So where did the 'Blue Raiders' come from?

by Jerry Manley

In all the confusion over the school's logos, symbols, streakers and pornographers, several people have raised the question of the origin of the "Blue Raider".

After all, Forrest's Raiders

Backgrounding the news

were gray and definitely anti-blue in nature. If the "Raiders" are blue, where did the Confederate Gen. Nathan Forrest come in?

Well friends, according to University Relations Director Homer Pittard, it all started back in 1934 when Sidelines and some students and faculty of the then Middle Tennessee State Teachers College decided they were tired of hearing the team called the "Teachers" or "Pedagogues."

The Daily News Journal decided to sponsor a contest to find a new name for the team. The football team was having a losing season so some of the suggestions were rather uncomplimentary, Pittard said.

Out of about 500 entrants, Charles Sarver, a guard on the team, was picked as the winner. Sarver borrowed the name "Raiders" from the "Red Raiders" of Colgate University and incorporated the blue from the school colors into the name ... thus "Blue Raiders."

But where was Forrest all this time? According to Pittard, he didn't come along 'till 1938, when then President Q.M. Smith and PR Director Eugene Sloan used the general as a semi-official school symbol.

This symbol was used on college publications in lieu of an official logo and was picked up by the bookstore for use on notebooks and other soft goods.

There were several spin-offs on the theme. "Dixie" became the unofficial school song, the band carried the Confederate flag and there was even a student dressed up as "The Raider" to lead cheers at the games.

This poor "Raider" met with more trouble than Forrest has recently. At first he would ride down the field on horseback before the cheering fans whenever the team scored. But that ended the day the horse decided not to stop at the end of the field and galloped on back to the barn. The administration saw the danger (but not the humor) in this and cancelled the horse bit.

The "Raider" also carried a saber, which was almost used in a game against Austin Peay, Pittard said. It seems there was an altercation between the fans at the game, and the "Raider" drew his sword to rally the troops.

There are some who hope we've gone beyond all this foolishness, and there are others who seem to want to return to it.

Well, if the "Raider" makes a reappearance on campus, he should carry his saber for self-defense!

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