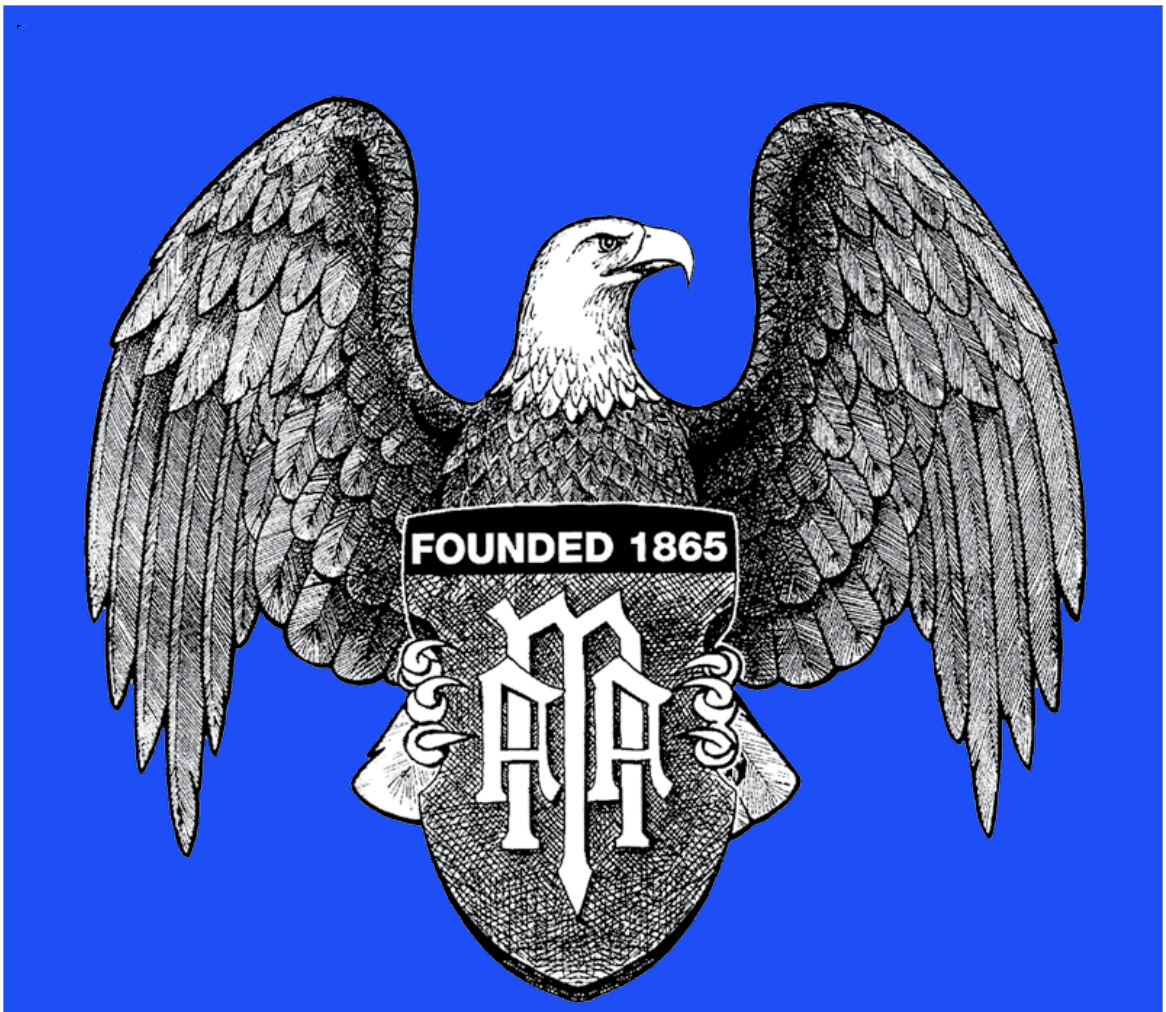


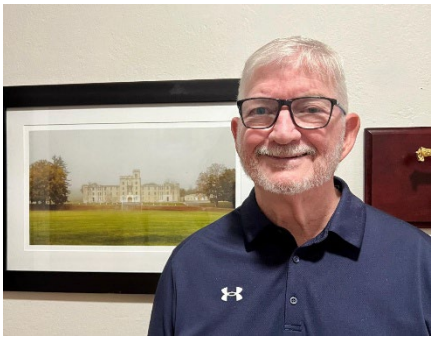
"Ad Astra Per Aspera"

AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY ALUMNI FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER

June - 2026

THE AMA MEMORIAL



Chairman's Message

Douglas W. Pennock '72

June 1, 2026

Dear fellow alumni and friends,

Happy Summer of 2026!

