Museum of Augusta Military Academy News

NEWSLETTER

November - 2024

Chairman's Message

November 1, 2024

Dear Friends,

2024 is rapidly closing in on the finish line, but we are still working hard to reach the end of 2024 with a laundry list of wonderful achievements, financial stability being at the top of that list!

I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that the response to my October letter requesting that you consider covering a portion of the Museum's overhead was pretty well received. As of today, we have raised approximately $8,000 via your generosity. That is good, but more is better, so in light of the fact that you have until December 31st to make your final tax deductible donation in 2024, what better place to do that with than the AMA Museum?

Later this month, Tom Del Valle and I will be travelling to Ft. Defiance to commence the preliminary planning stages of our organization's most significant episode since AMA closed in 1984.

Tom and I will be meeting with the architects who have been charged with preparing the Conceptual Visioning

Proposal of the future **Augusta Military Academy Memorial**, which will be located on the grounds of the Augusta Stone Church with a grand vista of the old AMA campus.

We will meet with the Architects on Friday November 15, at the AMA Museum and Chris will take them on a full-blown tour of the museum and the campus. After the museum visit, we will drive up to the Old Stone Church to meet with Pastor Stan Farthing, Pastor of the Augusta Stone Presbyterian Church, who will give the architects a tour of the inside of the church. Finally, I expect that we will be choosing the exact location where the Memorial will be built. Chris will take several 360-degree high-definition pictures of the sightline viewed from that spot. These pictures will assist the Architects in preparing a very accurate rendering of at least two variations of what the memorial will possibly look like.

I hope to have the final renderings ready for our next AMA Alumni Foundation Board meeting that will be held on Saturday January 11, 2025 in Staunton.

One other thought… I am not allowed to vote for the President of the United States because I reside in Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, I hope that every one of you exercise that sacred right by voting for the candidate of your choice. I pray that whoever wins the election, will aspire to work tirelessly for this great nation and every single United States citizen regardless of which side of the isle they sit.

Happy Thanksgiving 2024 to everyone!

Cordially,
Douglas W. Pennock
Chairman

Alumni News

Don Malnati '72 Second from the right, standing on the podium wearing his Bronze medal after competing for the United States in the Over 70 category at the Veterans Fencing Championships held in Dubai UAE in August. Italy took first and Don's USA teammate Joseph Streb (far left) took second. Don was enshrined into the AMA Sports Hall of Fame this September for being a member of Col. Hoovers 1969 fencing team. Congratulations to Don and Joseph!

Don and his wife Ragnhild hanging out at the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world

New Mexico Shoot

The author penned a Bayonet Spotlight article about Don Studer (AMA Faculty and Rifle Team Coach) some years ago and last year penned an article about Mike Payne ’76 (Rifle Team Member) for the AMA newsletter….

As things seem to happen… the Teacher and Student were finally reunited on a gun range after 48 years.

Mike Payne is arguably the most successful student of Marine/Army Coach SSgt Don Studer…. as he’s never stopped shooting competitively since graduating in 1976….in fact, Mike Payne is classified as a High Master, NRA’s HIGHEST Classification…The NRA’s classifications in order - Marksman, Sharpshooter, Expert, Master, High Master

I was able to witness their reunion, along with Tom Del Valle ’73 in October of this year.

Mike traveled from Rome, GA to Dallas, TX (783 miles) and spent a few days before riding with Del Valle the remaining 546 miles one-way to NRA Whittington Center in Raton, NM (I drove Mikes truck, following he & Tom to give him a break from driving)

Don took 2 days to drive from Sierra Vista, AZ to Raton, NM (664 miles one-way) to meet us for the reunion.

Mike & Don's knowledge of ordnance and shooting was enjoyed, shared and on occasion, challenged by Tom and me, during the 2-days of shooting.

The rain and 17-mph winds kept us challenged on day one … the weather cooperated day 2, with temperatures in the mid 60's and @ 7-mph winds….

The most dynamic time was watching Don and Mike engage with each other. As one would shoot, the other would spot and help walk them to the target.

Distances of one mile (1,760 yards) were the longest shots taken at the Cooper Range with an elevation of @ 6.7 degrees … while most of Mike's competitions are at 600 yards with an AR or an M-1 with steel sights …his natural and impressive ability not only hit the 1,760 yard target (1-mile) BUT, after a few adjustments for distance & elevation on his 6mm Creedmoor with a NightForce 5-20x50 scope, he hit the Steel White Buffalo at 1,123 yards on his **first attempt**. (that shot cost Del Valle a shirt and Granger a hat from the gift shop … HA!!)

