

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

John Wright, '63
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My memories of AMA are a mix of good and bad.

The decision to go to a military academy was not necessarily mine. My dad was stationed at the Pentagon in 1961-62, and I had not done well in the 61-62 school year. Being an Army brat, I had been to a different school each year.

Anyway, my folks told me that they were going to look into sending me to a private school and we could go visit a number of candidates. I recall visiting Fork Union, Staunton Military Academy and AMA.

I'm not sure that choosing AMA was all my idea, but that's where I ended up at the beginning of the 1962 school year. After checking in, I recall meeting **General Roller**.

My dad, mom and I were in his office and he laid out his expectations for "His boys". He then asked me to spell 'separate'. I don't know if my mom had expected this, but she had been drilling me on the spelling for a few days. (ha) Anyway, I spelled the word correctly. The General was pleased and indicated he thought I would do well.

After saying my farewells to the folks, I recall being issued clothing, bedding, etc. Then I was introduced to my squad leader, -----"Wendy". He took me up to the rooms and I met my roommates: **Ray Capouch**, **Brock Wagner**, and I believe it was **John Nicolson**. John introduced us to the 'snowbirds' over the winter (another story). Later in the day, I met **John Hipp** who was either the platoon leader or my Company Commander.

I actually enjoyed AMA very much, even though I do recall having to do laps around the parade field, once with, I think, Johnny Hipp, following me with his saber drawn. That was probably following a fight that Ray Capouch and I had. (I recall Ray being a pretty big guy).

I remember going on patrols, learning how to field strip an M-1, getting M-1 thumb (only once), the Parades, and classes. I was not a very good student, but did manage passing grades.

I also remember getting the privilege of visiting the store at Fort Defiance. It was a pretty neat place, and we could purchase collar stays (remember those?), candy, sodas. Great place!

I also recall "duck walking" up and down the stairwells between decks. I got pretty good at it as I

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recall. I wish I could find a list of my demerits, but then again, maybe I don't want to. (ha) Of all the memories of the year I spent at AMA, the saddest was the death of "The Big Boy". I remember when it was announced to the Cadet Corps. There was stunned silence, some tears, then realization that things at AMA would never be the same. Never again would we see The General in the quadrangle late at night, in his long greatcoat. Never again would we see him at ball games, at meals, and in class.

The procession to the "Stone Church" for the funeral was quite impressive. I recall forming up, and marching out to Route 11. Traffic was stopped as we marched to the church. There were many people there and it was a somewhat overcast day. I recall someone mentioning that even "God" was crying.

Life went on at AMA. I recall **Colonel Livick** stepping forward into leadership, so we all had a sense that things would be just fine. As a first year cadet I never got to meet **Ralph Butts**, but I do recall speaking to **Mike Basto** one evening. (Probably while marching off demerits, ha) Mike seemed to be a real nice guy, but we never spoke again.

In closing, I remember the end of the school year, each of us not knowing if we would be back the following school year. I do remember Wendy, or maybe it was John Hipp saying that they hoped I could return, as I would be a good squad leader.

That was not to be, as my dad was reassigned to Fort Riley, Kansas. I attended my junior year of high school at Junction City, Kansas and then my dad went to Korea. He moved the family to Manhattan, Kansas, where I attended my senior year of high school, met my wife of 33 years, graduated, started college, then went to Vietnam for two tours, eventually went to OCS, then retired from the Army in 1986.

I believe my time at AMA was valuable in providing me a good foundation for leadership as a squad leader, platoon sergeant, platoon leader and as a company commander.

AMA -- thanks for the memories!

You can view the 1963 RECALL here:

<https://galleries.amaalumni.org/Recalls/Recall-1963/>