

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

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Wow! My memories of AMA... I can so vividly recall my days there that telling you of my memories would only bore you. Everyday at AMA was a new adventure. Everyday left memories of events and/or people that have stayed in my mind for over 30 years!

I suppose my greatest memory of AMA and the one that will remain in my mind forever would be during my "visit" in 1999 while there for Alumni weekend.

I had my son who was nine and my daughter, 11, with my wife and myself. I had the opportunity to walk them through parts of the barracks and classrooms and told them of my time and experiences there.

It was with wet eyes that I told them of early rising, formations, classes, drills, PT, and yes, even the Tours I walked. I was able to relive with them some of the things that have made me strong today.

All the while the kids looked in disbelief as they saw what I went through as opposed to what they have now, including school here being canceled when the air conditioners didn't work! They found some of the things we went through hard to believe.

Then my eight-year-old son asked THE QUESTION, "*Dad, what did you do wrong that they MADE you go to school here?*" (That question was worth a box of tissues in itself). He couldn't believe or even understand why I WANTED to go there.

We all have to live with generation changes and I guess I went through a big one that weekend.

I guess that was the one big thing that stood out among the time I spent at AMA. I was rather quiet and tried to stay out of trouble. I kind of slid into the background as best I could. I am sure I could identify with many, many other memories as other former cadets will reveal to you.

But being able to pass along something from my childhood to my kids was one of the greatest thrills of my life.

Ok, you want memories, so here goes.

I guess the first thing that comes to mind is my first day! I guess you have to start somewhere.

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Oral History

I came to AMA as a transfer from Riverside Military Academy (RMA) in Gainsville, Georgia. Riverside had its problems and at the time I transferred it was thought that RMA would not open the next year. So, my parents searched for another school.

AMA was the first one to answer their request. **Major Dekle** arrived at our home and told us why I should attend AMA. Well, as it was with most kids, I didn't have a say in it, but he must have done a good sales job because next thing I knew I was on the bus to Ft. Defiance, Virginia. Ft. Defiance? Was this a real fort? Was it a Military Base? What was I getting into? Where was I going?

The bus delivered me to a stop in Staunton. I called the school and someone came and picked me up and delivered me to my new home. As I walked through the front arch for the first time I saw something that I had never seen at RMA. Cadets were walking along the outside of the walkways in military fashion. I thought to myself, "Man, I wonder how much it would cost to get a bus ticket back home?"

I was assigned a room and went to the 3rd floor in Company A to a room about half the size I was used to, BUT there were only two bunks in this room. At my previous school we had four cadets per room and the rooms were much larger. I unpacked and in came my new roommate, **Harry Rubins**. It was his 11th year at AMA and he was a junior then.

Things started moving fast. Next thing I knew I was in the Mess Hall and they were explaining "New Cadet Status" to everyone. Wow! What the new guys had to go through!! I had never been exposed to this before, but I soon learned what failing to maintain this status cost you.

What seemed like hundreds of pushups later I found myself in Major Dekle's office. He called me down to welcome me to AMA. As we talked, I remembered something he had told my parents: the fact that I was a transfer automatically made me an "Old Cadet" and I did not have to follow the regime of "New Cadet Status." I asked the Major about this and he stated that this was true. I could come and go as I pleased.

I walked out of his office and started down the walkway and got maybe 50 feet when I was challenged and told that I was not following tradition and was told to "Drop and give me 20." I tried to explain that I was a transfer and that I was granted Old Cadet Status but the Lieutenant I was talking to did not believe me. I remember thinking that this was going to be a REAL FUN YEAR!!!

Know what? I made it back to my room and I remember missing formation for dinner that evening. I was still in my room, almost afraid to go out. After dinner, in came the Lieutenant that had given me the pushups earlier and some Captain. This was when I discovered that the Lieutenant was my Platoon Leader and the Captain was my Company Commander.

They wanted to know where I was for formation and dinner. It was still my first day and you could have felt my knees shaking throughout the entire barracks. After they hammered on me

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for a while I tried to explain that I was supposed to be considered an old cadet. Once more, they didn't believe me.

Before they left my room I thought my arms were going to fall off from pushups. I slept with one eye on the door all night that night.

The next morning I remember going to formation and breakfast and doing the best I could to act like a new cadet. I did not want more pushups. After breakfast, my door burst open again and it was **Captain Theil** and Lieutenant **Joe Wenzel**. They told me that they had just spoken to Major Dekle and that I no longer had to maintain new cadet status. Since I was a transfer from another military academy, the school was granting me old cadet status.

You could see in their eyes that they did not agree nor like it, but they knew they had to go along with it. After they left I decided that I needed to go for a walk to show off my new status. Well, sometimes word travels slowly. I didn't get 50 feet until I was challenged by another officer and was told to "Drop and give me 20." I tried desperately to explain the situation, but he did not believe me

As I finished the pushups I looked down the hall where Captain Theil's room was and saw him standing in his door laughing. He called me into his room and told me that he would see the word got passed around, but it might take a few days, so just be patient, he explained. As I remember, it felt like weeks before everyone left me alone as I assumed the role of old cadet status (it was likely only a day or so, but seemed like forever)

After a couple of weeks or so I ran into Major Dekle again and this was the first chance I had to really thank him for using the "Old cadet Status" to help sell my parents on AMA

After many years in sales and dealing with the public, I can see now that this was just a sales tool that he used to get my parents to sign on the dotted line. To them it probably didn't mean a lot, but I know that I never forgot him or his sales tactics

That is about all I can come up with right now. Maybe later as I think about it I can get you something else. I am not a writer and this email program does not have spell check (God how I rely on that now, ha ha), so there may have to be a few adjustments made.

You can view the 1969 RECALL online here:

<https://galleries.amaalumni.org/Recalls/Recall1969/>