Studer also shot and hit the one-mile target as well as the 2/3-mile steel Buffalo, no surprise there either!

A dynamic time making new memories with AMA buddies and an honor to witness teacher and student shoot once again after 2 score and 8 years.

Primarily, .338, .308, .223, 6mm rifles and a 9mm pistol were the caliber's shot. Some 1,000 rounds made their way down range…

The banter in the Founders Cabins, our home base while at the range, was something to behold and there was plenty of food, libations and cigar smoking to accompany the banter. Few things compare to having fun and belly laughing with decades old “academy trained” friends!

BTW - ALL of us hit the one-mile and steel buffalo targets…as well as many in between.

Mike & Don, thank you for driving the distance to help make these memories!

Garry Granger ‘71

www.nrawc.org

Coach Don Studer and Mike Payne '76. Mike got to shoot with his old coach for the first time in 50 years!

Coach Studer spotting for Tom Del Valle '73 and Garry Granger '71

Tom Del Valle '73 taking dead aim at the steel target at 1,760 Yards. Yes, that would be one mile! The bullet takes about 3 seconds to reach the target from that distance!

L-R

Tom Del Valle '73, Garry Granger '71, Mike Payne '74 and Coach Don Studer

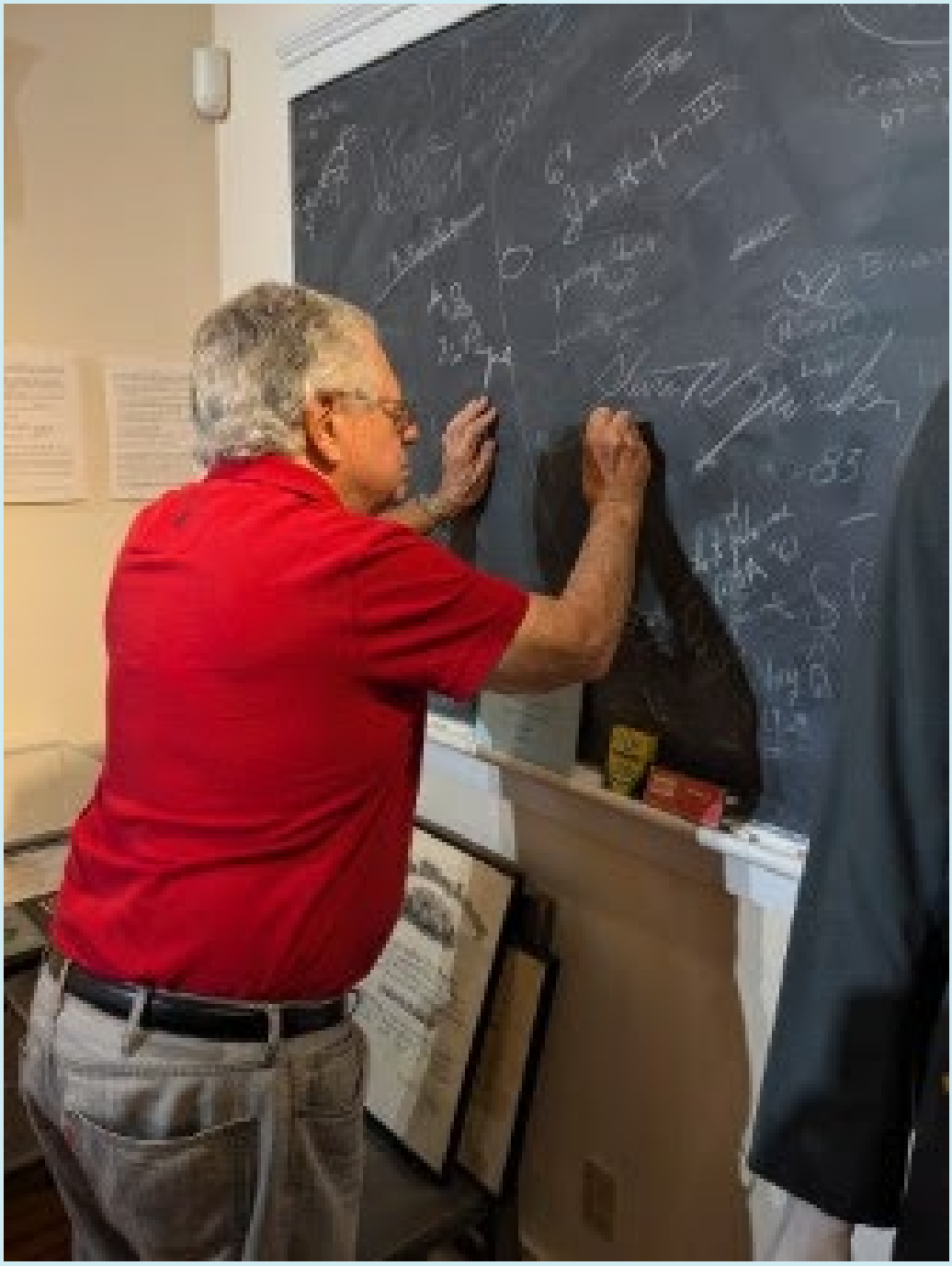
OCTOBER MUSEUM VISITORS

Juan Santalo (1949-51) visited from Miami with his family on September 14. (L-R) grandson Steven Evelyn, son-in-law Robert Evelyn, daughter Patricia Evelyn, wife Ada Santalo, daughter-in-law Maria Santalo, and son John Santalo. As a cadet, though far from his home in Havana, Juan loved his two years at AMA. Besides academics and English, it taught him humility, in part at the hands of a dominant wrestler from the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind. Juan entered the match

against the blind and deaf opponent with assumptions. He left the match with humility.

Still, he remains proud to have been named Best New Cadet. In appreciation for sending him to AMA, Juan gave his trophy to his father – who was later forced to leave it behind when he fled Cuba as a refugee. The museum has been working with Mr. Santalo and his daughter to recreate the trophy.

Juan ran his own accounting firm. His success as a CPA enabled him to own a series of boats over the years, each named "*Deductible?*" He loved taking his kids water skiing and watching regattas. He's also enjoyed travelling, gardening, and photography, especially of sunrises and sunsets taken from his boat on Biscayne Bay.



Juan signs his name to Col. Hoover's chalkboard in the museum.

