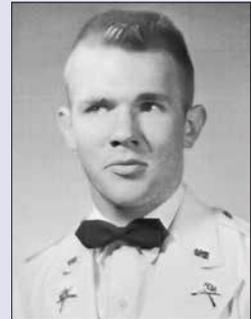


Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

Jack Steele, '61
July 14, 2001



I attended AMA from September 1959 until June 1961. My first year at AMA, I had a roommate from Parisburg, Virginia. He did not come back after Christmas. I do not know if it was me or AMA.

My second roommate that year was **Buck Lyons**. He and I were in "A" Company for two years. There were only two of us in a room my first year. We had four in a room my second year: **Larry James, John Calvert, Hank Walter**, and myself.

One day Hank and I went AWOL to Harrisonburg. I do not know why, but we were not caught and we had a pretty good time.

My first year at AMA was spent bracing up and down the stoops. I did not mind this and after a few weeks got used to it. The new cadets also had to be in all formations before all of the old cadets. This was interesting because we got to see the colors change on the mountains on the other side of the valley.

I played football for part of the season at AMA and we had to be at school two weeks early. That was really an experience. Everyday **Coach Ralph** ran us up and down the hill next to the gym and we slept in the gym for those two weeks.

I remember **Dave Trimble** and **Wayne Blaylock** and how friendly they were even though I as a new cadet. I also remember trying to get my shoes spit polished and all the lacquer off my brass during those two weeks before school started.

My earliest memories of AMA were the year before going to AMA when I visited it. I met **General Roller** and remember how friendly and warm he was. I really believe that meeting General Roller before attending AMA was what made me decide to go there.

I was in "A" Company both years. **Steve Durst** was our Company Commander and what a voice he had! **Bill Bowen** was Battalion Commander and you could hear him all over the whole school. These two were very impressive to a new cadet like me.

We had company and battalion drill every afternoon and we really learned how to march. I do not believe that any other military academy could march better than AMA. We also spent a lot of time learning the manual of arms with our World War II M-1 rifles. I remember that our First Sergeant was a big ol' Spanish boy, but he really did know how to march and he was patient and did a very good job of teaching us new cadets how to march.

I remember how we took apart our rifles, cleaning them, cleaning brass, spit shining our shoes, and Sunday afternoon parades. We had company drill every afternoon and Sunday parades every

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

Sunday no matter the weather.

If it rained, we wore our rain coats; and if it snowed we wore our overcoats with the bright red hoods. I remember marching around the bowl on afternoons when there was so much snow and ice on the ground that we could not march on the football field. We had to march round and round the bowl in front of big barracks and hope we did not fall. It snowed so much at AMA that winter that when we went home for Easter break snow was still on the mountains.

My second year at AMA I was promoted to Squad Leader. **Jim Bosley** was my Company Commander, **Ray Kerlin** was my Second Lieutenant and **Jim Crawford** was our Battalion Commander. Jim Crawford was one of the best Battalion Commanders that AMA had seen in few years. I believe that the two years I was a AMA were some of the best years the school had.

Every night General Roller would ride around the big barracks. Once it was really cold and there was a lot of snow on the ground. Some cadets placed those big stoop trash cans across the narrow driveway that went behind the big barracks and when the Big Boy came around that night he plowed right through those cans and what a racket it made!

The Big Boy got out of his car and hollered up at the barracks, “*Which one of my boys would do this to me?*” The next day at lunch he gave a speech about someone being a “nigger in the night”.

I fenced on **Colonel Hoover**’s fencing team both years at AMA. I do not remember much about fencing except that Colonel Hoover was a very demanding coach. But we all knew he loved and cared about us very much and he always demanded that we do the very best we could.

My second year at AMA, I had General Roller for College Algebra. His favorite saying when a cadet got the wrong answer was, “*Son, son, son*”. Also during my second year, a new Spanish teacher came to AMA and taught French and German. He was a very intelligent man but could not discipline the cadets. We really gave him a hard time, but he would not say anything. One day he told **Colonel Dean** about our behavior and we really got a tongue lashing from Colonel Dean.

I really do feel my two years at AMA made a big difference in my life. I will never forget **General Roller, Major Savage, Colonel Hoover, Coach Ralph, and Colonel Cyrus McCue**.

One more remembrance: General Roller had an old gray Chevy which we all called the “gray ghost”. He would drive that car down old Highway 11 from his house to the school on the wrong side of the road with two wheels on the pavement and two wheels off the pavement.

You can view the 1961 RECALL here:

<https://galleries.amaalumni.org/Recalls/Recall-1961/>