

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

Jim Hash, '72
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Remembering my various encounters with Nurse Mollie Canevet

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[Editor's note: this is a VERY long story, but well worth the read. Be prepared to laugh heartily.]

In late November or early December, 1965, I was in the seventh grade and attending public school in Howard County, Maryland. I was taking seven subjects and by the end of the first semester, I was flunking six of them and had a D+ in the seventh, which happened to be Physical Education. I think I got the D+ for showing up, God knows it wasn't for my dedicated participation. My grades weren't the result of being a moron so much as I just didn't give a damn. It was, after all, the sixties, revolution and rebellion were in the air, and hey, as a newly anointed teenager, I wanted to make my mark in history. My Father had a different idea.



Dad told me that he wasn't going to force me to attend Augusta, but he was going to force me to go down and check out the school. If I decided that I wanted to go, he'd send me. Coming from Father, that seemed an incredibly fair proposition. At that point in my life, the financial implications of sending me to Augusta just to be kicked out a couple months later (no refund forthcoming) never occurred to me.

First Meeting

In the fall of '65, Interstate 81 ended somewhere near Stephens City (I don't remember anymore), and much of the trip to Augusta was spent following U.S. 11, winding through a seemingly endless string of dingy, un-notable, mostly forgotten mill towns. And on that crisp, fall morning, little did I know that U.S. 11 and I were about to be seeing a lot of each other for the next seven years.

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It was also the morning that I first met Etta Mollie Canevet.

As my Father's Cadillac crested the hill just past the Old Stone Church, I got my first glimpse of AMA, and remember thinking that it was, decidedly, the most foreboding place on the planet. Admittedly, I hadn't yet seen pictures of Auschwitz or, for that matter, my basic training camp at Fort Dix, N.J. Still, Augusta was a scary looking place to my 13-year old eyes. As far as I was concerned, all it needed was a tall fence and a few miles of Constantine wire and it could have been any state or federal prison.

My parents and I were met by Col. "Doc" Savedge. Had he so endeavored, Doc Savedge could probably have been a successful ice salesman in Antarctica. Clearly, this man could hand you a bucket of camel dung and before you walked away as the proud owner, have you convinced it smelled like Florida orange blossoms. He was (among so many other things) the consummate salesman. But I digress; this is about Mollie and me.

Doc had already introduced my parents and I to all the usual suspects: Livick, Wales, and crew and we were just coming down the steps of the library when, standing before us (in route to somewhere) was Mollie Canevet.

Okay, I'll admit, no one that I know will ever suggest that Mollie Canevet was eye candy; no Angelina Jolie was she, but she gave me the biggest, warmest smile that I can ever remember being focused in my direction.

Now whether or not you guys will admit it, particularly for those of us who were junior school cadets, the idea of a warm, kindhearted, friendly face (particularly one that could have been your mother's) looked awfully comforting to me at the time, and I hadn't yet met Paul Hoover.

Doc introduced us and told us that Miss Canavet was a Registered Nurse and in charge of a fully equipped infirmary, almost as though she had a staff of medical personnel working for her. As she walked away, most of the big, red, warning flags that had been snapping sharply in the breeze since my arrival, drooped, and then fell from sight.

With the exception of three other instances, that was the last time I ever saw Mollie smile.

(As I was trying to organize my thoughts and knock the dust off some of my memories in preparation for writing this, an interesting revelation came to mind. In my seven years at Augusta, I don't remember ever seeing Mollie Canevet anywhere except in the infirmary. Maybe it's just been too long, but I really can't remember seeing her wandering about campus, on a mission or otherwise. So now, thinking back to that day when we met, I have to wonder why she happened to be passing in front of the library. She, quite possibly, was responsible for me agreeing to attend AMA. I'd be interested to know if anyone else has different recollections.)

I think it would be safe to say that most youngsters, certainly those in the age group attending school at AMA, were, for the most part, healthy individuals. Sure, we were all apt to catch a cold or flu, or have some typical sports injury, but all in all, we were generally a healthy group of kids.

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Unfortunately for me, in addition to those minor illnesses, I had a tendency to fall outside the above stated template.

