

Some things never change

Even at dawn of new millennium, tobacco companies use old tricks to peddle wares



In early June 1996, I started thinking about the things that were going to change me in the most bodacious ways – hence my incessant debates contemplating the existence of extraterrestrials and God.

Before I knew it, I was covered with slime and stigmata.

That was one crazy time, let me tell you, but it shed light on the fact that I had to prepare for a new life – and I only had three and a half years to do it.

The millennium's sober reality was soon to come, and instead of being drunk and trying to score with the person with the most fireworks, I was huddled in my bedroom, surrounded by unlit candles and a lighter waiting for the lights above my head

to quit working at exactly 12:00 a.m., Jan. 1.

I was waiting patiently for my stereo to stop its pulsating rhythms or, at best, to stop with the Nirvana and start spewing scripture readings from hundreds of different languages from every corner of the universe.

Of course I wouldn't be able to understand the babble, but the different languages all at once would be hella-cool.

Oh! And I'm pissed because not only did Jesus *not* show up and start fire-bolting people to death left and right, but my microwave still works.

My eyes twinkled excitedly in my room as I thought of new millennium catch phrases to share with my remaining friends.

For instance, if someone came up to me wearing anything but shiny silver (the new millennium garb), I would say, "Oh, that's so 20th century," and I would roll my eyes and walk off.

Or the phrase that graces my calendar, "Jesus is coming; look busy." This is sure to be a crowd-pleaser amongst the masses of Mormons I have recently become buddies with.

Or my personal favorite, "I'm Y2K compliant, so go ahead, turn me on."

I now realize that nothing is going to happen in this new year; no one's going to die (sigh). So instead of shooting my own foot (which was my New Year's resolution not to do), I will bite off my hand in utter disappointment.

There is one thing, and one thing only, that has made me forget all about my urge to go and screw up someone's home computer just for fun.

Someone out there wasn't worried about the problems with technology.

Someone out there reminded me that philosophies shouldn't change, and it's not even OK to try and forget about them until the New Year's resolution wears off.

This someone was R.J. Reynolds. R.J. is kind of tall and skinny, and he owns the second-largest tobacco company in the nation.

R.J. makes one out of every four cigarettes that go into people's mouths and assures people that he "will continually meet the prefer-

ences of adult smokers better than [his] competitors..."

I was a bit surprised when my roommate, Kristina, received two free boxes of Camel cigarettes in the mail for the new year.

Two boxes as a "gift of love."

We were pondering what would possess R.J. to be so nice, and then it dawned on us.

He doesn't love Kristina; he wants to kill her slowly and get rich doing so.

I must give R.J. props for his ingenious way of sucking Kristina into breaking her New Year's resolution just so he wouldn't lose a customer.

He knew that she would give up smoking this time of year, and he knew this would hamper his companies' profits. Especially if she has friends who have friends who have friends who smoke. Then it's all over.

I'm not quite sure how R.J. got her address; she swears she has never responded to a Camel questionnaire, but I like to think Mr. Reynolds has a band of ESP (Extremely Small People) who live inside each cigarette box, and they know exactly who is sucking on the other end of the white

devil.

These tiny people then relay back to R.J. and let him know how the consumer is doing. "She's lookin' good today. She's had about four cigarettes, and only one lung is black. Har, har, har."

It just makes me gleeful that while the government spent \$100 billion for the Y2K "problem" that would fix the world, one company was thinking about purposely destroying it.

Maybe it wasn't the direct fire-bolting death of several humans I was hoping to see, but R.J. (a Jesus of sorts) would kill several people slowly and at some point, painfully.

R.J. just had to be a catalyst to human destruction, as if people weren't preprogrammed to hold onto vices like a bad cold.

Whatever the case may be, I'm so proud of my roommate because she looked at the box with the two (count them, two) packs of yummy tar wads and said, "Hey, these cigarettes may be free, but so is cancer. I think I'll stick with my resolution and not give into this abhorred temptation."

We'll see about this – R.J. may stop at nothing to win her love.

Karen Brown is a junior English and film studies major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Tarnished relic

South Carolina upholds old hatred with Klan-affiliated flag



There is a certain piece of fabric, some might call it a flag, that is at this very moment flying over the capitol building in Columbia, S.C.

