

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

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My “tour” at AMA was from September 1944 to June 1947. These were the war years and most of my memories include happenings and escapades that were either motivated by the war or connected to it in some way.

One example:

Myself and a few other Cadets were able to get a few firecrackers known as “cherry bombs”. Beginning one night and continuing until we ran out of the bombs, we would wait until the last note of taps sounded, when we would throw the bombs out into the courtyard and yell “*Montgomery is coming*”. This would immediately be followed by a loud explosion. Montgomery represented the British General Montgomery famous for his exploits during the North African campaign. Why we used this battle cry, I don’t know?

Eventually, **Colonel Roller** became furious and wanted to know who was responsible for this nocturnal activity. He restricted the Corps to campus on one of our normal Monday trips to Staunton and threatened more serious punishment unless those guilty confessed.

We were starting to get scared. However, we saw our chance to confess and probably not be punished. From time to time bible thumping evangelists would visit AMA, arranged by Colonel Roller (actually it was Major Roller) for most of my tour at AMA... Somewhere along the way he was promoted.

I do not remember whether it was mandatory that the corps had to attend these religious functions or not. But I did, and I saw an opportunity to confess my sins. I requested a meeting with Major Roller and told him everything and how sorry I was and pleaded for his forgiveness.

Well, you know Major Roller. He was so impressed with my sorrowful expression and confession that he made me a folk hero of sorts.

That evening in the mess hall, he entered, rang the bell for attention and told the corps about the confession and how proud he was of the confessor. I do not remember if he mentioned the confessor(s) by name or not. I confessed for all of us that were involved.

In the “Report Sheet” section of the 1947 Recall I was reported by **Cadet Gregory** for “not throwing loud enough bomb into courtyard”?!

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Other memories include going to the University of Virginia during the middle of winter with our orchestra to play for Fraternity Houses celebrating their “mid-winter flings”. Major Roller gave us permission to go (I was surprised, but he did) provided that **Paul Bratton** did the driving.

I guess there were 8 or 10 of us plus our gear loaded into the station wagon for the drive to Charlottesville.

As far as a meaningful memory. It is *Ad astra per aspera*. For some reason that motto, that slogan, made a huge and everlasting impression on me. So much so that for the rest of my life my goal has always been to reach those stars no matter what the difficulty.

I feel just as passionate about it now as I did then, and because of it many of my goals in life have been reached.

You can view the 1947 RECALL here:

<https://galleries.amaalumni.org/Recalls/Recall-1947/>