

# These boots were made for Seniors

BY AARON MEIER  
 THE BATTALION

Running in shorts and boots may seem like torture, but this time of year, juniors in the Corps of Cadets run laps around the Quadrangle to break in their new senior boots in preparation for Final Review.

Joe Fenton, curator of the Sander Corps of Cadets Center, and a former cadet, said the history of senior boots goes back to 1920. The uniforms adopted at that time were the same uniforms worn by soldiers in World War I. The boots were used in the military by the cavalry and Texas A&M College decided to adopt them.

Several examples of senior boots are housed in the curator's office, showing the evolution of the tradition.

One of the first styles is known as the "Tanker." The boot has multiple straps instead of the modern single strap. Also, the boot has laces along the top of the foot. As the boot evolved, the laces were eliminated and varying colors of leather were used.

"The colors of the boots can vary from black to blond," Fenton said. "It is a matter of what color you want. However, the Holick boot and its color dominated the campus."

Holick's, the store that crafts the Holick boot, has manufactured senior boots since they were adopted by the University.

Eliantor Vessali, a junior member of the Corps and a biomedical science

major, said Holick's reputation in boot construction is unparalleled.

"Holick's is the place to go to get your boots made," Vessali said. "The ideal thing is to get on the list at Holick's. These days it gets so full that freshmen sign up for their boots during Freshman Orientation Week."

Carolyn Matheson, co-manager and vice president of Holick's, said the reason cadets sign up so early is the limited calendar for making boots.

"There are so many people these days wanting boots, and there are so few people qualified to make them," Matheson said. "The demand is just too great to keep up with."

Matheson said the boots are extremely difficult to construct, and even professional boot-makers cannot meet the demanding specifications for each boot.

"In the past four years, we have hired four bootmakers and let three of them go," Matheson said. "They just could not meet the high standards the boots require. For example, if they drag their finger across the leather while it is being stretched, the leather is ruined. It is a tough job."

Mass production of the boots is impossible, since each pair is custom made for the cadet. Boots cost about \$750 per pair.

Branson Washburn, a member of the Corps and a junior kinesiology major, said getting his senior boots was a realization of his college career.

"It is a huge accomplishment, getting your boots," Washburn said. "You are finally on the top of the heap and you have a good kind of arrogance about you, like you are a campus leader."

The first time juniors are allowed to wear their boots is during Final Review, but Vessali said some cadets secretly walk around in their boots trying to break them in. She said if they are caught by the senior cadets, they are punished by having to run a "Bloody Cross" — six laps around the Quadrangle.

Washburn said the juniors in his outfit, P-2, make a tradition of getting caught in their boots.

"All the juniors get caught and have to run a Bloody Cross together," Washburn said. "It is a class-bonding time breaking them in, so it is a lot of fun."

At Final Review, each cadet dons the uniform of the next class, and seniors officially retire from the Corps.

Washburn said Final Review is an emotional roller coaster for all cadets.

"You form the closest bond with the class above you," Washburn said. "It is really sad to see them go, but at the same time it is exciting to be able to wear boots for the first time. You experience every single possible emotion at that time."

Vessali said her senior boots are the culmination of all the hard work she did in the Corps.

"There is nothing compared to wearing your boots for the first time and seeing them sitting in your room," Vessali said. "It is the best part of being in the Corps."

Matheson said seeing the Cadets finally getting their boots is as exciting for them as for the cadets.

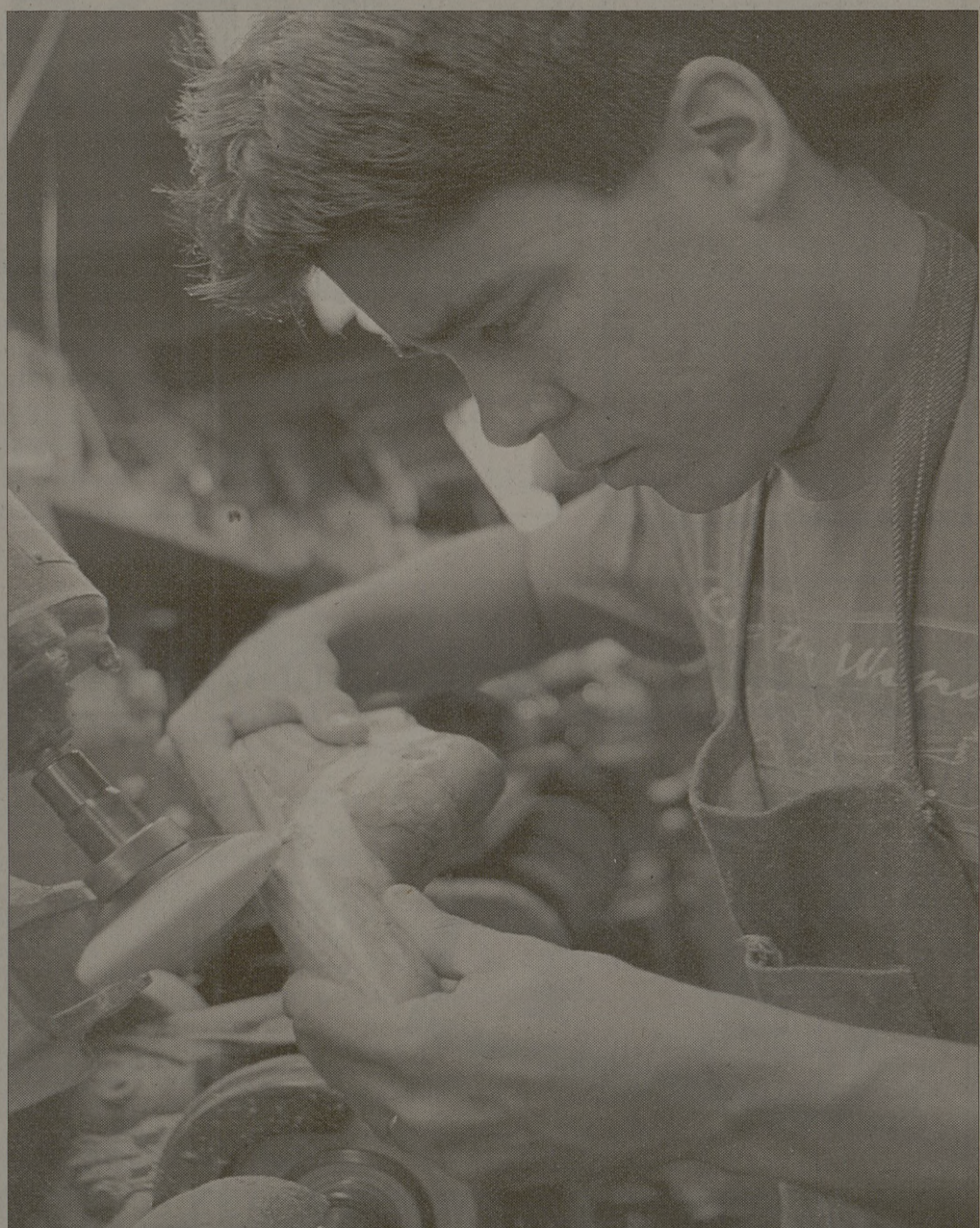


Photo by Derek Demere, THE BATTALION

**Leo Beloveskey**, a Holick's employee, fashions a lasting for a pair of senior boots. The lasting will be used to mold the foot part of the boot.

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