This is the time of year when we would have been preparing for our final week at AMA—final exams, the Final Ball, and the graduation ceremony for the senior class. One event was stressful, one was exciting, and for graduating seniors, one was far more emotional than most people would ever imagine. Over my six years at AMA, I witnessed more tears shed on the blacktop after final formation than at almost any other place.

We each have our own reasons for being involved—or not involved—in AMA activities today. Yet there is a common bond that connects most of us, and it is remarkably powerful. I have met and interacted with alumni who were my father's classmates from 1948, as well as members of the Class of 1984. We are all distinctly different, but whenever we gather, we seem to fall naturally into formation once again.

The spit-shined shoes are gone. The collar stays, black-striped trousers, and heavily starched shirts have disappeared. During my junior and senior years, when I was a Company commander, then the Battalion XO, I changed my shirt two or three times a day just to keep it looking crisp and sharp. Even today, my linen and cotton dress shirts receive an extra shot of starch at the laundromat. Some habits never leave us.

As I begin my tenth year on the AMA Alumni Foundation Board of Directors and my eighth year as Chairman, I have taken inventory of why I do this. I was never a particularly good student academically; I was probably better than average in the military life, and an average athlete. I stayed out of trouble but was not a saint. So, why do I spend 30 to 40 hours a month on things AMA? Perhaps the answer is simple. AMA gave me far more than I appreciated at the time, and serving the Foundation is one small way to give

something back. And as long as I have the steadfast support of the other 14 members of the Foundation Board, we will continue to work diligently and communicate in an honest and transparent way, and yes, sometimes even in a blunt way.

The Board of Directors will hold its summer meeting at 9:30 AM on Saturday morning, June 20, 2026, at the Hotel 24 South in Staunton. The primary agenda items are the status of the negotiations between the AMA Memorial Committee and the Old Stone Church, and the 2026 Alumni Reunion. As usual, the meeting is open to all alumni, and anyone who wishes to attend is welcome.

Cordially,

Douglas W. Pennock – AMA 1972
Chairman

2026 AMAAF Officers

The AMA Alumni Foundation Board of Directors met via teleconference on Saturday, May 2, 2026, to elect the 2026–2027 Officers. The election results were the following:

-Officers-

Doug Pennock '72 - Chairman
Tom Del Valle '73 - Vice Chairman
Gary Cripps '71 - Treasurer
John Arthur '75 - Secretary

Gordon Metz '67 - Chaplain

-Members-

Steve Trent '69
Marc Aronson '68
Bj d'Orsay '70
Jorge Rovirosa '70
Garry Granger '71
Herb Maher '71
Brett Thompson '75
Lee Ramsey '73
Jeff Wenzel '70
Victor Gomez '69

F L A S H !!

Once again, the Museum of Augusta Military Academy has officially been named a winner in two (2) categories of the 2026 Shenandoah Valley Best competition.

Gold - Family Attraction

Gold – Museum

Congratulations to all who voted for our incredible museum, our remarkable museum staff & docents, and the astronomical history we proudly show off to visitors!

An Announcement from Your Reunion Committee

New for the **Hospitality Room** on Thursday evening, September 10th, we have added a carving station featuring **roast beef** and **ham** carved by the hotel chef. Hot hors d'oeuvres and snacks will also be available along with soft drinks, water, and adult beverages.

Come join us at the 2026 Reunion, where Fun is a tradition!

