

## Boys in Transition

### Prolog

I have often contemplated capturing for posterity, or at least for my daughters, some of the more interesting events and histories of my life. And while each of us has a great story to tell, I have come to realize that I have been overly blessed with fun, interesting, challenging and tragic times.

Following the whirlwind weekend of my fiftieth high school reunion I am now compelled to recapture those wide eyed four years at Georgia Military Academy.

Growing up in Pensacola, Florida, the move from being the big dogs at Warrington Elementary School to being the underlings at Warrington Junior High School drove many of us to forge alliances with fellow students, primarily for emotional survival.

Donny Smith and I had much in common. We were both very slight kids, came from career Navy families and were being raised in tempestuous environments with an alcoholic parent. The fact that his cute outgoing twin sister was not taller than me and was growing breasts also made spending the night at his house far more interesting than some of my other buddies at the time.

We often spoke of getting away from it all, graduating from high school, joining the service, any service other than the Navy. Early in our eighth grade year, Donny came up with the idea of our going off to military school together. My father's verbal and physical abusiveness was worsening with each year of my life and I liked that idea of getting away.

I approached my mother about Donny and I going to a military school. Mom had only finished the eighth grade before joining the depression era workforce to help support her family. Dad, the educated one, had completed one year at Georgia Military College. Both my parents worked but I had no inkling of our wealth, or lack thereof. I knew other kids wore madras shirts, but I didn't. Other kids wore London Fogs, and I didn't. Either we were worse off than most or I was being harshly punished for the sins of being a child.

Mom contemplated the benefit of getting me out of the house and away from Dad's "illness". The idea stuck. I was beginning to envision myself at Sewanee, or Riverside, away from home and on my own at the age of twelve. Mom saw things a bit differently.

My parents were from South Georgia and had lived and worked in Atlanta for a number of years before Dad joined the Navy during the depression. They had friends and we had family there, tons of support and oversight around Atlanta for their youngest son.

Donny had not fared so well. My buddy would not be going off to school with me. But my lot was now cast. I would attend the Georgia Military Academy, alone.

In elementary and junior high, I was an average student at best. I do not recall taking an entrance exam, but during our 50<sup>th</sup> reunion weekend I would learn that one of my cousins in Atlanta had been turned down for admittance to GMA based upon such an exam. His younger brother would later be accepted. We were close, but I never knew he had applied but not accepted.

#### About the school

In the late 50s, the school catered to approximately 1,000 students, grades 1-12. Most were from affluent families, some a bit less and a few of us from very modest financial backgrounds. The school had an outstanding reputation in the greater Atlanta area as one of the best preparatory schools in the country, especially if one had eyes on an appointment to a US military academy.

In the late Fifties campus took in perhaps a dozen blocks right off US 98 in College Park Georgia. The building had evolved over the first 50 or so years of the school. Some were new, most were not. Several of the building probably dated to the twenties and thirties, and, although having brick exteriors, they were nothing less than fire traps. Luckily, the heating was steam radiators that cracked, and groaned and clanged in the winter as they heated up around 6 am each morning. In the walls, there were tongue and groove slats below the chair rails that, over time, had become hiding pockets for liquor, sex magazines, cigarettes, and any other assorted contraband, including electric heating and cooking devises. Problem with the electrical devises was that using them when all the students were in their rooms and the lights were on blew the fuses. So they were for the most part useless, except on weekends when most boarders were off campus.

#### Day Students and Boarders

Roughly two thirds or so of the students lived in and around Atlanta area and commuted weekdays. These were the day students. The remainder of us were

boarders, living in dormitories on campus. The tuition at the time for a boarder, at least in the upper school, grades 9-12, was almost half of an average salary for a worker in that time. For my parents, that was a quarter of their annual combined income.

The entire campus, including our dormitory halls, housed large speakers, generally in boxes mounted high on the walls, connected to a PA system in the Commandant's office, through which Colonel Burnett would growl out commands and announcements throughout the campus. Calls to formation, mess hall, call to quarters, preparation for bed, and lights out, Reveille, Tattoo and Taps, were blared out at painful decibels via this anger provoking device throughout each day and night.

Each morning we boarders were required to assemble, dressed for the day in full school uniform by hall, for roll call around the Bull Ring. At precisely 6:30 AM, our day moved quickly from the quiet of early morning to the sound of the first call of Reveille blasting down the halls and across the campus. I remember the very brief transition period as the record player needle was dropped onto a scratchy record. There was always that brief appreciation for that second or two of scratching and hissing that would precede the lurching sound of the bugle's blare. That was our fifteen minute notice that we had to be in formation and at attention before the last note of "Assembly" ceased or we were gigged maybe five demerits for being late to formation. With the exception of, I believe, Sunday, we did this religiously, rain, sleet, snow, storm or shine.

In retrospect, after the first week, I don't ever remember hearing second call at 6:35 the whole four years. Even in spite of the fear of being gigged, few of us even considered getting out of bed before third call at 6:40. One of my proudest accomplishments was learning to tie a perfect double Windsor tie knot in the dark and on a dead run to formation at 6:44 in the morning.

### Traditional Military Haircuts

Charlie was the school barber. His nickname was Charlie the Butcher. He was a miniature person with coke bottle glasses. He looked crazy and his facial expression never changed, ever. He was reminiscent of a miniature Charles Manson without the beard and long hair. There was a wooden box, concave in a half circle around the barber chair that permitted Charlie to be tall enough to reach the top of a student's head. Even with the added eight to ten inches, Charlie necessarily held both arms almost above his head while cutting hair.

To this day I can see his frail arm swinging back and forth at the elbow over a student's head as he buzz cut the victim. Charlie had one cut, a military cut. It was bald up to the ears, and about one inch long all over the top. It was consistently the worst haircut possible, absolutely ugly.

Students, including this writer, attempted to ask for a different outcome. Charlie would listen intently, then proceed with total disregard to earn his nickname.

Having to pay for haircuts off campus would cut into the allowance and would be worth every bit of it.

### The Armory

As a Silver Star military school (for some reason, Silver was better than Gold, or so we were told) we had access to a tremendous amount of World War II surplus goods. We had a complete armory filled with M-1 Garand's. We had Thompson 45 Caliber machine guns, at least one Browning AR-30, and maybe a fifty Caliber Browning. There were no firing pins and no ammo for any of these puppies, but we looked like bad asses at drill.

But our prize was our 105 millimeter howitzer, the kind you see in the WWII documentaries being pulled behind jeeps all over Europe and the Pacific. And for that we had ammo. Blanks, but man what a spectacle. The weapon was manned at football games and was fired whenever we scored. That was cool!

When not in action during football season it sat on the lawn in front of Woodward Hall, our guardian to the entrance gate, and a symbol of our great history.

### Boarder Rooms

Tuition did not include uniforms or books. That was extra. Consequently, most of us were provisioned with a minimal number of shirts, trousers, belts, etc. For gym, we were required to have one set of GMA sweats, one pair of red GMA shorts, a grey GMA T shirt, some black socks, some white gym socks, eight white undershirts, eight pair of briefs, a hard bill cover, a folded cap, two sets of flat sheets, two pillow cases, two towels and two wash cloths. Laundry was turned in on Sunday night and picked up on Wednesday. The administration was adamant that the minimum clothing count also be the maximum clothing count. And although that mandate was often brought up and seldom enforced, there was a reason for their attention to that detail.

Each room was furnished almost the same. Two metal bunks, most stacked, two thin mattresses, two metal two by three metal study tables with a single metal drawer, two wooden slat back chairs, two wooden lockers with shelves on one side, open to the bottom on the other with two wooden doors with a hasp for a combination lock, again, furnish by the student. Some of the older buildings had a small closet, perhaps a foot and a half by a foot and a half. It would only hold our dress uniforms, the heavy grey trousers and jacket, plus our P Jackets. That times two and it was full. We didn't need a lock on the closet door because all of that clothing in it had our name on it in indelible ink. And if your name wasn't on an article of clothing, it would disappear.

But the importance of the limited clothing and linens became obvious when one attempted to put all their "stuff" into that measly two by three by six foot tall locker, where two inches in each direction was consumed with wood. They had already figured out just what you needed and just how much would fit into that locker. Hardly room left over for a pack of cigarettes.

The smart students figured that forgetting your combination would provide a convenient occasional excuse for being late to formation, class, whatever. But the administration and the floor commanders became very angry when that happened. It was just too convenient and would result in demerits the second time around.

### **Stories from my Freshman Year**

First night on my own!

Mom drove me the eight hours from Pensacola to College Park on Friday and we spent the night with family. The next afternoon she settled me into my room in Memorial Hall, spent Saturday night with friends, and returned home on Sunday.

I arrived at GMA a meek, mild mannered, polite Christian young man, and that was all about to end. That first Saturday night on the second floor of Memorial Hall began a transition that would change my life.

I was sitting in my room after dinner. It was about 8:30 or 9 when the door to my room swung open. A kid I had met that afternoon named Merry, smaller than my fragile frame, charged in, grabbed me up from my table and drug me down to the west end of the hall and into a darkened room. All the furniture had been removed and the floor was covered with mattresses. Merry began to beat the

crap out of me, not saying a word. The room was full of kids fighting, grunting, wrestling. This was obviously the hazing I had heard about.

I understood the ritual, was prepared for it and accepted it as the preferable alternative to my father's indiscretions. I cowered and covered. Eventually I was released from Merry's custody and was permitted to return to my room. That really hadn't been so bad.

I was busy all the ensuing week learning the rules, where things were on campus, meeting all these new kids, and time moved quickly. I was looking forward to Saturday night, having fun.

Saturday night, 8:30 or 9, in comes Merry. Drags me down to that room again and proceeds to pound on me with his tiny fists. This time I fight back. Merry kicks my ass again. And because I fought back, he gets three other big guys to try and hang me out the second story window by my ankles over the parking lot.

The four of them quickly positioned me next to the window. My brief life flashed before me. The adrenaline kicked in and there was no fleeing. I kicked, clawed, bit, yanked and hit my way free of them and bolted back to my room, their humiliating laughter following me down the hall. But I had survived. Perhaps that was the last of the hazing.

The following Saturday night like clockwork, Merry shows up. I go willingly to the padded room with him and I initiate the event with a shot to his face. Merry and I go at each other in the darkness until he eventually steps back and departs the battleground. I stumble back to my room, exhausted.

The next Saturday night, at 8:30 sharp, I charged into Merry's room, grabbed the little asshole and dragged him across the hall to the "play room" where I proceeded to pound and kick him into a fetal position. For me, this had gotten old fast.

Merry was the smallest kid in the upper school. I think he had been at GMA as a boarder since the first grade. He had an attitude. As the second smallest kid in the upper school I was beginning to learn the law of the jungle. But it still wasn't as bad a dealing with Dad.

Sunday morning, my roomy and I are sitting around waiting for mess call, rehashing my visit to Merry's room the night before. There is a knock at our closed door. My roommate opens it and there stands Merry, asking if he can come in. My roommate widens the door, Merry steps in, and my wide eyed roomy steps out into the hall closing the door behind him. I stand up to prepare

myself for whatever was about to happen. Merry holds his position near the door and wants to make a deal. We two are the smallest kids, by far, in the senior school. He suggests that we make a pact that if anyone messes with either one of us, they would have to deal with both of us.

I suspected there would be others who would test the strength, endurance and will of Mrs. Holmes' little boy, Bobby, and although I thoroughly didn't like the little shit, his proposal made sense. The bonding had begun.

There would be a few who would mess with one or the other of us over our freshman and sophomore years, but word spread quickly. You might be able to kick both their butts together, but it would be very painful. Even the bully's quickly lost interest in either one of us. The teamwork paid off.

### The GI Shower

Some boarding students found the freedom of not being told to take showers most attractive. And after several days of not showering they began to take on the savoriness of a trash can full of dead shrimp that had been left all day in the hot sun. When the other students on the hall had enough of that student's "freedom", Mr. Smelly was told to take a shower by his hall mates. Failing to do so, his fellow students gave him a "GI" shower. A GI shower included Babo and straw brooms inflicted on the recipient by a half dozen fellow students, a very painful and memorial experience. And once was generally all it took to get the message across.

One student on our hall had a skin disorder that, on occasion, left the impression he was not bathing. I recall that some of our classmates on an adjacent hall decided to give him a GI shower, probably as much out of boredom as concern for the intended purpose. I recall several of our hall mates, including myself, intervening, halting the erroneous fix of that which was not broken. I remember feeling so good about what we had done, the emotional high of doing the right thing even in the face of opposition and adversity. That was one of many learning experiences, gifts of this life, and I thank my fellow classmate for that opportunity to learn to be a better human being.

### Mr. Tough Guy

There was this kid from Chicago, with a polish name. Thought he was a tough guy with a dialect that was reminiscent of a gangster movie, really obnoxious.

What a jerk, constantly telling everyone he could kick their ass. He might have been a tough guy on the South Side streets of the Windy City, but he sure didn't look like much of a threat to me and Merry.

After a couple of months of his crap, someone, maybe Selvidge, pulled him aside and explained to him that we were all getting tired of his crap and he needed to back it down a notch or two or the whole hall was going "soften" him up.

It was as if someone turned a switch. Me, Selvidge, Kras and this punk from Chicago would eventually become the best of friends, buddies. Over those years, I only hope I showed him the love he showed for me. Our senior year he was voted Friendliest.

### Being Drafted

At 85 pounds, my scrawniness was a commodity to both the upper and lower schools. I was recruited to play football on the junior school team. Their weight cutoff was, you guessed it, 85 pounds. Suddenly I was the biggest guy in the group. I played center and middle linebacker. But as my weight crept up, I was eventually cut. My love for the game of football endures today.

One day in the fall, two large seniors barged into my room. My roommate and I jumped to attention, as we were required to do for upperclassmen and cadet officers. The larger of the two asked, "Which one of you is Holmes?" I acknowledged I was. He asked which locker was mine, which I pointed out. He picked me up and threw me over his shoulder as his associate rooted through my open locker for my gym gear and tennis shoes. To the horror of my roommate I was then taken away. Seems I was a starter on the wrestling team at, you guessed it, 85 pounds.

Wrestling was something that I found fun. I was not strong enough to be overly effective but I was slowly learning. But with not so good grades my freshman year, my mother asked the school to take me out of wrestling and put me in something more worthwhile, like band. My mother and I argued at length over the band thing and I negotiated a settled for Glee Club.



## Sophomore Year

### Windows and Wires

As a sophomore, I had little resources with which to justify leaving campus on Saturdays, even for a chocolate shake at the corner. Often, the halls during the weekend days were almost deserted. Life could be extremely boring, and, with no one around, the days passed like years.

One such Saturday I was wandering the halls of 3<sup>rd</sup> Memorial and found a couple of guys I really didn't connect with leaning out their window together. Now I was never the brightest light in the sky, but these guys were certainly not John Kalmbach material. Bored and curious, I wandered into their room. As they were pulling their heads back in from their open window, I asked "What's up?"

"We're going to get ole so and so", one said. That's when I noticed the janitor's bucket full of water in the corner near the window. This could get interesting on a dull Saturday afternoon,

So and so was a bright, articulate Jewish kid with an extremely sharp tongue. His room was directly below these two and his mouth had evidently pissed off one of these fine rednecks. Seems this unfortunate day, old so and so had left his window open, enjoying the cool, dry, fall air.

Once again, "Jethro" and "Leroy" peered out the window in unison at the window ledge below. They were like children, not the thirteen or fourteen year old men our teachers demanded of us. Their actions and behavior were fun to watch, even comforting for a lonely kid.

Suddenly, heads back in the room, they pick up the huge bucket of water, carefully edging to the window, and poured its contents onto the window ledge below, dumping the bucket on the floor, and once again in unison, peering out the window together.

I suddenly felt sorry for old so and so. I knew the water would cover whatever was in front of the window, probably his desk holding his open books, his homework, or letters from home. At best, the floor would be soaked.

The rednecks were now howling with laughter, slapping each other on the back and beating on the window frame.

Through their he haws I heard the "whump" of the wooden casement window slam down in the room below, followed by the clatter in the walls of the counter weights. Again the whooping began.

As the diatribe died down, the party had now ended. We chatted for a while, and I wandered off.

Perhaps twenty minutes later I was returning to my room and once again passed the open door into the scene of the recent water on the window sill caper. Now, "Jethro" was leaning out the window doing something with both hands. There was an electrical cord trailing in from the window swaying back and forth. I followed the cord over to "Leroy" who was holding the AC plug in his hand next to the wall outlet, intensely watching his cohort at the window.

"Now what?" I thought. I ran to the window, squeezing over the shoulder of my hall mate to find him swinging a metal coat hanger. The coat hanger had been split and the two strands of electrical wire had been tied separately to each of the split ends of the hanger. This did not look good. These guys were going to set the building on fire and kill someone, including themselves. I stepped back from the window.

Down below, the coat hanger was tapping on the closed window. After a minute or so of tapping, we all hear the slide of the casement window from below and the lineman yelled "Now!" The plug went into the wall and the lights went out in 3rd Memorial South.

Later we would all learn that Moses' great, great, great whatever grandson had slung up the window in rage and grabbed the coat hanger while standing in a puddle of water. The electrical surge sent him flying across the room, leaving him stunned for a number of minutes. I can only assume that his connection to God through lineage spared him that day.

Bored young boys always find ways to entertain themselves.

### Even Good Guys do Mean Things

Second and third Memorial both had an East Wing, a South Wing and a West Wing. Still being reminiscent of a quiet, mild mannered kid my sophomore year permitted me to be assigned to room with THE Tim of the Barker boys on 3<sup>rd</sup> Memorial South. Our room was right next door to our Floor Commander, whose room was all the way at the end of the hall. His assistant, "Hairy" Hagy, ran the hall.

The bathroom for the whole floor was a door down and across the hall from our room. Visiting this communal facility was necessary a number of times a day, showering, shaving, peeing and pooping. There was a row of sinks on one wall,

toilets on the opposing wall, with showers behind the toilet wall in a separate room. There were no stalls. It was a virtual watering hole for all the animals on our floors and it was a dangerous place to go. If you left your towel, wash cloth, tooth paste, razor or shaving cream unattended, some would use them, others would take them.

