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# HOUSTON AGGIE

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Membership is **FREE**, but registration is required each year to ensure that our records remain current.

The HAMC is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization recognized under section 501(c)(3). Our Federal Tax ID# is 76-015741.

**Houston Aggie, P.O. Box 27382, Houston, Texas 77227-7382**  
[www.HoustonAgs.org](http://www.HoustonAgs.org)

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Submissions are encouraged and should pertain to news/information relevant to Houston Aggies. Send to:  
**Houston Aggie, c/o Deborah Lawson '92**  
**P.O. Box 940082, Houston, Texas 77094-7082**  
[deborahlawson@aggienetwork.com](mailto:deborahlawson@aggienetwork.com)

Submissions may be edited for length, grammar, accuracy, or for any other reason. Articles may also appear on the HAMC's website. Please contact the editor for additional information, including deadlines.

For information on advertising in the Houston Aggie, please contact Elizabeth Hamburg '07 at [elizabethhamburg@aggienetwork.com](mailto:elizabethhamburg@aggienetwork.com).

Because the Houston Aggie Magazine is sent via bulk mail, it is not forwarded or returned. Please remember to update your address on the website: [www.HoustonAgs.org](http://www.HoustonAgs.org).

Editor: Deborah Lawson '92  
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## From the Executive Director's Desk

To our sponsors, thank you for your support! I consider it a privilege to connect your companies with Houston Aggie clients. I love finding creative ways to drive Aggies to your websites and businesses. Thank you for supporting the Houston A&M Club and allowing me to help you build your business.

To our members, there are some amazing Aggie Businesses who support the club. These companies, like Aggies in general, have a track records of excellence and integrity. Next time you're in the market for pest control, plumbing, waste services, a new apartment or home, vehicle, a hotel room, insurance, dinner, or about a hundred other services, look at them first.

And if we haven't said it enough, here it goes again. Share the Spirit! As you can see from the graphic on the right, being a part of the Houston A&M Club has an impact. We need you to attend, donate, and volunteer so that we can keep doing great things for Aggies, Texas A&M, and the Houston-area. Thank you!

Elizabeth Hamburg '07  
HAMC's Executive Director



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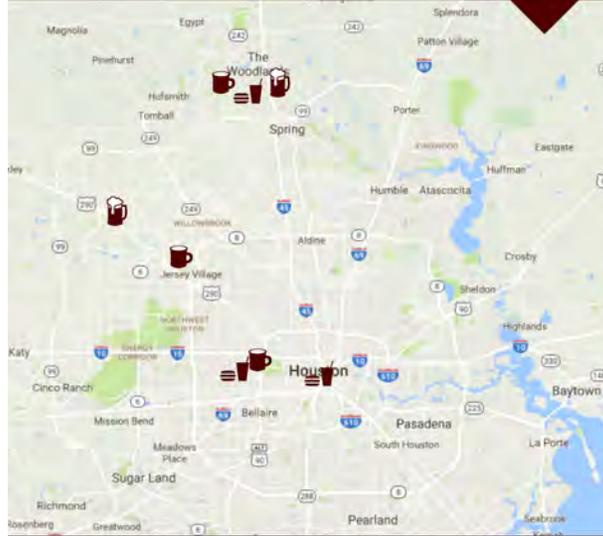
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# President's Corner

Wow! What a year it has been! It seems like just yesterday I was asking our editor to help me introduce myself to all of you, and now the year is coming to an end. We have had a wonderful year including the introduction of our new slogan: Attend. Donate. Volunteer., the addition of a monthly Memorial area lunch, and seeing many of you at our regular events! Through 2016, you have attended lunches, happy hours, Barn Dance, Muster, and Coach's Night, and we have loved seeing you out there! Many of you have asked how you can get more involved with our club.



The Houston A&M Club exists because of YOU and your ability to volunteer at our events. If you are interested in getting more involved or participating in an event or know someone who is, please let us know! I want to give a huge THANK YOU to each and every one of you who have given countless hours over the course of this year. Each one of you is appreciated more than you will ever know. From the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU! I hope to see you all again as we continue into 2017.

