

Legend of the Sentinel Box

By Thom Wilson, James Pigg, Bob Morris all VMI '79 with "Help received" from The VMI Archives and Keith Gibson '77



The wood sentinel box in 1905 with "bedclothes on stoop" VMI Archives

Like The Cadet the sentinel box serving as "Post Number 1" in the Old Barracks courtyard has a long and sometime mythical history. Through the years it remains the focal point in barracks where some of the most significant and impactful events of cadet and alumni life occurs. It's the pinnacle for "Old Yells" for one's class as cadets or alumni. In the new "break-out" ceremony the new 4th class often used sandbags to form their class designation for the post-breakout class photo to build a ramp to the top of the sentinel box for the first Old Yell for their class. It's often decorated by Cadets on Halloween and other occasion and when the VMI Honor Code is violated the perpetrator is expelled from the Corps with "his or her name never to be mentioned at the institute again." The history of the sentinel box itself is a rich one.

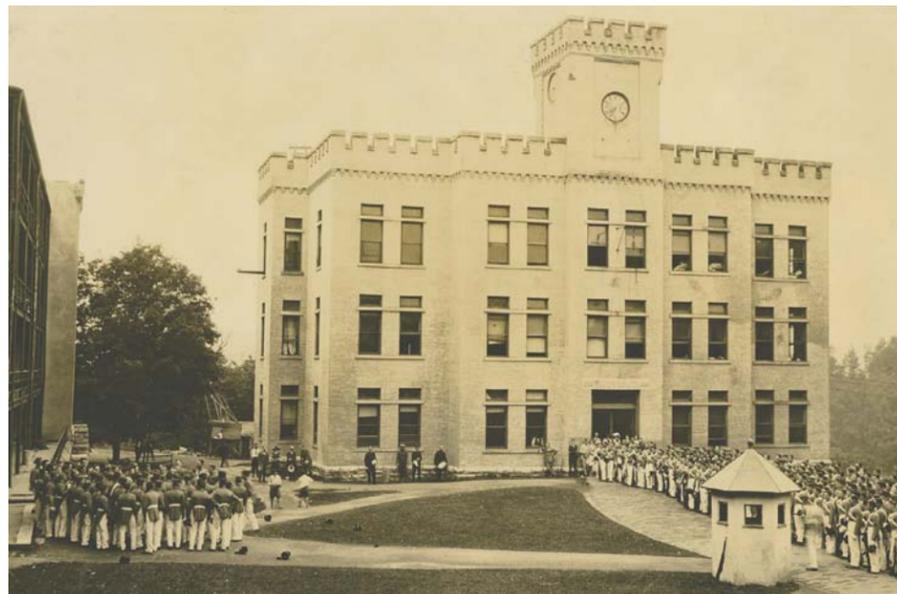
In one old tradition the posting of the first rat sentinel every year the Corps would crowd around or on occasion the first class would host the rat on their shoulders for his "first walk around the sentinel box". According to an article published in The Cadet September 27, 1974 "The mythical tradition decrees that the first rat to walk post number one each year will never graduate from VMI." It recounts how the sentinel was met by the members of the class of '75 who carried out the traditional cross-dyke cutting with "refreshing maturity" and "The crowd was orderly yet with purpose, and after their duty was done hoisted [the sentinel] on their shoulders carrying him around the first tour of his post." In looking back to October 24, 1946 the article notes the first member of the class of 1950 to walk post number one around the sentinel box similarly entered the courtyard. Eventually that first rat sentinel graduated VMI academically distinguished with a B.A. in History and entered the U.S. Army as a Second Lieutenant. He eventually rose to the rank of Colonel and became a legendary figure in his own right among commandants at VMI. His name was William J.

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"Buck" Buchanan.

According to Colonel Keith Gibson '77, Director of the VMI Museum System, VMI Museum, Jackson House Museum, and Virginia Museum of the Civil War when Smith Hall was in the old courtyard back in the 1920s there were multiple sentinel boxes to include a couple outside the barracks known as Guard Post Number 2 and Guard Post Number 3. Eventually as barracks expanded the remaining sentinel boxes disappeared leaving only Post Number 1 as the focal point in what became known as "Old Barracks". Over the years the sentinel box transitioned from its original wood construction to a more durable cement version. As a symbol of the institute and specifically the school's administration it soon also became the target for one of VMI's most colorful, if not dangerous, traditions.

The story of the "Molly McGuire Fourteen" is one of the first recorded histories recounting bombs in the courtyard and sentinel box. In 1917 Colonel Greene Class of 1890 had



The sentinel box in the courtyard ceremony during finals, 1922. The F.H. Smith Academic Building in background. This was constructed as a classroom building in 1900 and torn down in 1923 to provide space for the north side of barracks. An electric clock was added to the tower soon after its construction.

