

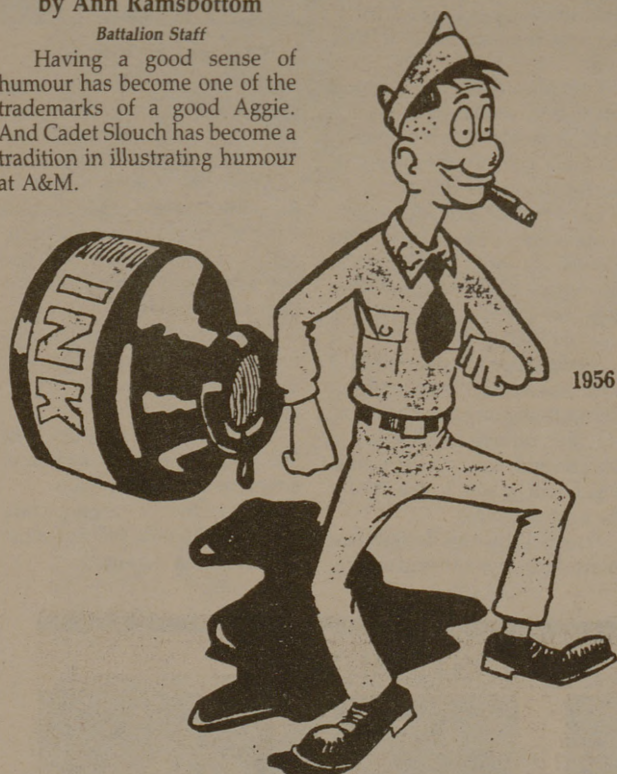
Cartooning: a job and hobby for artists of the Battalion

Cadet Slouch: a university tradition for three decades

by Ann Ramsbottom

Battalion Staff

Having a good sense of humour has become one of the trademarks of a good Aggie. And Cadet Slouch has become a tradition in illustrating humour at A&M.



For 30 years, Dr. Jim Earle, creator of Slouch, has illustrated the Aggie way-of-life. Through Cadet Slouch, he relays editorial messages and forces readers to see the lighter side of life.

"Humour is sometimes the only thing that keeps us going," Earle said, "and nobody can take a joke like the Texas Aggies."

Earle, head of the Department of Engineering Design and Graphics, became interested in cartooning as a Jacksonville high school senior. Cadet Slouch made his first appearance in print in 1953 when Earle was a senior at A&M.

"I had drawn funny pictures before and I thought that I'd like to do something of a cartoon nature," Earle said.

"In the beginning, Slouch was somewhat more crude and empathetic in order to get a point across — young people tend to overkill," Earle said, "and sometimes not in good taste."

In addition to "Cadet" being dropped from Slouch's name, he has also undergone some changes in views and opinions over the years. He has become less subtle and less rough around the issues.

Slouch has gone through some physical changes over the years as well. "The Slouch of today is rounder and less angu-

lar," Earle said. "His hairstyle has changed over the years from an exaggerated military cut to a regular cut. He still isn't up-to-date — I like to keep him about 10 years behind time."

Earle used to prepare his cartoons well in advance of publication, but now draws them up shortly before deadline.

"I've had a subconscious deadline for 30 years now," Earle said. "You have to be able to belch up ideas every day."

Most of Earle's ideas come

from things he sees on campus that students can identify with.

"I never intentionally try to take advantage of people," he said, "and I seldom take a stand on controversial issues any more."

"At first I used to poke fun at people. Some said that they felt

left out that they weren't used in my strips."

Once an idea has been thought out, the cartoon comes easy. It takes seven or eight — maybe ten minutes to do a cartoon. The character's form stays basically the same from strip to strip, but the expressions vary. Expression is manipulated through the eyes, mouth, and eyebrows.

Slouch's history can be followed in Earle's four books of Slouch cartoons: "Slouch vs.

A&M" (1954); "We is the Aggies" (1955); "The Struggles of Slouch" (1956) and "Slouch—the Aggies "Aggie" (1961).

In addition to these publications, Earle has been instrumental in writing an engineering design and graphics textbook and has illustrated textbooks and technical works. He also provides drawings for campus organizations such as the Singing Cadets.

He does much of this work free of charge because most of the organizations can't afford to pay a fee.

For the past 10 years Earle has presented an annual "Slouch Award" to the most outstanding Battalion staff member for the year. The recipient — voted on by fellow-staff members — receives a scholarship.

Earle received his bachelor's degree from Texas A&M in 1955,

his master's degree in 1962 and his doctorate in education in 1964.



Ever since I started wearing this shirt, I've been getting these spooky feelings.

