

There's more to Parsons' mo

In a school that worships tradition, Parsons' Mounted Cavalry occupies an important but peculiar position in maintaining Texas A&M University's past.

One reason is that it suffers from a schizophrenic image problem.

Most outsiders see the horse-mounted unit as a sharp group of cadets. Inside the Corps of Cadets, however, the Cav, as it is frequently called, suffers from a reputation of "sleazes," and slovenly cadets.

"Off-campus, across the state, the Cav's the best thing A&M has got going," said PMC's new military advisor, Air Force Maj. Joe Henderson. "On campus we have some image problems."

The image problems result from one of the basic conflicts that underlies the peculiar quality of the entire Texas A&M Corps of Cadets.

It is the difference between the almost sterile image of the perfect professional soldier and the rough and ready, almost crude character of the cowboy and farmer.

Thus the Texas Aggies have never become the archetypical

martinets associated with the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Rather, they have been known for being uniformed good ol' country boys. And it is in living up to one or the other images that problems occur.

This is not to say that Texas A&M cadets have not earned renown as soldiers. They have. But

"Off-campus, across the state, the Cav's the best thing A&M has got going. On campus we have some image problems," said PMC's new military advisor, Air Force Maj. Joe Henderson.

they have earned a reputation of being independent, also.

General George Patton once complained that Texans didn't know how to follow orders.

Conflicts arise over whether Texas A&M is a soldier factory, or a producer of citizen soldiers via a large rowdy military fraternity.

The Cav may have been set up

to channel some of the "Old Army" energy of juniors and seniors. Colonel James Woodall, Commandant of Cadets has said that the Cavalry was set up to give juniors and seniors who held no Corps rank or position something to do.

This meant that The Cavalry suffered in the past from those who concentrated more on playing the independent "Old Army" cowboy role than on being cadets.

David Wilkins, a junior Agricultural Economics major in Company B-1, said that other cadets resent the Cav people eating chow in Duncan Dining hall in civilian clothes.

Often that is because mounted drill or work sessions take place late in the afternoon, he said, therefore they do not have time to change into uniform. In previous years the privilege was often abused, which did not help PMC's reputation.

Also, Cav cadets, especially in the school year 78-79, had run-ins with Corps Staff on everything from uniform appearance to mistreating female cadets.

The Cav also seemed disin-

terested in horsemanship advice from Horse Center personnel.

In the Cavalry itself that year, there was dissension as the original Commanding officer was de-

David Wilkins, a junior Agricultural Economics major in Company B-1, said that other cadets resent the Cav people eating chow in Duncan Dining hall in civilian clothes.

posed. This was possible because PMC cav officers are elected by the troopers.

All of this lowered the unit in the Corps' eyes.

"People think about us like we were last year," Wilkins added. "This year we're doing a lot to upgrade our image."

Both he and fellow junior George Dalton, a Geology major in Co. F-1, said many juniors believe that, according to tradition, juniors get paddled with axehandles constantly.

"They walk up and ask if it's true that we get beaten all the time," Dalton said.

It doesn't happen that way, Wilkins said.

Dalton also said, "A lot of people think the Cav is sleazy because we don't get out and run like the RVs. (The RVs are the Ross Volunteers, an honorary organization of junior and senior cadets that function as the Texas Governor's guard and conduct Silver Taps.) But we work hard."

The unit has been building new fencelines, finishing its new tackroom, and building feedstalls for the horses.

Maj. Henderson praised Andy Reese, this year's PMC commander.

"Andy's not only been C.O. of the Cav, but C.O. of a construction battalion."

He also credits the senior management major from Marshall,

"We do have an image problem in the Corps. I don't really know what it stems from. But we're staying out of trouble and trying to be relatively sharp," said Andy Reese, PMC commander.

Texas with helping to turn the Corps' image of the cavalry around.

Reese himself said, "We do have an image problem in the Corps. I don't really know what it stems from. But we're staying out of trouble and trying to be relatively sharp."

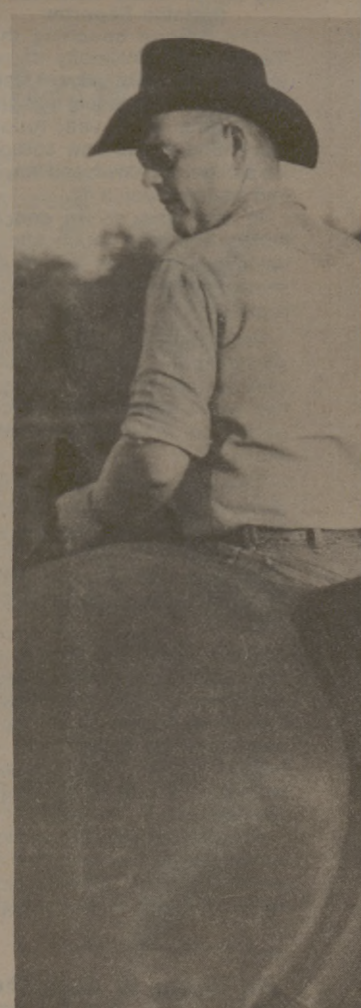
"We are having a good relationship with Corps Staff."

Unit members hope the improved image will help with recruiting. Membership is down from about 50 two years ago, to 35 members today. And out of the 35, only 11 are juniors.

Maj. Henderson said the Cavalry attracts city and country boys, including some who declare that their sole reason for joining the Corps was to join PMC.

