

Local



This saber is dedicated to the memory of Woody Ratliff, who died in an automobile accident in the fall of 1979. The saber will be in the possession of the Fish Drill Team commander. It was purchased for the drill team by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ratliff.

## Saber given to Fish Drill Team memorializes Ratliff

By MICHELE ROWLAND  
United Press International  
Woody Ratliff, the former *guidon bearer* and designated sophomore adviser to the Fish Drill Team, whipped his rifle through the air with precision during the one-man drills he was performing at the Memorial Student Center Open House.

Freshman Joe Cronin was so impressed and inspired by the performance that he immediately signed as a member of the Fish Drill Team.

That was Sept. 2, 1979. Woody Ratliff died Sept. 2, 1979.

His car crashed when he apparently fell asleep at the wheel driving home.

In memory of their son, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ratliff, along with the Association of Former Fish Drill Team Members, have donated a saber to the drill team.

"My spirit is forever with you — Woody," is inscribed on the chrome of the scabbard (the blade covering) between three ivy gold bands. It is dated March 18, 1960, his birth date, and Sept. 2, 1979.

The seal of the United States of America is etched on the blade, and the handle is shaped in the form of a golden eagle.

The saber will be carried for the first time at the Tulane University Invitational Drill Meet in New Orleans, La., David Garcia, the senior adviser to the Fish Drill Team, said.

It was originally presented to the team on Parents' Day, 1980, he said.

"Anytime there's any official meet, or exhibition, the Commander will carry the saber," he said.

Drill team Commander John Fahy compared the opportunity of carrying the Woody Ratliff Memorial Saber to that of guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

"It's something that comes from deep down. I would be so honored to carry that which has been dedicated to someone's entire life," he said.

"Woody had lots of spirit within him, and with the saber that spirit will be remembered forever," Garcia said.

"Woody was a hard-working, conscientious, inspiring young man, and was very representative of the Fish Drill Team," he said.

While he was on the drill team Ratliff had unanimously won the Roger H. Gray award for inspiration and leadership.

The saber will not only represent that Woody's spirit is forever with the members of the team, but may also, in a broader sense, represent the spirit of all former members, Garcia said.

Joe Cronin, the freshman Ratliff inspired to join the drill team, is now a sophomore adviser for it. He said he was thrilled that the Ratliffs still play an active roll in the team's affairs, traveling to watch the performances.

Photo by T. Garrett

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