

Tuesday, April 11, 1989

The Battalion

## Professor uses Mark Twain as 'meal ticket'

By Melissa Naumann

REPORTER

He'd rather talk about someone else than himself. In fact, Dr. Hamlin Hill, head of the English department, would rather talk about Mark Twain than do anything else.

Hill, who has been at Texas A&M since 1986, was the only A&M faculty member promoted to distinguished professor by the Board of Regents March 28. The promotion is effective September 1.

Hill said he knew since high school that he wanted to study English. At graduate school at the University of Chicago, he planned on writing his dissertation on poet e.e. cummings, but changed his mind after becoming acquainted with Mark Twain's work.

Hill was hooked on Twain and his humor.

"Mark Twain is such a good meal-ticket that I wound up lecturing about him all over the world, writing a bunch of books about him and playing the scam for all its worth, just like the Duke and the Dauphin in 'Huckleberry Finn,'" Hill said.

Hill has indeed covered the globe talking about Twain. In addition to the United States and Europe, he has found surprisingly large audiences in Pakistan, China and Syria.

Although students in many non-Western countries find 'Huckleberry Finn's' dialect difficult, they can still relate to his story, Hill said.

In a trade school in Pakistan, Hill, the first American to lecture there, wasn't sure the students would be in-

terested in "Huckleberry Finn."

"The room was filled and here was this sea of Pakistanian faces and I was convinced that they couldn't know anything about 'Huckleberry Finn,'" he said. "There was a big map of Pakistan on the wall and whatever the river is that flows all the way through Pakistan, I pointed to it and said, 'Let's turn your country sideways and imagine this river going straight north and south and one of you, when you were 13 years old, getting on a raft and floating 1,200 miles.'"

"It was spooky. I sensed that I wasn't getting across to them and then suddenly there was a realization that, yes, they could understand that and we could take off on some common ground."

If a foreign student can understand "Huckleberry Finn" and F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby," he can understand the American culture, Hill said.

"Then I point out to them that it's not likely that they'll ever understand 'Huckleberry Finn' if I don't understand it," he said.

Hill said that Chinese students coincide with American students on interpreting "Huckleberry Finn," even though this isn't the interpretation most scholars believe.

"I taught 'Huckleberry Finn' in China and the Chinese students see the river as the symbol of freedom and escape, and probably high school students in the United States do the same thing," Hill said. "But the current interpretation of 'Huckleberry Finn,' or the favorite one, is that Huck doesn't achieve freedom

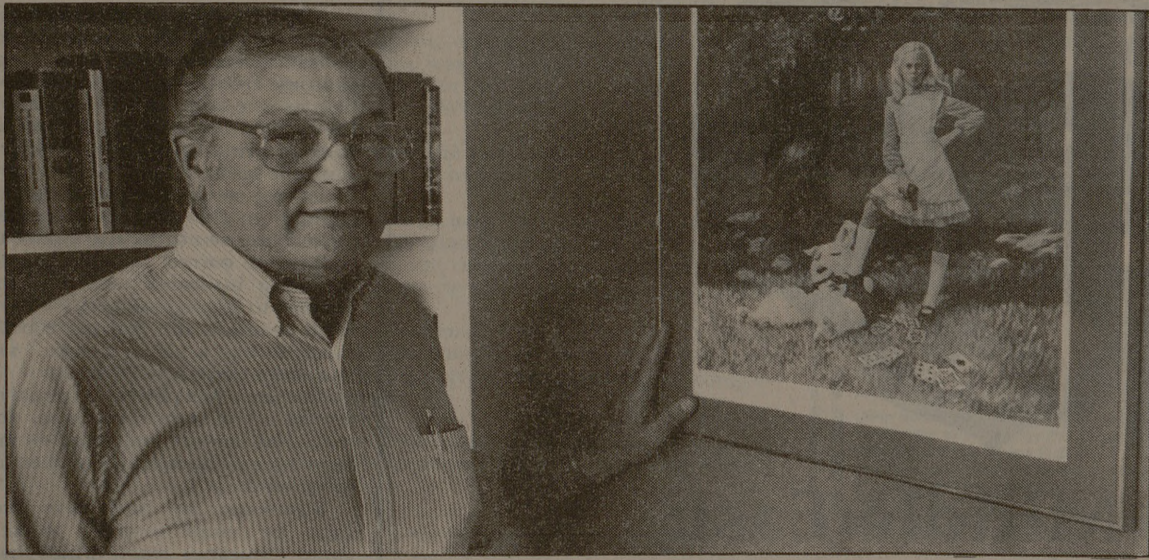


Photo by Dean Saito

A&M English professor Hamlin Hill shows off a print he received from his daughter. She said

she titled it "Malice in Wonderland" because of his different kind of sense of humor.

and doesn't escape society."

The more optimistic version is too superficial, Hill said, but both are necessary to fully understand the book.

Although Hill is one of the biggest fans of "Huckleberry Finn," he can understand the people who want to ban the book.

"I think an argument can be made that 'Huckleberry Finn' is such a complex and such an ironic book that it's better not to read it than to

misread it and do violent injustice to it," he said.

The charge that it is a racist book is true on one level, but the racism is only one aspect of the book, he said.

"Huck and Pap, the major characters in the novel, are all racists, but that doesn't mean the book is a racist book," Hill said. "What it means is that you've got to appreciate, with some amount of subtlety and sophistication, what Mark Twain is doing with 'Huckleberry Finn.'"

Since a ninth-grade student might

not have this sophistication, the book shouldn't be taught until later, he said.