I began my attendance at Augusta following the Christmas break [...] but didn't see Mollie until sometime later in the winter when I came down with the flu. I don't have many recollections of that encounter aside from the fact that the remarkably brilliant, beaming smile of our introduction had been replaced with the more dour, stern expression that I came to learn was more characteristic of the Mollie most of us remember. It was also my first introduction to Mollie's hairbrush.

The Hairbrush

That incident was the result of loud horseplay after being warned to quiet down. I might add that it was also my last encounter with the hairbrush; I'm a fairly quick learn once I understand the rules of the game.

First Encounter

The first of what was to be my usual, unusual medical needs occurred one Saturday in the spring of '66. I was one of the lucky junior cadets to reside in "The Annex."

For those who don't recall, the Annex was fundamentally the basement of Dean's Castle and comprised 6-person barracks rooms and a bathroom. I say "lucky" only in reference to the fact that those rooms were detached from the rest of the Junior School barracks and thus, under less scrutiny from the cadet officers and faculty. We could raise a lot of hell down there and not be noticed and, indeed, we took advantage of that. In truth, the Annex rooms were the tenements of Augusta's living quarters.

Still, the "independence" those rooms enjoyed seemed somewhat a fair trade for the appalling conditions ... well, most of the time. Showering during the winter was, at the very least, unpleasant. I don't remember if there was a radiator in the bathroom or not, but if there was, it never worked.

On a more positive note, if you sustained some sort of injury while in one of the Annex rooms, you were just a few feet away from the infirmary. In fact, the average male, armed with nothing more than a six-pack of beer and a healthy prostate, could have urinated on the front porch of the infirmary (not to mention all those freakin' cats) from the rear windows of the Annex.

I don't know exactly what project precipitated the need to use a can of blue spray paint. That is, I don't remember if it was something I wanted to do or one of my roommates. In reality, it has no position of relevance what-so-ever. What is relevant is that fact that the can of blue spray paint in question was clogged and I had determined that I should be the one to fix it. As it turned out, it was not one of my more intelligent decisions.

As I'm sure most, if not all of you know, aerosol cans have two external parts that enable the

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discharge of the can's contents: the nozzle and stem. I removed and cleaned out the nozzle with some lighter fluid, a straight pin and a tooth pick, replaced it, but the can still would not spray. I again removed the nozzle and, bent over looking straight into the top of the can, I pushed the tooth pick down through the stem.

This, of course, opened the pressure valve beneath the stem and released a torrent of blue paint into my face.

Yes, it's true, at that age, common sense wasn't one of my greater attributes, but you have to give me credit for my tenacity.

Over the years of my life, I have heard all the urban legends that the human eye blinks at speeds that boggle the imagination: the speed of light, faster than sound (although I never hear a sonic boom when I blink), faster than a woman can change her mind. [...]

Whatever. What I do know is that my eyelids were not as fast as the paint that erupted from the can.

Without the benefit of the nozzle's resistive properties, the volume of paint being ejected through the stem was impressive. Blue paint covered me from the top of my forehead to my upper lip and from temple to temple.

Both eyes were filled with paint, though the left one was the worst. Since I couldn't see, a couple of my roommates handed me a towel and took me by the arms, half walking and half carrying me to the infirmary.

Once inside, Mollie quickly and repeatedly flushed my eyes with some sort of eye wash. This process took a while because paint had gotten underneath both my upper and lower eyelids on both eyes. After the flush treatment, Mollie had me sit with my eyes closed while she meticulously cleaned all the paint from around my eyes and the rest of my face with fingernail polish remover, cotton balls and Q-tips.

After that she applied some sort of salve to my eyes and then bandaged them both. She allowed me to return to my room but under orders to keep the bandages on until she removed them.

The following day Mollie sent for me, and one of my roommates escorted me back to the infirmary. She removed the bandages and again flushed my eyes to remove the salve. Afterwards, she had me read the vision chart which I managed to do successfully, although the letters were a little blurry.

Proclaiming the disaster officially over, Mollie sent me on my way with some snide remark about avoiding any career choices that had anything to do with paint. At that point, I was inclined to agree with her.

While I realize now that any reasonably competent nurse would have taken more or less the same actions as Mollie did, at the time, I was so grateful that I could see again that she moved up a few

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notches on the Jim Hash Scale of Good Folks, despite my previous run-in with her hairbrush.

