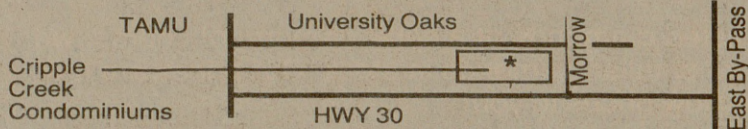


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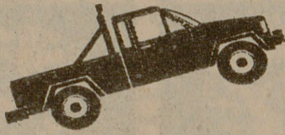
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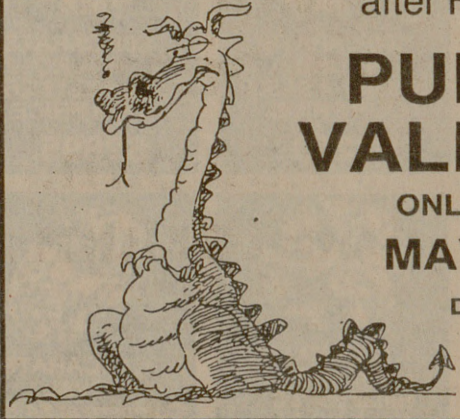
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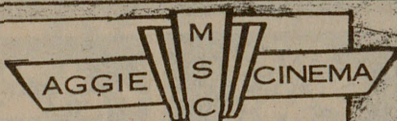
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A&M philosophy prof dabbles in Peace Corps, military ethics

By Doug Driskell
Reporter

Books on Plato, Marx, Dewey and Hegel all are within reach of a man who has helped put the Peace Corps in Africa, advised the Joint Chiefs of Staff on military ethical problems, and started the growing philosophy department at Texas A&M.

The rotund man sits behind a desk with the rough draft of the manuscript for his latest research project in front of him. He sports clip-on suspenders and wears black-framed glasses.

"I tell my students if they don't talk, I will," Dr. Manuel Davenport of the philosophy department says with a laugh. "I'm like nature — I will fill a vacuum, mostly with hot air."

The slow, deliberate speaker leans forward and moves his rough draft aside. This semester he has taken a faculty research leave to study the relationship between pacifism and militarism.

He became interested in this relationship in 1981 as a visiting professor at the Air Force Academy.

"I was teaching military ethics, and the cadets kept asking me about pacifism," Davenport says. "They had never heard anything good about a pacifist. So what I started to do was to look into pacifism and make the best case for it."

"Surprisingly the cadets respected the pacifist, but they disagreed with them. In a way they liked the ideals but knew they were unachievable."

Although Davenport enjoys talking about militarism and pacifism, he has a startling conclusion about human nature.

"I think there is real evil in the world," he says. "I am not a person who believes that human nature is perfectable."

"I don't think that by means of education and TV ads we are going to solve all human problems," he says, chuckling.

"I think from time to time human nature is going to produce people like Hitler and Stalin," he says.

Leaning back in his chair, he concludes, "I tend to quote humorist James Thurber who said, 'People are no damn good.' I would like to believe the pacifists (who believe people are perfectable) are right. I wish they were. I hope they are. If they are, then some day we will have peace on earth — if we do not blow

ourselves up in the meantime. Right?"

After teaching for 10 years and establishing the Colorado State University philosophy department, Davenport came to A&M in 1967. He specifically came to start a philosophy department — to organize it and develop a major.

A profile written on A&M suggested that the school neither has nor wants a philosophy department, Davenport says with a laugh. And legend has it that former A&M President James Earl Rudder called in the academic vice president and said that although he didn't know exactly what a philosophy department was, he wanted one at A&M.

A&M really didn't know exactly what the purpose of philosophy at a university was in 1967, Davenport recalls.

Rudder believed philosophy was something one learned and then went out and did — something practical, Davenport says. Philosophy would help anybody do a better job, but one does not go out and do philosophy.

"Philosophy has practical value in its application," he says. "This was the hardest thing to sell to the students and alumni at A&M."

