

HOLD ON, DUCKS: Oregon stops UCLA a yard short / Sports; D-1

DRIVER
 An afternoon,
 a hill, a thrill
BUSINESS

RESTORER
 4,000 hours
 to a dream
WE ALASKANS

HUNTER
 On a wing
 and a stare
OUTDOORS



Anchorage Daily News

VOL. L, NO. 260 388 PAGES ☆

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1995

PRICE \$1.50

See those boots? They're not making any more



Bunny boots grace a display of winter gear at Blondie's, a store in Fairbanks.

CHARLES MASON / Special to the Daily News

No More Bunny Boots

The big, white stompers that keep feet warm at 50 below are going the way of the Cold War

By TOM BELL
 Daily News reporter

As swift as an Arctic cold front, the news swept across rural Alaska: Bunny boots — those white, bulbous galoshes derided and beloved by Alaskans since the 1950s — are no longer being manufactured.

The boots are simply out of step with the New World Order. Now that the Cold War is over, so is the four-decade reign of the Cold War's warmest boot. The army plans

to switch to cheaper, commercially made boots once its four-year supply runs out.

But here in Alaska, the cold war will never be over. Hearing word of the boot's demise, some Alaskans rushed to military surplus stores to pick through remaining stock. Others, lamenting the passing of an era, tenderly recounted old stories about their boots. It seemed as if they were speaking of a person rather than footwear.

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U.S. Army troops soldier on in bunny boots during Brim Frost training on the Tanana Flats in 1989.

JIM LAVRAKAS / Daily News file photo

NATO to Serbs: Move it

Either guns go now or airstrikes resume

By CHRIS HEDGES
 The New York Times

ZAGREB, Croatia — NATO warned the Bosnian Serbs on Saturday that if they did not accelerate the withdrawal of heavy weapons ringing Sarajevo in the next 24 hours, attacks by NATO warplanes and missile strikes on Serbian positions would resume.

Earlier Saturday, U.N. officials said the Bosnian Serbs 277-1500, then enter had withdrawn only 1102 for latest news on a dozen artillery pieces and tanks

from the heights overlooking the besieged city, despite promises made on Thursday to pull out 200 heavy weapons in exchange for an end to NATO air attacks on Serbian positions.

By late Saturday night, the United Nations reported that 43 heavy weapons had been moved past the 12.5-mile exclusion zone established by the United Nations. But it was still unclear whether the Bosnian Serbs would comply with the U.S.-brokered agreement that has brought a 72-hour pause to two weeks of NATO attacks.

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Courts, NRA don't read eye to eye

A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

By MICHAEL REZENDES
 The Boston Globe

With a fervor usually reserved for a holy mantra, the National Rifle Association routinely quotes the Second Amendment in asserting an individual's absolute right to bear arms.

Whether supporting or attacking political candidates, lobbying public officials or raising funds from its 3.2 million members, the NRA uses the amendment to paint the cause against gun control as nothing less than a patriotic duty.

But in the aftermath of the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, the gun lobby has come under fire from critics who say it has helped fuel antigov-

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SUNDAY

CLOUDY

High near 60
 Low in upper 40s
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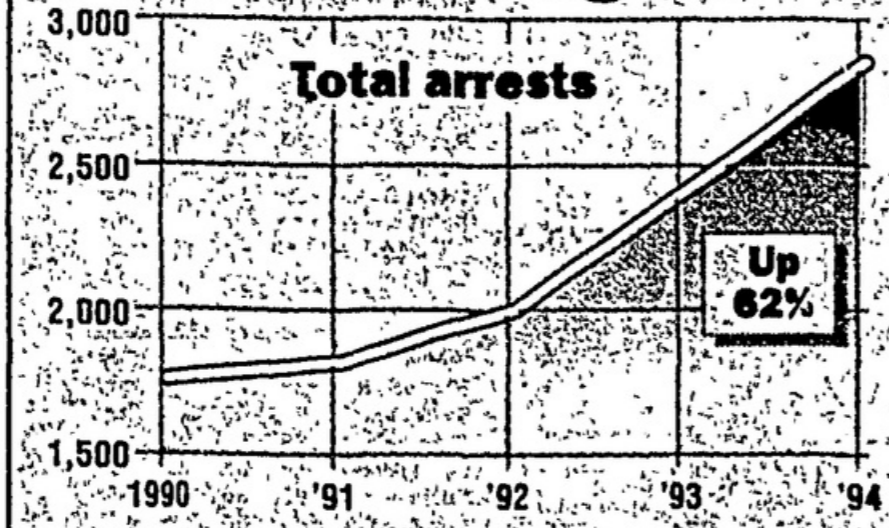
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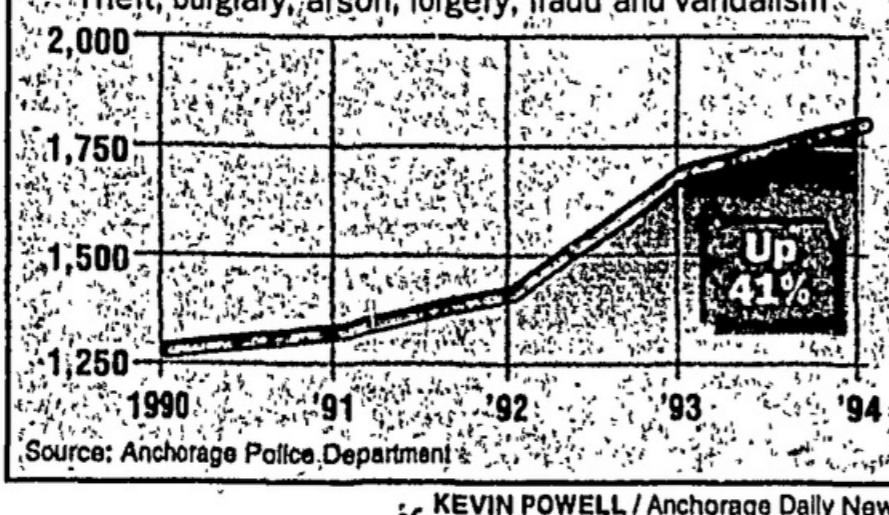
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Juvenile arrests rising in Anchorage



