

# Augusta Military Academy

## Oral History

Chuck Knapp, '73  
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### Doc: A Small, Heartfelt Tribute

"It's Chuck, not Charlie"

Until my freshman year in high school, I was always called Charlie by relatives and friends alike. But that changed on my first day at AMA when I met **Col. Charles E. Savedge**, Headmaster. As he registered me for classes, he looked at me and said, "You're in the south now, son. You are not a Charlie, you're a Chuck."



For weeks after that, whenever he saw me, he'd turn to whoever was in the area and tell them, "You are to call him Chuck, not Charlie". Then he'd look at them with that "Or Else" look he had developed over decades at AMA. His authority came not by power, but by a confidence that whatever he said would be done because, quite simply, it was the right thing to do. After all, who wants to go through life being called Charlie?

Ultimately, two things happened. First, of course, every cadet and teacher in about two weeks was calling me Chuck. Second, I was drawn into the fraternal circle of "Doc's Boys". For me and countless others, much of what AMA was really about (Loyalty, Honor, and Having A Good Time) came with this label. The "Recall" also came with that label, and for four years that was my duty and passion.

What Are "Chucks"?

There are far too many memories to share about Doc to recount. But two stick with me to this day. The first was Christmas of '68. I was invited down to Doc's room in the Second Stoop Tower for his annual Christmas Party and "Dinner". I put dinner in parenthesis because although the meal was much better than mess hall chow, it was cooked on a hot plate and electric skillet than had long passed its prime. But it made a life-long lover of black-eyed peas and stewed tomatoes out of me!

Doc would gather his little fraternity together and give each one a gift especially chosen and wrapped for that person. I remember **Jeff Wetzel**, **Mike Sisak**, **Don Malnati**, **Dick Whitaker**, were all there. Doc had a pecking order, with the senior "Recall" staff going first. So being a freshman and low man on the totem pole, I was one of the last to be handed my package.

Now those who knew Doc during this time (1969-1973) know when he dressed in "civies", he was a bit flamboyant, to say the least. And to be a true "Doc's Boy", you had to have a pair of "chucks". What are "chucks"? Well, Converse, the maker of basketball shoes, made a canvas B-ball shoe that

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is a now a classic. At that time, they made not only black ones, but blue, red, white, etc.

I received my blue “chucks” that Christmas. It was also at that time he looked at Jeff, Mike, Dick, Don, and myself and noted that he had his editors for ‘70, ‘71, ‘72, and ‘73 sitting in front of him. Now I was truly a “Doc’s Boy”.

### **Making Things Right**

In my class of ‘73, I was the editor of the “Recall”. This was going to be the year that we fully changed over to doing the book from September to June, instead of ending in the late spring to have the book ready for June Graduation. It was also the year that the funds for a “big book” just were not there, so we needed to get creative about combining sections and cutting corners.

Also, by this time, much of what I had been introduced to in my freshman year had diminished. Doc had become a national high school yearbook expert and traveled a lot during that year. Friday night dinners, day trips in the Valley, and other perks just seem to go by the wayside. The work was done more in bursts when he and I and the staff were available. In June, I had to take the last 30 odd pages home that summer to finish, but did not get it done. Finally that fall, after several conversations with Doc, I gave up and sent him the last pages to finish.

Years ago I came to realize that Doc was as close to a father figure as I had in my teens. He became a substitute father since my father had died when I was ten. So not finishing that book left me with a deep sense of guilt for letting him down. But I was able to make things right between us.

Doc taught annually at Ball State University in Muncie, IN. That was where I also went to college, thanks to his guidance. So in the summer of 1975, while he was teaching a room full of kids, I walked in and asked if I could address the group. He knew something was up, and let me speak.

Basically, I was able to acknowledge my debit to him and noted that regardless of the yearbook, your word is your word. One of the most valuable things he ever taught me was right there. I have not always been able to live to that standard, but Doc noted the fight is worth the struggle, regardless of the outcome. I guess being a die-hard southerner and a Dixiecrat, he had learned that lesson early and often.

I saw Doc several times in my twenties, but lost touch with him after that. He touched a lot of kids’ lives, not just my own. His gift -- to make you believe in yourself -- has been passed on to generations of cadets who needed to hear it.

So, Doc, assuming you’re in Heaven having a Mint Julep with Mr. Jefferson, thanks for being there. And I hope when you passed on, you knew you would be remembered by all your “Doc’s Boys” with a smile.