund-raising efforts on recent graduates, because it demonstrates that many older alumni are concerned with life in their communities and are sufficiently energetic to become involved in organizations that interest them.

In addition, it points out a group of potential donors who have been completely overlooked in the scholarly literature, as detailed in Chapter II. The vast majority of scholarly and practical literature is devoted to nurturing support among recent graduates, but this study has revealed a particularly lucrative segment of donors who are eager to support their alma mater.

Conclusion Two:
Older alumni view their commitment to Texas A&M in terms of people, making "institutional" commitment something of a misnomer.

The data reveal that for these respondents, Texas A&M is synonymous with the former and current students, administrators and faculty members who live and work there, not the physical campus, athletic teams, mascot, or other characteristics.

During Texas A&M's first half-century, when these respondents were students, the campus offered little by way of luxury. In fact, many students lived in overcrowded one-room shacks that lacked both central heating and running water (567. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1; 771. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2). The rigors imposed by military discipline and hazing compounded these hardships (311. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1).

In addition, these harsh conditions set Aggies apart from other college students and ultimately made them feel superior. "We were in this thing

together," one class agent said, "We'd do whatever we had to to make it go. . . . We knew we weren't like the kids at Rice or SMU. We had to fend for ourselves and each other" (348. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2). In fact, several respondents spoke with disdain of "flashy" colleges where students took for granted wealth, comfort, and other amenities (260. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1).

Hazing and other aspects of military life at the college also helped create feelings of loyalty that were directed towards individuals rather than the positions of authority or power they represented (803. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). In addition, the fact that Texas A&M was all-male and geographically isolated meant that external distractions from schoolwork and military discipline were few and far between; students relied on their own creativity and initiative for recreation (310. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1; 790. 4-14-94. Letter. 12.1). However, most respondents remarked that the military discipline and primitive and isolated physical surroundings they endured at Texas A&M unified them and in large part contributed to their camaraderie and career ambitions (218. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 692. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

These respondents maintain this emphasis on people even now that Texas A&M is a modern university with every amenity imaginable and they themselves have achieved career success that affords them many luxuries. "At A&M [loyalty] means there's a total experience of being an Aggie, not just learning a trade," explained one class agent (833. 4-18-94. Telephone. 8.2). The respondents viewed their contributions to the university in terms of the people that would benefit, and the happiness they derived from their interaction with other Aggies, whether they were

describing scholarships they funded, building campaigns they helped with or volunteering their time to cook barbecue at a tailgate party (106. 1-14-94. Office. 6.1; 427. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1; 615. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1; 677. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1).

Because of this emphasis on people, these respondents are optimistic that the desirable experiences shared by Aggies through the decades can be retained indefinitely. "I'm hopeful that the good things can continue, even though the school we knew has been lost forever," was one typical response (738. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1). "All Aggies love each other and the school. That's what makes them different from others," was another (527. 3-10-94. Sul Ross. 13.1).

Conclusion Three:
Underlying the formal military hierarchy at Texas A&M during the 1920s and 1930s was an informal and contradictory code of conduct that also created feelings of loyalty.

Until participation in the Corps of Cadets was made optional in 1965, military decorum dominated virtually every aspect of a student's experience at Texas A&M, creating what one respondent called a "seamless existence" (697. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1). On the surface, it appears as though acceptance of this military emphasis and adherence to military codes of conduct alone were sufficient to ensure a student's success. The data from this study, however, revealed an underlying maze of contradictions, the successful maneuvering of which also created feelings of loyalty and prepared students for the ambiguities of adult life.

One of the most important values of the military tradition is respect for authority. Indeed, the Aggie code of honor ("Aggies neither lie, cheat,

nor steal, nor tolerate those who do") remains intact today (Dethloff, 1975). While this respect was well entrenched at Texas A&M during the 1920s and '30s (311. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1), there also existed an informal and contrary code of conduct that rewarded students for fulfilling the letter--but not the spirit--of the rules and regulations they promised to uphold.

Flouting authority often was seen as a game, a strategy for gaining favor either among one's peers or with the academic and administrative power structure already in place. Many times, parties on both sides of the power equilibrium understood and encouraged this behavior, never officially sanctioning it but acknowledging and responding to it nonetheless.

