

What's Wrong With Profs, Students?

CADET SLOUCH

by Jim Earle

How Professors View Their Students

By JAMES SIZEMORE
Battalion Staff Writer

"If the wool is pulled over anyone's eyes, I will be the puller and you will be the pullee."

Thus, one prof, who is also an Aggie ex, lets his students know that he understands them.

Given a few years of experience, nearly all professors can understand students at A&M or, at least, form some views and opinions of students here. An assortment of profs with varying experience and backgrounds were questioned concerning students' attitudes, values, habits, etc. in hope for better understanding between profs and students.

Concerning attitude, D. H. Banker of the Department of Mathematics said: "I feel the amount of preparation a student has can affect his attitude, and students at A&M have good attitudes as a whole."

"Students are more prepared than ever before — not brighter — just better prepared," he added.

Banker mentioned a small minority of students who show little or no interest in their education. These are students who cut class, get behind in homework and are generally bad students. He explained

that they are exceptions to the general rule and are here either because their parents want them here or because they followed the crowd to school. These students have no real goal in life.

"Until a student decides on his occupation, he is just not interested," Banker said. "When he decides, he will not cut class, get behind in homework or generally show no interest."

Dr. J. P. Abbott of the Department of English also pointed out that these bad students are in a very small minority. Abbott said such students are exceptions and found most anywhere.

"I find most students quite reasonable," he said. "I certainly find individual students who are quite intelligent."

Some students who make bad grades may try to make excuses to cover up their inadequacy, but Abbott feels the attitude here may be improving.

"I find fewer excuses in the last seven or eight years than before," he said.

A chemistry prof with more than 18 years of experience at A&M feels students' performance depends a great deal on the instructor. He said the enthusiasm with which a prof teaches a course is contagious and will cause students to respond better.

"A prof can only expect response to his own enthusiasm," he said. "If he makes it clear what he expects of his students, then 95 per cent will honestly do their best."

In regard to students' values the prof said students here have a surprising degree of ethics. He said the honor system used at A&M speaks well of the Corps and the atmosphere which the Corps sets for the school.

"We are getting better students as reflected by seriousness of purpose. The entrance requirements give a better screening of students now."

He explained that the entrance requirements do more than they indicate. Not only are the unqualified students left out, but an atmosphere is established where better students are less likely to be led astray by less serious students.

Dr. Lloyd C. Taylor of the Department of History also feels A&M has plenty of good quality students, but the better students are being "gypped" because they are not challenged enough.

"I feel that the courses are geared to the mediocre students," he said. "When given the chance to do original work, students do very well, but they are put academically in a strait jacket."

Taylor said there should be more person-to-person communication with students because there is much that can be learned from students.

"Student papers, when well done, give new insights and new views for the prof," he noted.

He also pointed out that students can be quite original when allowed the chance. As an example, he mentioned a paper being done on "Alive in Wonderland" as a study of Victorian morals. This would not seem like a typical Aggie paper to many, but it perhaps shows that a student is reaching for an original way to express himself.

All in all, professors seem to have a fairly high opinion of students at A&M, but would like to see some things improved. One of the major improvements would be a decrease in conspicuous class absences on Friday afternoons. Aggies seem to sacrifice class time for traveling to insure that free time can be used to the fullest.

Some profs also wish to see students visit instructors for more conferences. They feel this is a great opportunity for individual instruction, but others argue conferences are unnecessary most of the time.



EARLE APR 66
"I could have turned in my report today—it's in my room finished—But it's more of a challenge to talk him out of an extension!"

How Students View Their Professors

By JOHN HOTARD
Battalion Special Writer

"Those who can, do; those who can't, teach."

That's what one student wrote when asked recently what he thought of A&M professors.

Is this the prevailing attitude students have of their professors? What is wrong, or right, with A&M profs? Are they boring? Do they show an interest in students? Do they show favoritism?

A questionnaire with these questions and others was given to 100 students around campus. As a whole, their opinions were similar.

To begin with, are profs boring? Why? "I find some of my profs boring. Lectures that are read verbatim from notes are always boring, as well as day after day of totally unprepared lectures," one senior English major wrote.

"Most of the boring profs I've had have been teaching for quite a while and seem to have lost interest in their subject. They've been saying the same thing for so long that they can't help but be boring," said a senior accounting student.

Some students said profs were boring because they spoke in a monotone. Others thought lectures could be improved if presented more in the students' perspective. "Keep it (the lecture) pertinent to course intentions. Have a prepared lecture to avoid mistakes and fumbling for material," a mathematics senior remarked.

