Ad Astra Per Aspera

MUSEUM OF AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

August - 2020

"It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light."

-Aristotle-

Museum Grand Reopening

weber

Top - Brett Thompson manning the grill. Bottom Left - "The Windbags" Ladies musical quartet. Bottom Right - Guests inspecting the displays

Chairman's Notes

August 1, 2020

Even with COVID-19 problem, the AMA Foundation Board of Directors has not taken time off from our responsibilities.

Every board member has been engaged and is currently working on strategizing and crafting a plan to implement and follow through with their respective committees mission.

Committee's such as Reunion support, Financial, Sports Hall of Fame, Fundraising, A.W.O.L. Cadets, Election, Public Relations, and Museum upkeep are some of the many tasks that I have assigned to Board members.

We held our second Board meeting on Saturday July 25, 2020. The meeting's agenda was essentially composed of Committee Chairman reports, each followed by a Q&A period. The meeting lasted a little over 4

½ hrs. I am extraordinarily pleased with all of the work and passion the various committee members shared with everyone that attended the meeting.

On the Friday before the Board meeting, we held the official Grand Re-Opening of the Museum. Turnout was good and the campus actually had the air of a carnival as guests walked around listening to the pleasant music played by a wonderful lady's quartet "The Windbags", led by our Collections Curator's wife Diane. Plus the smoke from the grill filled the air as Brett Tompson cooked burgers and Hot Dogs for everyone. Guests walked around the Black Top inspecting restored WWII vehicles, A Military High School uniform collection presented by Mr. Jim Belcher and a somber display prepared by Rich vanBeemen of all of our Military's KIA in all the wars fought by the USA dating back to WWI. In addition, many tours of the museum were given by the museum staff and Alumni that were present. Thank you to Victor Gomez for the pictures and videos.

Many thanks to Neil, Chris and Rich for the time and work spent preparing for the event!

Even during these strange and stressful times, the AMA Foundation Board is steadfast in our commitment to keep the AMA legacy alive!

I look forward to continue on this path and am excited about the future!

Team effort!

Cordially,
Douglas W. Pennock
Chairman

A.W.O.L. Committee Chairman Larry Nicholson ’75 message to all Alumni

WHO IS YOUR ONE?

Gentlemen....In an effort to make the Spring 2021 AMA Alumni reunion the biggest and most successful reunion in a decade, we are initiating the "WHO IS YOUR ONE" campaign. If every "Active" AMA alumnus reached out to at least one currently "inactive" classmate, and successfully gained their commitment to attend the 2021

reunion, we would have a wildly successful event that could prove decisive in the years ahead.

We all understand how incredibly busy our alumni are. Demands on our time from work, our communities, schools, professional organizations, clubs, not to mention the demands from family and friends, leaves all of us with very little actual free time. We all understand that our most precious, and un-replenishable commodity is our time.

We also understand that as AMA alumni, we share a very special bond that makes each of us truly unique. Whether you attended AMA in the 40s, or the 80s, the experiences we all shared in the heart of the Shenandoah valley are similar and special. Those experiences were not gained alone. They were gained side by side with friends, classmates, and teammates. While we all understand that the school we attended is closed, it is important to emphasize that the bonds that were built, the friendships forged, and those memories we made together are still there, just as they have always been, and are now waiting to be re-kindled.

We believe that what really draws attendees to any reunion is simply to connect with old friends and classmates. That is why any of us attend. Dinners, speeches, and ceremonies are great, but without classmates in attendance, they won't be enough to keep our alumni engaged and eagerly awaiting the next reunion. We also believe that if we can get a formerly inactive classmate to attend a reunion with his friends, that this may well be the catalyst for his re-engagement with the association. This can lead to more support of the association and the work we are doing.

In that light here is what we are asking all active alumni to do.

