



Howdy Class of '80 Friends!

It's REUNION TIME! Can you believe it's been 40 years!!? Everyone else has gotten old, but NOT US!

While we recognize there is still great uncertainty during this unprecedented time, we are moving forward with plans for the reunion, being very cognizant of the possibility that circumstances may dictate changes to our plans. Six months may seem like a long way away, but in planning terms, it's not that far. So we are being optimistic and encourage you to join us in making your reunion plans!

### **The Class of '80 40 Year Reunion is scheduled for October 16-18, 2020.**

The reunion will officially begin on Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. But we encourage those that can join us for the "unofficial" start on Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup> to maximize your time in Aggieland.

While we would all love to have our reunion on a home football game weekend, the lack of available facilities and venues, conflicting priorities for support, and much higher costs make it difficult, if not impossible. In the survey results, you told us an away game was fine because keeping costs low and having plenty of time to visit with classmates were the most important objectives for you. We have a hard-working reunion committee helping us achieve these objectives.

This weekend was chosen because it should be an exciting away game with Auburn. As mentioned above, having the reunion on an away game weekend ensures the availability of rooms and venues at an affordable cost. The timing of the game on Saturday is still unknown, but we're assuming Jimbo will have us playing in prime time.

Please visit our [CLASS WEBSITE](http://ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com) at [ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com](http://ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com) for updates between now and the Reunion Registration Email, which will go out in August!

## Hotels

The Stella Hotel will serve as our reunion headquarters hotel. Most of the activities will be held there, but we are considering on-campus venues for some of our activities.

If you want to use reward points or be closer to campus and other local sites, the Committee has negotiated special reunion rates at other hotels. Visit [ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com](http://ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com) for more details and for direct links to each hotel's Class of '80 reservation block. These rooms and special rates are held for us until the September release dates indicated on our website.

Hotel Guest Room Options			
Hotel	King*	Double*	Location
Reunion Headquarters Hotel			
The Stella Hotel	\$109.00	\$119.00	4100 Lake Atlas Drive, Bryan
Other Options With Class of '80 Negotiated Prices			
Hawthorn Suites	\$105.00	\$105.00	1010 University Dr East, College Station
Hyatt Place	\$105.00	\$105.00	1100 University Dr East, College Station
Courtyard by Marriott	\$119.00	\$119.00	3939 State Hwy 6 S, College Station
Texas A&M Hotel & Conference Ctr	\$129.00	\$129.00	177 Joe Routt Blvd, College Station
Fairfield Inn & Suites	\$129.00	\$129.00	4613 South Texas Avenue, Bryan
Cavalry Court	\$129.00	\$139.00	200 Century Court, College Station
The George	\$129.00	\$139.00	180 Century Court, College Station
Visit <a href="http://ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com">ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com</a> for more details and for direct links to each hotel's Class of '80 reservation block. * Price is one room per night excluding taxes/fees.			

Because other events that were postponed from this spring may be rescheduled for the same weekend as our reunion, **we encourage you to make your hotel reservations as soon as possible so you lock in a guaranteed room at these low rates.** All of these rates are fully refundable up until 48 or 72 hours prior to your reservation start date, so you can be comfortable in making a non-binding financial commitment now. Make a note on your calendar to be sure you have the cancellation cut-off date on your radar once you book your room.

**MAKE YOUR HOTEL ROOM RESERVATIONS TODAY!**

## Golf

We are working on details for a golf tournament on Friday for those that want to play. So whether you take your game seriously, or you play once a year, we hope to have fun with this optional event. If you are interested in participating, please email Sara Beaves ([sara.beaves@sci-us.com](mailto:sara.beaves@sci-us.com)) with your name and any other players signing up with you (e.g., your spouse or significant other, son or daughter, etc.) by May 31<sup>st</sup>. This will allow us to finalize the number of tee time slots and carts needed, which will affect the pricing from the club. We are planning on an 11:00 or noon start depending on the level of interest and the number of tee times needed. You'll have plenty of time to clean up and catch up with friends before the Friday evening event.

If you cannot arrive on Friday in time to join us but would like to play golf on Sunday before heading home, let Sara know and she'll provide you with details for arranging your own tee time.

