
AGGIES, OH AGGIES: THE GLORY YEARS

New Mexico A & M, 1935-1939

Michael F. Taylor

Edited by: W. G. Hines 10-7-10

Editor's Preface

This memoir by New Mexico A & M alumnus Michael Taylor was dedicated to Miss Era Rentfrow, long-time Registrar at New Mexico A & M, and to all members, living or dead, of the Class of 1939. The original manuscript (with Taylor's pen and ink corrections) was edited, several factual errors corrected, and slightly abridged by Walter Hines, who also added numerous photographs (no photos in original memoir), and a few footnotes. Care was taken to preserve the original tenor of the memoir, including not tampering with vernacular used by Taylor and common in the 1930s. Besides the colorful recounting of campus life, demography, and school history, Taylor's underlying intent was to convince readers that the mid-to-late 1930s in 'Aggieland' were the 'Glory Years.' By the editor's reasoning, he was quite convincing.

Taylor, who passed away on January 16, 1991, completed the memoir in 1978. Wife Marianne, also an Aggie alumnus, had died previously on July 1, 1988. Based on NMSU records, the Taylors had no children. Until recently, Taylor's memoir had been largely unknown, 'buried' in the archives of the NMSU Alumni Association. It is the editor's pleasure to bring this fine document to the attention of historians and interested readers.

INTRODUCTION

In 1957 my wife and I were on our way to a State Department assignment in Thailand. To get our baggage down to an acceptable weight, we left with California relatives a number of items, among them my New Mexico A&M *Swastikas* (yearbooks) for the years 1936 through 1939. They somehow got misplaced and were not found until this past summer (1977). Looking through them was like seeing a roomful of old and dear friends at a surprise party.

Most anyone, I suppose, thinks of his or her years

in college as the more important ones in their school's history. I am no exception, but I had to ask myself whether my feeling had any basis in fact. I began poring over the annuals, taking notes here and there, and re-thinking old experiences. Yearbooks are invaluable sources of history, sociology, demography, and romance. From them and other materials mentioned in the acknowledgement developed the test for my thesis: that the 1935-39 era was truly a great one for New Mexico Aggies, that those were indeed The Glory Years. Am I right? Read on and see.

Acknowledgements

The principal sources for this work are the 1936 through 1939 editions of *The Swastika*, whose editors were Marjorie F. Lockett (1936); Dorothy Leding and Grace Betty Carwardine (1937); Dorothy Leding (1938); and Daniel F. Botkin (1939). I am also indebted to Mrs. Ruth Turbeville, Assistant Registrar, New Mexico State University, for certain college records; to Dr. Simon Kropp, whose book,



Michael F. Taylor, 1938

That All May Learn (New Mexico State University 1888-1964), NMSU, 1972, provided verification of a number of facts; and to T. M. Pearce, editor of the fascinating *New Mexico Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary*, The

Photographs p. 33, p. 35 (basketball), and p. 54 from the Hobson-Huntsinger University Archives, New Mexico State University; all other photos from the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts yearbook, THE SWASTIKA, 1934-1939

University of New Mexico Press, 1965.

Biographical Note

The author was never a Big Man on campus at Aggies. He was a member of Phi Chi Psi social fraternity; Phi Mu Tau, the arts and sciences honorary; the Student Commission, where he waged war against the Dean of Students; and the International Relations Club, whose funds he illicitly ‘borrowed’ from time to time to buy tacos for his girl friends. He collaborated in the writing of a scandal column for *The Round-Up*, for which he also wrote special articles from time to time. He was ‘Fellow with the Best Line’ in 1938 and he graduated ‘with honors’ in 1939. He was fortunate in being an Aggie at a time when it was possible to know nearly everyone and have good friends in every segment of campus society. After graduation Taylor was a teacher in Indian service schools on the Navajo and Acoma reservations; instructor at Las Cruces Union High School; Marine Corps officer in World War II; instructor at the University of Denver; graduate student at UCLA; and an employee of the CIA and Department of State. Taylor retired in 1978 with his wife, ex-Aggie Marianne, to Carlsbad, NM.

Who We Were and Where We Came From

In the last days of August 1935 I came down from the Black Range village of Kingston, NM to Las Cruces, where I lived in the William E. Johnson home during my first year at New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (New Mexico A&M). I had in my pocket \$100, the gift of Bel Drummond, Kingston’s oldest and wealthiest widow and a good friend. It was a sign of the times that \$100 then provided not only tuition and books but also much needed clothing, which I bought at the Stern’s store on Las Cruces’ Main Street.

I was a recent graduate of Hillsboro High. Kingston had no schools of any kind so we had to commute to Hillsboro, nine miles east. I looked forward to becoming Kingston’s only college boy with a mixture of anticipation and apprehension. I had been valedictorian of my class, but that was not saying much since there were only six of us in all. The enrollment at Hillsboro High was around 40 in those days, the teachers ranged from fair to frightful, and the science and language courses were weak as weak could be. I doubted that I knew enough to get by in college, and I worried about

the collegiate social life. Kingston and Hillsboro were rustic hamlets with few refinements. I had heard of a professor at A&M who castigated the ignorant with such barbed phrases as “flop-eared yokels” and “country bumpkins.” I did not wish to be so assailed by any professor but I was even more concerned with how the other students would see me. Would they laugh at my country clothes and manners and my less-than-genteel poverty? With all the self-consciousness of youth it was my feeling that I would surely stand out, embarrassed among the suave, sophisticated, ‘with it’ collegians of my imagination. It was with great relief that I found on registration day that my name was legion, that among the 236 members of the incoming freshman class there were scores who were from places as small or smaller than my own, whose preparation was just as wanting, and whose dress was no better and no worse.

Let me here say a few words about us, the Aggies of 1935 to 1939, and where we came from. The overwhelming majority of students were ‘Anglos’, that all-embracing category which includes, strangely enough, anyone who is not of Black or Spanish or Oriental. There was not a single Black student in attendance during any of our fall and spring semesters, an odd and unhappy circumstance, since there was a Black community in Las Cruces, where a small segregated Black high school had existed for years, and there were Black families here and there throughout the valley. A few Blacks, nearly all women school teachers, did attend the summer sessions, and in 1937 one of them, Mrs. Clara Belle Williams¹, received her degree, the first ever so awarded (to a Black student). It was this summer school attendance that partially paved the way for A&M to become fully integrated.

Americans of Oriental descent were very few, represented entirely, so far as I know, by the Nakayama family of Dona Ana. The Nakayama’s were and are excellent farmers. One of them, Roy, became known worldwide as the greatest expert on the growing and processing of chili.

There was not a year within memory when there were not one or more Nakayamas attending Aggies. Throughout the hysteria of World War II, with the shameful relocation to concentration camps of West



Roy Nakayama

Coast Japanese Americans, the Nakayama's retained the high regard of their friends and neighbors. And, to Aggies' credit and his, then Acting-President Branson refused to deny admission to Japanese-Americans forced out of California.

New Mexico in those years was divided fairly evenly between Spanish and Anglos but this was not reflected in our enrollment. At any given time the Spanish surnamed was less than 5 percent of the student body, nearly all from the Las Cruces area. Individually, many of our Spanish-Americans were highly popular - e.g., Lauro and Hooky Apodaca, Kiko Martinez, Josephine Lucero, and Consuelo Duarte.



Hooky Apodaca Lauro Apodaca



Hooky and Lauro Apodaca

But it cannot be denied that there was some anti-Spanish prejudice. I wish I could attribute all of it to the 'Oakie', 'Arkie', and 'Texican' influence that entered the state during the Depression, but I cannot. Much of it, alas, was endemic. I am glad to say that I had many good friends among our Spanish-American contingent.

Aside from race, the chief distinguishing feature between human beings is sex. In those days it was possible, by looking, to tell one from another. A&M was, or should have been, a happy hunting ground for the young ladies, since the ratio of men to women averaged about 2.5:1. The girls dressed like girls, favoring sweaters, blouses, skirts that extended downward to 6" to 8" above the ground, plain shoes, and bobby sox. The guys went for sweaters or jackets, open-necked shirts, and plain trou-

sers, with corduroy a favorite. The blue jeans era was far in the future.

Geographically, the Aggies came from just about everywhere in New Mexico, from 15 (1935-36) to 25 (1938-39) other states, and four foreign countries — Mexico, Peru, Columbia, and Canada. The principal 'other state' was of course, Texas, with the great majority of Texans coming from the El Paso area. The only New Mexico county which did not have an Aggie was Los Alamos, for the very good reason that it was not yet in existence. The other 31 counties were all represented with the largest contingent from, as always, Dona Ana.

By my count, 143 New Mexico communities were represented as Aggies during those years. Only 120 of them can be found in current (1978) zip code directories, some because of a name change (e.g., Hot Springs to Truth or Consequences; State College to University Park); others because they became too small to have their own post-offices (Abbott, Mountain Park, French, Lake Valley, Levy, Ft. Stanton, Pasamonte, Separ, White Oaks, Dawson). And there are others, most fascinating of all, which do not appear today on any locally available map: Adams Diggings, northeast of Quemado, named for the alleged discover of a great gold mine; Cunico, southwest of Raton on State road 193; Cloverdale, in southwest Hidalgo County; Hollene, north of Clovis, named for the daughter of an early real estate promoter; Strauss, Cambay, Jordan, Van Houton, Sugarite, and Tortugas are others in this category.

Aggies in 1935 was already far from being a predominantly agricultural institution. Although the facilities investment was heavily on the agriculture side, what with the Extension and Experimental Station plots and buildings, the stock barns, feed lots, and so on, there were about the same number of students in engineering as in agriculture, and there were more enrolled in arts and sciences in any given year than in engineering or agriculture.

