

FAMILY BUSINESS: Roger Leavy is president of Tassel Depot, his wife April serves as vice president and their dog Brandi models their product. They make their tassels from brightly-colored rayon, silk and polyester threads.



HATS TASSELS FOR TASSELS

TASSEL DEPOT HAS BEEN PULLING THE STRINGS IN THE TRIMMINGS INDUSTRY FOR MORE THAN 100 YEARS

BY ELIAS E. LOPEZ

gle and the first result that pops up is Tassel Depot, with its catchy Tassels Without Hassles slogan.

The company has been operating in Deerfield Beach for the past 17 years - with Roger Leavy and his wife April pulling all the strings there were search engines or an

Formerly know as Hofmann & Leavy, the tassel manufacturer has Type the word "tassels" into Goo- been operating since 1864 and is pretty much one of a kind. It recently changed its name to Tassel Depot as part of an image makeover that includes launching a new, more

interactive website. Tassel Depot, which rings up sales of about \$3 million a year, cords, and millions of tassels a year. and it was in business long before makes the hanging ornaments - in other words, tassels - used on clothing, curtains, and other articles, most

notably graduation mortarboards. Tassel technology is simple. Tassels are made by laying cords or threads of even length parallel and then fastening the bunch at one end.

The company has New York roots but moved to South Florida in 1989. Since then Tassel Depot has continued to make apparel trimmings, In the company's manufacturing

*TURN TO TASSELS, 5G

These items dangle in thin air

*TASSELS, FROM 4G

facility located at 3251 SW 13th Dr. in Deerfield Beach, machines braid strands from spools of brightly-colored rayon, silk and polyester thread. The factory is also a warehouse and shipping point that connects the company to the rest of the world - since operations have gone global.

"South Florida is logistically well-located," Roger Leavy said, "We utilize all modes of transportation and always deliver on time. That's important for customer satisfaction and our clients recognize that."

Tassel Depot has a large distributorship in the United Kingdom and is setting up one in Australia. The company also runs a factory in Kingston, Jamaica, where most of the handmade work takes place. "We make our own cord and the tassels are made by hand," Leavy said.

But he said outsourcing by manufacturers in general doesn't make it easier to compete with a powerhouse like China. "I still keep this factory in the U.S. and give my hard," Leavy said.

Still, Tassel Depot has managed to thrive in its niche market, providing tassels for major graduation cap and gown companies around the country. According to Leavy, the company provides close to 60 percent of tassels used on mortarboards in the

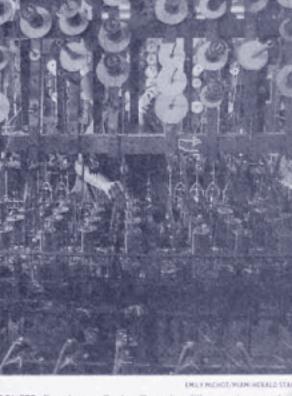
Its biggest client is Oak Hall Cap & Gown in Salem, Va. Tassel Depot and the company have done business. for at least 20 years.

Oak Hall sells graduation gowns and caps with tassels to 1,600 colleges and universities, including Florida International University and Nova Southeastern.

"Tassel Depot produces a TASSEL HUSTLE: Maria Garcia very high-quality product," said Joe D'Angelo, Oak Hall's owner and executive vice president. "We order tassels from them all year round."

The graduation tassels marks. And the company's come in a variety of colors and are made well in advance. For ease of handling, they are kept in boxes organized by year along with the shiny metal year plates - 2008, 2010 - that dangle with the tassel strings.

Tassel Depot products also decorate menus, gift packages, invitations and book-



employees healthcare. In spoot FEO: Employee Carlos Parodi refills empty spool China, what do they have? It's of burgundy yarn from a 1920's cord machine.



EMILY MICHOT, MIANS HERALD STAFF

makes tassels from blue yarn at Tassel Depot's Deerfield Beach factory.

> tassels and elastic bands are time as vice president in 1996. found on menus on major

U.S. government, including even was a delivery boy those made for the inaugural ball of President George Bush supply big businesses and

President Richard Nixon.

The company traces its beginnings to New York City in the 1800s. The trimmings company was started in 1864. by two German immigrants under the name Hofmann & Ellrodt and became very popular in Manhattan.

Ellrodt left the company around 1909. In 1921, Edward Leavy, Roger Leavy's grandfather, joined the company as a salesman. After Hofmann died in 1929, his family decided to sell the company to Edward Leavy.

The name was then changed to Hofmann & Leavy. In 1942, after serving in World War II, Roger's father, Jack Leavy, joined the company.

In 1978, Roger Leavy offi-cially took the reins of the family business, and his wife April, who has a background in fashion design, joined full-

"I started going to the factory when I was eight," said Its tassels also were Leavy as he walked the 11,000requested for formal invita- square-foot factory and waretions commissioned by the house in Deerfield Beach. "I around Manhattan. Now we in 1989, and the invitations for mom-and-pop operations all the 1994 funeral of former over the world." HOFAIII d LENVY-SINCE ô

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