The rest of that school year ended uneventful except for the fact that I flunked the 7th grade.

But, as Col. Livick told my parents, I was so far behind the other seventh graders that repeating the grade only made sense. If I didn't, I just be struggling every year of my schooling. Looking back, it did, indeed, make a lot of sense.

I hadn't been home for a month that summer before I realized that I wanted to return to Augusta the following year. I missed my friends from school, but also, I was treated differently at home than I had been.

I was given a lot more freedom. I guess it was my parents' way of acknowledging the fact that I spent much of my time in a very restrictive environment, but perhaps they just noticed a little more self-discipline than I had demonstrated in the past. Whatever the reason, it worked for me.

The '66/'67 school year kicked off with me back in the Annex. I was pleased; even tenements grow on you.

Second Encounter

I managed to make it through most of that year without any traumatic medical crisis until sometime late in the spring.

Col. Livick had assembled the cadet corps in the Big Room for one of his town hall meetings.

I wish I could remember more of the details of Livick's address to us that day. [...] But here's what I do remember: Some upper school cadet burned his face with lighter fluid. He apparently was practicing the art of being a human blow torch when some of the ignited fluid splattered on his face. He wasn't badly burned as I recall, just a few small, round burns on his face. I think the cadet's name was Burt Cummings, but I could be WAY off course on that account. Ultimately, it doesn't much matter what the guy's name was. Col. Livick had him come up on the stage with him (a little public humiliation) for all to see, as a deterrent to any further acts of lunacy.

In my heart, I believe Col. Livick's well-meaning strategy was sound, except for his inclusion of the junior school cadets at the meeting.

You don't tell a bunch of very young kids (particularly boys) not to do something that they would probably never have thought of on their own. That's tantamount to a challenge.

Not only were junior school cadets physically segregated from the upper school, but they were also socially segregated as well. In fact, (and I could be wrong on this --- it has been 38 years since I was in junior school) but I don't think we were even allowed to go into the upper school barracks.

So the odds that any of the junior cadets would have heard about the incident were pretty slim. I feel quite certain that on any of my afternoon walks to the Fort, I would never have said to

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myself: “Self, when you get back to your room why don’t you fill your mouth with lighter fluid, hold a lit match two or three inches from your lips, and then forcefully spit the fluid out creating a five foot flame. “ I’m sorry, but I just can’t believe that would have ever popped into my brain of its own volition.

I mean, it’s kind of like lighting farts. Just who the hell would ever think to hold a flame to their rectum and cut a screamer, without first having prior knowledge about the explosive results?

So, within a few days of Col. Livick’s meeting, at least three or four junior cadets that I knew were hard at work perfecting their puff-the-magic-dragon techniques; and I was one of them.

On the Friday night before review week prior to final exams, it had been several weeks since Col. Livick had dragged poor Burt Cummings out on the stage for his public cerebral scourging.

I had gotten quite good with the fire-breathing trick to the point that I was pursuing more artistic displays by rotating my head in various directions so that the flame would make an assortment of shapes — circles, zigzags, etc.

I had been attempting a horizontal circle (by spinning my body around in a 360) but always ran out of fluid before the rotation was complete.

Obviously, there were two ways to eliminate the problem: either turn faster or, use more fluid. I tried to rotate faster, but found that I couldn’t manage that without falling on my face. It appeared that ballet wasn’t one of my strong points. So, it came down to adding more fluid.

The first attempt (with my mouth completely filled with lighter fluid) was a masterful success. It was so good that several of my roommates demanded an encore. Wanting to be a crowd pleaser and reap the accolades of my newly-found talent, I filled ‘er up with high-test one more time.

Perhaps it was the excitement of the moment, or maybe the fact that I had been spitting flames for twenty to thirty minutes, or maybe it was just fate, I’ll never know, but I ran out of steam (so to speak) near the end of the rotation.

By that, I mean to say that I didn’t have enough air pressure left in my lungs to expel the remaining fluid in my mouth. This gave the flame the opportunity to work its way back to my face.

At the moment that I realized what was happening, I believe I had an intimate glimpse into what must have crossed the mind of George A. Custer when it finally occurred to him that he was about to have his butt kicked, not so much by several thousand seriously pissed-off Indians, but by his own stupidity and arrogance.

