

Friday, July 7, 1989

State senators spar over right to burn flag

Washington filibusters to stall resolution calling for constitutional amendment

AUSTIN (AP) — A lawmaker who says he opposes flag burning battled on the floor of the Texas Senate on Thursday to defeat a resolution to exempt desecration of the United States and Texas flags from the constitutional protection of freedom of speech.

Sen. Craig Washington unofficially began his stalling tactics at 1:25 p.m., although he got to his feet at 11:17 a.m., when the resolution was brought up.

An early test vote went 23-2 against Washington, D-Houston.

His delaying efforts drew immediate response from Sen. Hugh Parmer, a Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate, and Railroad Commissioner Kent Hance, a likely Republican candidate for governor in 1990.

Parmer, D-Fort Worth, introduced a bill to outlaw flag burning in Texas, saying there is no need to petition Congress to pass a constitutional amendment that would allow states to enact laws prohibiting the desecration of the flags of the United States and the 50 states.

"If we wait on a constitutional amendment, the United States flag will remain unprotected in Texas for at least the next two years," Parmer said.

The resolution passed the House last week, when members stood and recited the pledge of allegiance, in response to a 5-4 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in which it was held that flag burning is protected under the First Amendment.

The case on appeal to the court involved the burning of a flag at the

1984 national Republican convention in Dallas.

Hance said Washington is "out of line."

"The people of this state don't want the U.S. flag burned, and Craig Washington should be able to understand that," Hance said.

Washington, wearing small American flag stickers on both lapels, said the issue is not flag burning, but protection of the First Amendment.

Washington wiped tears from his eyes as he spoke of his deep respect of the First Amendment and its guarantee of free speech.

For comfort, he wore soft-soled shoes and had the plastic floor cover removed from under his desk at 3 p.m.

The Senate sponsor of the resolution, J.E. "Buster" Brown, R-Lake Jackson, said, "The American flag, of course, to some people is nothing more than some different colored material that is used as a symbol of some sort and does not have any special meaning."

"And it may have no meaning when it's held in the hands of a small child on the Fourth of July. . . . But it does have meaning to those who believe this country represents the last best hope for freedom and democracy throughout the world."

Brown, who also wore an American flag on one lapel, said to many people "who engage in an intellectual discussion of First Amendment rights, this is a high-level debate involving constitutional scholars."

But to the average American, the Supreme Court opinion "is an opinion that says it is OK to burn the American flag."

Washington responded that the resolution "has no purpose."

"It is utterly without substance, it is nothing more than a symbolic occasion for us to tell our constituencies and the world how we feel about this issue. It is as shallow, in my opinion, as an issue can be. It is meaningless rhetoric for us to engage in," he said.

Senate repeals 3-week-old law after outcry

AUSTIN (AP) — In an apparent response to an outcry from the news media, the Senate voted 24-0 Thursday to repeal the three-week-old law that allows police to withhold from the press and public the names of felony victims.

The repeal measure now goes to the House, where it originated in the regular legislative session under the sponsorship of Rep. Fred Blair, D-Dallas. Blair said the law was aimed at protecting crime victims from "harassment" by reporters or others.

Sen. John Leedom, R-Dallas, sponsored the repeal measure after guiding the original proposal through the Senate. He said the intent of the law was to protect felony victims from solicitations from security companies.

Leedom said he believes Blair will carry the repeal bill to a House committee on Monday.

Leedom also said there was not enough time in the special legislative session to refine the law, but there would be attempts "to deal with the problem in a more specific manner" during the 1991 regular session.

"Under the time frame, it seemed appropriate just to repeal it, then have a long study to try to draft a bill to be more specific and narrow," Leedom told the Senate.

There was no Senate debate, but in committee Wednesday Leedom said the law had been "misapplied to such an extent that many law enforcement officers are not furnishing (information) — that was not the intent."

The law amended the Texas Open Records Act to allow authorities to withhold information that might identify victims of felony crimes, such as aggravated assault, robbery and capital murder. Police may withhold the victims' names as well as information that could lead to their identification, such as addresses.

As the uproar grew against the law, Gov. Bill Clements added the repeal measure to the agenda of the special legislative session.

Producer, former inmate argue over rights to 'Blue Line' story

DALLAS (AP) — The producer of the movie that was instrumental in freeing Randall Dale Adams from Texas' death row said the former inmate wanted none of the film's profits because he didn't want to hurt his chances for release.

Adams has filed suit in state district court in Harris County, claiming "The Thin Blue Line" producer Errol Morris no longer has rights to his life story.

Randy Schaffer, Adams' attorney, said his client is seeking the declaration so he can pursue offers estimated "in the neighborhood of six figures."

Morris said Schaffer has demanded he pay Adams \$60,000 as Adams' share of the movie's profits. But Schaffer has said his client only is interested in determining who has rights to the Adams' story.

