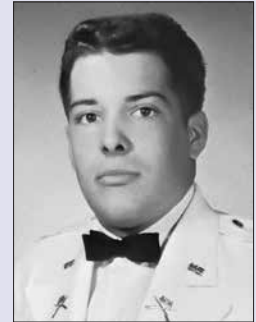


# Augusta Military Academy

## Oral History

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### **AMA - One of the Cornerstones of my Life**

At the outset, I should point out that I attended Augusta Military Academy during one of its heyday periods – a time when military prep schools were both in vogue and growing. Shortly after my class, the antiwar movement and other social positions led to hard times for this type of education. What a loss!

Over the last 40 years the Academy has proven to be one of the three major foundations of my life. In order, those foundations were my family, AMA, and the Army Special Forces.

I feel wholly blessed by these three cornerstones. They have guided me to what I am today. My family instilled an understanding and appreciation of honor, a thirst for knowledge, discipline, an appreciation of precise vocabulary, organization, persistence and a deep sense of noblesse oblige.

My time at AMA added more discipline, a Socratic-rational education, a deeper code of honor, an understanding of the power of camaraderie and esprit de corps, self-esteem, a deep sense of personal accomplishment, gracious socialization and an active sports life.

The Special Forces added the ability to analyze quickly and make instantaneous decisions; the necessity of achieving objectives; the pinnacle of self-discipline, the truism that “winners never quit and quitters never win”; a true knowledge of sacrifice; a feeling of self-worth; an understanding of both the little and big pictures; and short-term versus long-term thinking.

Augusta Military Academy’s contributions are indeed substantial. The virtue of discipline seemed to creep into one’s being almost by osmosis. Everything was precisely scheduled. If you wanted to eat, you had better be on time. Roll call formations, Latin class, football practice, and everything else were conducted on a precise time schedule, forcing discipline and time management.

This need for self-discipline was ubiquitous even in one’s “off” time. One had to think ahead. Time had to be managed to make one’s bed, fold the socks, and maintain equipment, clothing and accoutrements ready for inspection. One had to manage his study time, leaving little time for daydreaming. The prerogatives associated with achieving the honor roll or privilege list were hard won.

The Socratic-rational educational methods spurred a true appreciation for how to think as

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## *Oral History*

opposed to simply being familiar with data. As I remember, the small classes allowed for continuous and close teacher-class interaction.

The old excuse, “*The dog ate my homework,*” wouldn’t fly. You had to show up for class with the completed material in-hand. The casual discussion of questions and the greater meaning of the material consumed the greatest portion of the period.

Most teachers seemed to have a personal mission to enhance knowledge in every single cadet. Teachers were approachable any time, any place. They would take time on the spot or make an appointment to be sure the student completely understood their questions. The advantage of having teachers on call during evening study was most advantageous. A young person’s mind may have a question “now” but be overtaken by events and forgotten without immediate feedback.

The idea of an honor code – initially alien to a new cadet – seemed to gradually get into many cadets’ blood. Some skirted, if not directly broke, the honor code. However, taking responsibility for one’s actions was in the back of many cadets’ minds. The concept of taking responsibility became a part of my value system and is still strong to this day.

The idea that camaraderie and esprit de corps actually increases group performance was another concept that gradually took root in my thinking and is echoed in my current business practices. Close camaraderie can be a strong motivator. One is often willing to go the extra mile simply to hold up his end as a member of the group. This principle has paid significant dividends to me personally. It was great preparation for Special Forces and allowed me to form several highly effective management teams throughout my career.

The Academy provided many more opportunities for one to succeed through a greater number of activities than offered at public institutions. The variety of scholastic- and corps of cadet-associated clubs, sports at various levels of expertise, scholastic achievement and numerous other activities gave the widest possible opportunity for excelling to any cadet who desired such. Even partial success in one, if not several, of these endeavors went a long way in increasing one’s self-esteem and a deep sense of personal accomplishment.

Finally, gracious socialization via the Cotillion Club and association with the female finishing schools in the charming Shenandoah Valley environment gave many a taste for gracious living.

You can view the 1962 RECALL here:

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