"If someone sees the cavalry, it personifies Texas A&M," he said. "It's Old Army and the Corps all wrapped up in one."

"It transcends 'Cowboy,'" he explained. "When you think of Texas, you think of horses. When you think of A&M, you think of the Corps; it's a beautiful tie-in."



Cavalry

The Pl

For a unit that deliberately evokes memories of a lost era, Parsons' Mounted Cavalry is a youngster.

The unit is barely 6-years-old. Members of the class of '74 began forming the unit in 1973.

The unit was established as a semi-democratic organization. Troopers elect their officers. Any junior who wants to, can join the unit. Seniors who wish to join are sometimes subject to a vote of confirmation.

The Cav uniform is the midnight, or dark shirt, and a yellow-gold cord. Troopers wear the same gold-colored cord on their campaign (Smokey Bear) hats and seniors have their Cav rank sewn on their midnight shirts. It is possible for a cadet captain to be a corporal in the cavalry, for instance.

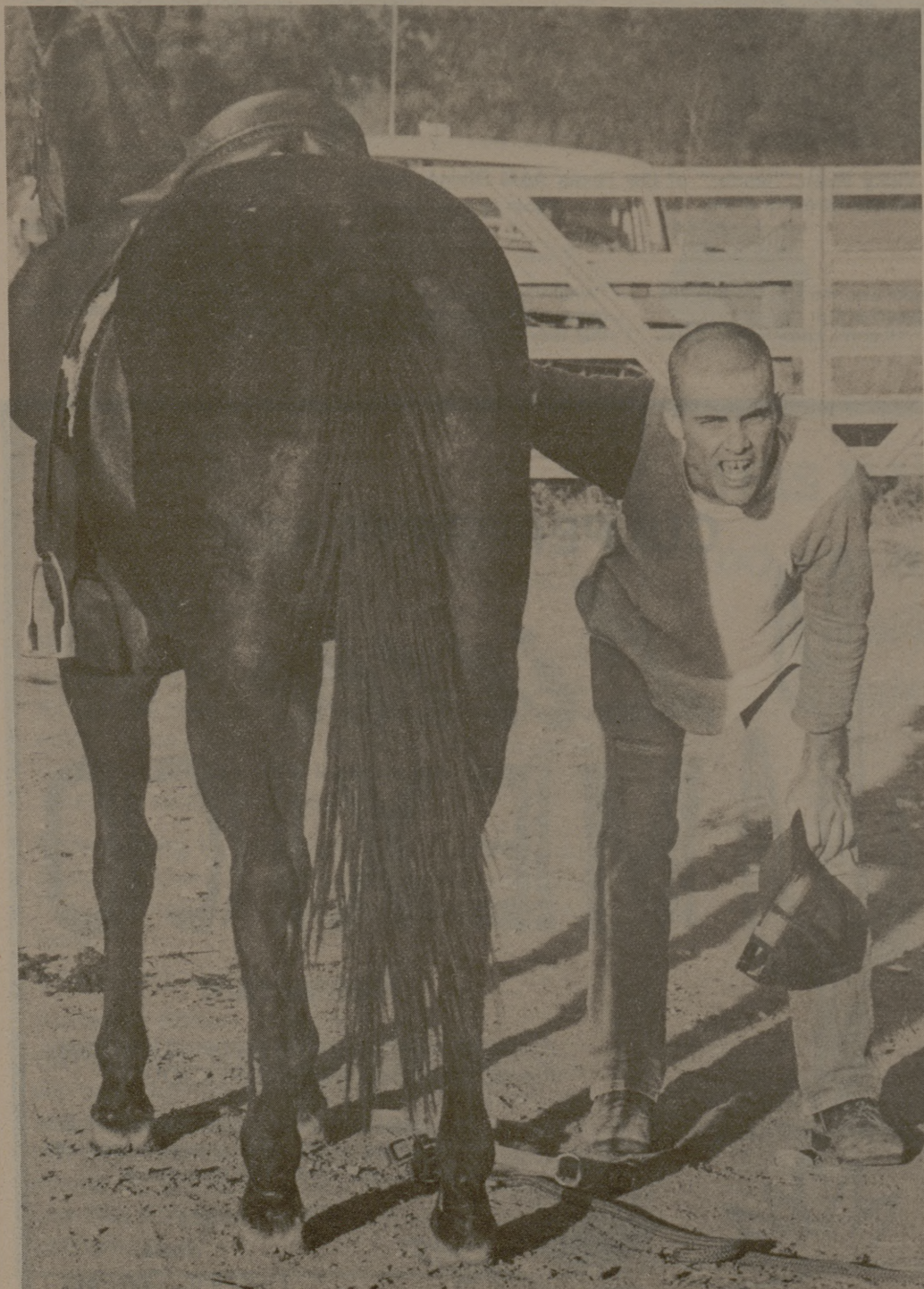
In a typical "Old Army" touch, Cav troopers wear shoulder patches which say Texas A&M C, instead of TAMU. The patches are cross-stitched with gold-colored thread.

The unit is supposed to resemble the last A&M cavalry units which existed until 1949.

Many persons have helped the unit. Dean John H. Fritz, not an Aggie, of Farleigh-Dickinson University in New Jersey, helped the fledgling troop procure the Steuben saddles and other tack the unit uses.

The Former Students Association donated money to purchase the equipment.

The unit went on Corps trips, at-



Junior Steve Durham "wildcats" during a late afternoon PMC drill session.