

More Bean's Background

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SHAWN GORMAN '89 OF L.L. BEAN

Can't get enough L.L. Bean background? Read on for more...

The Story Behind the Guarantee

L.L. Bean will take back anything at any time, pretty much for any reason—a return policy that sets the company apart from other retailers. "it's a big reason behind our long-term success," Gorman says. The company's very first product was the bean boot.

Of the first 100 pair of the boots sold, 90 came back because the tops and bottoms separated — "he didn't have the stitching process right," Gorman says of the company's founder, great grandfather Leon Leonwood Bean. "L.L." almost went bankrupt returning his customers' money, eventually borrowing \$400 from his brother to cover the loss. That's how the policy started, and surprisingly, customers haven't taken unfair advantage of the liberal return rules. Over the years, the returns department has found some interesting items left in pockets or rolled up in a sleeping bag, however. Gorman tells the story of one woman who returned her husband's bean boots, an older pair that had been tucked away in a closet. Little did she know what was inside. "we realized this must have been his money storage place — there was maybe \$4,000 in the toe of one boot," Gorman explains. "We called her up and said, 'we've got these boots and we'll take them back, but we want you to know you've got about \$4,000 here.' needless to say, she was pretty surprised."

Bean's in Pop Culture

You might not be among the thousands clamoring for back-ordered Bean boots, and maybe you don't have plans for an outdoor adventure that requires you to buy a new tent, snowshoes, kayak or some other outdoor gear that Beans sells. But even if you aren't a frequent Bean patron, you can't help but notice the way that L.L. Bean has been popping up in pop culture and mainstream media recently.

Want to Know More?

Check out the [feature story](#) from *UNH Magazine*.

Quirky Comments: In late December, blogger Alex Ronan wrote in *New York Magazine* about the "weird, lovely world of L.L. Bean commenters," drawing attention to the lengths that some people will go to in order to weigh in all-things-Bean: the Bean maple syrup is thick, but is that how everyone likes their maple syrup? Ronan also noted the reviewer who took the time to write 300 words touting her new flip-flops, and yet another reviewer was thrilled that her Bean tote appeared to be the only accessory that her pet rabbit would not chew through.

Lumberjack Meets Prepster: Acknowledging that teenagers and 20-somethings generally set the fashion trends of tomorrow, it's probably good to be included in a young fashion blogger's list of cool companies, right? L.L. Bean is right up there with Lilly Pulitzer and Vineyard Vines on the Twitter account called Preppy Life, where followers could see recently how to "prep-out" their Bean boots. (For those of you who want to be prep-school cool, apparently it's all in how you tie the laces).

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