Museum of Augusta Military Academy News

April - 2025

Chairman’s Message

April 1, 2025

Dear friends,

Spring of 2025 is just about to begin and for most of you, that is great news! This winter has been harsher than usual in Ft. Defiance. I know this, not because I have had to deal with the cold and snow in person, but by the unusually low visitor count at the museum and most importantly the unusually high LP Gas usage in the museum. I just saw the Year to date (January-February) financial report today. The total LP Gas bills for that period last year was $835. This year’s bill for the period is $2,758! That is a 230% increase in one year! Worse yet, Donation income this period in 2024 was $14,000, this year donations for the period are $8,500! About a 40% drop in one year.

This news is a bit concerning in light of the fact that we actually broke even in the museum operation last year. Something that I had never seen in forever. It is still too early in the year to send up red flares, but I do worry about

the little things, and thought that I would share this information with everyone.

There is nothing we can do about the weather. We will run the museum heaters a little cooler, but that is all we can do. There is something we can do about donation income. Each one of you can chip in in various ways. You can sign up for a monthly donation via our **Donation Page**, you can send a check, you can sponsor an event at the 2025 Alumni Reunion **HERE** and you can buy tickets for this year's Rifle raffle **HERE**. So, the message is: **we need everyone's financial support in order to keep the AMA Museum operating in the black!**

Nominations are open for the five (5) available AMA Foundation Directors seats. Nominations will continue until April 11, 2025. There will be a special Election Newsletter edition on April 13, 2025 announcing the candidates along with each candidates Bio. There are 4 Directors that have shown interest in re-election:

Gordon Metz '68, Lee Ramsey '73, Brett Thompson '75 and John Arthur '75.

At this time, we have two additional nominations:

Jeff Wenzel '70 and Elizabeth Andrews*

The AMA Memorial Steering Committee continues their work on the cost analysis stage of the project. Mr. Chuck Arthur '75 has joined the Steering Committee whose other members are Tom Del Valle '73, Marc Aronson '68 and Doug Pennock '72. Chuck is currently the Senior Project Manager for one of Virginias largest construction companies. Chuck oversees every project Manager in the company (24 Managers.) And is currently directly involved in

several hundred million dollars of construction work. Chuck will be instrumental in determining exactly what every aspect of the AMA Memorial soft and hard costs will be.

Sincerely,

Douglas W. Pennock
Chairman

*Elizabeth is Charles S. Roller (The Professor) Great-great Granddaughter

AMA Alumni Foundation Board Elections

In 2022, changes to the AMA Foundation By-Laws were approved, thus solidifying the annual AMA Alumni Foundation Board member election procedures. As a result, on-line electronic voting procedures were permanently approved, with the "cycle" for annual elections occurring in the spring (i.e. April elections).

In accordance with the By-laws: Section 4.3. *Terms*: *Each Director shall be elected for a three-year term, starting with the date of the annual meeting at which they are elected, and until their successors have been duly elected and qualified, or until their death, resignation, or removal. The Board of Directors shall be divided into three classes with staggered terms, with each class as nearly equal in number as may be (i.e. five/six).* Accordingly, one-third of the Directors' terms of office

shall expire/rotate each year. There are a total of five positions / vacancies up for consideration in the 2025 "cycle". The following four board members, whose term expires this year, have expressed their desire to serve another term:

Gordon Metz '68 Lee Ramsey '74
Brett Thompson '75 John Arthur '75

As specified in the Board-approved June 2024 revisions to By-law Section 4.4 *Nomination of Directors*, the call for Board nominations shall take place no less than thirty (30) days prior to the designated annual election start date. Notice shall be provided all members via AMA website posting, electronic mail and social media outlets. Nominations are welcome and encouraged for those wishing to become involved in the governance of the AMA Alumni Foundation. In addition to the four incumbents, any AMA Alumnus or qualified members may present a nomination for a qualified candidate, or may nominate him/herself, for the position of Director. The By-laws Article II: Membership, Section 2.1 & 2.2, delineates board member qualifications, which can be accessed / downloaded HERE. Nominations must be received no later than three (3) days prior to the designated annual election start date, with no exceptions. Nomination "window" formally opened Wednesday, March 12, 2025 and will close on Friday, April 11, 2025.

Appropriately, the Election Committee is preparing an electronic ballot to enable on-line voting utilizing Google Forms. If you currently receive the AMA Email newsletter, a link will be sent to your email, where you will cast your ballot. If you DO NOT currently receive the AMA Email newsletter and wish to

participate in this election, you must add your email to the monthly email distribution list by clicking HERE. The FIFTEEN DAY (15) voting window will open/commence no later than Sunday, April 13, 2025 and voting will end at Noon (Eastern DST) Monday, April 28, 2025. This election process will be publicized on the special newsletter, via email announcement, posted on the AMA website, and posted on the social media/Facebook sites.