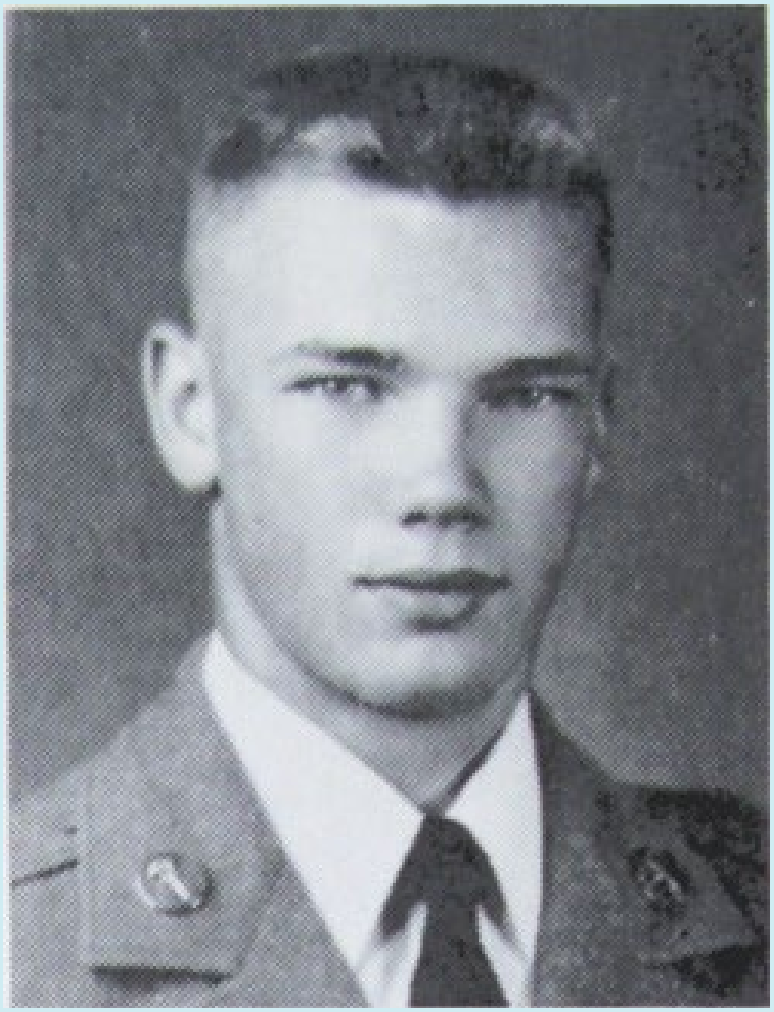
Cadet Santalo

On September 19, Tom Richmond ’57 and his wife, Sandy, returned to AMA for the first time since he was 16. Tom was a strong math student who got along well with Col. Hoover and adapted to AMA like a “duck to water.” He was only able to stay for a year, but he vividly remembers the quality of the officers that year. He was on the swimming team with Gray Hume ’57 and the Cotillion Club with Goodloe Saunders ’57 and Duke Fancher ’58.

After high school and a little college, Tom joined the Air Force, which in 1966 sent him to a nuclear missile silo in Okinawa. The knowledge of what he was there to do weighed heavily. “My understanding was if we were given the order to fire the weapons, then weapons were in-bound to the United States” and likely to his position. He had no post-launch orders. “We knew that if we weren’t in a fireball, we would have been covered with a tsunami from an offshore weapon which would have flooded us….It’s a one-and-done, like the old bazooka….We would have been expended.” Psychologically, “you pay a price,” he said, for living with that reality, and it took years to finally put the experience behind him.