In the academic arena, students routinely mocked and ridiculed professors (509. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2), and professors often reciprocated by mocking their own professional responsibilities (509. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2). One example is the instructor in the English department who "always said, 'Our job here is to learn 'em English!'" (73. SR1. 12-6-94. CWC. 3.1). Another example comes from a Texas A&M professor, who during his commencement address to the Class of '38 announced, "This class has no more chance of succeeding than I do of becoming president of this college!" (72. SR1. 12-6-93. CWC. 3). Ironically--and irony lies at the very heart of this simultaneous allegiance to and flouting of the rules--Thomas Harrington indeed did become president of Texas A&M, and naturally many members of the Class of '38 went on to achieve great success.

On the administrative side, policies and procedures often were circumvented and twisted based on caprice. One respondent who flunked out of Texas A&M's engineering program later was readmitted in another

discipline based on the strength of a letter his mother had written to the dean on his behalf. The respondent recalled, "The dean later said, 'Son, if your momma is that good, you deserve another chance!'" (234. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1). At other times students put a great deal of time and effort into circumventing direct orders, and more often than not received praise for their cleverness from their peers, even if their deceit was detected and punished (461. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1; 704. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1).

This flouting of authority affected physical property as well as campus professionals and the policies and procedures they upheld. While students rarely stole from other students, even when given ample opportunity (266. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 814-815. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1), this same courtesy did not extend to property held by those in authority. Instead, students were bound by a "peculiar sense of 'honor'" to make a profitable game out of getting something for nothing at the expense of an authority figure (816. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). One respondent told of stealing an entire semester's worth of food and shelter for a stowaway student who couldn't afford both tuition and living expenses during the Great Depression (817. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). The same respondent later recalled a fellow student who nearly froze to death while trying to save 85 cents in train fare by clinging to the outside of a moving train (820. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). Sometimes students would seek to gain favor with their peers by damaging college property. For example, shooting the light off the top of the Academic Building dome became a standard way of gaining prestige (269. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1).

The prevalence of hazing despite official regulations prohibiting it (740. 4-14-94. Letter. 17.2) is perhaps the most dramatic example of the simultaneous obeying and subverting of authority. Upperclassmen's physical punishment of freshmen, while often "brutal" (694. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1), also was seen as a "fun game" of strategic importance in determining one's ranking in the eyes of peers (566. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1; 797. 11-29-94. Family History. 20.1). In addition, hazing prevailed (usually anonymously and under cover of night) in direct contrast to the official policy of military courtesy that was enforced strictly during the day (Dugan, 1984, p. 6).

Most respondents claimed that the organization and management skills they learned through involvement with the Corps of Cadets were the most valuable benefit of their college education and the distinction that makes Texas A&M superior to other universities even today (579. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1; 606. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2; 661. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1). "I still think the Corps of Cadets teaches things that you can't get anywhere else," was a common refrain (639. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1).

In addition, participation in the Corps of Cadets provided intense bonds between these students that scarcely could be duplicated in other circumstances. Hazing and military discipline created intense pressure to conform to and simultaneously flout a strict code of behavior that was enforced uniformly among one's peers. These respondents underwent very similar transformations upon their arrival as freshmen, as described by one particularly articulate respondent.

Initial feelings of homesickness and loathing of upperclassmen (795. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1) were transformed into feelings of

camaraderie with one's counterparts who were undergoing the same indignities. Within a year, hazing became a "fun game" (797. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1) that determined one's place in the hierarchy of power and prestige (800-801. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). Because physical punishment apparently was arbitrary, its meaning could be constructed in a variety of ways, and freshmen used this to create meaning that gave them an advantage in later years. For example, one respondent was hazed daily for more than a year because the upperclassman he reported to held a "friendly grudge" against the respondent's home town (802. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). Eventually, however, the respondent developed feelings of "respect . . . and finally love" for his tormentor, and "would have done anything for him" (803. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1).

The effect of hazing was compounded by the total lack of other distractions. This respondent emphasized, "We had no money and there were no girls. Now, I don't mean we had just a little money and there were just a few girls; we had NO money and there were NO girls (804. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1).

Thus, pressure from one's peers to tolerate harsh military hazing and create distractions from the monotony of everyday life led to the subversion of authority and to practical jokes (805. 11-29-93. Family History. 20.1). The lack of suitable alternatives led to the acceptance of military discipline. At the same time, bonds were formed among one's peers that made the questioning of authority all but unthinkable. Survival depended on conforming to the official code of conduct while simultaneously creating a code of conduct to subvert authority,

The data make abundantly clear that a large part of the loyalty these alumni feel for Texas A&M stems not only from their adherence to the official Corps of Cadets hierarchy, but also from following unofficial and subversive codes of behavior to win favor from their peers, gain self-confidence and learn about the nature of authority and formal relationships.