Arrests for property crimes



Youth court not for hard cases

Reports in other cities suggest Begich juvenile justice plan works well in pulling wayward youngsters off criminal track

By PETER S. GOODMAN
 Daily News reporter

When Anchorage Assemblyman Mark Begich unveils his plan to revamp the juvenile justice system, the city's youth court will find itself cast in a central role. If the plan becomes reality, the majority of young people who land in trouble with the law could soon see their fate decided by teenage judges, juries and lawyers.

Anchorage would not be the first city to turn much of its juvenile justice system over to people too young to vote. Youth courts have sprung up around the country in recent years, most prominently in California, Texas and Florida.

"Teen court is good for kids who have made bad choices," said Tammy Hawkins, the coordinator of a youth court program in Odessa, Texas. "There's not much we can do with a kid who went out and killed someone. But a lot of the time, what preceded a big crime was a bunch of

smaller crimes that didn't bring any consequences."

Bob Buttane, a supervisor at McLaughlin Youth Center, figures Anchorage has the right sort of juvenile crime problem for the program to work well.

"Most of the young people that we deal with are mischief makers that have gone beyond the limits of what's acceptable," he said. "Intervention is still likely to succeed."

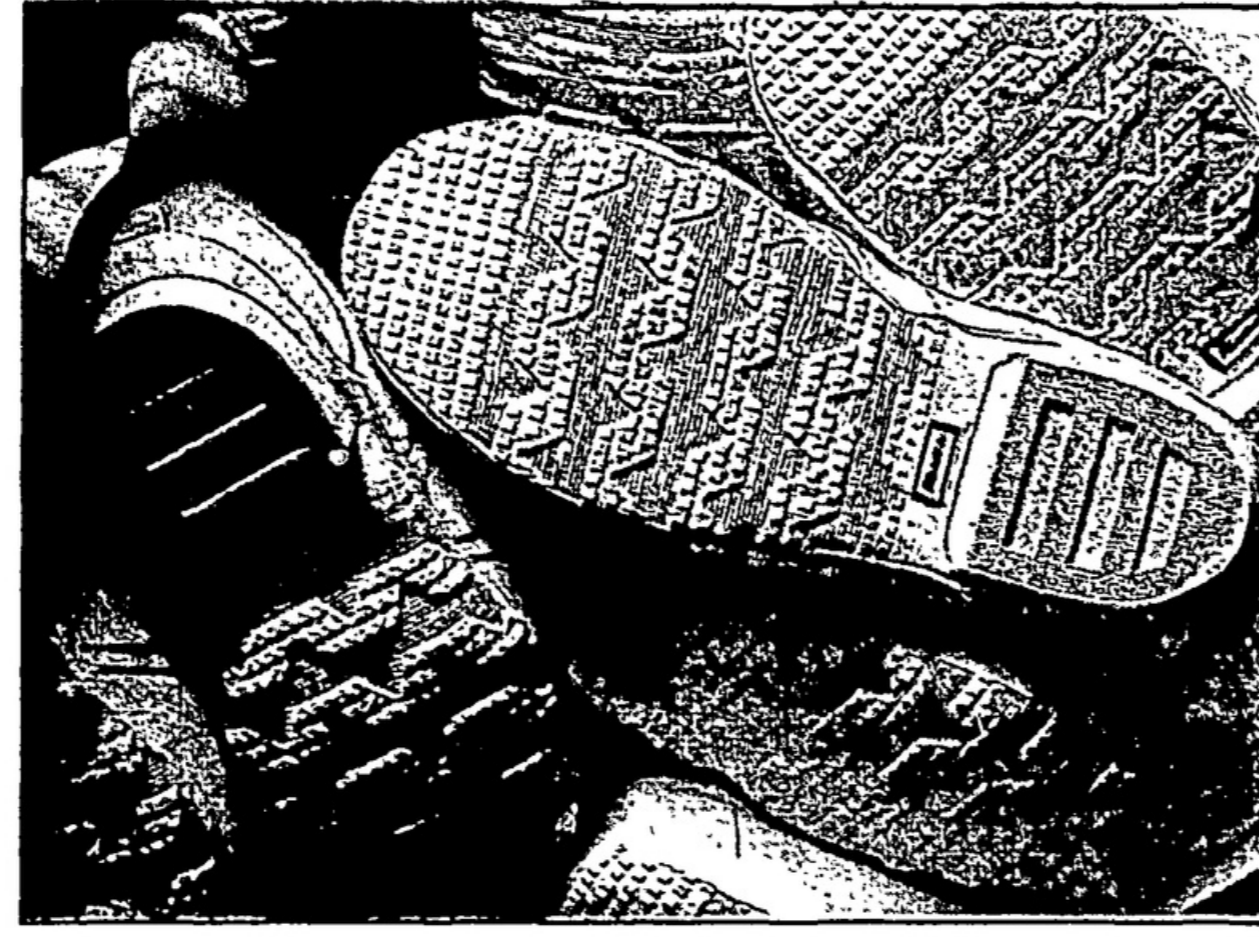
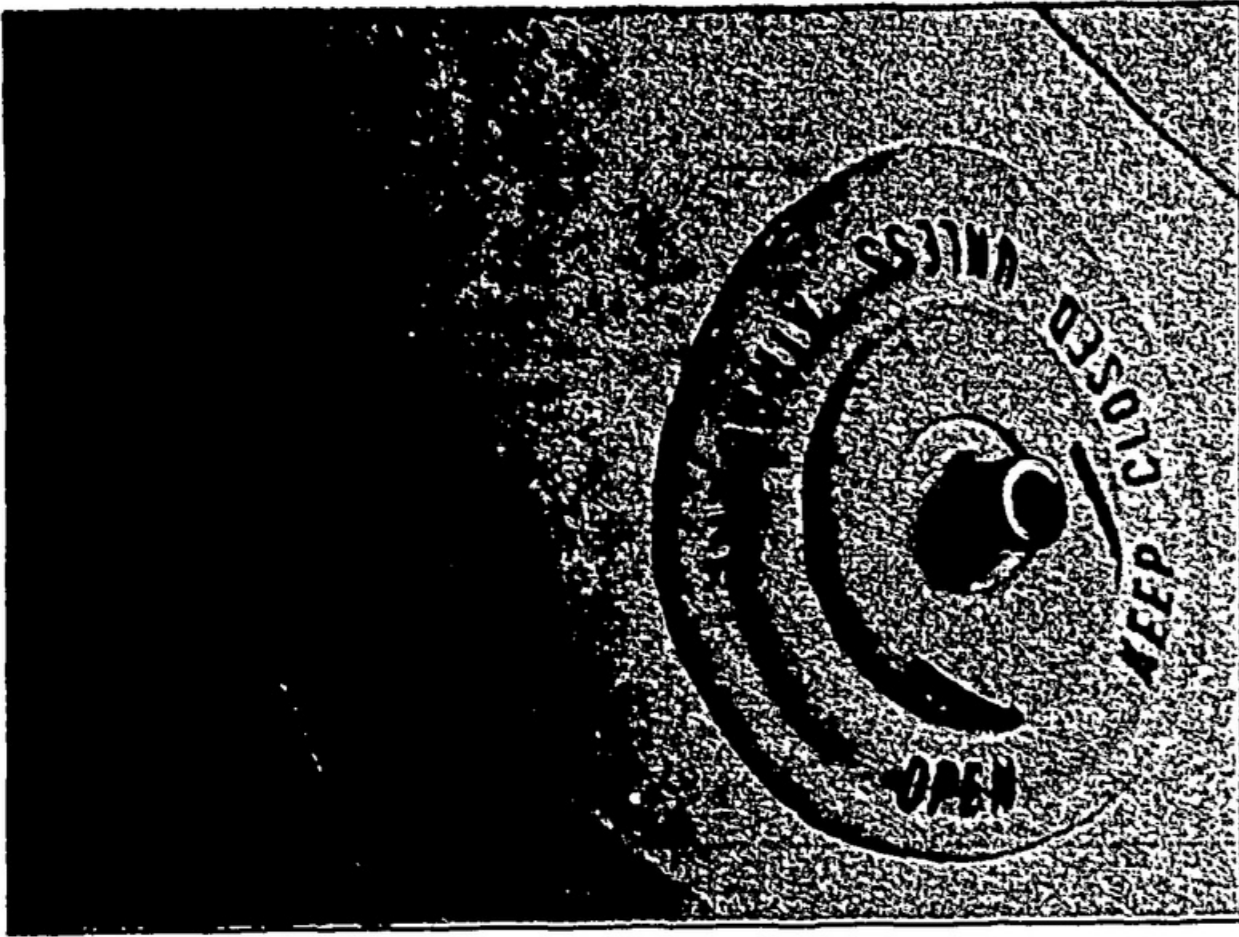
But while many youth court programs are relatively small-scale operations, Begich wants Anchorage's youth court to play a huge role. His plan would have the program take on 1,200 to 1,500 cases a year — some 80 percent of the city's total juvenile caseload.