NOMINATION AND VOTING TIMELINES

- **Thursday, March 13, 2025: Nomination announcement made on email, website and social media. All those desiring to be nominated should contact Doug Pennock (chairman.amafoundation@amaalumni.org) / 787-466-7454 via email or telephone call. Please include BJ d'Orsay (bjdorsay@amaalumni.org) on email.**
- **Friday, April 11, 2025: The nomination deadline / window formally closes.**
- **Sunday, April 13, 2025: Election electronic voting commences (15-day window).**
- **Monday, April 28, 2025: Electronic voting ends. Results provided to Chairman and Board members.**
- **Saturday, May 03, 2025: Special Zoom Board meeting with new members to conduct elections for Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.**
- **Monday, May 05, 2023: The election results and the newly-elected Board Officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) announced in the Museum Newsletter email and on social media.**

Please see The 2025 AMA Alumni Foundation Board of Directors nominees Bio's below

John Arthur '75

Upon graduation from AMA in 1975, John attended Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and obtained a B.S. in Civil Engineering, earning a U.S. Army commission. Serving on active duty for 22+ years, the first three years were as an Engineer and then 19+ years in Army Aviation. He was stationed throughout the United States, Republic of South Korea (early 1980's), and Republic of West Germany (mid-1980's). His last tour of duty was with Special Operations Command, and he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. John is married to Jessica Arthur and they reside in Williamsburg, Virginia. They have two children (Allison and John VI, both married) and have five grandchildren.

John retired from the U. S. Army in 2001, and then worked for three years with WBB Consulting, Inc., working a multitude of programs supporting numerous Department of Defense units and organizations. In June 2004, he started Centurion Development Group, LLC…a service-disabled Veteran owned small business/consulting firm. CDG, LLC supports specialized organizations with training, program management, unmanned systems and weapon system development, and counter/anti-terrorist mission areas.

John also has supported several other 501(c)3 non-profit organizations, one being the past-Chairman for CreatiVets.org, supporting Veterans with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. And he recently served as the Executive Director of Operation Restore Oral Health, supporting Veterans with several dental issues, gaining access to free dental care.

John has been on the Foundation Board since April 2018, and now serves as the Board Secretary. He also chairs the Sports Hall of Fame selection committee and the Board Elections committee, and also volunteers supporting the Annual Reunion committee. John is seeking re-election and looks forward to continuing support of the efforts insure the future legacy of the organization, our museum and our brotherhood.

Lee Ramsey '75

Lee Ramsey attended Augusta Military Academy for five years (1968 to 1973), leaving before his senior year to help his family back at home. Lee served as Company Commander of F Company, was a member of the Honor Committee, and was the first recipient of the Parker Ward Award. He later attended the University of Virginia part-time and distant learning over several years, and received a degree in 1987.
In 1975, Lee enlisted in the US Army as an infantryman. In 1977, he was selected for, and graduated from, Special Forces (Green Beret) school. During his years serving in the US Army, he served with the 82nd Airborne Division, the 1st Cavalry Division, Special Operations Command (multiple times) and the US Intelligence and Security Command in Europe. Lee retired in 1999, but was recalled to active duty in 2007 for two years.
The highlight of his career was his assignment to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (ODCSOPS). While assigned to ODCSOPS, he had the honor of assisting in the planning, coordination and operational execution of the 1995

Commemoration of World War II Ceremonies in France, Germany, Belgium, and the Czech Republic.
Lee served this nation on active duty, for over 26 years! After retiring from the military, Lee worked for several Department of Defense intelligence agencies, several private security companies, and then as a real estate broker.
He met and fell in love with his wife Karen in 2004, and they have been a “traveling pair” ever since! Lee is fully retired now and they recently moved to Riceville, Tennessee. They have three children, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.
Lee previously served on the Alumni Association Board, and currently serves as an Alumni Foundation board member. Lee has volunteered to assist with several repair/maintenance projects at the museum. Today, he also is one of the co-chairs for the annual AMA Alumni Reunion Committee, with the upcoming 2025 Reunion being his fourth year with that duty. Lee is seeking re-election to the AMA Alumni Foundation Board and looks forward to continuing to support the alumni organization.

Brett Thompson '75

After graduation in 1975 and a summer of fun, Brett enlisted in the US Marine Corps, attending Boot Camp in January 1976. After graduating from Boot Camp, he worked as a CH-46 mechanic. After leaving the Corps, he started his first business remodeling homes in the Northern VA and Washington, DC. He departed from the DC area in 1985, moving back to the Valley, settling in Bedford, VA for seven years. He relocated to Charlottesville, VA, then Oak Island, NC and settling down in Waynesboro, VA in2005. After 33 years of the remodeling business, he “hung up my tools” and started Blue Ridge Roof Cleaning of VA.

In 2014, he reorganized and expanded his company's capabilities, changing its name to Blue Ridge Exterior Cleaning. The company maintains its small business outlook, and has grown from one employee to seven, with a fleet of three service trucks.

His pride was in raising a fine young man from 1st grade-on, who now teaches and is the head football coach at Francis Scott Key High School in Union Bridge, MD.

Brett has a spent quite a bit of time volunteering at the AMA Museum and also has provided countless hours, utilizing his handy skills there as well. Brett previously served on the Alumni Association Board, and currently serves on the AMA Alumni Foundation Board. He is seeking re-election to the Foundation Board.

Jeff Wenzel '70

Jeff Wenzel was born at Fort Clayton, U.S. Canal Zone, Panama and was raised in Winchester, Virginia. After attending Staunton Military Academy for one year, he joined his brother Joe Wenzel '69 at AMA. Jeff attended AMA for three (3) years and graduated with the Class of 1970. His senior year, Jeff was the editor- in -chief of *the 1970 RECALL*. Attending Virginia Commonwealth University, Jeff pursued studies in Mass Communications.

