

Warped



by Scott McCullar

Evolution of Corps uniform chronicles tradition and lore

By KAREN KROESCHE
Reporter

In "The Corps of Aggieland," author Bill Leftwich talks of the prestige associated with the senior's uniform.

The Aggie senior's uniform has become known far and wide as the sharpest military uniform in the world," Leftwich says. "The boots, spurs and pink (a post World War II term for the pinkish-tan color) riding pants, with the white leather inside knee garters, topped off with a tailor-made blouse and a Garrison cap, just can't be beat."

In addition to the boots, the senior cadet also can be identified by his white nylon belt and a woven black and gold braid on his cap.

Juniors also wear white belts, but of cotton material rather than nylon. Their caps display a woven white braid.

Freshmen and sophomores both wear black belts, but the sophomore's belt is made of nylon while the freshman's is cotton. The sophomore has a woven black braid on his cap and the freshman's cap is bare.

There are eight different Corps uniforms, ranging from the formal class A midnight-green uniform to the simple athletic outfit.

All clothing is rented by Corps members — except for senior boots. There is no charge for the uniforms during the first two years because the federal government provides ROTC funds for this purpose. Ben Delamater, the Corps' military store

manager, says juniors and seniors who will be commissioned into the military service upon graduation continue to rent their uniform with Uncle Sam footing the bill. Drill and ceremony cadets, juniors and seniors who don't sign contracts to serve in the military, must pay a \$100 rental fee per semester.

Praising the A&M uniform for its unique design, Delamater points out that the Corps attire of today is both practical and showy.

"The basic philosophy of all our uniforms here," he says, "is tied to economics and style of the times."

Delamater says he thinks the Corps uniform, in some ways, is an advertisement for the University.

"When people think of Bryan-College Station, they think of A&M," he says, "and when they think of A&M, they think of the Corps of Cadets. It (the uniform) really is an image thing."

The showpiece effect doesn't come across unless you put something into a uniform."

For members of the Corps, that something is pride. "The Standard," a handbook and rule guide for the Corps, states: "Uniforms will be properly fitted, clean and pressed at all times. Shoes will be shined."

The publication also dictates, "It (the uniform) will be worn in such a manner as to be a credit to the individual, the Corps of Cadets and to Texas A&M University."

The article notes that it was not until the mid '60s that the present uniform began to evolve. Prior to that, the Corps attire consisted of easier materials that were impractical for day-to-day wear.

However, one characteristic of the uniform has remained constant over the years — the system of class distinction.

It's easy to spot a Corps senior by his impeccably shined boots.

The everchanging uniform," Bradford says, "reveals countless additions and examples of school lo-

yalty.

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