The Anchorage Youth Court has been in existence since 1989, but it has handled no

Please see Back Page, **YOUTH COURT**

◉ I revere the damn things. ◉

— John Burns, retired scientist, now a trapper in Interior Alaska



CHARLES MASON / Special to the Daily News

BUNNY BOOTS: That's all

Continued from Page A-1

"It's a tragedy they're not making them any more," said John Kerr, who surveyed the Dalton Highway in his bunny boots. "They're the greatest and the warmest."

"I revere the damn things," said John Burns, a retired scientist who now traps for a living in Interior Alaska.

"It's a loss to the outdoor community," pronounced Dean Wilson, a Copper Center raw fur dealer who buys from 1,200 trappers.

Fairbanks' Steve Neumuth, who wore bunny boots for seven years while trapping near the Nowitna River in the Interior, said the boots have saved people from freezing to death.

In Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire," the cheechako freezes to death after soaking his feet and failing to build a fire. If he'd worn bunny boots, that fire would have been unnecessary.

"Even when you go through the ice," Neumuth said, "and the boots are completely soaked, and solid blocks of ice are frozen outside the boot, the water inside will heat up."

Vern Tejas, who wore the boots during his 1988 solo winter climb of Mount McKinley, described them as the "greatest piece of defense" one could have for one's feet. "They're not good for climbing," he said. "But they're a lot better than losing your toes."

Bob Kallstrom of Dillingham told a story that revealed why the boot is so beloved in the Bush: A few years ago, he rode with a friend on a snowmachine to his cabin 80 miles north of Dillingham. They fell through overflow ice and got their feet wet.

Kallstrom wore a popular commercial boot lined on the inside with felt. His friend wore bunny boots. The temperature dropped to more than 40 below, he recalled. By the time they were rescued, Kallstrom's feet were badly frostbitten. Doctors later had to amputate the front halves of both his feet.

His friend with the bunny boots survived without any problems.

Kallstrom, who owns L&M Supplies in Dillingham, later bought thousands of bunny boots and sold them all over the state.

"Unfortunately, I didn't have the boots on when I needed them," he said.

SNUG FIT FOR ALASKA

Demand for the boots surged during construction of the Alaska pipeline. Since then, they've become an endearing state icon. Tough, practical and a bit on the heavy side, the boots aren't that much different from many Alaskans.

Dubbed "bunny boots" apparently because they look like huge rabbit feet, the boots commit every fashion crime possible. Summer tourists may respond to other symbols of the state, like puffins and sea otters, but those who live here year round understand that these clunkers — and the need to wear them — are what makes this state different from the other 49.

These boots keep feet warm in subzero temperatures even when wet inside. Rubber encases the boot's fleece and wool insulation, creating a boot so airtight that soldiers flying in unpressurized planes must open the boot's air valves to keep the boots from squeezing their ankles.

Army scientists began developing a cold-weather boot after the footwear used during World War II proved inadequate. Cold injuries were the second leading cause of American casualties in Europe. During the battle to take the Aleutian island of Attu from the Japanese, the

