

The Important Man gave the Instructor a scornful look. "That wouldn't do. They'll have those toolboxes for the rest of their lives. Everywhere they go people would see those toolboxes with our logo on them. We couldn't allow any shoddy goods."

"Oh, they wouldn't be shoddy," the Instructor assured him. "Built to spec, every one of them."

Here the Important Man turned toward the boys. He didn't look pleased. "Are they up to that? Some of them don't have any training at all... "

"I'm sure they can do it if we give them the chance," the Instructor coaxed. Thirty-six rigid faced boys silently screamed 'Yes! Give us a chance!'

And so it was. The boys were trooped to another building where four sheets of sixty-thou 17ST was sheared into strips sixteen by forty-eight inches. In another shop each boy was given a piece of one-by-one by eighth-inch aluminum angle along with a paper cup half filled with rivets. In the Steel Shop each boy received a section of piano hinge, two luggage latches, a small hasp and a piece of 3/8" cold-rolled steel bar ten inches long. Juggling this crazy assortment of stuff, cutting themselves on the sheet metal, dribbling rivets, they scurried back to their classroom. It wasn't yet nine a.m. of the first day of their apprenticeship and things seemed to be going to hell in a hand basket. Or in a toolbox.

It was all a bit of a show of course.

Over the next two weeks each of the apprentices, save those who slipped quietly away and never returned, used the materials to build his toolbox. The sheet of aluminum -- when properly cut -- provided enough material to fabricate a toolbox approximately sixteen inches long, eight inches wide and ten inches deep. The corners of the box were reinforced with angle while the steel rod was bent