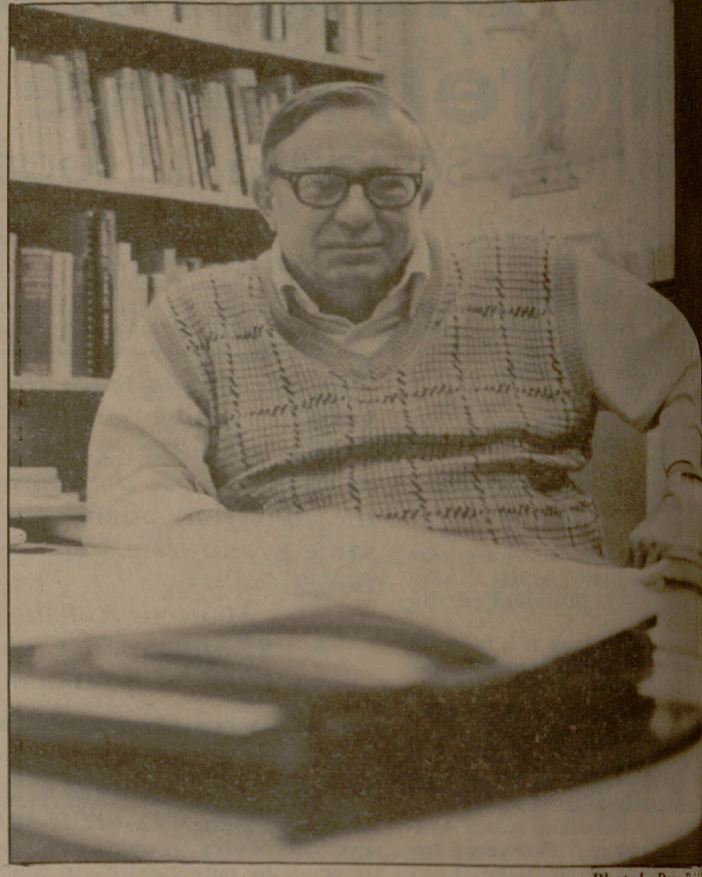
Davenport says people tended to judge the department on how many majors it had.

"We should not have too many majors, but there should be a lot of people taking philosophy courses," he says.

Davenport has applied his philosophical studies through his membership in the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics. He was the first civilian member of the conference, which works through the National Defense University advising the Joint Chiefs of Staff on ethical problems in the military.

"We meet once a year and do studies on subjects such as terrorism," he says. "Unfortunately, our recommendations are not always taken."

"Anybody with a little bit of common sense knows how to deal with terrorism, and it is discouraging when Reagan does it back-asswards. Reagan had it right at first. What happened in Libya is almost a textbook application of studies that have been made in this conference in Washington. I think it was dumb to go after Gadhafi's home and kill his baby girl. That makes us look bad. A



Dr. Manuel Davenport in his philosophy department office.

quick air strike on a port facility is a good way to combat terrorism."

The twice-tenured professor also took part in the Peace Corps feasibility study under the Eisenhower administration.

"Our job was to find the countries for the pilot projects of the Peace Corps," Davenport says. "My job was to find the best place in Africa."

Davenport selected Nigeria, and it is still productive today. Fifteen years later, he returned to Africa and found it still flourishing in most places, although failing in others.

"I was against putting the Peace Corps in a small country called Gabon. It was very pro-French and they did not like Americans," Davenport says.

"It turned out that they had put a Peace Corps there, and shortly after they had to abandon the project. Some of the volunteers even had to

run for their lives. Again, about not always taken."

Teaching awards from the Association of Former Students and Davenport's small office in Hamilton Tower. He says he has no idea how the awards were earned. He thinks it is because he enjoys teaching.

"I love to teach," he says. "The military ethics, and that makes me here at A&M. Five years ago I was teaching another love of mine — existentialism. Having students read Hegel and getting them interested in that to me is interesting."

Davenport will continue his research until the fall of 1987, when he will resume teaching.

"I will be doing more research, and more research," he says. "I am pretty much the same. I will learn this semester I will use it in classes next semester."

UT regents postpone vote on new chairman

SMITHVILLE (AP) — University of Texas regents Thursday postponed a vote on a new chairman until their June meeting. The postponement motion came from one of Gov. Bill Clements' new appointees, Sam Barshop of San Antonio.

"I think the members should have more information before we vote on this," Barshop said.

Clements has told Jess Hay, former Gov. Mark White's chief fund-raiser, that Clements wants Hay out of the influential chairmanship. Clements has said he and Hay did not "communicate."

Another new appointee, W.A. "Tex" Moncrief of Fort Worth protested the delay, saying he thought the election of the chairman should be held Thursday.

The Moncrief motion was overruled by Hay, who said the board had its own rules on election of officers.

The vote to postpone was 4-3 with a third Clements' new appointee, Louis Beecherl of Dallas, abstaining.

Senate confirmation of the three new regents was held more than a week after Beecherl told

the Senate Nominations Committee he did not have "some commitment" to Clements because the two had talked about Clements' wish to have a new chairman. The other two said they had no promises to Clements in return for the appointments.

However, Beecherl told a later session of the Nominations Committee he made no commitment to Clements. Beecherl said he would be willing to vote for a new chairman if necessary, but he felt the differences with Hay could be "worked out."

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