

State and Local

Corps' use of Confederate flag viewed as offensive by faculty

By Elisa Hutchins
Staff Writer

The Corps of Cadets' use of the Confederate flag in some functions was among several issues addressed Tuesday when Texas A&M Faculty Senate executive members met with Maj. Gen. Thomas Darling, the new commandant of the Corps.

But after the meeting, Senate speaker Richard Shumway said there is really no big issue at all.

"The meeting was outstanding," he said. "We will be able to work together with Gen. Darling to resolve any problems with the use of the flag or any other Corps issue."

The Corps' use of the Confeder-

ate flag during the 1987 March to the Brazos in April drew unfavorable attention from some faculty members when a picture of cadets holding the flag appeared in the *Bryan-College Station Eagle*.

Julia Rholes, assistant professor of library science, wrote a letter to the Senate in the spring asking it to take action against using the flag.

"I'm sure the students who used it didn't mean anything by it, but to many people, the rebel flag is still offensive," Rholes said. "A&M has taken some giant steps forward concerning affirmative action and I think incidents like this will undermine our efforts to recruit minority students and faculty."

Darling and Corps Commander Pat Thomasson agreed with Shumway and Rholes that use of the flag is not as serious an issue as the *Dallas Times Herald* and the *Associated Press* reported earlier.

"No unit of the Corps officially carries the rebel flag," Darling said. "Each company will usually carry a U.S. flag and a guidon (the unit flag). I have not seen the flag used since then, but if there is a problem I'm sure it can be resolved."

Thomasson said that during the March to the Brazos cadets wear uniforms and traditionally carry many items with them, including different flags. But he stressed that the rebel

flag is not an official guidon for any Corps unit.

"If using the flag is going to make people upset, then we won't carry it," Thomasson said.

If the issue is not resolved, the Senate may introduce a resolution to stop the use of the flag at University functions. Such a resolution would require President Frank E. Vandiver's signature before it became University policy.

The Faculty Senate is dealing with the issue because its function is to review and recommend policies dealing with curriculum, instruction, administration and facilities relating to the general welfare of the University.

Quadriplegic charged with shooting wife using wheelchair-mounted gun

HOUSTON (AP) — A quadriplegic charged with killing his bride with a wheelchair-mounted gun triggered with a string in his teeth was apparently upset because she was planning to go to California, officials said Wednesday.

Berta Mae Burns, 37, was shot in the neck and died Monday night before paramedics arrived at the Houston bar where she and her husband of two weeks had been talking, police said.

Her husband, James B. Burns, was questioned after the shooting but later allowed to return to his mother's home pending a review of the case by a judge, homicide Sgt. Dave Collier said Wednesday.

"We know he's not going anywhere," Collier said.

Collier said the city jail does not have the facilities to keep a quadriplegic, but added the Harris County Jail would be able to keep Burns if he is arrested.

Court coordinator Mary McClinton said Burns was not in custody Wednesday, but he was expected to appear before State District Judge George Walker on Thursday in connection with the shooting.

Police Sgt. J.C. Mosier said detectives had filed a murder charge against Burns, but that he had not yet been arrested.

Witnesses told police that the shooting occurred after Mrs. Burns had placed the string in her husband's mouth.

Mosier said police don't know why she put it in his mouth.

Police described the apparatus as a 9mm pistol mounted on a small board that the man had across his lap.

A string ran around two small screws in the board with one end running to the trigger and the other to his mouth.

A shoebox that covered the apparatus was taken off before the shooting occurred.

"She had to put the string in his mouth because he couldn't have done it," Mosier said.

Burns told police that after his wife put the string in his mouth, he jerked his head back accidentally, Mosier said. Three shots fired from the apparatus hit Mrs. Burns, who was sitting directly across from her husband.

Mosier said Burns gave a statement to police in which he said he wanted his wife to kill him, but that "she talked me into killing her." Mosier said Burns also suspected his wife of infidelity.

Police said Burns' brother took him into the bar to see his wife.

"He was upset," Collier said. "She had told him she was going to California" where her daughter lived, Collier said.

Burns, who was left a quadriplegic after being shot by a previous wife, had gone to several bars Monday looking for her, he said. Collier said he did not know how many places he had visited, but knew there it had been more than one.

"Somehow the string got pulled . . . somehow she pushed my head back," Burns said Tuesday from his bed at his mother's house, where he lives.

"I don't know if she was in her right mind," Burns told the *Houston Chronicle*, adding that his wife had been depressed for months because her daughter was living with her ex-husband. She tried to kill herself six months ago, but was stopped by a friend, he said.

Burns couldn't explain why the two other shots were fired.

"She turned around and looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'That's not good enough,'" he said. "Like she was going to try it again. Like she wanted to die."

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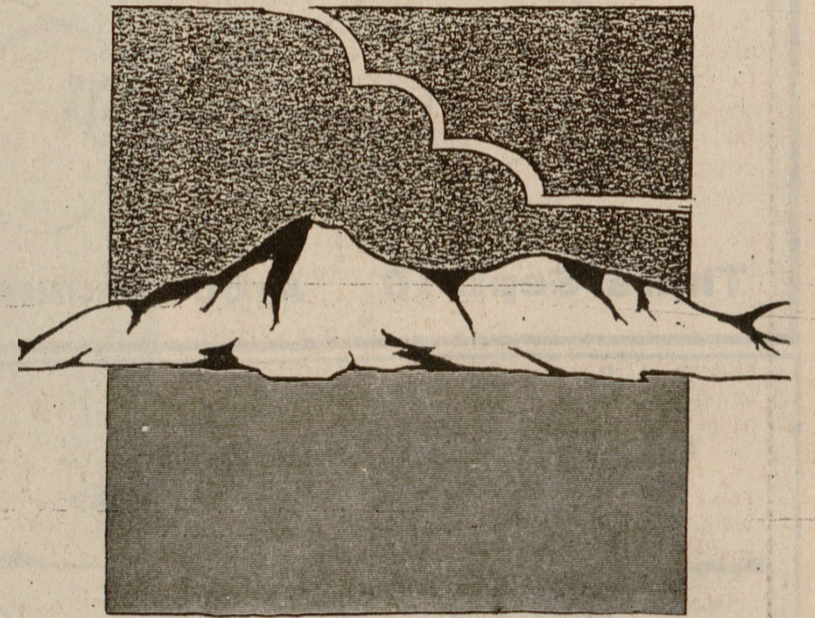
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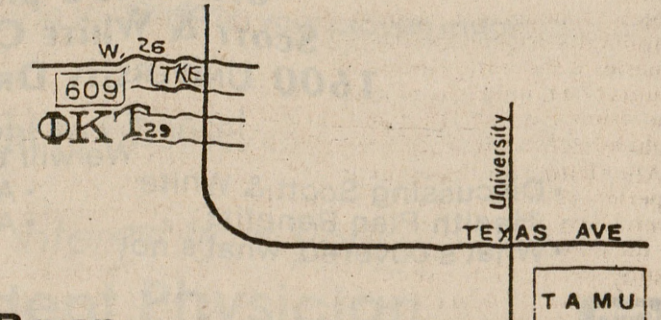
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