

Remarks by Chancellor John Sharp
Navarro County A&M Club Muster, April 21, 2013

Thank you... great to be in Corsicana, a town with a great Aggie tradition. A&M is not merely a school of many traditions. We are bound together *by* tradition.

There is the 12th Man, where our student body stands ready to enter the game. There is the Corps of Cadets...the keepers of the traditions...who remind us to this day of our military roots despite the development of a very diverse and modern university. There is the Band...the Pulse of Aggieland...and then there is the tradition of CT's running across the band drill field without getting beaten by BQ's falling out of trees.

Then there is the solemn and the reverent...such as Silver Taps, where we gather in silence with the exception of a few horns...to honor any current student lost in the previous month.

And then the most solemn of all...Aggie Muster.

James W, Aston, Class of '33 once said, *"No occasion can be more sacred than one where we honor those who have honored us... The other significance of the Aggie Muster is to remind us of our duty as Aggies to the past, present and future. We are the beneficiaries of the tireless and unselfish sacrifices of those we honor today, but we are also the recipients of responsibilities which, to faithfully discharge, will require the best that you and I possess."*

Tonight, we are joined in spirit by generations of Aggies past, present and future. We gather to celebrate our bonds of affiliation...and to perform our sacred duty of remembrance, commemorating the lives of the loved and the lost.

It used to be that Muster was simply a celebration of our affiliation...a command that all Aggies within 100 miles of each other gather to remember their A&M days...eat bar-b-que...drink cold pops...and they probably played 42 or horseshoes too.

But then came 42...the year '42. And 25 of our finest were under siege on Corregidor, led by Major General George P. Moore, Class of 1908. With the sound of Japanese guns as their backdrop, they paused to remember classmates and Aggies already lost, with their own fate uncertain. Soon, all 25 would be captured...and only 12 would survive.

What makes this particular Muster famous is the fact a war correspondent heard the story and put it on the wire for all the world to hear. But what makes it significant is not that the story was told, but that it happened...that men under siege found it worth their time and devotion to remember their fallen friends.

Their own lives at risk, they thought of others. And that my friends is the meaning of being an Aggie...fighting for and living for...causes greater than self.

Almost every school has a football team. Many have great schools of business and engineering. All have alumni gatherings that celebrate days of old. And a few have military cadets.

But none combine all these elements of excellence and remembrance...tradition and affiliation...and bring them together in a single, solemn ceremony that signifies what we are as Aggies to the core of our being.

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In an era where culture tells us to look out for yourself, Texas A&M still tells us to look out for one another.

If you were in the Corps of Cadets...that very first day of Freshman Orientation Week...you are taught the sum of the whole is greater than the individual parts. You are taught this when you are all given the same first name...fish. No one is elevated...you are all just lowly...and soon lonely...fish.

And then those fish from various communities, backgrounds and ethnic and racial roots over the course of one year become one. They learn to look out for each other, to march together, to eat together, to study together, to even share a date together. It is really horrible for the date of a freshman in the Corps.

In this process, the many become one...through a process that Scripture describes as “iron sharpening iron.” You do countless push-ups together...you spend late nights cleaning your fish hole together. You get screamed at on “the wall together.” Your individuality is broken down...your collective sense of one is formed. The cause of one another becomes greater than self.

And it is this crucible that sends Aggies out into the world...and not just those who have been a part of the Corps, but all who have been a part of the many great Aggie traditions that teach service ahead of self. And the proof is in the pudding.

It was the Class of '17 that graduated en masse early to go overseas and fight and die to liberate Europe. It was those classes of the 1930's and 1940's who fought on the high seas...who flew missions from the air...who died and bled in foxholes and lonely islands to free millions from the forces of oppression in World War II.

It was the Aggie heroes in Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War who brought down the Iron Curtain and a murderous Soviet regime, freeing millions of Russians, millions of neighboring Republics, and people throughout Eastern Europe.

And it was Aggies who fought, died and today bear the scars of the first Persian Gulf War...the War in Iraq...and the war that continues in Afghanistan today...who continue to do us proud.

But it's not just Aggies on the field of battle who have advanced the cause of service. It's Aggies in classrooms and boardrooms. Aggies in factories and mills. Aggies on oil rigs, in soup kitchens, involved in charities and private giving who have put a love of country and neighbor first. That's not just what Aggies do, *that's who we are.*

If society preaches narcissism, Aggies teach sacrifice and love. It's what makes the Aggie experience unique...that there is a campus in a Texas town today that ingrains a culture of selflessness in its students.

As we light a candle tonight for a loved one who has passed on, we recognize the giving Spirit of Aggies continues amongst the living. It symbolizes that the spirit of the dead fills the souls of the living. And it reminds us that their mission of making the world a better place remains our mission. We live to give...and remember those who have given all.

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As you leave here today, renew your commitment to the Aggie Spirit. You have the power to make the world a better place...to make your community a better place. You are the ambassadors of Aggieland, no matter how long ago you graduated. You are the carriers of the message...of an ethos of selflessness...of values that are timeless. Keep the spirit by fulfilling your duty.

Thank you, God bless you, and Gig'em.

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