Jeff entered a career path that was related to the apple industry, having grown up working in the family orchard business. He was a plant supervisor for a bulk bin and pallet manufacturer, a department supervisor overseeing the process for manufacturing

and delivering apple-based consumer products and was promoted to Assistant Plant Manager. Moving to sales and marketing, Jeff would manage all aspects of selling branded apple based products, both nationally and internationally. Creating promotions, building annual budgets, sales forecasting and market development were a key portion of his duties.

After retiring from business, Jeff graduated from Central Shenandoah Criminal Justice Academy and served three years as a police officer rising to the rank of sergeant.

Jeff lives in Mount Airy, NC with his wife, Suzanne Chilson, a retired Executive Director of The Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation.

“I have enjoyed serving on the Reunion Committee and I am eager to return to the Board of Directors with purpose and pleasure.”

Elizabeth Andrews

Elizabeth Andrews is the great-great granddaughter of Professor Charles Summerville Roller, the great-granddaughter of Colonel Tom Roller, and granddaughter of Hilton Roller Grasty.

Elizabeth graduated from the University of Virginia, where she met her husband, Malcolm Andrews. They married during her final year of law school at William and Mary. After graduation, Elizabeth moved to Maine, where Malcolm was stationed at the Brunswick Naval Air Station flying the P-3 Orion. While in Maine, Elizabeth clerked for the Superior Court of Maine and then started a family. After 16

years of very long winters in Maine and a transition for Malcolm to flying for American Airlines, the family moved to Charlottesville, where Elizabeth worked for the admissions office at the University of Virginia.

Elizabeth grew up hearing stories about AMA from her grandmother. These stories took on a life of their own after Elizabeth's mother, Virginia Somerville Hallock, died in 2021. As the "family historian," Elizabeth took on the task of cleaning out the attic and organizing the many boxes of her grandmother's photos and documents that her mother had saved. After months of reading love letters, organizing legal documents, preserving family correspondence, and digitizing a suitcase of 8 mm films from the 1930's, she visited the museum regularly to share items she had found. During one visit soon after the staff downsized in 2023, Elizabeth began to fully understand the monumental task that fell on Rich, Chris, and the alumni working to preserve the traditions of the brotherhood and history of the school. Passionate about the mission of the AMA Alumni Foundation, Elizabeth felt a duty to contribute to the museum's success.

For over a year, Elizabeth has regularly volunteered digitizing records, documents, and photographs that have not yet been scanned and catalogued. She has collaborated with Chris on articles for the newsletter and works closely with the team to map out a process to preserve, study and share the history of Augusta Military Academy. She is working to inventory the museum's collection and to update the existing database. When her schedule allows, Elizabeth spends at least one day a week at the museum and is included on staff emails. As such, she is well aware of the challenges the Board faces and is devoted to the ongoing preservation of the museum's collection in order to honor the alumni, faculty, and staff of AMA.

In September, 2024, Elizabeth was awarded the Alumni Medal and the Certificate of Commendation for outstanding dedication and service to AMA. She is honored to be considered for a Board position, something her grandmother would enthusiastically

support. Elizabeth considers it a privilege to serve on the Board and to continue the valuable efforts of those who are working on the successful transfer of the museum to a virtual platform.

Augusta Military Academy Alumni Foundation Scholarships

THE DEADLINE HAS BEEN EXTENDED

The NEW "postmark" deadline for receiving the AMA Scholarship applications for this year is April 30th, 2025

Don't wait, get your applications in the mail early!

This year we are offering:

- **Two (2) $2,000 AMA Legacy Scholarships**
- **One (1) $1,000 McVey – Leonard Scholarship *(Louise McVey Leonard - Robert P. Leonard Memorial Scholarship)**

Click the link below to go to the AMA Webpage, find the Scholarship tab and you'll discover all the necessary details.

AMA Legacy Scholarship Letter & Applications

Legacy Scholarship Letter

Legacy Scholarship Application

McVey-Leonard Scholarship Letter & Application

Louise McVey Leonard - Robert P. Leonard Memorial Scholarship

McVey Scholarship Letter

McVey Scholarship Application

Scholarship Scoring Rubric

Applicants – Make yourself familiar with the SSR (Scholarship Scoring Rubric), Understand what the judges are looking for and how best to model your application.

Need more information?

Click the link below to go to the AMA Alumni Website, find the Scholarship tab and you'll discover all the necessary details

https://amaalumni.org/scholarships/

Nominations for the 2025 class of the AMA Sports Hall of Fame are in. Chairman John Arthur and his selection

committee members are now working to determine the winners, which will be announced in the May 2025 Museum Newsletter

Museum News

Time Marches On

With the end of March, we sadly bid adieu to our young intern Keeley Potter. Keeley came to us in November of 2023 and has been a valued part of the museum staff ever since.

Keeley is a homeschooled high school student moving into her Senior year. For the past several months, she has been busy digitizing cadet photos and updating our online database with that information. Having taken that project to completion, she felt it was time for her to move on with both her studies and job experience. She has shown herself to be everything we could have hoped for in a student intern.

Her enthusiasm and can-do attitude will be both missed and difficult to replace. Hell, I'll even miss listening to her singing her heart out in the next room, oblivious to the rest of us hearing her! We wish her all the best in what I'm certain will be a bright future.

Shenandoah Valley Best 2025

One again, the AMA Museum has won **Best Museum** in the Shenandoah Valley Best competition. This would be the fourth year in a row that the Museum has been graced with this award!

