



Remembering our brothers who have passed from this life

HILLSMAN, CHARLES EDWARD '71

Attached are a number of posts about the passing of Charlie Hillsman, Class of "71". For most, I know the name is one you may not recognize, but Charlie was a fixture at AMA, he was there for 8 years. From new cadet to Captain of Band Company, Charlie's constant drumming kept the corps in step. In fact many may remember that even when you spoke to him, that foot was still holding the beat. That Big Smile, feet tossed out to a 45 degree angle as he "strolled" at the head of the Band as they passed down the alley between Big Barracks and the Mess Hall. And even after the band was dismissed to lunch, as "A" company finally made it to the stairs, there would be Charlie, Captain of Band Company, beating out cadence to the Corps on a drum he borrowed from another band member. Always getting in that last riff.

But more than that, Charlie was from a past time. He lived the Civil War, the History, the grace of the old South. When he opened his mouth and spoke, even as a boy, you suddenly felt like you were standing on the set of "Gone with the Wind." The blood of chivalry ran through his veins..

While many left AMA to follow Military Careers, entered business, became

Doctors, Lawyers, Printers and business owners, Charlie lived his love of history. His house was located on a Civil War battlefield, he became heavily involved and a leader in Civil War reenactment. Not only involved, but he was Brig. Gen. Charles E. Hillsman in the Gettysburg Civil War Reenactments.

Though my words come slower nowadays and yesterday is a blur, my memories of Charlie and all of AMA are crisp, refreshing and warm.

Attached are some of the notes people wrote about Charlie's passing. For those who never knew him, or those who need a spark of memory, a dashing photo of "Brig. Gen. Charles E. Hillsman" on the battlefield can be found at:
<http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Square/3208/>

And a visit to the main website, with its music, brought a small tear

<[A HREF="http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Square/3208/main.html"](http://www.geocities.com/BourbonStreet/Square/3208/main.html)>

Longstreet's Corps Home Page

Rest My friend, Steve Pearson AMA 68-72 Classmate to Brig. Gen. Charles E. Hillsman

From -Thomas Fontaine Behrendt,*Charlottesville, Virginia and (temporarily) Charlotte, NC

AMA Class of '66

Charlie Hillsman's squad leader when he was a new cadet

There are some people who stick in your mind forever. For me Charlie Hillsman was, and will continue to be, one of those people. Like most of us, Charlie arrived at Augusta not knowing what to expect but, as I would soon learn, he was there to give it his best. He arrived with a mouth-full of

metal braces, thick glasses and a friendly, gentle way about him. There is one incident which I recall very clearly. I can see him now, a little boney kid standing there in his uniform. He was not yet aware of how to wear it or how to stand at attention or how to adjust his cap or much of anything else about life at a military school. I had called him back to the blacktop after the rest of the corps had dispersed. As every squad leader at Augusta soon learned, there were times when new cadets needed individual attention.

"Louder, Hillsman! It's YES SIR!! I can hardly hear you," I shouted while pacing back and forth in front of him.

"Yes sir," he replied while giving it everything he had. But he wasn't able to muster much of a shout.

"Come on, Hillsman! Shout it like you want the entire corps to hear you. Pretend you are commanding the whole corps to follow you across the drill field so you can attack that old barn over there," I pointed across Route 11 to a barn sitting on a hilltop.

"Yes sir," he shouted as his face reddened.

"And get that chin in and that chest out! No, Hillsman, keep your mouth closed when you stick your chin in! I don't want to see all that metal until it's out of your mouth and dangling from your chest," I shouted as I pointed to the medals on my uniform. "And I expect you to earn some medals while you're here at Augusta, you hear me Hillsman?"

"Yes sir," said Charlie ...barely audible.

"Louder Hillsman! Louder!! Remember that old barn over there. You can shout loud enough for that old barn to hear you, can't you Hillsman? Just suck all the air you can into your chest and let it out hollering!"

"Can I untuck my chin to shout, sir" he asked?

At that point all of the hard edge I was feigning escaped me. "Yes, you can untuck your chin to shout, Hillsman."

He opened his mouth wide and breathed in as much as he could and then let out everything he had, "YES SIR!"

He still hadn't managed to produce much of a shout but I remember feeling that this kid was giving it everything he had, and I mean everything. You could see the determination in his red face. I remember placing my hand on his shoulder and telling him that he would do just fine at Augusta, or anywhere else, as long as he always tried as hard as he was at that moment. I believe he had no intention of doing otherwise. Soon thereafter I was told that he suffered from asthma or some other type of breathing problem but another cadet brought that to my attention, not Charlie.

I left AMA in 1966 and knew not of Charlie's activities thereafter. About six months ago I read that Charlie was involved in the battlefield enactments of the War for Southern Independence. I told my wife about Charlie and how interesting it was that little Charlie Hillsman was now a general in that theater.

Then, today, I learned of his illness and passing. Bill Scarborough told me more about Charlie's depth of involvement in the battlefield enactment theater, and that there was no doubt that Charlie had long ago found his voice, earned his medals and knew how to lead the charge. I just wish I had been there when thousands followed him.