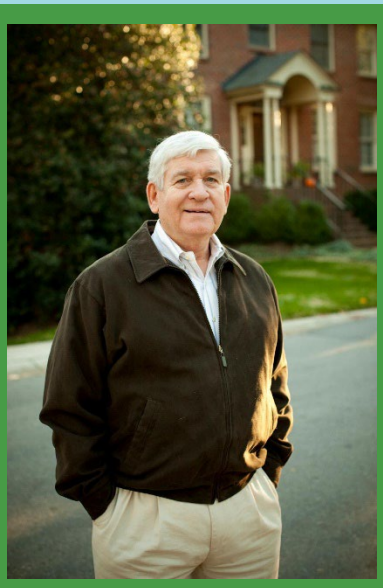
1. REACH OUT and Contact those special inactive friends and classmates that you were closest to. We believe this is best done by phone. Voice to voice connection is still the most powerful and personal medium when face to face contact is not possible. We can assist here in providing you with the latest contact information for the individual you are seeking.

2. Work to convince those special friends that after this most traumatic of years, that we seek to rally in the valley, and re-connect with the young men with whom we experienced and shared the most formative years of our lives.

3. Together we can make the Spring reunion of 2021 the most successful and well attended event in recent memory. Too many of our alumni have drifted away and it is time to sound Reveille, Fall-in, and reverse the unwelcome trend of declining reunion attendance.

I hope you will join us in this important undertaking. Together, we can make a positive impact and difference for good that will be felt for many years to come. Pick your one (or two or three) and use whatever means necessary to include peer pressure, to bring our great alumni back home to the valley in 2021.

WHO IS YOUR ONE?



Augusta Military Academy

ORAL HISTORY

Luke Snyder '60

JAMES LUTHER SNYDER, II
Charlotte, North Carolina

Pvt., 1; Sgt., 2,3,4; Sgt. Maj., 5; 1st Lt., 6; Capt., 7; Cotillion Club, 1-7; officer, 7; Decorating Committee, 1-7; chairman, 6; Swimming, 5; Student Body Officer, 7; Honor Committee, 7; Honorary, Roller Rifles, 7.

An institution passes on, indeed, when Luke graduates. No OD ever (except Luke) has tried to light the bowl lights by going to each one! No OD ever (except Luke) visited Mrs. Topping's during his tour! Kind, and good, but hardly generous, Luke doesn't have a mean bone in that body! As good-natured as Luke is, he'll never have a rough time in life.

June 11, 2020

Dear Victor,

Here is the AMA 1960 Recall, which is my graduating class year.
Duke Fancher signed it to me back in the late '90s when he was active at the museum and I was volunteering there with research and filing. Before Don Studer's time.

I want to tell you a story about my senior write up. The mention of turning the bowl lights on individually was that it was my first time as OD and Asst. Commandant Capt. Sam Wales told me to turn on the bowl lights. The normal way was to throw the switch at the power panel in the Guard House. I did, but nothing happened. I inquired to him and he said go turn them on manually. So, I took a chair out to the first lamp post at the steps of the Bowl and someone on the Bayonet/Yearbook staff

saw that and thought that was funny and decided to put it in the yearbook. In the end was a fuse had blown.

The other comment about being at Mrs. Toppings while on guard was that the Thanksgiving Dance happened to be on the night that I, again was assigned to guard duty as OD. I had a date and convinced the OC to let me off for the dance. The OC was faculty member Captain Manuel Kreisler, (aka Squicky). Anyway, after the dance, I walked my date to Mrs. Toppings as that where she was staying for the weekend. All was well until General Roller came to the barrack, as he did sometimes in those days, late night at about 11:30pm. Well, he wanted to see the OD and I guess my watch had stopped and I didn't realize Roller had come. I headed back to the barracks but was too late. I had to do a lot of explaining how I was just doing my gentlemanly escort duty. However, I was put on Report as AWOL by Squicky and had to go before Honor Committee and Student Body, of which I was a member of both. So, the result was that I was busted until Christmas vacation, about a month.

Whoever the Recall editor was, just had to put that in my senior write up didn't he? I suspect he didn't like me.

So, enjoy the yearbook and when finished you can donate it to the museum in my name if you want.

Thanks,
Luke

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 July!

