Ad Astra Per Aspera

MUSEUM OF AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

July - 2020

“You will never know how much it has cost my generation to preserve YOUR freedom. I hope you will make a good use of it.”
-John Adams-

George Lee Reaves AMA ‘69

1951 - 2020

George Lee Reaves class of 1969’, passed away on Friday, June 5, 2020, he was 69. Like many AMA Alumni, he proved to be one of a kind. A quiet and unassuming professional, who many folks would never take notice he was ever there. A guy who could always be counted on to come through for the AMA Alumni Association. At our annual reunions, George had various jobs to ensure our reunions were a success. He ran the Tower of Power and 50/50 and filled in for any other task asked of him. Not to mention he always wrote a substantial check each January to the Alumni Foundation.

George spent three years as a cadet at AMA and he was in Band Company where he played the bass drum. He was active with the Bayonet as an editor. George obtained the rank Sergeant his senior year. He had a dry sense of humor and loved to engage with Republicans like me in politics, since he was a union mediator. I will note that he would always patiently wait for me to say something and then strike!

George like others, stayed home to work in March. I spoke with him in early April and he told me he was having a lot of pain as well as trouble getting around. In May he went to Riverside Hospital initially for an MRI and once they had the results from the test he was immediately admitted and remained in the hospital for almost two weeks. George was sent home with hospice and passed away within three days. Even though George was a very private and quiet man, he will not be forgotten by his AMA Brothers or the folks he worked with. This is truly evident by the people in attendance at his grave side service.

Stephen G. Trent
President, AMA Alumni Association

Chairman's Notes

July 1, 2020

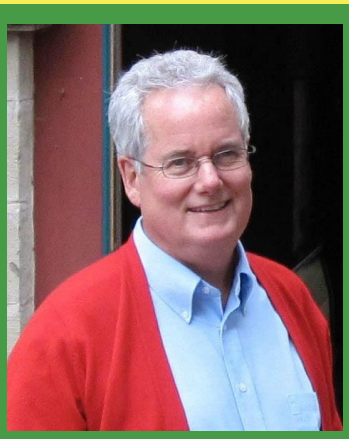
Happy upcoming Fourth of July!

I hope everyone is safe and healthy.
Hopefully you will be able to celebrate our nation's 245th Birthday with friends and family, outdoors, minus the mask. If you are still committed or feel the need to wear face protection, I hope you will also enjoy the celebration of the founding of this great nation.
I am pleased and encouraged by the wonderful response and support I continue to receive from the AMA Alumni Foundation Board membership and non-Director Committee members. Everyone is engaged and working diligently to assure the preservation of our legacy!
July will be a busy month for us. Ever since the Museum's soft opening on June 15, we have begun to see a renewal of visitors. We are encouraged with the visitor count as the daily headcount is about par with what we were experiencing last year at this time!
We will be hosting a "Grand Opening" for the Museum on Friday July 24, 2020 beginning at 1000 HRS. Food and refreshments will be available to all visitors. We have several special events on the calendar. There will be a large static display of restored military vehicles on the Black Top, thanks to our Collections Curator, Rich vanBreemen! We are especially excited that our fellow Foundation Board member Dr. Mary Decredico will be holding a book signing for her new book **Confederate**

Citadel: Richmond and its people at war. We also expect a large Board turnout, (I will be flying up from Puerto Rico) and we hope to see many friends and Alumnus as well. Volunteers to help with the BBQ and refreshments, set up and Museum tours are needed.
The Board will hold our regular summer meeting on Saturday July 25 at 9:00am. As usual, all Alumni are welcome.

Team effort!

Cordially,
Douglas W. Pennock
Chairman



Augusta Military Academy

ORAL HISTORY

DOUG DRISCOLL '72

My wife and I moved recently. We downsized and relocated from our lake home in Whitley County, Indiana to the east side of Fort Wayne, about 30 miles away. Since I was recovering from shoulder surgery and prohibited from lifting anything weighing more than a pound and a half, 17-year-old Quintin Macy from across the street agreed to help me pack and transport as much stuff as possible before the professional movers came. That involved lots of trips back and forth in my pickup and – Quintin being quite the talker – many extended conversations.