The arts and sciences figures require interpretation. For one thing, all freshmen and sophomores were required to follow a general curriculum, which was centered largely in the arts and sciences school. And, for another, the business and home economics students were included in arts and sciences figures, the first legitimately enough, the second questionably. In 1937-38, for example, there were 255 students in agriculture, 202 in engineering, and 334 in arts and sciences -- but 76 of

the latter were in home economics.

The year 1935-36 was the *Big Breakthrough*, for the total enrollment for the first time went over the long-time goal of 500, at 558. Size generates greater size, as more students come from more areas, younger sisters and brothers have a college student to emulate, and the increased complexity of college life provides greater attractions. From 1935-36 on there was a steady increase to 705 in '36-'37, 858 in '37-'38; and 1,033 in '38-'39. Given the hard, hard times, this almost doubling of enrollment over a four-year span says something for the



College Lane, West Entrance to NM A&M, 1938

vitality of the school. There was also, of course, a proportionate increase in the number of graduating seniors — from 66 in '36, to 78 in '37; 92 in '38; and 113 in '39.

Aggies campus in, say, 1937, would have passed, on the left, the St. James Episcopal Church and parsonage and a few private homes. A block or so further on, and also on the left was McFie Hall with the college dining hall behind it, and then the Kheth Samekh sorority house. Both McFie, which was the girls' dorm, and the dining hall, were the domain of Euphro Wisda, the redoubtable (i.e., awesome, formidable, fearsome) Dean of Women.

More on Euphro later.

After the KS house, and still on the left, were the track and football practice fields (Miller Field) and on the right were open fields and the barns and silos of

the experimental farms.

the experimental farms.

After crossing a north-south street (present-day Espina) one would find more open fields on either side. Proceeding east, on the left were the music building and the old gym, and on the right, roughly parallel with the gym, Wilson Hall, used primarily by extension service



Women's PE Class In 'The Crackerbox'



The Old Gym, 'The Crackerbox'

and experimental farming officials. Just before the 1937 fall semester Wilson, built in 1909, burned down, providing an exciting evening for those already on campus. With it went valuable agricultural records.

Let me digress to note that the old gym was known to many of us as The Crackerbox. When erected in 1911 it had been considered an architectural wonder - in my day we wondered why. The spectators at a game sat in one of the narrow balconies on either side of the basketball court. There was so little room that only a limited income could be made from ticket sales and that led to certain scheduling problems. The gym was a hot box and an echo chamber, and yet we loved it. Its very smallness made for a sort of enforced intimacy.

For two and a half of my four years nearly all the college hops were held there. The stark interior im-



SCIENCE HALL

The campus' oldest building
Built in 1896



**WILLIAMS GYMNASIUM
ON QUESENBERRY FIELD**

Newest building. Built, 1938
Named in honor of Dan W. Williams,
Regent Board President since 1935



QUESENBERRY FIELD

Honoring Joe Quesenberry, loyal Aggie
and football letterman, who lost his life
in the World War,

HADLEY HALL

In honor of Hiram Hadley
One of the founders and first president
of State College



McFIE HALL

Honoring Judge J. R. McFie,
A founder and first Regents Board
president.





KENT HALL

In honor of Dr. Harry L. Kent
President, 1921-1935



FOSTER HALL

Honoring Luther Foster
Professor; Experiment Station Director; and President,
1901-1921

YOUNG HALL

In honor of Judge R. L. Young
A founder and Regent Board President
1931-1933



GODDARD HALL

Honoring Ralph W. Goddard
Dean of Engineering and builder of
Radio Station KOB
At State College 1914-1929



posed great difficulties on the decorating committees that labored for days before each dance. We were not critical, however, and when the lights were low and the music swelling, the old monstrosity became an enchanted pavilion -- which reminds me that as you entered with your date on a dance night you became aware of a strange aroma. This was due to the mingling of *Evening In Paris*, a popular inexpensive perfumery, and vinegar. The young



Lover's Lane

ladies shampooed, of course, before such important occasions and many of them used vinegar in their rinse.

Back now to our stroll. Proceeding eastward from the areas noted above one entered the 'Horseshoe', divided by the beloved Lovers' Lane', which led directly to Hadley Hall.

One-third the way up Lovers' Lane was a vine-covered bower with benches on either side - and if that bower could have talked ——! One fine winter's evening, when all the vines were dry as dry could be, the bower



Fish Pond

caught fire and was never, alas, the same again. Any number of guys and gals were reputed to have been singled by the holocaust.

On the left 'leg' of the Horseshoe (as one proceeded eastward) was Science Hall, built in 1896 and the oldest surviving campus building. On the right 'leg' were Goddard Hall, the engineering building; Foster Hall, the main arts and sciences building and, to my mind, the handsomest structure on the campus; and Young Hall, the library building, which also provided classrooms for English and foreign language classes. The library section was enhanced, in 1934, by murals painted by Tom Lea, the noted El Paso artist. Outside Young Hall was the famous fish pond and bulletin board, a favorite meeting place. And then directly at the apex of the horseshoe, if horseshoes have apexes, came Hadley Hall.

Hadley Hall, named of course for founding father and first president Hiram Hadley, housed the offices of the college president, his assistant, the registrar, the comptroller and a number of faculty members. It also contained a 300-seat auditorium, whose acoustics were something less than desired, and in its basement there were additional offices as well as the State College post-office. Hadley was in my day a creaky old fire-trap and somehow sort of spooky. One expected at any moment to see old Hiram, white whiskers and all, drifting



Boys' Dormitory

through its corridors (old Hadley Hall was razed in 1957).

To the north of Hadley and set back of few yards from the Horseshoe, was the College Canteen, a small frame structure. Run by A. E. Hatch, it was a happy place, always jammed with students jostling each other good-

naturedly while bidding for sticky-rolls or pecan pie. It reminded me of one of those old movies when 100 or more people pile out of a small covered wagon.



Regent Dan Williams

Further to the north and east was the boys' dorm, which in December 1938 was dedicated as Kent Hall, for Dr. Harry L. Kent, President from 1921 to 1926. Southeast of Kent was Quesenberry Field, the football stadium. In 1938 a new gym was built at the north end of Quesenberry and named for Dan Williams, an important member of the Board of Regents from 1933 to 1940.

Williams Gymnasium was a fine, shiny place with gleaming hard-wood floors and plenty of room for spectators, and I'm sure the athletic staff were all for it. To me it never had half the charm of our tacky old Crackerbox.

All of the buildings mentioned, as well as the grounds around them, were under the care of Charlie Strickland, who served the college for 47 years as Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds. There was a rumor about that he, and he alone, knew where all the underground water, sewer, and power lines were laid — that knowledge, never committed to paper, made him indispensable. That was a canard, of course, but it is true that Charlie was known to many as 'nextx Wentxday'. He had a slight lisp and was a very busy man, one result being that whenever he was asked when some job might be attended to, the usual answer was: 'Well, I think we can get to that nextx Wentxday'.

Our campus was, in my eyes, a thing of beauty and a joy forever, though especially so on a crisp fall day near sunset. Walking up towards Lovers' Lane, with the setting sun picking up the autumn golds and reds and reflecting from the crimson and white uniforms of football players jogging by, one appeared to be caught up in an apotheosis of the Aggie colors.

I have before me a list of the 34 principal buildings on today's (1978) Aggie campus. Only six of them

(Kent, Foster, Young, and Goddard Halls, the old gymnasium (The Crackerbox) and Williams Gymnasium, survive from our day. Of the remainder, no fewer than seventeen are named for those who were active at Aggies when we were there — Baldwin, Guthrie, Hamiel, Hardman, Jacobs, Jett, Milton, Neale, Rentfrow, Sutherland, Thomas-Brown. Many of



Dr. Fabian Garcia

these notables had served before the mid-30's, of course, and many served for long years after that time, but they were all there then, and in their prime. It says something for the era.

Two buildings were named for Dr. Fabian Garcia.

The three honoring women are Hardman Hall, for Marion P. Hardman, long-time professor of English; Hamiel Hall, for Mrs. Flora Hamiel, for many years secretary to the colleges presidents; and Rentfrow Gym, for Era Rentfrow, registrar from 1922 to the early 1960's (for whom this memoir is dedicated).

It is of interest to note that only three campus buildings are named for individuals unconnected with the school. They are Anderson Hall, for Clinton P. Anderson, longtime New Mexican political figure and philanthropist; Garrett Hall, for Elizabeth Garrett, daughter of the famous Pat and author of the State song; and Rhodes Hall, for Eugene Manlove Rhodes, New Mexico's best and best-known writer.

Freshman, and Other Days

The typical freshman at Aggies in the mid-30's, and I was as typical as anyone, found himself taking many courses not of his choosing. The theory was that not until the junior year does a student know enough to de-



Miss Era Rentfrow

cide in which direction he wishes to head. Until then, we were exposed to a variety of instruction designed to make a rounded citizen. The newcomer was required to take freshman composition, a science, a foreign language, and if male and healthy, military science, since Aggies was, of course, a land-grant college. That left room for only a couple of courses to be ‘elected’ from the arts and sciences that remained.

Though by no means a pacifist, I had suspicion, which proved well-founded, that I would make a so-so soldier (*Note: Taylor was a decorated Marine Corps officer in the Pacific during WW II*). I did not like the uniforms, which seldom approximated a fit, and especially loathed the so-called overseas caps, which made most of us resemble organ grinders’ companions. We drilled once a week, on Fridays as I recall, and the drill was the old-style ‘square’ type, a complicated business involving in-place pivoting by some and mad rushes by others, to such orders as “squads right front into line.”