QUICK LINKS

[Register for Reunion 2026]

[Buy Rifle Raffle Tickets]

[Reunion Sponsorship]

[AMA Memorial Sponsorship Donor Agreement]

[Museum General Fund Donation]

AMA Alumni Reunion

September 10 - 12, 2026

Honoring the Classes of:
'46, '51, '56, '61, '66, '71, '76, and '81

Headquarters Hotel Hotel 24 South (Stonewall Jackson)

Call 540-885-4848 to make your reservation. Tell them that you are with the AMA group to get your $127 per night rate

Register HERE

Become a Reunion Sponsor

For the past several years, our Alumni Weekend has been fully funded by the generosity of our own. That says a great deal about the kind of men that AMA produced.

If you would like to help sponsor one of this year's events or venues, we would be grateful. Every contribution, regardless of size, plays a role in making the weekend something we can all be proud of.

Sponsors will be recognized throughout the reunion.

Please click HERE to sponsor an event

Below is a list of this year's sponsorship opportunities.

You may sponsor a portion of the venue or the entire venue. Your choice.

Registration	$1,500.00
Hospitality Suite	$1,500.00
Band Company Breakfast	$1,000.00
Friday Banquet	$6,400.00
Saturday Breakfast	$2,300.00
Saturday Lunch	$4,200.00
Saturday Dinner	$6,400.00
Flowers	$500.00
Reunion General Fund	Any Amount

Reunion 2026 Sponsors

Category	Cost	Sponsors	Pledge	Status	Paid	Dat
Registration	$ 1,500	Doug Pennock '72	$ 1,500	Paid	$ 1,500.00	4/25/
Hospitality	$ 2,100	Steve Trent	$ 1,500			
		Bill Mc Vey	$ 600	Paid	$ 600.00	5/15/
Band Breakfast	$ 1,000	Doug Driscoll '72	$ 500	Paid	$ 500.00	2/19/
		Joe Gallehugh '70	$ 500	Paid	$ 500.00	4/28/
		Frank Roach '69	$ 250	Paid	$ 250.00	5/17/
Friday Dinner	$ 6,400	Class of '67	$ 3,200	Paid	$ 3,200.00	4/14/
Saturday Breakfast	$ 2,300	Lee Ramsey '73	$ 2,300			
Saturday Lunch	$ 4,200		$ -			
Saturday Dinner	$ 6,400	Marc Aronson '69	$ 3,200			
		Anonimous	$ 1,500	Paid	$ 1,500.00	4/29/
Flowers	$ 500					
Reunion General Fund	$ 2,000	Doug Driscoll '72	$ 500	Paid	$ 500.00	2/19/
		Herb Maher '72	$ 500			
		Jeff Wenzel '70	$ 3,200	Paid	$ 3,200.00	
		Doug Pennock '72	$ 175	Paid	$ 175.00	
		Bj d'Orsay '70	$ 180	Paid	$ 180.00	
		Frank Roach '69	$ 500	Paid	$ 500.00	
TOTAL	$ 26,400		$ 20,105		$ 12,605.00	

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 are on sale. 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