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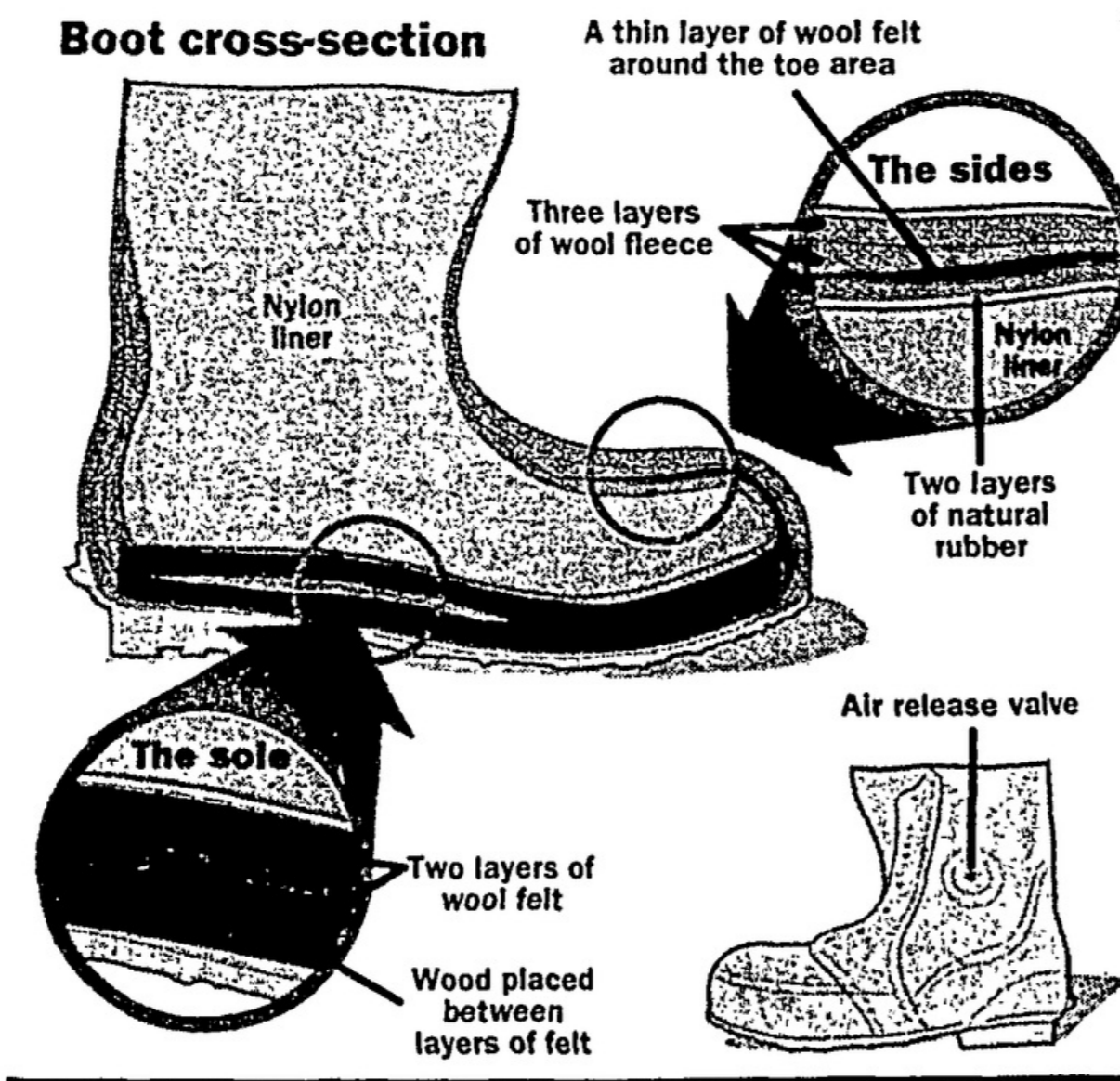


BOB HALLINEN / Daily News file photo

His bunny boots off, Iditarod musher Gus Guenther examines his feet at Finger Lake during the 1994 race. When worn for a long time, the boots wrinkle the skin of the feet. But they'll heat feet sufficiently so that they can stand some exposure when a weary musher stops to rub them back to near normal.