The showers were on the other side of the wall directly behind the toilets. When a toilet was flushed, the water went from comfortably warm to scalding hot in a heartbeat. The thoughtful boarders would always slap the wall twice or more to let those in the shower know a toilet was about to be flushed.

All the showers were constantly in use at certain times each school day morning. At the sound of the slapping, all in the showers would not step away from the shower head, but instead flatten themselves against the wall beneath the shower head. The water temperature would change that quickly.

I reminisce of watching six or so of us, in an instant flattening ourselves against the wall as if in synchronized ballet or training for the Colquittes Rifles, then clinging to the freezing white ceramic tiles, wet, soapy and naked, waiting the thirty seconds or so for the toilet tanks to refill. Then, one by one we would peel off the cold wall to replenish our body heat and complete our daily hygiene.

Then there were the assholes. Several of them would tip toe into the bathroom, take positions between two toilets, and, on signal, each flush one or two toilets without slapping the wall.

The screams could be heard on both floors. The obscenities would go on and on, resonating out of the ceramic tile megaphone of the shower room, specifically derogatory statements about these guys' mothers and their marital status at the time of their sons' births.

Another of the friendship threatening dangers was the rolled up towel capable of inflicting triangular whelps on a bare ass or leg. Situational awareness was paramount in avoiding serious injury from being popped by a towel. If you saw someone rolling a towel, you either got your own towel rolled before the other guy finished, or fled down the hall. If the other guy was already rolled, flight was your only option, even if with your trousers and briefs at your ankles and your butt unwiped.

There was a guy on 3<sup>rd</sup> Memorial West that was always joking around with me. We bantered back and forth, yanking chains, building our blossoming communication skills. He was a swimmer, strong and broad shouldered, and like almost everyone else in the school was a lot bigger than me. And I liked him.

One night in my BVDs I was brushing my teeth before taps. The swimmer was finishing up himself. Not contemplating him as a danger, I failed to see him roll his towel. As he headed for the bathroom door behind me, he stopped and popped the back of my leg. @#\$%!

He bolted out the door and down the hall. While enduring the excruciating pain, I quickly rinsed my mouth, threw my tooth brush and paste on my bed just across the way, and charge off down the hall in hot pursuit of the swimmer.

Noticing I had not immediately followed him out of the bathroom, my friend was casually strolling away from me toward 3<sup>rd</sup> Memorial West. My tactical maneuver would be to run by him as fast as possible driving my fist into his triceps, inflicting a frog of gargantuan proportions. His arm would be useless for a week. One had to insure the payback was sufficient to avoid a repeat offense.

I was running on my tiptoes, rapidly closing on my target. In the fraction of a second before impact, his situational awareness improved sufficiently to drop his left shoulder just enough to receive my right hand on the ball of his humorous. I missed the frog, but the impact almost knocked him down. We both laughed loudly, recognizing we were now even. Then the pain began. I had broken my second metacarpale in my right hand.

He would kid me constantly about my broken hand. But he did not swim for almost a week and there would be no more horse play with Holmes in the bathroom. Once again the law of the jungle played out.

### The Makeup Artist

Returning from Christmas break, Tim had “procured” some makeup putty that was used in the acting business.

Tim assured me we would have some fun with this stuff and that we needed to sneak some ketchup out of the dining hall. Next night after dinner I return to our room looking more like a miniature John C. Holmes rather than Mrs. Holmes little boy, Bobby. We had ketchup!

In those days I had little claim to fame. However, my math skills for those not in the advanced classes were legendary. Every night at 9:30 our door would burst open and students from all of third memorial, along with some football players and swimmers from the junior halls, would pour into our room where I would slowly and meticulously explain the solutions to the daily assigned math problems. It happened every Monday through Thursday nights like clockwork.

One evening Tim had finished his homework early and was playing with the makeup putty. Tim was a beautiful kid, tall, blonde, blue eyed, creamy skin, absolutely striking. He spent most of CQ that night working on his new look, a macabre look. Tim constructed a gash across his fair skin from his ear to the corner of his mouth. It had taken him almost an hour and a half to finish this masterpiece, but it look exactly as if someone had taken a carpet knife to him!

We retrieved the ketchup from my locker only to realize it was far too thick. We needed water to thin it. The closest water was the bathroom. Since we were going to pour this on Tim's face we couldn't pee in it. Someone would have to traverse no-man's land during quarters to get some water from the bathroom. It would defeat our purposes if our surprise guy got caught in the hall before Tattoo, so this would be my mission.

I slowly opened the squeaky door just enough to squeeze through. Tim held the door in place to insure it did not move and squeak more loudly on its own, as we both knew it would. I tiptoed to the bathroom, frozen by the fear that the faucets would often squeal when high water pressure was forced through a small valve opening, something that was not supposed to happen during CQ. I slowly opened the faucet ever so slightly, waiting, waiting for what I hoped was just the right amount of water to thin the ketchup to the consistency of human blood. It was so quiet as I held the ketchup bottle under the drizzling faucet, the only sound I heard was my own breathing. If I got caught out of my room during Quarters, the ten demerits would put me on restriction and require ten or more hours walking the Bullring. In retrospect I was building character, learning grace under pressure.

But we were running out of time. It was almost 9:30, and Tattoo. But the ketchup needed to look real. Better more runny than too thick. In my mind I urged the water to move quicker through the small opening in the valve. I feared that any more open and the screech of the water would resonate through the pipes alerting everyone on both floors of Memorial South that someone was in the bathroom during quarters, resulting in certain discovery.

Eventually, I had to stop. It was time. Rather than risk making a sound closing the value, I left it on. I slowly tiptoed back to the open door where Tim stood holding the door in its exact place, his face a warped contortion.

As I slipped between the door and door jam, I recall to this day that goofy grin on Tim's face and almost lost it laughing! Him, too. This caper would be great!

Tim quickly got down in the middle of the floor with his face closest to the door, assuming the position of the slain victim. Once in place, I poured the shaken

mixture in a twelve to eighteen inch puddle of blood alongside his head, trailing it up the side of his face into the trench of the makeup putty on his handsome face.

I hid the ketchup bottle in my locker and retreated to the corner of the room away from Tim and the door. The victim looked perfect. Not moving, hardly breathing. Hell, I thought he was dead!

Tattoo sounded. Our door swung open. The math students poured in. The screams started. The first guy fainted outright and collapsed without being caught by the others.

The screams had brought almost all the other students on the hall to our doorway. There were now close to twenty people crushed up against the doorway to view the grisly scene in our room. Hagy had heard the ruckus and was wading through the humanity to get to the problem. I recall him standing frozen over Tim's body, the look of sheer panic on his face. His career as a high ranking cadet noncom at the Georgia Military Academy was over. This would all be his fault.

It was all I could do to muffle my laughing. Unfortunately, the air was escaping from my lips even though covered tightly with both my hands, like tiny little farts. From the corner of his eye, Hagy saw me. Putting two and two together, he lunged at me and began to pound me mercilessly with both fists. As I was being beaten into a Beatle Bailey pile of goo, the spectators stepped into the room to see what the hell Hagy was doing. They too recognized that all had been had.

Tim's laughing probably saved my life. Hagy left me to begin kicking Tim all the way under his bed as the hoard in the hall laughed like crazy, probably as much to see our normally calm assistant floor commander trying to kill his primary charge, Tim.

The kid who had passed out was never the same when he showed up for math tutoring. He always made sure he was never, ever again the first one to enter our room at tattoo, always looking around the room, entering almost reluctantly.

## The Award

Later in our sophomore year together on 3<sup>rd</sup> Memorial South, Tim and Greg's mother was nominated for an academy award for her lead role in, I believe, Two Women. There was a great deal of conjecture among the students whether the school would permit the sons any accommodation to watch the awards on television that night. Perhaps they would allow the television on Second

Memorial to be on that evening. Perhaps some of us might get to catch a glimpse of their mom on TV. Generally, they received no special treatment. And with the little time I had spent around this most famous lady helping Tim unload his stuff from her Mercedes when she returned him to campus, I often wondered if Tim and Greg would even want to watch. To me, Susan always appeared very distant and withdrawn, almost cold.

At the last minute, and in a rare occurrence, the school permitted Tim and Greg to spend the evening with friends of the family off campus and take in the Academy Awards. That evening, as I sat studying alone during quarters, I was as anxious as anyone of the boarders could be about the outcome. The stress on Tim and Greg must have been much heavier I thought. After taps I lay awake wondering if she won, thinking about Tim and Greg. I couldn't get to sleep. I lay there in the quiet, apprehensive.

About 10:45 that night, the silence was interrupted by the faint tap of metal cleated cordovans on the linoleum over wood floors, resonating down 3<sup>rd</sup> Memorial South, becoming louder and louder as Tim approached our room.

I turned in my bunk to the wall to hide my still being awake. Tim slowly opened the door. As it always did, the door creaked loudly, first as it was opened, then again as it was closed. Tim stepped quietly to his desk and turned on his study lamp. I could stand the suspense no longer.

In the dim lit room, I slowly rolled over to face Tim. He was standing between his bed and his desk, staring at the floor and taking off his tie. "Did she win?" I asked. Not looking up he answered, "Yeah."

### The Cadillac Caper

For one of Captain Brewster's significant birthdays, perhaps his 80<sup>th</sup>, Susan Brewster asked us former students to provide her with some good antidotes. The following is what I forwarded to her. In retrospect, it very well may have been Colonel Brewster I was writing about, but the story is good just the same.

It was in the fall or winter of my sophomore year, I was living on the third floor of Memorial Hall. We endured a great many abuses by the local youth, harassed off campus, occasionally beat up and, of course, the constant rail of "Bellhop" from passing cars while

studying during call to quarters on preschool nights. The administration had repeated dialog with the College Park Police to stop or contain the interruptions to our evening study periods, all to no avail.

One particular evening there was a recurring car that seemed to be inviting us out behind Memorial Hall, coming again and again during quarters. We were all a bit aggravated by the continuity of the loud yelling at us, the insults, the obscenities, the unwarranted hatred.

Shortly before Quarters came to an end, there was the quiet pit pat of bare feet in the hallway. A note was slipped under our door. "Let's get the guys in the car during tattoo", read the note. I was rooming with Tim Barker. When Tattoo sounded, there was a group that charged down the hall, their robes flowing behind them as they ran. Tim and I looked at each other, grinned, and charged off after them.

The basement behind Memorial Hall was the Maintenance area. Along the fence were stacked clay drainage tiles, thick, heavy and octagonal in shape, along with some concrete blocks. We stumbled over the stack as we hid behind the fence, overgrown with vines.

We stood quietly behind the fence, waiting for the return of that car, the focus of our revenge. It was cold. I remember needing to tinkle, badly. Still we waited. And waited.

After about five minutes a car came to the corner, stopped, standing still for the longest time, and then slowly moved onto the street behind Memorial Hall. The



student closest to the fence opening whispered that the car was coming, slowly.

Could it be the one? What would we do? How would a dozen unarmed students in bathrobes confront these kids with a car? One of the students reached down and picked up a drain tile. Without a word, everyone followed suit selecting a projectile among the concrete blocks and drain tiles.

I recall my drain tile was cold, and dirty, and had vines growing in it. I looked east to see the car slowly moving our way, headlights bright. Through the few openings in the vines along the fence we could now see it was a Cadillac, probably a Fleetwood, long, black and shiny in the streetlights. I really had to tinkle. What would we do? What would I do? What should we do?

I was afraid to move, frozen in the dark behind the fence. We waited as the car continued slowly approaching the opening in the fence, waiting, waiting, waiting.....

The car was now very much in range inching forward. The quiet and stillness of that night was suddenly shattered by the simultaneous familiar shouts of the car's occupants, "Bellhops!" In a moment, the adrenaline kicked in, fight or flight.

In unison we charged out the gate and threw our anger into the trunk, roof, side and hood of that magnificent vehicle. The shiny, crumpled car roared off, tires squealing, the street an shattered, empty battleground.

Immediately recognizing the severity of our actions, we all bolted back to the front of Memorial Hall, up the

steps to the third floor, back to the safety of our rooms. Sitting there, panting, frightened even more, I really, really had to go to the bathroom!

The next day, the underground communications system bustled of the frustration and anger of the administration at the actions of a few renegade students. We were certain the entire campus would be restricted until further notice, we would be urged to turn ourselves in, eventually found out and subsequently shipped home. Our fate was sealed.

We knew a convocation would be called. We would be forced to sit wide eyed as Capt. Brewster ranted on and on about the disappointment of our families, the shame of the school, the frustration of our peers. It would be awful. All for that one moment of revenge, God and others would punish us severely forever.

The Convocation began as usual, introductions, announcements, reminders, etc. Finally Capt. Brewster spoke of his communications with the College Park Police Department, the recent destruction of a very new and very expensive Cadillac sedan, obviously at the hands of GMA students. (I guess it was the clay drainage tiles that gave us away.)

Now the railing on and on would begin. The exact words of Capt. Brewster now elude me these many years later, but the essence of his remarks have stuck:

"The College Park Police Department has asked me to address the destruction of that vehicle with the responsible students. Please consider yourselves so addressed". With that, convocation ended in cheers.

## Earning Privileges

One night during Tattoo, the Junior hall came calling to 3<sup>rd</sup> Memorial South. They came to kick our asses. No reason, no rhyme, just for shits and grins. We fought valiantly, protecting our turf. But in the end, they drove us back to our rooms, everyone except me and Merry.

With no one easy to beat on left, most of the juniors were headed back to their rooms. I remember standing at the turn in the hall like a yapping poodle urging the departing juniors to come back for more. Then I saw that there was one junior left at the far end of the hall, a football player. He had Merry by his ankles upside down and was pounding his head into the floor.

I charged down the hall. His back was to me. I launched myself up on his back, wrapping an arm around his neck. I knew if I did not kill him, he would kill me. I tightened my arm around his throat and squeezed for all that was left in me.

He dropped Merry. Merry scampered back to his room. So much for our deal. My opponent was focused on my arm around his neck. He could not pry my arm loose. I was trying to crush his larynx. He was becoming frantic. Finally, he slammed us both back against the wall. That was the closest I have ever come in my life to being knocked unconscious. As I attempted to get up and go after this guy, he began to hit and kick me, repeatedly. I was out manned, out muscled by someone who was at least one and a half times my bulk. The harder I tried to get up, the angrier this guy hit me. Eventually, I tucked and covered.

I lay still on the hall floor, hurting all over as the invader stumbled off our hall, cursing me with a now raspy voice. I felt I had failed.

Underclassmen were not permitted on upperclassmen's halls. If you were caught there, they hung you out the second or third story window by your ankles. Very occasionally, an upperclassmen hall might give an underclassman permission to come on board. No very often, though.

Several days after the brawl, word came from one of the juniors that the "visiting" junior hall had granted me privileges. A day or two later, the same word came from the Senior Hall. I did not believe these guys.

A week or so later one of the juniors invited me over to his room for a smoke. I laughed, explaining I had no intention of being hung out a window. He was shocked. They were serious when they granted me privileges. So were the seniors. Now I was shocked.

We went to his room. As I walked a hall which I had heretofore been forbidden to enter, I was overcome with wonderment. It was a new world to this sophomore. Some of the juniors spoke, some ignored me. There was this bully, a big guy, always shoving and slapping at me around when Merry was nowhere in sight. He walked up and shook my hand, "Welcome to the Junior Hall", he boomed. "Ever been on the senior hall?" he added.

He put his arm around me and headed me onto the adjacent senior hall on Second Rugby, no man's land. I was about to turn and run when he began introducing me to all the seniors on the hall I did not know. Perhaps I was not the bad person my father's mark had left on me.

## **Junior Year**

### **Guard duty**

Responsible cadets were, on a rotating basis, assigned duty in the Guard Room. The Guard Room was the hub of the campus in Rugby Hall with the Commandant's Office next door. The Commandant of Cadets was Col. John Burnett. He was a retired bird colonel, gruff, smart, pleasant, but all business. The only downside to Burnett was that he was the ultimate chain smoker. He breathed with a rasp. Most of his cigarettes, however, burned by themselves in a large glass cigar ash tray in his office. As bumbling as Burnett appeared at times, he was the master of multi-tasking. The guy always had a full plate. And he was a genius at recognizing the true good and bad in students and staff, and only these many years later do I come to truly admire that man.

In the evenings, and on weekends, some of the other teachers would serve as assistant commandants and would oversee the Commandant's office from perhaps 4 PM, up until sometimes 10. The Commandant was supported by a rotation of students who would "stand guard" in the Officer of the Day Room, which was on the opposite side of the "Guard Room" from the Commandant's office. There was an Officer of the Day, there was the Sergeant of the Day, the Corporal of the Day and two Privates of the Day. They assisted Burnett, ran errands and messages between the offices and classrooms, answered the phones and raising and lowering the Flag each morning and evening. The Guardroom was the brain of our living Campus.

In the OD office was the infamous announcement microphone, amplifier and turntable. It was the epicenter of the world, at least our world. It was the heart of GMA, pumping blood through the Campus. This was the sacred location from

which all things came to the masses. Here one could actually view the scratched 78 RPM recording of the bugle calls. From this microphone, God spoke to us through the voice of Colonel Burnett, his heavy breathing a constant reminder of his silent presence as he caught his breath during announcements.

From this microphone students were called to the OD's office, or the guard room to pick up telephone messages, to come meet campus visitors, and the big scary, "Holmes, R.G., report to the Commandant's office immediately."

When on duty I remember being frozen before that microphone when having to speak into that wand of wonderment. Any error there was broadcast around the world for all to hear. It was truly frightening.

### Alarm Clocks

With the exception of the Duty Sergeant, being on Guard Duty was fun. First, no classes. You got to walk around the campus all day with the OD wrap on your arm, indicating to all that your being out of class during the day was warranted. Plus, when you walked into an office or classroom, you received the respect of both Staff, teachers and students because you were there on official business.

But the Duty Sergeant alone had the charge of getting himself up at 6 AM and being at the OD office in time to warm up the amplifier and have the record ready to play First Call to Reveille at precisely 6:30 AM Eastern Standard Time. Not really a difficult thing to do maybe once a year.

