Good evening everyone. Welcome to T-Night. We’re talking about traditions, and T-night itself is a tradition. Our biggest tradition is excellence. We hope after you leave tonight, you’ll have a new appreciation for the history of Georgia Tech and you’ll understand why you should be proud to be a Ramblin’ Wreck from Georgia Tech.

How many of you are freshmen, or should I say RATS? You are the best qualified and most diverse freshman class in Tech’s history, and you are the largest. You are attending one of the best public universities in the nation. When you graduate, you will be prepared as a leader and innovator, and join the more than 135,000 proud Georgia Tech alumni throughout the world.

These are exciting times, and in fact, for Tech it is a year of celebrations. We’re celebrating the 100th anniversary of cooperative education at Tech, and the 60th anniversary of women at Tech.

**Women at Tech**

While Tech opened its doors as the Georgia School of Technology, in 1948 the name changed to the Georgia Institute of Technology under Tech’s fifth president, Blake Van Leer. We can also thank him for bringing women to the Institute.

I know it is hard to believe, but for the first 67 years of the Tech’s existence, women weren’t allowed in Tech’s full-time programs. Under the leadership of President Blake Van Leer, that all changed.
In the spring of 1947 President Van Leer proposed to the Board of Regents that they consider changing the policy at Georgia Tech. The proposal was controversial. There were a number of letters in the Technique from students opposing the idea. The list of reasons for this opposition included a need to rearrange dorms and classes - Tech might even have to install bathrooms for women - and perhaps one of the most compelling reasons was that it might make it harder to get football tickets!

Students and faculty came to support the idea of women on campus. On April 9, 1952 the regents finally voted to admit women on a full-time basis. Today, one third of Tech students are women. Tech is the No. 1 producer of female engineering graduates in the country.

**George P. Burdell**

I was asked my favorite tradition, and that is a man who shares my name, at least in part, George P. Burdell. This is his 85th anniversary at Georgia Tech. He has continuously been attending Tech since 1927 when student Ed Smith was mistakenly sent two Georgia Tech enrollment forms. He enrolled himself and George P. Butler, his high school principal and an avid UGA fan. He later changed the last name to Burdell.

George graduated from Tech, but has remained to earn multiple degrees. In addition, he briefly continued his education at Harvard. On at least three different occasions, he has signed up for every class offered at Tech. He flew a B-17 Bomber with the 8th Air Force in England during World War II, and has documented service in almost every war ever since.

He has authored numerous letters to the editor at the Atlanta Journal.
One of his most impressive feats occurred when TIME Magazine conducted an online poll to choose their person of the year for 2001. He led all the candidates in the poll until the magazine removed his name.

He has been paged at sporting events, on airplanes, and in hotels all over the world. I've received e-mails from him. Sometimes when I am speaking, I add his name to the special guests that I thank for coming. I keep looking for him, but have yet to meet him. The best part about this Tech tradition is that only the Tech folks get it!! So, to all of you students, including my friend George P. Burdell, welcome to Georgia Tech.