

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

Gabriel Lluch, '52
August 21, 2001

I have great memories of AMA but rather of the scenery and both the scholastic and sporting processes. I am already 64, and I am embarrassed to tell you that I only remember clearly the name of one cadet and only that one. He was my roommate for a while; his name was **Raul Lopez**, a Cuban-American, I believe.

I don't even remember the name of the Captain of Cadets, and not even of the commandant. I do recall that the Captain had a powerful and sonorous voice that made the commands exciting in some manner.

The place was beautiful, surrounded by both trees and pastures. Plenty of apple trees! Depending on the season, we would play soccer, basketball, football, and baseball (I don't remember if they also had Lacrosse). I was never a sport star but I was sort of a backup infielder for the varsity baseball team.

Concerning baseball, I do recall a home game where someone hit a home-run over the left field fence; the ball continued traveling in the air and finally got stuck between two electrical cables that were quite far from the fence. The event became a local sensation! Some Virginia newspaper reporters came to take pictures of the ball! There was no Internet and hardly any television then, so the incident stayed local.

I believe my first year was the last year of the "rat" system (that's how the new cadets were called). We were obliged to always march (not walk) when not inside a room, mark all corners, and be available to senior cadets for chores such as shining shoes (this was the service most requested) - spit shining, some cleaning of rooms, and things like that.

I was looking forward to the second year. Actually, the rat system was discontinued the next year, but the services to senior cadets continued as a tradition, so then I did not have to worry anymore about shining my shoes spit clean! The rookies had to do it.

Because it was a military academy, we were enrolled in something called Junior ROTC; so there was a lot of marching, full cleaning of the M1, I believe once a week - we learned to take it apart, clean it, and put it back together.

We had beautiful parades on special holidays when our parents came to watch. Actual military officers would visit us and give us lectures and show us movies about military operations and what was OK to do and what was not OK. For example, how to divide river sections when an

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

army unit camped near a river (one section for laundry, another for drinking, and in which sequence, etc.).

We had some random room inspections, but the big ones I think were Sunday morning before church (they would bus us to different churches in function of the cadet's religion). In these Sunday inspections they would do things like take measurements of the positions and relationships between blanket, bed sheets, pillows etc, and they had to be perfect! Also, the inspector would use white gloves to check all the furniture, and if it was not super clean, we would get demerits.

Demerits would be paid back by doing special work after classes in the afternoon; such as picking up garbage and raking leaves, etc.

The educational standards were high. If your grades were low you would get into trouble very quickly. I heard of a couple of cadets dismissed because of consistently poor performance.

The canteen (PX) was our local hangout locale. They had good sandwiches and malts. However, the food at the academy (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) was excellent! The servers were cadets on sport scholarships.

Well, while I had some bouts of nostalgia longing for my family during the school terms, the fact is that I value very much the strengthening of character and good examples given to us by the academy, and this certainly had an impact in adulthood later on. There was an aura of chivalry in the old Southern style that is hardly in existence anymore anywhere.

I don't remember the total number of cadets, but we were more or less the size of a battalion with about five companies, plus the band.