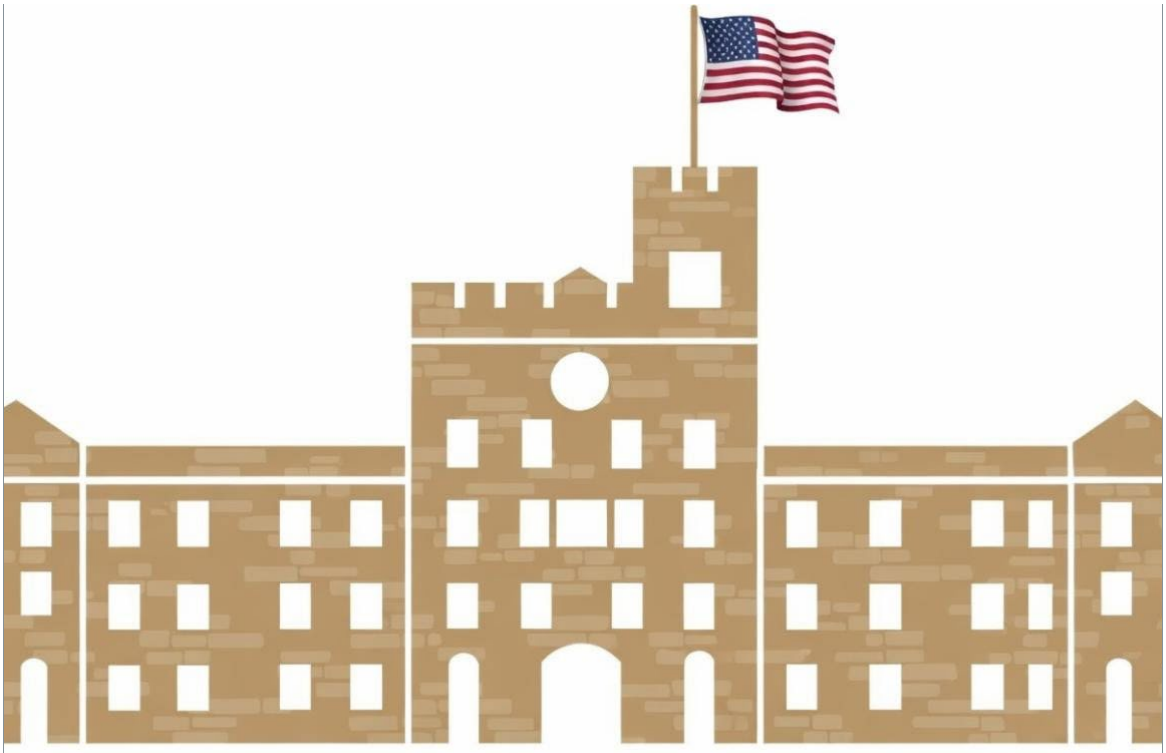
Like M1A rifles from 50 years ago, a reproduction M14 Army TM-9-1005-223-12 technical manual is included.

TWO-STAGE TUNED TRIGGER

M1A CLEANING KIT

OD GREEN SLING

Augusta Military Academy Alumni Foundation Scholarship



AMA ALUMNI FOUNDATION, Inc.

AMA LEGACY SCHOLARSHIPS

We have 4 applications.

Once again, the AMA Alumni Foundation is delighted to offer financial assistance for higher education to our alumni's offspring.

For the first time this year, we have two (2) highly qualified non-alumni Scholarship Committee members who will make the final decision (without debate)

regarding the winners of this year's Legacy Scholarships.

Announcements will be made in the July AMA Newsletter; a formal presentation will be given at Reunion 2026 in September.

A heartfelt THANK YOU to Marc Aronson '68, Phil Bentley '83, Soumi Eachempati, and Brenda Martinez (non-alumnus judges) for their time and energy with the Scholarship Committee

