

Pot incident sends shock waves

Associated Press
Changing times have finally caught up with that last citadel of conservatism, Texas A&M University.

Marijuana, or Mary Jane as it's called by the dope pushers, has reared its illegal head at a school which prides itself on academics, cadet corps, and football and basketball teams and clean living.

All-American defensive back Pat Thomas, running back Skip Walker, and former All-Southwest Conference basketball player Cedric Joseph have been charged with possession of misdemeanor amounts of marijuana.

The innocence or guilt of those charged will be proved in the courts. The very fact such a thing happened has sent shock waves through the administration and former students.

"It's a scandal and now we know why the team tailed off last season," said a letter written to The Associated Press by an Aggie supporter.

For such a thing to happen at Texas A&M probably is a scandal in the eyes of many alumni. But smoking marijuana is a problem that has been available on the campus of 25,000 students for years, just like other schools.

Texas A&M has never been immune nor will it ever be from the controversial weed.

As for the football team, there's no evidence marijuana was the cause of losses to Arkansas and Southern California after 10 victories which rocketed the school to the No. 2 position in the country.

"We talked to our kids all the time about the dangers of marijuana," said Melvin Robertson, the coordinator of college football's No. 1 defense. "You can tell in someone's performance if he has been messing around with that stuff. I saw no indication whatsoever. You can tell it by little things — missed assignments, snap counts."

Robertson said, "I think we have a problem that's no different than anybody else. It's prevalent on every campus and marijuana is here. But smoking the stuff is against the law."

In a candid telephone interview, Robertson said, "Marijuana had no-

thing to do with us sagging at the end of the season. I really have no straight answer why we tailed off. We were working as hard as we did all season.

"I think a lot of folks thought our season was wrapped around the Texas game . . . that we were over the hump when we beat them . . . sort of subconscious, you know."

Robertson said, "There are a lot of things without answers — why can't Michigan beat Ohio State? why does

"Marijuana had nothing to do with us sagging at the end of the season."

Alabama have trouble winning bowl games? But our problem wasn't marijuana."

A group of about 50 schoolboys visited the Texas A&M campus over the weekend. Texas A&M Coach Emory Ballard openly discussed the marijuana problem.

"Those kids came right back and

told us that every party they go to in their high schools marijuana is available," said Robertson. "They said if they really cared about it they could get it at lunch hour. They said marijuana is even prevalent down in the junior high school area now."

Robertson said, "What those kids were trying to tell us is it's there if you want it no matter where you are."

Ballard explained to the prospects he wanted only kids with good character on his team. He was deluged with commitments to come to Texas A&M from the schoolboys, Robertson said.

"We're going to have a super year, probably the best we've ever had," said Robertson. "We're getting blue chippers like you can't believe."

The Southwest Conference signing date for schoolboy prospects is Feb. 3.

"That marijuana thing is certainly not affecting our recruiting," said Robertson.

Texas A&M is a vibrant, fast-moving university now with 8,000

co-eds. Blacks are liberally sprinkled throughout the football and basketball teams.

There was a time in the 1950s when it was an all-white all-military school with 3.2 beer the biggest thing on campus. Some "old Army" Aggies fought any changes although attendance at the school hovered around the 6,000 mark.

It's no longer mandatory to be in the cadet corps. There are co-eds, all races and creeds are represented, and Texas A&M is becoming liberalized, ready or not. Liberalization brings temptations. Not that any illegal acts should be condoned.

It just took a marijuana bust that hit all the newspapers to make some people realize A&M is only human.

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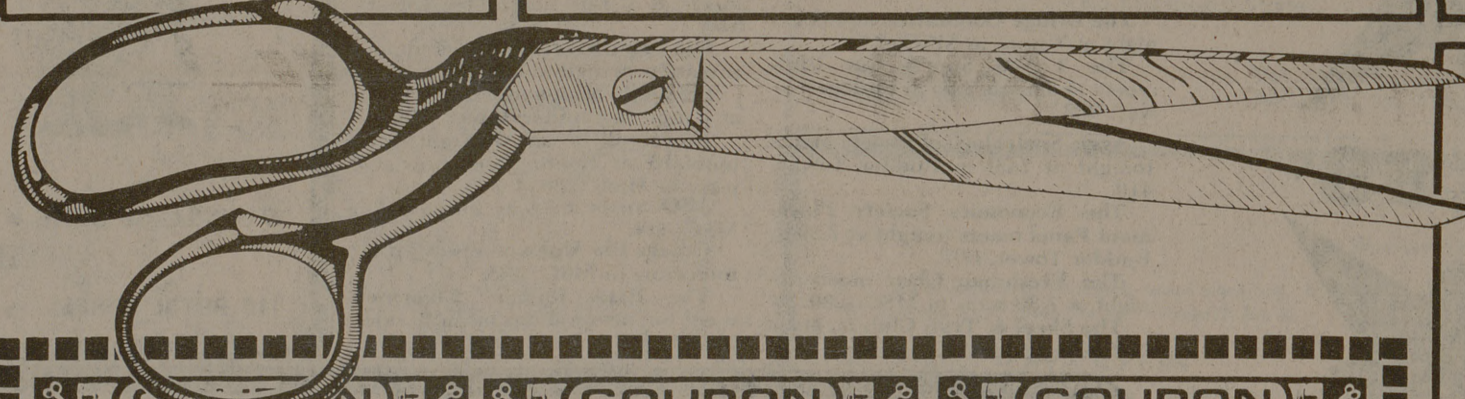
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Writer to discuss conservation

John B. Madson, award-winning outdoors writer, will explore the role of public opinion in the politics of conservation Tuesday.

Madson, assistant director of conservation for Olin Corp.'s Winchester-Western Division, is a journalist and wildlife biologist with a degree from Iowa State University.

His 7:30 p.m. appearance in Room 601 of Rudder Tower concludes a series sponsored by the A&M Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences Department. Other participants have been U.S. Sen. John Tower (d-Tex.) and Texas Reps. Bill Sullivan and Bill Presnal.

Madson, a former member of the Iowa Conservation Commission and writer on the Des Moines Register, joined Olin in 1958. He has written hundreds of articles, books and special publications, garnering along the way a lengthy list of outdoor writing awards.

Subjects have predominantly been on American game animals, promotion of biological game management, hunting, hunting ethics and non-game wildlife.

He serves on the president's councils of the Outdoor Writers Association of America and Great Lakes Outdoor Writers, two of many organizations in which he holds membership.

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