



# TEXAS A&M'S GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

It's been 50 years since our little school on the Brazos got the shock of its young life.

This year, 2013, marks half a century since A&M admitted women and African Americans to the newly named Texas A&M University. As the year comes to a close, *Texas Aggie* invites its readers to meet three of the original students who lived through Texas A&M's transitional years. They have something important to say.

BY STEPHANIE JETER CANNON '06

HISTORICAL PHOTO COURTESY OF CUSHING MEMORIAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES. MODERN PHOTO BY PATRICK DANIELCZYK '03. DIGITAL COMPOSITION BY LINDA SUAREZ.

The iconic black and photo taken of the YMCA building in 1945 is blended with a current photo of the same building.



With annual gifts from former students and the entire Aggie Network, The Association of Former Students provides support to Texas A&M University and Texas Aggies. "Dollars at Work" reflects how your annual gift to The Association impacts the lives of students, faculty, staff and former students, perpetuating a lasting legacy of Aggie Spirit, camaraderie and pride.

# AGGIE DOLLARS@WORK

## All Faiths Chapel: Encouraging Spiritual Expression

By Stephanie Jeter Cannon '06  
Photos By Patrick Danielczyk '03

First you notice the carpet. "It's definitely worn," says **Neil Peltier '97**, assistant director of University Center & Special Events and athletics tailgating. Entering further into Texas A&M's All Faiths Chapel, he points out the most worn parts.

"Oh, and you've got to see this," says Billy Bielamowicz, director of University Center & Special Events, walking to the front of the chapel. All Faiths Chapel has 176 theater-style seats, and most have unworkable springs due to age, but the front row shows the most damage, he says.

From a hole in the seat's fabric, Bielamowicz pinches out the material used as stuffing. "This is real, genuine horse hair," he says. "These are the original seats from when the chapel was built."

In the 55 years since All Faith's Chapel was dedicated, the much-used building, like its carpet, has worn thin, Peltier says. So much so, that last April, the Student Senate introduced and passed the All Faiths Chapel Bill, requesting that funds be directed toward having the pews reupholstered.

Much like when All Faiths Chapel was initially built more than 55 years ago, funds to help renovate the building are being raised by former students.

It's not widely known that the All Faith's Chapel was originally constructed with funds donated by former students through The Association of Former Students, Peltier says. In 1952, The Association of Former Students started a campaign to raise money for the building, and over the next few years, thousands of former students joined together to give \$200,000 to support the project.

The building was called The Association of Former Students' "finest gift" in an editorial published in *The Battalion* in 1955. "The former students have done it again," the editorial read. "And because they have done it, students will have another beautiful building in the near future."

And it was beautiful—The Association sponsored a competition among former student architects for the design of the chapel and **Richard Vrooman '52** won the

prize. The garden, lush and serene, was designed to be visible through glass walls. The shell limestone walls were chosen to match the Memorial Student Center, and the interior wood accents were done in natural finish.

Its beauty will remain. "When you walk in here, you won't notice a drastic difference," Peltier says. With new, but similar-colored carpets, and new, but similar-colored seats, "it will regain its crispness."

The renovation project is made possible by donors to The Association of Former Students.

"We have an obligation to provide students with buildings where they can learn and grow as individuals," Peltier says. All Faiths Chapel was envisioned, built and dedicated to encourage the spiritual expression of students and belief-based organizations, as well as serve former students and the entire community.

Countless memorial services, thousands of weddings have been held at the chapel. Student groups fill the chapel daily, using it as a place to come together.



**Klark Kurz '12** and **Joshua Hahn '16** are just two of the students who use the chapel. During *Texas Aggie's* visit to All Faiths, a student organization they're part of—College Station House of Prayer Campus Ministry—is wrapping up their daily event held in the chapel.

"This building, more than any other building on campus, has made a difference in my life," Kurz says. All Faiths is home, he says. "I have so many really special memories here."

When he asked his wife, **Polly '12**, to marry him, it was in the chapel that he told all his friends of their engagement. It was in the chapel where his faith grew deep and wide and life-changing. When he showed up on the first day of classes, "right as I opened the door, I turned to Polly and said 'Welcome home.'"

"Precious—All Faiths has been precious in my life," Hahn says. He started coming regularly to the chapel last year as part of ministry called The Divine Experiment—a 21-day focus on Jesus. "In the midst of that, I encountered a love in my life that I didn't know could exist. My behaviors and habits changed. My life is filled with so much joy." He now wants to help people and is pursuing a career in medicine.