Garry Granger'71
AMA Alumni Foundation
Scholarship Committee

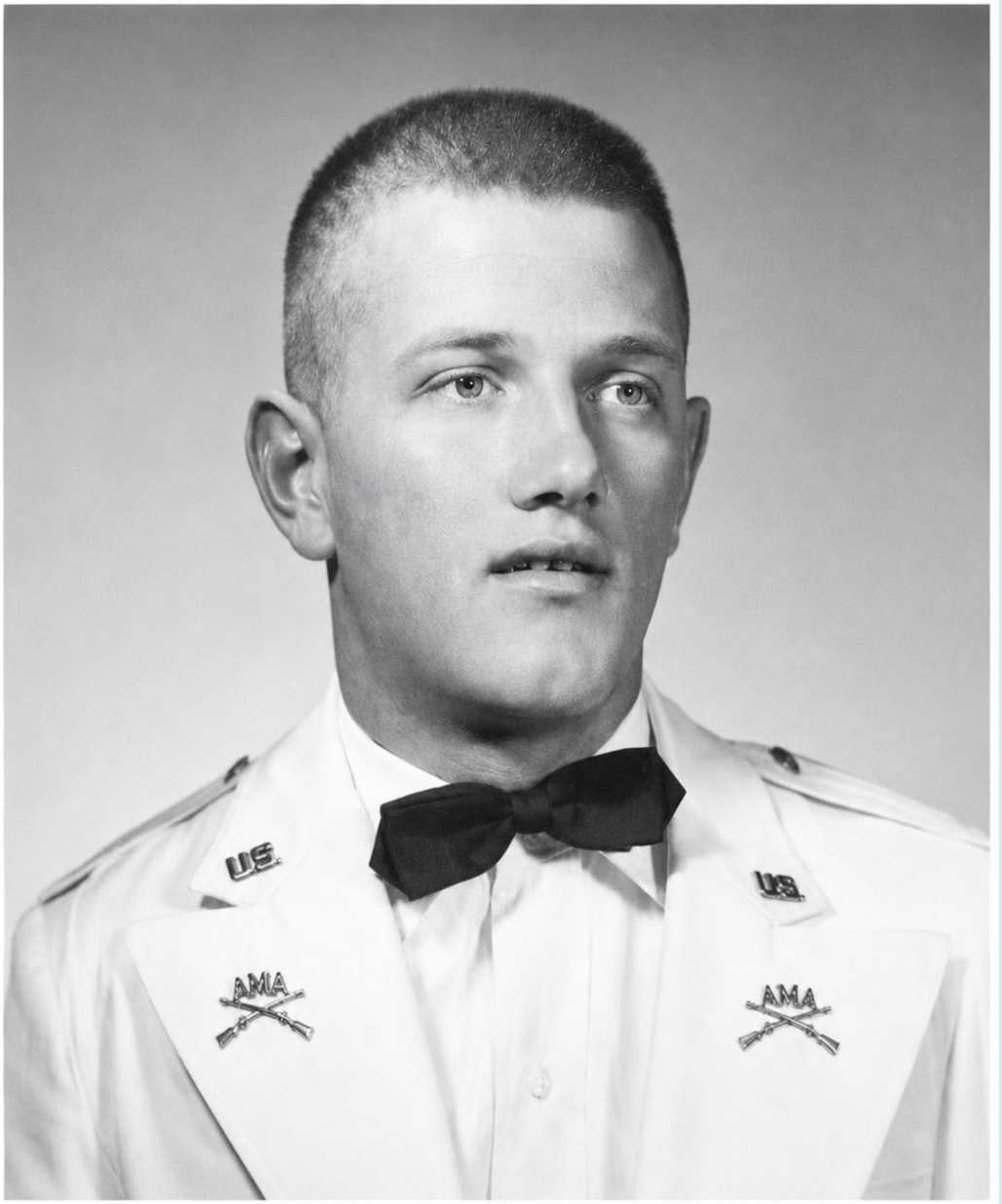
Museum Visitors

On May 15, Steve Brown '61 visited with grandson Dawson (studying finance at Virginia Tech), daughter Stephanie, and son-in-law Blain. They were traveling to JMU to see Steve's other grandson, Aiden, graduate with a degree in sports management.

Steve finished at William Byrd High School in 1960, just outside his hometown of Roanoke, but he wanted another year to improve his grades for college. He had no

immediate connection to any of the schools he could've chosen next, but some of his friends mentioned that Byrd High School's **Bill Ralph (VMI '54)** was **now at AMA**. Steve followed.

George William "Pastor Bill" Ralph (1930-2011), VMI Keydet and AMA Faculty



Cadet Ray Steven "Bob" Brown '61

Steve was on the football, basketball, and track teams (though he points out, not baseball, and he wasn't from

Florida, as the *Recall* says). Arriving on campus at under 150 pounds, he lifted, pressed, and curled his way to 180 by Christmas:

MUTILATION IN VIEW.. .Hargrave's ace finds himself against AMA's stone wall of defense, which saw Augusta trounce the Chatham men 39—6.
Weyman, Kraft, Stillwagon, Churchill, and Brown stop HMA cold in their attempt for a first down. Every defensive action on the field was praised in the local paper. – ***Recall 1961***

Even at his peak weight, Steve knew he was too small for college ball, so he focused on his education. He started in community college in Roanoke and transferred to VPI to study building construction. By this time, he'd already begun his 8-year service in the naval reserves.

After college, he began his long career in residential construction and now runs his real estate and property management firm. As he closes in on 84, "I should've been

retired, but I can't get around to getting myself to do that right yet." There's a lot of physical labor he can't do anymore, but when asked what his retirement agenda would be, he laughed, "I don't know. That's why I don't retire! I've worked all my life. It's the only thing I know how to do, really."

