



## Reflecting On Cadet Slouch With His Creator, Jim Earle '54

BY LANE B. STEPHENSON '77

**O**ld Ags—vintage mid-1950s to the mid-1980s—will undoubtedly recall the adventures and misadventures of Cadet Slouch, the cartoon character who livened up the Aggie community through more than 5,000 depictions in *The Battalion*, thanks to the wit and penmanship of a popular professor who drew on experiences with his students and by harkening back to his own days as a student. Latter-day Aggies can get a glimpse here of what they missed.

“This easy-going, well-meaning Aggie always has the best of intentions, but, no matter how hard he tries, the cruel hand of fate usually works against him,” observed a *Batt* writer in a 1964 banner story under a huge headline proclaiming Cadet Slouch as “The Aggie’s Aggie.”

The wide-eyed Cadet Slouch, who spent more than three decades in the Corps of Cadets but never progressed past underclassman status, was the creation of Jim Earle, who was Class of '54 but earned his degree in 1955 because he was in a five-year architecture program. After serving two years as an officer in the Air Force, he returned to Texas A&M, where he earned master’s and doctoral degrees in education. He also began his Aggie teaching career in 1957 as a graduate assistant. He served

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for 29 years as head of the department then known as Engineering Design Graphics. He retired in 1995 but he and his wife, Theresa, continue to reside in College Station.

The first Cadet Slouch cartoon appeared Nov. 26, 1953, and the last in late 1985.

Cadet Slouch over the years came to be so popular and “influential” in his own way that at one point, Earle was asked to prepare an institutionally published booklet designed to help Aggies develop good study habits. In a reverse psychology sort of way, he wittily titled it “How to FLUNK—With Cadet Slouch.” Sections of it bore such headings as Heckle Your Prof, Be Tardy, Don’t Take Notes, Ignore Your Prof, Don’t Study, Horse Play, Cut Class, Sleep During Class, Go Home Weekends, Help Others Flunk and, finally, Alibi.

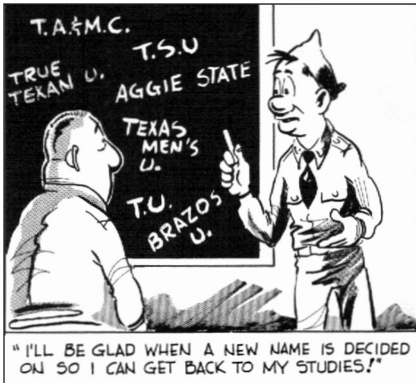
In the Help Others Flunk section, Slouch observes: “Flunking is more fun when enjoyed by a group, so try to enlist participants. When you find a friend studying, try to talk him out of it, but don’t give up if he is unreasonable and insists on studying. . . . Don’t become discouraged if you get thrown out of a few rooms.”

While Slouch quickly became a household name—in a campus sort of way—his buddies who occasionally showed up in the cartoons went nameless. *The Batt* editors decided early to rectify that by conducting a contest to at least get Slouch’s roommate his own moniker.

Slouch and Earle were generally low-key in taking on campus targets

PHOTO BY PATRICK DANIELCZYK '03





"I'LL BE GLAD WHEN A NEW NAME IS DECIDED ON SO I CAN GET BACK TO MY STUDIES!"



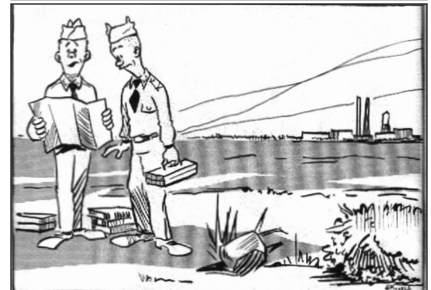
"WHAT DID YOUR GIRL'S LETTER SAY?"



"SIR, I'M READY TO BUCKLE DOWN AND STUDY THIS LAST WEEK! WHAT MUST I DO TO BRING UP MY 32 AVERAGE?"



"WHAT'S ALL THIS COEDUCATION TALK? WHO WANTS GIRLS?"



"...OF COURSE I COULD BE WRONG, BUT ACCORDING TO MY MAP, THE ENGINEERING BUILDING SHOULD BE RIGHT HERE!"



"...DENTON TONIGHT, CORPS TRIP IN DALLAS TOMORROW, BIG PARTY, HITCHHIKE BACK SUNDAY NIGHT! THE NEXT CHANGE WE'LL GET TO SLEEP IS IN CLASS MONDAY MORNING!"

of opportunity. Typical topics, according to one *Batt* article, included campus traffic violations, dining hall food, class assignments and campus construction. He also dealt occasionally with grads, profs and money—and “practically anything that came under the broad Aggie heading of ‘Good Bull.’”

“The best Slouch topics are issues most people deal with,” Earle explained in a 1979 interview with a *Batt* reporter. “Slouch makes the average person feel he has a spokesman. I’ve always tried to be moderate because it’s more fun to make comments than to alienate. It’s somewhat of a relief that I could say some things graphically that said in writing could have gotten me in trouble. A cartoonist can do it in a way people will accept good-naturedly.”

“I will tackle a serious situation occasionally,” he added. “People may be getting too serious about something and it needs lightening up.”

Although Slouch never got around

to graduating, his appearance did change a bit over his decades-long run. In his earlier years, he had a thinner face and was essentially scalped on the sides of his head. By 1979, he had a fuller face and a more fashionable haircut—but still military-friendly.

After 1963, when women were allowed to enroll on a limited basis, and with participation in the Corps of Cadets made optional two years later, Slouch no longer played to an essentially all-male, all-military audience. He was, however, readily embraced by the “non-regs,” as Aggies who were not in the Corps were often described back then, and he lived on for another two decades—until 1985, to be precise.

Slouch became such a fixture at *The Batt* that he was named “Outstanding Member of the Staff” in 1973. He even made it off campus and into the news column of *The Eagle*, the local daily, in 1962.

Earle also wrote and illustrated four books featuring Slouch, and the famous fictitious cadet also showed up over the years in a variety of other places, including a string of covers on Aggie football game programs.

Framed copies of many of Cadet Slouch’s prominent placements, as well as about a dozen binders filled with copies of the original drawings of all the cartoons that appeared in the *Batt*, are kept for posterity in the library and hallway at the Earle residence located just blocks south of the campus.

While Cadet Slouch no longer livens up the pages of *The Batt*, he lives

on in the microfilm files at the paper headquartered in the Memorial Student Center—and he has a presence in the University Archives at Cushing Memorial Library.

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