

“We may be rivals on the field, but we can be friends in life.”

PRESERVING A GLEAMING MEMORY

Volunteers ranging from current A&M students to University of Texas alumni came together to clean the Bonfire Memorial on November 8th. They wipe away the dirt and wear of the past year as they prepare the site for the solemn anniversary soon to come. *Photo courtesy of Christian Hamilton.*



remember the

12

Aggies remember the 1999 Bonfire collapse 25 years later

Anticipation filled the air with Aggies lined up in tents and chairs wrapped around Kyle Field on an early November morning as students anxiously awaited the t.u. ticket pull. After camping out for nearly two days, just before 2am, hundreds of Aggies stood and quietly made their way across campus for the 25th anniversary of the Bonfire collapsing.

On November 18, 1999, the lives of millions of Aggies were forever changed. At 2:42 a.m., the logs collapsed, taking the lives of 12 Aggies and injuring many more. Aggies took the great tragedy and made it a tradition to celebrate the lives of the Aggies, lost but never forgotten.

Preparation for the ceremony began a week in advance with Aggies coming together for the annual day of cleaning to freshen up the area. Portals are cleaned and waxed with every inch of the memorial receiving care to ensure preservation. Collections manager Amanda Neel organized the clean-up and has seen firsthand the lasting impact the collapse has on the school.

“It was something that shocked not just the campus but the state. That’s one of those things I’ve realized through organizing this cleaning is that it wasn’t just the University affected,” Neel said. “That’s why I think it is so important we have this tradition of the remembrance ceremony and the cleaning so we can remember those students we lost and remember they are still a part of the Aggie family and always will be.”

This year, Nov. 18 fell on a Monday and not only on a Monday but the night before the ticket pull for the biggest rivalry game in 13 years at A&M. Economics junior Chazzy Stateler began camping out shortly after the New Mexico

State game ended late Saturday night but recognized the importance of leaving to attend the remembrance ceremony.

“This is a big game and a big rivalry but at the end of the day, this was one of the biggest tragedies,” Stateler said. “There are just some things that transcend and this is bigger than football and so much bigger than myself.”

As the clock strikes 2:42 a.m., silence speaks louder than words as chills rush across the arms of hundreds with faint sounds of sniffles throughout the crowd. Corps of cadet members stand in each portal signifying their lasting impact because your time as a student is not your time as an Aggie; the Aggie family is forever.

Ag leadership sophomore Truett Marrs served as the Bonfire remembrance chair this year. Marrs grew up in College Station in a family of Aggies and was always curious why the school stopped doing the burn. It wasn’t until he took on the role of Bonfire remembrance chair that everything clicked for Marrs.

“The ceremony not only preserves and promotes the Aggie spirit but in a way serves as a reminder of the fact that we as a student body are capable of making it through any difficulty or hardship thrown our way,” Marrs said. “It is also a way of honoring the 12 Aggies and upholding their legacies. It is really a way of showing that so long as you’re a student on this campus, your legacy will forever remain within it.”

Story by Avery Kracmer



GUARDIANS OF TRADITION

A guard stands inside the memorial before the Remembrance Ceremony at the Bonfire Memorial on Monday, Nov. 18, 2024. *Photo by Hannah Harrison*



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

Members of E-2 Company set helmets around the memorial before the Remembrance Ceremony at the Bonfire Memorial on Monday, Nov. 18, 2024.

Photo by Hannah Harrison