

Retiring professor to miss his only hobby: students

by Mary Laura McNair
Battalion Reporter

Charles Walden Plum says it will be harder for him to retire from his teaching career of five years at Texas A&M than it was for him to retire from Standard Oil Company of Ohio after more than 30 years.

The 69-year-old accounting professor said it will be difficult because of the students.

"That's the only thing that has kept us here," Plum said. "We've had many opportunities to leave since we came; we've even gone and visited; but there's a different quality here. I could make speeches on that."

Citing Texas A&M students' courteousness and sincerity, Plum has nothing but praise for Aggies.

"I've been on the accreditation of 18 business schools all over the country and part of that you sit down and talk to the students," he said. "And I'll tell you this is one fantastic place."

Plum said that while he was at the oil company, Texas A&M asked him to teach. However, the company was not ready to let him go. He was asked to come to the University for four months, teach and then decide what to do.

"That's all it took," he said. "I fell in love with the place."

Plum said he doesn't like to

hunt, read or play golf — his hobby is working with students.

"Everyone feels so sorry for me that I don't have a hobby," he said. "I have never had a hobby. I've never had the time or the desire. There's nobody happier than I am."

Plum and his wife Margaret attend all the football games, all MSC OPAS programs, and all including Joan Jett and Adam Ant.

"We like music that has a beat," he said. "I love jazz."

Plum also is involved with the Athletic Department. It's a great experience talking to the football recruits, he said.

"I am a graduate from Ohio State and if I can get up and say good things about A&M...well, an Aggie can say good things about Aggies but for a Buckeye to say A&M's a great place, well that's something," he said.

Plum said he thinks Texas A&M is unique because of the students' loyalty to the University.

"One of the most interesting things I've done at A&M was a study of financial resources," he said. "It was amazing for me to find out that unlike most schools, the number of former female students who contributed to the school was equal to the number of male students,

percentage-wise. This does not happen in other schools."

Females definitely add something to the University, he said.

"I can't imagine this blasted place before females," Plum said. "There is no question in my mind that females spruced this place up."

Plum, who was awarded a Distinguished Teacher certificate last May, said his experience at Texas A&M has gone well because of Margaret's support.

"The students come first and Margaret always puts herself second," he said.

Plum's door is open 24 hours for students, he said.

"He's a workaholic," Margaret said. "He spends 98 percent of his time with students."

Plum considers himself somewhat of a liberal when it comes to students. He said, he realizes the pressures students face every day.

"Most teachers don't understand students' personal problems," he said. "The pressure of grades and the parental pressure is just horrible."

Plum, who is teaching Accounting 210, said he will let any student who is not prepared for the regular test on Thursdays take a make-up on Monday nights.

One of the only complaints Plum has received about his

accounting class, was that several students in the 12:30 p.m. section said they don't like the fact that they had to miss "All My Children."

However, this semester may be his last to teach. In the spring, Plum will be 70 — the University's retirement age. However, he still might be associated with the College of Business Administration. The dean has been talking with him about doing some counseling work.

He said he would enjoy doing that because he likes to raise questions in students' minds.

"I like to make students think about things they never thought about before," Plum said. "I ask them about their future, their goals and their home life."

Plum takes pride in the fact that students are not afraid of talking to him. Some will come to his office and use a half a box of Kleenex telling him about their boyfriends, he said.

Plum said that one day a female student came in and said that his name was on the girls' washroom wall.

"I've been waiting for this all my life," Plum said. "Will you pick up the phone and call my wife and tell her so I can brag about it when I get home?"

"Cool it buddy," the student said. "All it says is 'Take Charlie Plum's accounting class.'"

Watermelons by the ton

Former pipefitter happy in new job

United Press International
Queen City — The fruit of James Quinn's labor can be found on picnic tables all over Texarkana and Dallas.

During the summer, Skaggs Alpha Beta customers in those cities can satisfy their traditional summer hunger with one of Quinn's Queen City watermelons.

"These watermelons are as good as any you'll find," Quinn said.

Behind the 34-year-old grower, the remains of a mostly eaten 10 to 15-pound melon seem to speak for themselves.

"The kids usually eat at least two a day," he said of his three daughters.

With many of Quinn's Cobb Gem watermelons weighing over 100 pounds, two would probably be more than a single family could finish in one sitting.

In his 70-acre melon patch Quinn raises three varieties of

the hot-season fruit: the oblong, striped Cobb Gem; the round, dark green Black Diamond; and the long, striped Jubilee.

Quinn emphasizes he is a commercial grower and does not try to raise champion-size watermelons. Because he sells his crop to Skaggs by the ton, Quinn said he is more concerned about the overall weight of his crop than with trying to raise one melon big enough to compete with giants from Hope, Ark. and Bixby, Okla.

The Atlanta-Quinn City area native said he got into the watermelon raising business three years ago when he was laid off from his job as a pipefitter.

"I just kind of had it in my head that I could grow watermelons to support my family," Quinn said.

"So, I took out an FHA loan and lost every dime of it in the first year."

Since 1980, however, Quinn

has learned a lot about watermelon farming and expects to pay off the loan and make a modest profit this year. He also was recalled to his pipefitting job.

"I wouldn't recommend anybody grow watermelons. It's a trade, just like pipefitting, and you have to sort of serve an apprenticeship," he said.

Quinn said he was tutored in the finer points of melon growing by Parker Johnson of Atlanta, who has grown watermelons for many years.

Skaggs was also very supportive, he said, since when you finally succeed in raising a crop, it's often difficult to market.

About 50 percent of the work involved in growing a crop of watermelons must be done by hand, Quinn said.

Quinn, his wife, Mary, and two of his daughters spend many hours in the patch to ensure a good crop.

County of 'Box 13' fame involved in voting fraud

United Press International
Brownsville — It has been more than eight years since "Duke of Duval" George B. Parr shot himself to death near Benavides, but the vote fraud charges that followed the political boss for decades are continuing in Duval County.

Parr, who engineered the "Box 13" episode in which Lyndon Johnson defeated Coke Stevenson in the 1948 senatorial election by 87 votes, shot himself to death on April 1, 1975, while

facing a federal income tax sentence of five years.

But allegations of vote thievery among warring political factions in the county have been regular fare nearly every election since then, as they were during Parr's lifetime.

Monday, the wife of current Duval County Judge Gilberto Uresti went on trial along with County Commissioner Fidencio Saenz and five other people on charges they paid up to \$50

apiece for votes in the May 1, 1982, Democratic primary.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jack Wolfe told the jury at the opening of the trial Monday afternoon that he would show that the seven conspired to defraud the voters of that county by buying votes with county welfare vouchers.

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