Conclusion Four:
The timing of the Great Depression and World War II during Texas A&M's history was the most significant factor in creating the Aggie loyalty known today.

The data from this study indicate that profound external influences, primarily the Great Depression and World War II, were catalysts in creating the behaviors that over the years became institutionalized in the form of traditions.

Texas A&M is steeped in symbolism and tradition, and by extension, expressions of loyalty. For example, even today very few students would sit down during an Aggie football game, because to do so would violate the spirit of the "twelfth man" tradition. The tradition was created in the 1922 forerunner to the Cotton Bowl, when the Texas A&M coach asked a basketball player sitting in the stands to suit up for possible play as his team became plagued with injuries. Although E. King Gill never was called to the field, his willingness to serve has been commemorated ever since by the entire student body, who willingly stand throughout a game to signify their same desire to serve (Dethloff, 1975).

Traditions such as this are an integral part of Texas A&M's organizational culture, and comprise the narratives that are passed down

from generation to generation to describe the essence of campus life. Traditions are so much a part of life at Texas A&M that people often joke that something done twice becomes a tradition by default.

Many of the current traditions at Texas A&M were created during the 1920s and '30s, when the respondents in this study were students or recent graduates. However, none of these alumni understood at the time that their actions were laying a foundation for future demonstrations of commitment and reverence (539. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1). "We didn't think in terms of tradition [when we were students]," explained one respondent. "We just did things because they were expected. We always thought the class just ahead of us was the first ones to do some of these traditions" (475. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1).

Thus, the behavior these respondents took for granted a half-century or more ago has become institutionalized, an inextricable part of the university's culture. Most of these traditions serve to create a sense of bonding among students and strengthen their feelings of loyalty to the university. In addition, this study has found that they stem from actions taken largely to counter the hardships wrought by the Great Depression and World War II.

Texas A&M was just 53 years old, still creating its academic and cultural niche, when the stock market crashed in the fall of 1929. The college already had a reputation for providing solid, practical vocational and military training for young men who generally came from rural Texas families of modest means (358. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 622. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1; 655. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 18.1). Texas A&M's low tuition and

room and board costs became especially important incentives during the Depression (229. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 543. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1; 601. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2). Indeed, some respondents said they chose the college not because they had an interest in the military, but simply because wearing a uniform every day cut down on clothing expenses (323. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2; 485. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2; 546. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 15.1).

Many students of this era were the first in their families to complete a college degree (318. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1; 614. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1). They often came from families in which education was valued as a means of self-improvement based entirely on individual initiative and ambition. "My mom knew the thing for us to do was to go to college, even though she just had a grade school education," said one respondent (322. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2). "We knew we had to get an education in order to get out of the [cotton] fields," said another. "Our futures were set if we didn't go to college, and a lot of us weren't satisfied with that" (262. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1).

Thus, Texas A&M in its early years often attracted young men who came from meager circumstances, but who believed that hard work and a college degree would pay off. When the Depression hit, this framework of beliefs became even more entrenched as students helped each other through hard economic times (156. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1; 265. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1; 692. 3-21-94. Office. 19.1). A few respondents recognized the connection between the timing of the Depression and the strong relationships formed at Texas A&M (77. SR1. 12-6-93. CWC. 4). As one class agent who graduated in the mid-1930s said,

> I have a kindred feeling with Aggies who graduated between about 1930 and '37. This is due to many factors. One is that we

> all had to endure the most horrible economic conditions this country has ever known (216. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Of course, the Depression affected everyone affiliated with Texas A&M, not just the students. The college's administrators put several programs into place to help faculty (such as lowering the rents on university-owned housing) and students (such as lowering tuition and building "project houses" where students raised their own crops) alike (Dethloff, 1975).

Some of these programs, such as the low-interest student loan fund sponsored by the Ex-Students' Association, engendered a literal as well as figurative debt among its recipients. As much as the organizational culture of hard work and community-spiritedness already in place at Texas A&M by the 1930s, these formal programs helped create feelings of loyalty and obligation. Texas A&M at this point was a young institution, just beginning to have a well-defined alumni body with recent and strong links to the college. Still, the college was mature enough by the 1930s to have a critical mass of graduates who had achieved considerable financial success (mainly through oil production and ranching) and political clout (161-164. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1). It was these alumni who provided money for the student loan fund, came back to College Station to teach classes in their areas of expertise, and made it a point to hire Aggies, thus building the famous Aggie professional network. As one respondent remembered, "When times got tough, they would try to help A&M and Aggies in any way they could," (160. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1).