Another huge THANK YOU goes out to those of you who have donated to the HAMC. Because of your financial contributions, we are able to continue to give scholarships, have events like Muster and Coach's Night, and continue to function and grow as an organization. If you have not made your annual donation, there is still plenty of time! Please go to our website, [www.houstonags.org](http://www.houstonags.org), to give back to our future (and current) Former Students.



I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our incoming president, Dana Randolph '91. Dana has been my right hand woman all year and one of our Coach's Night Co-Chairs for the past 2 years. Dana, her father, and two of her brothers all attended A&M, and her family bleeds maroon through and through. This year her family is celebrating 30 years of tailgating before we BTHO whomever we are playing that week. This year wouldn't have been as successful without her! Please join me in welcoming the 2017 Houston A&M Club President, Dana Randolph '91!



Thanks and gig 'em!  
 Amy Blaase '03  
 2016 HAMC President

**"It has been more than sixty-three years since I kissed the bride at Villa Ceselle. It is no longer a beautiful villa and the garden has more weeds than flowers, but we still have pictures to remind us of what it was like on 11 July 1946."**

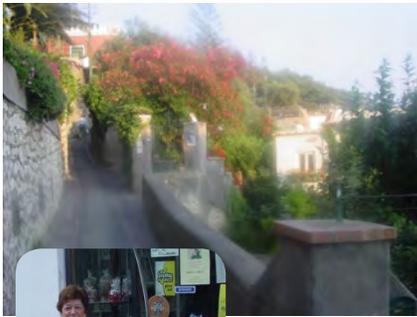
## Twos on the Isle of Capri that I found her

For five weeks, during the fall of 1945, Charles E. Cunningham '45 worked just blocks away from Bianca, who sold post cards at the Morgano Tiberio Hotel. Bianca had no idea that a soldier from Texas working at the bar near the Piazzetta was about to change her life. At least not yet...



On December 15th, Charles wasn't looking for romance, but he welcomed the idea of visiting with a girl that spoke English. As he boarded the boat from Naples to Capri, he thought "maybe I'll find her in the shade of a walnut tree."

That Saturday was just another day at the office for Bianca, who sold post cards and books in the hotel lobby. She has no particular memory of that day, but was likely getting ready to go home for dinner with her family when she noticed a soldier looking in her direction. Thinking that he might be a potential customer looking for a post card to write home, she smiled at him.



Lingering in the wide hall, Charles noticed a very attractive young lady with long black hair and brown eyes sitting at a table selling books and cards. He wasn't interested in buying anything, but was instantly attracted to the lady. She was not wearing any make up, but she didn't need any. When she smiled, Charles crossed the room to meet her.

Bianca spoke English very well, and without the accent of most Italians. She was very friendly, and Charles decided to ask her to dinner and that night's dance. Bianca declined, insisting that she was not properly dressed, and since she lived way up on the mountain, it was too far to go home, change clothes, and come back. Charles thought she looked wonderful, despite her overly large sweater, but decorum dictated that he accept her excuse. Undeterred, he asked if she would go to the dance if he returned the next weekend.



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Bianca enjoyed visiting with the Texas soldier, but he was just one of many men she met at work. She doubted he would actually return the following weekend, so she accepted and made her escape. As she boarded the bus for Anacapri, Bianca had already forgotten about Charles and her promise of dancing.

The next day, Mrs. Morgano, who owned the hotel, uncharacteristically commented that the soldier was a "very nice young man." Mrs. Morgano did not like Americans and always complained that they were ruining her hotel. In fact, this was the first time Bianca could remember Mrs. Morgano saying anything good about an American.

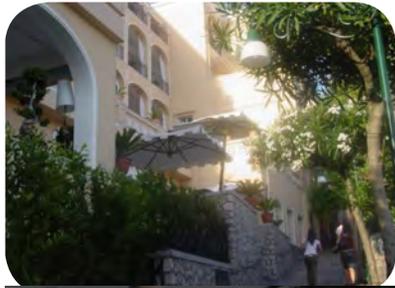
So it was that on Saturday, December 22nd, Bianca dressed for work as usual and thought not once of the Aggie or dinner or dancing. But Charles was thinking about Bianca.

