

Remarks by Mr. Jackson Hildebrand

Student Body President '04-'05
Bonfire Memorial Dedication Ceremony
November 18, 2004

Governor Perry, Regent White, Dr. Gates, and Mr. Ebanks: Thank you for your remarks.

To the families: thank you for being here today. I am honored to have you here. And on behalf of the students, thank you for sharing this special day with us.

And to my fellow Aggies: your presence here is a testament to the very ideals that set Texas A&M University apart. Just as Aggie Bonfire is a symbol of our strength and unity as a student body and university family, this ceremony embodies the true character of Aggies in the same way.

Indeed, there's a spirit that can ne'er be told — and this is it. We are the 12th Man, and today we stand in honor of 12 fallen friends.

Each of these portals is a window into the lives of one of our own. These young men and women lived their lives by the virtues of honor, spirit and tradition — they lived their lives as Texas Aggies. And that's how we honor them, each in our own way.

As we meet today around this memorial, we look to the future. And we learn from the past. This place is a tangible and fitting reminder of the friends we lost, yet the greatest memorial to those 12 Aggies lives forever in the hearts of each of us. We could bestow no greater honor on them than to draw inspiration from the common bond we share: reverence for our university and devotion to being Texas Aggies.

The 12 we lost November 18, 1999, exemplified the very best of that spirit. And every day we should strive for that spirit as they did. That's the Aggie way.

The Aggies who built Bonfire were, as we say, true to each other as Aggies can be. They asked not for fame, not for glory, not for recognition — but only to share an unspoken and sacred kinship. And so they are today.

They, like those who came and walked these hallowed grounds before them, wanted to be the best Aggies they could be.

And so should we.

They believed in being part of something far greater than themselves.

So should we.

They embraced Aggieland's traditions, and they cherished that pride each of us feels when a stranger asks, "What's so special about Texas A&M?"

So should we.

The 12 Aggies we lost loved their families, they loved their buddies, and they loved being Texas Aggies.

And, my friends, so should we.

As we dedicate this memorial, we must look to tomorrow and take with us a reminder to live life to its fullest. And in all we do, we must let honor be our guiding star and keep faithful to every trust. Our path must be worthy of their memory.

It is our solemn duty to remember those 12 Aggies — always.

-- Jackson Hildebrand