IMG_9944.JPEG

Jim Mitchell '76, Head of Security for Reunion 2025

AMA Alumni Reunion September 4-6 2025

Honoring the classes of '44, '50, '55, '60, '65, '70, '75, and '80

Headquarters Hotel
Hotel 24 South (Stonewall Jackson)

Call 540-885-4848 to make your reservations now and be sure to tell them that you are with the AMA group so that you get the Reunion group rate of $125.00 per night which includes covered parking.

Please use our new and easy Reunion 2025 registration portal

HERE

Ticket

Springfield Armory M1A Rifle

RIFLE RAFFLE 2025

This year we will be offering a unique and historically important weapon for raffle. This beautiful and brand new out-of-the-box weapon is a semi-automatic rifle made by Springfield Armory, Inc. The rifle is chambered to fire a .308 cartridge, and it is based on the M14 platform for the civilian and law enforcement markets in the United States.

The cost is $25 per chance, or five chances for $100. If you check the box on the purchase form, you can authorize an additional 5% to help us cover the cost of the payment processing fee. There is no limit on the number of chances you may purchase.

Buy your tickets through our new and easy Stripe credit card account HERE.

If you'd prefer to pay via phone, please contact Jeff Wenzel at: 352-445-4967 or email Jeff at jgraveswenzel@gmail.com

You must be 21 years or older to participate in this raffle.
This raffle is void where prohibited by law and the following States:
Delaware, Maryland, New York and Washington and Washington DC.

A few words from your 2025 AMA Reunion Committee

The price of the 2011 reunion was $170 per person. The price of the 2025 reunion is $170 per person.
How is that possible after 14 years? The answer to that question is Reunion Sponsors!
Without sponsors, the price for the reunion would be $240 per person. Ouch!
Please consider pitching in with a sponsor donation. You have lots of options to participate with full or partial sponsorship of the dinners, Saturday lunch, Saturday breakfast, the Hospitality Room or flowers. There is also the Reunion General Fund that helps purchase supplies and cover other costs which makes a fantastic reunion for all of us.
Not coming to this year's reunion? We will miss you, but you can still donate as a sponsor. Want to honor a friend, roommate, favorite instructor or coach? You can! Please go to amaalumni.org and check out the Sponsorship information included in the Reunion 2025 details. If you have questions call or email Jeff Wenzel at 352-445-4967 or jgraveswenzel@gmail.com. You can

also call or email Herb Maher at 757-353-1977 or herbmaher7@gmail.com.

Thank you for your consideration. See you at the 2025 AMA Alumni Reunion!

Reunion 2025 Sponsorships

Your AMA Reunion Committee has been working diligently since the day after the 2024 Reunion organizing a new format and events for Reunion 2025. We are trying to continue to significantly improve in the overall quality of the reunion experience each year. In order to make it affordable for as many alumni as possible we are opening certain events for sponsorship opportunities to help offset some of the costs. Excess sponsorship donations will be rolled over to the AMA Foundation as a donation. Click HERE to sponsor an event.

All Sponsors will be recognized at all events and venues.

Here are the events/needs and the sponsorship amounts we are seeking:

Reunion 2025 Sponsorship Opportunities

Event/Activity	Sponsorship Amount	Partial Sponsorsh
Registration	$1,500.00	5 @ $300
Hospitality Suite	$1,500.00	5 @ $300
Band Company Breakfast	$1,000.00	5 @ $200
Friday Banquet	$6,400.00	6 @ $1,000
Saturday Breakfast	$2,300.00	5 @ $500
Saturday Lunch	$4,200.00	7 @ $600
Saturday Dinner	$6,400.00	6 @ $1,100
Flowers	$500.00	2 @ $250
Reunion General Fund	Any Amount	

General Fund: Any Amount

Acknowledgement of sponsors:

1. Signage at event
2. Names mentioned with thanks during event

Please be generous and consider becoming a sponsor at whatever level you can afford.

Category	Cost	Sponsors	Pledge	Status	Date
Registration	$ 1,500	Doug Pennock '72	$ 1,500	Pledge	2/14
Hospitality	$ 1,500				
Reunion General Fund	$ 2,000	Jeff Wenzel '70	$ 1,000	Paid	2/13
		Larry Reed '69	$ 420	Paid	2/21
		Anonymous	$ 500	Pledge	2/13
Band Breakfast	$ 1,000	Anonymous	$ 500	Pledge	2/13
		Anonymous	$ 500	Pledge	2/13
Friday Dinner	$ 6,400		$ -		
Saturday Breakfast	$ 2,300		$ -		
Saturday Lunch	$ 4,200		$ -		
Saturday Dinner	$ 6,400	Marc Aronson '68	$ 3,200	Pledge	1/29
		Bill McVey '60	$ 600	Paid	3/10
Flowers	$ 500		$ -		
TOTAL	**$ 25,800**		**$ 8,220**		

A monthly pledge from everyone that reads this newsletter means

MUSEUM

DOCENT DUTY

THANK YOU!

Visitors in March

that the future of the Museum will be assured.

62

Museum Volunteers

SET UP YOUR MONTHLY DONATION HERE

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

***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 HERE

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.