## Reunion Video/Slideshow

We need photos of you during our college days! We need the REALLY FUNNY/INTERESTING ONES! We want to be sure everyone who attends the reunion is represented in the Class Reunion video/slideshow. (If you sent pictures for our 35<sup>th</sup> Reunion, there's no need to send them again as we have them saved.) Please dig through your photo albums and your parents' archives to find pictures from while you were at A&M. Maybe you have a video of you and your Aggie friends sawing Horns or an Aggie Ring picture from your wedding reception. Or maybe you and your friends came back for an Aggie football game together and you have pictures from that event. Please take the time to find a few pictures so that we have a great video to share during and after the reunion.

Here are the details from **Greg Brewer** and **Mark Rand, who are already** hard at work on updating and preparing the Class reunion video.

Please send digital photographs and videos of your memories to Mark Rand (by Monday, September 7th. You can download them to a thumb drive and mail them to: 13819 Claymont Hill Drive, Cypress, TX, 77429.

If more convenient, simply email Mark at [markrand@corpsassets.com](mailto:markrand@corpsassets.com) and he will reply with an empty DropBox folder. You can simply drag and drop your digital images and videos into the folder and share/save them and he will have them. If you so desire, you can write a description of each photo on a separate document and drag it into the DropBox folder as well (please identify each photo by number or name when writing the description).

Mark can work with almost any digital format (PDF, Jpeg etc.) as well as almost all video codecs (.MOV, H-264, Mp4, Mpeg, etc.). If you have some of your parents' home videos and want to have them digitized, please include those. If you aren't in a position to have your memories digitized for the video, send the originals to Mark and if time allows, he will digitize them for use in the video.

We're also asking you to bring your albums or photos to the reunion, and we'll have a place to set them out for everyone to see.

## Other Reunion Details and Plans

- Dinner and Dance on Friday Evening
  - The dinner will feature our classmate, former NASA astronaut Mike Fossum, as our guest speaker. He has incredible stories from his multiple trips to the International Space Station.

Send Bill Hyatt (bhyatt1980@hotmail.com) your favorite song to be included in the play list for the dance. We still have the play list from the 2015 reunion, so if you sent in a request before, there's no need to send it again. Check the list at [ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com/songs](http://ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com/songs) to you want to be sure your favorite is included!
- Game Watch Party on Saturday – Texas A&M vs. Auburn
  - Saturday's schedule will be flexible as the game time will dictate what happens and when, and the game time won't be known until early October. We can guarantee there will be plenty of time for visiting and catching up.
  - We will have a venue able to accommodate the whole group with the best big screen while we watch the Aggies beat the Hell outta Auburn!
- Campus Tours
  - Tours of some of the latest additions to the campus will be available for small groups or on your own.
  - For those that would like to visit the Bush Presidential Library, you'll be able to take advantage of a discounted rate of \$3 for a self-guided tour.
  - If there are particular campus sites that you would like to tour, please contact Katie Latham ([katie@vehiclereman.com](mailto:katie@vehiclereman.com)) so that we can gather more information for you and add the information to our Reunion website.
- Class Business Meeting
  - Class of '80 E. King Gill Selfless Service Award impact to the University with possible introduction of the 1<sup>st</sup> recipient
  - Class agent elections
- Cushing Library Presentation of E. King Gill Memorabilia
  - Following the business meeting on Saturday, we will have a short presentation of the E. King Gill Memorabilia to the Cushing Library Archives.
- Friends in Other Classes
  - We are inviting friends from the Class of '79 and '81 to join us. We figure the "more the merrier!"
- Registration Details
  - Expect to receive the email around **August 1<sup>st</sup>** with the final details and **registration information.**

## **Pass the Word and Invite Your Friends to Join Us**

Please help us get the word out. Think of the 5 or 10 or 25 people you really want to see at our reunion. Forward this email to them to be sure they received it and are making plans to join us.

We are on the “electronic communications only” side of the Association’s digital divide, which means we aren’t considered old A&M yet! For those that the Association doesn’t have a valid email or if they have been opted out, they will NOT receive updates about the reunion.

We recognize it’s easy to forget to update the Association when you change emails. It appears some classmates may have inadvertently opted out of certain Association communications not realizing it included our Class newsletters. We’re trying to get EVERYONE connected on-line, so we can keep them up-to-date on Class and Campus news. If any of your friends are not receiving updates, and you are able to get this information to them, please ask them to forward their contact information to one of the Class agents. We will get them back on our Class of 1980 mailing list.