"We'll get him in twelfth grade or we'll get him in an American Literature sophomore survey," Hill said. "He hasn't escaped. He's just been delayed."

Hill manages to find something new in Mark Twain's work every time he reads or teaches it, and he can show his students a Twain

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## Clements says liability laws cost Texans jobs

AUSTIN (AP) — Besides overhauling the state's workers' compensation system, the 1989 Legislature needs to change product liability laws that are costing Texans jobs, Gov. Bill Clements said Monday.

Clements, in a speech to the Texas Association of Business, also said the current Deceptive Trade Practices Act has generated too many frivolous lawsuits.

"In a recent survey, economist Ray Perryman of Baylor University found that the costs associated with Texas' liability laws have had a negative impact on job creation and may already be undermining those eco-

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nomic gains I just talked about," Clements said.

The governor said the need to create jobs and expand the Texas economy is as important today as it was when he took office in the depths of the recession in 1987.

"Today our mandate for economic improvement is just as great, if not more so," he said. "Yes, the recession is over, but the desire to create new jobs, to encourage new investments, remains."

The governor said the workers' compensation system and flawed product liability laws are top priorities for change.

He said he remains optimistic that the 1989 Legislature will reform workers' compensation insurance, a system he said has the attention of business leaders across the country.

"As I travel across our nation as your governor, working to attract new business and industry to our state, I am invariably asked what Texas intends to do about this faulty system," he said.

## Faculty Senate proposes revisions to regulations

By Kelly S. Brown

STAFF WRITER

The Faculty Senate on Monday passed recommendations from the Rules and Regulations Committee that would require a student who isn't following his chosen program of study to obtain approval from his academic dean, department head or college dean — or suffer consequences.

Reprimands would include being blocked from registration, removed from the inap-

propriate course and/or being required to register for a prescribed schedule of courses by the department head or dean.

As with all Faculty Senate legislation, it will not become effective unless approved by President William Mobley.

William Kebler, chairman of the Rules and Regulations Committee, introduced the list of recommendations, which were revisions and additions made to the 51-page Student's Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.

Among other revisions, changes may be made in the way students go about enrolling

concurrently at another institution for degree credit.

Under the revised regulations, undergraduate students would have to receive only prior approval of the dean of the college in which they are enrolled. Currently students have to receive the approval of not only their dean, but the dean of the college in which the course is offered. For example, a theater arts student wanting to enroll in a business course at another institution is required to receive approval from A&M's liberal arts dean and the dean of A&M's college of business.

Other action included creating general rules for pursuing credit by examination for undergraduate courses. The rules were redefined and would allow admitted and/or officially enrolled students eligibility to pursue credit by examination.

The Faculty Senate passed a resolution to develop a "comprehensive, state-of-the-art wellness program for (the University's) employees, which includes: health awareness,

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## Correction

A story in Monday's *Battalion* said the Reveille mascot tradition began 31 years ago. The tradition began in 1931. *The Battalion* regrets the error.

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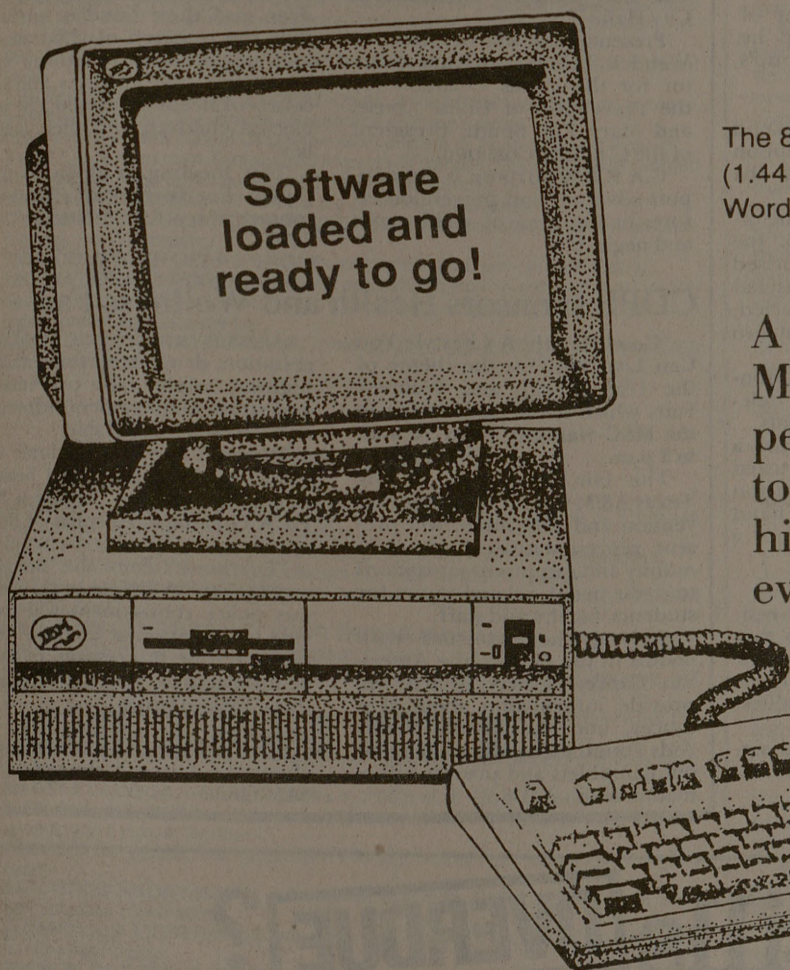
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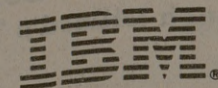
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