Charles had finally met a girl on the Isle of Capri, and he was going to take her dancing. At least he hoped he'd take her dancing. He didn't even know her last name!

## Beneath the shade of an old walnut tree

But Bianca was at her table in the hotel when Charles appeared to claim his date. Surprised, she gave the same excuse as before. But this Aggie was not going to allow a little mountain to spoil his evening with a pretty girl. In fact, he offered to escort her up the mountain if she really felt the need to change.

Bianca was stunned! No one had ever challenged her standard excuse before. She loved to dance. She hesitated only a fraction of a moment before deciding that she was old enough to make her own decisions. So, in the end, she said, "yes."



Charles and Bianca set off up the mountain through a narrow passage now called The 88 Steps. Back then, however, it was just a combination of gravel and big rock steps. But they were young...

*"As we wound our way up the side of the mountain, I could see that the bus was doing a lot of the mountain climbing for us, and if it did not go off the side of the cliff, it would be a big help."*



In the family home at La Pietra, Charles waited for Bianca. Thankfully, Bianca didn't wear makeup, so her transformation didn't take as long as it does today, and they were soon on their way back down the mountain.

After dinner, Charles took Bianca dancing. He wasn't a good dancer, but Bianca managed to keep him off her toes. He envied those who could "jitterbug," and got a bit upset when someone asked Bianca to dance, but he'd climbed a mountain to get this girl here, so it seemed a bit unfair to be expected to share.

Eventually, the evening came to an end, and Charles walked Bianca to the bus. She gave him a friendly kiss good night, knowing that tomorrow their lives would diverge and they were destined only for friendship.

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**Christmas 1945** was quiet for the first time in ten years, and it was a time for thanks. Bianca was thankful for her weekend with her Aggie, even though he'd soon be returning to America. Sure enough, that week, Charles received orders transferring him stateside on the next available transport. But first, he had to return to Capri to say goodbye to the girl who dragged him up a mountain for a dance.

On December 29th, Charles was sad to say goodbye, but happy to be heading home. He can't recall the specifics of that night, but knows they shared a lifetime. Charles talked about his plans to finish college before proposing to Maria. Bianca talked about Enzo's imminent proposal. But where Charles was very secure in his future with Maria, Bianca had doubts about being the type Italian wife – one satisfied to stay home, take care of the house, and allow her husband to make all of the decisions – a notion that ran contrary to Bianca's idea of marriage as **an equal partnership based on love and trust**. An idea with which Charles very much agreed.

Fate seemed to agree, too, as bad weather cancelled the boat to Naples, so instead of a goodbye kiss, they made plans for another day on the Isle of Capri. But... as each second passed, Maria and Enzo faded further into the past and it became harder to say goodbye.

On New Year's Eve, the boat's second cancelling allowed them to ring in 1946 together, with a kiss that was no longer friendly. Charles had forgotten that he wanted to return to Maria, and Enzo was a distant memory. **They had known each other for less than three weeks.**

Bianca was the first to admit: "I wish you did not have to leave." It was up to Charles to do more than wish.

It was a long shot, but the US Army was hiring American civilians, an opportunity that would allow Charles to stay in Europe for another year. It would take a miracle.

Fate works in mysterious ways, and sometimes miracles take time. While Charles fought to stay in Italy, a mysterious soldier convinced Bianca that he was gone without even a note of goodbye. Bianca had experienced enough adversity and disappointment to know that feeling sorry for herself wouldn't help, so she made plans to see Enzo.

**"We had lived through the hardships of war and were now hoping for a more pleasant future."**

That same day, a friend told Charles that Bianca was different. She wasn't just looking for a ticket to America. Charles admitted that they didn't know if they were in love: **they were just fighting for the change to find out**. Charles had one day to make it happen.