Brian Miller '67
Victor Gomez '69

Visitors in July

165

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

The Grand re-opening of the Museum was a success! Friday July 24, 2020 saw a very nice turnout of over 90 people including AMA Foundation Board members Steve Trent and Gordon Metz and several AMA Alumni and former Board Members. Hot Dogs and Burgers were cooked on a BBQ by Brett Tompson and pictures and videos were taken by Victor Gomez.

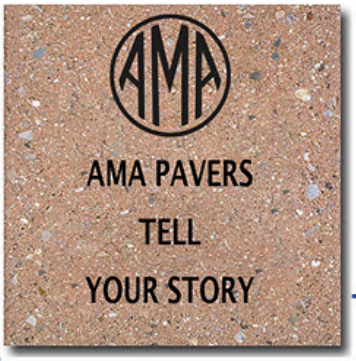
AMA Alumni Foundation Board to meet at the Museum

The AMA Alumni Foundation Board of Directors held their Summer meeting on **Saturday July 25 at 10:00 am**. Many members were not able to make the trip to Ft. Defiance so the meeting was held via ZOOM Videoconferencing. AMA

Foundation Directors Steve Trent, Gordon Metz and Gary Morrison attended the meeting in the Museum Conference room along with Neil and Chris from the Museum Staff and several other Alumni guests.

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.



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
August 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

Sometimes things are not what they appear.

When I was elected to the Chairman position of the AMA Alumni Foundation in April, I was keenly aware that my knowledge of the inner workings of the Museum information system, accounting procedures, personnel and day-to-day operations was limited at best.

I, along with several other Board Members, have made it our mission to get a handle on all of those and so many more tasks that make up the apparatus that keeps our little organization running smoothly. Unfortunately, running smoothly has turned out to be a "mirage". A "mirage" that because of our careful due diligence, has slowly dissipated over the past four months. What we have discovered as the fog cleared, is a very worrisome situation.

After careful analysis, and serious strategic thinking and conversations by our team, I have come to the conclusion that if we do not change the way we operate the AMA Alumni Foundation, Inc. immediately, the AMA Museum, our Crown Jewel, will be forced to close permanently in a very short time.

Hard decisions must and will be made regarding our beloved publication, "The Bayonet".

"The Bayonet" costs the AMA Foundation over $22,000 per year to publish and mail 4 publications per year. I must reiterate that over the past few years, B.J. d'Orsay has done a magnificent job in reducing the cost of producing the paper editions by about 50%! However, we still cannot afford to pay for the printing and mailing costs!

As of June 30, 2020, we have received about $350 dollars in donations (subscription fees) if you will, towards the cost of printing the Bayonet. The dollar differential between publication costs and donations is just plain unsustainable! Therefore, I have instructed B.J. to cease the

"Hard Copy" printing of "The Bayonet" after the Fall edition. Printed copies of "The Bayonet" in the future will possibly no longer be available but you will continue to be able to access and read the paper online. Assuming of course that B.J. d'Orsay Is willing to continue his commitment to write, paste up, and edit the much-loved periodical. I would reconsider the cancellation of printing and mailing "The Bayonet" if someone or two or three people were to sponsor Its publication.

As I write this article, Museum payroll eats up about 95% of our current income! In plain English, at the current pace, we are barely covering our payroll costs. There is no money left for "The Bayonet", utilities, insurance, office supplies, rent, and general museum upkeep.

The "Mirage" that I referred to earlier, has been kept alive over the years by a steady tapping into our cash reserves! Again, an unsustainable practice. So far this year (January to June 2020) we have transferred $20,000 from our Raymond James investment account to keep the bills paid!

There are only two ways to resolve our cashflow imbalance. One is to increase revenue, the second is to reduce overhead. If we are able to achieve both, our long-term future will once again be viable.

We will be making Museum personnel and job description adjustments and along with the decision to possibly stop printing all or some issues of the Bayonet in a hard copy form, we should be able to reduce our operating costs by a substantial amount, which MAY take us to a break-even point.