Our instructors were Colonel F. R. Waltz and Major A. J. MacNab (1935-1937), and Colonel A. T. Fletcher and Major H. P. Hallowell (1937-1939), with Staff Sergeant J. E. Cragin serving throughout (and for years before and after). The student battalion commanders were such stalwarts as Hush Master, Jack Baird, Roscoe Peacock, William Chamberlin, and A. E. “Steamboat” Baird. In my sophomore year I was promoted to corporal. Fortunately all of my squad except one other chap and I, were in the battalion band so I never had to exercise command. The two of us served throughout as ‘file closers’ to other units.

When my mandatory two years were over, I thankfully gave up the military life and did not resume it until World War II. (According to Simon Kropp’s book, *That All May Learn*, there were 327 Aggies in the services in World War I, ten of whom gave their lives). In



Maj. McNab Col. Waltz Sgt. Cragin

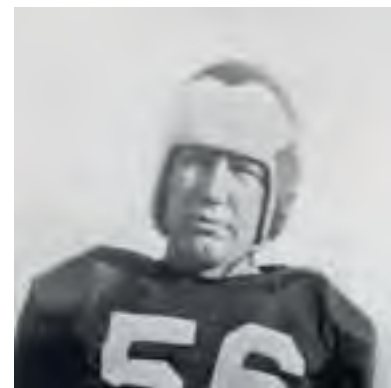
World War II Era Rentfrow’s records indicated that over 2,000 Aggies served and 124 died (*Note: Now updated to more than 130*).

Much of the curriculum consisted of courses one had to take and pass in order to graduate. I early on made a secret deal with A & M. In any subject of my own choosing I would work honestly and diligently and accept the outcome, good or bad. In any compulsory course I would first do my best, but if that best wasn’t good enough I would then do whatever needed doing to get a passing grade. As it turned out it was only the science courses – botany, zoology, and chemistry that required chicanery. In the first two my basic problem was that, like James Thurber, I could not see through a microscope. A second one, in zoology, was that I absolutely refused to stick pins into live frogs to inhibit their nervous systems.

Not seeing through a microscope meant that one could not draw for the required notebooks that one was required to turn in. There was only one solution to this dilemma and that was to go to the lab on a Saturday morning and copy from the work of better, or better-sighted, students. An accomplice in this sneakiness was Speegle Wood. Speegle was at A & M to play football and had little use for anything else.

When our semester grades came out Speegle, who was given to a slight stutter when aroused, was outraged. “L-l-look at this”, he said, showing his zoology grade card. “I c-c-copied the entire notebook from an ‘A’ student, and that old s-s-son-of-a-bitch gave me a ‘P’.” My better copying got me a ‘C+’.

I hoped to do better in chemistry. The instructor, Professor Glenn Hamiel, was a fine man and a most able teacher. For one semester all was well. In the second, however, equations and analyses raised their ugly heads. I have never, ever, solved a chemical equation or discovered, through the prescribed methods, just what was in the mysterious test tubes handed around at exam time. The chemistry lab, in old Science Hall, fortunately



Speegle Wood

was crowded so several of us had space in a storage room back of the lab proper. There we would lay out our equipment and go through the motions until roll was taken. We would then slip out a convenient window and go to the Canteen to while away the time until lab was nearly over. Roy Creek, a popular lad from Portales, was my usual companion in such derelictions. The solution, again, was the Saturday copying from the notebooks of others.

French was another bug-a-boo but the friendly hints of such able linguists as Marvin Raney and the Brook twins, Martha and Kate, helped me survive the required two years. In everything else I did well and was even in position to give a helping hand to others. I happened to take English composition with most of the freshmen football team, many of whom found diagramming sentences unfathomable and the writing of themes impossible. I had an aisle seat near the blackboards so it was easy to provide guidance for the diagrammers. Theme writing was something else, since the styles must vary, but on at least one occasion my efforts got an 'A' for me and 'C's' for three other lads.

Aside from our problems with classes we newcomers were soon to discover that a freshman's life is not, or is not supposed to be, a happy one. The administration was opposed to the hazing of freshmen and from time to time issued edicts against it, but to little avail. 'Fish' initiation began soon after registration. We were requested to buy and wear a green and white 'beanie' and to treat all upperclassmen with the greatest respect. Any infraction, real or imagined, would bring the command: 'Assume the angle!' This meant bending over, hands on knees or ankles, to receive one or more blows from a taped-up broom. The girls were not broomed and few of the boys suffered much more than the indignity, though there were always a few Neanderthals around who enjoyed walloping the defenseless.

Another punishment was triggered by the order 'Canary!', at which the victim was required to stand at attention and sing, as loudly as possible, 'Aggies, Oh Aggies', the school fight song. There were also weekly meetings in the Hadley Hall auditorium which all freshmen had to attend. At the kangaroo courts, indictments were presented against selected frosh and the judge's verdict was in two forms only: 'Guilty' or 'Guilty as hell'. The sentence was limited only by the imagination of the prosecutors. Most often it was to wear some outlandish costume for a week or to scrub the Hadley Hall steps

with a toothbrush, or to give some such response as 'horse feathers' to any question asked in a class. I was once found 'Guilty as hell' and ordered to give, on the spot, a discourse on 'Love through the Ages'. Fortunately my talk was well received, so much so that I had to repeat it, impromptu, at various restaurants and bars. At any rate, I escaped any more brooming.

The end of the initiation came in early October with the painting of the 'A', the college symbol made up of white-washed boulders on Tortugas Mountain overlooking the campus. This annual refurbishing began in 1920 and in earlier times all hands shared in the task. By our day the freshmen classes were large enough to do it alone. We toted the heavy milk-cans of whitewash up the steep and winding trail and dumped their contents where directed. It made for a long day and protesting muscles, but somehow it was also fun. And afterwards we could throw our beanies away and concentrate on more important matters, such as girls and football games.

During my freshman year I lived, as noted before, in Las Cruces, which had both advantages and drawbacks. On the plus side I became associated with the Las Cruces High graduates who to a large extent became the leaders of the Aggies' social swirl. They had a lot going for them — sheer numbers, proximity, family traditions of Aggiedom, and attendance at one of the state's better high schools. Among them were Henry Gustafson, Dick Hamiel, Marvin Raney, Luis Amador, Jewel Eakens, Virginia Bradford, the Brook twins, Johnny Cooper, Buford Jasper, Enid Edwards, and Ethel Isaacks.



Ethel Isaacks

Mention of Ethel brings to mind a Depression-days story. The Isaacks were a large clan with many interests, though ranching was their principal concern. One of their workmen got what he considered ill-treatment from one of the family and wrote to President Roosevelt about it. His concluding sentence ran: "And what I wants to know, Mr. President, is just who is running this country, you or the Isaacks?" There were those who thought it a good question.

A disadvantage of Cruces was that one was miles

form the campus in a day when few students had cars. Many of us got to and from the campus via the bus operated by Ed Whitfield and his brother, but there were often evening activities that were hard to get to, and, of course, you had to get up earlier than you wanted to in order to make an 8 a.m. class. The bus line was the start of what became Whitfield Transportation, one of the more successful trucking firms of the Southwest. I was on the bus one morning when, with Ed driving, we ran over a woman, who soon died. Her husband's crazy driving had thrown her off their stripped-down car and under the bus. Though all the evidence was in Ed's favor a jury, having learned that there was insurance, awarded damages.

My last three college years I lived near the campus at the home of June Hornbrook Sage. June was a well-known Valley personality. Her business was lending money on mortgages and her avocations were collecting things (especially Navajo rugs), playing bridge, and dropping by for visits about the time dinner was about to be served. Hers was a sharp practice but there were redeeming qualities. She loved dogs and her great collie, Pat, was a pal of hundreds of Aggies, and she has a soft spot for young men struggling to get through A & M. At any given time from four to six lads would be rooming at her place, which we called Sage Mansions. June expected to be paid, of course, but the rates were reasonable and there was leeway given. Year after year I would end up owing her two or three months rent, and year after year I would return in the fall, pay the arrears, and start anew. Professor Clarence Hope (education and psychology) was also a roomer and he and June became the frequent bridge opponents of me and my girlfriend.

Aside from campus festivities, we students often found occasion to go to Cruces or Old Mesilla for entertainment or a change from the college dining hall menu. Usually, this meant that a fellow and his date would hitch-hike to town, trusting luck to get back to campus before 'lights out' at the girls' dorm. Cars, as I have said, were scarce. On one glorious occasion when Tommy Graham, son of a Cruces mortician, could not get use of the family car, he drove his date to a campus dance in the town's largest and finest hearse.

A favorite Cruces hangout was Bob's Cafe where, though we could seldom afford them, excellent steaks were to be had. Another was the Tortuga Trading Post, whose restaurant served the hottest chili con carne in



La Posta, Old Mesilla

this entire world. It was, we believed, an excellent antidote for too many glasses of spirits.

Old Mesilla was loved by all. There the descendants of Colonel Albert Fountain presided over El Patio, featuring an indoor bar and an outdoor dance floor, where many informal under-the-stars dances were held and many romances flourished. Nearby was La Posta, the Mexican food restaurant and Billy the Kid Museum, run by the Griggs family.

The La Posta hostess was the lively and attractive Katy Griggs, always ready with a quip and a kiss. The restaurant was still of moderate size, the food and service excellent, and the prices reasonable. The museum was one of many which celebrated the memory of the adolescent little murderer who somehow became a folk hero. There were pistols and holsters and saddles and so on, and a few old photographs. But one questioned the authenticity. The Kid relics, all put together, would have freighted a long, long train. An irony was that under his carpets the proprietor, Mr. Billy Griggs, had used for padding his real treasure – old, rare, irreplaceable editions of Las Cruces and Mesilla newspapers from an era when records were irregular and scanty.