It was a relief then to get transferred to California’s Vandenberg Air Force Base. Tom became a missile analyst technician, but his duty was to launch satellites for the military and the private sector. He loved the work, but he left the service in 1968. “If in the Air Force, I had officers as good as the ones that I had at AMA, I probably would have made a career of it.” His academy officers distinguished themselves with their availability, their care for their people, and their work to earn his respect. The difference: “all of the officers at Augusta came up through the ranks.” They all started in the same lowly position, and it made them better leaders.

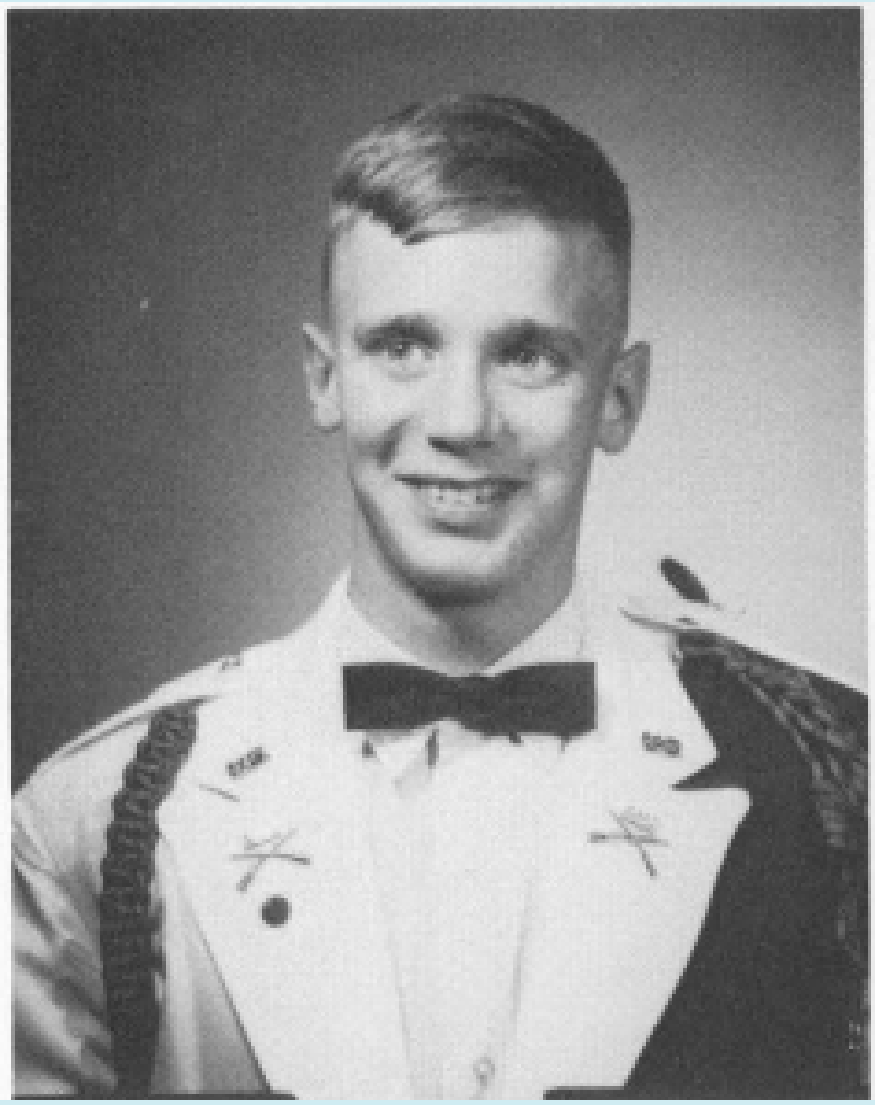
Maybe the most valuable direction the Air Force gave Tom was exposing him to early computers, which set the course for his entire career. Now that he was a civilian again, Tom joined his brother at the University of Tennessee to get a bachelor's degree in computer science. He stayed for a master's degree in math and computer science and spent the next 20 years in charge of security for the university's mainframes. Programming became his specialty. He could code in 10 languages. After cybersecurity, he applied his skills to voice recognition technology for law enforcement, then automatic underwater vehicles, and eventually automated logistics. Now retired, he's active in his church and enjoyes rides on his bicycle.