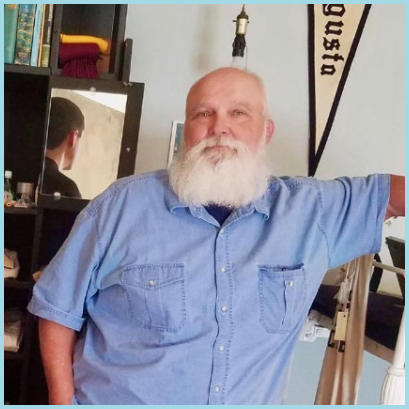
AMA "Knock off" branded merchandise that is sold outside the Museum PX store, an unsanctioned Facebook page or unsanctioned eBay account has no connection or benefit to the AMA Alumni Foundation, Inc. or the AMA Alumni Museum.

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

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

Wendell August Forge metal serving tray

$50.00



vanBreemen's Expressions

April 1, 2025

HISTORY GEEK OVERLOAD

By Rich vanBreemen

Hear me when I say, “Historical facts don’t interest me – they FASCINATE ME!” It’s the reason I drag myself up these stairs each week. Sitting at my desk and looking out the window across the campus field and the barracks, I often find myself daydreaming about what it was like here – “back in the day”. Couple that with my IT background and you can see why cleaning up our database is of such importance to me (as it is for Chris, Keeley and Elizabeth). Buried in the memorabilia and facts are countless fascinating stories.

Not only are individual’s stories interesting, but the way events and people interact in the world reinforce my belief that things don’t just happen – they happen for a reason which we may not understand but must accept. The word you are thinking of is COINCIDENCE, however, that implies accidental chance - I think it’s more than that. So begins our tale for this month…….

The Museum staff continues to plug away at our historical records and database. One part of that is the PEOPLE database which is different than CONTACTS. The latter is where we keep your contact data, donations records and basic bio information. It is a private and secure section of the database, accessible only to the Museum staff and the Foundation’s Board. PEOPLE on the other hand CAN be made accessible to the public. Here we can document a person’s biography and their connection to artifacts in the museum’s collection.

This is the area that we are diligently working on because it allows us to tell people's stories and help others with genealogical research. Starting with the names of the War Dead, I am adding names in chronological order based on their last year at AMA and then by last name (boring I know but significant to the story). WW-1, Korea and Vietnam are done, but WW-2 is a large list.

Joseph X Bell, Major USAAF

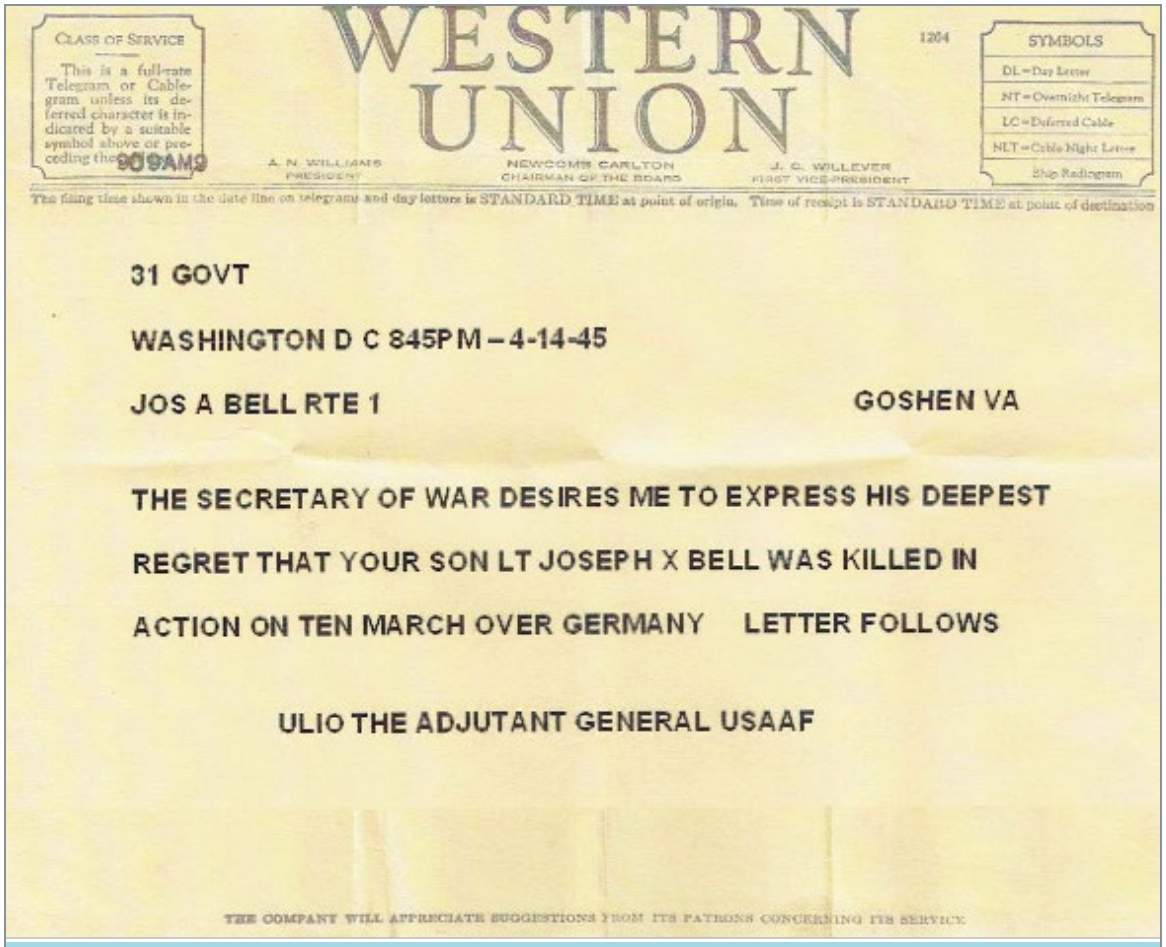
Enter Joseph X Bell, Class of 1934. I was filling out his PEOPLE record and finding more and more information on him the deeper I dug into online records. Please take a moment to review his record at this time before moving on:

Person Record

Full Name	Bell, Joseph X
AMA Class of	1934
Veteran	USAAF, Maj., WW2, KIA
Birth Date	02/16/1918
Birthplace	Goshen, Virginia
Deceased Date	03/10/1945
Died Where	North of Limburg, near Weilburg, Germany
Father	Addison Bell
Mother	Ellen Bell
Education	Virginia Military Academy (1938)
Titles & Honors	Purple Heart
Notes	Joseph X Bell was an AMA cadet for 2 years and remained a Private the whole time. However, his academic achievements were noteworthy. Graduating AMA at the age of 16 and entered VMI. Joseph Bell graduated from the Virginia Military Institute with the class of 1938 - still a Private but again his academic prowess shined bright. His nickname at VMI was "BRAINY". After leaving VMI with a degree in Civil Engineering, he worked for the Virginia Public Service Company, in the capacity of Civil Engineer and later taught civil engineering at Marion Institute, Marion, Alabama. He returned t Virginia and was employed at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, and helped in the design of the carrier USS Hornet (which was used in the Doolittle Raid of Tokyo of 1942)

Screenshot of online record. Full record can be viewed at:
https://amamuseum.catalogaccess.com/people/1803

As you may have gathered from this one individual's record, we have found a LOT of information that was previously either unknown or unverified. The photos alone thrilled me; it was like reviving Major Bell from the dead. I was so excited about it, I had to show Chris. With his excellent memory, he took one look at the page and exclaims, "We have a telegram on display downstairs that notified his family of his death!" HOLY CRAP BATMAN – I had forgotten about that. He instantly retrieved it.



CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

90 SAM 3

WESTERN UNION

1204

SYMBOLS

DL = Day Letter
NT = Overnight Telegram
LC = Deferred Cable
NLT = Cable Night Letter
Ship Radiogram

A. N. WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT
NEWCOMB CARLTON, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
J. C. WILLEVER, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

31 GOVT

WASHINGTON D C 845PM – 4-14-45

JOS A BELL RTE 1 GOSHEN VA

THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEPEST REGRET THAT YOUR SON LT JOSEPH X BELL WAS KILLED IN ACTION ON TEN MARCH OVER GERMANY LETTER FOLLOWS

ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL USAAF

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

Upon examination, there were a few things that struck me as being off center:

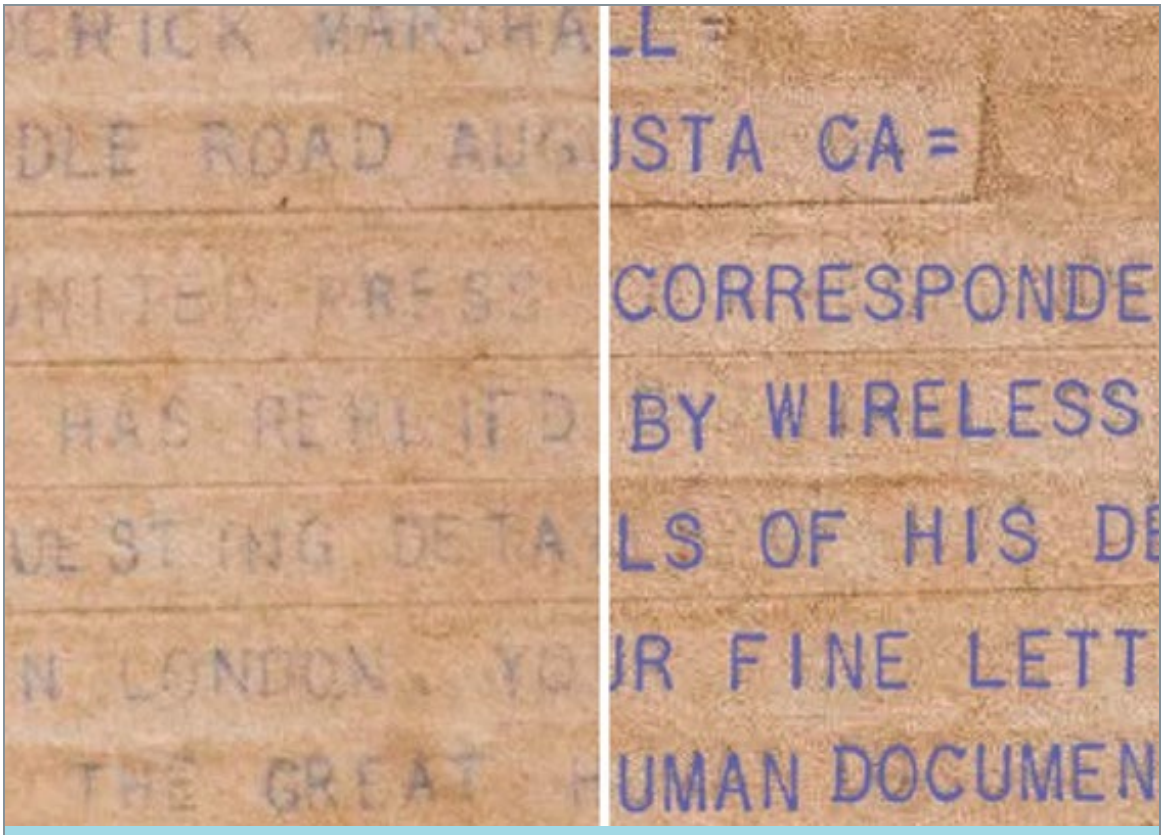
1. The condition of the telegram was too good.
2. The paper was different front & back colors.
3. Joseph X Bell's rank was listed wrong.
4. Dates didn't align with information we had uncovered.