It flies unabashedly brilliantly in its red, white and blue, a testament to what many South Carolinians – and Southerners in general – consider their heritage. It is an American flag, certainly, but not the Star-Spangled Banner; it is another flag from another time, an anachronism that has received much attention of late.

It's a Confederate flag; not just any old CSA standard either, but the rebel Navy Jack.

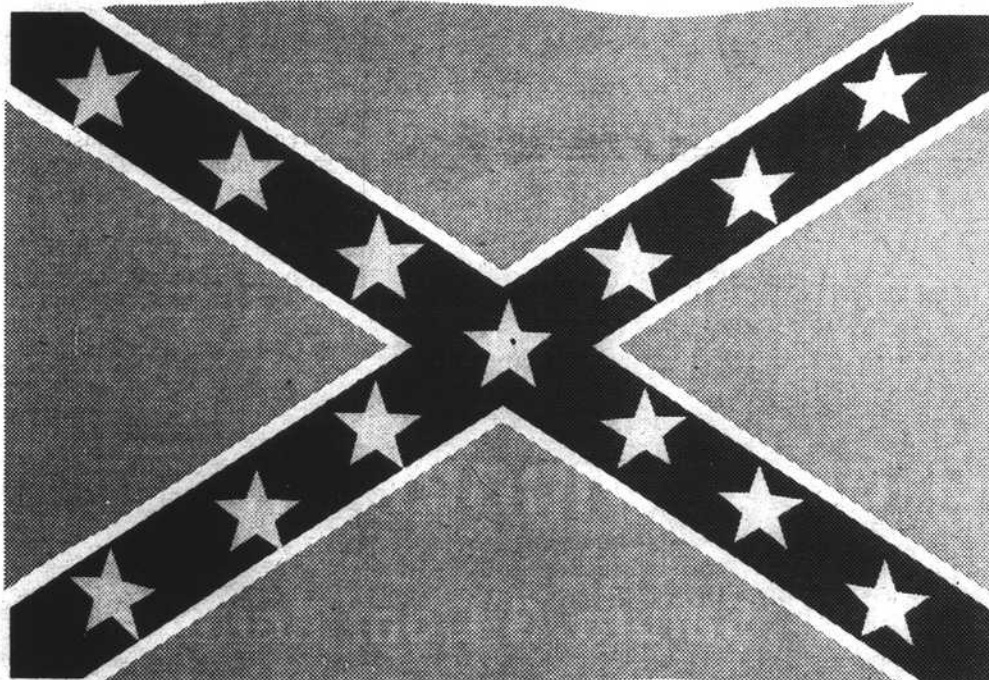
You know the one: the blue Southern cross adorned with 13 stars on a red background like the one painted on the "General Lee" car that the "Dukes of Hazzard" drove.

It was a rare flag in its day, having been elevated to a higher status since it was furled at the Confederacy's demise in 1865.

The flag was a navy jack for a virtually nonexistent navy. Yet, for whatever reason, this flag has become the image of Southern pride and nationalism.

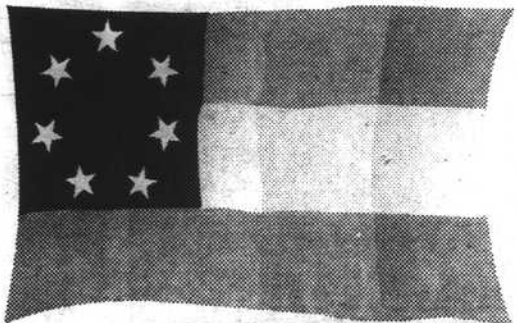
And it is now, as it was then, an icon meant to strike fear into the hearts against whom it was raised. The flag has become most prominent, not only flying over the South Carolina statehouse, but in its display at the forefront of Ku Klux Klan rallies and alongside the Nazi flag in other white power marches.