However, everyone knew when and who would be the duty officers and the Sergeants of the day. It was posted on the bulletin board. That was good, right? Wrong.

If the duty sergeant failed to timely perform his most important assigned duty of waking the student body, it was demerits, Big Demerits. The Administration would have no horse play with morning formations being late.

In preparation for this charge, the Sergeant was dispatched from the Guard Room at 9:30 provisioned with a wind up alarm clock with instructions to turn in early in preparation for the early start. Seldom would a duty sergeant think about going to sleep before taps.

If he did, he stood the risk of one of his hall mates turning off the alarm clock! Other times, intruders would much later sneak into his room and turn it off, a mean and brutal hoax. Suddenly, the value of an extra alarm clock was evident.

Getting up before second call to formation was a seldom thought. But some found studying early in the morning for exams plausible, on occasion. So there were some additional alarm clocks around on campus. The conscientious Duty Sergeant would accumulate all available alarm clocks and set them all for anywhere between 5:45 and 6:15, hiding them all over his room, the obvious one next to his bunk, another on his desk, one on top of his locker in the center close to the wall, sometimes one under his pillow, and my favorite, suspended by its base in the springs of my bunk under the bed. It was a game of cat and mouse.

### Short Creamy Sheets

Playing jokes on your hall mates was a favorite pastime. All beds were made in military fashion, tight drawn sheets and blankets, corners folded and pulled tight such that you could bounce a quarter off the tight top sheet and blanket. This was a time before fitted sheets.

In your absence from your room your “friends” would pull back your drab, dark green army blanket and remove the top sheet, pulling the lower end of the bottom sheet up to fold with the top of the blanket. In essence, the bottom sheet now only went half way down the mattress, but retained the appearance of two sheets rather than just the one. Hence, the bed was “short sheeted”.

Every night at ten PM, taps railed from the loudspeakers. At the end of Taps, all must be in their bunks with lights out, or it was ten demerits. Out of your room during CQ, or out of bed after Taps was seriously a no no. Often the Acting Faculty Commandant would stand outside as Taps finished, looking around the campus for non Floor Commander rooms with lights on. If any were observed, that Floor Commander would certainly have to answer to Col. Burnett the next day.

Few of us considered getting into bed until the last stanza of Taps. So when you dove into the bed with five or ten seconds to spare and found yourself short sheeted, you were screwed. One would jump up, turn on the light, and proceed to frantically remake your bunk. Without exception, the Floor Commander would see the light shining under the closed door to your room and come charging through the door yelling obscenities and threatening ten hours on the Bull Ring. And even though it was not our fault, we were chastised for not checking our beds before taps. Really, now, we are talking twelve to fourteen year olds here.

And while most times we were not written up, we were still not endeared to our superior officers. It was always an ugly scene.

Another trick was to take some shaving cream and spread it about calf length between the sheets so that when the bunk occupant jumped into bed at the last second and shoved his feet down between the sheet, there was the surprise of the wet, sticky cream. And in the cold winters, it could be herniating.

The drill was the same. Jump out of bed, turn on the light, grab two clean sheets, and frantically make the bed as the Floor Commander or Assistant yelled at you till you finished and finally turned the lights out.

I think it might have been my junior year, I was on Woodward Hall for part of the year before moving over to Brewster. Some big jerk of a guy short sheeted me one night. O.K., so next morning everyone had a big laugh at my expense.

The next night, the same lug put shaving cream in my bed again. O.K., I can take another joke.

Next night, Mr. Jokester gives me another load of shaving cream. We were only provisioned with two sets of sheets. I was now out of clean sheets and had to borrow a set from a hall mate. The next morning everyone was laughing but Holmes.

That day at lunch I went back behind Memorial Hall, first floor behind the kitchen, where the Maintenance Room was. There was some old guy in there watching me carefully as I looked around. First thing of interest I saw was a softball size piece of fiberglass insulation. I continued to look. There, a pair of leather work gloves. I turned to the leathery old man and asked, "Can I have this piece of fiberglass?" He nodded yes. "Can I borrow these gloves if I return them before lunch is over?" He nodded again and turned away from me, sensing he did not want to know what I was up to.

I folded the fiberglass between the two leather gloves and hurried back to our hall. Everyone was at lunch. I went into Jokester's room, pulled back his bunk covers and ground up the fiberglass insulation with my gloved hands from chest high to the foot of his bed. I remove the gloves and remade the bunk. I returned the gloves to the place from which I had taken them, and headed for the mess hall.

About Eleven PM that night our Floor Commander and Assistant carried the King of Jokes screaming and flailing down to the Infirmary. I spoke to no one of my revenge. Apparently, there was no need. After a couple of days in a local hospital without certain diagnosis, word would come to me that one of the cadet duty officers would be driving Joker back to campus as a specified time.

I was waiting for him just outside his room as he walked down our hall. I was nonchalantly leaning against the wall next to his dorm door, arms folded across my chest, one foot back against the wall. I watched him all the way down the hall, smiling only slightly. He walked slowly to his doorway, hesitated, looked down, went into his room and closed the door. Mr. Prankster was out of business.

### Cannonball Bowling

The Bull Ring was surrounded by a number of pyramids of old cannonballs, frozen together with years of rust and black paint, reminders of our long and great military heritage. The constant changing temperature, rain and curious students caused the occasional loose cannon ball.

At the height of the lunch hour, with the many day students on campus, the weekday lunchtime noise in the mess hall was a combination of conversation, the many clinks of metal utensils on metal food trays, the milk glasses clicking on the tables, the banging of the chairs, the click of the metal shoe cleats on the ceramic tile floor, the clanging from the food line and racket in the kitchen, it all came together as a constant loud hum of incredible proportions.

It was midweek at lunch, an atypical dull and eventless week. I was sitting near the center of the mess hall on the ground floor of memorial Hall, eating my bland food. Out of the hum of humanity there began a subtle low noise, moving from the west end of the mess hall, slowing shifting to the center then to the east end. As the hum subsided, the rising noise became louder and louder. It was a whump, whump, whump that began fast and fell both in volume and frequency. Something very out of the ordinary was happening on Second Memorial West and East.

By the time the diminishing sound had shifted to the East end of the mess hall, the customary noisy roar was reduced to the occasional discernible individual sound. Then it began again, this time very loud in the absence of the roar. Everyone was listening now. Whump, whump, whump again and again, this time loud and fast from the east to the center of the ceiling in the mess hall, slowing and quieting now as the rolling thunder moved to the west end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Memorial.

By now the lunch crowd was beginning to laugh. This was a joke. One or two more repetitions of moving ceiling banging and the noise stopped. As if nothing had ever happened, the roar returned.



By the time we came out of the first class after lunch that day the word was out that Pickens and Greg Barker had plucked a cannon ball off a stack around the Bull Ring and had found favor in rolling it back and forth to one another the length of 2<sup>nd</sup> Memorial East and West. The bowling ended suddenly when Moonman stepped out of his apartment to find out what the hell was going on. Pickens and Barker would spend the next two Saturdays painting all the cannons and cannonballs around the Bull Ring, including the one that had enjoyed the stroll above the mess hall.

### **Junior year**

#### **Our First Provisional Company**

Often on Saturday many of our guys without weekend passes would spend the afternoon taking in a movie. Sometimes the locals did too. Because of our perception as rich kids, or for the potential of being a graduation day sponsor, the local cuties were hot to date cadets, and local civilian guys hated our guts. We were often the butt of their jokes, sometimes pushed around, and sometimes fights broke out. Sometimes in numbers sufficient to be considered a brawl.

One such Saturday a bunch of kids from East Point High beat up on a group of our kids outside of the East Point Movie Theatre. Word came back to the school of what was happening. Major Thelander was the duty Commandant. He got on the PA system and assembled every student on campus to the Bull Ring, however dressed, and double timed them down to the East Point Theatre to kick some butt. Unfortunately, by the time the rag tag "provisional company" got there, the bad guys had departed.

#### **The Cherokee Game**

I was almost 5' 9" tall and I think Styles Kellett was slightly shorter than me. He played offensive guard most impressively on the football team. Styles just didn't understand he was too short for sports. But Styles was built like a fire hydrant, probably 165 pounds.

For reasons never clear to me, one of our fiercest basketball rivalries was with Cherokee High. After one such hard fought game with them at our gym, Cherokee had won in the final minutes.

Following the game, a number of their students were hanging around in the parking lot outside the gym looking for trouble when a fight got started. One of their big guys was pushing around some of our guys and it was about to get ugly. Through the crowd wanders Styles, watching the big guy run his mouth at the collection of cadets.

Styles stepped slowly in front of the big guy and engages him in dialog in an apparent attempt to dispel any violence. The big guy pushes Styles back with sufficient force to knock him back to the ground, Styles catching himself with one hand on the asphalt parking lot. Having dismissed the runt, the big guys scanned the crowd for the next smart ass cadet.

In one motion, Styles sprang from the ground and lunges a right fist into the jaw of the towering loudmouth sending him sprawled onto the hood of the car he was standing in front of. As he lay there unconscious, being examined by all the bystanders like a corpse on display, I remember thinking how this basketball game had suddenly come to a proper and satisfying conclusion.

## The Rumble

Following the event at the East Point Theatre, the East Point boys challenged us to a rumble. A rumble was where a bunch of their guys and a bunch of our guys get together and fight it out. Kind of like the rumble room on 2<sup>nd</sup> Memorial that Merry introduced me to early on, but on a significantly expanded head count.

The banter went on for months about a bunch of us boarders getting together and taking these guys on. Finally, a date was set, a weeknight after tattoo. We would rumble on the parade ground.

The whole week we boarders were working up to the big event. I was nervous, even scared. Somebody could get hurt and I was no bad ass brawler. The guys in the dorms were contemplating weapons, steel knuckles, slapjacks, brick bats, even two by fours! This was going to get serious. As apprehensive as I was about fighting, no way could I stay out of the fray. After all, Cherry and I had a reputation to protect. I would have to participate, all 125 pounds of me.

Recognizing my slight height and the limited reach of my arms, I envisioned how I would fight, absent a handgun, or better yet a rifle! As I was packing the days dirty clothes into my long laundry bag, the one with the long cord loop.....that I could wrap around my wrist..... I could take the clothes out of the bag..... and

what could I put in there, a brick? No, too heavy. Didn't want to kill anyone dead. This was supposed to be fun, I was thinking.

As I looked around the room my eyes settled on my heavy sole black cordovan shoes. There, that wouldn't kill anyone. Might knock them out for a while. That could work. I was beginning to feel comfortable contemplating the battle field. So much for any apprehension about the rumble. I now envisioned myself as a warrior.

On the appointed day, Captain Turner was the duty Commandant. He was a thin but toned teacher who was much more impressed with himself than I was. Not a jerk, not a really nice guy, just an OK Furman grad.

That day on campus, there was a special buzz in the air. Excitement. Energy. We had been putting up with their crap way too long.

After mess hall that evening, word came around the halls by messengers from the organizers of this little sortie that at the conclusion of tattoo, all would go to the parade ground and wait on the bad asses. So at the first bugle note of tattoo, we all charged down the halls, down the stairs, out of the dorms, across the campus, like ants to an intruder, all headed to the parade ground.

Once there we were the exhausted epitome of disorganization. Standing around, breathing heavy from the run from the dorms, looking at one another as if asking, "What now?" Then someone spoke up, and not one of the organizers, "Quick! Behind the hedges surrounding the parade field!" And in a flash we did.

There we crouched, behind the hedges that surrounded the entire parade field, we continued our heavy breathing in desperate wait for the enemy. The PMST classes were paying off. We lay in hiding, focused, prepared with our weapons, our loaded laundry bags, ready to attack, listening only to the thumping of our racing heartbeats. We waited.....we waited.....we waited.....

I had no watch on me, and if I had, it was far too dark to tell time anyway. It seemed like hours. I began to think they would not show up. If taps started, we would never get back to our rooms before lights out.

Then a car appeared on Walker Avenue, at the gate north of the gymnasium. It slowly turned into the parking lot, followed by another car, and then another, three cars, maybe eighteen or twenty of them. They would obviously be big guys, tough guys. My fear began to return. How would I perform? The hell with being hurt, I was frightened that I would disappoint my comrades. It was show time.

The cars made a gradual roll toward the gym, turning to the west on the road in front of the reviewing stand. About half way across the parade ground the cars turned off the paved road and came to a stop near the middle of the parade ground. Once still, the cars extinguished their lights, then their engines. The occupants quietly exited the vehicles. To me these guys looked huge.

From somewhere near the middle of the parade ground hedge, across from the reviewing stand, there came a shout. Suddenly, there were over a hundred well armed senior school students charging from the hedges at the dozen and a half or so bad guys. Like Custer and his last stand, they were there to kick some butt and they were not to be denied. And like Custer, I doubt they could see or comprehend the numbers charging at them.

Being the speedster I was (18 seconds flat in the 100 yard dash) I was late to the clash. Once there I immediately saw some guy about my size in an opposition letter jacket and I promptly introduced him to my shoes. He fell like a wet towel. I stood over him to see if he would get up and kick my ass. He began to crawl away on his hands and knees. Guess he was through having fun.

I now had confidence and was ready to assert myself on the next bad ass. It was dark. I was cautious. There was screaming, thumping, umping all around, but there was no one else to hammer! The opposition was already running back to their vehicles in full retreat! And I was just beginning to have fun!

The three cars roared away to the back gate and to where ever they came from. We victors were cheering our success. But the celebrating was broken by the shouts of Captain Turner. He had been alerted to the ruckus by the noise from the parade field was walking briskly toward the parade field to take control of the situation. Suddenly we were all panicked. If we got caught out here, no telling what kind of trouble we would be in.

Get this picture. One hundred students running from the parade field back to Brewster and Rugby Halls with one confident but slight acting commandant trying to stop the masses with his bare hands. It was like holding a couple of gallons of water on a table with two arms.

I was running, my laundry bag slung over my shoulder, bumping me in the butt. I was following a guy in front of me, a hall mate. Captain Turner was side stepping into our path. One of us was going to get captured.

As we approached, Turner centered himself in front of my hall mate to apprehend him. The captain was about sixty pounds short of the bulk need to do so. As I followed my hall mate in escape, the captain appeared near eye level slightly

above me as I ran by him. He was suspended in motion, in the air, upside down. The look in his eyes in the dim light as our eyes met still haunts me. We were in the middle of an asphalt parking lot. I just kept running.

Following that event, the issues with East Point, or whoever, significantly subsided.

Too much rain for drill

On Thursday, drill day, the rains came. It had been raining most of the day. So when drill was cancelled, a bunch of us decided to play football on the parade field. No pads, no helmets, full-contact tackle, just rain, sweat and mud. God, what a great two hours of slipping, sliding, blocking and tackling! More fun than any outdoor activity I had enjoyed in my previous two or three year at GMA! Wow!!!

Next time it rained, we paraded in the rain, but without our M-1s. OK, so we weren't that smart.

22-5

Captain Jack S. Cook was the Assistant Professor of Military Science and Tactics. That meant he ran the show. He was a retired US Army Captain and wore patent leather beaded cordovans. His uniform was always immaculate. He had the sharpest salute I ever witnessed. He was all business.

As a company first Sergeant early in our Junior year, I was taking a platoon through drill exercises when Cook wanders over and watches, hands folded behind his back. After a few minutes he yells out to me, in front of God and everyone, that I was performing the formation or procedure or something, incorrectly. I responded as anyone would to Cook, "Yes, Sir!" No one messed with Cook. He would eat your eyes out for a snack.

Following drill I returned to my room and opened our most basic Military handbook, Publication 22-5. That was the PMST bible. Looking on Page 17, near the bottom, I read the rule and I had been instructing the platoon correctly. I then went through the handbook and underlined all of the pertinent passages that dealt with the drill formations, commands and structure on the parade field, slowly committing each to memory.

The following week at drill, once again I was taking the platoon through our field exercises when Cook once again, strolling by, loudly reprimands me for handling the formation improperly. I halt the platoon, about faced to the Captain and loud enough for God and the whole parade field to hear, "Sir, Page 17, Section 6, Paragraph b, Publication 22-5 reads,,,,,,,,," where I cite verse and phrase from the manual the correct procedure as I am performing, finishing with "....., End Quote, Sir". To which I performed another about face and proceeded with drill.

Without a word, Captain Cook turned and strolled off, arms clasped behind his back, his lesson for the day to all present complete.

### The Greatest Fight Ever

Cole was a guy I admired. He was tall, thin, muscular, a swimmer. He was from Miami Florida, and in spite of the fact that, by car, Pensacola was the half way point to Chicago, we had a kind of kinship, being Floridians and all. But somewhere along the way we got sideways with each other. And at GMA, when those kinds of things were not talked through, and they seldom were, one or the other would call the other out behind the gymnasium.

I don't recall who call who out, but the other readily accepted. As in the custom of a gentlemen's duel, seconds were selected and they negotiated a date, time and place.

Witnesses other than the seconds were not permitted at these affairs. At the appointed time, we met on the far side of the football field, just east of the opposition bleachers. It was not till we took off our jackets did the reality of Cole's six inch reach advantage begin to set in. But there was no backing out now.

We went at each other like madmen, pounding on one another with still unrecognized hatred and rage. The maintenance people had burned some rubbish in the area and there was an old fire ring there. I recall the distraction of the conflicting senses of my bare feet between the soft powdered ashes and the metal and broken glass as we jousting around and through the fire bed.

Cole was a better boxer. I was becoming exhausted. I was losing. I was desperate. Cole was tiring, too. He left me an opening and I took it. With all my might I swung a hard right to the mouth and nailed it. His mouth exploded with blood. I thought I had killed him.

He yelled, "Your hand!" I looked down at my right hand. There was a bone sticking out the back of my hand. There was a bone sticking out the side of my hand. And when I turned it over, there was a bone sticking out my palm. I may have busted his mouth, but Cole's teeth had shattered my metacarpals.

We helped each other back to the infirmary. I had split his upper and lower lip. They examined Cole and sent him back to his room. I was dispatched to a local hospital to have my hand set. Cole and I never had a cross word again and to this day I never, ever hit anyone again with a closed fist. Lots of forearms, elbows, palms, knees and feet, but no fists.

