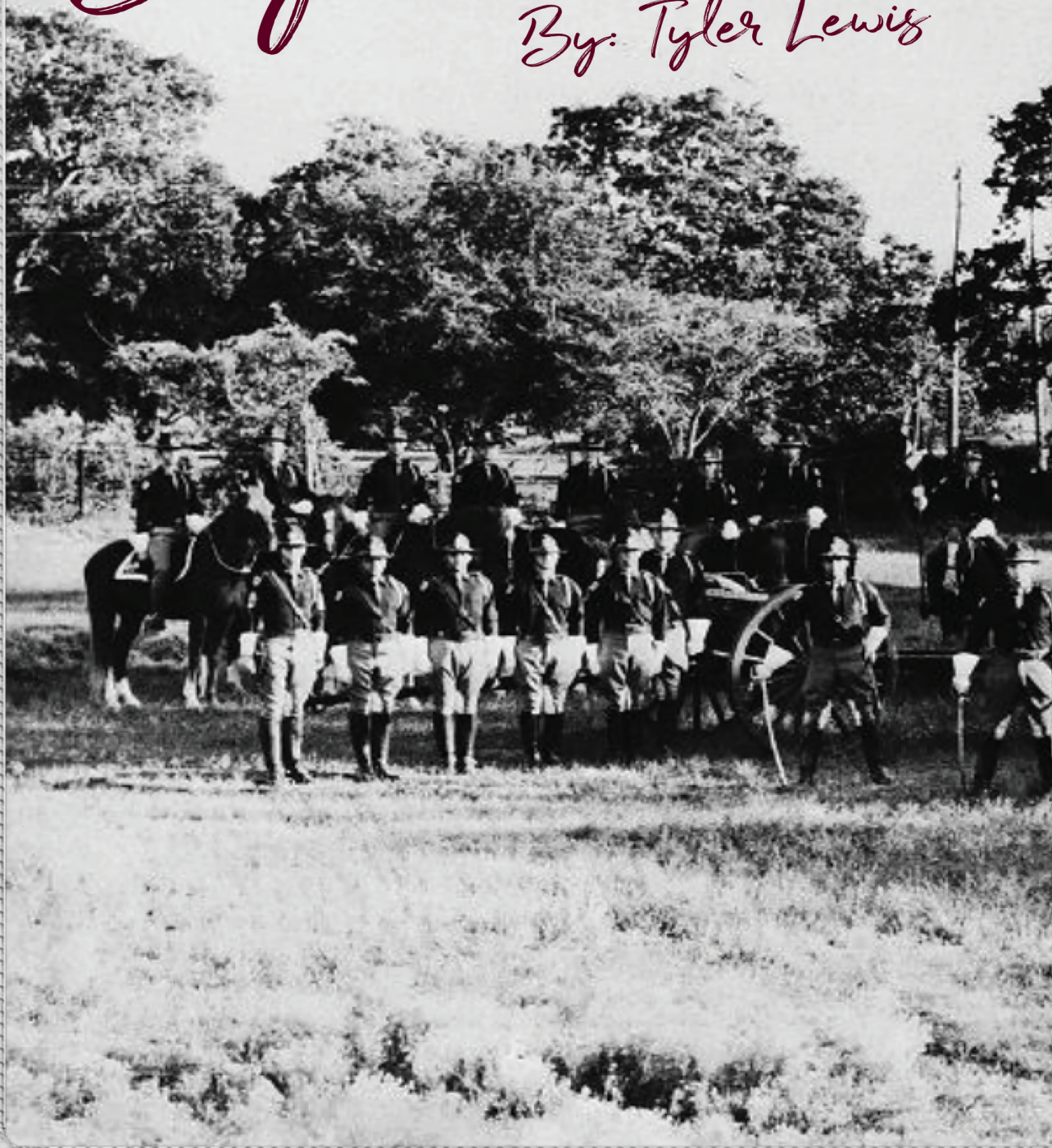


Big Boots to F

By: Tyler Lewis



Bill



Being one of “The Keepers of Spirit and Guardians of Traditions” is not unfamiliar to the Guerra family. For generations, their family has been stepping off of the Quad, marching around Aggieland, yelling in the stands at Kyle Field and crossing the stage at Reed Arena.

Freshman Year: Bringing Your Best

As a young Cadet, Dario Guerra '60 was the start of his family's Corps of Cadets legacy. When he enrolled at Texas A&M in 1955, Dario did not have much of a choice in becoming a member of the Corps.

“At that time, most of the students at Texas A&M were in the Corps,” Dario said.

An animal husbandry major at

the time, Dario's time at Texas A&M was short-lived. After only one year in the Corps of Cadets, Dario decided to transfer to Texas A&M-Kingsville to finish his degree. Dario credits his smooth transition and much of his career success to his time at Texas A&M University.

“Texas A&M is a fantastic school, but in Kingsville everything was well suited for my business in ranching,” Dario said.