South Carolina has fought and haggled for years over the display, but stands firm that it is a legacy to the past and a proud icon. But for those who have been subjugated and threatened under the banner – namely the



Melanie Falk/DN

Confederate Navy Jack



First Official Flag of the Confederacy

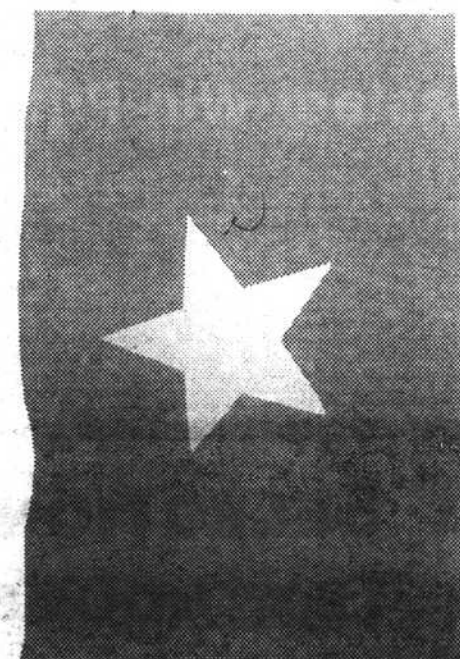
African-American community – it is but a piece of tragic nostalgia.

The Confederate Navy Jack is the burial shroud of Southern dignity.

The NAACP is right – this flag, the Confederate Navy Jack, whether intentionally or not, has come to symbolize hate and slavery, if only because a few white folks (specifically white supremacist organizations), under the guise of promoting Southern heritage, have exploited it and used it as an implement and icon of fear and oppression.

South Carolina forgets – or perhaps remembers all too fondly – that it spearheaded the move to secession and fired the first shots on Fort Sumter to touch off the Civil War.

Not only that, but it was beaten soundly, and after his march through



Bonny Blue

Georgia, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman laid more devastating waste to the state that started the whole thing.

And they want to remember the tragedy of their fall, the terrible fire they ignited, by displaying this flag.

It can't be. Like an American pundit said of the state after it seceded in

December 1860: "South Carolina is too small for a republic and too large to be an insane asylum."

Yet it will not back down and seems unwilling to compromise, though other means of maintaining the Southern tradition are readily available.

A state that flies the Confederate Navy Jack proudly over

a government building, a state with a known history of racial injustice, a state that is (like so many other Southern states) still striving to rectify the mistakes of the past can ill afford this nonsensical fight. South Carolina should be doubly disgraced.

And yet South Carolina, while making the most ostentatious display, is not the only state that flies a remnant of the Old South.

Both Georgia and Mississippi incorporate a Confederate battle flag into their state flags.

The mascot of the University of Mississippi is a decadent Southern gentleman named Colonel Reb. And while the school has tried to move away from this image, it is still contested as a piece of historic value.

Still, in this widening scope of affairs, the South Carolinian vanguard and the white citizens in support of flying this flag over the capitol building evidently do not realize the face they put forward for the rest of America.

They seem happy to perpetuate

the Southern stereotype at the further expense of alienating and marginalizing their black citizens.

And the question becomes: why this flag?

Certainly, the people of the South, white and black alike, have a right to display their heritage. But when that display has been sullied and exploited to the extent that the Confederate Navy Jack has, the icon loses all positive nostalgic value.

Besides, it is very strange that this flag – a banner used sparingly in the Civil War – should have such significance for the Southern people today.

It is archaic.

It is anachronistic.

It has been lost as a relic of history.

But the Confederate government (not just the Confederate armed forces) flew several flags in its short existence.

South Carolina might fly the Bonny Blue flag or the first Confederate National flag—the Southern cross is not displayed on either flag.

Moreover, both flags, especially the Confederate National, stand for the ideals for which the South had so valorously fought— independence and liberty. And whether we agree with the cause or not, we as an entire American body should be able to sympathize with such a struggle.

If South Carolina wants to make this kind of statement, then by all rights it should. Let the Klan and the rest of the fringe have their symbol of hate.

We must remember the price paid in the Civil War and what the blood of 600,000 Americans leaves us as a legacy.

But we must also not forget the ignominy of other Southern causes that are wrapped up in the Confederate Navy Jack – slavery and racism.

And while history and heritage are glorious things, they are not weapons.

A reaffirmation of that faith we hold in our American Union is due from the state of South Carolina; for these are no longer the days of secession and civil war, no longer the days of segregation and Jim Crow, but days of promise for a new America.

Adam Klinker is a junior English and history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.