



John Henry Faulk, left, converses with Michael Nerges, the Texas A&M chairman of the National Library Committee, before his speech Tuesday night. Faulk spoke on "To Secure the Blessings of Liberty."

First amendment 'precious'

# Faulk supports free speech

by Larry C. Couvillon  
Battalion Reporter

Radio and television personal-ist John Henry Faulk said Tuesday that the First Amendment is the most precious guarantee for free exchange of ideas.

"People should censor the government — the government shouldn't censor the people," Faulk told an audience in the Sterling C. Evans Library.

Faulk, 79, told how he fought "vigilante group" called "Aware, Inc.," which during the McCarthy era tried to "suppress communistic conspiracies in the radio and TV industry." Aware would blacklist anyone who criticized the government, he said.

Faulk was host on a radio program for CBS until 1957, when he was blacklisted by Aware for speaking out against them. He was labeled a communist sympathizer and no one would hire him.

"I come from a line of frontier-type fighters, and I had to fight back."

Faulk said his reputation and career were seriously hurt as a result of the blacklist and he sued Aware for libel.

But Aware didn't have much of a case, he said. The group argued that Faulk had spoken at a dinner where a well-known communist attended. He said that was true — he had spoken at

a dinner for United Nations delegates. The "well-known communist" was Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

Faulk asked for \$2 million in damages, he said, but was awarded \$3.5 million, of which he only collected a fraction.

Faulk was called a defender of personal freedom by newspapers, but despite the hero role, he said he couldn't figure out why he had gone ahead with such a heroic act.

He said he studied American history to find out why and realized that the American founding fathers believed deeply in their cause for freedom and posterity. He said he's part of

the posterity they believed in.

Faulk said there have been times in American history — such as during the McCarthy era — when freedom of speech has been threatened. He said the Reagan Administration is currently slipping into the same attitude.

"But, we always return back to the sanity and solid ground of the First Amendment."

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