Within an instant, much of my face was engulfed by flames. Terrified that the flames would ignite the residual fluid inside my mouth, I concentrated on spitting and sputtering out as much of the remaining fluid/saliva mixture that I could.

To my dismay, I managed only to get it to drool out, whereon, it immediately ignited, setting the

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underside of my chin and part of my neck on fire. The situation was clearly going from bad to worse.

One of my roommates jumped up and began slapping at the flames, which, looking back, probably only served to spread the flames to other previously disaffected areas but also to further damage the melting flesh.

Finally, another roommate had the good sense to completely smother the flames with a pillow. While I'm not sure who exactly it was, I believe it was Dallas Baldwin.

[...]

With the flames extinguished, but still in a mild state of shock (psychologically more than physiologically), the expected pain was not evident. However, I didn't have to wait very long.

Within a minute, I was in serious agony. Worse, I was too afraid of the repercussions and condemnation from Mollie and the school administrators (specifically Livick) to seek any form of help.

Wanting only relief from the pain, I went to the bathroom and plunged my face into a sink filled with cold water. It was instant gratification, but I soon found that I had two problems with which to contend.

First, I could only hold my breath for so long before I had to come up for air; I longed for a set of gills. I really could have used a snorkel.

The second problem was that the longer my face remained submerged, the warmer the water got. For every degree the water temperature warmed, the degree of pain increased exponentially. This meant I was draining and refilling the sink every five to ten minutes.

There was actually a third problem, but that didn't become evident until after the first thirty minutes or so. My legs were getting tired and the small of my back began hurting from being bent over the sink for such a long period of time. One of my roommates brought a chair to me but it was too low for me to comfortably keep my face submerged.

So, there I was at roughly midnight playing submarine. The light bulb in the bathroom was burned out, so the only light I had was from a dim bulb that illuminated the hallway in front of the rooms. It was probably just as well, because I undoubtedly would have felt even worse had I been able to look into the mirror above the sink.

Roughly six or so hours (I don't remember exactly when reveille was on Saturdays) after I began the process of keeping my face in cold water, I heard the first scratchy sounds of the needle about to play reveille on those old beat-up records.

By then, the small of my back was in nearly as much pain as my face. My predicament was fairly well broadcast to all residents of the Annex once the guys started coming in to use the urinals.

So by the time the formation on the blacktop actually began to assemble, the cadet officers were

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aware of my situation.

While I don't know for sure who it was, I believe it was then cadet LT Bruce Orenstein that came to my rescue.

I talked to Bruce on the phone recently about this incident and he couldn't remember if he was the officer that took me to the infirmary or not. I suppose it doesn't really matter. And as Bruce said to me, if someone else remembers the details, they'll probably let me know.

As I entered the infirmary, the trepidation I was feeling was nearly as bad as the pain. I felt certain that I was going to catch hell from Mollie over this one. I was wrong. But what I did get from Mollie was somehow worse than what I expected.

I can tell you that Mollie (like myself) was not a morning person. You just didn't want to get her worked up first thing in the morning, and that was part of my apprehension.

But what I saw in Mollie's eyes and her expression when she first saw me, was a lot scarier than her fury. It was concern on a major league level, as if I had walked in with a gunshot wound to the chest.

Mollie wasted no time in ushering me into the treatment room. I remember her first treating the burns with some kind of disinfectant and then covering them with (I was later to learn) a Vaseline-based antibacterial ointment that she applied very liberally with a tongue depressor.

The entire time she was working on me, she was constantly reassuring me and trying her very best to comfort me. None of her biting sarcasm reared its head.

She then called Dr. Painter — Augusta's on-call physician. Once Dr. Painter had examined me, the decision was made for me to be transferred to the hospital. By now it was midmorning and I wasn't to go to the hospital until late in the afternoon. I don't know what the wait was for, maybe a bed space issue at the hospital; I've no idea. So, I was allowed to leave the infirmary.

The pain had receded significantly from the level I had experienced while bent over the bathroom sink. That, in itself, was a major relief. However, it gave me time to examine the results of my night's work in the mirror.

