

# Westerns distort true 'wild west'

Western novels and movies often have distorted or glamorized the history of the American West and have left readers and viewers with the feeling they have been "conned by the storytellers," says a writer of Western history.

C.L. Sonnichsen, senior editor of the Journal of Arizona History and author of numerous books and articles on Western history and literature, has published a book he hopes may help put Western fiction in its proper perspective.

The book, "From Hopalong to Hud: Thoughts on Western Fiction," published by the Texas A&M Press, is a collection of 11 essays in which Sonnichsen looks at both popular and "serious" fiction.

The book suggests reader interest in western fiction is declining because of the way in which most are written, but that a turnaround — or a return to the valuable books already written — could occur if writers chronicle the virtues of the true heroes of the western movement.

"Western novels are indeed here today and gone tomorrow, and there are some special reasons for reader indifference," he says. "One is the feeling that we have been conned by the storytellers and scenarists who give us wrong answers about how the West was won."

"They have ignored the landgrabbers and exploiters and played up as frontier Galahads, a gang of barroom characters and part-time peace officers whom the Kansas and Arizona historians have revealed in their true insignificance."

To show how far the flight from idealized fiction, including Western fiction, has gone, Sonnichsen cites the case of Larry McMurtry, whom he describes as a "properly disillusioned writer."

His novel "Horseman, Pass By" ("Hud" in the movies) prompted many honors, including a top award by the Texas Institute of Letters and Wallace Stegner and Guggenheim fellowships.

"With all this impact, one would think, it would have sold 50,000 or 100,000 copies," Sonnichsen said. "It sold about 1,500."

Sonnichsen says, however, the decline of the Western novel may be only temporary.

"In years to come," he said, "the novels which are overlooked today may be historically important as a line between what was and what is to be. Much gritty realism, exemplified in the work of Larry McMurtry and his disciples, shows how far behind we have left the hopes, ideals and scruples of our forebearers."

Sonnichsen says the Western novel is often defined in terms of the frontier, the formula and the legendary Wild West, "but it is much, much bigger than that, and it needs to be plumbed and measured."

# Campus Names

**Zerle L. Carpenter**  
new department head

Dr. Zerle L. Carpenter, a teacher and researcher in the meat sciences field, is the new head of Texas A&M University's animal science department.

"As head of this key department, Dr. Carpenter will have a vital leadership role in the future of the livestock industries of Texas," said Dr. Perry L. Adkisson, vice president for agriculture.

Carpenter has been acting head of the department since last April. He came to Texas A&M as an assistant professor in 1962 and has been a professor of animal science since 1971.

His research and teaching have focused on improvements in beef quality and tenderness and beef packaging and distribution.

Carpenter's early studies formed a basis for U.S. Department of Agriculture revision of pork standards as a reference for scoring pork color, firmness and marbling. He is author or co-author of more than 230 scientific publications.

Among his honors and awards are the 1970 Faculty Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching from the Texas A&M Association of Former Students, the 1972 Meat Science Research Award from the American Society of Animal Science, the 1975 Outstanding Educators Award from the National

Association of Meat Purveyors and the 1977 Distinguished Service Award from Gamma Sigma Delta.

Carpenter is past president of the American Meat Science Association and the Texas Section of the Institute of Food Technologists.

**76 grad's research nationally honored**

Helen H. Ligon, a '76 graduate of Texas A&M University, has earned national recognition for her doctoral dissertation, "A Comparative Analysis of Design Concepts for Large Scale Information Systems."

Her dissertation is among the 100 chosen from tens of thousands in recent years for publication by the University Microfilms International Research Press.

The collection aims to promote wider recognition and use of research by promising young scholars.

Ligon's work is one of ten in the series "Research for Business Decisions."

Her book, published under the title "Successful Management Information Systems," establishes a set of criteria for the conceptual design of a large scale information system. She demonstrates how the criteria apply to three large information systems.

Ligon is director of the Casey Computer Center and professor of quantitative analysis at Baylor University.

**Susie Williams enters state pageant**

Du Juana Lyn (Susie) Williams, a senior agricultural journalism major from Hemphill, will compete in the Miss Texas Rodeo Pageant in San Antonio Saturday through Wednesday. She will enter under the title of Miss Texas Prison Rodeo 1978 and is being sponsored by the Texas Department of Corrections.

Williams graduated valedictorian of her high school class in Hemphill in 1975 and is attending Texas A&M on a four-year College of Agriculture scholarship. She was recently awarded a scholarship by the Texas Cowbelles for the spring semester. She has been a Distinguished Student at Texas A&M for six semesters.

She is a member of the Alpha Zeta — National Agricultural Honor Society; Sigma Delta Chi; Women in Communications; the TAMU Horsemen's Association; Saddle and Siroin Club; Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society; and Gamma Sigma Delta — the Honor Society of Agriculture.

She has competed in area and state horse shows for 10 years and has won numerous awards. She has been queen of numerous fairs and rodeos.