Do the students feel the prof is qualified to teach the course?

"Most of my profs are qualified, at least in an academic sense. Many of those who are not are simply poor conveyors of the knowledge they possess," a junior electrical engineering student answered.

"Qualified to teach, yes; qualified to handle students, not always. Many professors seem to find the students 'distasteful' and are even antagonistic toward them," another English student said.

All students agreed that being a Ph.D. or having a long list of impressive publications does not qualify a man to teach. These are often the worst profs, they agreed.

A majority of those polled believe several professors think they are doing the students a favor by teaching them. Along this same line, they resent some professors continually cutting down A&M students.

"Some profs really get a big thrill out of cutting down the students and school affairs which make them greatly disliked by students," a sophomore pre-law student wrote.

"The constant downgrading of the students is, as far as I'm concerned, the biggest problem at A&M," one student replied. "It creates bad attitudes among the students. The prevailing attitude among professors at A&M is that they are doing us an enormous favor by condescending to put up with us in the classroom. Very few ever seem to consider the fact that it is we who are paying them and not the reverse."

Opinions vary on the question of whether or not professors show favoritism. Some feel girls are shown favor. As to favoritism to a student majoring in the subject which the prof teaches, opinions are split.

"Perhaps English majors, because it is their field, excel and honestly deserve more credit in a subject like English," wrote one junior English major. Opposing opinions to this question were unprintable. Others saw no favoritism at all among profs.

Graduate students who teach also present a problem, the students think.

"Many graduate students are bad teachers, and I think it is a great mistake to require a graduate student to teach in order to get his assistantship pay when he doesn't aspire to teach in the first place. One like this doesn't really care whether the students grasp the material or not," a senior mathematics student wrote.

Quizzes are also a problem. Do stu-

dents have to blow off the feathers before taking the quiz? Are essay quizzes graded fairly?

Once again, the students split their views.

"Most profs give good quizzes; however, some are chicken when they require you to memorize insignificant details," a senior accounting student answered.

"Most do give fair quizzes. But some give quizzes that are too long or cover material not covered at all in class. The prof should let the student know what material he considers the most important," a marketing major said.

"Some ask opinion questions — then count off if your opinion differs from theirs," wrote a junior English student.

"Some teach in a specific manner, giving attention to details and then quiz you on general material. Some are just the opposite," another marketing student added.

Students were also asked to name interesting profs and why they were interesting.

Dr. William Luker in the School of Business Administration was one example.

"A very good lecturer — would explain material over and over until students understood it. He had conferences with each individual student concerning his quizzes — he's very fair — gave the student the benefit of the doubt," wrote one student.

"A very dynamic prof," another wrote.

Dr. Henry Rakoff in the Department of Chemistry was another.

"He's a good speaker. He varies his vocal tone. He adds something extra to his lectures by demonstrations," said one senior.

"He's hard, but interesting," wrote another.

"He gives heavy reading assignments, and if you don't read them, you're in the dark during class. That's why his Chemistry 228 class is known as 'Rakoff's Mystery Hour.'" one of his present students wrote.

Dr. Robert Skrabaney in the Department of Sociology was also mentioned.

"A good lecturer. He gives interesting and useful information. He not only knows facts, but also how they may be related to the student as an individual."

"He has a sense of humor and vast knowledge," another said.

Injections of humor is one thing which the students feel greatly adds color to a lecture.

Others mentioned include Dr. Haskell Monroe, Dr. H. H. Lang and Dr. Allan Ashcraft in the Department of History and Government; Dr. John Q. Anderson, Dr. Fred Ekfelt, H. L. Kidd, Jr., J. N. Shepperd and the late Dr. S. S. Morgan in the Department of English; J. M. Glasgow and Dr. John Treacy in the Department of Economics; Dr. W. J. Dobson, Dr. L. S. Dillon, Dr. John Sperry and Fred Conte in the Department of Biology; and J. H. Dozier and N. A. "The Judge" Stewart in the School of Business Administration.

Criticisms have been given on what students think is wrong with some professors on this campus. Praise has been given by students to those they feel are good profs. It might help if all other profs look at their lectures and methods of teaching to see if they fall in any of the above mention categories.

To sum it up, what is wrong, or right, with A&M professors?

One senior management student sums it up thusly:

"One the whole, profs here at A&M are good. But those who are too demanding, boring, or cannot communicate need to be talked to and shown where they have gone wrong. Those profs who have set themselves upon an altar and feel that they are doing the student a big favor for having the student in his class are hurting the good profs who want to teach and help the student. Many profs need to reevaluate themselves and their purposes at this university."

