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## Rivals draw together at UT



A&M cadet Jason Arnold, left, and P.J. Miller, center, join Lt. Gov. Rick Perry, a graduate of Texas A&M, and his daughter Sydney, right, in singing 'The Spirit of Aggieland' at the University of Texas on Monday night. UT turned its traditional Hex Rally into a memorial service for the 12 people killed in the collapse of A&M's Bonfire.

Photo by Ralph Barrera/AA-S

## ■ Longhorns, Aggies share words, songs and comfort

By [Angela Shah](#)  
 American-Statesman Staff

Posted: Nov. 23, 1999

For the first time in history, notes of the Texas A&M University alma mater rang out Monday night from the University of Texas Tower.

It was one of the more obvious signs that the grandest of all UT pep rallies had given way to a solemn memorial service.

An estimated 10,000 people -- including students, graduates and administrators from both UT and A&M -- gathered on the South Mall at 9 p.m. to set aside a storied 106-year-old football rivalry between the two schools. Instead, they honored the 12 Aggies killed last week when the four-story Bonfire collapsed.

Twenty busloads of A&M students and faculty traveled from College Station for the gathering. A&M junior Kevin Russo, who drove to Austin with a friend, said he was thrilled by the response of the UT community.

"The outpouring of love and support has been amazing," said Russo, who lost a friend in the collapse.

In between playing the two schools' anthems, the bell tower rang once for each of the 11 students and one recent graduate killed.

Don Evans, chairman of the UT Board of Regents, told the group he came not as a chairman "but as a father, as a dad of a daughter and son-in-law who are both graduates of Texas A&M University."

Pointing to the UT Tower and its engraved message "Know the truth and the truth shall make you free," Evans said: "The truth is in the loving support to the A&M community. The eyes of Texas are upon you, and our hearts are with you."

The vigil was the first time Michelle Sanchez of San Antonio had been back to campus since her graduation in May 1996. "I just had to come back and pay my respects," she said.

"To me it's a sign of the loyalty that can happen with Texans," said Ed Baca, a 1987 A&M graduate who brought his 5-year-old son, Adam, to the service.

At the end of the ceremony, gatherers lit white candles instead of the

## Video

Watch video clips from the Unity Rally  
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[Excerpts of Larry Faulkner's Speech\(Quicktime\)](#)  
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[Texas A&M bonfire tragedy](#)

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traditional red candles used for the Hex Rally. The UT Tower was darkened.

The memorial featured a rare commingling of the two universities. Speaking at the ceremony were past and present students from both universities, including U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison and Lt. Gov. Rick Perry, who both were student cheerleaders, she at UT and he at A&M.

"All of us can walk off the field on Friday as part of one team and part of one family," Perry said.

The days leading up to the Thanksgiving holiday football matchup are usually some of the most jingoistic for both UT and A&M students. But as funerals have replaced fanfare, UT student groups have worked to revamp the Hex Rally, a campus tradition since 1941.

"We're no longer getting prepared for a football game," said Parisa Fatehi, UT student body president. "This is joining hands at a difficult time."

The UT student newspaper Monday asked student fans attending Friday's game in College Station to tone down their notorious taunts by avoiding chants such as "Poor Aggies" and by replacing the line in the Texas fight song, "And it's goodbye to A&M" with "And we'll cheer for the Horns again."

The UT Ex-Students Association, which sponsors the annual Hex Rally, is donating money from the sale of rally T-shirts to a memorial fund at A&M. Since Friday, UT student groups have been cutting white ribbons to be worn in remembrance of the dead Aggies.

In College Station, the Aggie Elephant Walk, in which graduating seniors turn over their responsibilities as the school's "12th Man" to the junior class, has been postponed to Nov. 30.

And to thank the UT community for its support since the Thursday collapse, A&M students plan to forgo this year one of their most beloved chants: "Beat the hell out of t.u."

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