Here and there, in both Las Cruces and Mesilla, were smaller cafes, some true 'holes in the wall', where tacos and the like could be had for a small price indeed. One, in Mesilla, featured tightly-rolled roasted tacos with a green-chili sauce. Another, in a small nook on Las Cruces' Main Street, also featured tacos and menudo. My date one evening ventured to ask just what menudo was. The waitress answered, in plain and unmistakable manner, "Cow's guts." So much for tripe! Despite this



Tony Sarg Marionette

we made off with it.

The school sponsored occasional on-campus entertainment. A favorite was the Tony Sarg Marionettes troupe, which performed several years in a row.

Others worth remembering were The Ballet Caravan and the Ted Shawn all-male dancers.



Marvin Raney

And each spring there was a local talent revue made up of acts put on by the Greek and other social organizations. The stand out of the revues was in 1936, in which the highly versatile Marvin Raney starred. Marvin had studied the Shawn dancers closely and his act was a perfect imitation of their best solo performer.

To find out who was doing what with whom we



Kearney Egerton

turned each week to our campus newspaper, *The Round-Up*, a publication that dated back to 1907. There were few radicals at A & M in our day and *The Round-Up* reflected general conservatism. The consequence was that, aside from the annual April Fool's spoof edition, which

ventured a few potshots at the pompous, the only really lively segments of the paper were the sports columns, written by Kearney Egerton or Kick Hildwein, and the gossip columns.

There were over the years a variety of scandal mongers who work appeared under such headings as *The Mortician* (Dorothy Leding and Kenneth Kennelly); *The Campus Tide*, by Ed and Flo (Kennelly); *Graveyard Scoops* (Bob Detterick and Roy Gunter); *Pyrene*, by C.A.T. (Dorothy Roane and Eleanor Medlor); *Stink Kitchen Research* by Beaker Bounder and *Testtube Twiddler* (John Gaines and Dick Kent); and *The Sludge Pot*, by Muck and Mire. This last was the best, to my mind, a biased view since Virginia Bradford and I were the authors during much of one year. Other perpetrators were John Cooper, K. Kennelly, and Jules Van Dersarl.

The principals in producing *The Round-Up* and getting it into our eager hands were, over the years, Rosemary Head, Jonathon Cunningham, Ernest Rees, Dick Kent, John Gaines, Paul McGuire, Orren 'Buttercup' Beatty, Bob Yates, Frank Burnett, Marvin Raney, Dick Hildwein, Kearney Egerton, and Era Rentfrow. Era for many years was the Alumni Editor. I was fond of *The Round-Up* and apart from the *The Sludge Pot* from time to time contributed articles to it, on subjects as diverse as the iniquity of selling scrap iron to Japan and the history of the hot dog. Our scandal-mongering led to difficulties at times. My old friend Speegle Wood once threatened to stomp me for one reference and Kearney Egerton and I feuded from time to time but managed to remain pals.

THE GUARDIANS – ANGELS AND OTHERWISE

Before going on to other matters let me give here my entirely subjective student's-eye view of the Aggies administration and faculty.

The college president in 1935 was Dr. Harry Kent (the Dr. was honorary) who had held that office since 1921.

The Kents



Hugh Gardner

were good friends of my Johnson family of Las Cruces and Kingston and two of the Kent children, Lo Ree and Dick, were pals of mine. Dr. Kent became ill in March 1935 and though technically retained in his position the



Dr. Ray Fife

job was in fact filled by Dean Hugh Gardner.

Dr. Kent was, I believe, and ardent Republican at a time when the wind had shifted in favor of the Democrats.

This may be why he was abruptly dismissed by the Regents in early 1936. Gardner continued his “acting” role until July of that year, when Dr. Ray Fife was selected as the new president.

Dr. Fife’s principal interest was in agriculture, which may be why we who were in arts and sciences knew so little about him. To us his chief claim to fame arose from his edict banning smoking in classrooms. His



Hugh Milton

concern was not with morals or hygiene but with the possibility of fires. Having created few waves (or ripples) Dr. Fife departed

in July 1938, to be succeeded, briefly, by another “acting”, John Branson. Then in October 1938, the presidency passed to Hugh Milton, who had joined the A & M faculty in 1924 and served before his elevation as Dean of Engineering.

Milton, at my earnest request, had given the commencement address at our Hillsboro High graduation so I considered him an old friend. He was in great demand as a speaker and ever willing to take the podium. An excerpt from his message in the 1936 *Swastika* provides an example of his exuberant style:

“...The all-nourishing mother has stood with lighted beacon directing a noble company from the darkness of ignorance, fear, and superstition, into the light of truth and freedom.”

Flowery rhetoric aside, President Milton was

highly intelligent and an able administrator. Some years later, while head of the New Mexico Military Institute, Milton offered me a

position, which I reluctantly declined. Today (November 1977) he is a Major General, retired, still active, still oratorical.



G. L. Guthrie

Assisting these several presidents throughout was Gwynne “Gus” Guthrie, whose title as Assistant to the President fell far short of describing the importance of his role.

He was one of those quiet, capable, resilient people who do so much to keep things on an even keel, no matter the turmoil topside. Mrs. Glenn (Flora) Hamiel, Secretary to the same presidents, and Miss Era Rentfrow, Registrar from 1921 to the early 1960’s, were strong allies of Guthrie in keeping the ship not only afloat but moving ahead. This trio not only could, but to a large extent did, run the institution during many times of trial. And as thousands can attest, no one on this earth has known and remembered as many Aggies, or shown such great interest in their joys and sorrows, as has Era Rentfrow.



Euphro Wisda

Other administrators, aside from the academic deans, included Dr. Fabian Garcia, Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station;

G. R. Quesenberry, Director of the Extension Service; Miss Elizabeth McCoy, Librarian, and her able assistant, Elise Rosenwald; Charles Strickland, the already mentioned Superintendent of Grounds; Miss Margaret O’Loughlin, head of the Home Economic Department; Euphro Wisda, Dean of Women; and, for one year only



George Fox Mott

(1938-39), George Fox Mott, Dean of Students.

With the latter two I had my problems.

In my sophomore and junior years I worked under Wisda's jurisdiction at the college dining hall, where I was chief assistant to the chef. I ate very well in consequence but it was not all fun and games. I had to be at the kitchen at 4:30 a.m. each day to fire up the gas ranges and start the coffee urns brewing, and the day didn't end until after supper clean-up was finished. I had worked for years before in cafes here and there and knew something about preparing food. Eupho, as we all called her, did not and her instructions to the kitchen crew made little sense. Despite this we got along reasonably well until near the end of my junior year.

One of the dorm girls had broken one of Eupho's commandments and as a result was 'campused.' This meant that the offender was restricted to classes and the dorm, with no leave privileges of any kind. Some of the young ladies thought this unreasonable and one of them suggested a petition to presidential assistant Guthrie. This was seized upon and a document listing Eupho's high crimes and misdemeanors was drawn up. Since I was considered a whiz at English, this was brought to me for inspection. It was nearly unintelligible so from kindness of heart and unfathomable stupidity, I cast it into more understandable and forceful form. A number of girls signed the revision but before it could be presented one of them squealed and I was called on the carpet. It availed nothing to point out that I was not the originator and that the right of petition is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. I².

Prof Guthrie lectured me later on the virtues of loyalty, readily available in those days for 25 to 40 cents an hour, but then helped me get a National Youth Administration job as assistant to Professor Bill Edwards. Years later when applying for a U.S. Government post I was asked if I had ever been dismissed from employment and if so, why. I had to reply: "Yes – for participating in an insurrectionary plot against the Dean of Women at New Mexico A & M." Despite this admission the Central Intelligence Agency, with all its wariness about subversiveness, hired me.

My experience with George Fox Mott, Dean of Students, was not as fraught but neither was it pleasant. Mott was a Stanford graduate and had that lordly disdain for all lesser forms of life which Stanford implanted in so many of its own. He was a bit of a fop, in our view

– an impression to which his small and somehow satirical mustache and his wearing of cummerbunds contributed. Mott's only year at Aggies coincided with my term on the Student Commission, which led to our clashes. He appeared to believe that the Commission's role was to accept gratefully such pearls as he chose to cast before us. We differed, often at the top of the decibel scale, and I was glad to hear later on that Mott had been dismissed before his contract expired. As noted in *That All May Learn* (pp. 255, 258-9) Mott was instrumental, at least in part, in raising questions which led to an accreditation investigation of A & M by the North Central Association.

The Dean of Arts and Sciences throughout my



Dr. Percy Mallet Baldwin

college years, and for a long time before and after was Dr. Percy Mallet Baldwin, who also served as professor of history. A Canadian by birth, he was a dry,

bespectacled, large-nosed, thin-lipped man who conveyed an impression of gauntness. He had, withal, a giant intellect and a wry Victorian humor, quoting with approbation what Gladstone said about Disraeli in 1873.

I took seven of Baldwin's courses and came to have a regard for him which in time bordered on the affectionate.

Baldwin's temper was volatile and when our ignorance or sloth became unbearable he would go into tantrums, on one occasion throwing a book at a sleeping student and on another kicking a waste-basket sky high. When a dictionary definition was not to his liking he would cross it out and carefully pen in his own version. For some reason, perhaps the sheer incongruity, I started calling him (though not to his face) 'Butch.' The nickname caught on and to hundreds of students this dignified scholar was so known. 'Butch' Baldwin did his best, which was considerable, to raise college standards to a higher level and was uncompromising in his insistence on hard work and solid achievement. As the years passed he mellowed considerably — or perhaps the mellowness was always there and only waiting to be discovered. Dr. Baldwin in 1947 stepped down from the deanship,

becoming Professor Emeritus of History, a position held until his retirement in 1956.

