

FLAGS *and*

Yellow ribbons

If there was one thing about the war that all students on campus agreed on, it was support for the troops. War protesters displayed signs reading "we support our troops." FYC members handed out yellow ribbons. The Chapel set-up tables in Coates for writing letters to our troops. The Sigmas "grew" a yellow ribbon/star tree and students in general displayed the United States' flags on the balconies of the residence halls.

The campus was full of such spirit. Junior Shannon Walsh of the Sigmas sorority said she thought "with all the negative attitudes on campus about the war...we needed something positive...to remember our troops." It was Walsh's idea to put a small tree decorated with yellow ribbons in the Coates Center lobby. Students, faculty and staff were encouraged to attach stars with the names of loved ones in the gulf region to the ribbons to show support. The tree was taken down after the war, and the stars were kept and made available to those who had put them up. Physical



A patriotic Prassel parking edifice (photo by Rich Powers)

plant promised to plant the tree when a suitable site was found.

The Trinity campus made local news when Vice President for Student Affairs Coleen Grissom told RAs to instruct their residents that hanging anything on their balconies including flags was an infraction of the balcony policy.

Grissom expressed concern that flags displayed on balconies would not be properly treated according to the rules of flag etiquette, and she was also concerned that as the war in the Persian Gulf continued, stances on it would become more divisive and the American flag would evolve into a symbol of conflict.

Senior Dennis Carpenter, whose father was commanding the air refueling wing in the gulf region, took his flag down at Grissom's personal request.

Senior John Branch was asked by his RA to take his peace sign down, but he requested the decision be reconsidered

by the administration.

As the administration sensed deep student concern over the issue, Residence Halls Director Peg Layton and Grissom reconsidered the policy decision.

A memo was sent to resident students to state their opinion on a temporary exception to the balcony policy that would only apply to the American flag.

Layton expressed concern over what such an exception would warrant in terms of the U.S. Constitution. She said that exceptions led to judgement calls by the administration which may violate the First Amendment.

In a Feb. 12 memo, Grissom voiced her approval of the display of flags and banners on balconies for the remainder of the spring semester.

"My goal in this decision is to keep the balcony policy intact, but at the same time, to offer students a reasonable opportunity during this time of war to express their concern for the allied troops, whether or not the students support U.S. policy in the Middle East," Grissom said.

Exceptions included yellow or orange ribbons, the flags of any countries involved in the Persian Gulf conflict (including Iraq) and peace signs "which express sentiments of those opposed to U.S. policy in the Middle East, but which do not reflect lack of concern for the Allied troops."

BY JULIE POUCHER



Above: McLean residents followed Prassel's lead, flying flags in support of the troops and/or the war. (photo by Rich Powers)



Left: A typical balcony scene; many students argued that the balcony police was enforced too sporadically. (photo by Rich Powers)