

Cathleen Inman's Dedication of the 2019-2020 Year and Directory

April 12, 2019

I'd like to welcome y'all to Rudder Tower, named for Major General James Earl Rudder '32. Most Aggies know him as the legendary President of Texas A&M University. However, he was also a decorated war hero. On June 6, 1944 he led Rudder's Rangers on successful mission at Point de Hoc, which paved the way for the success of the D-Day invasion. The casualty rate for the mission was greater than 50%. The unit was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation and Rudder earned the Distinguished Service Cross.

It is a true honor to stand in a building named for a great war fighter and to have the privilege to dedicate my year as Federation President and the accompanying 2019-2020 Directory to the Veteran Resource & Support Center.

The VRSC's mission is to support Texas A&M's Division of Student Affairs vision of preeminence by identifying, developing, and providing uniquely tailored services to enhance academic and holistic success of students who are Veterans, Active Duty, Reserve/National Guard, Military Families and Survivors. These great Americans serve our veterans by facilitating and empowering successful Aggie transitions by integrating the Aggie Core Values with the foundational VRSC philosophy to...Serve Well Those Who Have Served.

Texas A&M University recently celebrated our 100-year anniversary of supporting student veterans at TAMU. On March 7, 1919, the first two wounded warriors from WWI arrived at TAMU to begin their vocational rehabilitation training. I can't wait to see what the second century brings!

Here are some examples of the great work the VRSC has been doing:

- Military Admissions: prospective student veterans who use Military Admissions are 25% more likely to be admitted and their first semester GPA is .25 higher.
- The Student Aggie Veteran Enhancement (SAVE) Fund has prevented 28 student veterans from "financial failure;" of the 28, 27 have graduated or are still enrolled.
- Through generous donations, the VRSC has created 79 new endowed scholarships and awarded over \$350,000 to veterans or their spouses to help reduce their loan debt at graduation.
- The Aggie Shields text book lending library has saved veterans, dependents and survivors nearly \$400,000 in text book costs...which also helps to reduce student loan debt.
- At graduation, nearly 9 out of 10 Aggie veterans have a job or are accepted to earn their next degree.
- Some additional programs and resources include Lone Survivor, Student Vet of the Year, Graduation Cord program, Aggie Rings for Student Vets, Tickets for Aggie Student Vets.
- The VRSC is one of the smallest departments in the Division of Student Affairs. Over the past 6 years, our success has only been possible with the support of organizations like Aggie Moms, former students and our campus & community partners.
- In 2018: Veteran Student Enrollment was up 200% in 5 years
- Over 1150 student veterans, 52% served in combat, 36% still serving, 49% are married

When their country calls, Texas Aggies are the first go to war – and are among the most decorated. From the Spanish-American War to two World Wars and on to Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, Aggies have been leaders in every branch of America's Armed Forces. TAMU has the proud distinction of producing more officers than any other school outside the service academies.

Virtually every Aggie tradition reflects our heritage, reverence, and dedication to military service. The Aggie Hall of Honor celebrates our Medal of Honor recipients. On Game Day, there are 55 American Flags that fly at Kyle Field. Each flag represents one of the 55 Aggies who fought in World War I and gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The flags are given special care and are only flown on game days and are taken down at the end of every game – a recognition of what they mean to us. The MSC and the building grounds are a living memorial to Aggies who gave their lives in service to their country. It is sacred ground.

I had numerous statistics and all sorts of historical information prepared for this speech – but oftentimes it's not the statistics but the real stories of the real men and women from this hallowed institution that make the best point. I came across this when I was researching for this speech....

Got a little story for ya, Ags!

Maj. Jordan Enger, Class of '02, was in Khowst, Afghanistan in February 2007, when attempting to shoot a suicide bomber before his vest detonated. When the bomber's vest detonated, a ball bearing struck Enger, blowing out the lower portion of his jaw and five of his teeth.

After he regained consciousness, he realized doctors would have to cut off his beloved Aggie Ring that he wore on tours to Iraq and Afghanistan before surgery. With his face bandaged and unable to speak, he slipped it off his finger and handed it to a friend with a nod and the understanding that he would return it to him. When Enger eventually woke up in the ICU, his jaw was wired shut and a tracheostomy in his throat. On a note pad, he asked nurses where his father was, and they told him he was stuck in Atlanta due to a snow storm, preventing his flight to Washington D.C.

Enger was alone for another day while he was stabilized in ICU, but the next morning, nurses told Enger that two "friends" had stayed overnight in the waiting room. Minutes later two Fish Camp and Company D-2 buddies entered the room. Enger said Aggies Jonathan Murphy, a platoon leader in Old Guard in charge of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Dustin Green, a government official, gave him comfort in his time of need.

"When I saw them walk in I started to cry," Enger said. "I was alone and scared before they got there. Dustin and I weren't close as cadets. In fact we fought and I hated Dustin. I wrote on a piece of paper 'Dustin, Why are you here? We never got along.' Dustin replied, 'because when we were fish we made a promise to always be there for each other no matter what.'" Enger said when Green noticed he didn't have his Aggie Ring, Green removed his own ring and put it on Enger's finger.

"Jonathan and Dustin each held my hand and sang the 'Spirit of Aggieland' to me and stayed by my side until my Dad got there," Enger said. "If they hadn't been there I don't know what would have happened."

Enger said his stay at Walter Reed was "dominated by the Aggie Spirit." His doctor was an Aggie who played the Aggie War Hymn on the operating room speakers during his first surgery. He was also visited by Aggie Congressmen Rep. Chet Edwards, Class of 1974, and Rep. Louie Gohmert, class of

1975, who was also a "D-2 Dog" in the Corps of Cadets. Before Enger was discharged, he said he received a visit from Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who served as Texas A&M's president from 2002-2006.

I'm so proud to be associated with this special place and specifically the people who consider it a natural condition of life to put our veterans first. It's a distinct pleasure to work with the great Americans who work tirelessly at the VRSC. The entire staff: Col. Gerald "Jerry" L. Smith '82, USMC (Ret.), SGM Donald Freeman, USA (Ret.), Karen Allen, Karen Cambronero, Megan Pulliam, Montaigne Long, Ashley Drake and the Vets who volunteer every day in the Center are examples to me and make the lives of our veteran Aggies that much better. Thank you VRSC staff and volunteers for all you do!

I'll leave you with this quote in reference to those who serve:

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." -- John F. Kennedy.

Thank y'all for coming and Gig'em!