Good grief, was I ever a mess. I looked like something from a Wes Craven horror film. The ointment Molly had put on the burns made them look even worse than they were, and that was bad enough. My eye brows and lashes were gone along with much of the hair on the sides of my head, not that any of us had very much to start with. There were a few small round burns on my forehead and a large, nasty looking one across the bridge of my nose. It was south from there that things got bad. My lips, cheeks, chin and neck were a grotesque mess.

Depression started to settle in. I sat on the edge of my bed and considered crying, but didn't see any benefit in that when suddenly it occurred to me that it was the day of the junior school dance which was scheduled to begin in a few hours.

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The dance was to be held in the mess hall. Most of the junior school cadets that I knew (guys in the 7th grade) had no intention of attending. It was a testosterone thing. We were old enough to know what hot babes looked like and the imported, flat-chested, twelve year olds from the local community, just didn't cut it, particularly considering that they came with almost as many chaperons as there were girls.

The diabolical, demented side of me took over. What the hell, I thought, I might as well have some fun with my new appearance.

I think the dance began around 1400 hours or so, but I gave it a little while to get warmed up and then made my appearance.

I know, I'm bad, but I just couldn't stop myself. I probably asked a dozen different girls for a dance and was turned down by everyone and that included girls that no guy in his right mind would have asked to dance.

Finally, I asked one young girl who immediately began to cry, so I just walked away and sat down in one of the chairs.

But the damage was already done and one of the AMA faculty members came over and (in so many words) politely suggested that I go outside and watch the grass grow.

I arrived at King's Daughters Hospital in Staunton around 5 or 6 that afternoon. Don Studer recently informed me that King's Daughters Hospital no longer exists. That's too bad. It was the best hospital I was ever in.

My parents showed up at the hospital the next day and, of course, as soon as my Mother walked in she immediately broke into tears. My Father, on the other hand, gave me one of his famous looks that silently asked: "How did I manage to raise such an idiot?"

I won't spend time describing my stay in the hospital other than to mention that on two occasions during my 7-day stay, Mollie called me just to ask how I was feeling. I didn't expect that.

Again, Mollie moved up a few more notches on the Jim Hash Scale of Good Folks.

I remember that Col. Livick came to see me and also Doc Savedge. Doc assured me that I would not have to face my final exams as soon as I was released and that all my teachers were going to get all the review material to me and provide me with plenty of time to study before I would be tested.

Best of all, Col. Livick didn't drag me out in front of the cadet corps as he did with Burt Cummings. It might have been a random act of kindness; but then, maybe he just figured that his tactic didn't work before, so why bother. Who knows.

When school ended that year, it was the worst summer of my youth. I wasn't allowed out in the sun between the hours of 1000 and 1800 unless I wore an absurd hat with a huge brim that kept

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the sunlight off my face. That lasted for three months! It was the first and only time in my life that I longed for winter.

In retrospect, I was extremely fortunate. As my Mother points out whenever the subject comes up in conversation, both the doctors at the hospital in Staunton, as well as the doctor that saw me several times in Maryland, predicted that there would be at least some permanent scarring.

But by the end of a year, there was very little evidence of the burns aside from a faint line that ran just from the side of my left nostril, in an arc, down to my jawbone. Amazingly, even that faded away within a few years.

My 8th grade year at Augusta ('67/'68) was a banner year for me. Not only did my grades continue to improve, but I got through the year without incurring any physical damage, bizarre or otherwise.

I wish I could make the same claim for the following year.

In the fall of 1968, life was good. My classes were going well, and I had met Torrey Noel, a Stuart Hall girl, who soon became my first "true love". Yep, everything was just peachy. I should have known life was just setting me up.

Now compared to the face burning ordeal, what happened was profoundly minor, at least in a physical sense, but psychologically speaking, it was quite a trauma for me.

On the other hand, it did elicit the first real smile from Mollie Canevet that I had seen since the day we met.

At the tender age of 15, my body was humming along just the way it should. I was no athlete, indeed, I had no use for sports at all, and still don't.

Still, I was young, agile and all my body's processes were working just the way God planned it. So it came as a bit of a shock to me when, quite unexpectedly, one of the processes malfunctioned.

I don't know how long I sat on the throne that afternoon, but it was more than an hour. And by the time I had finished, I knew several things.