The best known, best loved, and most feared faculty member was Rufus Galloway Breland, head of the English department and instructor in such courses as English literature, public speaking, and vocabulary.



Rufus Galloway Breland

Breland was sandy-haired, small in stature, ever dapper in appearance, with a Chaplinesque mustache and an air of detached amusement at the world and all its foibles.

English literature was for many a required course, and for the unlettered a period of squirming agony. Breland in his free time had a penchant for appearing where not expected and quietly noting the passing scene. An unprepared student would be greeted in the next class with:

“Well Miss _____, had you not been so immersed in soothing the tender ego of our noted pigskin toter, Mr. _____, at El Patio last night, you might have found time to study your Chaucer.”

Breland loved football, by the bye, and never missed a home game. But in the classroom one would never suspect this. He derided the ‘flop-eared yokels’ who had the effrontery to believe that carrying an inflated piece of animal hide through a crowd of other ‘country bumpkins’ was a praiseworthy act. A bachelor throughout, Breland also scoffed at romance, which he called ‘nature’s fly-trap.’ But in fact, he had a soft spot for the young lovers on campus.

Like Baldwin, Breland had high standards, and anyone receiving an ‘A’ in one of his courses could have earned a similar mark from any university in the land. All in all, he did more to raise the literacy level of New Mexico than any other individual before or since. Hundreds of Aggies yet living can still recite, as a sort of recognition signal, the first 18 lines of Chaucer’s prologue to *Canterbury Tales*, and for many an appreciation of Byron or Keats or Grey – and especially of Burns –

began in Breland’s classes.

Other arts and sciences notables were William Edwards, economics and political science; Earl Beem, English; Claude Dove, education and psychology; Carl Tyre, foreign languages; Sigurd Johansen, sociology; Carl Jacobs, music; and Glenn R. Hamiel, chemistry. I must call on others to tell us about the leading members of the faculty of other schools. Some few, such as Hugh Gardner, Fabian Garcia, and Daniel Boone ‘Dad’ Jett were known by all, but there are no doubt a dozen others who deserve mention.

Bill Edwards, another confirmed bachelor, was on the flamboyant side, being fond of both booze and belles. Many a Monday morning would find him, even on a gray day, wearing dark glasses and walking warily. I worked for Edwards during my senior year, grading papers, monitoring exams, and even making out the final grades. This became known and I came under considerable pressure to make a felicitous change or two. My defense was that only the professor had that power. As a matter of fact Edwards could not have cared less, and I wondered at times just what he did, year after year, beyond lecturing from long ‘canned’ notes.

Maybe I was prejudiced, but the way to know a person is to work for him, and I considered Edwards’ performance as falling below the standards set by such men as Baldwin and Breland.

Earl Been, ever smiling and affable, taught a few English classes and after our day succeeded Breland as head of the department. Been is remembered by one and all primarily for his thespian activities. Under his direction the several dramatic societies — Yucca Players, Cibola Players, Coronado Playmakers — presented year after year plays of near-professional quality. I recall especially *Petticoat Fever*, *Penny Wise*, and *Night Must Fall*. There were many fine student actors, but most would agree, I believe, that Marvin Raney and Frederica Lewis were most consistently superior.

Dr. Claude C. Dove and Dr. Sigurd Johanson were amiable instructors in fields which in our day consisted more of technical jargon than substance. The astute student early on would pick up a number of terms, such as ‘sibling’, ‘Freudian slip’, ‘demography’, ‘id’, and so on, and then feed them back, at judicious intervals, to the instructors. The textbooks could then be safely discarded since a grade of at least a ‘B’ was assured or, with a minimum of additional effort, an ‘A’. If that sounds far-fetched, it could be. But I got A’s in the psychology

and sociology courses with little effort, and A's and B's in the education courses, on which I spent none at all.

Carl Tyre and Carl Jacobs, both true masters of their fields, did what could be done for foreign languages and music respectively. They were fortunate in finding amidst our sand and cacti a number of outstanding students – Marvin Raney, Sylvia Bricker, and May Adair in both French and Spanish; Henry Gustafson, Buford Jasper, Edward Foster, Nate McNeilly, and many others in music and chorus.

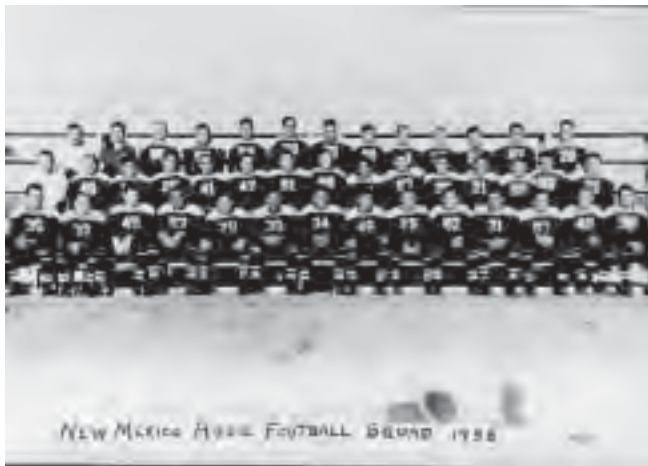


Aggie Athletics

The first Aggie football team was fielded in 1893. There were 15 men on the team, nine of them with Gay 90's style

mustachios, and they had a .500 season, winning one of the two games played.

In 1938 there were some 39 men on the varsity



1938 Aggie Football Team

team, without a single mustache among them.

Even in the 1935-39 era there were those on campus who deplored the time, money, and attention devoted to sports, especially football, but they were few in number. The vast majority of us were enthusiastic supporters, not as fanatic as the old grads who suffer heart attacks when the opposition scores but still devoted to our teams. And what can be more fun than a rousing

Friday night pep rally, complete with bonfire, snake dance, band music, and the halting words of coaches, followed the next day by taking your date, chrysanthemum and all, to the Big Game.

The Quesenberry Field stands were made up of plain wood slabs and there was never quite enough room to seat all the spectators, but nobody minded. On a crisp, sunny Saturday afternoon in October or November one could keep warm enough jumping up to follow the plays, though of course a blanket and a companionable girl friend helped a great deal. For most of my first two years all our home football games were played, as God had intended, in the afternoon. Lights, alas, were installed in 1937 and as time went on it became increasingly the custom to play at night.

Besides the players, a good many students were involved in providing color and enthusiasm for the games. First, there were the cheerleaders, led from '35 to '37 by Jack Green and from '37 to '39 by Oather Morper. They were assisted by such other great voices as Kearney Egerton, Bob Livermore, Bill Sommers, Barbara Green,



Morper White Livermore Summers

Bill Van Ordstrand, Bill White, Gracemary Gragg, and Bernard Kaplan.

Then there was the Pep Club, the all-girl organization that performed at half-time along with the band.

The Club was directed over these years by Elnora Williams, Dorothy Roane, Dorothy Leding, and Ruby Jane Hatch, but the girls who caught one's attention on the field were the drum majors: Margaret Davis, Rachel Poe, Kate and Martha Brook, and Betty Jo Poe. The Brook twins, who were not identical, Kate a brunette and Martha a blonde were likely the most attractive ma-



Martha and Kate Brooks

jorette duo in Aggie history.

The Aggie band under its various student leaders, Hugh Newman, Larry LaCoss, Bob Hatch, and Pete Mocho, performed valiantly at all the games.

It is pleasant to note that the band,



Aggie Band

for the most part, played band music — stirring Sousa marches and such grand old college tunes as *The Washington and Lee Swing*, the *Notre Dame Victory March* and *On Wisconsin*. Whenever the Crimson and White made a score, they gave their rousing rendition of the fight song, *Aggies, Oh Aggies*. This last is not an elegant work, in either words or music, the verses running as follows:

*Aggies, oh Aggies, the hills send back the cry
We're here to do or die
Aggies, oh Aggies, we'll win this game
Or know the reason why.*

*And when we win the game
We'll buy a keg of booze
And we'll drink it to the Aggies
Till we wobble in our shoes.*

One of the music instructors—unfortunately I



Aggie Pep Squad on Quesenberry Field

do not recall his name—composed a new song which incorporated part of *Aggies* but had considerably more dignity. It was in fact a fine swingy number but it just did not catch on. We continued to bellow out *Aggies, Oh Aggies* and a winning game would leave us hoarse for days thereafter.

Our coaches throughout were Jerry Hines and Vaughn Corley. Assisted at various times by Major



Corley

Hines

McNab and Elton Bresenham, they were in our era the most successful coaches in the Border Conference.

In 1935 the Aggies won all but two of their eight football games, losing to Arizona U. (9-6) and playing a scoreless tie with the State Teachers' College of Silver City. There were glorious victories over Flagstaff, Tempe, and sweetest of all, the University of New Mexico. We were then invited to play in El Paso on January 1st, 1936, in the first-ever Sun Bowl, against Hardin-Simmons, then a mighty football power.

Getting a post-season bowl bid led to great excitement on campus. The Pep Club and band began in-



1936 Aggie Sun Bowl Team

tensive practice for the Sun Bowl and their half-time contribution, the football players had an abbreviated Christmas vacation as they prepared for the great day, and many students were engaged in building the float to represent Aggies in the parade which was to traverse downtown El Paso an hour or so before the game.