Our "seconds" who had been the sole witnesses to the battle, became the celebrities. According to them, they had witnessed the greatest boxing match in the history of the world. This was obviously before the time of Ali. They would repeatedly tell the story of how our fight went on and on, Cole and I pummeling each other with face shots, two great fighters duking it out. Our "seconds" became legendary. The message became clear. When people fight, it is others that win.

## Ice Storm

Sometime during the winter of our junior year there were as series of storms that came through the Atlanta area. It would rain during the day, then freeze at night. That went on for several days. Almost everything was covered with a quarter inch or so of ice. When the sun eventually came out, the tall barren trees around campus glistened in the backdrop of clear blue skies.. As the day wore on and the temperatures rose, the limbs at the top of the trees would thaw out and break off. As the top limbs fell on the limbs below, the limbs below would give way. With little warning the process would compound as a major section of the tree limbs would suddenly come crashing to the ground in a pile of ice and dead limbs.

I recall watching two students walking across campus carefully traversing the ice covered sidewalks when they heard the limb slide begin above them. Not even looking up, they scrambled on the ice covered concrete barely avoiding the pile that exploded just behind them on the walkway. They barely looked back at it and continued their precarious trek toward Rugby Hall.

The conditions were so bad in the metropolitan area that classes in all the schools were suspended. My cousin, who lived five blocks away from campus, had a buddy, Ronnie, who had an old Willis Jeep with four wheel drive. Although

road travel was precarious, the four wheel drive made it much easier. They came by campus and picked me up in the Jeep.

We eased around the residential areas in College Park, taking in the awe of the striking brilliance of the aftermath of the ice storm in the clear winter sunlight. It was like nothing I have ever seen before, or since.

Ronnie's confidence grew as he demonstrated a real ability to control the four wheel drive vehicle on the empty ice covered roads and streets. We were headed back to the school, east on Rugby. The wide road was vacant. Ronnie got the jeep up to 15 or so mile an hour and then spun the wheel to the left. We began to spin wildly, around, around, around, slowly coming to a stop. Wow that was fun!

Again Ronnie straightened the jeep on Rugby and off we went. At the desired slow speed, again Ronnie spun the wheel! On the third time around, the jeep slid off the dome of the roadway toward the gutter, where the jeep slammed up against the curb, almost throwing all four of us out of the canvas covered death trap. The thought that we might not be demonstrating a behavior that was favorable to remaining in the gene pool, we straightened ourselves in the metal box and resumed a more cautious demeanor. They dropped me off at the entrance to the school and took the jeep back to its parking spot in front of Ronnie's house. Still, that had been a blast.

### The Attempted Robbery

Halfway through our junior year Hank Blackstock asked me to be his assistant floor commander on Woodward Hall. Woodward was originally a residence and our room was probably four times the size of most of the other dorm rooms anywhere on campus. Sitting at the southeast corner of the building, our wide array of windows afforded a panoramic view of the campus and the Bull Ring, complete with our signature 105 howitzer. That gun was the centerpiece on the lawn in front of the hall. The thought of living in that room was a deal maker for me. Liking Blackstock was just icing on the cake.

One night in the fall, Blackstock was gone for the weekend. I had enjoyed a quiet night of listening to my radio, which I had checked out of the Commandants office for the weekend. After lights out I was still wide awake. I had one of the large casement windows open and stepped out onto the roof that overlooked the entrance to the school for a late night smoke. It was a pleasant cool evening, a little after 11. The campus was always buzzing with activities, loudspeaker



announcements, students walking and running between buildings, guys pounding the Bull Ring in their small formations. Seldom was the campus this quiet. It was almost eerie.

Occasionally, headlights from several blocks away on Rugby Avenue would light up the entrance and the western end of the Bull Ring. And when that occurred, it was like have company, someone to talk to. Then, one vehicle came up the side street, Jackson, and turned into the entrance to the campus. That was odd for this time of night.

It was an old military surplus Jeep. It crawled around the Bull Ring, the Willis engine humming. I had almost lost interest in the Jeep when it stopped, right in front of me. The world war two relic again moved slightly forward, then backed up, over the sidewalk and onto the grass. Where was this guy going? Then I saw it. All those old pictures of the war. The jeeps pulling the 105s. These guys were after our Howitzer! The engine noise quit and the lights turned out.

Three figures emerged from the silent vehicle. I slowly crawled down the slope of the porch roof, quietly positioning myself with my head at the eave of the building. I could hear the soft voices as they inspected the chain holding the 105 in place. One of the voices sounded familiar. Was that Ronnie? Was that the Jeep we did donuts in down Rugby Avenue during the ice storm?

I watched, listened. They had nothing with which to defeat the heavy chain and lock. They were at a dead end in their mischief. My reluctance overcome, I spoke. "Ronnie, what the hell are you guys up to?" In one motion all three were in the jeep. The little Willis engine roared to life and the rolling box jumped off the lawn, bounced over the curb, onto the Bull Ring, out the gate, and back down Jackson Street, the side street from whence it had come. Ronnie lived about four blocks away down Jackson.

As I closed the large casement window from inside, I was laughing and smiling. It was always nice to have company on a lonely Saturday night on campus.

### Reveille Pranks

You never knew what to expect at formation each morning. Things just kind of happened. And no one ever knew who did it! Between the end of the Bull Ring and the main classroom building was a fifty or sixty foot flagpole. Every morning the boarding students would assemble in formation along the Bull Ring in

formation by hall (for a headcount to see who was AWOL) and to raise the American Flag. This was always orchestrated to begin a 6:45 like clockwork.

The flagpole, being the most visible fixture on campus, was a center point. And when not in use flying our symbol of Americanism, it was used for lots and lots of other stuff! And sometime between lights out and Reveille, there was frequently "stuff" run up the top of the flagpole, anything. And the more difficult it was for the duty cadets to get it off the flagpole before morning formation, the more effective the "stuff" was. And when that got old, one morning they found that a tire that had been dropped over the top of the flagpole.

Remember those old round green metal trash cans that were in every classroom and every office? One morning all of the parapets that lined the front of the three main buildings facing the Bull Ring sported their own green metal trash cans. It was a very subtle statement about our concerns about the quality of our school leadership and the rigors we were forced to endure. And in retrospect it may have been fitting. The forefront of the trash cans on the parapets was our majestic American Flag, a fitting symbolism that in our form of government it is acceptable to demonstrate our opposition.

Then there was the tulip trick. Captain Brewster and his wife had traveled to Holland over the summer. That spring, Mrs. Brewster took on the project of planting tulip bulbs in the flower beds that lined the front of the three main buildings. As the spring warmed, the flowers exploded in a vibrant rainbow array. They were beautiful, tall, large and in a half dozen brilliant colors. It was striking. On morning we came out to formation and every one of those beautiful flower stalks had been broken half way up the stem and folded over to the left. For that prank I think the entire upper school was restricted for a week.

But my favorite was the Volkswagen. One morning, perhaps it was Major Ferguson's Volkswagen Beetle that was found on the landing at the top of the granite steps leading into Founders Hall. Now that was priceless! To my knowledge, and even during the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion weekend, no one ever confessed to that caper. Perhaps it was the guys from East Point getting even.

## Hide and Seek

There was a three teacher group that was only occasionally convened. That was the Disciplinary Committee. That was for serious infractions of the rules, something above and beyond the call for demerits. At this time the committee

included Major Watkins, Col. Watkins and Col. Padgett. Padgett was a hard nose, a disciplinarian, demanding perfection from these children in transition

There was a kid, can't recall his name, nice guy. His infraction was a victimless crime, yet he was sent before the Disciplinary Committee. Most of us thought this was overkill and that the student might be busted from Sargent back to Private or Corporal, gigged a pile of demerits and his world would come back to normal in a month or two.

To the shock of almost the entire student class, on a two to one vote the cadet was shipped home. The student body was furious, one of the few times there was a real ground swell that the administration had swung and missed. And that anger seethed.

Padgett had an office on the second floor of an administrative building across Jackson Street from Brewster Hall. Brewster Hall was a two story dorm where I roomed with, I believe, O.B Hill early in our Junior year before being assigned as Blackstock's assistant floor commander. Our room faced Jackson Street. Padgett's office was across the street.

A week or so after the student was shipped home, I was walking across campus following our last morning class back to Brewster Hall to dump my books before going to lunch. A student, someone I knew, but not well, came up to me, reached out his hand in passing and said, "Hide it." In a blink he was gone. I looked at the wad of metal in my hand and immediately recognized it as a trigger assembly. I shoved the device awkwardly into my pants pocket and kept nonchalantly walking as if everyone on campus was walking around with a bulging trigger assembly in their pocket.

Once in my room, I studied my surroundings. Brewster Hall was a new dorm, concrete walls and floors, built in lockers, not at all like the old wooden tinder boxes. There was literally no place to hide anything! Even the beds, maybe a two and a half inch metal post with angled caps on top so you could not sit anything on them, designed to be stacked one on the other with four post extensions, I guessed. Then the caps had to come off, I reasoned.

With a pair of scissors, I pried a cap off! Yes, this might work. I inserted the assembly across the opening and it fit inside. But how would I get the damn thing back out? Perhaps I could hang it on something, but what? Perhaps a piece of wire coat hanger? Yeah, that might work.

At the time I knew not where this piece came from or why it was significant for me to hide it. But I did recognize, from the moment it became my charge, that

things could get ugly. This was not my first rodeo at the Georgia Military Academy.

As I stood there with the assembly back in my pocket, the bed cap in one hand, a coat hanger in the other, if the building were locked down, as could happen in a heartbeat, I could be the next kid out of here if I got caught with this thing. Frantically I worked the coat hanger, back and forth to break it, harder, quicker, until finally it separated, about a ten inch section. I then placed one end under the corner of the bed post, lifted up the wire while holding the bed down, bending a crook, first in one end, then the other. I now had something to hold the assembly in the post and yet retrieve it.

I put the cap back on the outside open post and remove the one up against the wall. I momentarily labored with whether it was less recognizable that the cap was ajar on the post closest to the door or farthest away from the door. Decisions, decisions.

The fear of the impending lockdown was removing the luxury of that debate. I slipped the lower hook around the trigger guard, slowly lowered the trigger assembly into the hollow bed post hooking the top end of the wire on the edge. The replaced cap was crooked, but not really obviously of interest to anyone other than the custodian of the trigger assembly.

I pulled a pair of briefs or something out of my locker and wiped down the bed post and the cap to remove my fingerprints. (Dumbass Bob never thought about wiping down the trigger assembly itself!) At that moment in my developing psyche I wondered if I had stepped across the line to a life of crime, all consumed by the adrenaline high of the moment.

I replaced the scissors in my desk and departed for the Mess Hall. I needed to keep to my routine, less a watchful eye single me out as a perpetrator or accomplice of whatever had happened.

By the time I had gone through the chow line and set down among my fellow students I was beginning to leave behind the fear of the first fifteen minutes of my lunch hour. Then my world changed.

A kid soon sat down at the table, and without looking up at anyone there, spoke quietly as he ate, staring into his metal lunch tray. Someone had fired a pellet gun into Padgett's office from Brewster Hall while he was sitting at his desk. He said the College Park cops were all over Brewster Hall as he spoke.

Suddenly, being shipped home was the least of my worries. I was going to the Georgia State Penitentiary as an accessory to attempted murder!

I think I sprayed the poor messenger with a mouthful of half chewed meatloaf. Suddenly, I had lost my appetite. I left the Mess Hall through the door farthest away from Brewster Hall slowly casually walking toward the east end of the Bull Ring, first glancing at Brewster Hall, then stopping to stare. The building had been locked down, all right, not by the school, but by the College Park Police.

For what seemed like hours, probably only forty minutes or so, we waited outside our dorm in small groups. The waiting was horrible. That's what uncertainty can do to a person. After a time, we were allowed back on the hall to retrieve our books for the afternoon classes under the watchful eyes of the ominous police. Being in the same room with that trigger assembly made my breathing difficult.

In the halls between classes that afternoon word came it had been determined by the police that the shot had come from the second story of Brewster Hall, either our room or one of the two away from ours. The jaws of justice were closing in on my life. What if the fateful shot was taken from our room? It was but a matter of time before the causing mechanism was discovered.

After classes that day, those who lived on Brewster Hall were all questioned by the police and staff about our whereabouts at the time of the shooting, around 11:15 that morning. After confirming I was in the class I said I was in, I was released from interrogation. The building had been searched thoroughly that afternoon. Nothing had been found. The following day it was searched again. Once again, nothing was discovered. Yes, there was a God. So far.

Obviously, the whole school was restricted that week, but by Friday, passes were once again issued and life went back to normal. In the middle of the next week the student who had made me an involuntary bailee of the trigger assembly asked for it back. I told him where it was and that he could pick it up at his leisure, and the sooner the better.

With the next visit to my room the bed post cap was no longer crooked and the fashioned hook was not to be found. I can only surmise that the coat hanger remnant remained in that bed post throughout the life of the bed.

Moonman

Col. Russell was a short, stocky, bald Geometry teacher with a towering voice. His wife was a tall attractive, pleasant English teacher, with what appeared to me

at my young age, nice breasts. She was the ultimate of grace and class; he was gruff and walked with a pronounced limp. They were the ultimate odd couple and he was the resident teacher on 2<sup>nd</sup> Memorial.

At that time, this was the heyday of Blue Horse Coupons, the “green stamps” of school supplies. Moonman, as he was lovingly referred to, collected Blue Horse Coupons at every opportunity, even by stealing them. Over the years he had acquired numerous awards from the manufacturer of the school supplies for the benefit of the School. So the fact that he “took” the coupons from students who failed to voluntarily give them to him was unceremoniously overlooked by the administration.

The taller students would hold the cut out Blue Horses above his head to get him to jump up for them only to find his strong hard fist wallop their chest. Some would tape the coupons to the wall or ceiling just out of his reach. If he could not jump up and retrieve them, he would command a student, any student, to get it down for him right that moment, and you did. He was a tenacious man.

Class always began with the following booming statement from Col. Russell: “O K, we are going to start at the bottom of the class and go down: Holmes!.....(or whomever he wanted to beat up on that day)” In the classroom, he hobbled back and forth in front of the two blackboards that covered the front wall, scribbling wildly as he expounded the laws of geometry, several pieces of chalk between his fingers in one hand, an eraser in the other. The various pieces of chalk held in his fingers protruded above his knuckles like spikes. He often broke more chalk than he wrote with. He was constantly asking individual students to recite the Pythagoreans, the formulas, the solutions to all the angles, ratios and relationships. And if you failed to provide the correct answer the penalty was dodging the rapidly approaching projectile that began life as a blackboard eraser.

I recall one day when Moonman was chatting with some students outside of his apartment on 2<sup>nd</sup> Memorial. I stopped to listen in and he said, more to the other students than to me, that he knew my Aunt Dot (who lived five blocks from the school and who worked for the city of College Park) and that she was a very nice lady. He then returned the conversation back to where it was before I walked up. That may have been the only time he made me feel good about myself.

In spite of his joviality, his quick mind and wit, for me, that never overcame my perception of him as an asshole. I still have a vision of him having to stand on a chair to play with his wife's tits.

## Life in Civies

Having an Aunt, Uncle and two cousins my age five blocks from the school afforded me the flexibility to often get off campus for the weekend, or sometimes simply for a good home cooked Sunday dinner. These were very proper people and as the youngest of my father's four brothers, my uncle was certain the stories my mother and I conveyed regarding my father, the family patriarch, were certainly untrue. And even if they were, it was blasphemy for us to speak them. So I leaned to keep my stories to myself, sharing them only with my cousins, who intimated that life at their house, too, was not always at it appeared.

The school had a very strict rule for boarding students. Boarders were forbidden to be out of uniform off campus. Even if you were playing tag football or tennis, you had to have on your GMA issued shorts, shirts or sweats. And it was forty demerits if caught off campus in civilian clothes, or civies as we called them.

But the call of civilian life off campus on the weekends was an instinctive calling, most probably from the swelling hormones in our developing bodies as we began to roam farther and farther from the herd in search of gene pool receptors. It was seldom any of us boarders were observed in civies off campus, consequently, seldom was anyone gigged 40 demerits. That afforded me a false sense of security, especially staying with family in such close proximity to the Campus.

As soon as a boarder could afford to pay someone to cut their hair, Charlie was no longer an option. I found a barber of my Uncle and cousins liking in a strip mall about eight blocks from the school. One weekend I am staying at my cousins and need to get a haircut. So I was permitted to borrow my cousin's car and run up to the barber shop for the well worth trim. I was wearing my favorite Bermuda shorts and a short sleeve civilian shirt, looking my best in the event I might stumble on a local cutie in my brief unsupervised excursion.

I am sitting in the barber chair reading a magazine already appreciating a haircut that would be the envy of all that Charlie had most recently butchered, when through the door waddles Moonman. Oh Shit!

Col. Russell smiles broadly and speaks only acknowledging, "Mr. Holmes", and limps by me to a near chair. With my bare legs protruding from underneath the hair bib, I felt as if my entire genitalia were on display and the sensations in my lower anatomy left me feeling like a girl, a very young girl.

Eventually, the now horrible haircut would end and as the robe was lifted off me and my civy nakedness would be in full display of Col. Russell. I paid and thanked the barber, exchanged good days with the Col., and stepped briskly out

of the barber shop. My hand was trembling as I fumbled to unlock the Nash Rambler that was my cousin's pride and joy.

Once back at my aunt and uncle's home, the car was parked in its appointed spot and the keys returned to their appointed hook. I was once again in the comfort of the family womb, safe and secure, if only until the gig sheet was posted before noon on Monday morning.

Forty demerits was six weeks or so on the Bull Ring. Twenty demerits or more brought with it being busted, being demoted from your cadet rank. In my case as a master sergeant, that would mean losing some or all of my stripes. Not a good thing.

Monday after morning classes I head straight for the bulletin board. There in the H's, Holmes, R.G..... Civilian Clothes Off Campus.....40. I always thought the bastard hated me. Now I knew it.

But there was something else on that line. Through the "40" was a thin pencil line. Next to the "40" was written in a pale "19". The hand writing was unmistakably that of Col. John R. Burnett.