Graduating from the Texas A&M system school did not stop Dario's involvement at Texas A&M University. For a number of years he served on many committees at A&M, was named Man of the Year in Texas agricultural in 1967, has worked alongside many Texas senators and

was appointed to served on the Farm Service Agency Board by Former Presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush. He credits these accomplishment to his agricultural degree.

While it has been about a year since Dario has set foot on Texas A&M's campus, he has watched the university grow and evolve quite a bit in the last 64 years.

“When I was on the Food Standards Agency Board, our headquarters were in College Station, and we would meet about once a month,” Dario said. “So, I could see the gradual changes with new dorms, the ag building and more.”

Although Dario did not finish out his time at Texas A&M, he began an Aggie legacy that would extend to multiple generations of Guerras' to follow. Eight out of 16 grandchildren have attended Texas A&M. Four of them are current students, of which three

are members of the Corps of Cadets.



Sophomore Year: Stepping Up

Eddie Guerra '84 was not the first in the Guerra family to start in the Corps of Cadets, but he was definitely one of the first to finish. However, Eddie's decision to attend Texas A&M was not his own.

“I actually did not want to be in the Corps or to A&M. It was my parents who wanted me to come to A&M, believe it or not,” Eddie said. “It was probably one of the best decisions my parents have ever forced down my throat.”

The long-



established values of the Corps have transcended almost a century and a half. The foundation of the program and many of its traditions have remained the same. However, there are a few differences during Eddie's time compared to today.

"I had a group of fish buddies who went through the same experience. Back then, we could not do anything apart. We had to do things together as a unit," Eddie said.

Yet, finding the perfect balance between Corps life and personal life took some time for Eddie to solidify. At the beginning, most of his free moments were dedicated to the Corps, but during his junior and senior years he was allotted a bit more free time. Standing out from most, Eddie also heightened his experience in the Corps of Cadets by joining the Parsons Mounted Cavalry.

"Parsons Mounted Cavalry was just getting started back in the 80s. So, it was not as prestigious as it is today," Eddie said. "I had the Corps life with my fish buddies and the Cavalry life, and while everyone else marched to the Brazos, I rode there."

A notable difference in Eddie's Corps experience compared to today was the amount of parent involvement. Certain aspects including Parents Day Weekend and the involvement in activities specific to each outfit were not as big.

"My parents were not involved in Corps activities like my wife and I have been for our children the past six years. Some parents find it hard to let go of some of these kids by allowing them to grow up and do what they need to do," Eddie said.

Earning a

degree in agricultural education was an easy decision for Eddie, as the Guerra family is no stranger to the world of agriculture. Dating back to 1758, the Guerra family was well-known in the cattle ranch industry.

"My grandfather, along with two of his brothers-in-laws, went to Brazil and were one of the first to import Zebu cattle into the United States in 1946. We raised registered Brahman cattle; however, my grandfather dispersed his herd in the 70s," Eddie said.

Since his time at A&M, Eddie has seen the continuous growth of the campus and diversity of the student body. He believes A&M is headed in the right direction, and is

pleased with the amount of minorities on-campus.

"Back when I was in the Corps, hispanics were not predominate. Now you can come and see all kinds of ethnic backgrounds. The amount of growth on-campus is unreal. At one time, I believe there were more than a dozen cranes on-campus. Plus, West Campus did not exist back then," Eddie said.

A man rooted in traditions, Eddie's favorite Aggie traditions range from Silver Taps to Final Review. One tradition dear to him that students lack now is the Aggie Bonfire.

"For Bonfire, our outfit was a loading outfit, and we had to



All photos courtesy of Mayzie Purviance

load the logs onto the trucks. The logistics of it as a junior and senior versus being the workers as a fish and sophomore, taught us a lot," Eddie said.

Choosing one tradition as his favorite was a difficult task for Eddie, but his eyes lit up with passion when talking about Aggie Muster, making it clear which tradition held a special place in his heart.

"My sister, Martha Guerra-Arteaga '89 passed away. Having to go through Aggie Muster and answer "here" for her was a pretty rewarding moment in my life," Eddie said.

Currently serving as Sheriff for Hidalgo County, Eddie directly oversees a staff of 800. He attributes his leadership qualities to those instilled in him through being in the Corps.

"Without the Corps of Cadets, I would not be the leader I am today," Eddie said.

Junior Year: Taking Charge

Continuing the Guerra legacy, Andres Guerra '16, followed in his father's footsteps. Literally.

"Dad was in the Corps. While growing up, he would always mention the things he did and his experience in the Corps. When it came down to going to A&M, he encouraged it," Andres said.

The Aggie experience is different based on the individual, not including your select group of friends and the many organizations you can join as a student. However, being an Aggie while being a member of the Corps is an experience like no other.

"It was very rewarding being a part of an organization that is larger than yourself," Andres said.

Not only is it rewarding to be in the Corps, but they are committed to helping their students succeed. Additional resources are given to ensure they excelled academically during their time as a cadet and student.

"When it came down to studying, I always had an upperclassman within my major who mentored me with advice on how to be successful academically," Andres said.