Enzo took Bianca to her first opera, La Boheme, at the San Carlo Opera House on January 4th. While Puccini's bohemians played, Charles was at the employment office in Naples offering two years of college accounting and basic typing skills to any taker. Luckily, the Fiscal Director in the Mediterranean Theater Headquarters needed someone with a financial background. Charles reported to the Royal Palace in Caserta. Thirty minutes later, his two years as an accounting major at Texas A&M secured him a job and a discharge. When he returned to Bagnoli, having accomplished the impossible, the sergeant simply muttered: **"well I'll be damned."**

Neither Charles nor Bianca knew that they spent January 4th under the same stars. Charles simply knew that when he saw Bianca again, he would no longer be a soldier and he wouldn't be looking for a walnut tree. He'd already found his girl on the Isle of Capri.

Unable to get a pass, even on his last day, Charles went AWOL, racing down the pier as the day's last boat to Capri slowly pulled away. A man in a row boat took pity on Charles and yelled for him to jump aboard. As the row boat approached, Bianca and Enzo looked up from their seats on the rear deck. Under different circumstances, Bianca would have been delighted, but everyone knows that three is a crowd and that boat was about to become very crowded. **"If only the boat would sink,"** she remembers thinking.



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 **TEXAS CENTRAL**



As he boarded the boat, Charles saw the embarrassment on Bianca's face and knew the better part of valor. He walked past her without so much as a glance. But somehow Enzo knew that this man was more than he seemed and he threatened to disembark at Sorrento, leaving Bianca to "her American friend."

Sunday morning was Befana, an Italian holiday much like Christmas, and Charles awoke early hoping to receive a gift. When Bianca arrived at the hotel, Charles opened his arms and Bianca simply said: "he has gone." There was no proposal or diamond ring. They had both made commitments that were far more important than words.

Discharged from the Army, but without civilian clothes, Charles chose to wear the uniform with insignia - exchanging two stripes for two bars - put his few personal belongings in a duffel bag, and took the bus to Caserta where he was given a room in the bachelor officers' quarters and Officers Club privileges. He had a short walk to work, where he was assigned a desk in a large room with about a dozen other men. He moved work from his "In" box to his "Out" box, and waited for the weekend, making the trip from Caserta to Naples to Capri every weekend for the next six months.

**11 July 1946** was a typical summer day in Capri; a beautiful sunny day, warm but not too hot. Charles waited patiently in his new wool suit, comfortable despite the lack of air conditioning.

The studio of Aunt Asta and Uncle Antonino's Villa Ceselle was staged like a small chapel with the altar in the front of the room and the piano hidden in the nearby living room where it could be heard, but not seen. There were more guests than chairs, but as Antonino escorted Bianca to Charles, the only thing that mattered was putting a golden ring on Bianca's finger. And when the priest said "you may now kiss the bride," Charles didn't hesitate.



Photos were taken in the garden, followed by a reception at the Villa. *By today's standards the wedding cake was certainly nothing elaborate, but on the Isle of Capri in 1946 when the grocery stores did not have sugar on the shelves, any cake was special.*

Following the reception, Charles and Bianca were driven through Anacapri where people threw flowers and confetti from the balconies amid the cheers and greetings of the crowd that lined the streets, sending them off to a honeymoon in Sorrento.

That day, Bianca left her home on the Isle of Capri. More than sixty years later, however, she is still known by the locals as being "from the Island" or "from Anacapri."



**Meet Charles and hear the rest of the story at Traditions Lunch. He's there every second Monday of each month.**

*And though I sailed with the tide in the morning  
Still my heart's on the Isle of Capri*

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Aggie specials thanks to the owners - Mark Zientek '93 & Matt Kowalski '92

# Anadarko Aggie Happy Hour Social Event

On September 1st, Mario Coll '84, Anadarko's Sr. VP and CIO invited Anadarko's 329 Aggie Former Students to meet Coach Jackie Sherrill at the Westin Sidebar in The Woodlands.

Special thanks to Valerie Walker '04, Amelinda Jaramillo, and Carlos Cortez for putting this event together and hosting more than 90 Anadarko Aggies for Happy Hour. And thanks to Josh Hanrahan '06 at the Westin for helping with the details.

