AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY ALUMNI FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

February - 2026

Take a flight over the AMA campus after the recent blizzard

THE AMA MEMORIAL

Chairman's Message

Douglas W. Pennock '72

February 1, 2026

Dear fellow alumni and friends,

First off, I hope that all of you who live in the path of the recent winter storm are OK and that you did not suffer any property damage.

We will be holding the first AMA Alumni Foundation Board meeting of 2026 on Saturday, February 7, at the Hotel 24 in Staunton. I plan to be there if the weather cooperates. As is customary, all alumni are invited to attend.

The AMA Memorial Building Committee, comprised of Tom Del Valle, Marc Aronson, and me, has been very active ever since we announced the AMA Memorial project at the September Alumni Reunion. In fact, Tom, Marc, and I will arrive in Staunton on Wednesday, February 4, to attend a series of meetings on key aspects of the project that must be in place before we can commence construction. I hope to share a full report on these critical steps in the March Newsletter.

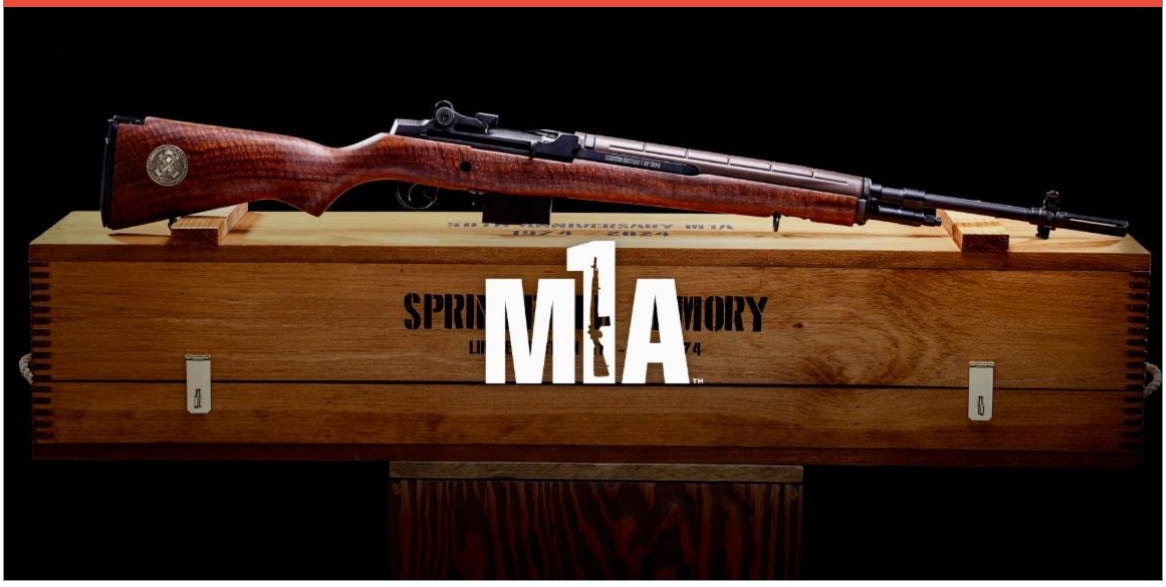
As of January 31, 2026, we have $243,000 in the AMA Memorial building fund. Thank you to everyone who has

contributed! As I have expressed in my previous letters, I am extremely confident that we will not only have the funds to build the memorial but will also raise sufficient funds to endow the AMA Memorial Trust, which will be the vehicle for funding all future AMA Memorial expenses for years to come!

You may make a donation to the AMA Memorial building fund by writing a check to the order of the **AMA Alumni Foundation**. You can find the **Donor Agreement Form here**. Please continue supporting the Museum's operations, as it still requires funding to stay open.

Cordially,

Douglas W. Pennock
Chairman



Springfield M1A
50th Anniversary Rifle

Watch the Video

This year, we are offering a very special rifle for our annual Rifle Raffle.
In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Springfield M1A version of the iconic semi-auto M14, Smithfield Armory produced a limited production of 1,974 units. This beautiful collector's rifle includes a handcrafted wooden display case, laser-engraved operating rod, a certificate of authenticity, and additional accessories.

Tickets will go on sale immediately. Ticket prices are $25 per single or $100 for a five-pack. You may purchase your tickets online HERE, or you can send a check to the Museum at: PO Box 100, Ft. Defiance, VA 24437-0100

22" BARREL

The G.I. 22-inch carbon steel barrel on the M1A 50th Anniversary rifle wrings all available performance out of the 7.62 round.