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 May

70

Museum Volunteers

Elizabeth Andrews
Brian Miller '67
Jim Alexander of Fort Defiance

***B*e a Volunteer Docent for a weekend. You may be surprised how much fun you will have!**

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

AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY
AD ASTRA PER ASPERA
1865

CHARLES'S ROLLER
III
RIFLES

AMA

AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY
BAND

AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY

CROSSLAND
AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY
AD ASTRA PER ASPERA
1865

PAVER BRICK

Celebrate a life, a legacy, or a special memory by purchasing a personalized Paver Brick at the AMA Museum.

Every brick is proudly placed along the sidewalk running east of the Museum. When the time comes, all paver bricks will be relocated and permanently displayed at the AMA Memorial — ensuring your tribute endures for generations.

Visit the Brick virtual map HERE
Brick Order Form

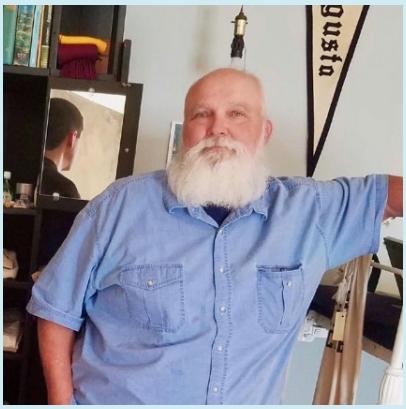
AMA

1-LT John Arthur

Class of 1975

+/– 30 minutes

HDP



vanBreemen's Expressions

June 1, 2026

Yippie Ki-Yay

By Rich vanBreemen

Much of this will seem like rehashing old news. Bear with me, as I believe it will help clarify a lot.

As kids, we grew up watching westerns and would picture ourselves as rootin'-tootin' cowboys. We all knew what it meant if you saw buzzards circling in the sky over the next ridge; something dead is lying over yonder! Sometimes I get that same impression working at the Museum; look up, and you can almost see buzzards circling the campus.

It is no secret amongst ourselves that each day the Museum inches closer to its finale. This is not to say that we will shutter our windows in the next few months. OH CONTRARE – we still have a few good YEARS left in us before we ride off into the sunset. But that has not held off the buzzards.

Last week, I got an email from an American Legion Post outside of Charlottesville. They had heard through the grapevine that the Museum was closing and asked if they could "please" have our cannon! Pretty ballsy, to say the least, but I took a deep breath and calmly replied that we were not closing anytime soon and that the cannon was already spoken for by the American Legion Post that had arranged for AMA to get it in the first place (Post 13, Staunton, VA). However, once rumors like that start, they are hard to quash.

The whole incident got Chris and me talking, and we came to a few conclusions that will serve as fodder for this article and several subsequent ones. For starters, we need to redirect the narrative about the Museum and AMA's future. **The Museum is NOT going out of business – we are transitioning from one form to another.**

Chris and I arrived at the Museum around the same time in 2019. When we got here, the Museum was already in the midst of change – though no one realized it at the time. What was happening was a metamorphosis from what the Museum had started out as to something quite different. Originally, the Museum served as a "home base" for alumni to return to campus and relive the days of uniforms and sports events. Alums could wander through the exhibits, review the old RECALLS and some of the Bayonets, and for a while, step back in time.

This was a noble and worthwhile endeavor that played out well at the time. But something happened – the same thing that has

happened since forever. Time marched on. With each passing year, the number of alums who visited the campus declined. Then came COVID, and the world changed. Travel halted, health concerns rose, and interest in the past was put on hold as people worried about the future. A new way of thinking was needed to secure the Museum's future.

The alums were facing changes of their own, parallel to the changes at the Museum. A new board of directors had been appointed, the Museum's management staff had changed, and the Alumni Association and Foundation merged. Without fanfare or intent, the Foundation's and the Museum's operations were morphing into a "lean" machine, and all the while, the clock kept ticking, and the pages on the calendar kept tearing off.

Call it the Perfect Storm, Karma, Luck, or Divine Intervention, but the chess pieces had lined up to facilitate a move in a new direction. So much of the groundwork had been done over the years that it seemed to be foretold. The research, writings, and cataloging of artifacts, all done "old school" since 1999, had installed a solid foundation on which to build. Kudos to the former staff and volunteers who put in so many hours of hard work. The Museum now sees that, if it were to have any future, it lies in a digital/virtual direction. Thankfully, the Board agrees.
No one is ready to close the Museum and have it become another "APP" on a phone. But let's be realistic; visits and donations from alums and the general public have declined sharply. However, the biggest obstacle we face, and cannot ignore, happens in October 2028. That's when the long-standing agreement between the AMA Foundation and our landlord, the Pentecostal Church, comes to an end. Various alternatives have been investigated over the years, with no success.