I knew, for instance, that I NEVER wanted to be bound up like that again. Ever. I also knew that I had injured myself in a way that I had never experienced and that it was excruciatingly painful.

I also knew that there was something protruding from me that should not have been there. And that was the manifest problem.

You have to understand that while I had heard the term hemorrhoid often enough, I had absolutely no idea what one was or where one was likely to occur. It could very well have been an ailment found in the middle-ear for all I knew. In these days, with a daily bombardment of male-erectile dysfunction pills and feminine hygiene products on television, Americans are rather coarsened towards traditionally intimate products.

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But in 1968, a hemorrhoid commercial would have been something very close to blasphemy. So, bottom dollar, I was clueless. So clueless, in fact, that I believed that I had pushed out some part of my intestines, and I was sincerely frightened.

I somehow managed to waddle my way from the second floor of Big Barracks down to the infirmary. And believe me, it was a painful journey.

Pushing my way through a bunch of arrogant cats, I stepped into the lobby (waiting room) of the infirmary. Depressingly, I saw that Mollie was with a cadet in the treatment room and two others were sitting on that long, pale green bench, waiting.

So I located a comfortable looking section of wall space and leaned my back against it; sitting on a hard bench (in fact, sitting at all) was absolutely not in the equation.

When Mollie called me into her treatment room, I was so embarrassed that I was at (believe it or not) a total loss for words.

After stammering for a while, I finally just blurted out, "I hurt my butt".

That generated Mollie's first smile during my visit. Through her grin, she replied "All right, Hash, let me take a look."

I've often heard women complain about the indignities they suffer when visiting their OB/GYN doctors. It is not my intention to dismiss or marginalize their discomfort in any way, as I'm sure that many, if not most, women find the event an assault on their modesty. I just want to point out that women don't have a monopoly on modesty.

So when Mollie instructed me to drop my trousers and underwear, bend over, reach back and spread my cheeks. My level of emotional discomfort reached heights I had never even imagined. I'd put that ordeal up with a set of stirrups any day.

To my great relief, the examination only took about 30 seconds. "Well, Hash," Mollie said, "Congratulations, you gave yourself one doozy of a hemorrhoid".

That's when I heard her start to laugh. When I asked her why she was laughing she said that she was fairly certain that I'd given her another "first", in as much that I was the first 15 year old she'd seen with a hemorrhoid.

She added that the paint in the eyes had been another "first". It wasn't much of a comfort for me that she was keeping score.

I was pleased that she took the time to explain what a hemorrhoid was, how they were caused, and even drew out a little picture of a vein with a bubble sticking out of the side of it.

Most of all, I was VERY relieved to know that my intestines were not involved in any way. I had visions of surgery and all sorts of unpleasant medical procedures.

The imagination of a 15 year old has no bounds.

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Mollie gave me some ointment to put on the affected area and some other general instructions and then added that I might want to sleep on my belly for a while, as if I wouldn't have been able to figure that one out on my own.

Thinking back on it all now, there was one good thing that came out of my hemorrhoid experience: it prepared me emotionally for my next and final disaster that Mollie saw me through.

It all began on a Sunday in my 10th grade year, just before one of our parades. The Stuart Hall bus had arrived a bit early that day which gave Torrey and I time to seclude ourselves away in a classroom in Dean's Castle that I had found carelessly unlocked.

In the heat of our necking, I kept putting off ending things despite the fact that I needed to go to my room and change for parade. I put it off until I only had about 15 minutes before formation and then finally broke away and ran to my room.

My roommate, at the time, was Mike Bruder.

He was one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to know, but sometimes acted as though he was a brick or two shy of a full load. One of the things I admired about him was his absolute inability to get excited or agitated about anything. Nothing seemed to rattle him. As tightly wound as I am, it was a comfort to me.

Like me, Mike had no interest what-so-ever in sports. In fact, Mike was the ultimate barracks rat. He didn't go anywhere that I can remember.

I seem to recall trying to get him hooked-up with a Stuart Hall girl, but he didn't indicate any enthusiasm for that either.

I had missed turning in my laundry the previous week, so I didn't have any clean undies. Eh, it happened occasionally.

