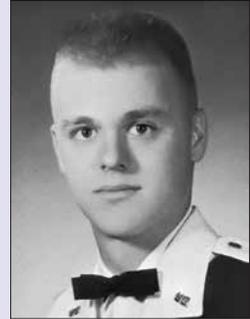


Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

Robert Gebeaux
February 3, 2002



1961: Coming to AMA

I came to AMA having been sort of a juvenile delinquent. Though I was never in any serious trouble, my school grades were very poor and I had no ambition or real interest in my education. I came to AMA as sort of a “Last Resort”. I recall being pulled aside by my father on my first day there and receiving a stern lecture indicating that this was my last chance if I wanted to make anything of myself.

That first year I was a cadet waiter and remember many great times in the CW Barracks. Most of the other waiters were jocks. I certainly was not a jock, but enjoyed being with a great bunch of guys. I waited on the Band Company, which was about the furthest table from the kitchen. I remember having to really hustle to keep pace with the needs of the table.

The discipline of the school helped me a great deal and my grades were excellent. I surprised myself and I am sure my folks were shocked when I made the Honor Roll time and time again. A big difference from the F’s, D’s and C’s I got in public school. I took to the wearing of the uniform quickly and I remember competing each Sunday for the best new cadet and going up to the front of the main formation to compete for the best cadet. I even won on occasion! Boy, did that make me feel good and did wonders for my self-confidence.

Doc Savedge and his Chemistry class was the biggest single thing at AMA that changed my life. All of a sudden I realized that if I actually studied the material and paid attention in class, I could learn and understand what the teacher was saying. It was like a light turned on in my head. I found myself teaching the other guys in the barracks when they realized I actually knew the material. Winning the medal for the Best Chemistry Student was a highlight of my first year for sure.

I can remember as if it were yesterday, the day Doc asked me to be the Editor of the “Recall” for the next year. I was flabbergasted to say the least. Was he crazy or what? I tried to tell him I could not spell cat, had absolutely no experience with yearbooks and was a very poor grammar student. He did not seem to mind a bit and had much more confidence in me than I did. I didn’t even know how to type! I can recall many hours in the recall office trying to teach myself to type so I did not look like too much of a fool as the “editor”. But what I have come to admit to myself is that he was just looking for a trainable gofer...not a literary giant! I fitted the bill.

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

Here are some memorable events from my first year:

Learning how to march and brace.

Spit shining shoes.

Walking to Sunday personal inspection like a stiff-legged duck so I would not mar my shoeshine!

Getting the best shine on a brass belt buckle.

Washing the white belts and gloves.

Barracks inspections!!!

Getting best company/platoon in those Sunday parades.

PX treats for the parade winners by the "Big Boy".

Marching to Sunday church services at the Old Stone Church.

Watching for the Grey Ghost (the Big Boy's gray car) circle the grounds just after taps.

Spelling tests in the Big Room.

Learning to field strip an M-1 rifle and to get it inspection quality clean!

1962:

My senior year was great -- all thanks to Doc. As the editor I had a corner room on the 2nd floor just down the hall from Doc and just up from the "Recall" office on the first floor. I guess Doc did not want his editors to be able to escape too easily. A lot different than rooming in CW barracks! It is hard to express how important being the "Recall" editor and Doc's shadow was for me. My biggest regret in my life is that I did not come back to AMA in time to tell Doc how much he did for me and how grateful I was. Life is too short.

My first girlfriend of any serious nature came my senior year. **Sue McCue**, the daughter of **Colonel McCue**, the Physics teacher! Sue was a great friend! She had wheels, which allowed

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

me to escape from the barracks occasionally. Those AMA dances were great events with those decorations, decorations, and more decorations.

Making the Roller Rifles and learning their “tricks” was great fun. Trips out of the area for parades.

General Roller’s College Algebra Class. What an event! Some great lessons on life and even a little bit of math! Seems much of the class was made up of General Roller’s Boys, and Jocks. In any case it was great! The class sat in the front of the Big Room listening to General Roller wax poetical for an hour or so! Sometimes he even spoke about math! It was one of the last classes he would teach, as he passed away the next year.

Putting out the ‘62 “Recall” took a lot of my time and essentially all of my spare time, but what a great lesson for me. I remember a trip Doc and I made to the campus of University of Virginia for some sort of high school yearbook workshop. Doc had me give a presentation on yearbook layout. It was my first time to address any sort of group. Wow! It turned out that the editor from my public high school was in the audience. I had a great feeling of redemption for all my poor work in high school English class!

Graduation day and the final formation were emotional events, even more so now in my memory after almost 40 years.

Getting into college would not have happened for me had it not been for AMA! I ended up at the University of North Carolina with a full NROTC scholarship, followed by a 20-year career as a Naval Officer! Again, all thanks to Doc Savedge and AMA for leading me to the right decisions. Had I not gone to AMA I would likely be in jail!

It is indeed sad that young boys (and girls) will not be able to have those great experiences and opportunities I had by attending AMA! But AMA can live on in the memories of those of us that are still here. We are fortunate to have such a fine Alumni Organization. How I went some 38 years without coming to a reunion or knowing of the Alumni Organization defies reason!

Sincerely,
Robert(Bob) Gebeaux
Class 1962
Ad Astra per Aspera

You can view the 1962 RECALL here:

<https://galleries.amaalumni.org/Recalls/Recall-1962/>