During the last week of my junior year I was in my last class with Moonman. All the grades had been turned in, the students who had any failures had been notified so they could make plans for summer school. Nothing short of killing someone would change your student status at this point in the school year. And I had completed all classes that would ever place me in Moonman's room again. Col. Russell was reading out the grades to our class. When he got to my name, he began, "Holmes, R. G., C minus, minus, minus, minus, minus". I blurted out, "Col., you mean like 19 point nine, nine, nine, nine, nine?"

The class roared with laughter. Moonman was unfazed and proceeded to the next name.

### The Bar Mitzvah

I had heard about the strange customs of Jewish people. What stood out for me as a child was that there was importance associated with your children when they turned 16, a bar mitzvah for boys, and a bat mitzvah for girls. I worried that in might have something to do with circumcision for the boys, and God knows what for the girls.



So when I was invited to Kras' bar mitzvah, I was delighted to be included, but a bit apprehensive. After all, Dad had warned me about associating with Catholics, Jews and blacks, and outside of Kras, I just didn't know many Jewish people that well. And with all the strange customs these folks observed, was I to be a sacrificial gentile? Would I have to watch them trim Kras' wee wee? Would all these Jewish people be ugly to a protestant the way some protestants looked down on Jews? I already had told Kras I would attend before thinking all this through. I would just have to suck up and bear with it.

On the appointed Saturday, Kras' aunt, who lived in Atlanta and who owned a florist shop, came to school and picked us up. Either Pods or Selvidge, maybe Ponder, or perhaps two of the above, were part of the entourage. Their lack of apprehension was contagious, but I was not totally assuaged. .

We drove perhaps to the other side of Atlanta and arrived in very nice upper middle class neighborhood. The yard was large and well maintained and there were large tents to one side of the house. Beneath the tents were tables, chairs and food, lots of food. Kras' aunt introduce me to her sister and then they both introduced us to everyone there, and there must have been fifty to a hundred people there, all Jewish looking, all very pleasant and polite. There was food, wine, music, dancing, and everyone was so nice to all of us.

They all insisted we eat. "Eat, eat, eat!" they said. And we did. Most of the food was strange to me but very, very good! And after we had eaten, the aunts brought us all a glass of wine. For us fifteen and sixteen year olds, being showered with love and friendship, the sharing of the wonderful food and the wine began the process of my understanding what life was all about. I don't know what Jews Dad had been hanging around with but man did he have that one wrong! These Jews were great!!!

Another lesson learned in life: We can't believe everything our parents tell us. There is a lot we all don't know.

### Weekend Passes

For us boarders, there was a process for getting off campus on the weekends. First you had to have permission from your parents and they had to provide either individual permissions or blanket permission for the specific individuals you were permitted to weekend with. I had two aunts, with cousins my age, a second cousin and a grandmother. Lots of options with blanket permissions! My favorite

Aunt Dot, now in her nineties, still lives in her home five blocks east of the Campus.

I was a regular at their home. My cousin Curt, my age, and his younger brother Lance, we became close. They had a mess of beagles, hunting dogs. Curt, his buddies and I would go hunting on Saturdays. Aunt Dot had a relative in Douglasville, just south of Atlanta, who owned a large tract of land, sufficient large for hunting. There was a small cabin on the property, several miles from the main house that was often available for us to overnight in. There was no trouble for us to get into out there in the woods, but there were no gene receptors out there either. Seldom did we stay overnight, opting to return from the hunt in time to clean our kill, shower, have dinner and head out on a double date. Curt was a bit shy and not always came up with a date. When that happened he was kind enough to permit me to take his turquoise and white two tone Nash Rambler on my date alone. Did you know those things had a roll down bench front seat that turned the whole car into a bed? It was no '57 Chevy, but it had other attributes! But I never had the opportunity to take advantage of that amenity, and I doubt Curt did either. But it was fun to talk about.

So I had blanket permission to visit two aunts and a grandmother. All I needed was a written invitation to the Commandant.

There were three day passes, beginning at 4 PM Friday and there were two day passes beginning after inspection around noon on Saturday. All passes ended at 6 PM sharp on Sunday.

All requests for passes had to be submitted on a form to the Commandant no later than noon of Wednesday. If the individual was on your permission list, and if the Commandant had received a written invitation and if you were not on restriction, then the Commandant would sign off on your pass. Passes could be picked up at the OD's office on Thursday afternoon.

With a signed pass in your hot little hand, one could go to the OD's office and sign out for the permitted duration indicated on your pass.

Without a pass, the only time boarders could legally leave campus was on Thursday between 4PM and 6PM, Saturday from noon to nine PM that night, or Sunday from Noon to Six. That process simply required signing out at the OD's office and signing in on return. However, those on restriction were required to walk the Bull Ring for one hour from Noon to four on Saturdays.

With blanket permissions to visit numerous family members, all of whom never spoke to one another, it soon became obvious I could go anywhere, anytime.

But with little financial resources, where would I go and what would I do other than visit my relatives? I could generally get an invite most anytime with a phone call, obviously well in advance of the weekend.

But if I had someplace to go, other than to see family, and some shekles to spend, I would need to have someone hand write the invitation (like my handwriting might be recognized out of four hundred or so others, I imagined) from one of my approved hosts, and insure it was mailed to the Commandant in time for it to hit Burnett's desk by Wednesday of that week along with my pass request. Simple enough, but it did require a bit of prior planning, not a real strong attribute of we sixteen year olds.

Along the way I noticed that Col. Burnett, our Commandant of Students, used colored pencils when approving the passes. And initially the colors appeared to be rather indiscriminate. As a frequent traveler off campus I soon began to observe some consistency in the colors. I developed a hypothesis that he would use a specific color each week for either the two day or three day passes. After three weeks of looking at every possible signed pass I could between Thursday afternoon and Friday afternoon when the departures began, I came to understand the theory was solid. The three day passes were signed with one color that week and the two day passes were signed with another color. I would have to wait until Thursday afternoon to know what color was used for which type of pass that week.

Of concern could be if the passes were cross checked with invitations AFTER the passes were signed. From working in the OD's office I knew that was not done, and I confirmed with other duty cadets that had never happened on their duty watches.

The other challenge was perfecting the three letter initials of Col. John R. Burnett. I was never an artist, so this was a challenge. The Colonel's small but smooth hand writing was most distinct, nothing like my scratchiness. But with practice, I would soon provide myself, and fellow boarders, with last minute passes in the correct color code, just as if personally signed by JRB himself! My only rule for others was to be damn sure you made it back to campus by 6PM on Sunday or this party might come tumbling to an end. And I was no longer dependent on my allowance for my disposable cash flow.

## Field Trip

Some of us students went on a field trip down to Columbus Georgia to get a glimpse of Jump School at Ft. Benning. We would spend the afternoon there, have dinner in their mess hall, attend a dance put on by the wives with a bunch of young local girls, spend the night in a real army barracks and return the next day.

At the dance I met a beautiful young girl. She was more than a bit thick through the middle but had a wonderful smile, a very gentle personality and large breasts. I was easily drawn to her. In between our dancing, over the course of the evening she introduced me to her parents. He was a Bird Colonel, a large man, her mother was attractive and very proper.

Following the weekend in Columbus, she and I corresponded regularly. Seems she and her friends and family were into boating and water skiing. I grew up boating and water skiing. We shared that commonality. In short order she invited me down to Columbus for a weekend. On Saturday we would go water skiing on the nearby river. Cool!

A buddy of mine had developed a lady friend in Columbus from that same field trip and we coordinated our weekends to hitch hike down to Columbus together. There was safety in numbers doing something risky like hitch hiking at our age. We were young but we weren't stupid.

Col. Burnett and I arranged for our three day passes. We packed what few civies we had. I think I called my cousin and asked him to drop some off at the school, which he did. We were locked and loaded.

On the appointed Friday, we left school at four and walked several blocks away before sticking out a thumb. Getting caught hitch hiking was also a big no no, but we were awash in testosterone. Took us about thirty minutes to get to the southbound I-85 on ramp, but from there it took us only a couple of minutes before some traveling salesman picked us up and dropped us off in front of the ladies houses, first me then him. We were lucky.

That night my lady friend and I had dinner with her parents. We stayed up late talking. I would be sleeping on the couch in the den. You can only imagine the possibilities that were running through my head. But all those fantasies ended up the same way, getting caught with her by her towering father and being disemboweled by his bare hands.

Saturday was the real fun. We went water skiing. Their idea of water skiing was getting up on two skies and staying up for the entire pull. They didn't even own a slalom ski. So I had to ski slalom without a back foot cup. But I was careening all over the place, making cuts back and forth, throwing water everywhere, jumping the wake and busting my ass time after time after time. They pulled me until I was exhausted, probably thirty minutes, reveling in my skills on one ski. Suddenly, I had become a celebrity, even with all the parents and other boaters.

But there was a downside. Seeing this beautiful child in a bathing suit overcame my hormones. I developed an aversion to overweight ladies at a young age. We had a wonderful weekend together as friends but I would never write her back again.

A lesson in life.

Taking first year Latin in Farabee's class was easy. Most didn't learn anything; didn't have to. Farabee could have cared less about his charges. Teach the course; take their money. Farabee read during our exams. Having difficulty in the translations, my class mates coached to place my books on the floor beneath my desks and to turn the pages with my foot, cribbing the exams. I did it once and felt horrible about myself. Never again.

Second year Latin for me was easy. The others struggled.

## **Senior Year**

### **Shakedowns**

Shakedowns were required if something came up missing, or if contraband was suspected in a dorm.

In a shakedown, ingress and egress to the hall is halted. All students are required to open their lockers and stand outside their rooms. Access to the hall was controlled by teachers, Commandants, or duty cadet officers of the day. With either the Floor Commander or the assistant standing watch over the hall, the other would take the room occupants into their room and inspect their person, the desks, the closet, the personal lockers and the entire room.

After searching the room, beds, desk drawers, closet, and lockers, the fun part was removing all the contraband from the secret hiding places in the old wooden

dorms, the location and function of which had been passed down from class to class over the decades.

After completing the search of a room, the occupants were ordered “As You Were” whereby they would lunge at the contraband and frantically return it to the “secret” hiding places behind the wooden wall slats. The hilarity of this practice was in dark contrast to the seriousness of someone being caught with stolen goods and it was always difficult to maintain a proper official decorum. At the conclusion of these very occasional ordeals, Johnny and I would reminisce over the expressions of the kids as their most precious hidden artifacts were splayed out on the floor of their rooms for their superiors to see. It was a look of absolute horror.

#### Impromptu Latin Plays

Glen McAdam and I took second year Latin from Ferguson, who was only slightly more gay than Farabee. McAdam came up with the idea of conversing, as Ferguson always encouraged us to do, in Latin. So McAdam did the homework to come up with the words and phrases. With me on one side of the room and McAdam on the other, in a deep masculine voice I would blurt out “Haberisne coitum mecum?” McAdam would then squeal out in a very high pitched feminine voice, “None!” Me again, “Curr?” McAdam, “Virgina Sum!” to which I would finalize with “Curr?” The class was only slightly amused but the charade always turned Ferguson bright red.

#### Going to Dalton and the Red Olds Convertible

One of the friendships I developed as a senior was with a guy who lived in Dalton, Georgia. His dad owned a chenille factory there and had bought his mother a brand new Oldsmobile convertible, bright red. When invited I would send myself a long weekend invitation to visit my grandmother who lived in Buckhead, and off we would go to Dalton. At the time Dalton was a typical small southern town of six or eight blocks of downtown with a park with monuments in the center. Just outside of town were the many long low metal buildings that made up the Dalton chenille manufacturing trade.

There was high school football on Friday nights, a movie theater, an A & W, and the number one Saturday night activity was drinking beer and dragging the main. My buddy and I looked hot in his mother’s red Olds convertible, but back then in

Dalton, you weren't squat if you didn't play football. And we didn't. Even with that red Olds convertible, we never got close to any receptors.

#### School Rules; Student Rules

If you left your toothpaste or shaving cream unattended in the bathroom, you should expect it to be stolen. It wasn't that the school or students didn't care about that behavior, it was that there was nothing that could be done to differentiate one tube of Pepsodent from another, one can of Foamy from the other. To that issue, there was no perceived crime. And a reason to always keep your "stuff" locked in your locker.

There were school rules and there were student rules. If caught by the school, stealing by a student was an immediate shippable offense. School's rules. If a student got caught stealing by the students, they took the student out behind the gym and beat the crap out of him. Students' rules. For a second offense, the students turned him over to the Commandant. Even under the student rules, there was no second chance on that one.

Another student rule was not telling on other students, or ratting. There was a student who lived on the third floor or the Armory who never got with the program. Every time a cadet on his hall broke a rule, he would run to the Commandant and tell on that cadet. Even infractions of being out of their room during quarters, having dirty magazines, even smoking without permission, victimless offenses. The kid turned everyone in for anything. And he was a scrawny, obnoxious little kid. It may have been his way of getting some very missing attention.

Behind the Armory, there was a underground tank that was part of the sewage system, perhaps a large grease trap. The ground there was always soft and wet, covered with thick grass.

The students on 3<sup>rd</sup> Amory finally got tired of the rat fink running to the Commandant's office almost daily and finally told him they were going to pound his skinny ass into the floor if he did it again, to which the dumb ass immediately ran to the Commandant. Burnett came over and wrote up several students for their actions under some weird behavior rule, effectively putting the perpetrators on restriction for a weekend or two.

Later that afternoon the kid "accidently" fell out of the third floor window of the Armory, luckily landing in the soft mud at the back of the building.

Once again the kid ran to the Commandant to share his tale of woe. Burnett once again charged up to the Armory only to have all the students, to a man, swear the kid jumped out the window.

The next day the kid once again “accidentally” fell out that very same third story window. His second appearance at the Commandant’s office resulted in the school removing him from the dorm and explaining to his parents that the school could no longer ensure his safety. He would need to be removed from the Georgia Military Academy. School’s rules and students’ rules, working well together.

#### Dinner at Aunt Dot's

As a senior floor commander on first floor Woodward, the building was right across the entrance to the Mess Hall beneath Memorial Hall. There was a gate there out to Cambridge Avenue, the street between the upper and lower schools. At the far end of the Junior school was the infirmary, which was often visited by students before going to dinner. So seeing someone walk out that gate during the evening meal was of little notice by staff or students.

Occasionally, my aunt would call and ask me if I wanted to join them for dinner, and I almost always did! Sure beat the Mess Hall food. My cousin would drive over in his Nash Rambler and park just short of the opening behind the fence. I would stroll out the gate, look back to see if anyone was paying me any attention, and then scoot back to the waiting Nash Rambler, jump in and away we went. Following the evening meal we would all sit in their small living room and chat, my aunt and uncle wanting to hear the latest letter updates from Pensacola.

Sometime after 7 PM Curt would take me back to the school, dropping me off just outside the same gate permitting me to walk back to my room as if I had just come from the infirmary. And since I was with my responsible family members, I never considered the fact I was actually AWOL.

#### Interstate Snow Storm

On one of the football games at Marietta either John Peacock or Johnny Reeves had his car on campus. It was an early fifties Ford Coupe, flat head V-8, I believe Kelly Green. Me and two other guys got permission to ride with John or Johnny to the game and back rather than go on the bus with the remainder of the students.



As with most games with Marietta, we played well, just not well enough to win. On the return trip we were screaming down the interstate, becoming deaf from the roar of the smitty's on John pride and joy. Boy, this roaring down the interstate smoking cigarettes with the windows open sure beat being cooped up in that hot smelly bus.

Then someone in the back seat said, "Johnny, pull up alongside this guy in front of us, just a bit in front of him." The speaker was sitting behind Johnny in the back seat. When Johnny had positioned his car just ahead of the other 65 mile per hour vehicle, the speaker stuck his hand out the window and pointed a can of shaving cream up and away from the Ford. The shaving cream from the spray can covered the trailing windshield. Their vehicle braked violently and disappeared behind us. Holy Shit! That was funny!!!

Johnny sped up to the next unsuspecting traveler, moving ever so closer to the perfect location for the off load. Again the hand went out the window, the white rain covered the majority of the windshield, and the car braked wildly to slow down as the green Ford roared off for the next victim.

By the time we had perpetrated our third assault the severity and danger of what we were doing was beginning to set in. In the aftermarket side rear view mirror Johnny could tell there was a stream of shaving cream along the side of the car. He reasoned we might want to get that evidence off the vehicle so he took an exit off the Interstate somewhere in downtown Atlanta.

We drove around in the dark city looking for a good spot to remove the obviously incriminating evidence. Finally we came across a large paved parking lot with adequate lighting. Johnny parked the car near the middle of the parking lot which served a multi-story building about two hundred feet away. All four of us got out and feverishly began wiping the already drying shaving cream off the car.

Suddenly, a car appeared, a black and white car, a city police cruiser. We were dead meat. We all panic at the same time and began running for the corner of the tall building. And although I was the farthest from the corner of the building, and the slowest afoot, I recall that I was standing behind the building when everyone else arrived. Adrenaline is great stuff.

The police cruiser continued down the street, oblivious to our tribulations. We quietly and properly completed our drive back to campus contemplating the stupidity of our pranks.

## Burning Paint

One of the football players on my hall was a very delightful and mature 15 year old. His affluent parents lived in North Atlanta. He invited me to go home with him one weekend so we could double date. He had access to a vehicle but no driver's license. I had a license but no car. Necessity is the mother of invention.

He had built me up to his parents, but I would need to make my own impression with them. Friday night we had dinner at his home with them. Beyond the "yes, sirs" and the "no ma'ams", it was probably more my table manners that convinced his parents I could be trusted with one of their cars and their son.

At the appointed time on Saturday night, nicely dressed, Bush and I were preparing to leave in his mom's Chevy when his dad handed me the keys to their brand new Chrysler Imperial, beautiful black with the round chrome circles atop the winged tail lights. Our dates would go nuts!

So off we headed. We pick up his date close by and head south through the city to West End to pick up my date. We went to a movie, or dinner or where ever, but we ended up parked someplace doing almost everything high school couples can do when one double dates.