"His lawyer demanded that I not only return all rights, but my rights as well plus \$60,000," Morris told the Associated Press in a telephone interview Wednesday from his Cambridge, Mass., home.

But Adams didn't want money from the movie, the filmmaker said.

"What he wanted was freedom. He himself felt if you were to receive money from the movie, it would in some way weaken his attempt to get out of prison."

Besides that, Morris said there has been no profit from "The Thin Blue Line."

"I'm still in debt on this movie," he said.

Adams served more than 12 years in prison before an appeals court ruled he did not receive a fair trial in the 1976 shooting of Dallas policeman Robert Wood. The Dallas County District Attorney's office later dropped the murder charge.

Lawyers reopened Adams' case largely because of Morris' film, which contained numerous interviews with witnesses from Adams' trial, including the prosecution's key witness who virtually confessed to killing Wood in the film.

He said Adams signed three releases concerning his rights to profits from the film.

Morris said Schaffer was present when Adams signed the first release.

"In the first, really he had handed over all of his rights and in the subsequent agreement he got those rights back . . . through a partnership between him and me, that he would share in any profits, in the sense say a book would come out or say a movie would come out after the fact," Morris said.

He said the two agreed Adams would receive \$60,000 for another theater feature based on Adams' life. He did not recall how much Adams would receive from a book.

The third release was essentially the same as the second, but was redrafted so it would be written by the same firm that wrote the first release, Morris said.

"The idea has never been to deprive Randall Adams of something. It's a case of an attorney gets a hold of something and things get out of hand," Morris said.

But according to Adams' attorneys, a 1986 agreement under which Morris paid their client \$10 for a two-year option on Adams' life story has expired, so Morris no longer holds any rights to the story.

"Errol Morris, in fact, may have made a great business deal for himself when he gave Randall Adams \$10," Schaffer told the AP.

A&M medical student receives Reagan award

Susan A. Olsta, a third year A&M medical student from Huntsville, is the 1989 winner of both the National Pathfinders Fund's Nancy Reagan Scholarship and the Joseph Collins award.

The \$2,500 Nancy Reagan Scholarship, established in 1985 by the National Federation of Republican Women, is presented annually to a woman studying in various fields relating to substance abuse.

The \$2,500 Joseph Collins award is given by the Joseph Collins Foundation in the name of the late Dr. Joseph Collins, a physician and pioneer neurologist. The award was established to help a deserving medical student receive an M.D. degree.

In addition to having financial need, the Collins award winner must

be in the upper half of his or her medical school class; demonstrate interest in the arts or letters or other cultural pursuits outside of medicine; consider specializing in neurology, psychiatry or general practice; and live within 200 miles of their medical school.

Olsta was a National Merit Scholar, a President's Endowed Scholar, a member of Alpha Zeta Honor Society, on the Honors Program committee and a member of Alpha Phi sorority.

She also participates on the water ski team and plays second chair oboe with the Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra and currently serve as one of the 10 national trustees of the American Medical Student Association.

FAMOUS FIRSTS



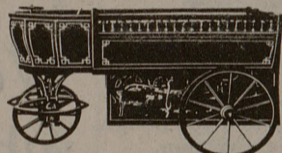
FIRST AIRPLANE

The Wright Brothers began experimenting with kites in the 1890's and in 1903 became the first to sustain flight for 852 feet over the beach at Kitty Hawk.



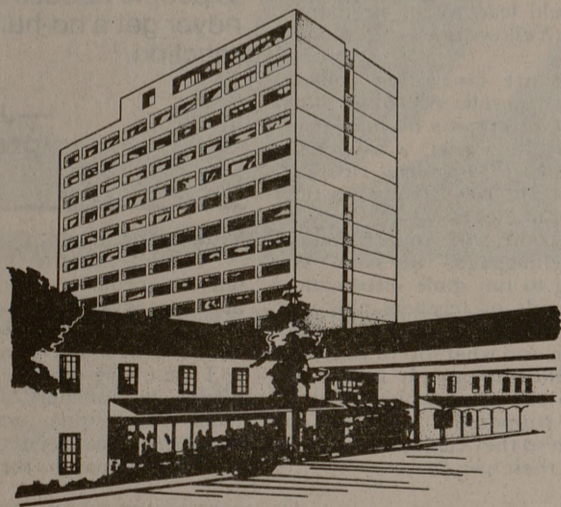
FIRST LOVE

She was the only one who didn't laugh when you fell off the jungle gym and broke your leg. She even let you win at checkers. What a woman!



FIRST CAR

The world's first motor car, the Lenoir, named after its inventor, ran at an average speed of 4 miles per hour. In 1863 the 1 1/2 horsepower vehicle made its first drive of 6 miles in only 3 hours.

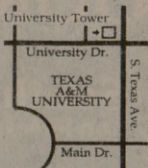


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