

the city

'Knights' lacks credibility

By DEBBIE NELSON
Battalion Staff

Maybe it was because they were competing with the World Series and only 30 people were in the audience. Or maybe it was because the actors didn't even claim to be Broadway material.

Whatever the reason, there was a severe lack of emotion in Stage-Center's production of "The Last Meeting of the Knights of the White Magnolia" Wednesday night.

Preston Jones' play — about a meeting of a 1962 fraternity of war heroes and good old boys — could have had some very dramatic moments, as well as some very funny ones. Unhappily, most of these moments just weren't believable.

The Knights of the White Magnolia appear in their rundown meeting room, ready to hold a usual meeting, accompanied by dominoes and whiskey. Then, for the first time

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in five years, they find someone willing to be initiated into their society.

The Knights go through their ridiculous initiation ceremony, get in a few fights, drink a little whiskey, and compare war stories. Members claim to have seen a lot of action in different wars, but the colonel is the only one who remembers the horrors of war.

The colonel, played by Will Worley, keeps interrupting the initiation

with increasingly gory details of WW I. Finally, recalling men being shot and bodies flying around him, he collapses.

Although the words Worley speaks are horrible and full of the bloody reality of war, the play's emotional level is so low the audience cannot believe the character is feeling any pain.

The same lack of credibility occurs in a fight scene. The town drunk, played by Roy Fitzwater, gets in an argument with a bitter cowboy, Mark Lindsay. Again, the dialogue and the action are believable, but their execution is not. Both actors smiled in the middle of their supposedly heated argument.

Despite these flaws, the play was otherwise well presented and had a

message for the audience. The Knights were founded because members were not satisfied with the Ku Klux Klan, but by the time the play begins, these men in their small Texas town are the only surviving chapter of a once-large organization.

In their initiation ceremony they had sworn to uphold the ideals of the society till they died. But the ideals didn't seem to mean the same things anymore.

An all-white club, the Knights are ironically interrupted by the presence of colonel's faithful black servant, played by Raymond Belcher. At the end of the play the Knights break up, realizing their meetings have become nothing more than domino tournaments.

The servant shuffles into the deserted meeting room to sweep up. He picks up a page of the Knights' secret initiation ceremony. Easily flicking on the lighted white cross — which the Knights couldn't get to work — the servant reads the page loudly, with more emotion than was shown by any of the Magnolias.

Professor studies engine for fuel efficiency, design

Gas turbine design breakthroughs 30 years ago brought about a quantum jump in the production of electricity, but the current energy situation demands improvements in turbine designs, a Texas A&M University professor said.

The technology led to massive electric power generating facilities in which huge turbines powered by cheap, plentiful natural gas spin at high speeds for long periods.

"Energy producers now are talking about low BTU fuels such as from coal gasification," said Peter E. Jenkins. "Lower efficiency of the fuels will require better efficiency of the turbines, at levels not previously necessary with natural gas."

Jenkins, a mechanical engineering professor, has been named director of the Gas Turbine Laboratory at Texas A&M.

"The energy situation requires that we go on to new and better things or improve existing turbine systems. The latter is one of the goals of the lab," he said. "We have a project to couple low BTU fuels with turbines."

Jenkins specializes in measurement of various flow, acoustic and vibration problems in turbomachinery. His work in air pollution control at Purdue University, where he earned his doctorate, has helped in the development of new ways of controlling emissions from a variety of turbomachines.

Jenkins has worked for Texas Instruments Inc. in Dallas and the U.S. Department of Energy in energy conversion. He currently consults with DOE, the Gas Research Institute, American Gas As-

sociation in energy conversion. The gas turbine lab sponsors the annual Turbomachinery Symposium, with the eighth annual conference planned Nov. 27-29 at the Shamrock-Hilton Hotel in Houston.

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