Long story short, we were running late after dropping off my date. In a time before the completion of the north south Interstate and before the beltways, we were taking advantage of the lack of traffic on a four lane undivided north south corridor road on the West side of Atlanta. Between stoplights, we raced, reaching speeds in excess of 80 mile per hour. We were pushing the beautiful new vehicle to its limits and the Imperial was performing up to its reputation. Bush was urging me on, faster, harder. We could not miss our curfew. House rule.

We dropped his date and sped back to his home, just at the appointed hour. As we walked from the car to the house I could smell the paint that had been cooked off the engine block and was certain that telltale odor would not get me invited back again.

## The Thelander Exams

As I recall the senior math classes, there were fewer of us in Trigonometry than in the advanced math classes. Thelander taught Trig. I liked him and was looking forward to his classes.

First class after our first exam he was handing out the exams and I didn't get mine back. I spent that class terrorized. I thought I knew this stuff. At the conclusion of the class Thelander asked to speak with me. As the classroom emptied, I stood frozen at his desk, I stared down at my exam. There was each of the equation to be solved, and next to each was my solution. I did not understand this at all.

When we were alone, Thelander spoke. "Mr. Holmes, could you please tell me how you came to this answer?"

Frightened I answered briskly, "This equals that, that equals, this, this equals something, something equals the other, the other equals another and that equals..." the answer I had written on the paper.

Thelander hesitated then, "Uh huh."

He pointed to another question on my exam and in his monotone asked, "And this one."

Slower this time I answered, "This equals that, that equals, this, this equals something, something equals the other, the other equals another and that equals..." my answer.

Thelander reached to the top of my exam and wrote one letter. "A"

As he handed my exam back to me, in his deep drawl said, "Mr. Holmes, if you would please give me at least every other equation next time."

"Yes, Sir, Colonel!" and I was out of there.

Next class before the exam, we were reviewing all the equations. Thelander would ask who could solve the problem. I raised my hand. He called on me and I provided the answer. Next problem, I raised my hand, realizing it was once again the only one in the air. Again I was called on to provide the correct answer.

Next problem, I once again raised my hand. Thelander glowers at me. I slowly lowered my arm and sat quietly, hands in lap, through the remaining forty five minutes of class as my classmates were called on one by one to butcher the solutions. Tattoo would be busy tonight.

After a couple of weeks, the time for review before the next exam approached. At the end of the class preceding, Thelander ask to speak with me after class. Uh, oh. I'm in trouble now.

That wonderful voice spoke, "Mr. Holmes, would you mind not attending the next class? We will be reviewing the material. If anyone questions your being out of class, have them to speak with me."

Again, "Yes, Sir, Colonel!"

I don't remember taking a final in that course. Thelander may have thought it a waste of time.

### Lady Lessons

I was enthralled with the new miniature battery operated recording devices. And I was rewarded by one as a Christmas present. I recall the first time I heard my own voice, I was shocked at the almost indiscernible draw. I would begin to pronounce my words very succinctly.

A dance was approaching. Someone suggested that we take my tape recorder and place it under the table in the ladies bath room at the dance. In my innocence I could not fathom what might be gained from that. But being in possession of the required device, I caved in and agreed.

The scene was set. A buddy's girlfriend would deliver the device to the ladies room, just under the table drop cover about forty five minutes into the event. The record time was one hour. About forty five minutes after receiving word of the launch,, my regular girlfriend announced a need to retreat to the powder room. The ensuing fifteen minutes of distracting her from relieving herself was one of the most difficult successes of my four years at GMA. I held her off as long as I could.

Later the recorder was retrieved and returned to my buddy by his girlfriend. I spent the better part of that weekend fearing her voice would be identifiable on the recording and any hope of practicing gene pool participation would vanish. I would have wasted the sponsorship for naught.

By Monday, I was invited to hear my own tape recorder play back the comments and conclusions of over thirty young women. I was vastly relieved her voice was not among those recognized. Not so with the voice of her best friend. Her best friend spoke generously about the "short-comings" of her longtime boyfriend, both in terms of time and distance. Once again my sponsorship bet was in jeopardy. I could sense the where this was going. Students would pay good money to hear these conversations. There was money here to be made.

I suggested to my now new entrepreneurial partner that we afford the “short coming” boyfriend the option to purchase the erasure of that segment of the tape, after all, he was from a very wealthy family. My associate approached the boyfriend, negotiated a very handsome settlement, and successfully blackmailed two other fine classmates in that same manner, removing the incriminating dialog of their lady friends, before opening up the recording to any cadet with twenty five cents wishing to listen in on these fine southern ladies boast, brag and complain about their current and past boyfriends as well as their many other intimate partners. It was another lesson in life, and it paid good money to boot.

### The Letter Jacket

I so admired those students at GMA, and those from other high schools, who had earned an athletic letter sweater or letter jacket. I really want to earn one. But at what?

I came out for wrestling as a sophomore and again as a junior. But I had developed a benign tumor in my shin that was extremely sensitive. Consequently, the pain associated with the sport of wrestling was preclusive of my participation.

Over the summer between our junior and senior years the sensitivity in my shin disappeared. A physical exam at the start of my senior year ended when the orthopedic surgeon whacked me on the tumor with his rubber mallet. My failure to once again scream in pain permitted me to be cleared for wrestling.

The tryouts were rigorous. I was good at handling my own weight and better at handling the weight of the opposition. I was quick on the mats. Most of these guys had at least a year of experience on me, others had more. As Coach Brooks was making the final team cut with all of us present, he hesitated and asked me if I was a senior. I said yes, and he did too.

Brooks was a wiry 185 pounds who had been an All American tackle at Georgia Tech. No slouch. He was a demanding coach.

I weighed in consistently at 129.5 pounds. My good friend Barcello was my competition. He was probably the most experienced and talented wrestler on the team. He finished our senior year at fifth in the state. Being so close in weight, we were often paired together in practice. He taught, I learned.

Before the weight classes changed midseason, Barcello always wrestled our weight class of 130. If 136 didn't make his weight, I would wrestle that class, and

if 142 didn't make his weight I would go in his stead. That played out all the way up to 148.

Each match, after dressing and weighing in, I would step out the back door of the dressing room to the football field, regardless of weather, cold or rain. I would climb up to the top corner of the home team bleachers and visualize my match. I would see my opponent embarrassing me, not so much in front of my teammates who intimately knew my limitations, but in front of my friends, my other classmates, the kids on my hall, the cadets in my platoon. Many would come to watch. They would not recognize I was outweighed and outclassed to begin with. I could see myself being embarrassed, tossed around like a rag doll. I visualized my failure, my father's mark. The fear created adrenalin. When I was fully charged up, I would return to the bench for the start of the match, rocking back and forth in my chair like a savant.

During the first half of the year, Barcello always made weight and I always wrestled above my weight class. Some I won, some I didn't, but my shining success was bridging for the last minute and a half of the third period of a 148 pound match. Avoiding the pin in my match was just enough for us to win the team match by a single point. I was finding success, learning the value of being a team player, and building confidence.

At the beginning of each and every match I would go to the center of the mat and drop down on one knee and slowly and deliberately squeeze my opponent outward to corner him. This would drive Coach Brooks nuts and he would scream at me for not staying on my feet. But in my entire senior year of wrestling, I always made first takedown, even in the matches I lost.

After dealing with kids eight to eighteen pounds heavier than me, the weight class shift at mid-season was a welcome change. Barcello would now wrestle at 126, the guy above him would go up to 138, I would have 132 to myself. So that was Coach's plan!

By the time of my first match at 132, Coach had quit yelling at me for going down on a knee. In my first match at a reasonable weight class, I quickly made the initial takedown and proceeded to sling my opponent around on the mat for the remainder of the first period to get riding time. At the beginning of the second period, Coach became impatient. He sensed I was holding back. He yelled for me to turn the guy over. In one quick move my opponent was on his back. One, two, three slaps of the mat by the ref's hand, and the match was over.

I had been well coached by Brooks and well tutored by Barcello. The remainder of the season was no different than my first match at a friendly weight class. I

would drop to a knee, make the takedown, and cover riding time. Coach even stopped watching my matches. He would take the time to study the ensuing matches on his card. I recall during the first period of one of my matches he was reading the Atlanta Constitution. Then without even looking up, at the beginning of the second period, he yelled out as if in pure boredom, "Turn him over". It was a charade we both enjoyed.

That year of wrestling was significant in my truly finding self-confidence. And I got a letter.

### Fight for the Phone

In the guard room were two small alcoves that held pay phones. For us boarders, that was our only link to the outside world. If we were dating someone, our only means of "herding our fillies" was over the phone. The demand for those two telephones was so high the Guard Room rules limited each caller to five minutes. Most played by the rules, others cheated over, saying they forgot their watch. The line was always there, especially between tattoo, that signaled the end of quarters and taps. So at the first scratch of the record at tattoo, students, often dressed in pajamas, robe and slippers, would sprint out of their room, down the hall, out the building, hurling themselves across campus to the Guard Room get the best possible place in line. The two winners would be panting heavily from their sprint to the lifeline, fumbling with their dime, gasping for their breath as they desperately tried to be charming and debonair to the fair maiden at the other end of the line.

Everybody brought their watch so they could time the guy ahead in the line. "Five minutes", everyone was told by the guys behind him, and every one told you when your time was up.

Now picture all these big strapping guys hanging over you as you are crouched in this small area smaller than a phone booth, locker room chatter all around while you're trying to talk sweet nothings to your babe, and not let these lug heads hear what you are saying! Needless to say it was a very revealing experience.

Invariably, the last of the six guy to get in line at tattoo was generally shorted a minute or two, sometimes more.

There was a guy in my platoon, football player, that just plain ignored me if he could. I had no problem with that. He showed up at inspections prepared,

marched in formation, so there was little need for dialog between us. He was friendly to most others, just not me.

One night in the guard room, he was the last guy behind me in the phone line. One of the first guys had gone over a couple of minutes, so everyone was running behind. As the guy in front of me hung up, Mr. Personality told me that if I took my full five minutes he would kick my ass. I explained to him I fully expected to take all of my five minutes and nothing more. He repeated that if I did I was dead meat. I deposited my dime and proceeded with my phone call.

My five minute call ended about 9:58. As I stepped out of the alcove, the tall blond kid with massive fists launched a right hand at my face. I ducked under the shot, picked him up in a fireman's carry and ran him across the Guard Room into the wall. The impact of first his butt, then his head, against the wall caused his grip on me to release. I half dropped him on the floor. He was out.

The horrendous noise of our impact caused the OD to slide his chair back from his desk and investigate what the hell was going on. By the time the OD got to the counter I was out the door and enveloped in the campus darkness. I remember looking back through the window as I stepped briskly away from Rugby Hall seeing the duty officer trying to help the groggy cadet to his feet. That week at drill, my platoon member acted as if the whole event never happened.

### Fake IDs to Order

During the summer between our Junior and Senior years one of our classmates was fortunate to have a great job working at the Georgia Highway Department. He was so grateful for the experience and the good pay that he brought back to school one thousand blank Georgia drivers licenses. Now this was way before picture IDs were the norm.

Access to a typewriter would produce indisputable evidence of access to a whole new world, most especially, alcohol! Almost. The licenses would need to be validated, or stamped, with a printing device that would print and date stamp a jagged partial rectangle across the front of the license surrounding an outline of the state of Georgia, with the issuance date inside the state, all in red ink.

Because of my reputation as the go to guy for last minute weekend passes, the "Highwayman" approached me about the possibility of "validating" these most useful documents for a portion of the proceeds. If I could learn to JRB a pass,



perhaps I could learn to validate these puppies. Of course, if we/I got caught, any possibility of a reputable career was forever lost. I had not yet been around the block, but I already knew those guys in blue uniforms with the Georgia Highway Patrol/Department were not to be taken lightly.

Having been assured by our publisher that there would only be three players, he as the typist and order taker, me and one other person validating, I agreed to attempt to facsimile the validation. He was selling the fraudulent license for five dollars each. The other counterfeiter and I would receive one dollar for each one we validated. That was the potential for an additional \$500 dollars over the course of my senior year. Hell, I was set for life!

The first one I butchered up, but it still sold for three dollars. But by the third one I had it figured out. It was time consuming to do it right. Part of my education that year was learning that there is a reason making money is hard work. If it was easy, everyone would do it. Secondly, anything worth doing was worth doing well. I took pride in my felonies and marked each forgery I validated with a single red dot on the same back corner.

Evidently our publisher didn't know a thousand underage drinkers. The other validator and I compared notes and between the two of us we probably only inked a hundred between the two of us our senior year.

But that extra fifty buck allowed me to appear that I was keeping up with some of my more affluent classmates.

## Insurrection

My senior year I was assigned as the floor commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Woodward. It was a hall of freshman and sophomore athletes, everything from junior varsity football to tiny gymnasts. It was a real collage.

I was now catching up with my classmates in physical attributes weighing in at an impressive 130 pounds. Some of my charges were pretty big and I reasoned that I might need some muscle in my corner. There was a kid in my platoon that might make a good roommate. He, too, was a smoker, a sprinter on the track team, played halfback on the varsity football team, was kind of goofy fun and we got along well. But in spite of his similar slight stature, his endearing attribute was that this guy would rather fight than chase gene receptors. And everybody knew it. Just in case he was ever needed, Johnny Reeves would be my enforcer.

On some halls, the students ran the hall. On others, the floor commanders were dictators. Somewhere in between the two extremes was where I thought we should be. At the start of the school year, Johnny and I met with our charges, large and small, and told them as long as there was peace and quiet on the hall and our reasonable hall rules were followed, it would be the easiest year of their time at GMA. And it eventually would be.

However, because other halls were very loosely run, these bright guys later got together and told Johnny and I that the rules were going to change to their rules. Johnny and I pushed the oversize spokesmen around in the hall for a few minutes and sent the dumb asses back to their rooms.

A couple of weeks later Johnny and I were called out into the hall and almost every kid on our hall were outside their room in a show of force. They were going to take over their hall and start the process by kicking our asses. Johnny and I looked at each other. When Johnny smiled, I smiled.

We put our backs together and instructed the boys to let the fun begin! And it did. By ones and by twos they came at us from both ends of our hall. And one by one they returned to their rooms stunned by the strength, quickness and stamina of these two wiry little survivors. We didn't live through three years at GMA accidentally.

When there were no more players for Johnny and I to play with, we started at separate ends of the hall and call every room occupant out into the hall, butt down on the floor, where we proceeded to kick, hit, slap and dog cuss them for their stupidity in making their own lives worse off. Next time this shit happened we would address the problem with their respective coaches. That got their attention.

The rebellion had been quieted and peace and harmony would prevail for the duration of our senior year. During Government inspection these fine charges would honor Johnny, I and themselves by earning Best Hall.

### Maurice and the Big Spic

As we moved through the late fifties and early sixties in the south, the integration movement was boiling. Lester Maddox, George Wallace, it was an ugly time in our history. But on the Campus of the Georgia Military Academy, just outside of Atlanta, were whites and blacks taking classes together, most with no recognition we were doing so. I could not understand what all the fuss was about. In spite of

Dad's warnings, I quickly learned the color of a person's skin was not indicative of their worth as a human being. It was probably not until graduation that Dad came to understand his son was already integrated, and had been since he first came to the Academy. He and I never spoke of that issue.

The Spanish contingent was very structured. These guys came from all over the Caribbean and central and south America. But they blended together magnificently through their shared language, history and dark to black color. Most came from families of privilege. And they shared a strong comradery, frequently addressing each other as "Spic". Spic, in their culture was the equivalent of the N word. And as blacks in the south would address each other in that manner, the Spanish speaking contingent did so with the word "spic", with equal casualness, and only with each other. But should someone other than the Spanish group address them with that moniker, a fight would ensue. And if you fought one of them, you fought them all. They were one. I was frightened of their force. Morales was their Godfather. Morrice was the enforcer.

Some were very fluent in English, others could hardly speak a word. There was festive sharing of our languages. I learned to speak some Spanish, like, "Dome cigarillo," "ieta amo", "Bese me cula", "Dome Puta", you know, the basics.

These guys banded together, outsiders in our strange American culture. They chatted in loud and fevered Spanish almost constantly. They often asked us for words, what was the English word for something, how to say something, how to pronounce our phrases. As ranking students, some of us would bring in an interpreter to ensure non bilingual students understood the rules, understood their orders. I did it frequently to ensure my charges in third Platoon D Company understood "inspections".

I had one Spanish kid who was not interested in any dialog with the gringos, and certainly not in learning the language. His attitude carried over into his preparation for drill inspection, unshined shoes, dirty brass, wrinkled shirt, the guy was always a mess. I would bring one of the bilingual guys over and ask him to explain what was required for drill inspection, the shoes, the brass, the shirt, and the demerits that could be forthcoming.

In a subsequent drill, "Pigpen" shows up in his customary presentation and was advised by my interpreter he would be reported for his sins, I think maybe three demerits. The next week at drill, same deal. When told he was once again going to be reported, the two Spanish speakers chatted back and forth. I asked my good Spaniard what he was saying. He was reluctant to tell me. Finally I coughed it out of him that the Mr. Unkept told him that if I wrote him up he would

kick my ass. I looked my problem cadet straight in the eye and told the interpreter to tell him, he would be written up. The interpreter conveyed the message and returned to his position in formation. I proceeded with the inspection and drill. As usual, dirtman was as inattentive in drill commands as he was in his presentation.

Following drill, I was returning to Woodward Hall where there were an unusual number of Spanish students mulling around the door to our hall, maybe eight of them. I enquired what was up and was told to go inside. As a cadet officer, I was not accustomed to taking commands from privates, corporals and sergeants. But Morrice shows up and very respectfully asks me to let them handle the rouge. I thanked him and reminded him this was my fight, not his.

Morales waddles up to join the fray. He says they need to address this issue with the wayward one. Evidently, Mr. Grungy was causing Morales some heartburn as well. I was insistent to deal with this guy myself. Morales begged me to let him handle it. I felt so powerful as Morales and Morrice, these two large strong men pleaded with me. I sensed that Morales and I both need to address this guy for our own distinct purposes. I took a deep breath, exhaled and without a word, turned and walked into Woodward Hall. I felt like a coward.