Similarly, just as the Depression turned deprivation and a spirit of cooperation and "making do" into a national phenomenon, so too did

World War II bring to the forefront the experiences of students who devoted their precious college years to military discipline and rigor. Even those who entered Texas A&M primarily to save on clothing expenses found themselves key players in an international drama of truly profound proportions.

Aggies became heroes for their authentic patriotism and willingness to serve. Indeed, more than 20,000 Aggies--about 14,000 of them officers--served in World War II, more than from any other institution except the military academies (Bynum, 1991, p. 321). The entire of Class of 1944 left campus literally overnight when called to service (Dethloff, 1975). In addition, Aggies were instrumental in many of the most important battles; among these respondents, only one did not leave the United States to fight (because of an injured leg) (446. 3-3-94. Home. 11.1). Others spoke matter-of-factly about their involvement in battles at Normandy (576. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1) and Omaha Beach (203. 1-20-94. Home. 7.1). Perhaps the most notable Aggie hero from World War II was Gen. Earl Rudder, a 1932 graduate who helped lead the battle at Normandy. Rudder served as president of Texas A&M from 1959-70 , and was a decisive figure in the university's transformation into a coeducational research university (Dethloff, 1975).

Thus, the timing of the War itself--and the involvement of so many hard-working and ambitious Texas A&M graduates--created a network of camaraderie that tied these alumni to each other and directly back to their alma mater. In addition, the tide of patriotism that swept the nation made Texas A&M an appealing choice for many entering freshmen.

"There was a good feeling generally [regarding Texas A&M]," recalled one respondent. "People wanted to be part of the action, to be officers" (232. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1).

This patriotism also helped institutionalize some of the university's traditions. "Some things that are not understandable by everyone but sacred to Aggies developed at these times, I think, because during these times there was little disillusionment with the military aspects of the college," noted one respondent (591. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2).

The data in this study clearly indicate that the timing of the Great Depression and World War II in Texas A&M's history was a major factor in creating and sustaining the unique traditions for which the university is known. Still, that does not mean that all older alumni embrace the traditions enthusiastically. One class agent said he believes that "some of the [traditions at A&M] are overdone" (476. 3-3-94. Home. 12.1), and another claimed that "one bad thing about Aggies [is] that they brag too much!" (257. 2-4-94. Home. 8.1).

Conclusion Five:
New strategies for maintaining support must be created for younger alumni of Texas A&M.

The data revealed factors that have contributed to institutional support by these older alumni. When contrasted with the experiences of the typical student at Texas A&M today, it becomes clear that new strategies for building and maintaining support among younger alumni must be created.

Underlying Texas A&M's history and the lives of these respondents is the notion of change. As described in greater detail elsewhere in this

study, Texas A&M was a small vocational and military training college when these respondents were students. The campus was bleak and isolated, and living conditions were primitive at best. During the half-century since these respondents were students or recent graduates, Texas A&M has been transformed into a major coeducational research institution with nearly 43,000 students from more than 200 countries. Despite these changes, many traditions unique to Texas A&M and stemming from its military heritage continue today.

The respondents in this study considered the admission of women students, making Corps of Cadets participation optional and the tremendous growth in enrollment the most dramatic changes Texas A&M has experienced (390. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1; 565. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1; 607. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 3.2). In addition, advances in technology and transportation make the contrast between then and now even more acute (345. 2-22-94. Home. 4.2; 499. 3-4-94. Office. 5.2; 564. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 16.1). These respondents were very much aware of these changes. "[I]t was just a different ballgame than today," was a common perception (371. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1).

Respondents were hopeful that current and future Aggies will have many of the same enriching and rewarding experiences they remember from their college years (390. 2-24-94. CWC. 10.1). Said one respondent,

> [Although traditions at A&M may change] the things that make for growth and development of a person stay the same. We have a different set of students now, so we have to do things differently. Our home life is different. As long as we emphasize the basics of what it takes to develop good characteristics, [today's students] will develop whether the traditions are exactly the same or not (315. 2-22-94. Home. 9.1).