A building doesn't cause life change, but it can host it. And it's for that reason that they both nod their heads in agreement. "We're really thankful for this building. It's so



considerate of the former students to renovate," Kurz says.

When you think of the number of similar stories that have surrounded All Faiths Chapel, Peltier says, it's encouragement to act in support of keeping the building in good working order.

Bielamowicz has been employed on campus for 38 years and has heard story after story of weddings, student groups and events that support the community. "We are excited to get this building back in a condition where students and former students can be proud of the facility, and we're grateful for all the former students who helped make it possible," he says.

Renovation will start after the spring semester to minimize conflict with student activities.



To learn more about Traveling Aggies® trips, or to see more pictures from past adventures, go to [AggieNetwork.com/Travel](http://AggieNetwork.com/Travel). If we can be of service or answer any questions, call us at (800) 633-7514 or email us at [TravelingAggies@AggieNetwork.com](mailto:TravelingAggies@AggieNetwork.com).

# AGGIE TRAVELINGAGGIES®

## Alaskan Wilderness

The Traveling Aggies enjoyed a cruise aboard Oceania Regatta from Seattle to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. From Seattle, they traveled to Ketchikan and learned about the local cultures and ecosystems before traveling to Alaska's capital, Juneau, then on to visit the Mendenhall Glacier. After experiencing Skagway's spectacular natural setting and the abundant wildlife of Icy Strait Point, the Traveling Aggies sailed on to Victoria.



*"The Traveling Aggies trips are the most fun thing you can do for your vacations. I tell anyone who will listen to me to try a Traveling Aggies' trip."*

~Jim Hopper '68



## South Africa Hunting

Porter Garner '79, President and CEO of The Association of Former Students, hosted 21 fellow Aggies on an exciting plains game safari in the rugged bushveld of South Africa's Northern Cape in July. The party enjoyed nine days of world-class hunting, including dangerous game! The experience included two luxury camps, expert field staff, fantastic cuisine and spirited Aggie camaraderie. The trip was organized by Randy Saucedo '93 of L&L Sporting Journeys and the outfitter was Wintershoek Johnny Vivier Safaris. A 2015 return is already in the works!

*"Start with inspiring Aggie camaraderie, add incredible wildlife, first-class accommodations and expert staff and the recipe for an unforgettable sporting experience is complete. Our travel partners continue to produce awe-inspiring trips for our Traveling Aggies programs."*

~Porter S. Garner III '79



## Machu Picchu To The Galapagos

The Traveling Aggies crossed the equator in July to take in the beauty and history of Peru's Sacred Valley of the Incas, including the majestic Machu Picchu. After enjoying seven days of Peruvian culture and cuisine, the group journeyed to Ecuador, where they surveyed the natural beauty and wildlife of the Galapagos Islands and cruised the Pacific Ocean aboard the motor yacht Coral II.

## Viking Passage

Aboard Oceania's Marina, the Traveling Aggies enjoyed a cruise from New York to London. After leaving New York, the Traveling Aggies stopped in Bar Harbor, Halifax, Sydney, Quebec City, Corner Brook and L'Anse Aux Meadows, Canada. After three days cruising the Atlantic Ocean, the Traveling Aggies arrived in Cork, Ireland, before going to Dublin and Falmouth and concluding in London.



## Waterways Of Russia

Aboard the deluxe Volga Dream, the Traveling Aggies enjoyed an enriching experience, traveling from St. Petersburg to Moscow, Russia. The Traveling Aggies enjoyed Russia's rich history, stopping at historic sites along the way in Mandrogi, Kizhi Island, Goritsy, Yaroslavl and Uglich.

*"I dreamed my whole life of seeing Russia & this trip exceeded my expectations!"*

~Debbi Dimmick '74



## Discover Switzerland

During their 14 nights in Switzerland, the Traveling Aggies explored medieval villages and cruised the crystal waters of Switzerland's lakes as well as enjoyed the breathtaking Matterhorn, stunning Reichenbach Falls and the medieval Chateau de Chillon in Montreux. The day trips included Brienz, Kandersteg, Lucerne, Meiringen, Bern, Lauterbrunnen, Murten, Thun, Zermatt and Grindelwald.