Shortly afterward, from my room, I could hear the loud bantering in Spanish. It seemed to go on forever. Finally, all was quiet. I stayed in my room until time for dinner.

I was unsettled all week, hoping not to run into my predator. But that Thursday at drill we would once again be placed face to face during inspection. At the appointed time and place on the drill field, during the inspection routine I stepped in front of my wayward charge, performed my left face, and looked him squarely in the eye. He was looking straight out over the top of my head.

Who was this guy? His shirt was clean, his brass was polished and his shoes were shined. I called for the interpreter. Now, both of them, their eyes were wide in horror. I asked the good guy to explain to the new good guy how well he was prepared for inspection and to thank him for doing so. Upon my right face to the next squad member, the interpreter sprinted back to his position in the formation. During drill that day, not only was my problem child well-dressed but sharp and in sync on most marching commands. I owed Morales.

Several days later, I saw Morales and Morrice chatting with some of their charges on campus. I walked up to him and thanked him for his help with our wayward one. He thanked me for the way I handled my Spanish charges, using

the interpreters to insure they knew what was expected. Seems not all the cadet officers took the time to do so.

Recognizing I had interrupted Morales, I excused myself to leave. As I proceeded away from the group Morales barked after me, "And you can call us Spic." I stopped, turned and caught Morrice's eyes first, and in his stoic stare he sharply nodded once his concurrence. It was comforting to now know I now had nothing to fear of the Spanish contingent.

### Meeting with the Dean

Even with a dozen or so appointments to the various US Military Academies, many students would kill to have one. Several months before graduation I was summoned to the Dean's office. Having bordered on the precipice of Honor Roll most of the year, and even attaining it once, I was surprised at the call, but not worried.

Dean Mitchell began by observing that I had not applied for any of the appointments the school had at its disposal and followed with the enlightenment that the school was prepared to give me an appointment to any Academy I qualified for. I was now truly surprised. I thanked the Colonel and told him I was greatly appreciative, but I really was not interested in pursuing a military career.

Dean Mitchell finished by saying that I knew he would have to advise my parents, and I acknowledged I understood.

A day or two later I was summoned to the OD office to take a long distance phone call from my parents. My father began by yelling at me for not accepting an appointment to the US Naval Academy (his presumption that academy would have been my choice!). At the conclusion of his tirade he told me not to return to our home in Pensacola following graduation. After some shuffling with the phone, my mother's voice began by indicating they were very disappointed at my decision but that she would deal with Dad.

### The Senior Party

As the school year came to a close, every class had a super-secret party off campus. Our year would be no different. Tim and Greg reasoned that since Mom was working in Los Angeles, the family home in Carrollton would be empty. And that would be the perfect location to hold the senior party. Did these guys

have large brass ones or what? Having ridden some wild trails with Tim as a sophomore, I was ecstatic.

The party was scheduled for about five or six weeks before graduation. The week or so before the grand event I learned the name of the individual who would be Officer of the Day on the appointed Saturday night, one Holmes, R.G.

Now it was possible to swap out duty dates with other cadet officers. I asked every cadet officer that had OD duty over the short remaining weeks, but there were no takers. I would miss the Senior party. The campus that weekend was almost deserted. That Saturday night may have been one of the loneliest evenings of my four years at GMA.

Later I remember reading in the paper about the home of Susan Hayward in Carrolton Georgia had being broken into and vandalized. It was discovered upon her return from California. No real damage, just lots of missing nick nacks. Tim would later confide that damn near every bimchette who attended had to leave with something that belonged to the famous beautiful and talented actress who had birthed the two good sons of Jess Barker.

#### Getting to Know Grant Gillis

As the resident faculty in Woodward Hall, Gillis had permitted Johnny and I to run the hall as we saw fit. He spoke to us briefly at the beginning of the year for maybe five minutes. He took perhaps a minute or two maybe three times during the year when it was necessary to pass on some mandate or update from the commandant about administration concerns, procedure changes or new hall policies. Outside of that, our only exchange with Col. Gillis was speaking to him while he was sitting on the porch in front of Woodward Hall while we were coming or going to the Mess Hall.

It was perhaps three weeks before graduation. Johnny and I both smoked Winston's. So did Gillis. One night during quarters, someone came walking down our hall. Johnny and I looked at each other. This was weird. As the heavy, Johnny got up to address the problem. As he reached for the door, there was a knock. Johnny opened the door and there was Gillis, asking if he could come in.

He indicated he was out of smokes and wanted to bum a pack of cigarettes. We said sure, invited him in, opened a fresh pack and offered him a chair. We all lit one up. Gillis began speaking about the many years he had been at the school

and said he had never had a floor commander and assistant that had done such a good job with the hall. He probably said that to every group every year but still it sure made us feel good.

He went on to summarize some of his observations of Johnny and I over our tenure at GMA. He spoke of Johnny's tenacity with a football in his hands, his accomplishments in track, the good stuff. He pointed out to me that he knew I never had smoking permission, as he smoked one of my Winston's, that he knew I was occasionally going AWOL to have dinner with my Aunt Dot, and that was alright because he knew where I was going, and he respected her very much.

As Gillis continued, Johnny and I sat mesmerized by this aging stalwart of the 1935 and 1936 Championship Alabama Football teams that had played in the Rose Bowl those many, many years before. Here was a mountain of a man in the closing years of his life and with a heart the size of Texas. Grant Gillis was a good man.

#### All About The Ladies

Major Watkins, it was rumored, had played professional football. A large towering presence with a deep, deep voice, he was not at all what one would expect in an English Literature teacher, much less head of the Department.

Throughout the year we read and studied various classics, many of which were romantic in subject. The only one I can recall is "The Scarlet Letter".

I recall him strolling back and forth at the front of the classroom, his large frame swaying from side to side as he lumbered. And as he moved, he stared at and almost spoke to the side walls, the novel at his side, reciting paragraph after paragraph verbatim from its pages, long before imprinted in his mind.

He never avoided a steamy part of a book, reading or reciting it to us in that beautiful booming voice of his, almost emotionlessly. I recall often being mesmerized by this man as he spoke in English class of the unspeakable behavior of men and women of a hundred years before. These years later I cannot recall the plots of that epic literature, only the wonderment of watching Watkins at his work, his love.

As we approached the English final, we all knew there would be much to recall, much to remember. It would be a difficult final for me. And as a C student, the final would be critical to my grade.

The dialog among the students on how to prepare for this challenge was varied. Would it be multiple choice, true or false, a series of essays? One student said a couple of years back, he had heard Watkins's final was a single essay. Our finals were three hours long! I couldn't write for three hours. God, I hoped he didn't do that.

The last class before the English final, Watkins began by recounting the behavior and conversations of one of the women. I was taking light notes. By the time he got into the second female character my notes became more detailed, feverishly writing down almost every word that came from the mouth of this mountain of a man.

That night, I organized the copious notes from the day's English class, noting the disparities between the actions and character of these several women immortalized through classic novels. I was betting on a longshot Watkins would ask us to write a three hour essay. I would need all the fodder I could recall. My notes would be my salvation, but only if I guessed right about the nature of the exam.

At the appointed time of the final, Watkins slowly swayed into his full and silent classroom, a single book in his hand. He placed the book on his desk, and without a word, picked up a piece of chalk and began to write on the center of the blackboard "Write an essay on the evil portrayed by all of the women characters we have studied this year"

Finally he spoke: "You have three hours."

Watkins sat down at his desk and began to read his book.

I looked around the room at my brothers in arms. It was the look of a herd of deer frozen in a world of headlights. I immediately began to write. I wrote with reckless abandon.

After a couple of hours the students, one by one began turning in their papers, one by one vacating the room. Still I wrote, like a madman. With twenty five minutes left I on the clock, Watkins and I were the only two in the silent room. Occasionally, Watkins would look up at me, then return to his book. Still I wrote. I had so much to share. The excitement of my perfect preparation was feeding my words. I was writing with passion about the subject.

So engrossed in my writing I did not sense that Watkins had strolled to the back of the classroom and was now towering over me. I continued to write wildly, pleading with him to please let me just finish. With tears in my eyes I am now



reminded of the massive hands of that brute hulk gently reaching down and slowly taking the pile of handwritten pages from my grasp and turning away comfortingly saying, "You'll do fine."

My grade was an "A".

## Shipped

Among the many triumphs' in my formative four years at GMA there stands out perhaps my biggest tragedy. One of the kids on our hall was a gymnast, a small, spindly almost frail child. He was a kid from wealth whose parents discarded him to boarding school. He was so desperate for care and attention. Johnny and I did what we could to be nice to the sometimes annoying persistence of his need for human interaction, and his history of rejection was ever apparent.

Less than two weeks from graduation one of the kids told us his watch was missing, a very nice and expensive watch. I notified the Commandant's office and Johnny and I were, as expected, told to shakedown our hall. Because our hall was straight and because there was only one way in or out, Johnny and I would perform the shakedown unassisted. Johnny and I flipped a coin to see who would watch the hall and who would do the shakedown. Johnny won.

Shakedowns seldom resulted in finding what we were looking for but the administration was compelled to go through the motions anyway. They were time consuming and the students were required to stand quietly at ease outside of their rooms for the hour or more it could take to complete. It was boring.

About twenty minutes into this one, Johnny came out of a room and walked up to the student whose watch was missing and asked him if this was it. He nodded yes. His roommate confirmed it.

I knew which room it had been found in and correctly guessed in whose possession it had been found. Johnny stoically walked up the hall to me, watch in hand. I was nauseated. It had been found in the locker of the little gymnast.

The hall was ordered "as you were". Immediately, the cadets began to assemble the beating party. The gymnast was going to get his due behind the gym. I was concerned these guys would kill him. This was not the first thing that had disappeared over the school year, just the most expensive one. They already disliked him. I could not let the beating proceed.

I excused myself into the beating party and explained their services would not be required. I had made the command decision to turn him in to the Commandant's Office. There was minimal objection. They were angry and quickly surmised being sent home for this troubled kid was probably a worse fate than that which they contemplated for him behind the gym.

I went into the gymnast's room and he was sitting on the bed, awaiting his beating. He was shocked to see me. I told him to get his hat and come with me. As he and I walked down the hall the eyes and faces of his fellow hall mates turned away. Students stepped into the bathroom, back into their rooms. It was sad.

Out of the building we continue across campus. He realized he was not headed to the gym. He began pleading with me, begging to let the hall take him out behind the gym, "Please, please, please", he pleaded. No, I could not do it. He could be killed. Finally, the pleading stopped. He began to quietly cry as we covered the hundred yards or so to Rugby Hall. He would be returned to the parents who had deprived this bright child of needed love and affection.

Col. Burnett was not there. I met with the cadet OD and explained the results of the shakedown. The wayward student was sent to wait in the Commandant's office for Burnett's return. They would convene the Disciplinary Committee the next day, and the foregone conclusion was the student would be out of here as quickly as travel arrangements were concluded by his family. I asked the OD to tell Burnett I would like to be the one to drive the kid to the train, bus station, airport, wherever, when he was returned home. He said he would tell Burnett.

As expected, those things occurred in the anticipated time table, including my being permitted to drive the kid to the airport the Friday of graduation weekend.

As we drove the fifteen or so minutes to Hartsfield from the Campus I told him to not let this be defining of his life, but to look at the experience to be a better person, regardless of how he was treated by those closest to him. He promised me he would.

These many year later the knot in my stomach returns when I wonder how his life may have turned.

#### Graduation Weekend

It was traditional for boarders to get motel rooms off campus for graduation weekend. A hotel was selected and we all went in together for rooms. The lucky

motel was right across the street from Hartsfield, a hundred or so rooms surrounding a swimming pool. We all pitched in to purchase cases upon cases of beer.

Taking my wayward charge to the airport put me behind in getting away from campus Friday afternoon. My parents had brought two cars to Atlanta for graduation to insure I had my own wheels for the big finale.

By the time I picked up my car and got to the motel, everyone was in the pool. I asked which room was ours and proceeded up to the second floor and changed into my trunks. I looked all through the room. No beer. Hey, I paid for beer! I went outside. The doors to the adjacent rooms were open. One by one I ventured into the open rooms searching for beer. There was no beer.

Back at the rail overlooking our class occupying the pool and patio I yelled out, "Where's the beer?" They all yelled back in unison, "In the bathtub!" I raced back to our room, pulled back the shower curtain, and there, piled high with ice in the tub was more cold beer in one place than I had ever seen before! The party had begun!

### Stone Mountain at Midnight

The time was shortly before graduation, or perhaps even Thursday or Friday night of graduation weekend. I remember we had been drinking beer for a long time. Someone in the group wanted to drive to Stone Mountain, so we did. This was long before access to the mountain was controlled, and long before there was a safety fence along the North face. I recall at the time the façade was not yet completed and the shards from the carving were in a pile at the base of the mountain.

There we were, four or five of us, hiking up the mountain in the middle of the night. It was over a mile to the top. I remember running out of beer about half way up.

We were all meandering around on top of the mountain, going off in different directions, taking in the magnificence of the lights of Atlanta off on the horizon. Three of us had wandered back to the top of the north face. One of the group moved close to the edge to look down at the 800 foot drop. He slipped. He fell. He began to slide. I lunged at him on the rock. I caught his hand. His weight was dragging me with him. I was trapped in an ethical dilemma: let him go or

hope we would stop. A third cadet grabbed my leg. Quickly, we all stopped sliding.

I lay still as the individual whose arm I tightly held, slowly and silently, crawled back over me tugging carefully at my body and my clothing, until I could cup his shoe in my hands. He continued his assent across our comrade who by now had a firm grip on both of my legs. The two of them then dragged me cautiously across the granite stone away from the slope to safety.

The joking and laughter began. But through all that surging adrenaline, the alcohol could not temper the stark realization we had almost stupidly died. We began the long decent, far more reserved than in the assent. No one spoke of it, but we all knew we had barely survived this critical learning experience. This was not education; this was knowledge.

#### Graduation Weekend

With a lifetime supply of cold beer, Graduation weekend became a blur. This was at the height of the airline hijacking. Outside of partying in the pool at the motel, going parking after the graduation ring dance, the only other memory was that of stumbling around Hartsfield International at 4 AM Sunday morning with three other classmates chanting "Cuuba, Si, Yonkee, no; Cuuba si, Yonkee, no,....."

Amazing we were not arrested.

#### The Moment of the Hats

Sunday of graduation weekend, as I recall it, began at the graduation ceremony in the Gymnasium. The gym was full of parents, family, friends and faculty. With only 135 graduates, the chairs at graduation were spaced out perhaps like every other chair space to give the appearance of a larger group.

Our partying of the night before had taken its toll on several of our classmates. Most of us were deliriously hung over. The student to my immediate left was a real casualty. During the proceedings he sat slumped in his chair. Occasionally he would begin to topple out of his seat. I recall repeatedly lurching over to keep him from falling out of his butt rack, eventually, just leaning over and holding him in place until I woke him up to walk. I was trying so hard to look unobvious to the crowd behind us.

Between the graduation ceremony and the Sponsors' Parade I recall my mother's uncontrolled laughter when recalling the assistance I rendered to my classmate. It was one of the highlights of her weekend. Even Dad had a good chuckle on that. I explained he was sick. That prompted even greater laughter. So much for the lying.

At the conclusion of graduation was the hat toss, something we all anxiously looked forward to from day one. And when the moment came, it was over in a flash, a fleeting blur, forever gone. Perhaps that's when the reality of the end of my wild and crazy four years hit home.

There would soon be no more sharing of these wonderful friendships, no more pranks, no more locking teachers in the armory, no more hiding Blue Horses, no more awesome revelations to share and learn, at least not with this great class. Now, these fifty plus years later, it is clear that, at that moment, the transition of we boys to men was complete. Our faculty and leadership had done its job well.

#### Final Parade

The Sponsor's Day parade at Georgia Military Academy was a social event annually worthy of the front page of the Society Section of the Atlanta Journal. Every cadet officer was permitted to sponsor a fair maiden for recognition in this tradition. The ladies dressed in antebellum long dresses with wide brimmed hats, looking just like Scarlett O'Hara out of "Gone with the Wind". The pastel multi colors were splendid in the afternoon sun. The sponsors lined up in front of the reviewing stand.

After the battle group marched onto the field, the cadet officers assemble at one end of the parade ground and were one by one, beginning with the Battle Group Commander, would escort his just introduce sponsored date around the full length of the parade grounds as the Company First Sergeants presented the companies. It was such a simple event but with incredible meaning for each and every of those appreciative receptors.

As the third platoon leader of D Company, I was the last officer off the field in each parade. Swelling with the pride of completing my four years at GMA as a successful student and cadet officer, and with great honor to my parents and family, my final eyes right salute to the reviewing stand was crisp and sharp. So crisp and sharp that the tip of my sabre caught the brim of my hat knocking it off my head. My final pass of the reviewing stand was made without my cover.

Following dismissal from our final formation, I returned to the parade field in frustration. This cover had accompanied me in my final year and was my airborne symbol of transition from boy to man, my protestant Bar Mitzvah, if you will. That transition now complete, I would not need this hat again in my life. I retrieved my companion cover from the dusty red clay of that hallowed parade field with my saber as one would retrieve trash with a gig. Looking back, it was an unfitting end.

#### Epilog:

On The Outside Looking In (Observations and Comments of my 50th Reunion weekend companion, Barbara Barber)

Bob and I had only been dating a few months when he asked me if I would like to attend his 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion with him in Atlanta, Georgia. We had not yet experienced the proverbial “weekend away” with each other and my past history with that sort of thing was not good. I knew at this point that I was interested enough in the relationship with Bob to move forward with just such an experience, so I accepted.

During the weeks leading up to the trip, Bob would tell me stories of his life at GMA. My experience with information regarding military schools was extremely limited. Little did I know, that was about to change. Bob would reminisce about everything from the layout of the school campus to the hilarious actions of his roommates and friends over the years. As he walked me through one story something he remembered would trigger another story and the telling of that one would begin. Some of the tales made me wonder who was really in charge on that campus but mostly they made me laugh. I could tell that Bob was realizing, maybe for the first time, just how important that part of his life was in shaping the man he became. When you are old enough to be able to look back 50 years at yourself... life has its own way of showing you what was really important through the memories.