With that distasteful end looming before us, we had to decide: "Fight or Flight". We've decided to fight to preserve AMA's legacy. That fight is a two-pronged assault: the AMA Memorial to be located at the Old Stone Church overlooking the campus, and the virtualization of the current Museum.

The Memorial project is well documented by your Board and progresses under their leadership. The Museum, on the other hand, struggles to move forward on its new path while still providing a comprehensive experience for guests and alums alike. To virtualize the Museum, we need to digitize current displays and collections stored in our archive room. Much has been done thus far:

- **An updated webpage has been developed to better align with the virtual theme. (https://amaalumni.org/)**
- **A virtual walking tour of the campus and the Museum is available online.**
- **All the known grade books have been scanned and are securely archived.**
- **All known Bayonets have been scanned and are available online.**
- **All known RECALLS have been scanned and are available online.**
- **Cadet and artifact records via PastPerfect continue to grow and are available to the public.**

What remains is a monumental task of reviewing and digitizing all the cataloged items. These can range from a belt buckle to a 50-page photo album. However, to make the results worthy of

museum display, specialized equipment and techniques are required.

The former conference room has been reconfigured into a digitization workshop. What you see in this photo is a combination of specialized photography tools and some custom-built "gizmos" to aid in the process. Chris has done incredible work here, and the results are on par with anything a large, federally subsidized museum is producing, albeit somewhat slower.

While Chris is doing the lion's share of this work at the Museum, BJ has been busy digitizing school records we discovered that had been languishing in a storage unit, awaiting a water leak that would destroy them. What he has uncovered runs the gamut

from benign trivia to mind-blowing exposés of some of the school's inner workings.

DR. EDWIN M. BEERY
118 GATES AVENUE
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

PHONE, PROSPECT 3638

May 28.1928.

Col.T.J. Roller
Augusta Military Academy
Fort Defiance, Va.

My dear Col. Roller:-

I have been extremely well pleased with Moffett's progress at Augusta Military Academy this year and feel that the training and general conditions at your school have been of inestimable benefit to him both physically and intellectually.

I have every intention of returning him for next session.

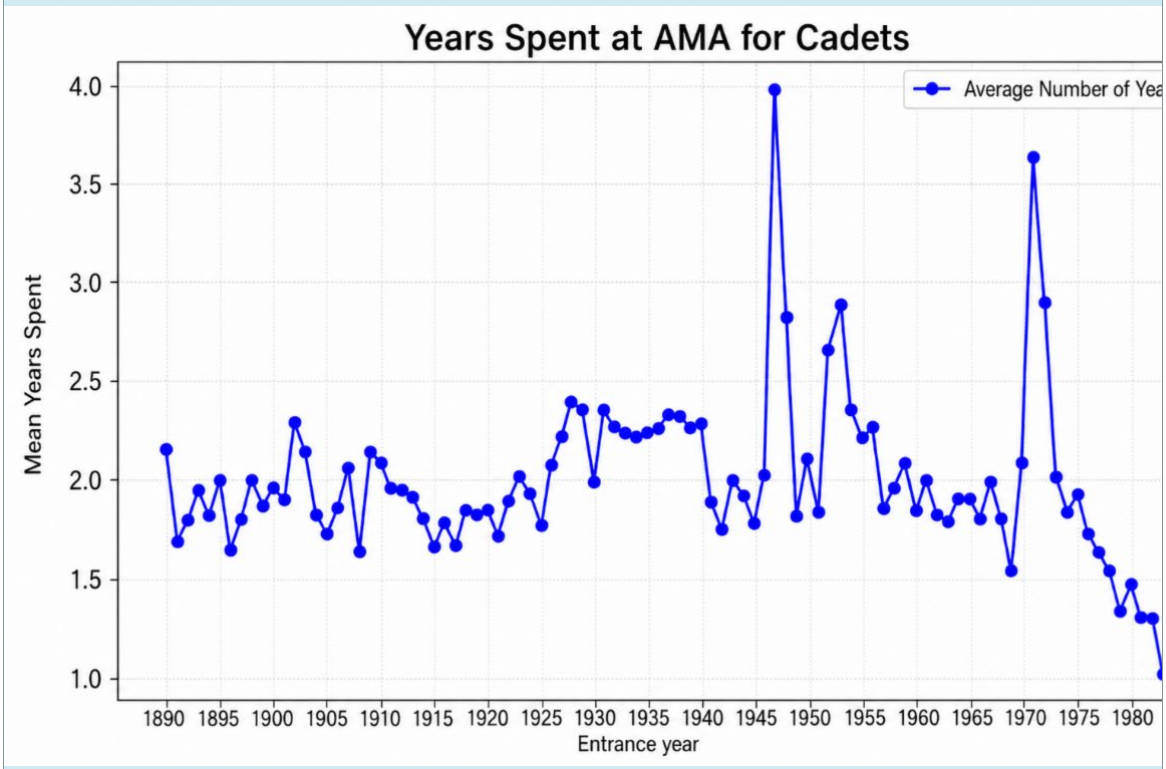
Very truly yours.