During one of those trips the topic of AMA came up. I often find myself explaining how I, a California native, wound up in Indiana by way of Virginia. It's a fairly unusual trek, and I've described it many times over the years. Invariably, it's the part about AMA that generates the most interest from whoever my audience happens to be, and so it was with Quintin. In this

instance, the more I talked with Quintin, the more apparent it became that life at AMA is getting harder and harder to explain as I get older and my audience younger.

Military schools were fairly common back the in the day – there was even one in my hometown in California that, apparently, wasn't far enough away to suit my parents – so when the subject of AMA came up, people had at least a notion of what the experience was like. Now, four decades after AMA and many other military prep schools have permanently shuttered their doors, most people, especially young people, have no idea. Describing my AMA experience to an incredulous Quintin, for example, was like trying to explain life on Mars. Read full article HERE

The "Big Room"

-The Next Step-

Our goal for 2020:

$125,000

PLEASE WRITE A CHECK! Wire Transfers and PayPal also welcomed!

THANK YOU!

DONATE HERE

MUSEUM
DOCENT DUTY

THANK YOU!

To those who volunteered in June!

Charlie Pascale '69
Victor Gomez '69

Visitors in June
58

Museum Volunteer's

We really need Volunteer Docents! Please sign up below.

SIGN UP HERE

AMA Alumni Foundation Board and Museum NEWS

AMA Museum Grand Opening
20th year celebration

We will be holding a Museum Grand Opening on Friday, July 24 from 10:00am to 4:00pm. This event will celebrate the Museum's re opening after a two month shut down due to the COVID-19 emergency.
We will also use this event to celebrate the Museums 20th anniversary.
There will be food and drinks available for all visitors, plus an impressive static display of restored WWII vehicles exhibited on the Black Top.
Mr. Jim Belcher will be displaying various uniforms worn by cadets at AMA, SMA, Fishburne and other Military Schools from the Shenandoah valley.
Dr. Mary Decredico will be holding a book signing of her latest book:
Confederate Citadel: Richmond and its people at war.

AMA Alumni Foundation Board to meet at the Museum

The AMA Alumni Foundation Board of Directors will hold their next meeting at the AMA campus on **Saturday July 25 at 9:00 am.** Due to the continuing risk of the Novel COVID-19 virus, and taking into consideration that our membership pretty much falls under the "high risk" category, the Chairman has decided that we need to hold our meeting somewhere that we can practice proper social distancing protocols. The Museum Conference room is too small to implement safe practices, so we will meet at an alternate location on the campus. We will also be requiring the use of face masks during the meeting. We trust that all attendees understand and will comply with this decision.

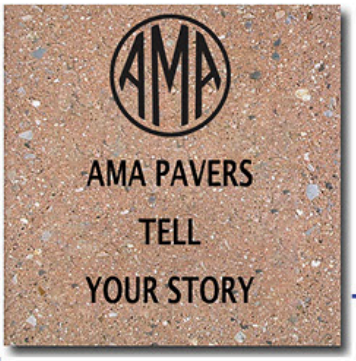
2021 REUNION DATES SET

The Alumni Reunion Committee has decided that Reunion 2021 will be held on April 15,16 and 17 of 2021. The Blackburn Hotel will be the official AMA Reunion Hotel. The hotel's management has agreed to keep the $99 plus tax rate that we had this year. The Blackburn Hotel is a small Boutique hotel that has limited amount of rooms available. All of the rooms had been booked one month before this year's reunion so we urge you to reserve your room as early as you can. The Reunion Committee is also working on special rates at alternate hotel's in the Staunton area. We should have more information on this and other reunion information in future issues of this publication.

-MEMORIAL BRICK MAPPING-

Order your brick today!

Phase I of the Memorial Brick mapping has been completed!
You may now search, see an image and find in what quadrant of brick alley it is located. Just go to the AMA Museum Webpage, or CLICK HERE.
Make a permanent mark in memory of your AMA experience or just recognize a friend, roomate or a relative



Paver Order Form

Options:

4" x 8" ~ 3 lines of 20 characters each - $50
8" x 8" ~ 6 lines of 20 characters each - $100
8" x 8" ~ 3-6 lines of 20 characters plus graphic - $225
*number of lines depends on size of graphic

Left: example of 8 x 8 with graphic and three lines of text.

Fill in the blanks below. **PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY!** Only one paver per order form. Print additional copies for additional pavers. When you buy a paver, you SUPPORT AMA'S ALUMNI FOUNDATION.

