



PATRICK REDMOND

A Howe cadet carries the school's massive garrison flag inside following Saturday's graduation ceremony. The school flew the garrison flag on special occasions. Howe graduated its final class Saturday and will now be shut down, ending a 135-year history.

Howe's Last Class

Military academy closes the book on a 135-year history

BY PATRICK REDMOND

predmond@kpcmedia.com

HOWE — Alexander Weissberg made history Saturday morning whether he wanted to or not.

Stepping onto the stage at Howe Military Academy's Burton Auditorium when his name was called, Weissberg, a member of the school's Class of 2019, became the last cadet ever in Howe's 135-year history to be awarded a Howe Military Academy diploma.

Starting Monday, the for-sale signs will go up around the 63-acre historic Howe campus as school officials start the process of shuttering the school and writing the final chapter in Howe's rich history.

Like hundreds of other private military schools across the United States that flourished in the 1950s, Howe's decreasing enrollment, its aging campus, its ever increasing costs combined with dwindling support forced the school's board of trustees to shut down the school for good after classes ended this year.

For Judy Perkins, a Stroh resident and daughter of 1917 Howe graduate Maj. James



PATRICK REDMOND

Howe Military Academy Class of 2019 graduate Alexander Weissberg became the last cadet to graduate from the 135-year old school Saturday morning. School officials will now start the process of shuttering the school.

Merritt, for whom the school's dining hall is named, this was a day she thought would never happen.

Perkins came to Howe Saturday morning to watch the school's cadets march in a final parade. It was almost too much for Perkins to watch.

Perkins' father left Howe for a career in the military, and returned years later as the school's Commandant of Cadets. Perkins said she and her

brother grew up on the Howe campus.

"We lived on the campus, I grew up on the campus in a building that's no longer here," she said. "My heart is here."

Howe alumnus and Class of 1974 graduate Charlie Kerr, a Cleveland, Ohio, resident, made the drive over Saturday morning wearing his old Howe letterman's jacket. He wanted to see the campus one last time before the school closed.

Kerr said he really wasn't surprised when he learned Howe was closing.

"I saw this coming for a long time," he said. "I was hopeful it would not happen but ..."

Kerr said cadets could see how quickly Howe's fate was changing even when he first arrived on campus 50 years ago.

"I graduated in 1974, and the school was

SEE HOWE, PAGE A5

HOWE: Alumni drove in for final commencement

FROM PAGE A1

operating on a very tight budget even back then. And as the campus structures got older, and the cost to maintain them escalated, you could watch the enrollment drop and see this was inevitable," he explained.

Kerr said when he first arrived at Howe in 1969 as an eighth-grade student, the school had more than 350 cadets on campus and a senior class of more than 60 students. By the time Kerr graduated in 1974, his class was made up of only 35 students.

"It's not just Howe that's struggled," he said. "Many other private schools have suffered this same fate."