Cadet Richmond

Bill Leustig and his wife, Ania Kubik, were here on September 27 in the middle of a busy afternoon. One couple was already at the museum to learn about family from the class of 1940, and then a family of 6, with all children under age 6, arrived for a tour. Bill jumped into the breach and helped tell the AMA story and held the attention of all the listeners. If any of the class of 1969 don't remember his first name, it could be because of his many cadet nicknames, including Lightbulb Lustig and Chief Little Foot. Nowadays, Bill is an entertainer in and around Long Beach, California. With his guitar, he performs classics, Americana, Oldies, and original tunes. His motto is, "Music is the language of the soul."

Bill the Entertainer



Cadet Leustig

From 1978-81, Sandra Wood-Burton was AMA's Business Manager. With her husband, Rick, she came back to campus on October 24 after visiting family in Staunton. Though the late 70s were a difficult period for the academy financially, Sandra has many good memories of her years in her barracks office. She and Rick have lived in Florida for 40 years. Their Palm Harbor home avoided a direct hit from hurricanes Helene and Milton.

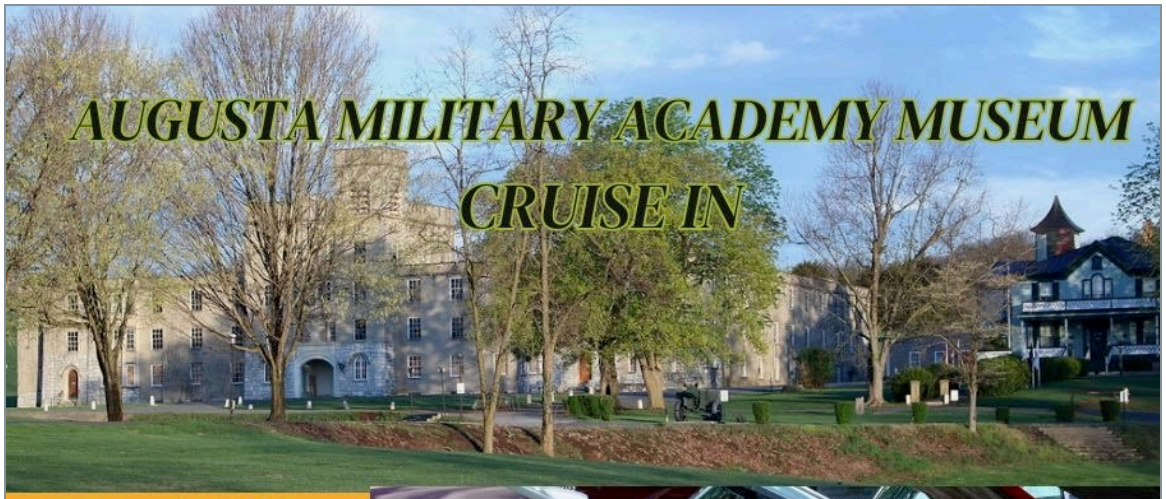
Sandra Wood, AMA Business Manager 1978-81

AMA CRUISE IN 2024

Once again, the AMA Alumni Foundation hosted a "Cruise In" at the AMA Campus. Thank you to Gordon Metz '68 and Steve Trent '70 for putting in the time and work to make this happen. Thank you to Chris Correa who was manning the Museum and PX. A special thanks to our former Museum Administrator, Amy Hensley, for showing up and helping out.