I remember that first Sun Bowl only too well. The Aggie float was driven to El Paso to a parking lot the evening before the game. Somehow, I was chosen to be one of the two guards to watch over it until parade time. The other custodian was Robert E. 'Red' Donahue, a Silver City lad who was then a junior. Red was on the football team where he was used primarily as a kick-off man. It was a cold, cold night and we huddled in a nearby car that happened to be unlocked. Around 10 p.m. Red decided that he was starving and asked for a loan to buy a bowl of chili. I had with me only a \$20 bill, which was supposed to see me through to the month of January. I gave it to Red but implored him to return as soon as possible with as much change as possible. Our float was scheduled to move to the parade route at 10 a.m. on New Year's Day. At ten minutes to that hour Red at last reappeared, bleary-eyed and tottery. He had spent the night in Juarez and had blown my \$20 on licentious living.

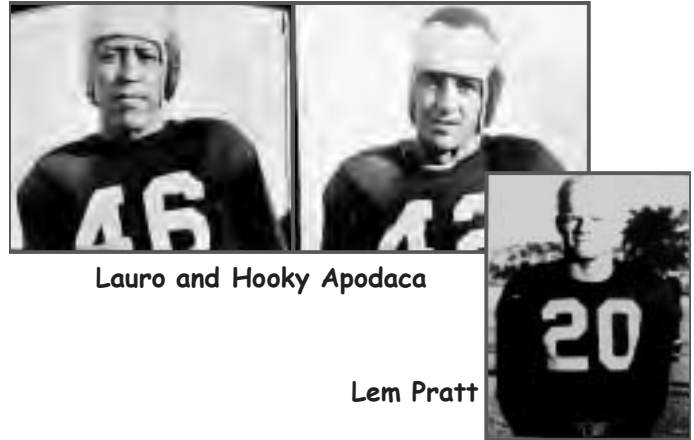
Red was not of much use on the football field that afternoon but the heroics of others led the Aggies to a 14-14 tie with a much heavier team and got the Sun Bowl tradition off to a good start before 11,000 fans.

In the next year, the Aggie record in football was six wins, three losses, and one tie. In 1937 there were seven wins and two losses, and in 1938 the Crimson also won seven and lost two, giving Coach Hines over the four seasons a record of 26-8-2. Of those 26 wins there is one that stands out in the memory of all who witnessed it, the 1938 victory over Drake University. Drake had a great team, but the Aggies resorted to fine faking and such razzle-dazzle as the triple-lateral. Before the day was over, the Aggies had scored in every way possible, winning 20 to 16. For a week after few of us could talk.

Our football heroes were many; among the more memorable were Lem Pratt, Hooky Apodaca, Lauro Apodaca, Mark Spanogle, Joe Hixon, Jack Baird, Bill Cann, Hugh Master, Walter Nations, Anthony George, Joe Yurcic, Frank Kozeliski, Speegle Wood, Sammy Cline, Charles Pennington, Howard Schwarzenback, Mel

Ritchey, Eddie Miller, Mert Gillis, and Wayne Smith. The great majority of the players were native New Mexicans,

1936 Sun Bowl Heroes



Lauro and Hooky Apodaca

Lem Pratt

two of whom, Lauro Apodaca and Frank Kozeliski, were the only three-letter men of our era, with A's won in football, basketball, and track.

The Aggies' football successes were exceeded only by their victories in basketball. After a so-so 1936 season (10 wins and 9 losses), the Aggie five caught fire and for the next three seasons they were truly sensational. In 1937 they won 22 and lost only 5; in 1938 there were 22 wins and 3 defeats; and in 1939 they won 20 and lost 4. That ciphers out to 74 wins to 21 losses. For the last three of those years (when the record was 64 to 12) the Aggies were the champions of the Border Conference. In 1938 they went to the National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball Tournament in Kansas City where they lost on a controversial call to Murray State in



1938-39 Aggie Basketball Team

the quarterfinals. And in 1939 they went to the National Invitational Tournament in New York City. With their cowboy hats and boots the team attracted much attention in the big town and when they played Long Island University at Madison Square Garden the crowd was clearly on their side. Their wide open style of play, new to the conservative East, led to foul trouble, however, and the game was won by LIU in the late minutes. The Aggies won a consolation game over Roanoke College ('Champions of the South'), 55 to 52, before returning to New Mexico.

The basketball stars during this period of glory were Lauro Apodaca, Hooky Apodaca, Henry Crownover, Howard Ball, Clayborne Wayne, Marshall Fuller, Jules Van Dersarl, Tom Esterbrook, Pecos Finley, Kiko Martinez, Morris Wood, Joe Jackson, Morton Coffman, Fustin Stevens, Frank Kozeliski, Melvin Ritchey, and Otis Shows. Perhaps the greatest combination of all was the 1938 first string consisting of Finley, Martinez, Wood, Jackson, and either Ritchey or Coffman.

The Aggies also had track, tennis, and rifle teams in intercollegiate competition but despite some outstanding individual performers (Lem Pratt, Dick Hamill, Frank Kozeliski, Lauro Apodaca, and Merrill Thompson in track; Scott Taylor and Roy Wilson in tennis) they met with only modest success. For reasons which escape me, we did not go in for baseball except on the intramural level.

WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK

After the excitement of that first fall semester, those of us who were freshmen in 1935, and were so minded, looked forward to the New Year and the Greek 'rush' season.

The Greeks in the 1935-39 era enrolled from 28 to 40 percent of the student body, which meant, of course, that the Independents could have swamped them in any given campus-wide election, and from time to time this did happen. The Greeks, however, supported each other (except when running against one another); they had the more affluent students, which meant more time and money for campaigns; and many Independents just didn't give a damn.

During my first two years there were four fraternities on campus and in 1938 a fifth was formed. The only 'national' was Tau Kappa Epsilon, whose local chapter (Alpha Omicron) had evolved from an organization

founded in 1921. The 'locals' were Phi Chi Psi (founded in 1926); Phi Beta Theta (1927); Alpha Delta Theta (1921); and Sigma Alpha Omicron (1938). There was supposed to be an advantage in being 'national', greater prestige and thus an edge in pledging the more desirable candidates. I can find no evidence that this was true for the TEKE's. The quality of membership of the several frats seemed to pretty well balance out.

Throughout there were only two sororities, Kheth Samekh and Zeta Tau Alpha. 'Kheth' and 'Samekh' are the English words for the Hebrew letters 'k' and 's' and I don't know how an organization so named came to be considered Greek but it did. The KS's were founded at Aggies in 1925. The Zetas, like the TEKE's, were national, their local chapter being Beta Nu, formed in 1928. The honors between the KS's and Zeta's were fairly even in 1935-36 but thereafter the Zeta's, dominated by Las Cruces high alumnae, seemed to get more than their share of the pie. In 1938-39, as a 'for instance', ten of the sixteen campus beauties featured in the year-book were Zetas, as were the secretary-treasurers of the senior, sophomore, and freshmen classes, the assistant editor of *The Swastika*, and two members of the Student Commission. I had good friends in both sororities and suspect that neither conferred an advantage so far as getting along in the post-college world was concerned.

During rush week the prospective pledge spent his evening at home, ears straining for the ring of door bell or telephone, until his hopes were answered or his fears confirmed. I still remember the day when I learned from the grapevine that the TEKE's had me in mind. On the night of their 'smoker' I was dressed in my best long before the scheduled hour of 8 p.m. That time passed and the long evening drew on, and on and on. At 11 p.m. I decided it was all a practical joke and headed for bed. Then came the doorbell ring. My escort, Johnny Gaines, had had as bad time of it as I. Confused about the address, he had been all over Las Cruces before chancing on the right number. Solemnly and sullenly we drove to the 'smoker', which by that time was breaking up. The TEKE's and I made a poor impression on each other and their bid never came. I was later pledged by Phi Chi Psi and after a time recovered from not having been chosen by our 'national'.

Fraternity invitation had some of the trappings of freshman hazing. Before being formally accepted the pledges had to undergo the rigors of what was known,

and rightly so, as Hell Week. Part of the 'hell' was innocuous enough, learning the fraternity oath, making a wooden paddle with the fraternity letters or crest on it, and so on, but there was also the performance of mental chores for the brothers and last, and worst, 'The Walk'. The pledges were taken out into the countryside at night, rigged in outlandish costumes, and left to make their way back, singly, through 10 to 20 miles of unknown terrain.

I was only a so-so fraternity man, lacking the devoted, almost religious fervor of such brothers as Milton Cox and Oather Morper. Many of my good friends were Independents, and the notion that Greek must support Greek, no matter what, I found inane. And, while it did not claim my attention immediately, I came to wonder how it was that not a single Spanish-American was pledged by any fraternity or sorority. There was never any discussion as to the why of this that I can recall, and it certainly was not for lack of excellent prospects among our Spanish surnamed. There was no barrier, it should be noted, against our Jewish students, several of whom became Greeks.

For those who lived in the fraternity and sorority houses there were definite advantages. The cost of room and board was within reason and the fellowship meant a great deal. The houses themselves, with the sole exception of the Kheth Samekh, were antiquated structures that any present day building inspector would condemn on first sight. The house mothers were, in general, elderly widows willing to serve for very little beyond their own food and shelter.

Except for the Engineer's Ball, held on or near St. Patrick's Day; the Ag Brawl, usually scheduled around harvest time, and the Military Ball, a late spring affair, most of the campus dances were Greek sponsored and held in the gym. They were on the sedate side, all things considered, mostly fox trots to such tunes as *Two Sleepy People*, *Thanks for the Memory*, *Cocktails for Two* and *Love is Just Around the Corner*. In 1937 the *Big Apple* craze came along but fortunately did not persist. Rock and jitterbug were far in the future.