A&M Grad Dean Edits Jeff Davis History Volumes

By MIKE BERRY
Battalion Staff Writer

The thin, inscrutable, intelligent features of Jefferson Davis have masked his life as effectively as the myths, legends and prejudices that have surrounded the Confederate statesman.

A step — a slow, laborious, but significant step — has been taken to unravel the silence of history.

Dr. Haskell M. Monroe, assistant dean of the Graduate College and assistant professor of history, is editor of the awesome venture of documenting, objectively and in detail, the man's life.

"It is for someone else to draw the conclusions," Monroe says. "My job is to locate and edit the papers that contribute to an understanding of the man."

Davis, an important figure in a period of American history, has intrigued historians seeking the key to his personality and national importance.

First formal discussion of the project occurred before a meeting of the U. S. Civil War Centennial Commission. Groundwork was laid at a conference of the American Historical Association in New York.

Dr. Frank E. Vandiver, a professor of history at Rice, was appointed chief advisory editor and president of the Jefferson Davis Association, a non-profit corporation supporting the project.

An advisory board of eminent historians was formed to lend their influence and advice. Board members are Charlotte Capers, Bruce Catton, Philip Detweiler, Thomas R. Hay, Albert B. Moore, Allan Nevins, Rembert Patrick, James I. Robertson Jr., Hudson Strode, Bell I. Wiley and T. Harry Williams.

Monroe, speaking before the Civil War Centennial Commission at Springfield, Illinois, defined the Association's objectives.

"Neither the chief advisory editor nor the editor possesses any preconception about the purpose of the series except as a service to scholarship and a contribution to the better understanding of a long segment of American history . . . no desire . . . to make Davis a hero or villain . . . the purpose of an editor is to set the record straight."

The first phase of acquiring, compiling and editing the papers began with a survey of manuscript holdings across the nation. A questionnaire was sent to 1,000 libraries, 173 bookdealers, 228 newspapers, 147 broadcasting stations and 123 scholarly journals.

The search yielded about 25,000 items. Processing, copying and indexing the numerous letters, speeches, reminiscences and other material collected is being done by Monroe and Mrs. Walter Riddle, his secretary, at the Fendren Library at Rice. The editor commutes from College Station to Houston several times a week.

Material streamed in from such diverse sources as the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, Harvard University, the Huntington Library, Miami University of Ohio, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the State University of New York at Buffalo, the National Life Insurance Company and the Speed Art Museum of Louisville.

After evaluating the project, the National Historical Publications Commission gave its approval calling it "a well-conceived documentary publication undertaking of special value to American history."

Editing the paper will be done in four major segments — the period before 1853 (Davis' appointment as Secretary of War), his congressional career, the war period and postwar years. The work is expected to encompass 15-20 volumes, averaging 600-700 pages. The first volume is expected by 1969.

The Louisiana State University Press will publish the volumes.

An Outsider Looks Inside

Rehabilitation: Key Word In Prison System

By GLENN DROMGOOLE

Rehabilitation has surpassed punishment as the dominant theme in the Texas Department of Corrections, but people aren't falling all over themselves to enroll in the program. For, despite more professional guidance and better living conditions, prison is still prison.

I took an outsider's look at the inside of five prison units recently along with A&M sociology professor W. Dee Kutach and about 60 other students from his criminology and social psychology classes.

We got some idea of prison life, enough to reaffirm our desires to avoid it. We saw inmates at work, study, play and rest, but our impressions can only be taken at face value. There were at least four differences between our observations and actual prison life: The officials knew in advance we were coming; we felt no personal guilt for being there; we were treated as transient guests, not temporary residents, and we could walk out when our tour ended.

Nevertheless, the tour gave us perhaps a little more insight into some of the problems, programs and practices of prison life. It was educational and informative, to say the least.

We saw men and women prisoners, young and old, short and tall, weak and strong, sick and healthy, educated and illiterate, white and black. Any thoughts we may have had about a "criminal type" vanished, because we saw all types. They looked like you or me or the next fellow.

We observed silent, efficient mass production by solemn, almost expressionless, workers. It all fit into our self-conception of communism: a self-sufficient communal of forced labor.

