

# Augusta Military Academy

## Oral History

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### Our Generation:

Some things stay with us forever - the Kennedy assassination, the clang of a streetcar, the songs we knew by heart, the smile of someone special... but the most notable was the day that the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor, on December 7th, 1941.

On that day, several cadets and I ventured down Route No. 11 to the only roller skating rink in Augusta County, located in Verona, Virginia. We had a wonderful time that afternoon and little did we know what dramatic events happened that day, which would affect all of our lives.

We left the roller skating rink, hitch-hiking our way back to the barracks when we were picked up by the PMS&T Sergeant stationed at AMA. He provided us with all the news in detail about the events that happened at Pearl Harbor and he told us that he would be leaving soon for active duty.

From that moment on, everything changed at AMA. It was like we had entered into a wartime mode in the everyday life of the things we had taken for granted. We knew what we had to do, and how to do it.

### Number 9 Coal

On the cold, windy, snowy morning of January 24th at 2 a.m., **Cadets Schwab, Clere** and I left the barracks on a journey and boarded a Greyhound Bus at the base of the road leading to AMA. We embarked on a mission to enlist in any branch of the Armed Forces that would take us. From Washington, D.C. to New York City, N.Y., we tried eight different enlistment centers, but were turned down at everyone.

In the meantime, there was a 17-State police alarm out to return us to AMA. All of our parents were notified and issued telegrams stating that we were now officially considered as being AWOL and to return us to AMA immediately or we would be expelled.

Cadet Schwab and I returned to AMA. Cadet Clere, however, did manage to enlist in the Merchant Marine. I have not heard from either of them nor do I know of their whereabouts.

Upon returning to AMA, Cadet Schwab and I were disciplined and ordered by Major (Big Boy) Roller to shovel a mountain of coal - 15 tons of "Number 9 Coal" into the cellar of **Lt. Colonel**

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and **Mrs. Robinson's** home, which is now the AMA Alumni House and Museum. It took us a month to accomplish this task and when that was done, we were ordered to clean up all of the debris in and around the main grounds of AMA, until graduation day.

On the Sunday before graduation, we were invited to the home of Lt. Colonel and Mrs. Robinson for dinner and they thanked us for the effort of shoveling all that coal into their cellar.

As one of my classmates, **Bill Stuart, '43**, commented in an article in "The Bayonet":

### **"INTENSE PATRIOTISM RAMPANT"**

I have never before or since seen such patriotism. Instead of trying to find ways to get out of going into service, we tried to get in, even if we were underage."

---From the 2000 Fall Edition of "The Bayonet"

Cadet Schwab and I graduated with the great Class of 1943.

### **Our Own Set Of Wheels**

In the early Spring of 1943, we were granted permission to leave the grounds and spend the day in Staunton, Virginia. On that visit to town, a group of us decided to purchase an automobile and have "one last blast" before we went into the Armed Forces.

We were walking on the outskirts of Staunton when we sighted a junkyard that had a few cars in it. We approached the man in charge and asked him if he had any cars for sale. He said that because of the war, he did not have any cars for sale and had not had any for over a year, but he did offer to build us one from junk parts and he could have it for us in three weeks for \$25.00. We accepted his offer and gave him a deposit of \$10.00.

Three weeks later, we managed to go to Staunton again and we went to the junkyard to pick up the car. It was ready to go and the junkman filled the tank with gas and gave us a license plate for a total price of \$32.50. As we were leaving the junkyard, he gave us a book "A" gas ration card.

We had a ball with this car and it ran like a clock. A week before graduation, we gave it back to the junkman and he gave us \$20.00 for it.

In 1943, we were not permitted to have or own an automobile at AMA, so we had to leave the car at the junkyard and use it only on the weekends when we got into town.

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### **In conclusion:**

#### **WHAT I LIKE TO REMEMBER:**

**Major (Big Boy) Roller** in Algebra classes.

**Colonel Hoover** with a helping hand for everyone.

All the Cadets, Staff, Balls, Dances, Sports, etc.

Sunday afternoon parades after which we would take our dates down a country lane in Fort Defiance for the best chicken dinner I ever had for fifty cents, and that included the tip.

The most important place lost to me was the old barracks and it was certainly a pleasure growing up there. I sometimes feel as though a little piece of all of us is still there, when I visited there a few years ago.

**Cadet Yount** and I were roommates when we both arrived at AMA back in 1941. We shared many fine moments together, but after four months they transferred me up to the top floor of the barracks. Through the years, we crossed each other's path many times after that and I considered him to be one of the finest Southern gentlemen that I ever knew. All of my memories of him are pleasant and I will always remember him. I graduated with him and consider myself honored to know him.

All the good times.

#### **WHAT I LIKE TO FORGET:**

World War II - the loss of so many of our buddies.

[Editor's Note: the 1943 RECALL can be viewed online here:  
<https://galleries.amaalumni.org/Recalls/Recall-1943/>