

Corps Commandant retires

Final Review last for Woodall

by Cyndy Davis

The Corps of Cadets Final Review Saturday will also be the final review for Corps Commandant James R. Woodall. Woodall announced his retirement effective Aug. 31.

Col. Donald L. Burton, 56, has been named as Woodall's successor. Burton is currently director of course development training at the Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Okla.

Burton, a Waco native, received a bachelor's degree in biology from Texas A&M University and a master's degree from the University of Arizona.

His decorations include: the Legion of Merit Award, the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal and the Army Commendation Medal. Burton's daughter, Robin, is sophomore accounting major at Texas A&M.

Burton is scheduled to report for duty at Texas A&M Aug. 1. Along with retiring as commandant, Woodall is also ending his 30-year-long military career.

Woodall, a native of Fort Worth, said he hopes to take up another career in the College Station area.

Woodall, class of '50, returned to his alma mater in July 1977. One of his "fish buddies," fish Miller (Dr. Jarvis Miller) returned to the University about the same time to become university president.

Miller served as University president until the summer of 1980.

Woodall came to Texas A&M from Heidelberg, Germany, where he was deputy commander of the U.S. Army Postal Group, Europe.

While a cadet, Woodall served as commander of Company D Infantry and was a member of the Ross Volunteers. He was also editor of The AggieLand.

Woodall's military decorations include: the Silver Star Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, the Legion of Merit Award and the Army Commendation Medal. He has also received the Expert Infantryman's Badge and Parachutist's Badge, among others.

Woodall said changes in the Corps during his five years as commandant have reflected changes in the University, but on a smaller scale.

"The Corps is a dynamic organization," he said. "It's weathered a lot of changes in the

University, but it has certainly changed much less than the University."

But Woodall said he doesn't think the Corps has changed much since he graduated in 1950, either.

The biggest change in the Corps has been a stronger emphasis on academics, he said.

"Academics must be the first priority," he said. Another change he has seen involves the cadet command structure.

"I think the Corps staff and the Corps leaders have more authority now than they did when I was a cadet, which I think is a good change," he said.

Working with cadets and contributing to the perpetuation of the Corps have been two highlights of Woodall's career as commandant, he said.

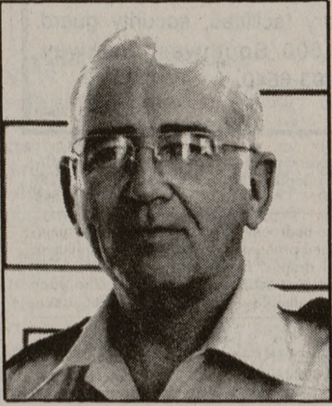
"I'm firmly convinced that the Corps of Cadets is an important part of this University," Woodall said. "I've been disappointed with the number of people who have come to A&M and not joined the Corps. I'm sure the Corps could do a lot for them."

Woodall explained: "Without the influence of the Corps, we would lose many of our traditions."

To prove his point, Woodall suggests that students attend a few campus events. "You'll see the Corps is always there," he said.

Silver Taps is one example, he said.

Woodall pointed out that many people attend the ceremonies in September and October, but later in the year attendance is poor.



Corps Commandant James R. Woodall

As commandant, Woodall has enjoyed the "tremendous support" of former students for the Corps of Cadets, and the involvement of parents in the Corps.

Woodall said several incidents have occurred during his stay that the Corps could have done without.

One such incident involved a senior cadet who drew his saber on Southern Methodist University cheerleaders during the Texas A&M-SMU football game last fall.

Another involved a group of freshmen chopping down two trees belonging to a University professor. The freshmen had intended to use the trees for Christmas trees.

The hardest thing Woodall said he has had to do as commandant is "administer discipline to good guys who have made a mistake."

"I think we've had a general tightening of discipline, but it's been brought on by a series of pranks," he said.

But pranks are nothing new to the Corps, he said. "But you look at any organization that has young men and women in it, 18-22 years old, and you're going to find a lot of pranks going on. That's something that you just have to face," he said.

"You try to correct those situations that need correcting, but you don't want to demolish an individual just because they made a mistake. We try to have an atmosphere where they learn from their mistakes."

"If a person makes a mistake, they take the punishment and then do better."

But there's a difference between pranks and "very serious incidents", Woodall said.

For example, he cited a recent incident in which eight junior members of Company F-2 were dismissed from the Corps. The cadets were dismissed for their participation in a hazing incident. The case has since been referred to the University administrative hearing officer.

"This was a very unfortunate thing," he said.

Woodall said the cadets were warned verbally in advance that hazing wouldn't be tolerated.

"You try to prevent things, but sometimes you can't," he said.

Melanie Zentgraf's lawsuit against the University could have done without, Woodall said. Zentgraf accused the University of discrimination against female cadets.

"We were solving the problem," he said. "If the outside influences had left us alone, we'd be better off now."

"I think we would have a lot more females in the Corps had we not had that unfavorable publicity."

"I've also been disappointed with the treatment of the Corps by the Batt," Woodall said. "I don't think it's fair to ask people to comment on incidents that are being investigated until the investigation is completed."

"Certainly it's not fair to the individual to tell who was punished and what for. I try to work that out with the individual and I've gotten criticized for it, but I guess that's part of the territory."

Woodall also expressed concern for the fraternities and sororities of which many University students are members.

"They (fraternities and sororities) are going to be the detriment of Texas A&M," he said.

"People seem to have more loyalty to fraternities than the University," he said. "As far as I'm concerned, we have a fraternity here and it's called the Aggies."

"I say that as a former student, not as the Commandant."

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