



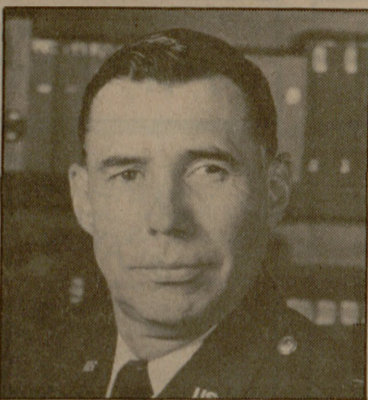
A&M chooses leader for Corps of Cadets

By Daniel A. La Bry
 Staff Writer

Texas A&M's Corps of Cadets is getting a new "top gun." Air Force Maj. Gen. Thomas G. Darling, Class of '54, has been named the new Commandant of the Corps of Cadets and head of the School of Military Sciences.

Dr. John Koldus, vice president for student services, made the formal announcement 3 p.m. Wednesday during a small meeting in his office.

Darling will replace Col. Donald L. Burton, who retired in September 1986 after serving as Corps commandant for four years.



Maj. Gen. Thomas G. Darling

Koldus said Interim Corps Commandant J. Malon Southerland will return to his previous position as assistant vice president for student services.

During a phone interview from his home in Virginia, Darling, who recently retired from his position as chief of staff for the U.S. Atlantic

Command in Norfolk, Va., said he plans to start his new position in early July.

"I'm confident the Corps is the best in the country, and I would like to press on and make it even better," the new commandant said.

Koldus said he wanted someone who had the expertise, professionalism and patience to work in an educational environment like Texas A&M, pointing out that Darling had served as commandant to the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk for three years.

Of the four finalists being considered, Koldus said all were qualified and all were Aggies. Koldus said letters were sent out to all flag officers who were Aggies asking them if they were interested in the position or if they would like to nominate someone.

Darling, originally from Abilene, said his wife, Evelyn, is excited about returning to Texas. She is originally from Hamilton.

Darling has a 32-year-old daughter, Suzanne, and a 29-nine-year-old son, David. His son, who works in Houston, graduated from Texas A&M in 1980 with a bachelor's degree in finance and his daughter, an attorney, attended school in Virginia.

Court upholds Brazos County case verdict

AUSTIN (AP) — The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals changed its mind Wednesday and upheld a death sentence it had thrown out last year because jurors were allowed to move their cars during the trial.

On a 7-2 vote, the court affirmed the capital murder conviction of Curtis Hall Harris in the beating death of Timothy Michael Merka. Merka was slain in Brazos County after stopping to help four men whose vehicle wouldn't start.

Last September, the appeals court voted 6-3 to overturn Harris' conviction, saying it was improper that jurors were allowed to leave the courthouse to move their cars just before beginning deliberations.

Wednesday's decision to uphold the conviction was branded "a complete flip-flop" by Judge Marvin Teague, one of two judges who opposed the action. Judge Sam Houston Clinton also dissented.

"It should be easily recognizable by all that the majority opinion's holding will undoubtedly be popular with the prosecuting attorney, the trial judge, the jurors and probably a majority of the citizens of Montgomery and Brazos counties who happen to be familiar with this case," Teague wrote.

"Our decisions, however, should never rest on what might be popular with the masses," Teague said.

But the majority opinion, authored by Judge Chuck Miller, said the facts indicated that the court's earlier decision was incorrect.

According to court records, District Judge John Martin of Conroe allowed jurors to leave the courthouse briefly — just before deliberating on the guilt question — so they could move their autos to the courthouse parking lot and that they had no improper contacts while away from the courthouse.

Anti-hazing bill passes Senate, raises penalty

AUSTIN (AP) — The Senate approved an anti-hazing bill Wednesday that was written as a legislative response to the deaths of two students, one at Texas A&M and the other at the University of Texas.

Sen. Gonzalo Barrientos said his bill redefines hazing to increase the penalties to fines and jail time.

Barrientos, D-Austin, said he began thinking about the hazing issue two years ago after a Texas A&M student died after doing calisthenics. Last year a UT student died of alcohol poisoning.

He said in the past nine years, 40 young people have died in hazing incidents in the United States, but the Texas hazing law has not been changed since 1937.