Beside the hops each fraternity and sorority had its traditional social affairs, such as the A.D.T.'s Christmas house party, the 'TEKE's Founders Day banquet, the Zeta's Beta Nu birthday party, the Phi Chi's Washington Birthday picnic, and so on. And the smash event for each was the Final Ball, held in the late spring at an

El Paso hotel, the Del Norte or Hilton. These were the only true formals of the year and months were spent getting ready for them. There was rivalry to see which organization could book the best known orchestra and there was much agonizing over decorations, menu, and the selection of favors (which usually came down to compacts or metallic-mesh purses).

Near the end of my senior year my Phi Chi Psi fraternity was accepted as the local chapter of the national Sigma Alpha Epsilon. There was long and heated debate before this came to pass. The pro side argued that being 'national' would mean real prestige, putting us in that respect on a par with, if not above, the TEKE's. Moreover, whenever one went he would find welcome at a chapter house and fellow SAE's would help him to lucrative positions out there in the great world. The anti's admitted some validity to the first point but pooh-poohed the rest. Only a hobo would go from campus to campus seeking fraternity hand-outs, and no one in his right mind would give preference to an unknown just because he was an SAE. And, of course, a point the pros soft-pedaled, the dues would go up to help support the national office and officers. I was an anti. Just before graduation the frat seniors were told that although we had been Phi Chi's for four years, payment of \$100 each would get us an SAE pin and certificate of membership. Most of us had had enough trouble with the modest local dues and \$100 in 1939 was the equivalent of five times that amount today. Consequently, to the extent that we are anything fraternal, we are still Phi Chi Psi's.

There were, besides the social organizations, three Greek honorary societies: Alpha Zeta for agriculture, Mu Phi Pi for engineering; and Phi Mu Tau for arts and sciences. Membership depended on maintaining a certain grade level and the members were duly pictured in the annual *Swastika*. I eventually made Phi Mu Tau but I do not recall the organization ever meeting or carrying on any activity of any kind.

Lest one think that the Greeks controlled all facets of campus life, it should be noted that there were, of course, over a score of other organizations. Besides the all-inclusive Engineers' Club, the engineers had their societies in each discipline. The Ags had the Ag Club (another inclusive), the Agronomy Club, the Dairy Club, the Block and Bridle Club (formerly the Wranglers), and the Dairy and Stock Judging Teams. There was a Home Economics Club. On the arts and sciences side there

were the dramatics clubs, already mentioned; the language societies, Los Picaros and L'Esprit Francais; the music associations, orchestra, chorus and band, and the International Relations Club, which, along with Phi Mu Tau, was largely the creation of Dr. Baldwin.

Baldwin labored valiantly to make us aware of what was going on in the international arena, and it was largely through his eyes that we viewed from afar the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (1935); the death of George V, the abdication of Edward VIII, and the civil war in Spain (1936); the Japanese incursion into China, the Panay incident, and Italy's withdrawal from the League of Nations (1937); the German invasion of Austria, the Munich conference and subsequent dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and Mexico's nationalization of foreign oil companies (1938); the German-Italian alliance, the end of the war in Spain, and Japanese adventurism in Manchuria (1939). A Canadian by birth, Baldwin was strongly pro-British, but he had a clear vision and correctly predicted many of the calamitous events of the future.

The Swastika for 1939 for the first time found room to picture the Independents as a separate entity (it is my impression that they had been organized for long before that time but I am not sure). Their officers for 1938-39 were Ollie Sherman, president; Morris Wood, vice president; and Virgie Mae Shook, secretary-treasurer. A year before, the Spanish-American students had founded Los Conquistadors, a club for promoting fellowship and scholarship. Their first officers were Kiko Martinez, president; Effie Apodaca, vice president; Ernest Chaves, secretary; and Ernest Sanchez, treasurer.

And, finally, there were the several religious organizations: The Baptist Student Union; the Newman Club for Catholics; and the Christian Endeavor, which in 1938 was new or newly revived. The unofficial campus chaplain, it should be noted, was the Reverend Hunter Lewis of St. James Episcopal Church of Mesilla Park. 'Preacher', as he was known throughout a vast area, was associated with the college in some degree from his arrival in the valley in 1905 until his death, at age 78, in 1948. At the 1939 graduation ceremony the school conferred on him its Certificate of Distinguished Service. I knew 'Preacher' from earlier days when he made missionary visits to Hillsboro. One of his daughters, Abbie, taught for a year in our high school before going to New York where she had a distinguished career in the theater,

and another daughter, Frederica, was in the Aggie class of 1940.

SPRINGTIME AND SWASTIKAS

Time flies when one is young and before we knew it four years were almost gone and graduation, like love, was just around the corner. The great events before that day were the May Day festival, the Greek's final dances, and distribution of *The Swastika*.

The May Day tradition at Aggies goes back a long way, at least to 1900 when a May Queen was selected. By our time it had become the custom for students to ballot each spring for May Queen, Greatest Aggie, Most Popular Girl, Most Popular Boy, Most Popular Faculty Member, and Fellow with the Best Line. Certain members of the faculty deplored the election of a 'most popular' from among their numbers, feeling that such popularity was likely to be found amount the amiable and easy-going rather than in the scholarly taskmasters. Perhaps they had a point. I voted throughout for Rufus Breland or Glenn Hamiel. The 'Fellow with the Best Line' category must have been a product of the 1920's. On May Day there was a great to-do, usually in the form of a pageant, with the chosen and their escorts introduced with suitable fanfare. There was also a parade of floats, with prizes for the best three. And later, of course, the elected were honored with full page photographs in the yearbook.

The politicking for the May Day selection was the most intensive of the year, since the entire student body was involved. The Greeks made deals with each other – 'You support our Zeta for Queen and we will vote for your TEKE for Most Popular Boy'. But these schemes were not always successful. Out of the twenty students elected over the four years, twelve were Greek but eight were Independent.

Our 1935-39 May Queens were Elnora Williams, Alyce Hawk, Martha Brook, and Barbara Schaber. Greatest Aggies were Hugh Master, Lemuel Pratt, C.C. Bunch and Joe Yurcic; Most Popular Girls were Dorothy Roane, Christine Christy, Helen Anderson, and Helen Peek; Most Popular Boys were Anthony George, C.C. Bunch, Roscoe Peacock, and Pecos Finley. Fellows with the Best Line were Kearney Egerton (both 1936 and 1937), your author (1938), and Oather Morper (1939). The Most Popular Faculty members were Major A. J. MacNab, Dr. J.R. Eyer,





Oather Morper



'Dad' Jett

D. B. 'Dad' Jett, and Coach Jerry Hines.

Beginning with the 1937 edition, the *Swastika* included a section on campus belles titled variously as 'Beauties', 'Las Lindas', and 'Vanity Fair'. These were selected from photographs by some outside artist. Among those who were selected two or more times were Martha Brook, Kate Brook, Margaret Horton, Helen Peek, Regina Yarbrough, Carthelle Johnson, Enid Edwards, Lena Ruth McClellan, and Roberta Stern.

The final balls were held on schedule, all, of course, smashing successes – and a week or so later the *Swastika* came out. Like *The Round-Up*, the *Swastika* dates back to 1907. The name was taken from a centuries old religious and good luck symbol. The word derives from the Sanskrit Svasti, meaning 'well-being', and the device was widely used by certain American Indians, especially the Navajo, and it was this swastika that Aggies adopted for their yearbooks. As the Nazis came to power in Germany and took a swastika as their party emblem the question arose as to whether or not the school should retain it. This was voted on from time to time and the decision was, always to keep it, since:

1. Our use ante-dated that of the Nazis by many years.
2. Our Indian swastika differed from theirs, the arms of ours moving counter-clockwise while the Nazi one went clockwise, and,
3. To hell with the Nazis anyway.

Of my four *Swastikas* the emblems in two (1937, 1939) conform to the American Indian model. The 1938 book has the name but not the symbol. The emblem on the 1936 book is, alas, the same as the Nazis.

One editorial problem was that of selecting the person to whom an edition would be dedicated. In 1936

the honoree was Era Rentfrow, the long-time registrar. The choice was widely acclaimed. The 1937 *Swastika* was dedicated to the new A & M President, Dr. Ray Fife. Many of us found it a strange choice, since Dr. Fife was little known and there were many around who had contributed greatly to A & M's successes. The 1938 book honored Elise Rosenwald the assistant librarian, another popular choice. And the 1939 fiftieth anniversary edition was very properly dedicated to Dr. Fabian Garcia, who had been in the Aggies first graduating class and on its first football team. As already mentioned, he was one of New Mexico's truly great men and beloved by all.

It was the custom, of course, to write a note, or at least a signature, in one another's *Swastika* and one could quite easily collect one to several hundred signings, since the school was as yet so small that most of us knew most of us. On re-reading those inscriptions today one wonders what we would have done without the adjective "swell." Here, with all due modesty, is part of the message that the popular Tucumcari belle, Betty Magruder, wrote for me in 1938:

"Dearest Mike you were always swell to me I think you're swell and hope that you always get the best of everything because such a swell guy really deserves it Lots of love"

A nice memento of a really swell girl.

Graduation Day at last arrived, that sweet-sad time had somehow had much in common with one's opening days at a school. Again one is leaving one world behind and entering another. The ceremonies for the Class of 1939 were held on Quesenberry Field, at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 23rd. There were 101 graduates, a record up to this time, three 'with highest honors' (Marvin Raney, John Cooper, Daniel Botkin) and twelve 'with honors'. We were addressed by the Honorable Frank Murphy, U.S. Attorney General, who was accompanied by J. Edgar Hoover, then a relatively young 44. I recall not a word of Murphy's address (who at graduation ever listens to anything but his own inner voices) but in any case he got in return an honorary degree. As heretofore noted, the Reverend Hunter 'Preacher' Lewis was also honored.