Anatomy of a bunny boot

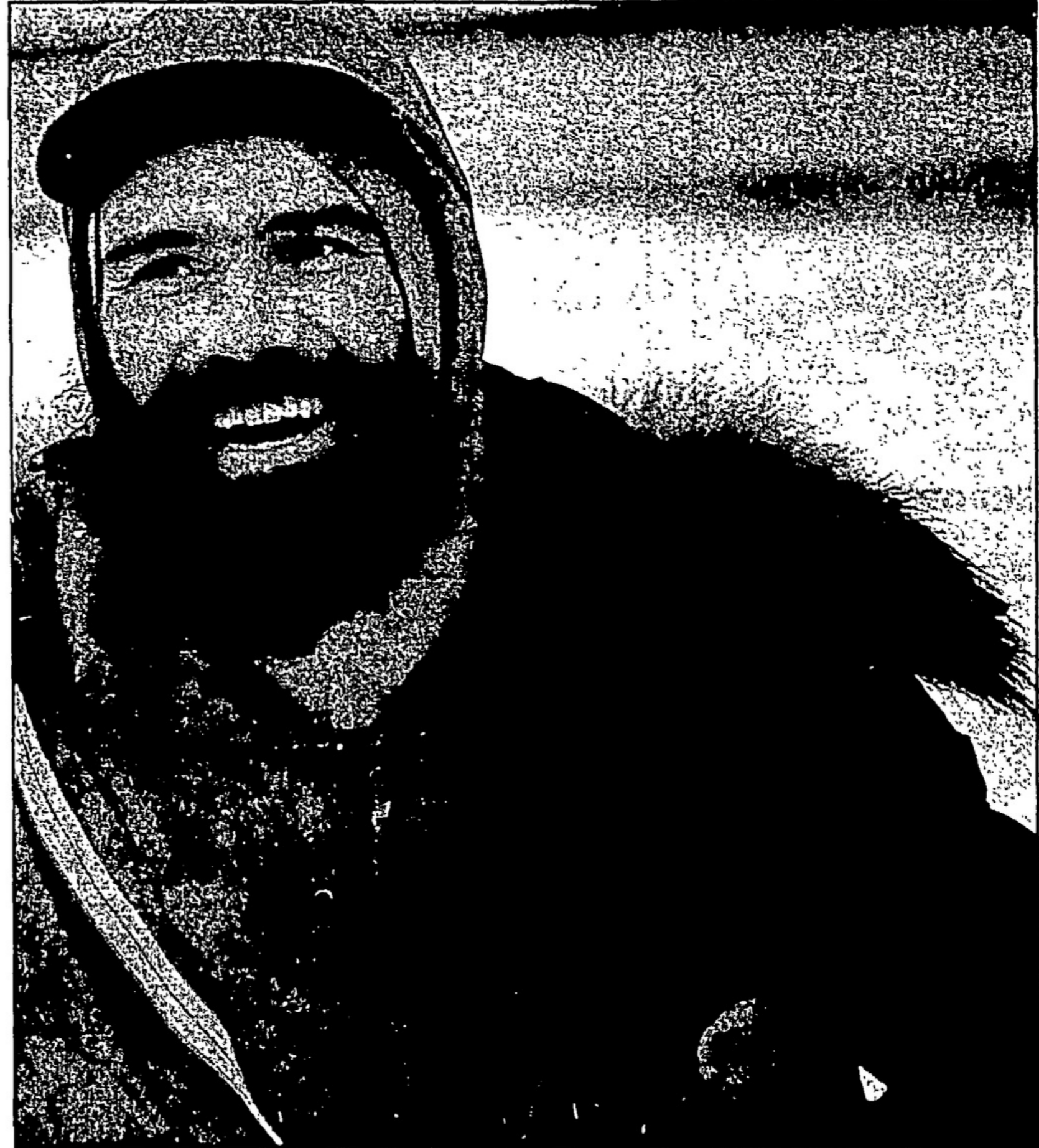
First made in the late 1940s for use on submarines, bunny boots are a delicate balance of rubber, wool, nylon and wood weighing about 5 pounds. The Maryland company that in 1972 won a contract to produce them for the military eventually churned out 2 million pairs, with production peaking in the mid-1980s at 1,500 pairs a day.



Helping that last pair survive

- Never open air release valve unless flying in a unpressurized plane.
- Some trappers recommend gluing the valve shut.
- Never blow into the valve. If moisture gets in between the rubber layers, it will never dry, and the boot will cease to be effective in cold temperatures.
- How do you know if there's moisture in the boot? Freeze the boot. The water will turn to ice and make the boot stiff. If that happens, the boot is in bad shape.
- If working around petroleum based products or acid, clean the boots daily, and they'll last a lot longer.

KEVIN POWELL / Anchorage Daily News



JIM LAVRANOS / Daily News file photo

Vern Tejas wore bunny boots during his solo winter climb of Mount McKinley in 1988. He called them the "greatest piece of defense" one's feet could have. "They're not good for climbing," he said. "But they're a lot better than losing your toes."

◉ It's a tragedy they're not making them any more. ◉

— John Kerr, who surveyed the Dalton Highway wearing bunny boots

BUNNY BOOTS: Made to last, the last have been made

Continued from Page A-6

U.S. Army lost more men to cold injuries than battle wounds, military records show.

It was widely assumed at the time that all boots had to be breathable, said Charlie Smith, group leader of footwear and handwear at the U.S. Army's research and development center in Natick, Mass. Bunny boots broke that mold.

The first vapor barrier boots were made for submarine crews, Smith said. Submarine decks are cold and wet, but there's little space on submarines for drying wet felt liners, he explained. Drying the vapor barrier boot proved to be simple. Crews simply dumped the water overboard and wiped the inside dry.

In the winter of 1950-51, when American soldiers fighting in Korea began suffering heavy casualties from the cold, Smith said, the "Navy told the Army, 'make these for the Marines.'"

Scientists modified the boots so they'd be easier to march in. They tested them in Canada, Alaska and on New Hampshire's Mount Washington. They designed them so an immobile soldier could keep his feet warm for four hours in minus-50-degree weather. The boots were shipped to Korea by the thousands.

