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Jennifer Hart
Director of the Texas A & M Aggie Dance Team

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TEXAS A&M 1ST SUMMER SESSION
MAY 21-JUNE 24, 2002

Once upon a Time...

Faculty and students publishing their works

By Mike Whitlow
THE BATTALION

English 332: Studies in Aggie Literature. It sounds far-fetched, but not many people are aware of the contributions Aggies make to the literary world.

Janet McCann and James Hannah, both professors in the Department of English, have published several books. McCann, who has taught at A&M since 1969, has published several books of poetry, including *Looking for Buddha in the Barbed-Wire Garden* and *Ghosts of Christmas*. She has also co-authored several textbooks and anthologies, but said her own work means more to her.

"I began writing poetry in grade school," McCann said. "In college they had poetry contests and I would use the money I won from those to finance my entertainment in college. I started writing for publication in 1975."

Hannah has taught at A&M since 1991 and published two short story anthologies, *Desperate Measures* and *Sign Languages*. His latest work, *The Great War Reader*, is a collection of short stories, poems and memoirs about World War I.

"I owe my interest in writing to my mother and brother," Hannah said. "My mother insisted I have a library card from an early age, and my brother would read to me when he was on leave from the Navy. In high school my senior English teacher helped me send off an essay to *Readers' Digest*." One of his favorite stories he has written is "Hello to Hello."

"I like it I guess because I love the ending and because others don't think highly of it," Hannah said. "It's like the affection you have for the runt of the litter. I've often thought of asking my wife to have the last page read aloud at my funeral. That's how much I love the language at the end."

Many students have problems finding time to write. Antonio Elefano, a senior English major, said he did not write anything until his junior year. Since then, he has

written his first novel, *Requiem's Waltz* and a 10-minute play, "Thin Ice," which is being produced by the Aggie Players.

"When I started junior high, my dad put a word processor in my room and I haven't stopped since," Elefano said. "I decided I wanted to write for the stage because in all of my prior writing, 75 percent of the text is dialogue."

Katie Beard, a sophomore theatre arts major, said the constraints are her biggest difficulty. She has written and produced a play, "Par 20."

"I haven't been writing recreationally," Beard said. "After graduation I want to act in film. I heard about the Elizabeth Wong playwriting workshop and I decided to apply because I thought that it would help me grow as an actress."

Some students are not sure how to get their work published. McCann and the University Writing Center, located in the University Library, offered advice.

"Ordinarily, poets enter poetry contests," McCann said. "Most publishers won't publish poems that have not won one of their contests. For fiction, the method is similar but you do have to limit yourself to contests. Most publishers will not accept unsolicited manuscripts. The best thing to do is buy a copy of *Writer's Market* and read their instructions."

Dr. Valerie Balester, director of the University Writing Center, said the center's resources are limited but growing.

"At this point we have books and web resources and can help point students in the right direction," Balester said. "As more writers become interested and seek our help, we can expand our services to provide writers' workshops. We focus our efforts in that direction. Right now we provide the best service we provide create writers is an objective review of their work, helping out with character development, plot structure and so forth. We give writers an audience for their work that is supportive but also honest."

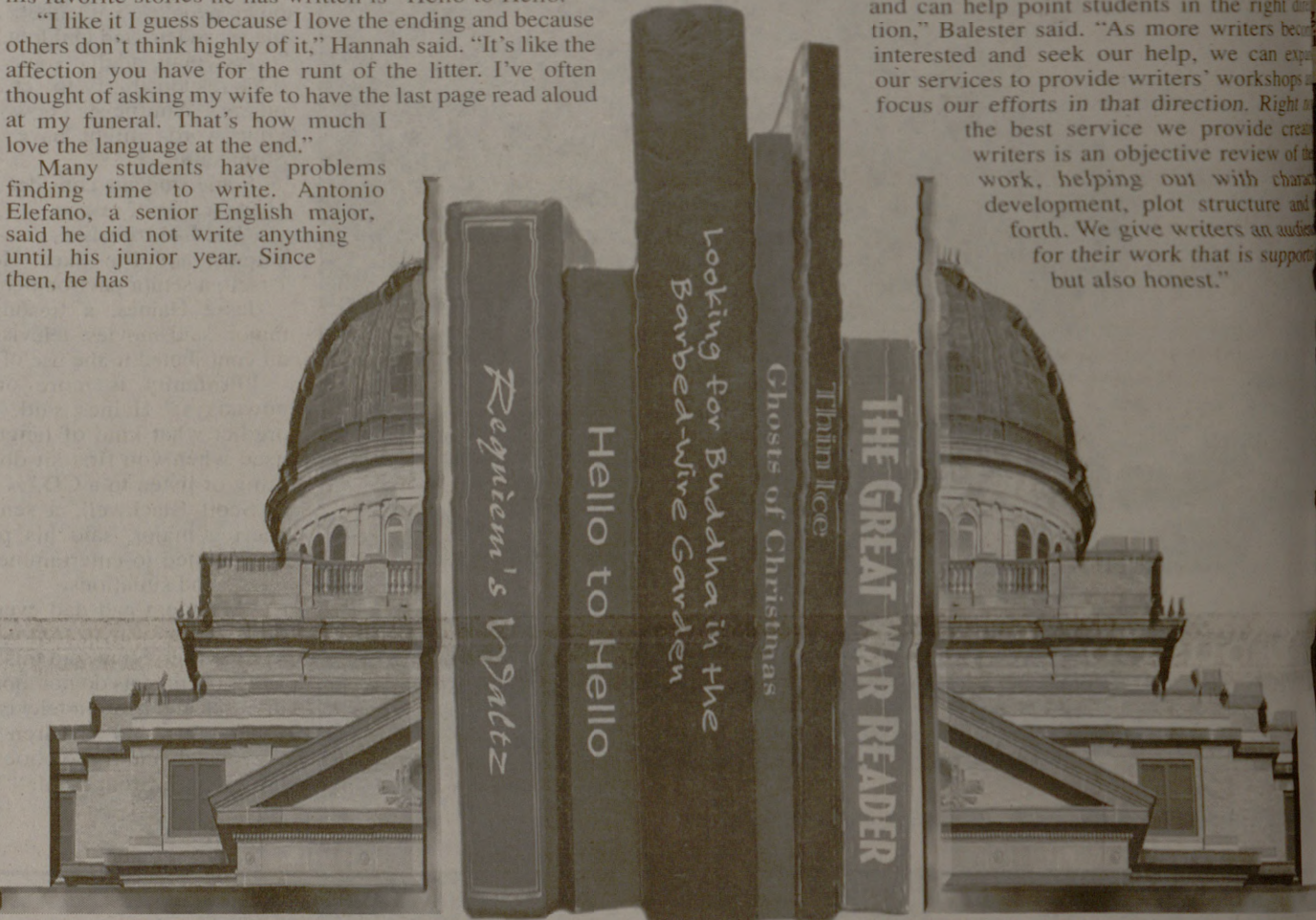


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