## **Flexibility and Optimism**

We sincerely hope all of you are well and experiencing little personal impact with the unprecedented reaction to the global outbreak of COVID-19. The steps taken by our government and the medical community are warranted, there’s no arguing the disappointment with the cancellations of spring sports and postponements and/or cancellations of major events both at Aggieland and in our own communities.

As we said in the opening, we are optimistic we will be able to have our 40 Year Reunion in October as planned. As circumstances evolve and schedules become clearer over the next 90 days, we’ll have more information and the Committee will make a decision about continuing with the Reunion as planned in October or deferring into 2021. (The Committee agreed that trying to reschedule into November or December of 2020 is not a viable option because of the holidays and other year-end commitments.)

## **Campus News**

We recently attended the Association of Former Students Spring Leadership Council meeting and have an update on the University. Texas A&M is now the largest university in America. The current enrollment is over 69,000 at the main campus. President Michael Young spoke and told us they are focused on quality and excellence, not quantity. While the growth has been incredible, they are now playing catch-up to make sure we provide the highest quality education for each and every student. One area being addressed is the size of classes and availability of courses for the students. A new classroom building has just been completed offering 2,200 seats for students.

A few facts to make you proud: A&M is tied for the highest graduation rate for universities in the SEC, we have the highest starting salaries, and we have the fastest graduation rate at 4.1 years. Dr. Young reiterated that we are focused on students graduating in four years, and not taking the five year plan (how the world has changed!).

Texas A&M was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation in Money magazine's "Best Public Colleges" Report for 2019 and 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the 2020 U.S. News & World Report category for "Best Value Schools". And, with the efforts launched two years ago in the Student Success Initiative, the student retention rate has increased from 92% to 95%. Finally, President Young reported we received \$91 million in additional funding from the state in the last biennial legislative session.

We also heard from our new Athletic Director, Ross Bjork. His department is currently working on a fiscal and facilities Master Plan. Our goal is to maintain a culture of excellence in the athletic programs. His focus is leadership and communication. Texas A&M University is 13<sup>th</sup> in the rankings for the Directors Cup for all NCAA universities. He pointed out that we have 20 NCAA sports teams, whereas Stanford has 32. That will limit our ability to compete at the highest levels in the Directors Cup. Ross pointed out the average grade point for our athletes for the Spring Semester 2019 was 3.0. It was 2.977 in the Fall Semester. Our athletes maintain an 82% graduation rate.

The Association of Former Students reported on the status of the university-wide Lead by Example Campaign initiated in 2012. The overall Lead by Example goal is \$4 billion with over \$3.7 billion raised to date. The AFS campaign's goal was to raise \$100 million in giving. We reached \$119.5 million in 2019. The stretch goal is to reach 100,000 donors, and there were just under 61,000 donors in 2019. The Class of '80 was represented by 1,055 donors, contributing more than \$256,000 (a record for our class) to the Association of Former Students, with multiples of this given to other areas and programs of the University. Thank you for your generosity.

### **Closing**

In closing, please remember to forward this e-mail to any of our classmates as we are focused on getting as many e-mails as possible or reconnecting with those that have been opted out without knowing. We currently have email addresses for 4474 of 5639 (75%) living classmates in our e-mail list. We want to make sure everyone knows about our Reunion. It will be a great event, and we'd love to have as many attendees as possible. It's also not too late to volunteer to help either before or during the reunion. It really is a fun way to reconnect and help make it a great event.

As always, please send us updates as things change in your world. We love hearing from you and letting your classmates know what is going on.

Finally, mark October 16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> on your calendars now. Make plans to attend as it will be an event to remember. It won't be the same if you aren't there. Make your hotel reservations now and send in your pictures or videos to Mark Rand. Visit [ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com](http://ClassOf1980.aggienetwork.com) frequently for updates about the reunion.

Beat the Hell outta COVID-19. Stay calm and WASH YOUR HANDS!

Your Class Agents,

**Sara Beaves**

**Bill Jentsch**

**Jim Pratt**

**Mark Rhea**

**Kari Roush**