Although I wasn't there then, I am now with him and all of you, in spirit. I was lucky enough to have known him and he will always have a welcome place in my memories. I can hear him there now. Yes sir, I can hear him loud and clear.

My deepest sympathies to his family and loved ones, TFB, 12/18/00

Sorry to here about Charlie, damn shame. The good Lord will gain a fine General.
Ross Mitchel 1972

I am very saddened by the news of the passing of my first roommate at AMA, Charlie Hillsman. I can vividly remember how in the fall of 1965 Charlie [I believe in his second year) took in a scared, homesick boy as a roommate and tried his best to help me thru those first few months. Even then, Charlie was already practicing with drumsticks on anything he could tap. I can also remember him telling me stories about his family funeral home, and how he and his younger brother would play pranks with the cadavers. Of course the best story he told was that of the "headless" horseman who was an old "Confederate" cavalry soldier who would ride up and down the railroad tracks in Hopewell Va. ? Needless to say at that time he was also big into the Civil War. We talked a lot about the "Grey Ghost" and other great Confederate Soldiers.

I also can remember Charlie being the "drummer" for a Band made up by him and the Bakalis brothers.

These guys would play at "Fall" social held at the Mess Hall and attended by the ladies from Stuart and Fairfax Hall. Of course we also cannot forget how Charlie with his magical drumbeats, would get the spirit/adrenaline going of the Roller Rifles and our great Band prior to parades in Staunton, Waynesboro, Alexandria, Winchester, Harrisonburg, and Richmond. I close my eyes and remember those moments and cannot help but to be moved by the memory. I recall a few reunions ago seeing Charlie for the first time in over 25 years. He was just the same. His introduction to me of the lady friend that accompanied me could not be more Southernly Cavalier in manner. It was like going back in time.

Well, talking about going back in time, I know that Charlie, now back with his maker, is probably already mixing it up with the old soldiers in heaven. So long, dear Charlie; rest in peace, my friend...

Jorge P. Roviroso AMA 1970

I know that you and I have not met. My name is Elizabeth Barnes-Watkins. Chuck is my cousin and Ricky Ellett is my uncle. Not only am I distantly related to Chuck, but I am a member of the 12th Va., Co. B reenactment unit of Longstreet's Corps. Ricky forwarded your AMA letter to me. With your permission I would like to pass the letter you wrote to other members of our unit. Chuck was not only a friend to all of us in the re-enactment world, but he was also a great leader. The rare events that Chuck did not attend were just not the same. I feel that Chuck was truly in his element when wearing a Confederate uniform. He had every bit of class and poise that one would have expected of a Confederate officer and Southern gentle massed by hundreds of friends.

Most Reenactors realize that non-Reenactors do not understand their passion for the hobby. Although most of us feel strong ties to the past, we only live in the past temporarily. We commemorate days of war gone by and teach history through this hobby. We learn through reenacting and many us of hope to better understand the mistakes of those that came before us so that we do not repeat these mistakes; Acts that lead us to the evolution of the "War of Northern Aggression" as some would call it. Most of us have some kind of tie to the Civil War. I personally grew up on a Southern plantation built in 1792, attended Hollins College which was founded for plantation owner's daughters, and currently live on a plantation built in 1763. My military experience has been gained as one of "Ricky's little soldiers," however, I do not take the field as a reenactor.

The last time I saw Chuck was the Saturday before Thanksgiving. He was in the Remembrance Day parade in Gettysburg, Pa. I was saddened by his appearance. As he rode his horse with his body slumped over and his head hung low, Chuck looked like so many of the soldiers coming home at the end of the long Civil War. It was if Chuck knew that he was on his journey home.

Ricky wrote me about his visit with "Charlie" just two weeks ago. I am so glad that Ricky was able to spend some time with someone who has always meant so much to him. I think Chuck meant much more than he knew to so many people whose lives he touched.

Well, as much as we will all miss Chuck, we are assured that his is finally at peace and we can take comfort in that knowledge. God Bless.....Elizabeth Barnes-Watkins

Bill, Our flags are flying at half staff! The sun will set on an empty country today!
He will be missed greatly! PJ

I barely knew Charlie, but recall he was one helluva Band Leader. As an example, my recollection is in the Spring of '71, he and John Goynes developed a new, spirited drumbeat cadence, that oddly enough I play in my mind walking between Federal buildings in Washington, DC. It's been a lifelong memory and a great inspiration to me and my career. Steve Traylor '72

21 December 2000

A Hi Ku For, General Charles (Chuck) Hillsman C.S.A., gentleman, room mate and friend.

A drummer drumming,
To a different beat, always, marching,
Now with the history he loved.

With love and sorrow, Rick Welch, AMA '67' Band Co.

I was sorry to hear of Charlie's passing. My daughter, Sandy Flynn, took a number of videos of Charlie's reenactment group as a part of her job to film reenactments. I will let her know of our loss.

Sincerely, Ed Chauncey (49)

It was a sad day when we received your e-mail about Charlie Hillsman. I myself had only met him at the class reunion, before he had gotten sick. His passion about the Civil War era made the past come alive. Both Bob and I were saddened by this loss. Our hearts and prayers go out to his wife and all his AMA buddies.

Bernice Walker (Bob Walker '75)