MATCH-GRADE APERTURE REAR SIGHT

The match grade non-hooded rear sight features a small .052" aperture, ½ M.O.A. windage adjustments, and 1 M.O.A. elevation increments.

ARMY TECHNICAL MANUAL

Like M1A rifles from 50 years ago, a reproduction M14 Army TM-9-1005-223-12 technical manual is included.

TWO-STAGE TUNED TRIGGER

M1A CLEANING KIT

OD GREEN SLING

ENGRAVED OP ROD

Each 50th Anniversary M1A features an engraved 1 of 1974 operating rod, symbolizing its unique place in history.

Nominations are being sought for the ***Class of 2026*** AMA Sports Hall of Fame (SHOF). You may nominate an individual athlete, coach, team or anyone that you feel contributed in a significant way to AMA sports. Personnel / Team(s) selected will be recognized during Annual Reunion in September ***of 2026.***

Nominations must be recieved no later than Februrary 21, 2026

Please email your nomination to **John Arthur '75** email: john.arthur@cdg-1.com AND Rich VanBreeman, the Museum Curator, email: amacurator@gmail.com. John can be reached at 757-650-6309 for any questions.

SCHOLARSHIP CORNER

This year's Legacy Scholarship application window is open. Please click the link below to access the electronic portal to submit an application.

The application deadline is April 30, 2026

Garry Granger ‘71
AMA Scholarship Chair

https://amaalumni.org/scholarship-app-2026/

A monthly pledge from everyone who reads this newsletter supports the Museum's operating costs.

SET UP YOUR MONTHLY DONATION HERE

MUSEUM

DOCENT DUTY

THANK YOU!

Visitors in January

40

Museum Volunteers

Elizabeth Andrews

***B*e a Volunteer Docent for a weekend. You may be surprised how**

much fun you will have!

Online PX has been discontinued

Online PX sales have virtually ceased, so we have decided to discontinue the Online sales feature. You can still purchase items and bricks at the PX, but you must do so in person, by phone, or via email.

You may call the Museum during regular business hours, Wednesday through Sunday, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. Email - museum@AMAalumni.org

