

# Cadet Slouch—The Aggie Aggie



By MIKE BERRY  
Battalion Staff Writer

Twelve years ago a character that combined all the parts of the experience of being an Aggie was created.

The character, named Cadet Slouch, took on the characteristics of every Aggie that has ever lived and depicted them with the satire, sentiment, or poignancy that has made Aggies look at themselves and laugh or be proud.

As Dr. Jim Earle '55, creator of Slouch, said in his collection of cartoons "The Struggle of Slouch," The gags are so true, it hurts.

The key to understanding the success of Slouch is his ordinariness. Slouch is not an abstraction, but a day-to-day reflection of the average student's life at a demanding institution. In Earle's words, "There has always been a Slouch at A&M because every Aggie has a Slouch deep inside him."

The immediate world of Slouch and therefore, of the Aggies, is populated by the figures of immediate importance: the professors, the roommate, the upper-classmen, and the military officers. The all too serious realities of finals, campus issues, and the ever-uncertain future are relieved by the bit of madness that Slouch provides.

Cadet Slouch first appeared in the Battalion on Dec. 8, 1953. The idea of such a character had been germinating in Earle's mind for some time before that, however.

With the approval of the editors of the Battalion at the time, Ed Holder and Jerry Bennet, Slouch became a regular feature of the Battalion's editorial page. His appearance has been almost uninterrupted since then; even when Earle was in the Air Force the Cadet Slouch cartoons continued to come in by mail.

Earle came back to A&M in 1957 to join the Engineering Graphics Department and with him came Slouch, to appear four times a week in the paper henceforth.

The small, painful, personal tragedies and tribulations of Slouch give the dimension of universality to them that soothes their sting with the balm of humor. One of the classics is the sketch of a sobbing postman looking at the hand of Slouch forlornly dangling through his mailbox while saying, "I just aint got th' heart to tell ole' Slouch he

aint got no mail today, Sob!"

Or the one that typifies the beleaguered student's fantasies about professors. The professors hold a secret meeting: "Okay, men, is Saturday agreeable? Then poor Aggie! Yuk! Yuk! My Saturday class is at 11:00!" While the next day, a thoroughly demoralized Slouch muses, "All the profs scheduled their quizzes on th' same day again! Sometimes I think they plan it!"

The human yearnings for greener pastures is given a succinct Aggie interpretation in a cartoon showing a bored, rich fraternity man taking a pretty girl to the opera contrasted with the Aggie counterpart of the same situation — jumping over the fence at the nearby drive-in show.

Or in the picture of a gray, heavy-lidded Cadet Slouch standing in front of his washroom mirror, saying, "You don't like to sleep! You like to get up at 6 a.m.! You are going to pass! You don't wanta sleep! You is an Aggie! You don't wanta sleep! sleep . . . sleep . . . sleep!"

In 12 years, Earle has drawn approximately 2,000 cartoons for the Battalion and other campus publications. Various characters have appeared with Cadet Slouch: Simp, his roommate; Cedric, the civilian; Slouch's little brother, Phillip; Fish Perch and Fish Shad; and Randall from Coed U. But because of the limitations of the form, they were all dropped in order to simplify the framework of the cartoons and to develop one firm characterization, Slouch.

The satire leveled at the faculty and the administration has been taken in a remarkably liberal fashion. In fact, according to Earle, representation in the feature sometimes became construed as a prestige symbol. Earle attributes this partly to good sportsmanship and the humorous intent of the cartoons. Due to its singleness of purpose, Earle believes that "A cartoon is less subject to misinterpretation than an editorial."

On his method of creating cartoon situations, Earle named his three basic approaches. Twisting a serious situation into an improbable or illogical form takes away some of its terror by deflating it a bit.

Another approach is the dramatization of an everyday experience, in this case, the key factor is association — to the personalities and to the prevailing atti-

tudes. Finally, there is the complete break with reality; the ascent into the ridiculous that is always the greatest challenge for the humorist. The attitudes of Cadet Slouch

have progressed from the early expressions of a purely Corps viewpoint to ones that are more generalized.

But with the coming of coeducation to A&M, a broadening of the feature's scope might be re-

quired — perhaps with the inclusion of a female character. Nevertheless, Cadet Slouch will remain as the composite of all the pleasure and pain of being an Aggie, and for quite some time.

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(b) The act of allowing animals or fowls to run at large, whether committed by negligence or design, is hereby declared to be a public nuisance. Any person who violates this section of this ordinance shall be subject to a penalty of \$5.00 for the second and all subsequent violations thereof.

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