

Opinion

Use of Confederate flag a 'nonissue'

As an A&M freshman living in Underwood Hall, I was chosen dorm public relations chairman. Like every other dorm on campus, we often had parties, or "mixers" as they were called, with the guys' dorms. And like every other dorm public relations chairman on campus, my job was to design signs and fliers to publicize mixers and other dorm events.



Sondra Pickard

Most of the mixers and the signs I made announcing them are long since forgotten, but one in particular was recently brought back to mind — the Underwood Hall Civil War mixer. Every mixer had a theme, and for this one, dorm council had decided we would represent the South, and the guys the North. With only a week to spare, the date was set, a Quonset Hut was reserved, the kegs were ordered, and the publicity began — that's where I came in.

For an entire grueling evening (four hours if I remember correctly), I sat on my floor preparing a poster I thought only fit for kings. With the Civil War being the theme, and my dorm representing the South, I naturally began by drawing a big, red, white and blue Confederate flag at the top of the sign that eventually would hang at our dorm's main entrance.

Thoughts of racism or discrimination simply didn't exist. At the time, I only thought as far as how much fun I was going to have at the mixer and what a wonderful sign I was making.

Sometime after midnight, after adding the final touches and getting approval from friends, I ran down to the first floor and hung the sign in its designated spot. Such insignificant accomplishments highlighted my on-campus days, and I remember standing alone in the quiet hallway admiring my masterpiece, knowing that everyone in the dorm would see it before the big party that weekend.

The next day I found the poster ripped to shreds and scattered on the floor.

On the verge of tears, I stomped up to my room and found a note asking me to see the dorm president immediately. The only explanation I got was that several Underwood residents had destroyed the sign because they were offended by the rebel flag I had drawn. They saw the flag as a racist symbol and, after completing their pillage, went straight to the Resident Hall Association director and reported me and my "racist" poster. The dorm president told me not to ask any questions and to make another sign without the flag.

I was a lot more timid back then, so I kept quiet, did what she asked, and not much else was heard of it. But I knew that I wasn't guilty and knew that I was the one who had been treated unfairly.

An isolated and long-gone incident, but there's a moral to the story: The Confederate flag doesn't represent a racist and discriminatory attitude on the part of all who display it. Although it's important that Texas A&M as a public institution remain impartial to all minorities — blacks included — pointing at anyone on campus associated with a Confederate flag and shouting "racist" is an unnecessary overreaction.

Last spring, an A&M professor and

library administrator noticed the Confederate flag in a Bryan-College Station Eagle photo taken during the Corps of Cadets' March to the Brazos. Disturbed, the professor wrote a letter to the Faculty Senate suggesting that it urge the Corps commandant to halt the use of the flag at official Corps functions, as it had "racist overtones to it."

Early this semester, both the Dallas Times Herald and the Associated Press carried stories about these goings-on. Sensing possible controversy, The Battalion covered the meeting that later took place between Senate members and the Corps commandant.

What happened was that nothing happened. A "nonissue," as I heard someone in the newsroom put it. The Corps commandant knew nothing of the flag, and it apparently hasn't been

seen since.

If the Corps or any other A&M group has racist attitudes or discriminates against blacks or other minorities, then immediate action should and would have been taken by now. But chances are the cadet who carried the Confederate flag during the March to the Brazos was just as racist as I was when I drew the flag as freshman, and as I am today — not at all.

There is no law against the rebel flag. This is America, where there is no law against any flag. The cadet had a right to carry it, I had a right to draw and display it and, although I don't support the Klu Klux Klan's beliefs or actions, they have the same right.

It's unfortunate the Klan decided to adopt the Confederate flag, but it was around long before the Klan and, to many, the flag symbolizes a devotion to

the South and its history. To the flag symbolizes rebellion in general, be the last one to condemn rebel.

On Feb. 23, 1861, Texas was the seventh state to join the Confederate states chose the "30 Bars" as their official flag. On the Civil War broke out. The Confederate flag is a permanent part of our history. Attempts to rid Texas or this University of it are unfounded.

But if someone is going to start by removing the Lane Sullivan Ross statue in front of the Academic Building, Ross, once president of Texas A&M, was a general in the Confederate Army.

Sondra Pickard is a senior journalism major and editor of The Battalion.

Reagan brings back forgotten art form of the ethnic joke

Once again, President Reagan has come through in his nation's time of need. Just when we thought ethnic humor could never make a comeback in this country, the president decides to start collecting Russian jokes.



Lewis Grizzard

It was in all the papers. The president gets these jokes from people over at National Security, the CIA and the State Department and he revels in telling them to reporters.

"The president," according to one story I read, "likes to point out the differences between the Soviet Union and the United States by using Russian jokes."

Ethnic humor has been on the decline in this country ever since Amos and Andy went off the tube. Earl Butz, recall, lost his job as secretary of agriculture for telling an ethnic joke.

But all the frustration that has been involved in not being able to rib a portion of our society may now be vented if the president's doing it — towards the Russians, who are too busy standing in line to buy toilet paper to get upset over somebody poking a little fun at them.

Here is one of the president's favorite Russian jokes:

The Soviet agriculture secretary is talking to a potato farmer about this year's crop.

"We have so many potatoes," says the farmer, "we could pile them on top of one another and they would reach to the feet of God."

"But this is the Soviet Union," says the secretary. "There is no God."