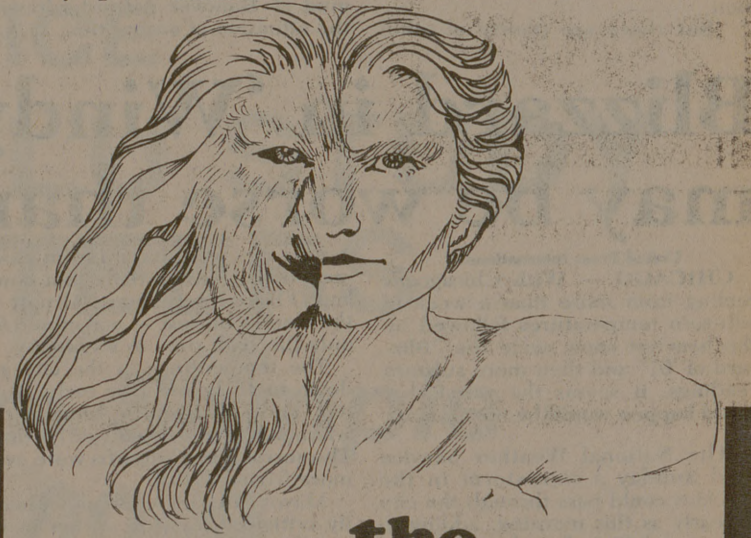
About 40 contestants are expected to compete in the Miss Rodeo Texas and Miss Rodeo Texas Teen contests. Prizes for Miss Rodeo Texas include a \$1,000 scholarship, use of a new pick-up truck and horse trailer, and a hand-made saddle.

# False 'Kennedy' fined \$50 in theft

United Press International  
DOVER, N.H. — A man who allegedly pretended to be a member of the Kennedy family — using their name to buy airline tickets and rent a fraternity house room — has been fined \$50 each on three theft of services charges.

Edgar Berube, 22, of Somersworth, was found guilty Friday and fined by Dover District Court Judge Ovid Viel. He appealed the verdicts to Strafford County Superior Court.

Berube was arrested last month. Police said he posed as a Kennedy to sign credit card applications, buy \$8,000 worth of airline tickets to the Bahamas and rent a University of New Hampshire frat house room.



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# Pickin' Paradise

World's largest country music college is in Texas

United Press International  
LEVELLAND, Texas — More than 1,000 miles from Nashville, on the flat expanse of the West Texas plain, is the world's largest college-level country and bluegrass music program.

It wasn't here four years ago, but either was John Hartin.

Hartin, 36, was teaching guitar in Norfolk, Neb., in 1975, when he picked up a country music magazine and noticed an interesting item in the job listings.

The Wichita, Kan., native, who as educated in Iowa and taught guitar in Nebraska, responded and ended the job in West Texas overlooking a Kentucky bluegrass and ashville-sound music program.

"I've enjoyed myself immensely," Hartin said recently, his voice betraying the pride he feels for the expanding program on the South Plains College campus.

The 2,400-student school, located on the southern edge of this table-top town, is just a hayride from country star Waylon Jennings' hometown at Littlefield, 24 miles away. And it's about the same dis-

put him five or six years ahead of where he would have been had he not had it," Hartin says.

Those two years at the college aren't necessarily easy ones, though.

One Alabama bluegrass guitarist said she figured on coming to South Plains College just to "pick."

"But I had to learn to read music through the program, and that's hard," she said.

"If you're going to have any success as an artist, you do have to be extremely talented and well-trained," Hartin says.

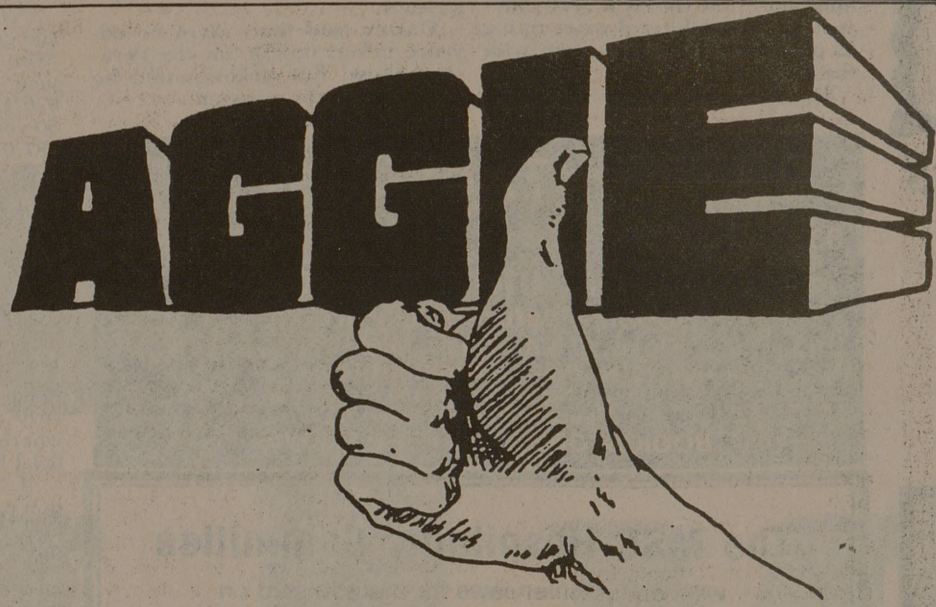
four-year school, Hartin says most of the country-bluegrass credits are transferable.

The school has three full-time and two part-time instructors and its students perform to audiences once a month during a country-bluegrass jamboree.

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