On behalf of the Houston and Montgomery County A&M Clubs:

Thanks to all the Anadarko Aggies for your support!

Thanks Coach Sherrill for autographing books for everyone!



# Anadarko



**Thanks Coach Jackie Sherrill!**



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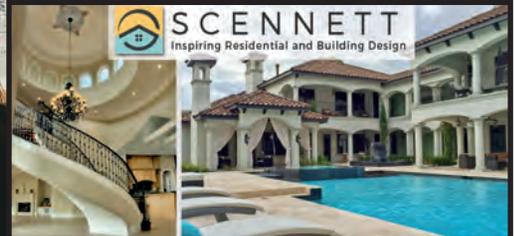
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Matt Emley '97  
sawedoffwoodworks.com



Editor's Note: For years, I have had the privilege of sharing with our readers the photographic history of the amazing events the Houston A&M Club hosts each year. Today, I want to share the hard work that goes into making each event spectacular. From the smallest to the largest, no event would happen without the generosity of our donors AND the sweat equity of our volunteers. A toast to the hidden heroes who magically make each event appear!



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## Miss Tennessee 2006

### Blair Pancake

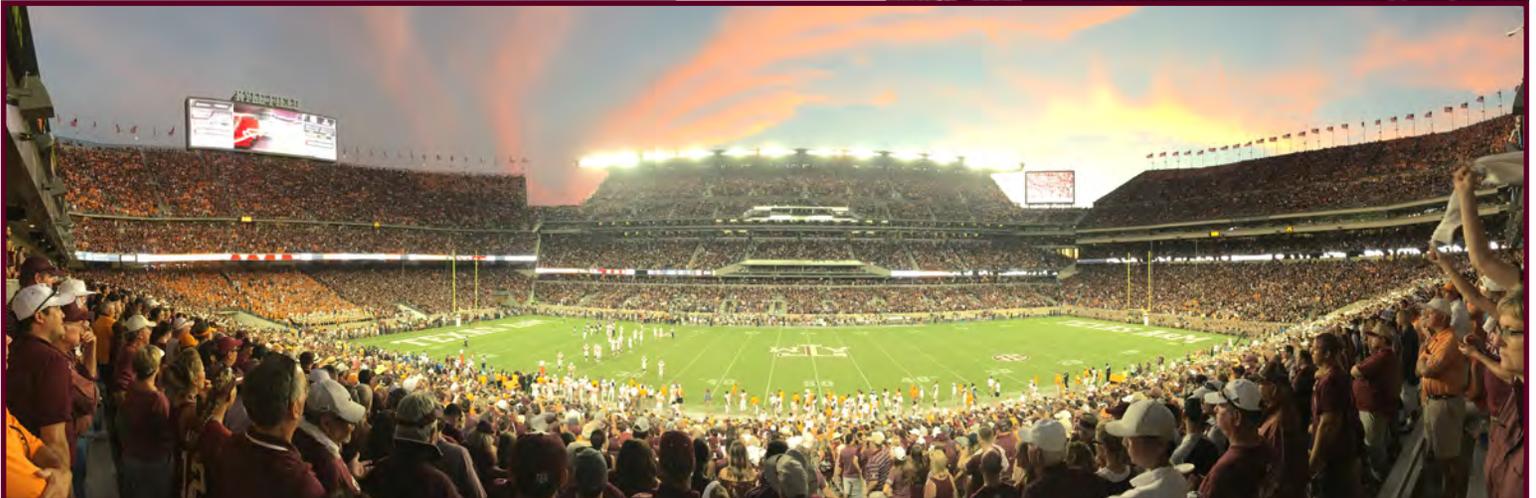
enjoyed Aggie hospitality firsthand from the sidelines at Kyle Field.

*"I had a blast! Bummer we lost, but y'all are the nicest fans in the SEC. I had a man shake our hand and say 'welcome to Aggieland.' That doesn't happen at other SEC schools when you show up in your opposing team gear."*

*"The yell leaders were super nice," and showed off their Aggie Spirit with a Kyle Field photo op.*



*Gwynn Gunter '03 captured the sun setting on Tennessee.*



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