

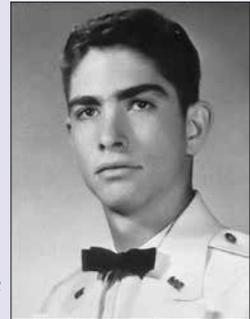
# Augusta Military Academy

## Oral History

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MEMORIES STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART – TOUCHING AND HUMOROUS

When I think back to my days at AMA, I suddenly get a flood of memories and long forgotten faces. One special memory stands out particularly, because it taught me that hard work brings many rewards and allowed me to get to know a man that I respected and appreciated very much, so here it goes...



I arrived at AMA in September of 1959 from the country of my birth -- Cuba -- eight months after Castro's military take-over. My English at the time was limited to "*Tommy is a boy and Mary is a girl*".

I entered the school as a sophomore, so you can imagine the effort required to obtain passing grades under those circumstances, but somehow I did manage to pass all my subjects and move on to become a junior. I adjusted to my military surroundings and life-style quite well and enjoyed it all.

My second year at AMA was different for sure. As a result of the political situation in Cuba, my father couldn't pay the full tuition required, but **General Roller** insisted that I remain at AMA and he said that I could work as a cadet waiter to defray the costs of the tuition.

I was the first "Spanish Boy" to ever become a C.W. at Augusta! The "Big Boy" had a heart as big as the state of Virginia, God bless his soul.

I moved to C.W. barracks and roomed with HQ. Company's Captain **Bill Klinck**, **William "Craig" Roberts**, and **Bob Andes**. I soon found out that C.W.'s were special guys -- friendly, helpful and a real tight unit.

It was at this time that I met our Post Steward, **Captain J.C. Peduto**, or "Louie" as we called him behind his back. "Louie" was a no-nonsense type of guy, his mess hall was his kingdom and we owe to those that did not think so!

He was a tough guy, but he was also sensitive and fair as hell. He demanded that as a cadet waiter you served your table properly and treated all members of the corps with respect. His mess hall was no play ground and cooperation among C.W.'s was a keyword.

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Right off the bat “Louie” assigned me to “Pots and Pans”. I became the dishwasher along with a hell of a nice guy by the name of **Mel Avery**, who, by the way, was a great character in his own right. We worked in the back of the mess hall, we were friends with ole **Archie**, the cook, and **Mrs. Ollie** and the other guys behind the kitchen scene.

Being so close to the cooks brought many side benefits, Mrs. Ollie used to save a whole peach pie for me for she knew that it was my favorite, Archie took the time to fix me a plate with bacon and eggs freshly cooked at breakfast time and so on and so on...

“Louie” taught me that hard work was good, and there was no shame in it. He treated me the same way my father would have treated me had he been there with me and I appreciated that.

He was notorious for avoiding wandering around in the mess hall at dinner time on his birthday when the corps were in so that the “Happy Birthday” song would not be sung. During my senior year, my roommate **Craig Roberts** and I, in cahoots with other C.W.’s, decided to change that.

We staged a fight at a vacant mess hall table -- we had some old dishes and silverware as props laying on the table and sure enough, Craig and I staged our mock fight as previously practiced. He flipped me on my back on top of the table, shattering old plates and scattering silverware all over the floor as planned.

Unsuspecting, “Louie” came out of the kitchen at double time to see what the commotion was in “his mess hall”. “Louie’s” face became red as a beet as the whole corps of cadets broke out in a “Happy Birthday Captain Peduto”. He shook his finger at Craig and me and told us in a gruff voice to clean up the mess right away.

What everyone didn’t see was that several minutes later as Craig and I went behind the mess hall’s swinging doors that separated the mess hall area from the kitchen area, “Louie” met us and with moist eyes, thanked us and disappeared into his office.

Almost 40 years have passed since that day and my graduation at AMA. My last memory of “Louie” was him sitting on the bench in front of “his mess hall”. I had my gear with me and was waiting for my cab to come and pick me up. I walked over to “Louie”, shook his hand one last time and he said, “Take care of yourself kid”.

I have never heard of him again, I don’t know if he is still alive, but I do know that he is remembered often by me and I wish that today’s young people could meet a “Louie” at least once in their lifetime, I was fortunate enough that I did.

You can view the 1962 RECALL here:

<https://galleries.amaalumni.org/Recalls/Recall-1962/>