Gordon wrote the Following:

"Had around 80 cars. Many went to the museum and several bought items from the PX according to Chris. Connor (Gordon's Grandson) made hot dogs and my sister-in-law signed them up".
"They all commented about how much they loved the location. Several had never stopped before."



October 12, 2024

10am to 4pm

Dash Plaques for the 1st 50 cars!
Free Registration
(donations accepted)
Door Prizes!
50/50 Raffle
Always Free Museum Tours!

Augusta Military Academy Museum
1640 Lee Highway, Fort Defiance VA

FOR MORE INFORMATION

540-248-3007
museum@amaalumni.org

A monthly pledge from everyone that reads this newsletter means

MUSEUM

DOCENT DUTY

THANK YOU!

Visitors in October

63

that the future of the Museum will be assured.

SET UP YOUR MONTHLY DONATION HERE

Museum Volunteers

Brian Miller '67

Elizabeth Andrews
Professor Charles S. Roller's Great-great Granddaughter

Thank You Elizabeth!

***Be* a Volunteer Docent for a weekend...**

Purchasing a Paver Brick allows you to recognize anyone you knew while attending AMA

All Paver Bricks are placed in a permanent location along the sidewalk running East of the Museum

[Visit the Brick virtual map HERE]

[Brick Order Form]

Shop at the PX

Notice!

The AMA Alumni Foundation would like to clarify that all of the profits of the merchandise that is sold through our Museum PX store, go exclusively to help offset Museum operation costs.

AMA "Knock off" branded merchandise that is sold outside the Museum PX store, an unsanctioned Facebook page or unsanctioned eBay account has no connection or benefit to the AMA Alumni Foundation, Inc. or the AMA Alumni Museum.

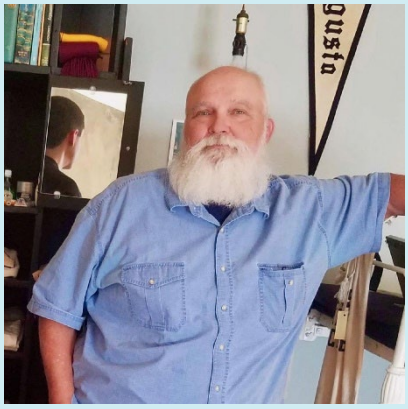
17 oz. Mug
Only $14.00 (Plus tax and shipping)

To order items from the PX, call the Museum at
540-248-2007

Beautiful Wendell August Forge metal serving tray

$50.00

(Limited quantity)



vanBreemen's Expressions

November 1, 2024

AMA – A Shared Experience

Rich vanBreemen

A common sight at AMA Reunions or other AMA gatherings, is 2 men – OLD men - greeting each other with a warm handshake or hug and calling each other “Brother”. To the casual outside observer, this might seem like a rather odd happening. Men, in general, do not show a lot of emotion or openly express affection for one another. Yet, AMA Alum don’t seem to be burdened with that type of constraint when assembled in one place.

To the reader o this article, the reason for this is simple and clear – long ago, when minds were fresh and bodies were spry with youth, friendships were made and bonds formed that have stood the test of time. Good or bad - you experienced it; you lived it. Having “survived” it, you came out on the other side a different person. Only someone who had done the same thing as you would understand.

Folks who served in the military, or police academy, or fire fighters formed many of the same bonds. To some degree, college fraternities / sororities have as well. In any number of these cases, similar shared experiences will form a bond. But for AMA alum – as well as SMA, FMS, GMS, etc. – it’s different, its more. Why is that? I believe it has to do with two very important things. ONE – these experiences took place at a key point in your young life. The events that occur during our adolescence and the friendships made are often the strongest

in our lives. It's part of our youth that helps create who we become as adults. TWO – the strongest of these bonds is unique amongst the cadets who experienced barracks life.

That second point – BARRACKS LIFE – is the all telling difference. Without it, you could have just as easily been in any other school anywhere else in the world. Proof of that can be found simply reviewing the different view of AMA between resident cadets and Day Boys. I can say with 99% certainty that all of the support the Foundation receives in financial and volunteer time comes from the alum that lived on campus. Without naming names, I can attest that of the numerous AMA Day Student alum I have talked to, do not have the same feelings for the old place OR their classmates. This is not to say that they "hate" the place or the time they spent here. But their recollections of their time at AMA are very different than resident cadets and I have never heard one refer to an old classmate as "brother".