Mike, ever the considerate roomie, offered me a pair of his underwear, but I declined. I was fairly certain that the pant material was thick enough that nothing would show through.

Besides, we were good friends, but not quite that good. So I broke out my last pair of white ducks, pried them open and shoved my legs through.

I had just gotten my belt and shirt on when (as it always seems to happen when you're in a hurry), nature called.

I flew down to the bathroom at Mach 3 and slid to a halt in front of the first urinal. It was after I had finished, that my world began to unravel.

I needn't remind any of you of the amount of heat, pressure and starch that was used on our white ducks, nor the stiffness of the brass zippers they had.

On my first attempt to zip up my pants, the zipper didn't budge. So, I yanked harder, but it still

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wouldn't move.

Finally, I pulled on it as hard as I could and much to my relief, up the zipper went. It was about that time that I felt a fairly intense burning sensation and, looking down, I noticed approximately a 1/16 inch of flesh showing through the teeth of the zipper for several inches.

I stopped breathing.

At first, I couldn't believe my eyes.

The sight of my condition was actually worse than the pain I felt, that is, until I tried to lower the zipper. That really got my attention. I made one or two more attempts to lower the zipper, but lacked the intestinal fortitude to pull the zipper down as hard as I pulled it up.

I knew I was going to need help on this one. So I started making my way back to my room, holding on to the front of my pants to minimize movement.

Just as I reached my door, Mike started coming through it, rifle in hand, headed to formation. I told him not to go yet as I needed some help.

At first I thought he was going to ignore my request, but seeing the panic in my eyes and not knowing exactly what was wrong, he reluctantly turned around and followed me back into the room.

When I explained what had happened, Mike was aghast, but hells-bells, so was I.

Making it clear to Mike that there was no way I could pull down that zipper by myself, he resigned himself to the task. I pleaded with him to make sure he pulled it completely down at one time and he promised me a good ol' college try.

Considering that neither of us were in college, it was a little less than reassuring.

Mike grabbed the top of my trousers in one hand, the zipper in the other, and then yanked.

To his credit, he did manage to pull the zipper down about 3/4 of the way and also had the good sense to immediately back away from me just in the outside chance I reacted, well, let's just say, strongly. I didn't, of course, but I still lauded his forethought, even if it was motivated by self preservation.

Bringing the zipper down as far as it was, caused enough intense pain that it made sense to me to finish the job while my body was still sending those delightful little signals to my brain.

I grasped the zipper and opened it the rest of the way.

Now that the zipper's teeth were no longer filling all the little holes they had punched in me, the blood began to flow in earnest.

Mike tossed me a clean wash cloth.

So, there I was, stretched out on my bed holding a wash cloth around my wounded (mortally?)

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member.

First Call had already sounded. The pain levels were dropping, but it still hurt pretty bad and just as Mike was reaching for his white gloves and rifle, I asked him if he had anything I could put on the wound that would ease the pain.

Mike quickly started rummaging through his wall locker, and eventually held up a small elongated box. When I asked what it was, he said he had no idea, that it was just part of a bunch of stuff his folks had given him but that the box said it was for muscle pain.

Well, my penis wasn't a muscle (too bad!) but it was in pain. Mike tossed me the box and ran out the door to make formation. As he was leaving he said he'd let the company know that I had, um, cut myself and wouldn't be making the formation.

Good ol' Mike.

Since neither Mike nor I had any interest in sports, it came as no surprise to me that we didn't know what Ben-Gay was.

I know now.

Much as I tried, I couldn't wipe that stuff off fast enough. At first, I was furious with Mike, but realized that the tube of ointment had not been used before and, in any case, it was most unlikely that Mike would have done such a thing considering the gravity of my injury.

Since the bleeding wouldn't stop, I realized that it was, sadly, Mollie time.

When I got to the infirmary, Mollie was upstairs, so I had to call to her. When she appeared a few minutes later, she didn't seem to be in any particularly foul mood and that gave me a morsel of hope.

Having survived the indignities of the hemorrhoid fiasco, I had few, if any, inhibitions of dropping my trousers for her again.

When Mollie saw my member wrapped in a white wash cloth (that was slowly turning red) secured by a rubber band, she gave me a odd look that was a cross between concern and amusement.