Rehabilitation through academic and vocational education, recreational programs, medical attention, counseling sessions and physical labor was emphasized. We heard illiterate women answer-

ing, "How much is four time 10?"; saw teenagers acquiring skills in air-conditioning, television and automobile repair; observed distressing mental patients undergoing treatment; watched physical weaklings working to condition their bodies; enjoyed a rock'n'roll performance by an inmate combo, and noticed rigid enforcement of procedure to teach discipline and maintain order.

Our tour took us to the Goree Unit for women, the Main Walls in downtown Huntsville, the Diagnostic Center for new arrivals, Wynne Farm for the physically and mentally handicapped and the Ferguson Unit for first offenders age 17-21.

The Goree Unit didn't look much like a prison from the outside. A small picket fence surrounded the area, much like a ranch home, with a modern, brick edifice housing the inmates. Most of the units have new physical facilities, and several others are under construction. Three of the five areas we visited — Goree, Ferguson and the Diagnostic Center — were adequately equipped with modern furnishings, contributing to the rehabilitations atmosphere.

Inside Goree, we saw moderately comfortable surroundings — not plush, but at least conducive to maintaining the inmates' self-respect. The 400-capacity unit contained 387 women then, and 12 more were expected later that day. Illiterate inmates were engaged in basic education — number of quarts in a gallon, minutes in hour, etc. — conducted by teachers of the "outside world." All prisoners — male or female — who have not achieved third-grade level education must take the basic course. Inmates are allowed, and encouraged, to achieve high school equivalency ratings. Since the General Educational Development Program was initiated in the TDC in 1956, more than 4,000 inmates have earned certificates of high school equivalency. The system's Education Department claims that recidivism is about 7 per cent among inmates

receiving G.E.D. diplomas.

Women inmates work at various jobs from sewing to yard work. Cell blocks compete for honors in hootenannies and other activities, as is the case at most of the units. Art classes, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, chapel, movies, civil defense training and a library are also available at Goree.

Inmates are allowed two visits and \$14 spending money every two weeks, may have five persons on their mailing and visiting list (which is closely checked by unit supervisors).

At the Main Walls in Huntsville, we were entertained by The Frames, one of the inmate combos featured in variety shows during the year. The nine-member group presented a lively rock-n-roll session which they aptly termed TDC A-Go-Go. Proceeds from variety shows, the annual Prison Rodeo and other entertainment activities go into the Education and Recreation Fund, which supports such inmate programs as high school equivalency education, intramural sports, Operation Teenager, chapels and religious endeavors and The Echo — inmate newspaper.

A few words about The Echo. A monthly tabloid of about 8-10 pages, the inmate publication is written, edited and printed entirely by the prisoners. News from each unit is collected by correspondents and written as a column. Poems, art selections and critiques, humor, editorials, letters, law cases, music comments, movie reviews and sports also fill The Echo pages. Even an outsider finds it highly readable; to the insiders it presents information, entertainment, encouragement and a source of pride.

Industry plays an important role in the self-sufficiency and training functions of the prison. At Huntsville we saw plants producing license plates, textiles, printed matter and maintaining automotive equipment. The Wynne Unit produces garments and mattresses, with brooms and mops a major industrial

concern at Ferguson. Prison agriculture provides most of the inmate food, with beef cattle, swine, dairy and poultry production and truck crops furnishing much of the farm work. Cotton production is basic to the department's economy.

Wynne Farm is a combination factory, farm and hospital. Primarily concerned with the physically and mentally handicapped, the unit keeps up a slower, more steady, pace. A new dorm now under construction should help relieve overcrowded conditions in the present dungeon-like facilities. The therapeutic, or treatment, center cares for all physically and mentally handicapped male inmates in the system. We walked through a cell block when mental patients were undergoing treatment by tranquilizer, counseling sessions and laboratory work. Most were serene, but several stalked about their cells, raving about first one thing or another. One inmate with thyroid difficulties kept talking about having a baby; another tried to convince us to contact the FBI; a third was rambling that barbarians are going to rule the world.

The Diagnostic Center is a central receiving area for all inmates. Medical, educational and mental tests are conducted during a three-week period to determine the unit for confinement. Prisoners are given instruction in cleanliness, personal discipline and respect for authority.

Ferguson was the most impressive unit we visited, and yet was in a way the most depressing. Its facilities were the nicest and cleanest and an excellent attitude seemed to prevail among the supervisory staff. But it was rather depressing to see so many youths — 872 at that time — gathered under the same roof because they had gone astride the law. Still, it was encouraging to observe the training and discipline outlook that has resulted in an exceedingly low recidivism rate.

We left Ferguson, the iron bars were closed and we were on the outside looking in again.