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

CHARLES ROWLETT
RIFLES
III

AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY
BAND

AMA

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

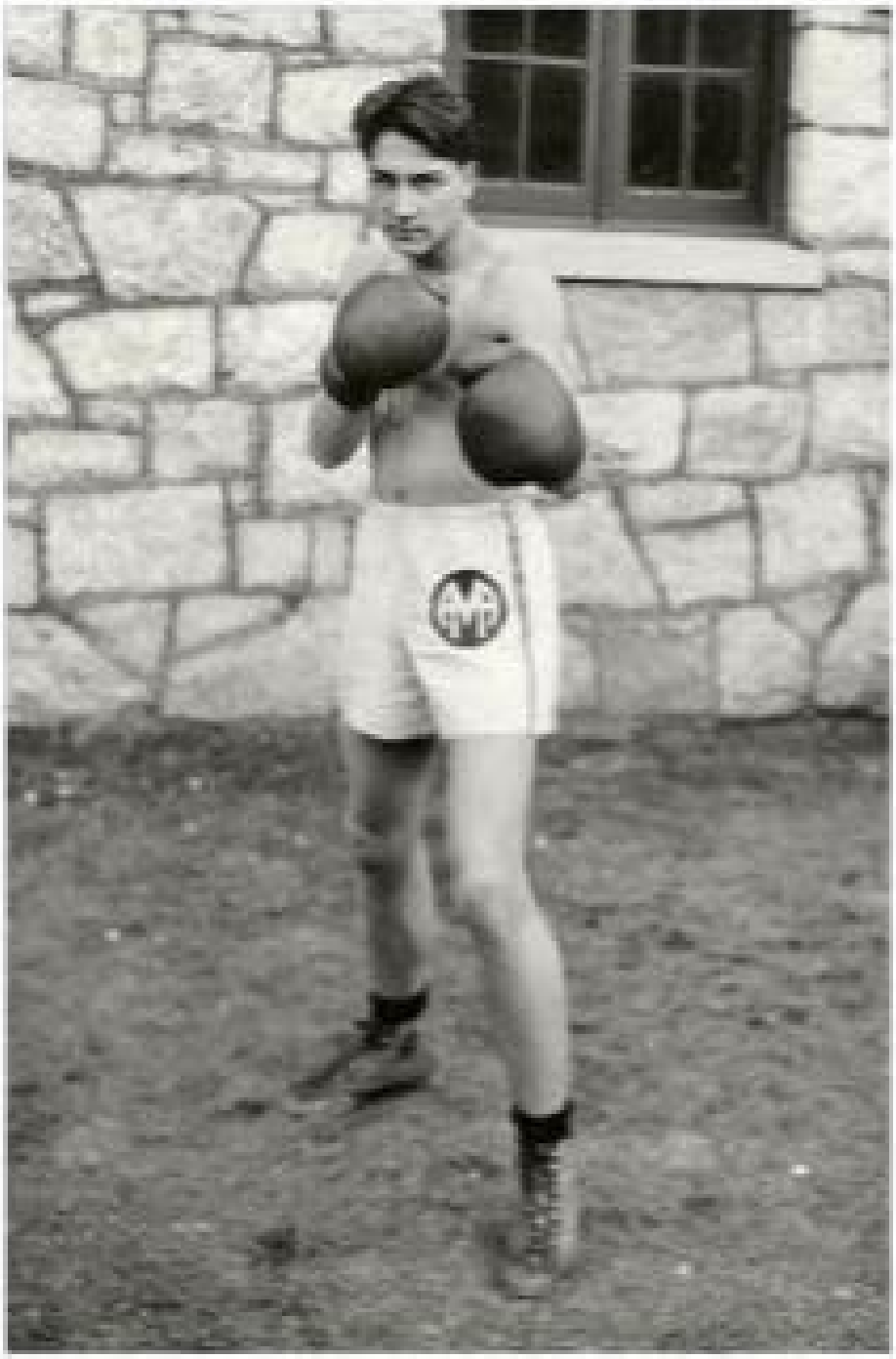
Elizabeth's Quest

Contribution written by Elizabeth Andrews
AMA Museum Volunteer

With Love, from Jackie to Hilton

I met Jack, or as my grandmother called him, “Jackie,” the summer I cleaned out my parents’ attic. I opened a box that contained all the love letters from the many cadets to my grandmother, Hilton. She had organized them by beau, each group tied with a ribbon, and all in chronological order. The attic clean-out came to an abrupt (and welcome) pause, as I time-traveled back to the period between 1928 and the summer of 1936, when my grandmother got engaged and married. Up until then, Hilton corresponded with many young men, all who professed their love for her – but no one quite like Jackie.

With love and best
wishes for success
Jackie



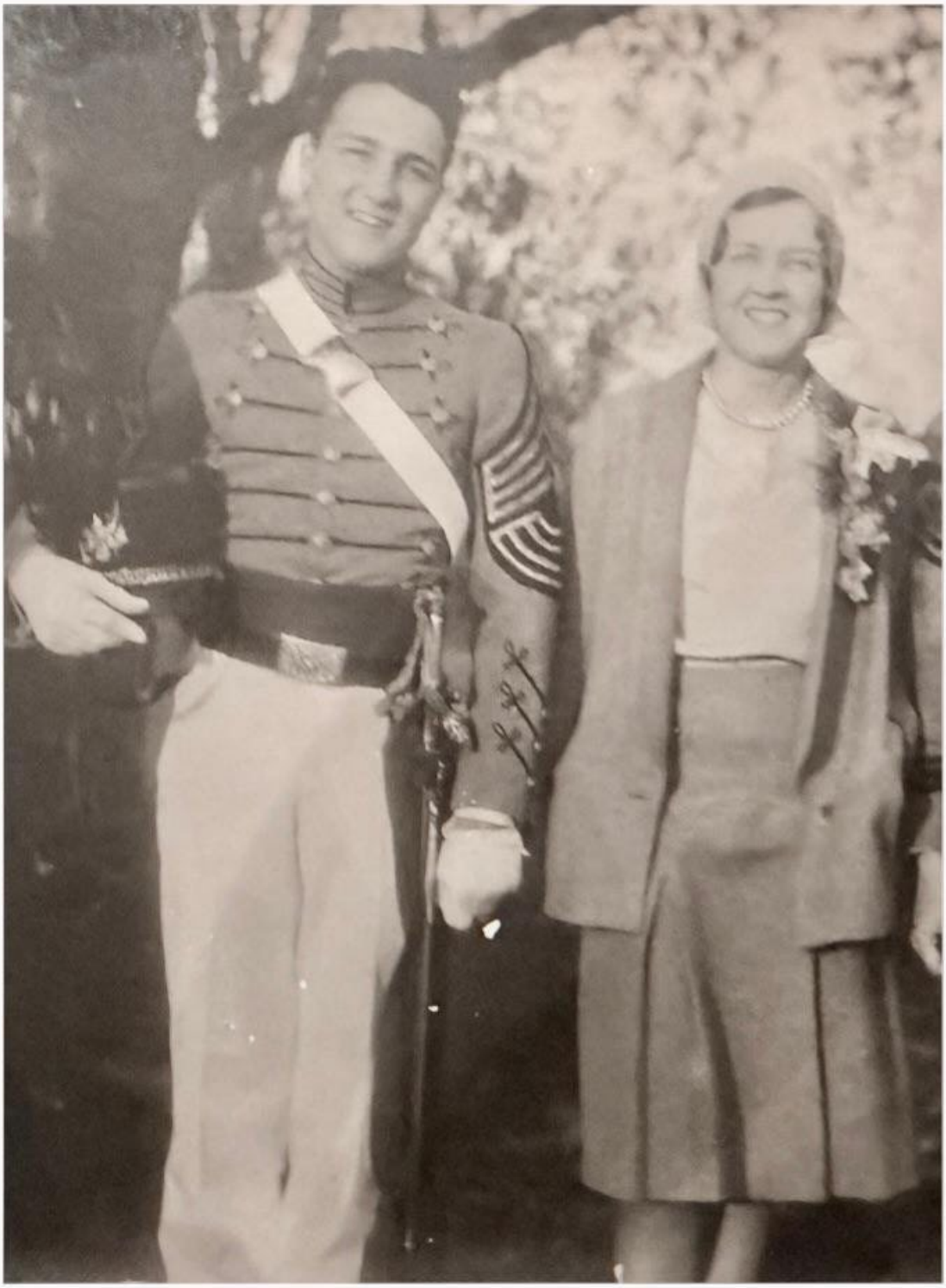
John Guy Woods attended AMA from 1926-1930. He was a boxer, a member of Ad Astra, and best friends with my grandmother. While their love story is one for the ages, as told through their correspondence, Jack's letters over the years also offer a glimpse of life as a cadet at AMA.

