

## Translator



**Kevin Leahy**

Kevin Leahy has been making bespoke footwear since 1976. He apprenticed under an Austrian Master Shoemaker, Heinz Heiss, for three and a half years. Mr. Heiss was from Tyrol, and his specialty in the old country was making custom hiking boots and ski boots (back when ski boots were made from leather). During those years Kevin learned traditional methods of constructing shoes and boots, including the art and nuance of measuring feet, patternmaking and design.

After his apprenticeship, Kevin traveled to the Munich School of Orthopedic Shoemaking and hired the valedictorian of the class. They returned to Houston, Texas, setting up an orthopedic shoemaking facility with all the latest German equipment and hired two additional German orthopedic shoemakers. As the supervisor of the facility, Mr. Leahy was able to absorb the latest skills and techniques of German orthopedic shoemaking for the next three years.

After thirteen years of shoemaking, Kevin returned to school and completed the UCLA graduate Prosthetics Program. After his residency in prosthetics, he opened a prosthetics and orthotics facility in Santa Cruz, California. He worked as a Certified Prosthetist for 25 years, all the while continuing to make custom shoes and boots. After retiring from prosthetics and orthotics, Kevin Leahy returned to custom boot making full time. He frequently travels to Europe to visit shoemakers and orthopedic shoe conventions to continue refining his techniques and knowledge.

### **Translator's Notes**

Translating a book from German to English is a task for which I am not qualified, at least not in the traditional sense. But I had an apprenticeship under an Austrian master shoemaker, who taught me uppermaking and the geometric design system, further studies in shoemaking with German shoemakers such as Martin Kistner, and frequent trips to Germany over the years to learn new shoemaking techniques. This gave me, as a native English speaker, a unique perspective as to how to translate a German uppermaking text for an English-speaking audience. My smattering of high school German, augmented by translation software, allowed me to use my depth of shoemaking training and experience to complete the task. Knowledge of the German approach to upper design was needed, and I was fortunate enough to have received this training at a young age.

But choosing the best words in English presented a challenge. Shoe terminology is different in America and Britain, and nomenclature among London bespoke shoemakers differs from Northamptonshire factory settings. Although there are many upper design books in English, they often reference "point T" or "line B-X", without ever naming the points or lines. This contrasts with German practice, where every point and line have a name. So please excuse some neologisms.

I am humbled and gratified to be a part of Hartmut Seidich's work, which is certain to be a classic referenced for years to come. Please address errors, suggestions, and unclear explanations to this email for correction in future editions: [textbook@uppermaking.com](mailto:textbook@uppermaking.com)