I'm sure that I am coming across as "preaching to the choir" and you are wondering what the heck this has to do with anything. Bear with me. As you all know, the museum is completely staffed with people who have no direct ties to AMA. None of us went there or had family who went there. For us, it's sometimes hard to relate to the people we serve – you the alum. I probably come the closest to being able to relate; I was in JROTC in high school as well as served in the military afterwards. I have never called a former classmate or airmen "brother". It's just different.

And that brings us to the topic of SHARED EXPERIENCES.

Working with the museum staff, I have tried to convey this unique phenomenon and rationally, Chris and Keeley both get it. But how could I help them better understand what the

average cadet’s life was like back in the day? I’ve suggested camping out in the big barracks courtyard overnight, but that wasn’t very well received. The next best thing I could come up with was taking them shooting! From AMA’s earliest days, firearms and weapons were a big part of the military training. Neither Chris or Keeley had any experience with firearms so it seemed like a good way to have a taste of the "shared experiences".

Some of you are familiar with the museum’s good friend, Bob Raffa. I reached out to Bob and asked if I could bring the staff over to his property and private rifle range for some shooting fun. His stock reply is, “I’m always up for burning a little
powder.” So that’s just what we did. Between Bob’s collection and mine, we were able to let Chris, Keeley and Tiffany (Keeley’s mom) experience the thrill of firing an 1861 Springfield rifle (Civil War era), a Remington Rolling Block rifle (late 1800’s era), and an M1 Garand (WW2 era). All of these were weapons carried by cadets or provided to cadets for training at some point in the school’s history. We overlooked the M1903 Springfield, but maybe next time.

Everyone was surprised at how much fun it was to fire the black powder, Civil War rifle.

Keeley squeezing off a round from a Remington Rolling block in .22LR.

Chris takes careful aim with an M1 Garand. He was surprised at the recoil and noise!

To say we had a good time would be an understatement. We spent about 4 hours at Bob's range and punched a lot of
holes in the targets. Not wanting to miss an opportunity to impress, we also

included a Ruger .22 pistol, a Remington 1875 revolver in 45 Colt, a 1911 in .45ACP, an AR-15 and the crowning jewel – an M3 Grease gun!!

Tiffany doing her best "DIRTY DOZEN" impression With the M3 Grease Gun. Brass flying everywhere!

Did the experience equate to what the Corps of Cadets experienced at AMA? Hardly, but it did allow the staff a tiny glimpse into life on campus. It was also an eye-opener for them regarding firearms training, safety protocols and learned skills that you can't get watching on TV. The experience was very useful to Chris for his next newsletter article which specifically deals with firearms at AMA (stay tuned).

It’s safe to assume we will never be able to fully understand the bond that draws AMA alums together and frankly, that’s proper. We wouldn’t want to cheapen what you have by making it a D ticket ride at Disney World. But I’m already thinking a little close order drill and maybe a few laps around the bowl would be useful. 😊

Doug Pennock's Viewpoint

November 1, 2024

Dear readers,

Happy November.

This month will bring many changes to all of us. The November 5th election will bring a change of leadership to our country. Whomever is chosen to be our next President, will need to tackle dozens of crisis at home and abroad which if not handled properly, may affect the world as we know it. I pray that this great nation which is made up of so many people of different diversities, values and beliefs will choose our next president by using their intelligence and not their emotion.

Daylight Savings will cause a jump back of an hour which drives me nuts because we do not change the

time in Puerto Rico. That mean that I will again be one hour ahead of Eastern Standard time for the next 6 months, so excuse me if I call you before your morning coffee!

Tom Del Valle and I will be in Virginia November 14 -18 to attend to AMA Alumni Foundation Business and will probably miss the beautiful fall colors. Having said that, I look forward to enjoying my daily fill of Country Ham and the beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

No matter how uneasy you may feel about how things are looking, take a moment this Thanksgiving to give thanks for all of your blessings. We are all so fortunate to be part of the AMA Family, and because of that connection, we are probably better men today.

Doug Out

The Museum Newsletter is written and prepared by Doug Pennock and edited by Trudy Pennock and Marc Aronson '68

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 a paid staff. Former cadets volunteer their time and talent most every month. 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
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