While Texas A&M's organizational culture is based on a heritage of having only a few thousand students, being all-male and having a distinct military emphasis, the experiences of current students differ dramatically. Even before they first step on campus, the Aggies of today differ from the university's former students and from each other. Today's students are relatively more affluent, more urban and more diverse than the students of yesteryear. Despite the prevalent belief that Aggies remain thoroughly "conservative, God-fearing, and patriotic" (637. 3-11-94. Sul Ross. 17.1), concessions to change must be made.

On the other hand, the sheer force of tradition at Texas A&M, and the qualities of conservatism that continue to attract many students to this campus instead of another, indicate that many of today's students are aware of the university's heritage and consciously choose to maintain its ties to the past. Thus, while the majority of today's students are urban and affluent, their deference to traditions--or at least their willingness to "go through the motions" even when they might lack knowledge or interest in the historical events behind them--creates an opportunity for development professionals to nurture institutional commitment that likely will increase over the years.

Contemporary strategies for creating institutional commitment cannot be carbon copies of those used in the past; indeed, many respondents in this study seemed unaware that their actions and beliefs of a half century ago laid the foundation for the university's top-ten ranking in private support. Strategies that paid off handsomely during the past 50 years can be irrelevant to today's graduates. Although designing strategies for encouraging support among recent alumni of Texas A&M is

not the focus of this study, these data clearly show that development professionals must shape new organizational sagas that have distinct ties to the university's past, if they are to maintain the interest and support of younger graduates.

Implications for Practice

Implication One:
Enthusiasm for college programs and the individuals involved with them does not necessarily diminish over time.

It seems logical that interest in one's alma mater would diminish as decades pass and career and family matters consume more time and energy. This study, however, revealed that this is not always the case. These alumni contributed their time and other resources to Texas A&M steadily after graduation. The few who contributed significantly more upon retirement generally did so because geographical distance precluded their earlier involvement, and they consciously chose to move nearer the university to make participation feasible. For this group, the inability to become involved with the university throughout their lives was seen as a handicap that they actively sought to remedy.

This has important implications for alumni and development professionals. Most importantly, it means that older alumni do not have to be "talked into" supporting the university. Their motivation is high; only the appropriate fit with an opportunity for giving might have been lacking. Thus, a great deal of effort in establishing interest can be eliminated. Scarce resources can be put to use better through providing information about the university and programs that might be of interest

to certain alumni, not through trying to "recruit" the alumni as contributors. Older alumni often are well informed about the university through whatever external channels are available; they are aware of problems but realistically want to do what they can to improve the situation.

Implication Two:
Older alumni who are enthusiastic about their alma mater will find ways to contribute to campus life, even beyond the avenues for participation organized by the alumni association.

This study provides an instance in which older alumni are willing and enthusiastic supporters of their alma mater. While this study cannot be generalized, it indicates that the dearth of scholarly and practical inquiry into this population's giving potential is problematic in that it suggests that alumni and development professionals too often focus their energies on young alumni at the expense of older graduates.

The fact that this study uncovered many "peripheral" means of institutional support, such as serving on university advisory panels or recommending the university to family members and friends, indicates an eagerness to participate in the life of the university that extends beyond the alumni (or athletic) association's programmatic efforts. The alumni in this study attributed their involvement largely to altruistic motives--a desire to give back something to the university, a belief that younger people could benefit from their experiences, and an interest in keeping active in their community. In most cases, their personal satisfaction was their only reward for service; indeed, many went out of their way to remain behind the scenes.

Older alumni clearly are a potentially profitable market segment. They are, furthermore, a group that often is more secure financially, and therefore, more willing to commit personal resources to institutional goals. Their eagerness to participate across colleges and programs can be cultivated to reap even greater rewards for both the former students and the university.

Implication Three:
Emphasis should focus on individual interaction, not the institution.

This study shows that people give their time, effort and financial resources to other people, not to institutions as a whole. For example, these respondents perceived service to their classmates as class agents and Sul Ross reunion officers as the most important indication of their loyalty, despite their many financially significant contributions.

Alumni and development professionals can profit from this information in their everyday roles by giving volunteers recognition, support and constant encouragement and by paying attention to the characteristics that make a particular alumnus unique. Details, such as taking time to visit with volunteers when they are on campus, can go a long way to nurturing the relationship of the alumnus to the university, even though the benefits might not be apparently immediately.