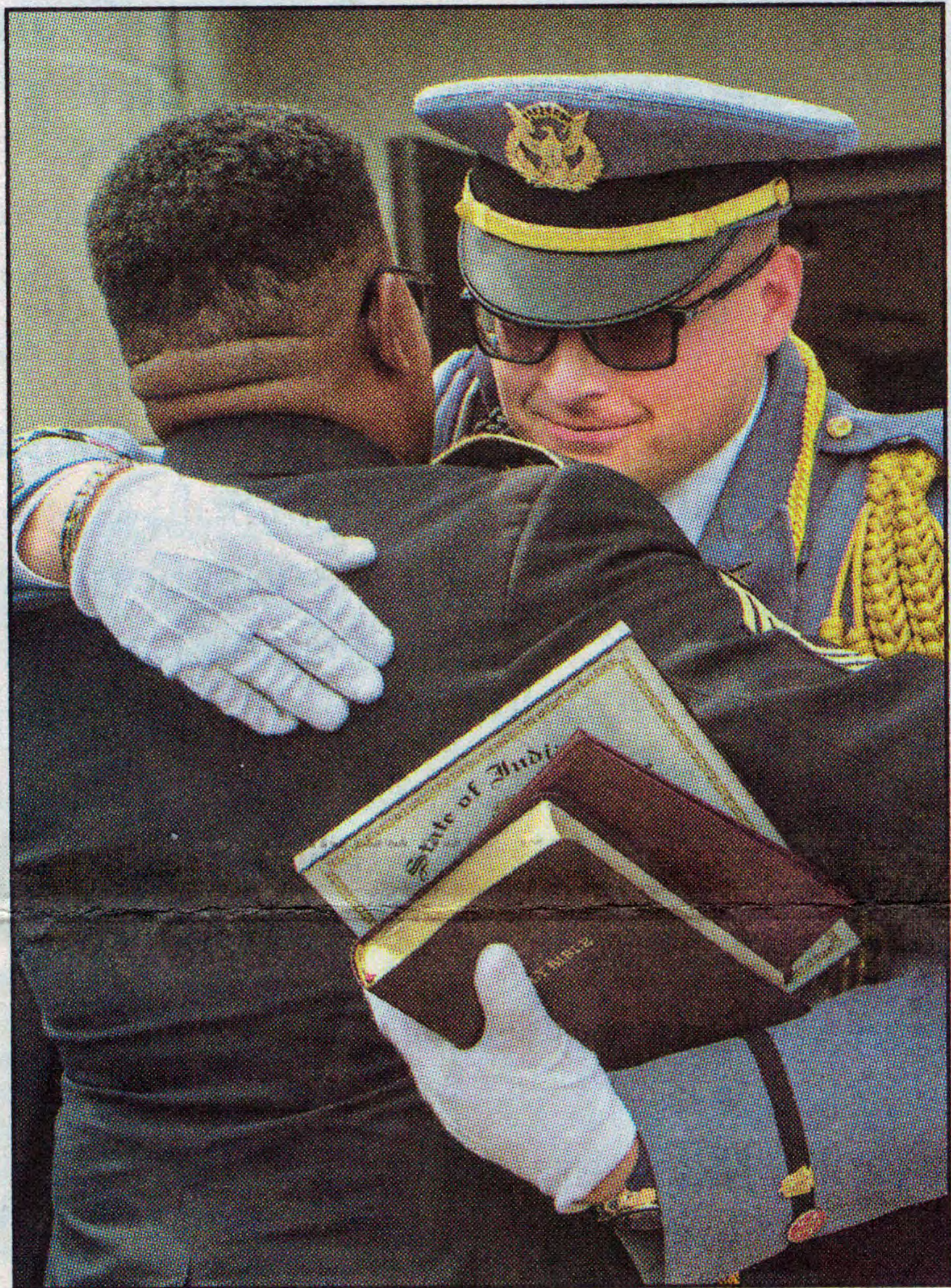
On Sunday, the final class ever at Howe graduated just 11 cadets.

One by one, each cadet marched across the school's auditorium stage when his name was called. Col. Tom Tate, the school's president, presented each cadet with his diploma, and guest speaker Maj. Gen. James C. Boozer, a 35-year career military veteran and Phil Malone, president of the school's board of trustees, warmly congratulated each cadet and shook his hand.

Graduate Justin Baker said he and his classmates felt the pressure of being the last cadets to graduate from Howe.

"This was a big day," he said. "It was a big honor for myself and my classmates."

With the graduation



PATRICK REDMOND

Howe Military Academy graduate Justin Baker gets a hug from Howe instructor Sgt. Marc Satterfield following Saturday's Howe graduation ceremony. The 135-year-old Howe school is closing its doors.

ceremony complete, his voice cracking with emotion, Col. Tate stepped to the podium's microphone one last time to give his cadets a final order, to strike the school's garrison flag that Howe flew for special events like graduation.

A crowd of about a hundred lined up along the

edge of the school's parade grounds, cell phones and cameras in hand, watching the cadets bring down Howe's massive flag one last time, and then carefully fold it up before bringing it back inside.

The entire time the cadets worked, no one said a word.