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## **Dorm name change led to threats to VU**

**Caller vows to cut out Gee's heart, school reports**

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One person called Vanderbilt University's chancellor and threatened to "cut (his) heart out" another e-mailed a university spokeswoman to threaten an event involving former Vice President Al Gore. Both threats came after the school decided to remove the word "Confederate" from a building's name, Vanderbilt says in court documents. Vanderbilt attorneys attached copies of e-mail messages, a campus police report and a police official's affidavit to a memorandum filed in Davidson County Chancery Court late Wednesday afternoon. They included the items to counter the United Daughters of the Confederacy's claim that the university had shown no specific examples of threats to Vanderbilt personnel when it asked the court to seal documents related to the decision.

Attorneys for the two sides will debate that request before Davidson County Chancellor Irvin Kilcrease at 9 a.m. today.

The UDC's Tennessee division sued Vanderbilt in October over its plans to change the name of Confederate Memorial Hall, a dormitory that the organization helped build with a \$50,000 donation nearly 70 years ago. On Jan. 3, Vanderbilt asked the court to keep confidential any documents revealing the names of administrators, trustees and other people involved in the decision.

After the UDC responded last week, Vanderbilt offered a much longer argument in support of its position, claiming that the lawsuit "concerns matters .... of little legitimate public interest (the changing of the name of a dormitory on a private university's campus)."

"First of all, it should be clear that there is no 'public right to know' regarding factual information relevant to this case," the Wednesday filing states. "Vanderbilt University is a private, not-for-profit institution. Despite its prominence in the Nashville community, Vanderbilt has ... no legal obligation to disclose or report to the public any of its decision-making processes."

The attached police report, listing Vanderbilt Chancellor Gordon Gee as the victim, says Gee returned a call from Wallace Earl Cook of 1437 Nesbitt Drive in Madison on Jan. 7. "After Gee explained the reason for the name change, subject Cook stated that he was through talking and was going to come over to Vanderbilt to cut Gee's heart out," says the report, filed later that day.

Charles V. Smith, Vanderbilt's assistant chief of police, says in the affidavit that "VUPD investigated Cook and learned that he is a retired military service member. No criminal record on him could be located. VUPD continues to provide increased security for the Chancellor, (administration building) Kirkland Hall and other locations as a result of this incident."

Cook could not be reached for comment yesterday.

One of the e-mail messages, addressed to a Vanderbilt spokeswoman and sent by a Jean Stork on Oct. 18, contains the subject line "Removal of 'Confederate' from building 'bad' ... Gore address 'worse.' "

"Shame on you all," the message reads in part. "We only hope you have plenty of security around for this distastfull event .... As we fear you will need it."

Gore and his wife, Tipper, spoke at Vanderbilt's annual Family Re-Union conference on Oct. 21. Smith's affidavit says a VUPD detective determined that the message had come from out of state and that there were no problems during the conference.

Other e-mails contain a mix of racial slurs, criticisms of Gee, a reference to the university as "Panderguilt" and other insults. One, from a Henry Maston, expresses the hope that Gee will be "killed by the same worthless (racial slur) that kills Farley."

Jonathan Farley, an assistant math professor at Vanderbilt, wrote in a column published in The Tennessean in November that Confederate soldiers and leaders should have been executed at the end of the Civil War. In a related matter, Vanderbilt and UDC attorneys are arguing over whether the UDC needs to depose, or interview, Farley, who will begin a visiting professorship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology this month. According to Smith's affidavit, two Davidson County assistant district attorneys told a VUPD detective that "there were no specific threats that warranted prosecution" in Maston's message.