In addition, this focus on individuals underscores the importance and potential profitability of an institution's planned giving efforts. As noted, planned giving is the largest growth area for colleges and universities as alumni of the baby-boom generation grow older and seek advice on estate planning and bequests that benefit both themselves and the institution (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 18, 1994). Obviously,

this attention to alumni as individuals who are drawn to specific aspects of the university can be extremely profitable. Alumni and development professionals should look beyond demographic data and understand their constituencies as individuals as much as possible, just as these alumni view the university in terms of the people who study and work there.

Implication Four:
Communication from the institution to alumni must be relevant, honest, and constant.

This study demonstrates the importance of keeping alumni informed and including them as appropriate in changes occurring at the institution. The respondents in this study contributed generously to Texas A&M, even though the institution they remembered from their college years in many ways does not exist, either figuratively or literally. The factors that generated support among older alumni are tied to people and feelings of affiliation with the "organizational saga" of achievement and pride, not to specific buildings or other campus characteristics. These respondents were interested in change and in many cases even supported very radical departures from "the way things always have been done."

Alumni coordinators and others can use this interest to their institution's advantage by keeping their older alumni fully informed of change, even when it's negative. For example, the alumni in this study were very well informed about the scandals and controversies that have plagued Texas A&M during the early 1990s, and had very specific opinions about the action that should be taken to remedy these situations. If the university's alumni publications had blithely ignored the headlines

found in major Texas newspapers during this time, a great deal of credibility would have been lost in their eyes. Accurate and timely communication from the university to older alumni can assuage fears that the university has lost all integrity and even suggest options for their involvement.

Recommendations

Many ideas for generating support among older alumni came out of this study. The following is only a partial list of opportunities that alumni professionals can use to promote feelings of loyalty and commitment.

1. Include a section in alumni publications devoted exclusively to older graduates. Older alumni are not sedentary; they often change addresses following retirement or during ill health. Seeing a long-lost classmate's address in the alumni magazine could spur interest in the institution as well as in the individual.
2. As the budget allows, create publications exclusively for older alumni. Even a biannual tabloid could provide this constituency with information they would not receive elsewhere and make them feel special. In addition, older adults have more leisure time to devote to such pursuits.
3. Encourage older graduates to become involved in campus life. Those who live nearby could give classroom presentations about their careers or travels, or could help with orientation or registration activities.

This mixing of old graduates with current students provides an important sense of institutional history and continuity.

4. Encourage older alumni to provide summer employment opportunities or internships for current students.
5. Hold special events for older alumni in the cities where they live. Current students, faculty members or administrators could give brief presentations about life on campus to keep alumni informed.
6. Conduct special exercise classes on campus for older graduates living in the area. Traditional aerobics and weight training classes could be changed slightly to meet their special needs.
7. Actively promote campus cultural and athletic events throughout the surrounding communities. Upon retirement, many older alumni move to the town where their alma mater is located because they consider it to be their true home.

Of course, many other options can be created to involve older alumni in all phases of university life: special cultural, educational and recreational programs can be designed for an older audience, or the expertise and insights of older alumni can be solicited for programs already in place, such as student recruitment, counseling, and lecturing. The important--and encouraging--lessons of this study are that older alumni are capable, creative, and eager participants in the life of the university they believe contributed so much to their own career and personal success.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF DOCUMENTATION

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APPENDIX B

SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE

313 Day St.
Bryan, Texas 77801
July 8, 1993

Mr. Porter Garner
Associate Executive Director of Alumni Programs
Association of Former Students
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas 77844

Dear Porter:

As you might remember, I am completing a Ph.D. in higher education administration, and hope to pursue a career that combines my experience in writing, marketing and public relations with a position at a college or university, such as in alumni affairs, development, or an office of public information.

Now that I have completed my coursework and preliminary exams, I am trying to find a dissertation research topic in one of these areas. Ideally, my study could benefit another organization. Are there any programs or issues that you, as associate executive director, would be interested in having studied? Here are some broad suggestions:

- The effectiveness of The Texas Aggie in reaching the increasingly diverse alumni population (or an update of Roy Steele's 1973 study, "An Analysis of the Effectiveness of The Texas Aggie as a Public Relations Medium for Former Students of Texas A&M University").
- The effectiveness of the Association's telephone fundraising efforts.
- The effectiveness of the Association's current governance structure.
- Ways class programs can best reach an alumni body that is increasingly large and diverse.

Please think about these or other issues for possible study. I will call you next week to arrange an appointment to discuss this. I am enclosing a resume so you can see the professional activities I have been involved with since I left the Association. Thanks a lot for your help.