VMI Archives

the story published in the September issue of Century Magazine. It was reprinted, by The Cadet in 1928. Molly Fourteen was formed in response

to the organization of secret fraternities at VMI and with the purpose of frustrating the administration. As Henry A. Wise documents in his definitive book on VMI: Drawing Out the Man: The VMI Story" and in a lesson for today: "There was no need justification for secret fraternities at a college where all lived together on a basis of equality and fraternity, if not liberty." The group consisted of 13 cadets known only to themselves and their crowning achievement was blowing up the old arsenal on Woods Creek, after which the VMI Board of Visitors abolished secret societies in 1885. As Wise recounts, in the 1920 the Certified Thirteen thrived with the annual practice of rolling bombs into the barracks courtyard followed by the warning should of "Bomb in the Courtyard!" The practice continued and become more organized into the 1940s by which time rules among the groups include the size of bombs, detonation practices and more.

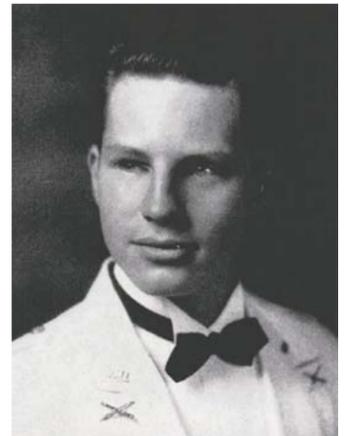
For an article tracing the legends during his tenure with The Cadet, Tom Wilson '79 interviewed an alumnus from the 1940s to explore the legend of bombs in the courtyard and blowing up the sentinel box. The alumnus recounted that explosives were set in the box and the warning given "Bomb in the Courtyard". As with anything connected to the ingenuity of the Corps, over time explosions became bigger and the practice was eventually banned. Of course being VMI cadets, the ban was for placing a bomb in the sentinel box or courtyard. The innovative new idea and practice became attempting to deliver destruction of the sentinel box using a mortar outside of barracks and issuing the same warning.

Bombs in the courtyard and sentinel box were, at the time, organized activities with the designated bomb groups known as "the bomb squad"

barracks courtyard, a prank perpetuated each year by members of the Third Class, was immortalized in the Bomb: "Remnant of the days when cadets were bold, bad men - and authorities weren't so tough! This club is neither secret nor is it eight...When cadets reach their Third Class year it has become a custom for that group to throw a bomb. The instigators and executioners of this deed automatically become members of the Secret Eight."

As James M. Morgan, Jr. documents in his essay: "Cadet Life at VMI During World War II" the tradition signified the Third Class's recognition of itself in barracks. As Morgan writes:

The General Committee forbade the practice of throwing bombs into the courtyard during 1941 - 1942. This tradition had been followed by the Third Class for several years, the number of "bomb in the courtyard" cries to match the last digit in the class's year designation. For instance, the Class of 1942 was traditionally to throw two, the Class of 1943, 3 and so on. The prohibition followed the unfortunate incident involving Richard Niess '44, who lost an eye during one such incident; he was later to play an important role when the size of the Corps drastically shrank and when assigned enlisted army personnel numerically overshadowed those that wore the grey.



VMI Cadet First Captain and Corps Commander Richard Niess Class of 1944 VMI Archives

Richard "Dick" Niess may have been the final graduate of 1944. He actually damaged his eye but did not lose it completely. This initially prevented him from serving during WWII although he was able to serve later and was one of the very few '44 men who actually graduated at VMI in February of 1944. Dick Niess graduated VMI with a BS on Civil Engineering and further distinguished himself serving as the Regimental Commander and Jackson Hope medal recipient. The present day VMI Guard Room was his First Class Barracks room where, undoubtedly, his spirit continues to look out over the sentinel box.

Following the ban on bombs, the sentinel box became the focal point for a new tradition known to many

or "The Secret Eight". According to photos of these groups found in the VMI archives and the 1937 Bomb Members of the Class of 1940 who engaged in throwing a "bomb" in the

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though the 1970s as “the burning of the woolies”. Each year when the Corps tradition from heavy grey winter wool pants to the lighter “whites” the First Class piled the wool pants into the sentinel box and burned them in what, in some cases, older alumni recount today as “a bonfire you could see from space”. Whether spurred on by nostalgia or fueled by alcohol this practice ultimately resulted in the final destruction of the old cement sentinel box by the Class of 1979.

covered with stucco and repainted.”

Members of the class began pondering how to comply with the no explosives edict and still take down the sentinel box. Civil Engineering classes were judiciously applied for a strategy to heat the sentinel box as hot as possible numerous times then rapidly cool it off by the normal application of cold water by VMI facilities management personnel the next morning using the Old Barracks fire hydrant.

classes before then. When the Class of 1978 burned their straight pants fire was so hot the normal onerous order of burning wool was virtually imperceptible.

On the night the Class of 1979 burned their woolies, the celebration (and alcohol consumption) reached its peak with the only remaining challenge being how to actually topple the sentinel box. The cadets set on the idea of using a telephone exercise pole from the rifle range area and so a pick-up truck was dispatched to retrieve the pole. Thanks to hinges secretly installed on the screens for one of the first stoop rooms so they could be opened for “running the block” and other nocturnal activities, the pole was secretly sequestered in the room, much like a whale in a beer bottle, leaving the remaining challenge of how to manage such an unwieldy battering ram. Never at a loss for solutions, the group hit upon the idea of using bed straps that would not only facilitate transportation but provide unique momentum when assaulting the sentinel box.

few to this day. In response the VMI superintendent, Lt. Gen Richard Irby, issued every member of the Class of 1979 an official letter of reprimand and the Class of 1979 was required to pay for a new sentinel box. One ingenious cadet then had an exact replica made of the permit stamp from the commandant’s office with which he stamped it “Disapproved” and sent it back.