Your Name : _____ Class, if any: _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ - _____ Email: _____

WHAT SIZE PAVER DO YOU WANT? ____ 4" x 8" - $50
____ 8" x 8" - $100
____ 8" x 8" with _____ graphic - $225
graphic at ____ top or ____ bottom

Punctuation marks and spaces count as characters!

* contact museum for custom size and placement of graphic, additional charges may apply

Please PRINT below what you want on your engraved brick:

Line 1: _
Line 2: _
Line 3: _
Line 4: _
Line 5: _
Line 6: _

Mail form to: AMA Museum, PO BOX 100, FORT DEFIANCE, VA 24437
Include check or money order made payable to AMA Alumni Foundation
OR call the museum at (540) 248-3007 with your credit card information
OR email form to museum@AMAalumni.org, then call with payment information
OR call the museum to place your paver order over the phone.

BAND AMA ROLLER RIDERS ROLLER RIFLES

Revised May 2020

Download the Brick Order Form

Doug Pennock's Viewpoint
July 2020

Editor's Note:
The following expressions are mine alone. I look forward to your feedback. You may contact me directly at:
chairman.amafoundation@amaalumni.org

Pedagogical scholars tell us that there are four types of learning styles. Writing/Reading, Auditory, Visual and Kinesthetic. Using these assumptions, AMA Cadets could have followed the following paths:

Writing/Reading - Worked best in the reading/writing modality demonstrate a strong learning preference for the written word. **Doc Boys, and Honor Roll cadets.**
Auditory - Most successful when they are given the opportunity to hear information presented to them vocally. **New cadets, younger underclassmen looking to earn rank.**
Visual - Internalize and synthesize information when it is presented to them in a graphic depiction of meaningful symbols. **Cadets with natural leadership qualities and most likely an athlete. They prefer to see the whole picture and not get information piecemeal. Holding rank and in the officer corps.**
Kinesthetic - Hands-on, participatory learners who need to take a physically active role in the learning process. **Officers, class leaders.**

Many people do not fall in one category, 50-70% have affinities to several different styles of learning. They are considered "multimodal learners". I fall in the Visual and Kinesthetic group. You can probably figure out which group or groups you fall in.
Our Museum attracts and excites all four learner segments because while guests and Alumni walk around and view the displays, one or all of the learning traits will kick in.
As we begin to implement newer and different methods, styles and technology to showcase our museum collection, we hope to make museum visits even more interactive and enjoyable to all of our visitors.

Below is an example of what the use of technology will look and feel like. Just download any free QR reader app on to your smart phone and scan it.

SCAN ME

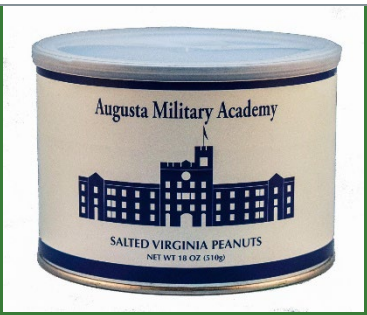
If you have never visited the Museum, I urge you to make a trip to Ft. Defiance. If you have visited the Museum in the past, please visit us again, I promise you will always find something new and inspiring among all of the "old stuff" that we proudly display. If anything, you can take your learning style(s) for a test ride!

Doug out.

PX/Gift Shoppe

SHOP HERE

Featured is a small sample of what we have for sale.



VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

Jorge Rovirosa '70

Full Interview Here

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

Painless Giving

Imagine if you could send the AMA Foundation a little bit of money every time you bought something on Amazon. YOU CAN if you sign up to Amazon Smile.
You are going to buy stuff anyway, why not allow Amazon to help the Museum?

vanBreemen Expressions

Rich vanBreemen is the AMA Museum Collections Curator

Barry Spanjaard | Merle E. Thomas

A Tale of Two Cadets

There are many surprises in life and the older we become the more there are. How often have you had the odd occasion to bump into someone from your past in a most unusual place? It's happened to me on more than one occasion and I'm sure it has probably happened to you.

Such may be the case of 2 AMA cadets. The year is 1947, the class of '48 are the upperclassmen. Among them is one cadet, older than most. He stands apart from the rest of the Corps not because he is popular, a sports hero, or on the Battalion staff. He is a young DAY student who also happens to be MARRIED. He lives off campus and attends formation and school like the rest of the Corps. The faculty and staff, take note of this young man, and treat him mostly like any other cadet, and yet a bit different. His name was Merle E. Thomas from Grafton, WV.