Sincerely,

Ann M. Alsmeyer
Graduate Assistant

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Jim Jeter
Mr. Porter Garner
Ms. Olive DeLucia

FROM: Ann M. Alsmeyer

RE: Dissertation proposal

September 20, 1993

I'm sorry I was unable to reach any of you by telephone last week. I understand how busy you are, especially this time of year.

I have enclosed a copy of my dissertation proposal that outlines my idea of interviewing Aggies in the Sul Ross classes. I have given a copy of it to each of my committee members and will discuss it with them as soon as possible. This is by no means a final draft of my proposal. I'm sure you will have suggestions that I haven't considered. I will call each of you later in the week to see if you're agreeable to this research, and to find out your suggestions and comments.

Thanks so much for your consideration. I'm eager to get started and look forward to seeing each of you.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. James M. Jeter
Mr. Porter S. Garner
Ms. Olive DeLucia

FROM: Ann M. Alsmeyer

RE: Possible dissertation research proposal summary

September 13, 1993

First of all, thank you again, Jim and Porter, for visiting with me a few weeks ago about possible research topics that could involve the Association of Former Students. After much thought, I have come up with the idea (see attached) of working with those who truly are "old Ags"--members of the Sul Ross classes.

I would like to pursue this because it relates to my interest in alumni affairs, because it does not require extensive travel, and because I think these are men who have invaluable insights into what Texas A&M means and how it operates, both 50 or more years ago and today. I believe their opinions and experiences can provide tremendous insight into the nature of Texas A&M, and how alumni programs can (and do) tailor to their special needs. In addition, in my brief experience with these men (Name, Name, and Name come to mind), I quickly came to realize that they have many insights and contributions that with time are in danger of being lost forever. Perhaps my dissertation might in some small way prevent this from happening.

Attached is a brief outline of what I have in mind. If this is agreeable to you, I will continue with my review of the literature and write a formal 10-page proposal to present to my committee, then begin my research in earnest. With your consent, I would like to get started as quickly as possible so that I might become involved with some of the mini-reunions scheduled here this fall.

Thanks so much for your consideration. I will telephone you later in the week to discuss this with you further.

313 Day St.
Bryan, Texas 77801
November 22, 1993

Mr. Class Agent
Street
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. Class Agent:

While I was growing up in College Station, my grandfather, Henry L. Alsmeyer, Class of '23, often told stories about his experiences at Texas A&M, the friends he made there, and how being an Aggie shaped his life. Until his death in 1979, he stayed active in the life of the university as a Class Agent and participant in the annual Sul Ross reunions.

The stories he told stuck with me through the years, and inspired me to pursue a career in alumni relations. I am now a student at Texas A&M myself, and would like to conduct a study that examines the experiences other "old Ags" and how Texas A&M has affected their lives.

As a Class Agent, you have demonstrated your involvement with Texas A&M. Would you be willing to visit with me and share some of your experiences, beliefs, and opinions about Texas A&M? Please think this over during the next week or two. I will telephone you the week of November 29 to see if you would be willing to meet with me.

I would love to meet you at your convenience and learn more about your experiences as a student, and your feelings about the university at the Association of Former Students.

Olive DeLucia, Jim Jeter and Porter Garner have given this their "stamp of approval." Thank you for your time, and "Gig' em Aggies!"

Sincerely,

Ann M. Alsmeyer '88
Graduate Assistant

313 Day St.
Bryan, Texas 77801
February 28, 1994

Mr. Class Agent
Street
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. Class Agent:

As you may remember, I am interviewing class agents and Sul Ross officers who graduated from Texas A&M 50 or more years ago for a research project. I have already met with the class agents in the Bryan-College Station area. I plan to be in [your city on these dates], and would love to visit with you while I'm there.

I'm enclosing a copy of topics I'd like to discuss with you. I thought it might be easier if you knew in advance what questions I'd like to ask so you could think about them before we meet. These interviews usually last about an hour.

I will call you [on this date] to see if there's a convenient time for you to meet next Monday or Tuesday. If you are unable to meet then, perhaps we could meet during the Sul Ross reunion in College Station March 9-12. Thanks for your help!

Sincerely,

Ann M. Alsmeyer
Graduate Assistant

313 Day St.
Bryan, Texas 77801
March 2, 1994

Mr. Class Agent
Street
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. Class Agent:

As you may remember, I am interviewing class agents and Sul Ross officers who graduated from Texas A&M 50 or more years ago for a research project. I have met with many class agents and hope to be able to visit with you while you're in College Station for the Sul Ross reunion next week.