"It's amazing," Smith said. "Over the years since that time, they've tried to come up with something that good, but nothing has ever been developed."

The boots have their problems, though. For one thing, they're heavy. A typical pair weighs five pounds.

Although some soldiers complained about the weight, that's no reason to get rid of them, griped Dave Greenbaum, who inspected the boots for the Bata Shoe Co., which made the boots until a year ago.

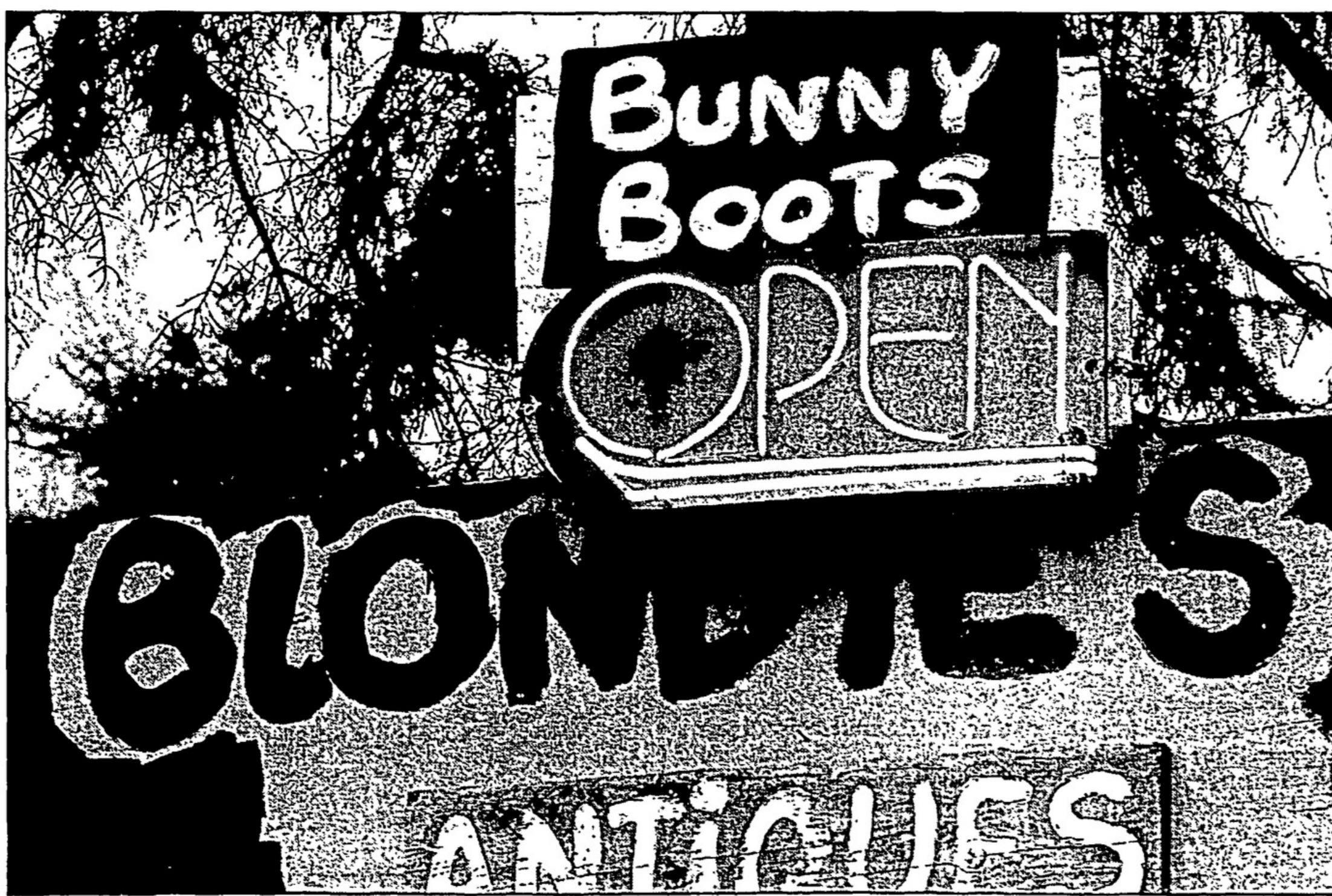
"Our best tanks are heavy," he said.

Another problem: moisture trapped in the boot softens the skin and creates a condition Tejas calls "prune foot."

"Your feet turn to mush," Tejas said. "They're white, wrinkly, sore, and they stink."

The boots are also expensive, costing from \$125 to \$190 in local military surplus stores.

They cost so much because



At Blondie's, bunny boots are a mainstay, but they're not likely to be there for long. CHARLES MASON / Special to the Daily News

they're assembled almost entirely by hand, said Ed Buser, the rubber division manager at Bata Shoe.