Over the summer of 1927, Jack wrote my grandmother asking how they, meaning Col. Tom and Major (aka General Charles S. Roller, Jr., but "Major" or "Uncle Dolly" to my grandmother) were "getting on with the new things and are they building a house over the pool so you can swim and the boys won't see you sink." In the fall of 1928, Jack wrote, "How is old AMA and how is the new gym, and what on earth did they do to our Academic Building that we can't come back on time? Where is the golf course that they are having near school – do you know where it is? I think that it is about halfway between school and Staunton and will us 'keydets' be able to play there? You ought to get some clubs and start swinging so that when things get going we can go up and play." (I invite you to read more about AMA construction projects during this time in Chris' **November newsletter article**.)

The letters continued even when Jack was at AMA for the school year and my grandmother was a few yards away, staring down at the Barracks from her bedroom window at Beaumont. In December of 1929, Jack described Major's discipline of his roommate: "Henry, the roommate being on O.D., has received as usual the regular O.D. takedown that your Uncle Dolly gives deficient O.D.'s and Henry like unto him was slightly deficient. As I write that last sentence, Major was giving Henry a little more bawling out. And Henry just came by the door saying 'I give up'."

And how were the letters delivered up the hill from the cadets to my grandmother? That question is answered a few months later, when Jack wants to get a permit to leave campus to go on a date: “If I am going to write you a flock of letters on scratch pad notes, I had better keep changing the handwriting on the envelopes, had I not? Your dad brings you over all the mail, does he not? His seeing a flock of letters in the same hand will put him thinking, won’t it? Write me real quick and tell me when it would be best to go to the movies for you afternoon or night? And I will know when to ask Major.” He adds, “If Major is in a good humor this noon, I shall ask him how chances would be getting a permit approved on Thursday. If he is not in a good humor, I shall wait until tomorrow.”

In June 1930, Jack graduated from AMA, and my grandmother was his escort.



Jack gave the Valedictory speech, a copy of which he mailed to Hilton, and his words ring true many years later: “Fellow Cadets, there is a freedom, a joy in our school days that is not found in any other chapter of life. The friends that we make in school life are nearer and dearer to us than any others, and today we are leaving those friends, many of whom we shall never see again.” He later concludes, “Halls that we leave, fond Alma Mater, farewell, We turn to take our last look at these dear old walls. Remember, Fellow Students, no matter how high our names are inscribed upon the gilded scroll of fame, to our Alma Mater all honor give; to her all praises bring, and when we are wearied by the rush and hustle of this busy world, let us turn our minds to these happy school days and seek repose in their sweet memories: grey barracks - - tall cottonwoods - - green campus - - clay bowl - - rose bushes - - sweet honeysuckles - - song birds - - dear friendships - - first call - - fall in - - taps - - new cadets - - old cadets - - dear pals. To all of these farewell and goodbye.” (The complete speech is a fascinating read. Find Jack’s own copy, along with more pictures and his memories of AMA and WWII, **here**).