There were of course a few very special people in Bob’s life during those GMA years. Selvage, Pods, and Kras were the three names that I made note of. These guys were classmates, comrades, partners in crime and most importantly friends. The teenage antics of Mac Selvage, George Podowski, Richard Krasnowski and Bob Holmes would often leave me clenching my stomach in laughter and begging him to stop the recall. I came to understand Bob’s desire not to just see these guys again and celebrate with them, but to tell them all “thank you for your friendship”.

There were many events over the weekend but one in particular stands out for me. As we were finishing dinner (in the mess hall if you will), one of the wives

suggested the guys walk the "Bull Ring" one last time. We all gathered outside with our cameras as the men began the tradition of walking the bull ring. I remember the guy's excitement as they practically sprinted around the bend in the bull ring. We were watching them from the opposite end, when suddenly they all realized that one of their own was working hard to keep up with his walker. What I saw next was simply wonderful. The entire group of GMA men stopped and waited for their comrade with the walker to catch up and then they put him at the front of the line and all men finished the bull ring together! I thought to myself that I have never witnessed so many "honorable gentlemen" in one place before. As I looked around me at the wives and significant others watching their men I realized I had spoken aloud my words. We were all very proud women witnessing once again why we loved these men!

Throughout the weekend I was touched by the continual demonstration of caring these guys had for one another. They showed it often in their laughter and their tears which they all shared freely with us. I was touched by the camaraderie and the love with which they treated each other. I came away with a better understanding of the man I was falling in love with and a smile in my heart for having shared the moments with him.

I am happy to reveal that Bob and I became engaged in July of 2013 and we couldn't be happier. A GMA man is the best you can have!

#### PJC entrance exam

Upon graduation, Woody Woodward and I were the only two members of the Class of 1962 who had not been accepted to a college. Woody just wasn't inclined to go to college. As for me, my parents had spent my college money on high school. My mother even had to borrow tuition money for my senior year from a close family friend in Atlanta.

Consequently, I would have to attend Pensacola Junior College following graduation, living at home and driving across town each day to class. I knew that from the first day of my senior year, so taking ACT test was not necessary for me. The policy at PJC was to accept all students, even those without ACT scores. They just put you on probation for your first semester. But they did make you take an entrance exam, which I did.

Several weeks after I took the exam, I received a phone call from the College asking me to come in to meet with someone at the College. Having never gone to college before and knowing the test was no real challenge I assumed this was simply part of the normal entrance process.

At the appointed date and time I was taken into a small conference room in the Admin building where there were two men and a woman. The woman was the Administrator, one of the men was a Dean, and the other a vice president of the college. Wow!

The vice president began the meeting with a very adversarial, "How'd you do it?" Surprised, I asked, "How'd I do what?" Hell, I had not been on the campus a total of two hours. I'd not had time to do anything!

"How'd you cheat on the math portion of the entrance exam?" one of them almost yelled. "Cheat?" I responded, "I took all that stuff on the math test as a sophomore in high school."

"Oh, yeah?" was the response, "Where'd you go to high school?" almost screaming.

"Georgia Military Academy in College Park, right outside of Atlanta", I said almost apologetically, adding, "and I wasn't smart enough for the advanced classes."

The investigators looked at one another, when the vice president, blurted out, "Well, we're going to check on that." The meeting was summarily terminated.

I wondered if I had been rejected, for, of all things, doing well on the math exam. A week or so later I received an unceremonious letter indicating I had been accepted into PJC.

Years later I recognized I was not smart enough to be angry at their inquiry, but I had been smart enough not to ask which one of the three dummies was responsible for the math questions.

Joe's

It was the summer of 1969, I was already out of my first marriage, single and living on Pensacola Beach. Five graduates of the US Naval Academy came through the Naval Air Station for flight training. Joe, Jerry, Kirk, Dunn and Duggin were best friends. They found a bar on the beach for sale and between the five of them, came up with the down payment. At first, I thought these guys were entrepreneurs. Quickly I would learn they were partiers looking to minimize the cost of their beer consumption.

I was working for a local beer distributor as an in house accountant. We had just picked up Pabst Blue Ribbon to augment our Falstaff, Miller and San Miguel lines. We were doing a promotion at this new bar on the beach, their new bar,



Dirty Joe's. One of the sales managers had hired a bartender for the night and she would be slinging cans of Pabts for Dirty Joes. I was invited to join in if I wanted to since I lived on the beach.

That night I got to know the five Naval Academy grads. We shared a kinship of our military schooling. The bartender the sales manager had hired was a real cutie, and later that night she and I shared a little kinship, too.

Over the years Dirty Joe's on Pensacola Beach went on to become an institution. But those first five years or so were the epitome of what life was all about in the late sixties and early seventies. Life was literally sex, drugs and rock and roll.

Every Wednesday night at Dirty Joe's, free draft beer for the ladies. The place was packed. Friday and Saturday nights were good as well. There were three foos ball tables and a bumper pool table. Jerry and I played a lot of foos together. Kirk too. I was a favored partner as I was the first one to learn how to stop the Italian flight students defensively. Those guys were weaned on foos.

The five owners took turns working in the bar, working the door, cleaning up each morning. One night Kirk was working the door. Noticing I didn't have a date he offered me free beer all night if I watched the door for him for an hour or so. I said, "Sure". We both laughed. We both knew I could get all the free beer I needed by playing foos or bumper pool. All games at Joe's were played for a beer. House rules. And I was good at both.

It was a typical Saturday night, some locals, mostly tourists. Joe's was becoming as well known around the world as Trader Jon's downtown. It was an institution, and I had been a part of it from the opening.

There was a steady stream of tourists, mostly in their twenties, from Atlanta, Birmingham, Montgomery, Jackson, New Orleans. Most were clean cut kids, bringing the girl friends or boyfriends to the beach for a weekend of, well, sex, drugs (liquor or pot) and rock and roll.

Two nice, polite attractive couples came in, I checked their IDs, the first three were mid-twenties, the last lady was probably the youngest one in the group. She presented me with a Georgia driver's license that said she was thirty two. I turned it over and there it was. My mark! I broke into laughter and handed her back my masterpiece and waved them in. They settled in near the bumper pool table, sipping beers, chatting among themselves and others.

After a while Kirk had tired of winning free beer from his patrons on the foos table and came up front to relieve me. I got a free beer from the bartender and put a

quarter up on the bumper pool table. After a few minutes the 32 year old bimchette worked her way around the short stick table and, excusing herself, asked me why I laughed at her ID. I told her the story of our classmate who stole the driver's licenses and how I had helped with the validations. I told her that the red dot on the back corner indicated it was one I had done. The maybe twenty year old thanked me and returned to her friends, obviously sharing the story. Over the course of the evening, one by one her comrades walked up and shook my hand and thanked me. Breaking the law never felt so good.

### The Convergence of Two Worlds

Ten or so years ago I received a copy of our alumni magazine in which a contributing writer was soliciting stories about Stephen Pless, a 1957 GMA grad and Medal of Honor recipient. The following article was sent to him at that time. Subsequent to that book, Pless and some other GMA alum would be honored on the Bull Ring as Vietnam War casualties. The following is my submission to that author of the book on Pless' life.

I recently read the article in Academy regarding Stephen W. Pless, GMA '57. Regretfully, I can only provide a glimpse of this very unusual man. And although it has been over thirty years ago I will attempt to recreate the images and circumstances of my brief encounter with him.

I was one of the last people to see Pless the night he died. Several months earlier he had initially appeared as just another gung ho marine among the naval flight students and instructors, biding time at the bars on Pensacola Beach. The most infamous of the beach bars was Dirty Joe's. A grungy little beer bar nested in between a pizza shop and a lounge, it was the brainchild of Joe, Kirk, Dunn, Duggan and Jerry, five graduates of the Naval Academy in flight training in Pensacola. They had bought Joe's on a wild hair to reduce the cost of

their drinking habit. In time, it would become an institution.

Joe's became the fun place to go on the beach and became a mixing place for civilians and military, beach bums and professionals, officers and enlisted, US and foreign flight students. With three foosball tables, a bumper pool table and free beer on Wednesday nights for the ladies, the environment was perfect for beer fights, pie fights, streaking, pissing in the trash cans, brawling out the back door, and, of course, participating in the sexual revolution. But for all of its shortcomings on the cultural scene, Joe's was a great place to meet good people.

There's a little of the good, the bad and the ugly in all of us. Some of us, just more or less than others. Joe's was the kind of place where people who consistently failed to cloak their ugly side were told not to come back. It was always management's call, and the patrons were quick to enforce the few house rules.

Out of the '62 GMA class of 135, two of us came from Pensacola. I was the only one still in town in the late '60s. So when someone showed up in the bar who had graduated from Georgia Military Academy, word spread quickly. Pless graduated in the spring of 1957. I enrolled in the fall of 1957. Pless and I spoke of our common bond only once when we initially met at Joe's. The communication vectors quickly crossed and we both immediately recognized we had come to this point in time from different worlds.

Many of the bar patrons were either on their way to Vietnam, home on leave, just before going and some

convalescing from combat wounds, both physical and emotional. The bar conversation was often of Pless' heroics in combat, his rank at such a young age, and most impressively, the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was admired by many, frightening to some, and garnered little more than ambivalence from others. But everyone, male and female, young and old, knew who this lean and almost slight man was.

By virtue of our common high school bond, my perceived stature among friends and acquaintances was suddenly elevated. I reluctantly accepted these unearned accolades and was not comfortable with it.

I was in Dirty Joe's the night it opened on St. Patrick's Day in 1968 and I immediately sensed it would become a special place. My many nights there with the boys, the beers and the boobs gave me quick insight into the nature of the human animal, his or her capacity for love, kindness, apprehension, fear, aggression, anger and rage.

When people in the bar I didn't even know introduced me to Pless as a fellow GMA graduate, there was something about him that made me uncomfortable. I had felt that same apprehension about another GMA student, a man the world would later come know as Lt. William Calley. I did not trust either of them. If I was in the same room with either I made it a point to always know where the other was.

One of my observations about Pless was that he would drink with anyone who would have him. He spent time with acquaintances, but he did not have friends. When he drank heavily, as he often did, he became loud,

obnoxious and aggressive. He sometimes had a James Manson look about him. He would boast of his accomplishments. As he shared more of himself with those around him, his rage began to surface.

Several weeks before his death, he was overheard slurring that he would "gladly trade another stack of dog tags for another Medal of Honor." Later, friends, almost apologetically, replayed that scene to me. Because of the shame that comment inflicted on both Pless and myself, these superlative graduates of THE Georgia Military Academy, I now had a knot in my stomach from thinking people knew we attended the same high school, even if it had been at different points in time. It was of little comfort to me that those with whom I had shared my earlier distrust of him quickly acknowledged my earlier reservations.

Winter on Pensacola Beach can be brutal. With the temperature in the forties, a north wind at 20 knots and humidity in the 90% range, it can feel like well below zero. A shotgun bar like Joe's with concrete floors and large crack in the doors doesn't get a big crowd on in January, even on Saturday night.

I stopped in about 8:30 to buy a cheap beer and see who might be playing some foos. There was the bartender and three patrons standing at the bar. I remember clearly that Pless was wearing a short leather jacket. He was standing at the short end of the bar, one foot on the rail, bracketed by a couple of the usual long-haired, bearded vets in camouflage, both captivated by his every word.

From the conclusion of our first, brief conversation of our GMA heritage, Pless never again acknowledged my existence. That Saturday night was no different. I chatted briefly with the bartender and left.

About 1 A.M. I was headed home with a snoot full of Pabst Blue Ribbon and decided to duck into Joe's. Pless was still there, surrounded by more vets, staggering drunk, the look of a madman. The vets were encouraging him to spend the night with them. They would drive his "crotch rocket" back to their cheap apartment in "Sleazy City" just across the Intracoastal Waterway bridge where he could sleep it off. Pless would have none of it. He was bullet proof.

Sometime that night between my leaving Joe's for home and my drifting into a deep slumber, Pless began his final mission. He left Joe's on his motorcycle and headed back to the base.

The beach road turns north toward the mainland and runs along the causeway to the old draw bridge across the inter coastal waterway. With a tug and barges approaching, the tug's floodlight raked the bridge. Piercing the darkness, the flashing barricades at the base of the bridge added to the excitement. Behind the barricades the two lane beach bridge ran up a slight incline almost a quarter of a mile along to the draw span.

If he hurried he could get to the top before the bridge began its slow ascent. Pless swung the motorcycle around the barricade and accelerated toward the crest. As he roared forward, the bridge began to slowly rise. Even if the bridge was slightly opened, the distance

between the lift spans would be minimal. Besides, the other side would act as a down ramp.

At the speed the motorcycle was going when it reached the metal grate, the angle of the draw span from the bridge was too severe. On impact the motorcycle bounced forward into the air.

That night, the rage that drove Pless to such extraordinary accomplishments ended. He ceased to be the person he had perhaps always hoped to escape from. The newspaper account transformed him from "Stephen W. Pless" to "Medal of Honor Recipient".

On my way into town the next day, the beach bridge looked like an ant mound. Sheriff's deputies, emergency personnel, boats of all sizes and types in the water, search and rescue, marine patrol, navy, coast guard, volunteers, pleasure boaters and hundreds of spectators, all searching for the fallen hero.

Seldom do I pass the remnants of the old bridge or pass by Dirty Joe's and not be reminded of these events. After more than 30 years these images are still vivid in my mind. And in this writing I am stunned that this extraordinary and angry man, that I both so appreciated and detested, could have left such a dramatic and lasting impression on me.

(Needless to say, this story did not appear in the book the author crafted to commemorate the life of Stephen Pless. But the telling of his heroics that justified his Medal of Honor warrants reading)

## Indecent Exposure

Sunday afternoons on Pensacola Beach in the mid 1970s was always a party, a big party. It was a time of sex, drugs and rock and roll, at least until Charles Manson screwed it up for everybody. One of the places of particular interest was a place called the Firehouse. It was an open air restaurant and bar with cheap fried seafood tourist fare. But on Sundays, a band played all afternoon.

One Sunday, having played beach volleyball for beer and won the larger part of the day, I stumbled into the Firehouse about 4 PM. Half the place was locals, half were tourists. I stood back against the wall in the bar, searching the room for receptors. There was a new face up against the wall near the entrance, very attractive and very unusual. Her crystal blue eyes were accented by her premature silver and black short hair. She was stunning.

With a snoot full of confidence, I stumbled up to her and said, "You're not local." She looked me up and down and said, "That's right."

"Where from?" I mused. "Carrolton Georgia" the answer.

"Oh, yeah? I know some people from Carrolton Georgia."

"Who do you know from Carrolton?" she asked.

"Tim and Greg Barker" I proudly splattered out.

"I dated Tim", she replied.

"I roomed with him at GMA" I bragged.

She smiled and said, "I'm Trish"

We drank beer, danced and talked the remainder of the afternoon away. When I realized the band was packing up and I was too inebriated to safely drive, I asked if I could buy us dinner. Obviously, she would have to drive. We were off to eat.

She lived in a large apartment complex on the other side of the draw bridge, the nice ones, not in Sleazy City. We would need to stop by her apartment to insure her baby sitter could stay through dinner. Being Sunday early evening, the apartment complex parking lot was packed and she had to park in the middle of the large lot.

Trish excused herself and said she would be right back. After about twenty minutes, I was running out of room to store all the recycled beer. I needed to pee



really, really bad. I didn't have a clue which apartment was hers. So I waited, writhing in the front seat of her car.

The sun was almost gone. In my stupor, I reasoned no one would notice if I stepped out of the car and whizzed in the parking lot between the cars, which I preceded to do. Relieved, I was now a willing and patient passenger.

Within a few minutes Trish arrives and asks me to come back to her apartment. Her baby sitter would need to run home for a few minutes and then return.

I was sitting on her couch contemplating Chicken Kiev at my favorite beach restaurant when there was a knock at her door. She opened it and began chatting with someone. She seemed a bit confused, but then that was a drunk's perception.

Trish stepped back from the front door, stopping short of the living room in the hall and said someone wanted to talk to me. Now really confused, I stumbled to the foyer. I immediately noticed the police uniform and this short fat lady behind him. She spoke sternly, "Yes, that's him."

What could possibly be wrong? I was a responsible drinker and not driving. The officer asked me to step outside, which I did, and was immediately thrown up against the wall and handcuffed.

Seems the lady, her husband and their teenage daughter had driven by me while I was watering the asphalt. Indecent exposure, I was told. Hell, I never heard a car.

So there I was, on my way to Milton, the county seat, about an hour's drive to the Santa Rosa County jail, where I am booked and dumped into a holding cell. The adrenaline by now had burned off a ton of alcohol and my senses were returning. I called my roommate, an attorney that practiced in the two county area. He said he was on his way.

The bailiff asked me who I had called and I gave him the attorney's name, identifying him as my roommate. The bailiff then asked me if I played Gin Rummy. I said yes and he opened the holding cell door and offered me a seat at his desk. Playing Gin Rummy would be my penance.

It took my roomy a bit more than an hour to make the haul from the beach to Milton. Already not pleased with my predicament he strolls in to the jail, sees me playing card with the bailiff he knows well, and begins with "I thought you were in jail?"

After a big laugh by all, I am released, either on my own recognizance or into the custody of my attorney, don't remember which.

After a couple of telephone calls in the ensuing weeks by my roomy to the assistant state attorney (who would years later become a tax client), it was determined, based upon the circumstances, the charges of indecent exposure would be not be prosecuted.

The next time I ran into Trish she was dating a friend of mine. They eventually got married, then later divorce. Sometime in 2011 her ex and I were sharing a glass of wine at a local watering hole when he indicated that beautiful woman had recently passed away. We are all destined to fully complete our life cycle.

In fine'

I want to thank all of you who shared our years at GMA. Each of you left indelible marks on me creating an individual I am fortunate to have become. I am grateful. Our fiftieth reunion was a special once in a lifetime event. I ask for the opportunity to someday once again gather together with you honorable gentlemen and revel in that special bond we share.