PROUD BOOTMAKERS

Several U.S. companies had made the boots until Bata won the contract in 1972. Buser said it took Bata workers eight months to figure out how to make them.

The factory is in Belcamp, Md., a town located about 25 miles northeast of Baltimore. In the mid-1980s, when both military budgets and bunny boot production reached their peak, 290 workers pumped out 1,500 pairs a day.

Although they pieced together footwear they would never use, the Bata workers grew proud of the boots, Buser said; the company put the best workers on the production line.

In 22 years, Bata made about 2 million pairs. During that time, the army returned three rejects, Buser said, for cosmetic reasons. Not all bunny boots are the

same. There are pretenders. In the mid-1980s, Miner Industries of Rhode Island also won a contract to make the boots. But the company produced an inferior boot, and owner David Ashgroff was jailed for fraud after the Pentagon discovered he was lying to government inspectors.

Miner brand boots are still available in Alaska military surplus stores, although they're sold at a discount.

Also in the 1980s, a Korean company developed bunny boots that had fake air-release valves glued on the side. The low-quality imposters were a commercial flop in Alaska.

The Bata factory had steadily produced 5,000 pairs a year for the commercial market. Bata also sold boots to the Pakistan Army for use in the Himalayas.

Army scientists recently developed a next-generation bunny boot that's less bulky and 20 percent lighter. But the Pentagon only wanted to make

2,500 pairs. After Bata officials calculated that retooling expenses would inflate the cost to \$1,500 a pair, the Pentagon tabled its plans.

The saga of the bunny boot reveals how the military has changed the way it buys equipment. Faced with shrinking military budgets and the public uproar of spendy items, like \$700 hammers, the Pentagon now buys items created by commercial designers and made for public consumption.

Through the 1990s, the military bought just enough boots from Bata to keep up the bootmakers' skills. When the contract wasn't renewed last year, Bata laid off 65 workers.

"That was an extremely sad day," Buser said. "Some of these workers — all they'd ever done was make these boots."

Buser said starting up production again would be prohibitively expensive.

"We'd have to start from scratch," he said. "We've lost all

our skills."

Greenbaum, the quality control inspector, said the boot will never be made again. "If anybody has any bunny boots, hang on to the damn things," he said, "because there ain't no more coming out."

GOING FAST

The biggest civilian market for the boots is Alaska, but that market is too small to continue production without a military contract, Bata officials say. Supplies are already dwindling in Alaska stores. Some retailers have stopped selling the boots altogether, while others still carry the boots but predict they'll be sold out by the end of winter. Small sizes are already scarce.

Commercial boot technology has improved since the pipeline construction days. Back then, the bunny boot was so superior that some workers bought two left boots if they couldn't find a matching pair, said Mike Miller, an owner of the Army and Navy Store in Anchorage.

It was Miller who spread the word of the bunny boot's fate. He put a notice in the store's fall/winter catalog, which is mailed throughout the state.

These days, there are several commercially-made boots that can keep feet warm at minus 50 degrees and even colder, and they all cost and weigh less than the bunny boot. Some use felt linings that need to be changed daily, some use foam insulation, and some use synthetic mesh innersoles that absorb moisture.

Nevertheless, old "bunnies" continue to be the trusted boot of choice for many Alaskans when temperatures drop below minus 40 degrees.

Although the boots are no longer manufactured, their durability assures they'll remain on the Alaska scene for some time.

Neumuth, the former trapper from Nowinta River, said he plans to buy two pairs — enough, he figures, to last him through the end of his life.

And when the end finally comes, he said, he intends to die with his bunny boots on.

"They may find me dead," he said, "but my feet will still be warm."

Hacker conjures up a college degree and a criminal record

By JOSEPH A. SLOBODZIAN

The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — Brian J. Michalovic used his computer skills to get the things that had always eluded him: a college degree and a good job. Last week it got him something he probably won't put on his next resume: a criminal record.

Michalovic, 29, of Germantown, was fined \$4,000 and put on three years of probation for going into Drexel University's alumni

computer, creating himself a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and then using his newly minted diploma to get a job as a federal asbestos building inspector.

"You now have a felony conviction," U.S. District Judge Eduardo Robreno told Michalovic, but added, "Society will not be served by your incarceration."

In a barely audible voice, Michalovic, a tall, soft-spoken man, apologized to the court, his wife

and parents.

The U.S. Attorney's Office charged Michalovic in May with one count of making a false statement to a federal agency involving the bogus resume he used to get a \$23.50-an-hour job with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In 1993, the documents say, Michalovic started a new job as a senior database specialist with Drexel's Office of Development

and Information Services, creating computerized records for alumni and donors.

In November 1993 Michalovic entered Drex-

el's alumni records and granted himself a degree.

Prosecutors say Michalovic did well in his new job — until Drexel security

personnel, curious about why he abruptly left his university job, discovered the bogus degree and blew the whistle.

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