

CW reporters interrupt possible Machine meeting

By Jon Anderson
News Editor

Three staff members of *The Crimson White* interrupted what they perceived to be a meeting of senior representatives of the Machine in the basement of the Alpha Tau Omega house Sunday night.

Acting on a tip from an anonymous source, two reporters and a photographer went to the house at about 10 p.m. to investigate the meeting.

Several individuals who have been identified as Machine members were in the basement, but Ashton Wells, a member of Alpha Tau Omega who has been identified as Machine president,

said it was a social gathering.

The reporters knocked on the basement door they had seen an individual enter, asked to see Wells and identified themselves as reporters. The door was slammed shut immediately.

A few moments later, the door was re-opened and Wells identified himself. The photographer snapped a picture of Wells, and individuals within the basement proceeded to pull the reporters toward the door.

The reporters refused to enter the house, and Wells asked them to leave. They complied and were accompanied off fraternity premises by a group of about seven individuals.

One of those individuals began "handling" the photographer's camera and instructing oth-

ers to take the film, CW photographer Kip Brannon said. Campus Editor Peter O'Connell identified that individual as Scott McCleneghen, campaign manager for SGA presidential candidate Trey Boston.

O'Connell informed McCleneghen that this would be theft, and McCleneghen ceased his actions. The CW staff members began walking to Assistant Campus Editor Roman Schauer's car. A party of about 15 individuals approached the car, at which point the reporters found it prudent to leave quickly.

Contacted later Sunday night, McCleneghen said he was present but could not immediately comment about actions toward the photogra-

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pher. He failed to return *The CW's* call after saying he would call back.

Prior to the trip to the fraternity house, the reporters visited Harry Knopke, University vice president for Student Affairs, and asked Knopke to accompany them. He declined.

Knopke said he had no reason not to believe a Machine meeting was taking place and said the meeting would have interested him. But "at this stage of the game, the situation is students and students ... I think it would be counter-productive for me to be involved," he said.

Wells later came to *The Crimson White* office to find out if *The CW* was planning to use a photo of him in relation to an article being published about the Machine.

Andrew Skier, who has been identified as the senior Machine representative for Zeta Beta Tau, accompanied Wells. "We knew something is going to be published (Monday) about a group called the Machine," Skier said. "We don't want to be associated with anything in the paper that has to do with that."

Wells said he did not see anyone pulling the reporters toward the door or pushing the photographer around. "I didn't see any of that. After I had the camera flash, I kind of had a spot in my eyes for a few minutes," he said.