"That's OK," says the farmer. "There are no potatoes either."

One more:

An American and a Russian are talking. The American says, "I can stand in front of the White House and yell, 'To hell with Reagan!'"

"That's nothing," says the Russian "I can stand in front of the Kremlin and yell, 'To hell with Reagan, too.'"

In an effort to help my commander in chief, regardless of his needs, I have a couple of Russian jokes the president can use, too.

• The Russian airline, Aeroflot, is regarded as one of the world's worst in regards to both service and safety.

Two rookie Russian pilots are landing at Rostov. The co-pilot looks down and sees the runway.

"The runway is very short here," he says.

"We have no choice," says the pilot. "We must land."

"They bring in the plane and make a miraculous landing."

"This was a short runway," says the co-pilot, "but I've never seen one wider."

• Two Russian cosmonauts are lost hopelessly in space. One suggests they pray.

"But I don't know how to pray," the other replies.

"Don't worry," says the first cosmonaut. "I was in United States once and went to a Catholic church. I know how to pray. Repeat after me, 'Under the "B," 13. Under the "O," 72...'"

If you have any good ethnic jokes you have been too embarrassed to tell, make the Russinas the subject and send them to President Reagan.

He won't be able to continue to show his Butz without you.

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Welcome to Russia

EDITOR:

After reading Brian Frederick's column of Sept. 15, it seems to me that Mr. Frederick has been studying a little too much Russian history. It seems he is beginning to think a little too much like the people he is studying.

In his column on the AIDS virus, Mr. Frederick pointed out that it is suspected that AIDS can be transmitted by mosquito bites as well as by sexual contact. And he concluded we should begin mandatory testing of all U.S. citizens and require everyone to carry health cards. Mr. Frederick said, "No one's right to privacy or any other right can be construed to allow him to jeopardize the life of another."

This statement simply is wrong. The fact is that many of the rights we in the United States consider to be unalienable can and do jeopardize people's lives. The right to free speech is regularly accused of endangering the lives of our military personnel when reporters make public strategically sensitive information. The right to own property is often accused of endangering the lives of those who because of severe lack of property undergo health risks.

Consider the high infant mortality rate among those living below the poverty level. No one ever said the freedoms we enjoy are without a price.

I also fail to see how being tested and carrying a card is going to do any good if what Mr. Frederick says about mosquitoes carrying the AIDS virus turns out to be true. Maybe I'm supposed to make the mosquito show me his card before I allow him to bite me?

What scares me more than the AIDS virus is how much information people can get about you from a blood test. A blood test reveals things about diabetes, pregnancy, nicotine addictions, alcohol addictions, other drug addictions, and a host of other health problems that are no

one else's business.

It seems Mr. Frederick doesn't share my respect for privacy. And it seems he is a little too eager to let the government into our very private lives. There is a place where such invasion of privacy goes on regularly as a matter of principle, though. Highway 6 runs all kinds of ways, Mr. Frederick, and one of them is to Russia.

Jerry Rosiek '87

Apology accepted

EDITOR:

This letter is a response to the anticipated public apology that MSC Aggie Cinema owes to people who David Byrne's "True Stories" last Friday.

To the surprise of about 120 people, the movie expected to see for \$1.50 suddenly cost \$2. I witnessed at least a few people in line who brought with them extra \$1.50, so they couldn't have gotten in if they hadn't borrowed from a friend.

Granted, 50 cents is not a big deal, but if MSC Aggie Cinema gets away with this they'll feel that, if they can make this kind of mistake again. Regardless of the reason for this inconvenience, and I'm sure they'll be good one, they owe some sort of restitution to the body. May I suggest a free midnight movie of similar quality one weekend this fall?

I know that many of us are tired of sucking up to the University system, but to get hosed by a student organization is going too far. Get out the grease — it's gonna be a long semester.

Mark Schupsky '88

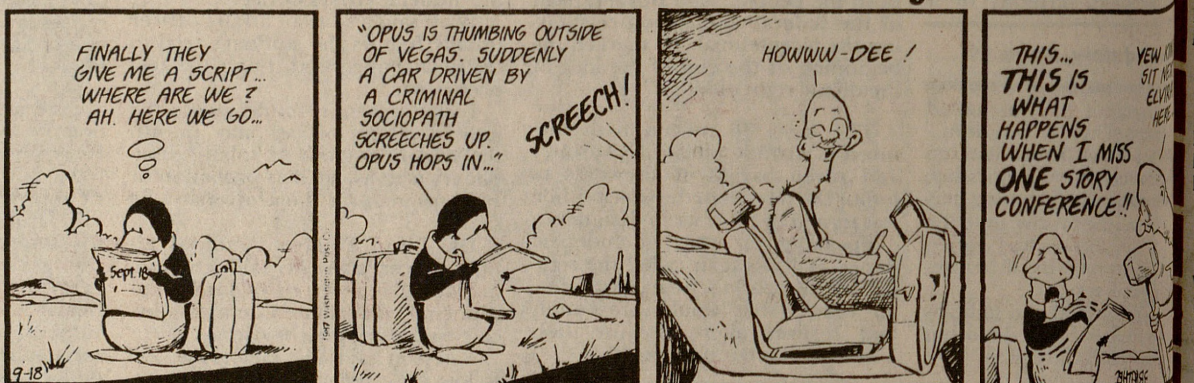
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Mail Call

BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed



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(USPS 045 360)

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