

THE BATTALION

Slouch' Originator Jim Earle Recalls Start Of Cartoon

(Editor's Note: Wednesday is Jim Earle's birthday and The Battalion is pleased to run the following article, written last fall, on one of A&M's favorite professors.)

By ALAN PAYNE
Battalion Editor

Over eight years ago a small, amusing cartoon character first appeared on the A&M campus in a bonfire publicity.

Today this character, Cadet Slouch, is deeply embedded in the hearts of present and past students. And Slouch's creator James H. (Jim) Earle, '54, is one of the most widely known and enjoyed professors at the college.

For Earle, a slender, balding man of 29, Slouch's road to recognition has not always been easy. But persistence, natural talent and his architectural training have parlayed the cartoon character into success.

Earle figures he has done around 2,000 Slouch cartoons since that uneventful beginning in 1953. Sketches are printed in every edition of The Battalion, plus regularly in football programs, Aggie Talent Show programs, athletic Department brochures, Former Students Association stationary, television guides for Aggie varsity athletics and local store ads.

In addition he drew a daily "Beetle Bailey type" comic strip while in the Air Force in 1955 and 1956.

Four books have been printed of his cartoons. They were published in 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1961.

"I had drawn some unrelated cartoons before, but never had any printed before the bonfire publicity in 1953," Earle explains. "I was just a senior then and most of my previous work had just been funny pictures."

After the first printing of Slouch, the character immediately became a regular feature of The Battalion. Other jobs were slower in developing, but during the 1954-55 school year, while in his fifth year as an architecture student, Earle was drawing two ad-

vertisements weekly for the Exchange Store.

After graduation came duty with the Air Force, mostly at Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene. During his first year there, Earle was mailing Slouch back to The Battalion for publication.

Initial drawings depicted Slouch with big ears, a thin neck and monotone facial lines. Since then Earle made the ears smaller and switched from a speed-ball pen to a brush to give variety to Slouch's facial lines.

"I don't really know how I came up with the particular character for Slouch," the creator admits. "I just tried different characters until I found one that was easily recognizable from any angle. And, of course, I was trying to depict the average Aggie as he might look 'cartoon-style.'"

As for cartoon ideas, Earle prefers controversial situations in which most students have formed opinions.

"In such a case I can take either side, make everything seem a joke and 'relieve' the situation," Earle said. "I think these are probably the best liked by the readers, too. You can make things look just as ridiculous as you wish, and everyone will just laugh and think it's a joke."

"And, surprisingly to me, I have received hardly any criticism for such cartoons," he added. "People even call and say, 'Hey, you left us out here.'"

"People usually like to associate themselves with the cartoon char-

acters," Earle added, "and I try to accommodate them. Many also enjoy making the professor the villain—even the professors, they really get a kick out of those."

Other general themes for Slouch cartoons are exaggerations, misinterpreted terms and advertising of coming events.

"I guess the biggest problem is thinking up ideas for the cartoons," Earle admitted. "There's certainly no formula—I try to remember things I have heard or seen, or just think up something imaginary."

Earle estimated that he spends an average of 15 minutes per cartoon thinking up ideas. The actual drawing takes another 20-30 minutes. Daily cartoons appearing in The Battalion are all done the afternoon before publication—some hectically, others leisurely.

"I guess the strangest thing of all," Earle added, "is that after finishing every cartoon, I feel I just can't do another one. If I'm doing a series of five, I just couldn't possibly do six. And if I'm doing only one, two would be out of the question."

Even though well established as an educator, Earle admits he wouldn't scoff at professional cartooning offers, especially from a syndicate.

"Cartooning is like show business," he said, "you don't really know what it takes to be a success. I'm real fortunate at A&M in having an outlet for my work. I just hope people don't 'type' me and feel I can do only Slouch cartoons."

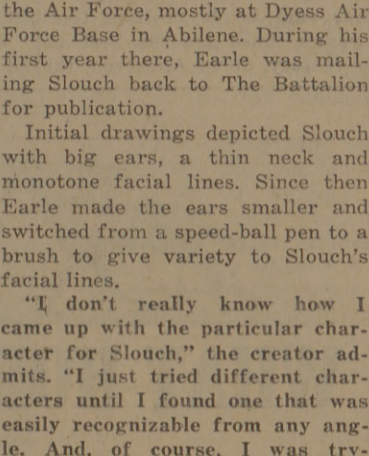
Just hand Earle a pencil and piece of paper, however, and he will readily prove he isn't 'typed.' He can draw one of the best resemblances of Mickey Mouse possible.

"Don't get the wrong idea," Earle cautions, "I'm real happy teaching. But a real good offer from a syndicate is just something you don't turn down every day."

Aggies probably hope Earle stays around A&M for quite a while longer. Cadet Slouch and his cartoon friends would be hard to replace.



Slouch, the cartoon character created by Jim Earle, is shown in a military-style uniform.



Another cartoon character, a man in a suit and tie, is shown in a different pose.

Jim Earle likes to draw his comic characters around current situations, such as the above chuckle which appeared in The Battalion in conjunction with the heated discussion concerning whether to keep the shrubs in their places on campus or take them away.

... FRANKLY IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME — I JUST LIKE CRUSADES!

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NOTICE: GRADUATION INVITATIONS: All Seniors that ordered their graduation invitations for the May graduation may pick up their order at Memorial Student Center Craft Room, Lower Level, across from the Barber Shop beginning Tuesday, May 1, through Monday, May 7, 1962. Also all seniors that failed to place a regular order may purchase our extra invitations beginning Tuesday, May 8, 1962, at 9:00 a. m. at the Cashier's Window, Memorial Student Center. These invitations are sold first-come, first-serve basis only. Memorial Student Center Cashier 108tf

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