E M Beery

EMB/GAJ.

Example of a letter found in storage

To conclude this segment of our Museum's report, I will note that converting all this information from hard copy to digital has enabled us to run statistical analyses on school records, something previously impossible. Have you ever wondered how long cadets stayed at AMA? Each case is unique, of course, but some trends help explain the school's history. Here is a rough preliminary example:



This and much more is what we are beginning to extract from the digitized data. Next month, I will expand on this process and WHY it is important in the short and long term.

If you have any questions about what we are doing or suggestions for improving the work, don't hesitate to get in touch with us at the Museum via email.

museum@amaalumni.org

Doug Pennock's Viewpoint

June 1, 2026

Dear fellow Alumni,

Graduation season is in full bloom, and this year I get to celebrate my granddaughter Clara's high school graduation. I won't bore you with grandfatherly accolades, but you may not be surprised to learn that this young lady has a strong working knowledge of all things AMA. She has met many of my AMA brothers, and as she got older, Clara would sometimes say, "Pop, they're all like you!"

I have no doubt that the influence AMA had on me so many years ago allowed me, as I did with my two sons, to pass along advice and wisdom you could only learn inside that fortress-like incubator.

My last two lessons with Clara have been:

1. Having her change the perfectly good tire on her car and replace it with the spare tire dug out of the bowels of the car's cargo area.

Clara: “Pop, why do I need to learn how to do this?”
Me: “Someday you will be alone, on a country road, at night, in the rain, and your cell phone will be dead.”
Clara: “Ok, but the probability of that happening is pretty slim.”
I also added, “You probably want to keep a raincoat and a pair of gloves in the trunk, just in case.”
That earned me the traditional eye roll and an “Ok, Pop.”

2. A few months later, Clara came by to visit, and I told her we were going to take a drive. I asked her to take me to a location about ten miles from my house. When she asked me for the address so she could put it into her phone’s map, I handed her an old-school paper map.

Me: “Here you go. I put an X on where we are going. Your phone is dead, and it is urgent that we get there in less than an hour.”
Clara: “Pop, really?”
Me: “Yup.”

Clara picked up the map, opened it, and within a few minutes got her head around reading it. We made it to the X in forty-five minutes.

The destination turned out to be a very nice restaurant, and we had a great lunch.

I hear so many people complain that younger generations have little or no life skills, people skills, or common sense. That may be true in many places, but a new generation

depends on the foundational support of the one that precedes it.

As the farmer in me is fond of saying, “You get what you sow.”

Clara will be settling into her dorm at UAX University, just outside Madrid, Spain, in mid-September. Being Clara, she has decided to take all of her coursework in Spanish. The significance of that decision is that she has attended an all-English-language school for the past fifteen years.

I have a feeling there will soon be many UAX students learning how to “Chalk.”

Doug Out

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

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
| **Museum@AMAalumni.org** | **http://www.amaalumni.org**
1640 Lee Highway
P.O. Box 101
Fort Defiance, VA 24437