Barrientos' bill, which was sent to the House on voice vote, increases the penalties for individuals who commit hazing from the current maximum of \$250 and 90 days in jail to a maximum fine of \$1,000 and

180 days in jail if there is no serious bodily injury.

If there is serious bodily injury, the penalties would be a maximum fine of \$5,000 and a jail term of one year. If the offense results in a death, the maximum penalty would be a fine of \$10,000 and a jail term of two years.

U.S. plane shot down by Honduras air force

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — A U.S.-registered DC-3 airplane piloted by an American was shot down by the air force after it entered Honduran airspace on an apparent drug mission, the government said Tuesday. All three people aboard were killed.

The plane was probably carrying narcotics from Colombia, said a statement issued by the armed forces Tuesday night.

The aircraft was shot down at 11:30 p.m. Monday in western Honduras after failing to answer

repeated requests to identify itself or to land on a specified airstrip, the statement said.

The pilot was identified by personal documents as Joseph Bernard Mason, who carried U.S. and Panamanian pilots' licenses, the armed forces said. A spokesman at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa, speaking on condition his name was not used, said details about Mason were being withheld while relatives were notified.

Immediate identification of the other two people on board was impossible because their re-

mains were scattered over a broad area, according to the statement.

No drugs were found in the burned wreckage "but it is believed the cargo was thrown out by the crew shortly before the plane was intercepted and brought down," the statement said.

The statement said the plane's route was similar to the plane captured three months ago carrying two Colombians and a load of pure cocaine valued at an estimated \$500 million.



Photo by Tracy Staton

Just Clownin' Around

A performer in the Royal Lichtenstein Quarter Ring Sidewalk Circus juggles at Rudder Fountain

Wednesday. The A&M Catholic Student Association hosted the circus. See related story, page 4

Libyan family keeps up tradition started in 1960s

Family members travel around world to A&M

By Amy Couvillon
 Staff Writer

Each year since the mid-1960s, at least one member of the Ben-Ali family has been enrolled at Texas A&M.

This wouldn't be unusual if the family was from Texas, since many A&M alumni have sent generations of descendants to A&M. But the Ben-Alis have sent their sons and daughters almost halfway around the world — from Libya.

Amer Mohammed Ben-Ali, 11th in the family's Aggie legacy, was born in 1965, one year after his oldest brother Muftah came to the United States to go to A&M.

Amer, an environmental design major, will graduate in May.

"We are nine who came — immediate family," Amer says. "And then, if you count my in-laws, we are 11. Those 11 are who graduated. If you count more, those who just attended for a while, you can go on and on."

Indeed, the Ben-Ali clan seems to have no end. Muftah graduated in 1968 and Zaineb, his wife, finished in 1971.

"She is Ben-Ali, too; she is my first cousin," Amer says. "It is very, very common in Libya to marry your first cousin."

Another brother, Fathallah, graduated in 1974, followed rapidly by Fouzi and Shamsiddin — who they call "Habib."

"We had a 1974 graduate, 1975 graduate, 1976 graduate and a 1977 graduate," Amer says.

"Then, in 1977, Habib was going on for his master's and my other

brother Khaled and his wife came in and started at A&M."

A sister, Samiha, graduated in 1985 after Amer began in 1983.

One of his younger sisters attended A&M for a year, but returned to Libya to get engaged, Amer says.

Amer's father, Haj M. Ben-Ali, only had a high school education. Until 1950, when Libya attained its independence from Italy, Libyans were prevented by law from seeking further education. So Haj, who died in 1983, made sure all his children had an opportunity to go to college.

A natural question — one Amer hears all the time — is why his father chose to send his children more than a quarter way around the world to A&M.