Jack gave my grandmother his AMA class ring, inscribed with both his and her initials. I have a video of Jack doing handstands for my grandmother in the front lawn of Beaumont just before he left. He was a charmer. He moved to California, where his father’s family lived, attended community college, and graduated from UCLA. Over the years, Jack sent 174 pieces of correspondence to Hilton. He talked about coming east during the summers, but money was short and life got in the way. After he left Fort Defiance in June of 1930, they would never see each other again. I was heartbroken when, after my grandmother wrote of her

engagement to a former cadet, Louis Somerville, the letters ended with a heartfelt congratulations from Jackie.

Jack married a lovely woman named Vivian. They were together just shy of 60 years.

Vivian and Jack Woods, 1979

We know this because Jack and my grandmother resumed their letter writing 40 years later. When Jack died, his daughter mailed my grandmother's letters that he had saved back to her. They shared news about their children and grandchildren, remembered friends and good times from the past, and exchanged photos like they used to do. Jack even offered to help track down Hilton's brother, Tommy,

who my grandmother had not heard from in years. Best of friends, as if no time had passed.

I met Shalee Miles, Jack's granddaughter, a few months after she and her family visited the AMA museum. Her father, Jack's son-in-law, was visiting from out-of-state, and they decided to spend a long weekend in the valley at an Airbnb just around the corner. Driving past, her father said, "I think your grandfather went to Augusta Military Academy." Chris listened to Shalee and wondered if John Guy Woods, who folks sometimes called "Jack," could be THE Jack about whom I had shared so many stories.

It was. I returned to Shalee the class ring inscribed with Jack and Hilton's initials and a "ball-in-a-cage" toy that Jack carved out of wood and gave to my grandmother.

I shared the 174 pieces of correspondence with her so that her children could get to know their great-grandfather in his own voice. And fall in love with him just as much as my grandmother and I did.

Elizabeth with Jack's granddaughter, Shalee, September 11, 2025

Doug Pennock's Viewpoint

February 1, 2026

Dear readers,

It is fascinating how we tend to take things for granted. We are all guilty of this pattern, whether we want to believe it or not.

Case in point. As you all know, I live in the Caribbean. San Juan, Puerto Rico, to be exact. I deal with expensive groceries because 90 percent of what we consume on this island is imported. I also deal with expensive electricity because we are on a stand-alone grid that must produce its own power with bunker C fuel oil, diesel, natural gas, a little solar, and a little wind. Because we are a stand-alone grid that was built in the 1950's, our outdated power plants must always produce 25 to 30 percent excess standby power in the event of a generator failure. Without that extra power in reserve, the grid would crash. The US/Canada power grid is interconnected, allowing every state, province, city, and town the luxury of relying on a power reserve from somewhere in greater North America, so a "grid crash" is unlikely in the northern 48. So, all of you who live up there, take clean, cheap, and steady electrical power for granted!

We also have earthquakes, hurricanes, and a serious shortage of doctors. But this is where I was born and raised, except for the

decade I was away getting an AMA and College education, so I'm used to it.

What I take for granted is that our weather, outside of the occasional Category 4.9 hurricane, is always pretty nice. The temperature will hover around mid-70’s to low 80's from November to March, then gradually rise to the high 80’s the rest of the year. We always have a gentle easterly breeze, so even when it gets hot in mid-summer, temperatures in the shade remain pleasant.

I very much enjoy visiting the “States” during the winter. I enjoy cold and snowy days, only because I know that I will be returning to my warm island in a short time. I can’t imagine what it is like to live where you need to park your car with the windshield wipers pulled back off the glass, having to keep a shovel in your car to dig yourself out of a frozen tundra and taking your life into your own hands by walking outside on snow that has an inch of ice covering it which may not melt for weeks! Not to mention dressing in multiple layers of clothing in order to stay warm while you walk outside to pick up your mail. My youngest son lives outside of Boston and had over 28” of snowfall during this last winter event, not to mention the walls of ice and snow the plows leave impeding him from leaving a parking space. Below is a picture of his car after an hour of digging and scraping to liberate it from its icy tomb.

So, to all of you who were affected by the late January snowstorm, and possibly a second round right after that, I send warm regards and hope you have made out without any major complications. Stay safe and stay inside if you can.

Oh yeah, I'm looking forward to a few days in the valley this week! I hear it will be a bit nippy.

Doug out

The Museum Newsletter is written and prepared by Doug Pennock.
Trudy Pennock and Marc Aronson '68, editors.

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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