Please forgive my skepticism - I had never personally received an actual telegram so I wasn't sure how to tell if this was real or not. A quick search of the web on how telegrams were produced in World War 2 confirmed my doubts – this was a nice representation of what the original telegram would have looked like but not the real McCoy. No worries and I got a nice lesson in 1940 technology along the way which I will now share with you (like it or not).

I found a wonderful page which described a telegram exchange between a war widow and a war correspondent. **The Legacy Behind a War Telegram — The Conservation Center** The correspondent was present when the widow's husband had been killed, and she was looking for some details to share with her 2 young boys for when they later asked about their father. The soldier was Lt. Col George F. Marshall (no relation to the General). He was killed in action in the Port of Oran during Operation Torch (important point for later). The Col was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (2nd highest honor just below the Medal of Honor) for his actions. **LTC George Frederick Marshall**

In 1943, his then 3-year-old son received the medal from the US Army. Many years later, the son (Ricky) contacted The Conservation Center about trying to digitally restore the original telegrams since they had degraded so badly.

"Telegrams were not produced with longevity in mind. At the time, telegram messages came over a ticker-tape machine, resulting in a typed-out message on a long, narrow ribbon of paper. The paper ribbon would then be cut and pasted in the proper order onto the message form. The degradation of telegrams is generally inevitable between the fast-drying inks, the glue, and acidic paper. This results in the document becoming brittle and acid burned, and the inks fading."



Here is an example of the original faded telegram (on left) and the digitally remastered copy

As fascinating as this exercise had been, my research on Major Bell had pretty much run its course. There was one connection I was hoping to make – if you read Major Bell's bio, you saw that he was involved in the design team for the aircraft carrier USS HORNET. One of AMA's more notable alums was Jack Manch, a pilot in the Doolittle Raid of Tokyo, who flew his B-25 from the deck of the Hornet. Was there a possibility they knew each other at AMA??? Alas, that was not to be. Bell graduated AMA in June of 1934 and Manch didn't start at AMA until September of 1934. To quote Maxwell Smart, "Missed it by THAT much!" I updated Bell's profile and moved on to the next name on the list of WW2 dead.
Charles Dowell Buckley, 1st LT USA

In the museum, near the back door, and to the side of the hall where the War Dead plaques are displayed, is a small exhibit with some artifacts from those war dead. That is where the Bell telegram is displayed. There are several white binders with hard copy versions of the biographies of each of those names. That was the starting point for the digital efforts we are now committed to. I applaud the Herculean efforts of the early museum staff devoted to producing these binders. However, with all the new tools available to researchers, we can do a more thorough review of the data.

Gathering the data to fill out Charles Buckley's profile began the same as every previous record, by transferring what we already had from the Contact database into the People database. That got me the basic information and from there the online digging, coupled with that white binder is used to flesh out the profile. During this research, I discovered some errors in other organizations' records. For example, FIND-A-GRAVE listed Charles as having graduated from a high school in California. However, we can prove that Charles graduated from AMA after 4 years of attendance! I sent them a message pointing out this error. Online records are of no use to anyone if they are not correct. That message bounces around in my head each time I research and catalog another cadet profile.

Charles and his family, originally from Virginia, moved to California from New Jersey around 1929. William A Buckley Sr. (the father of Charles) was a career Navy man assigned to work on dirigibles. In 1935, he was a crewman on the USS MACON, a US Navy, lighter-than-air ship which crashed in the Pacific. He was reported to have also witnessed the Hindenburg disaster in 1937. He was a fascinating man in his own right, but not the focus of my sleuthing. Shortly after the Buckley family arrives in California, young Charles is sent back to Virginia to attend AMA. During his 4 years at AMA, Charles made a name for himself as a ladies' man. His senior class "Note" humorously states that he was enrolled at Mary Baldwin College in recognition of all the time he spent there. Charles' life after AMA is quite a mystery. What we do know is that he married Helen Jane Springhorn (8-22-1936) and that they had a daughter

named Judith Ann in 1940. **FOOTNOTE:** I attempted to track down the wife or daughter only to discover they are both deceased, and no other living heirs exist.

When war broke out, Charles joined the army and was commissioned as an officer. That would denote at least some college experience, but we can find no mention of what school he may have attended. My research on a previous fallen cadet showed me that back then, a college degree was not required to become commissioned – very different conditions from today. Charles MAY have received a commission based on his ROTC experience at AMA, as did Morris "Punchy" Guerrant '42.