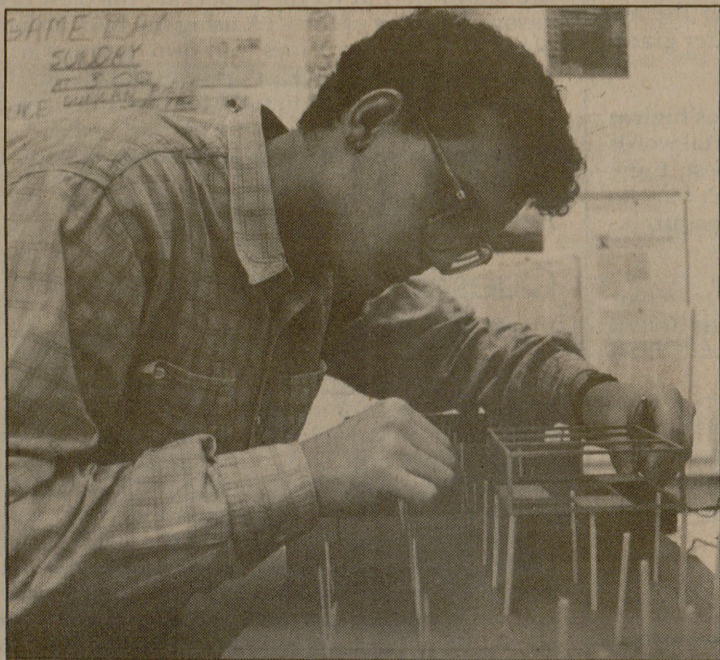
The answer is family legend. Haj Ben-Ali — so the story goes — was doing business in Benghazi, Libya with some men from Fort Worth.

"They sat down and talked to my father about business and things like that," Amer says, "and he noticed something on their hands. It was the A&M ring. So my father asked them, 'What is this ring?'"

"See, in Libya, we have rings alike if you belong to the same tribe. So my father asked them 'Does this represent a tribe?' And they said 'No, no — It's from the greatest school in the world.' They were talking about A&M."

"You know," he says with a smile. "They were good old Ags talking about A&M. What do you expect?"

At any rate, Haj was impressed



Amer Mohammed Ben-Ali, Libyan student

with the stories and decided to send his first son, Muftah, to A&M.

The rest is history.

Amer says the most important thing he has gained from studying in America is learning how to adjust.

"About 70 percent of what I've learned has been around this campus, more than I learned in class," he says.

"The way I feel about it, I adjusted to here and I can adjust to anywhere."

"I used to have this attitude that

phone and get them here. It's different.

"Libya is an Islamic country and it's a lot more conservative. Talking to our opposite sex is a lot more formal. . . . We have a very, very beautiful culture. We have a beautiful family life and social life. It's beautiful, but it's different, more formal than here."

Amer hasn't been home to Libya since 1984. During summer and Christmas breaks, he stays with a brother who attends the University of Texas or with a sister who attends school in Canada.

When the United States bombed parts of Libya in early 1986, Amer had a few tense days as he waited for news.

"I was very worried about my family for two days, because I was not able to get in touch with them," he says. "I was worried about my family, my home. I was very hurt that 120 people that I call my brothers and sisters got killed for no reason. All these kind of things hurt me."

His friends in environmental design were very understanding, and most people did not connect him with the negative image of Libya they might have had, he says. But he was bombarded by the media, which was very difficult for him.

"Everybody wanted to have an interview then," he says. "Everybody. I got calls at two in the morning. I'd say, 'I'm sorry, I won't do it.'"

"Can you imagine if I came on TV and I say my opinion, because my opinion is my opinion?"

"There are some crazy people who don't understand that I don't

have anything to do with this. You see, me, I'm here for one reason, which is school."

Although he tries not to take a political stand, Amer says he believes in peace.

"You should always try to solve things another way," he says. "You know, Rambo-acting never helped anybody. That's the way I think about it, but I don't get into that."

One of the biggest adjustments he had to make at A&M was dealing with the misconceptions people had about his country.

"They would ask me, 'Do you have cars in Libya?' And I'd go 'Of course we do!' I'd get so mad."

"But now I understand they don't do it because they think we're stupid, they do it because they don't know better. And I understand this now, but in the beginning, I didn't."

Amer says before he came to the United States he, too, had stereotyped images.

"I pictured America, you know, the highway glittering and the lights coming out. I was picturing like all these movies we see."

"Driving from Houston International to College Station through Highway 45 is not very pleasant. I thought 'My God, what am I doing here?'"

"It was horrible at the beginning for me. I was very homesick, but now it's very different, Amer said, adding that he probably will be very homesick for College Station when he leaves.

After graduating in May, Amer will go home to Libya.