At last the moment arrived when we stepped forward to receive our diplomas and the turn the tassels on our mortar-board graduation caps. And on the morrow we who had not already done so began the search for that rarity, a decent job. Little more than two years in the future was the attack on Pearl Harbor and the war

that would send so many Aggies of so many classes to the far-flung fields of battle.

Fifty of the Finest

Every class on every campus has its share of those energetic and magical men and women who seem to be able to be everywhere and to do everything, and do it well, all at the same time. They hold important positions, dominate the playing field, win the elections, run the publications, put on the plays, and end up in the local versions of the Who's Who.

Just for the hell of it I have dawn up a list of the fifty Aggies who during our four years were the Big Men (and Lovely Women) on Campus. Any such list is sure to outrage those who have in mind other heroes and heroines. To them I say, come join the fun. Write your indignant letters and we will try, somehow, to give you an opportunity to present your versions.

The astute reader will notice that from my own class of 1939 I have chosen twice as many finest as from other classes. My only deference is that our class was considerably larger and (how subjective can you get?) blessed with, proportionately, more talented guys and gals. (The truth is I just knew them better). Anyway, here, listed alphabetically by class, is my Fifty Finest:

Class of 1936: Jack Baird, Anthony George, Jeannette Gustafson, Josephine Lucero, Hugh Master, Walter Nations, Elsie Raye Rigney, Martha Generive Shipe, Clayborn Wayne, Elnora Williams.

Class of 1937: Anastacio "Hooky" Apodaca, Laura D. Apodaca, Jo Betty (Green) Bush, Margaret Davis, Genevive Harrington, Rosemary Head, Betty Jean Hess, Lemuel Pratt, Jules Van Dersarl, Hayden Wiley.

Class of 1938: Charles C. Bunch, Kearney Egerton, Joe Hixon, George Robert Hatch, Gerald Leach, Dorothy Roane, James Wiggins.

Class of 1939: May Adair, Daniel F. Botkin, Kate Brook, Martha Brook, Corabelle Boutz, Mary Ellen Chamberlin, C. Milton Cox, Enid Edwards, Pecos Uvalde Finely, John R. Gaines, Emmett Hixon, Ethel Isaacks, Richard Kent, Frank Kozelkiski, Kiko Martinez, Paul McGuire, Oather Morper, E. Marvin Raney, Morris Wood, Joe Yurcic.

The selections above are based to a considerable degree on the records of individuals as shown in the various *Swastikas*. The 19 women included is about right, given the 2.5 to 1 ratio of men to women, and the Span-

ish surnamed represents fairly closely their proportion of the student body. There is also a fair balance between the basically athletic and the basically scholarly, though in every case the individual listed had talent in more than one area.

Quite aside from their other accomplishments there were fellow Aggies who qualified for my personal Hall of Fame:

Marvin Raney. This brilliant and versatile lad was a great and good friend. In 1936 he was chosen to advertise *Phillip Morris* cigarettes on campus and to this end was given many cartons of the smokes, each carton containing dozens of two-cigarette samplers. Marvin was a non-smoker and uninterested in huckstering, so he turned his entire stock over to me. Those Phillip Morrises kept me going for months on end, the only drawback being that I could be traced all over the campus and nearby mesas by the discarded cigarette packets.

Oather Morper. Oather, whose unusual name is, so far as I can discover, unique, was also a good pal. In addition to many other achievements he became, in 1938, the nation's champion swallower of goldfish at a performance at the Mission Theater in Mesilla Park. That was a zany season and many considered Oather a half-baked publicity hound. I knew better. He was a highly intelligent guy and like most of us, hard pressed. The goldfish stunts were profitable, which was his only motive for doing them. After each swallowing exhibition he was nauseated and had to drink large quantities of milk to settle his innards.

Kearney Egerton. Had there been an award for the most debonair, Kearney would have won hands down. He was always colorfully dressed, especially as to vest, jacket, and necktie. He was a very sharp customer, witty and valuable, and as good a sports reporter as anyone could ask. I enjoyed sparring with him through our *Round-Up* columns, though he was usually the winner,



Henry Palm

but to me his special charm was as a cartoonist. Kearney's style most nearly approached that of Al Capp, whose Dogpatch characters were then coming into vogue. The campus was strewn with his on-the-spot caricatures of our more pompous personalities.

Henry Palm. Hank, one of the finest men that Deming, NM ever sent our way, had the distinction of

founding, almost single-handedly, a new fraternity, Sigma Alpha Omicron, to challenge the old ones and widen the opportunity for prospective pledges.

Pecos Uvalde Finley. Pecos bore with good-humored grace the names of the two Texas towns, though his home was shown in the *Swastika* as Causey, NM, a hamlet in Roosevelt County.



Pecos Uvalde Finley

Pecos was one of our basketball greats and though in only one year, 1939, was he elected Most Popular Boy, he was in fact our most popular through all his Aggie years. (Note: Lt. Pecos Finley died in 1942 at POW Camp O'Donnell in the Phillipines after surviving the Bataan Death March).

Kate and Martha Brook. These were likely the best loved sisters who ever attended Aggies. They combined with beauty and intelligence a basic kindness and tact that spread a warming glow to all within their orbit. Their tremendous popularity never deflected or diluted a down-to-earth unpretentious attitude toward life in general. They certainly made this country boy feel at home and they are dear friends to this day.

What is needed at this point is one of those 'Where Are They Now' accounts to tell us how all these people fared after their college days. Did those considered 'most likely' actually succeed? How many of the romances developed into enduring marriages? Did the best scholars get the best niches? I would dearly love to know. Many of those mentioned here have no doubt gone on to the Great Beyond but many more are still around, laboring in one vineyard or another. To all of them, living or dead, at home or abroad, my salute. God bless them every one!

WERE THESE THE GLORY YEARS?

The premise of this memoir is that the 1935-1939 era was one of the more important for Aggies in the first half-century of the schools' existence, a sort of watershed between the pioneer decades that got the in-

stitution on its feet and the post-World War II expansion and diversification that led in time to true university status. Is there credible evidence to support my view? I think there is.

In the first place, the Aggie enrollment during those years nearly doubled, a growth rate which was not equaled for years thereafter. We reached and exceeded the then 'magic' 500 number in 1935 and went to over 1,000 in 1938-39. Secondly, the administrative and teaching staffs for those years were the best up to that time and for a long while to come. They shaped the school nearer to their hearts' desire and that desire was for administrative soundness and academic excellence. As already noted, the importance of their roles has been recognized in the number of Aggie buildings named for men and women who were then active.

Third, an excellent balance was achieved and maintained between the three major schools of agriculture, engineering, and arts and sciences. Each was prepared or preparing for whatever expansion the future might hold. It was no longer a requirement, as it unofficially had been, for the Aggies' president to be identified entirely or largely with the agricultural interest.

Fourth, in the athletic arena the Aggies racked up records in the major sports, football, and basketball, which over a four year span have never been surpassed. And most of the athletes were native New Mexicans.

Fifth, the military staff prepared many young men, at least to a degree, for responsible roles in the terrible war soon to come. The Aggies contribution in World War II was far out of proportion to the size of the school.

Sixth, the seeds were sown for a greater degree of mutual tolerance between the several races and social groupings. We had, admittedly, a long way to go. The admission of Negroes to summer sessions set a valuable precedent for future policy; the courageous stand against anti-Japanese-American frenzy was admirable; and the absence of anti-Semitism encouraging.

Seventh, and last, the Aggie students of that period had more fun. Exuberance may have little to do with greatness, but it has a lot to do with the way one looks at life. The inane 20's had passed and the grim war years were yet to come. We had our strange interludes, to be sure, but for the most part we were spared anything akin to either the complacency of the 50's or the frantic rebelliousness of the 60's. We were Depres-

sion kids, but, though often 'ill-housed, ill-clothed, and ill-fed', we found each day a challenge and a delight.

Are you convinced? Well, no matter. If you are, you may have found some interest in these footnotes to Aggie history. If not, perhaps you will take pen in hand and tell us of other and worthier times. It is the hope that this brief volume will lead to more and better chronicles so that we can build up over the years a small library of informal histories of our school as it was both

before and after it became New Mexico State University.

Adios, Amigos...Michael F. Taylor

The editor Walter Hines is an NMSU alumnus ('66, '67), and author of the book, *Aggies of the Pacific War: New Mexico A&M College and the War with Japan* and several other articles on NMSU history.

Footnotes



Clara Belle William

1. From the NMSU website, 2010: *Clara Belle Williams went on to receive many honors during her lifetime. She succeeded despite significant obstacles of discrimination placed before her while pursuing her higher education. In 1961, New Mexico State University named Williams Street on the main campus in her honor. She received an Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from NMSU in 1980. Clara Belle Williams Day was celebrated on Sunday, February 13, 2005 at NMSU. Included in the festivities was the renaming of the NMSU English Building as Clara Belle Williams Hall. Mrs. Williams passed away July 3, 1994 at the age of 108.*

2. As recounted in *That All May Learn* by Simon Kropp, 1972 (p. 228):
Dean Eupbro Wisda, as the guardian of campus morals, inspired the installation of lights on the pathways leading to the library building. But an unidentified student (Ed. Note: Taylor?) with a "perverted sense of humor" retaliated on Halloween, when Mrs Wisda was awakened by a noise in the girls' dormitory during the wee hours of the morning. Properly, wrapping a robe about her person and descending to the lower floor, she found a tiny baby goat loitering without permission.