Regardless, Charles found himself in the ETO (European Theater of Operations) early in the war and was a part of the Allies first invasion of Axis controlled territory – Operation Torch. Torch was a grand scheme to put Allied soldiers into North Africa to fight the Italian and Germany armies, along with their ally France. YES – I said France. France had been invaded by Nazi German troops in 1940, and France agreed to capitulate after several weeks of fighting and loss of territory. The agreement was supposed to protect French authority in the unoccupied areas of France and prevent more loss of life. Known as the Vichy French Government (named for the capitol city) they were hated by the free French and not trusted by the Axis powers. Vichy France authority also applied to French held territory outside of France proper – such as the French East & West Indies along with areas of North Africa such as Algeria. This was quite the conundrum for the Allies and their dealings with France.

This put France in a precarious and dubious position of being both the victim and an aggressor. Many Vichy soldiers sympathized with the Allies and were often divided on their loyalty. French Officers however felt more duty bound to comply with the treaties their political masters had agreed to. Such is the situation when the

Allies planned and executed Operation Torch. Part of that Operation was to capture the Port of Oran in Algeria and prevent the French from destroying the Port. It was needed to help with supply efforts during the campaign inland.

A sub-Operation of Torch was Operation Reservist, which specifically targets the Port of Oran by 2 British naval vessels crashing through the barriers into the Port and there disembarking American Troops to capture the Port. All was going to plan until the HMS Walney, carrying 1st Lt Buckley and his Regiment ran into the French fleet. Not sure of what reception they would get from the French, I'm sure they were surprised. It was a "turkey" shoot – 4 French shore batteries and 31 French Naval vessels ALL directed their guns against the 2 British ships. Both ships were pulverized, yet the HMS Walney somehow made it to the jetty only to capsize and sink, taking with her most of her crew and troops – including Charles Buckley.

As I was digesting all this information, something in the back of my head was ringing. Maybe it was my tinnitus or maybe something else. Then it hit me – The Port of Oran. That was the same battle that took the life of Lt. Col. George Marshall, the guy whose telegram I researched while working on Major Bell's profile.

Even though he has nothing to do with AMA, I had to look more into Marshall. Researching Marshall gave me a lot more information regarding the battle of the Port of Oran, the battle in which Charles Buckley was killed. Much of that information was drawn from the telegraph article I mentioned earlier. What was most striking was discovering that Lt. Col. Marshall was 1st Lt. Charles Buckley's commander! I determined Col. Marshall's body was not recovered but after speaking with Larry at Knollkreg Memorial Park in Abingdon VA, I confirmed that Charles' body was recovered, and he is indeed buried there.

The circle was now (somewhat) complete. Remember that Bell and Buckley were classmates at AMA, graduating in 1934. In working on Major Bell's profile, I was brought to Col. Marshall's story which ultimately helped me fill in some of the blanks on Charles Buckley. When you consider the shear number of people who were involved in these events and the passing of time, I refuse to believe that this web of interconnected transactions "just happen". I feel like something is guiding Chris, Elizabeth, Keeley and I to tell these stories. We are apparently unwitting mouthpieces for the dead.
I encourage you to learn more about these people and events. It will help you understand the nature of the research your museum staff is doing for the benefit of people both in and out of the AMA world. I look out my window and imagine these two old classmates standing on the parade grounds. Its like they were brought back to life, if only for a moment.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Torch
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Reservist

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Infantry_Regiment_(United_States)#World_War_II
https://www.uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/48.html

Doug Pennock's Viewpoint

April 1, 2025

Greetings everyone,

During each yearly cycle around our sun, something in our personal universe will be jogged, shaken, added or taken away. I find that the older I get, that inevitable lists of events grows a little longer and a little more pronounced. Sometimes these changes don't have anything to do about your new aches and pains, family, pets, neighbors and such. Sometimes one is faced with having to say goodbye to an old friend.

Case in point: I am what my friends describe as an Apple device person (freak). I have an iMac computer in my office at home, an iPad for portable computing and travel, an iPhone connected to my umbilical cord and an iWatch connected to my iPhone. You get the picture.

Every once in a few years, I upgrade my watch and phone and even the iPad, but my 2012 iMac is in perfect shape. I had it upgraded by my computer dude three years ago by

adding lots of new RAM and he even changed out the old hard drive to a new digital hard drive with three Terabytes of memory. These machines are so good, that the 2012 model looks exactly and runs practically as well as the 2025 model! Heck even today, I don't run anti-virus software on my Apple computer!

But father time, with the help of Apple Corporate geniuses, have maliciously added a glitch in my digital matrix… Apple engineers have managed to write code that causes any apple computer that is of more than a certain age, to no longer have the ability to update the latest version of its operating system software. The net effect of that critical small line of code, is that slowly but surely, my trusty desktop no longer runs very well, sort of having a Formula one car morph into a Yugo!

Over the past two weeks I have been forced to replace my perfectly good desktop with the latest Apple Mac Mini Pro. This slick little device, is miniscule in size and will do laps around my old desktop! At least that is what my computer dude tells me. Along with my new Apple Mini Pro, I had to buy a new magic mouse, a new magic keyboard **AND** a new monitor! Plus to top off my frustrations, yup, you guessed it, I can't get the damned new contraption to work, so my computer dude will be paying me a visit tomorrow afternoon to set it up!

Sadly, this will be the last Museum Newsletter that will be written and put together by my old Mac computer.

Hasta la vista old friend!

Doug out

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

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.

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