I'm enclosing a copy of topics I'd like to discuss with you. I thought it might be easier if you knew in advance what questions I'd like to ask so you could think about them before we meet. These interviews usually last about an hour.

I hope that you will be able to find an hour to meet with me next week. I will be at most of the activities and will try to find you. Thanks for your help!

Sincerely,

Ann M. Alsmeyer
Graduate Assistant

APPENDIX C

RESPONDENT CONSENT FORM

My signature below indicates that I know and understand the nature of the dissertation research conducted by Ann Alsmeyer and agree that the information given in my interview(s) will be used in her dissertation.

I also understand and agree to the following:

- Ann Alsmeyer will seek to maintain confidentiality and anonymity to the highest degree possible. Identifying characteristics in my interviews will be changed. However, because of the nature of this topic, absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- My interview information will be coded, and the code key will be protected, so that my identity can be revealed only by the researcher.
- I have complete freedom to revise or add to my interview comments as necessary. No interview transcriptions will be analyzed until I give my written or verbal approval that the information is correct and complete as given.
- I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time of my choosing. In addition, I am free to retract information even after I have given my initial consent.

Name_____ Date_____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

These questions/discussion topics guided each interview:

- Tell me what it was like to be a student at Texas A&M when you attended.
- Why did you choose Texas A&M instead of another college?
- What reasons do you think most of your classmates had for attending Texas A&M over another college or no college at all?
- In one or two words, how would you describe yourself as a student?
- What did you do after graduation? (Career, marriage, children . . .) Did being an Aggie make it easier to find a job?
- Did you maintain any ties to Texas A&M after graduation? Did these ties get stronger as time went by?
- How long have you been a class agent? How did you become a class agent?
- What other organizations or clubs are you involved with? Did you become more involved after retirement?
- There are certain characteristics that come to mind when people think of Texas A&M, such as loyalty, pride, tradition. Do you think these are accurate? Do you think they apply more strongly to A&M than to other colleges and universities? Do you think the "Aggie spirit" can remain strong given the changes at Texas A&M?
- As a student, did you have any sense that you were helping to build traditions that would become so legendary and well-known?
- Did you support A&M's transition into a major research university, such as making Corps participation optional and admitting women students? Have your opinions changed since these changes were made?
- Did you encourage your children, grandchildren, or other family members or friends to attend A&M?

APPENDIX E

AUDITOR'S REPORT

Audit
for An Analysis of Institutional Commitment
Among Older Alumni of Texas A&M University
by Ann Marie Alsmeyer

Auditor: Sharon Spall
1807 A Briar Oaks
Bryan, Texas 77802

Credentials: I have studied naturalistic inquiry under the direction of Dr. Yvonna Lincoln and completed additional study in qualitative research in the anthropology and sociology departments at Texas A&M University from 1992-93. I also had the privilege to be a peer reviewer on two qualitative projects.

This audit reviewed the raw data, the log of activities, the log of methodological activities, and log of all data analysis activities, the reflexive journal, and the final product of the study, the dissertation. The review established the dependability and confirmability of the inquiry.

The following steps comprised the audit:

Read the dissertation.
Read the reflexive journal entries and noted all analysis and all the methodological entries.
Reread Chapter 3 and checked the reference to analysis and to decisions of method to the reflexive journal.
Reviewed the category system, randomly selected seven categories, and read all the cards to understand the logic of the sorting.
Reread Chapters 4 and 5. Selected references to field notes and retraced the data citations.
Surveyed the log of activities, documents, and selected field notes for multiple data sources for evidence of triangulation activities.
Met with the researcher for debriefing on the audit.

Total hours: 7

The documentation followed the procedures prescribed for naturalistic inquiry. A clear audit trail allowed the auditor to retrace the information to the field notes, or raw data. The procedures in Chapter 3, entries in the journal, and field notes show that the study was conducted in a fair and adequate manner. For example, great care was taken to submit all field notes to respondents to verify accuracy.

The original field notes and reflexive journal were compared to the analyzed data and final product of the study to establish confirmability. The category system and items within the categories showed that the data were carefully coded. The questions asked the respondents, the supporting documents, and field notes give evidence of triangulation throughout the investigation. The findings are based on the data obtained from the inquiry.

My observations and review of the products show that this inquiry meets the requirements of confirmability and dependability set forth in the guidelines of naturalistic inquiry.

Auditor's Signature Sharon Spall **Date** Aug. 28 '94