Cadet Thomas started his AMA life in 1941 as a young traditional boarding student. The RECALL shows that Merle was a normal, average student. Of course, that was not a normal or average time for the country. WAR had broken out and like many other young men of the day, Merle was anxious to do his part for the war effort. He and others attempted to enlist but were thwarted because of their young age. There is a story of how Col. Roller approached the local recruiters and got them to "flag" any AMA cadets attempting to enlist and have their applications 'set aside'.

However, the war dragged on and Merle got older. In 1944, he and several other AMA cadets had to register for the draft. The Bayonet shows us that Merle was one of 17 cadets to take and pass the Army/Navy physicals in March of 1944. Information becomes sketchy after that, but we know Cadet Thomas was not mentioned in either the Bayonet or Recall after that… until 1948.

While researching a different topic, I stumbled upon Cadet Merle E. Thomas' (1st Lt C Company) graduation photo. Completely normal by most standards, except for the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB) proudly displayed on his cadet uniform! Intrigued, I had to find out more which led me to his story (as best as I can determine thus far). His ribbons denote he served in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) and given the approximate dates of service, had to have been involved in the final push into Germany. Having had to give up his education at AMA to fight a war, he came back after his enlistment to complete his education.

Merle's story is both intriguing and incomplete because nearly all of his records from AMA as well the USA have been lost or destroyed with time. I do know he returned to active duty after completing his AMA education and served in the Korean conflict as well as Vietnam, retiring as Master Sergeant with the US Army. I continue to research M.E. Thomas.

While Merle was completing his studies, there was another young cadet, completing his education in '47-'48. Barry Spanjaard was a bit of an awkward young man. Most certainly, the rest of the students couldn't quite figure him out. Although born in NYC, he was raised in Holland. He initially spoke little English and was very leery of the 'soldiers' around him in uniform, barking out orders. What none of them knew (although I have to believe the school's staff had to be aware) was that young Barry was a Jewish Holocaust survivor. Having barely survived and then escaped the Nazi death camp of Bergen-Belsen, he had a very different mind set about uniformed men yelling at him. To help him deal with the trauma, young Cadet Spanjaard hid under his bed covers in the barracks and began writing his memoirs as a young Jew in Nazi occupied Holland. The story is that he was discovered during bed check and the O.D confiscated his papers. After the OD reviewed them, however, he returned them to Cadet Spanjaard and encouraged him to complete them. Years after having written it down, Barry was encouraged by his wife to publish his paper. His book DON'T FENCE ME IN came out in 1982 (available on Amazon). Cadet Spanjaard completed his tenure at AMA in 1948 as a Corporal in Band Company.

What an interesting coincidence that here, in rural Virginia, 2 young men who had endured and witnessed the horrors of a bloody war thousands of miles away would be in the same small private school. Did they know of each other? Did they ever meet? We can only speculate, but that is the stuff that TV dramas are written of. Interestingly, that class of '48 included a young Cadet Izenberg who went on to become a renown sports writer. Certainly, he and Barry knew each other as they were both in Band Company and Bayonet staff.

These and untold other stories are what the Museum of the Augusta Military Academy hopes to capture and share with the public. I am always interested in hearing you story – do not hesitate to get in touch with me to share.

Regards,
Rich vanBreemen
Museum Collections Manager

The 2020 Summer BAYONET is now available

READ HERE

The Museum Newsletter was written and prepared by Doug Pennock and edited by Trudy Pennock

This issue of the AMA Museum Newsletter was sponsored by: AMA Class of 1971

AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY MUSEUM
- Fort Defiance, Virginia -

MISSION STATEMENT "To preserve the traditions of the Augusta Military Academy and to honor the memory of the life and times of its alumni, faculty, staff, and supporting families through permanent and temporary exhibits and diligent conservation the museum's collections of artifacts, archives and photographs."
The AMA MUSEUM is operated by the AMA Alumni Foundation, which is a 501(c)3, non-profit organization. The museum is manned by former cadets and faculty members, who volunteer their time and talent. Funding for the museum is totally dependent on tax-exempt financial gifts and donations made by the alumni, former faculty, and friends of Augusta Military Academy, as well as the community and visitors to the museum.

Augusta Military Academy Museum | 540-248-3007 | Museum@AMAalumni.org | http://www.amaalumni.org
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