Donations have slowed to a worrisome level this year, so we will need to cut overhead immediately to stop the bleeding from a gusher to a small trickle.

I acknowledge that the message from the Foundation's leadership over the past two decades has been "if we don't get more donations, we will shut down." That message was repeated so many times accompanied with zero changes in our operational structure and habits, that the message morphed into the classic "Cry Wolf."

Human nature eventually kicked in, so our membership assumed that since we appeared to be doing pretty well year after year after year, there was really no eminent cliff to fall off from!

That my AMA brothers, sisters and friends, is the AMA MIRAGE!

The Foundation Board is working feverishly to change the traditional "business as usual" mentality that has been the standard operating procedure in our organization for decades.

The changes that we will be implementing will cut deep, but I believe that they are vital and necessary in today's economy and COVID-19 reality.

On a positive note, we are currently hard at work on medium-and long-term strategies and a very exciting special project that will assure our future and presence in the Valley for a long time! More to come on this in the near future.

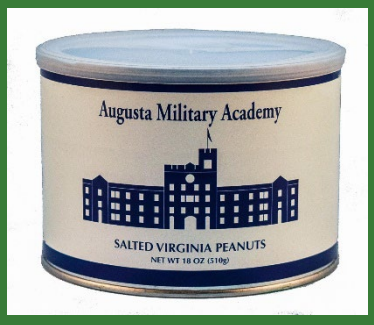
Hopefully after the dust settles, we will be assured to conserve our legacy way beyond our expiration date.

Doug out.

PX/Gift Shoppe

SHOP HERE

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



VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

Tom Del Valle '73

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

Glory Days

In the words of Bruce Springsteen, “Glory days - well they’ll pass you by”. I went to a large public high school outside of Chicago. I was simply student #815 of the Class of 1977; lost in the shuffle of a 3000+ student body. Yet today, almost 50 years later, some of my closest friends are the people I hung with back then. We still joke with each other, get on each other’s nerves and cry over friends who’ve gone before us. That’s what making friends in your formative years does to you. You form bonds like no other time in your life. Now take that and ADD the component of living with those friends every day for a semester or 5 years and you have an even stronger experience.

Back then, we we’re told by our elders, “Your high school years are the best years of your lives.” Of course, we didn’t believe them – why would we? They were OLD and didn’t know anything! How could acne, weird growth spurts, strange eating habits, out of control hormones, hazing and social awkwardness be considered our BEST DAYS? We all moved on; went off to college or joined the military or went to work. We moved out on our own, got married, had kids and raised our families. Life moved on.

Jump forward 40 or 50 years and now we believe those old guys may have been right! We remember band practice, study hall, working on the school publication, drill team and cheering on the home team while freezing in the stands of a football game. We look back on those days with fond memories and maybe some not so fond, but still treasured. Damn, they were right – they WERE our Glory Days!

One of the things often heard in and around the museum is, “What is the purpose of this museum?” What seems like a simple question is really fairly complicated. This is not the right forum to decide that, but rather acknowledge that for many of the alum, the museum is a place to showcase the memories of your time at AMA, and yes, relive a bit of the GLORY DAYS. But telling the story of the day to day life of boys who changed into young men is also part of the purpose of this institution. Most students lived here; stayed in simple rooms with modest bunks and minimal comforts; others went home each evening to their own beds but all were affected by AMA none the less.

That is why being able to tell the stories of band, drill team, sports, rifle team and academics is so important. The GLORY DAYS for AMA alum lives on in the hearts and memories of anyone who wore the uniform and marched on the parade ground. For you the alum, that is a no brainer and the museum often acts as a talking point for those glory days. But for those without that first-hand knowledge, for your kids or grandkids, for the family of former staff, this museum helps answer questions and fill in blanks about their heritage. We’ve had several visitors who say (in one way or another), “Grandpa always talked about this place and we just want to find out why.” You see, the museum helps make those GLORY DAYS continue on for a while longer, and not just for those who lived them.

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

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
1640 Lee Highway
P.O. Box 101
Fort Defiance, VA 24437