

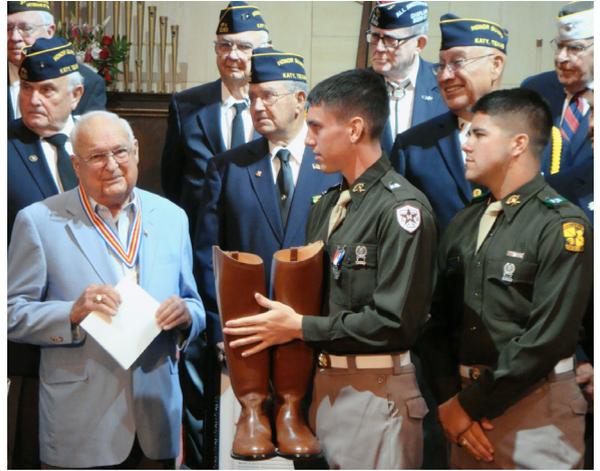


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AGGIE GOODBULL

'44 Aggie Finally Gets His Senior Boots

By Roberto Molar Candanosa '13



When you talk to Norris H. Miertschin '44, you may notice a serene and joyful voice as he reminisces about Texas A&M, the Corps of Cadets, Aggie good bull, and his service in World War II. This Ol' Army Aggie veteran rarely refers to himself alone in the vivid stories he tells—stories that lack just one thing: his senior boots, which he and other cadets sacrificed as part of a campus-wide effort to contribute raw materials to U.S. manufacturing during WWII.

It was the sense of communion with the people surrounding him that got Miertschin a most breathtaking surprise on Sept. 1, 2013, when his friends gathered after church service to present him his senior boots. The gift presentation was instigated by Kyle Hanson '14, a good friend who was moved when he learned Miertschin had never received his boots. He raised the money through donations from Miertschin's Aggie friends and fellow members of Memorial Lutheran Church in Katy.

"That a young man like that took it under his own self to try to do something for me out of respect and after 70 years come up and say, 'Hey, Mr. Miertschin, here, I have you some boots,' it was just outstanding, tears just came to my eyes," Miertschin said.

Hanson, a senior business management major and executive officer of Company E-1, sees in Miertschin a particularly inspiring figure, too. "Honor, integrity, selfless service and discipline, those things

still reflect in him," Hanson said.

Miertschin sees in Hanson a good friend with whom he relives his days at A&M. He remembers with laughter his first day as a fish, when he arrived at campus from Port Arthur, not knowing exactly what he was getting into. His father dropped him off in the dorm, suitcases in both hands, saying, "O.K., son, it's all yours." Another day Miertschin remembers vividly is Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, when he was in the theater passing the time. Suddenly, the movie was interrupted by a radio transmission saying the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, had been bombed.

Miertschin remembers how the whole United States had to turn itself into war mode, and people sacrificed nearly everything for the war. The Class of '44 seniors decided they would sacrifice the leather of

A video of the boot presentation and a longer version of this story are available at tx.ag/adcrmi.

their boots.

But Miertschin's greater sacrifice began when he was called into chemical warfare service in Maryland, at the rank of second lieutenant. He later went to Europe, where he served in the Special Forces units of the U.S. Army. Miertschin was on the frontlines for 315 consecutive days in campaigns including Normandy, only a few days after D-Day; the Battle

of Hürtgen Forest; the Battle of the Bulge; and the battle for the bridge at Remagen across the Rhine River. He was also present for Elbe Day.

By 1946, Miertschin and some 600 other Aggie WWII veterans had returned to Texas A&M. "They knew we had shortcomings in both education and livings and that some of us were married, but they were right there and helped us right through it all," Miertschin said. After graduating in 1947 with a degree in chemical engineering, Miertschin landed a job as a researcher with Texaco.

He now lives in Katy, where he represents Texas A&M's long-known values and traditions through educational initiatives with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Veterans Memorial Museum.

The Rev. John Davis, Jr. '85, senior pastor at Memorial Lutheran Church, considers Miertschin a mentor and a friend. As a former member of the Corps of Cadets and a U.S. Navy officer, Davis cherishes Miertschin's unique storytelling about the war and Texas A&M. He also admires the love that Miertschin has gained from the people in Katy, who gave him a standing ovation after he received his boots.

"Even non-Aggies from Texas Tech had wet eyes," said Davis. "We saw how much it meant to him and how even school rivalries took a back seat on Sunday." 🐮