A political science major during his time at Texas A&M, Andres is now in his second year of law school at Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas. He credits his law school success to his time, courses and professors at A&M.

"I feel that the courses at Texas A&M prepared me well," Andres said. "They pushed me and challenged me to refine my study habits that I now use in law school."

As a recent graduate, Andres is pretty familiar with the current state of the campus including its constant growth. He



is hopeful the university will expand its amount of on-campus resources, specifically libraries.

"Within the next 10 years, I would really like to see more library and study spaces for students," Andres said.



Senior Year: Leading the Way

Eddie's youngest son, Miguel Guerra '19, is the last of the mohicans. With examples including his grandfather, father and brother, joining the Corps of Cadets was a decision he made with ease.

"I grew up listening to stories and being amazed about my grandfather's and father's experiences and memories from Texas A&M and the Corps of Cadets," Miguel said. "I was also a sophomore in high school when my brother decided to join, and I learned insight from him."

With almost 35 years separating Miguel and Eddie's time in the Corps, the differences in their experiences shine brighter than ever. During Eddie's time, Corps members with 8 a.m. classes were required to attend class in the outfit they trained in that morning. Now they are required to be in uniform.

Although the Guerra men had different experiences in the Corps, some things remained constant throughout the generations. Eddie, Andres and Miguel are men of Squadron 6. Squadron 6 was the largest unit in the 80s, and with aspirations to expand the Corps of Cadets, the unit was split in half to create Squadron 13. Squadron

6 was eventually reactivated during Andres' freshman year, and he was sure to transfer.

"I made the move for legacy reasons. My father was in Squadron 6, and I wanted to be in the unit my father wore," Andres said.

One would think being in the same unit as the men before you would be easy. However, as great as it may sound, Miguel found it quite challenging. His older brother was a senior in Squadron 6 during Miguel's freshman year.

The Guerras' continued the Aggie tradition with Eddie passing down his senior boots to Andres, who then passed them down to Miguel. Not only did Miguel have great shoes to fill, but the leadership and camaraderie of the Corps really helped to solidify his reasons to join.

"My Aggie experience has been a special one, mainly because of the people I have shared it with. I would not have had a better experience without my buddies from the Corps," Miguel said.

Being in the Corps of Cadets has been an experience of a lifetime for Miguel. When confined to a certain friend group, you naturally make yourself at home and create strong bonds that you naturally would not have. He has formed life-long friendships you cannot get anywhere else.

"We all arrived on campus and to the Quad on the same day. We also went through the same training and formed friendships that will probably last forever," Miguel said. "We've helped each other with classes, the Corps and life in general."

Aside from lasting relationships, Miguel has received numerous resources from the Corps that have helped him in many ways.

"About once a week, the Corps holds career readiness trainings on the Quad that aid us at being professionals

in the workforce," Miguel said. "For example, we work with the Career Center and develop resumes, perform mock interviews and get lectured by a professional throughout the year."

The College of Agriculture and Life Science has had a major impact on Miguel's time as an Aggie. As a student in the Department of Agricultural Economics, he has been provided opportunities like no other, which have helped to shape him as a person.

"The college of ag has helped me become a better individual. Our unique professors are not only specialized in what they teach but also in character building as well," Miguel said. "I have had several professors teach me how to properly dress, act and treat others in the professional world. No other college comes close to the amount of etiquette education we receive by the professors and guest speakers."

One professor in particular who has had a major impact on Miguel's life is Craig Rotter; Ph.D. He has taught Miguel to be mindful of others, and to respect their opinions while still being a strong leader.

"I have used these skills in my education and volunteer work, which have created an advantage for me. I hope Dr. Rotter continues to develop students in the unique way he does to create better leaders for the future," Miguel said.

Miguel has been very instrumental in the Corps of Cadets and believes in the student body of A&M. He feels like A&M is headed in the right direction, but believes there is more room to grow.

"There's a lot of things I would like Texas A&M to keep on doing, but they should listen to the students more. We have wonderful ideas on how to challenge multiple issues on campus," Miguel said. "It seems the university has put

more interest towards what donors have to say instead of the students. We realize it is important to keep our donors satisfied, but students like myself have some comments and concerns that would like to be heard."

Miguel will graduate in August 2019 with a degree in agricultural economics. He does not have any plans to attend graduate school, but his post-grad plans are far from average. He intends to start a business, which he has spent time creating and building through his AGECE 424 course with Edward Rister; Ph.D. Miguel has also been offered a scholarship to become a Lieutenant in the Texas State Guard. He also serves as a volunteer firefighter in his hometown, which offers another potential employment opportunity.

"I'm just weighing my options right now. I graduate in a couple of months and still have time. So, we will see which one will set me up for the most success," Miguel said.

Overall, Miguel's time as a member of the Corps of Cadets has been well spent. He owes all of the credit to his family for paving the way for him and showing him what it means to be a part of something bigger than yourself. The Guerra family has a legacy unlike any other and that has transcended through generations. They truly understand the meaning of, "from the outside looking in, you can't understand it. From the inside looking out, you can't explain it."