I was sitting on the edge of a treatment table when Mollie removed the wash cloth and examined the damage. She was sort of stooped down in front of me when she raised her eyes and gazed up at me from above her glasses.

Her eyes were like laser beams drilling into mine. I will never forget the deadly seriousness with which she stared into my eyes and uttered words that shook the very foundation of my soul: "Hash, you do realize this is going to require stitches."

Holy Mother of God, I thought I'd pass out. I was mortified beyond description. I could feel my

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body wanting to go in about ten different directions at the same time, but was too paralyzed with unadulterated terror to move an inch.

I'm certain that had I had a pistol, I would have just put it to my head, pulled the trigger, and gotten the whole thing over with.

The very thought of Mollie having her way on my penis with a suturing needle was a horror too great for me to contemplate.

I don't know how long our eyes were locked, it seemed an eternity, but then ever so subtly at first, the comers of Mollie's lips began to stretch outward and the beginnings of a smile began to take shape.

Then it was as though a dam had broken and she began to laugh, and laugh like I had never heard her do before.

What a sight it was, Molly in near uncontrolled laughter and me with my perforated penis completely dumbfounded.

After a few moments, Mollie seemed to get a hold of herself long enough to look me in the eyes once again and, still grinning from ear to ear, said simply: "Gottcha", then began laughing all over again.

For just a split second, I thought I was going to get mad, but seeing her in total, almost adolescent joy that was so completely uncharacteristic of Mollie Canevet, teetering on the point of absurdity, I began to laugh with her, probably as much in relief as at the near insanity of the moment.

Once we had both regained our composure, Mollie went about her nurse duties and used butterfly band aids to cover the wound. Then she wrapped me up with gauze. She handed me some supplies so that I could change the dressing regularly and let me know that I could leave.

About the time that I reached the front door, Mollie called to me. When I turned to face her, she was standing in the doorway of the treatment room.

"Hash, right now, you have a whole bunch of little holes in you, but the holes are separated by very narrow pieces of skin. Should those sections of skin tear for any reason, you will not have a bunch of little holes, but one very big hole, and that will require stitches. Do yourself a favor, and stay away from girls for a while.

The message was very clear, although all together unnecessary. For the first time in my teenage life, sex wasn't on my mind.

I thanked Mollie and headed back to the barracks. As I passed the back corner of the mess hall next to the barracks, I could see the cadet corps was just beginning to leave the parade field.

So I decided to go up to my room and wait for the formation to be dismissed before going

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down to face my girlfriend and somehow explain my absence from the parade.

That was the last of the major medical crises that Mollie and I journeyed together. Somehow, I managed to get through my last 2 years at AMA without further incident. My reprieve couldn't have come too soon.

I returned to Augusta sometime between February, 1976, and before the school closed in January, 1984.

I just can't, for the life of me, pin it down to a more specific time. In fact, about the only thing I can remember about the entire visit was my meeting with Mollie.

I had driven past the gym and Hoover Hall and was just rounding the back corner of the junior barracks, when I noticed that the infirmary was gone.

That was a bit disconcerting until I noticed a new brick building just across the way from the PX. I wasn't sure it was the infirmary until I espied the pack of mangy cats loitering out front. It just had to be.

So, I pulled up in the parking lot, got out of my car and stepped inside. Despite the fact that I had never been in the building before, it somehow felt like I was going home.

When I first walked in, Mollie was talking to some cadet, but then turned and noticed me. There was a couple seconds delay before she recognized me, but then her face lit up with a smile like the day we met.

She walked up and gave me a hug (which I certainly wasn't expecting) and then took me by the arm to a couple of chairs and we sat down together.

There was a flurry of questions about what I had been doing since I graduated, interspersed with a variety of small talk. We laughed about some of my old injuries and about some of the other crazy things that happened at school when I was there.

She was about to give me a tour of her new facility (of which she seemed somewhat proud) when some cadet came in with an injured foot.

Realizing that she needed to tend to her job, I bid her farewell and took my leave. As I drove through the front gate and turned onto U.S. 11, I was still smiling.

It was the last time I saw Mollie smile. It was the last time I saw Mollie.

Etta Mollie Canevet died on 28 March 2003.

Of her, I will always think kindly.

Jim Hash