



**Building Leaders, Living Traditions: The
Memorial Student Center at Texas A&M
University (Centennial Series of the Association of
Former Students, Texas A&M University)**

Amy L. Bacon

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For more than fifty years, the Memorial Student Center—the MSC—has served as the “living room” of the Texas A&M University campus. Beyond its lounges, dining, and recreational facilities, though, the MSC has played a vital role in the transformation of Texas A&M from an all-male, all-military, rural college to a university internationally recognized for excellence in a variety of fields.

The MSC, conceived as a memorial to Aggies who lost their lives in the two world wars, opened its doors in September 1950. More than just a monument to fallen comrades, however, the MSC and the programs initiated by J. Wayne Stark, its first director, helped the university expand its focus to embrace an even more inclusive future.

Author Amy Bacon surveys the development of two functions that quickly became vital to the mission of the Memorial Student Center: its role as a leadership laboratory for students—especially those not in the Corps of Cadets—and its centerpiece location as a place of extracurricular cultural and intellectual enrichment. The various student-led committees of the MSC provided important avenues for students to address social, political, and other interests, while the world-class speakers and arts events sponsored by the MSC afforded access to many students who would not otherwise have enjoyed such opportunities. Bacon demonstrates how the MSC and the traditions that have developed around it blend with the national student union movement in a unique way that enhances the institutional heritage and aspirations of Texas A&M University.

This attractively illustrated book draws heavily on recorded oral histories, archives, and extensive interviews with key administrative leaders and students, both former and current. *Building Leaders, Living Traditions* narrates the story of an institution that has transformed and enriched the lives of thousands of Aggie students and is poised to continue its vital mission for decades to come.

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