Years later, in 2010, renovation in barracks required removal of the sentinel box, but the one purchased by the Class of 1979 was so solid it could not be moved and had to be demolished by heavy equipment. The Class of 1979 donated the funds for the new sentinel box that stands in old courtyard today, bearing a plaque commemorating the events.

The only addition to the plaque in the present sentinel box is an “info sheet” posted inside. Gibson recalls: “I remember when we were expected to memorize our special and general orders AND the OD came around and checked! (By Crackey!). As a Rat sentinel on Post #1 I was challenged by the OD to recite my general orders.

The first strike punched a very promising hole, but speed was of the



Results of the Class of 1944 Bomb Squad work in barracks
VMI Archives

essence before “The Tac” arrived and so as cadets tired on the straps they were replaced by fresh hands and hearts until the sentinel box was reduced to smoldering rubble.

The aftermath was something to behold as the search for the guilty parties expanded across the Institute but in true VMI tradition the Corps stood firm and the identities of those involved remain known only to a

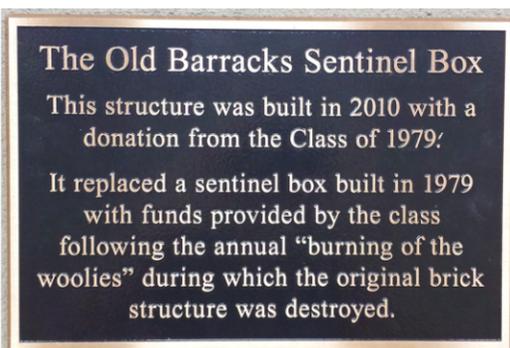
I choked and was boned! If only there had been a cheat sheet in the box, I could have asked the OD to wait while I brushed up on the details and avoided whatever the penalty was!”

Do you have a story about the sentinel box or other VMI landmark or tradition? If so, send it to us at Info@cadetnewspaper.com for a possible series or future story!

Editor’s Note: The staff advises that the reader “not attempt this at home” (or in barracks). These men were professions (sort of) and you see what happened.

The first strike to bring down the sentinel box by the Class of ‘79 whose identities are known only to God and themselves

VMI Class of ‘79



Members of the Class of 1940 who engaged in throwing a “bomb” in the barracks courtyard”, a prank perpetuated each year by members of the Third Class. The 1937 Bomb has information about the Secret Eight: “Remnant of the days when cadets were bold, bad men - and authorities weren’t so tough! This club is neither secret nor is it eight....When cadets reach their Third Class year it has become a custom for that group to throw a bomb. The instigators and executioners of this deed automatically become members of the Secret Eight.”

VMI Archives



Members of the Class of 1944 “Bomb Squad”. Front Row: Ezra Trice, Dick Moon, Tom Cook, Peyton Gish; Back Row: “Jungle Jim” Hull, “Slim” Galliford, Dick Sorensen

VMI Archives

According to one alumnus from ‘79 who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear his right to visit Moody Hall would be revoked: “As a rat I had smelled and seen the woolies get burned. I saw some cracking around the bricks before they were

To accomplish the preparation, each Class having a bonfire from 1976 – 1979 was advised to make it larger without telling them the specific reason. This proved an easy task as Cadet Classes have always been known to “go bigger” on everything from the





The Old Corps

The true story of how "Doc" Hardee the Class of '56 bomb maker almost turned his barracks room into a two-room suite.

The Legend of the Sentinel Box Vol. 2

- By Cadet James Mansfield '22

The real beauty here at VMI, as every cadet knows, is the soul and spirit found in the Brother Rats around. There is no greater friend, no one who will give you more than a Brother Rat. This story is but one vignette reminding us that cadets have, do and will continue to make the impossible somehow possible; especially for each other.

It began in Jackson Memorial (J.M.) Hall.

"Each class tried to distinguish itself in some fashion," Jack Prizzi '56 recalls. "by pulling some sort of pranks throughout your First Class Year. We actually met as a class in J.M. Hall and voted that we would set off six bombs because we were the class of '56. The person who volunteered or was selected to be the bomb maker - the Bombardier - was to remain anonymous.

Well, after a time, that was hard to do, and certainly by the time of the sixth bomb we all know who was making the bombs."

Wellford Estes "Doc" Hardee, a proud five-year private who, according to the 1957 Bomb: "...is known in barracks as VMI's only ex-demolition expert who almost succeeded in having a two room suite in barracks."

The date, as Jimmi Thurmond, Hardee's next-door-neighbor in barracks would later recall was on or about the 5th of May 1956.

Prizzi remembers, "It was somewhere around eight o'clock, maybe nine, I heard that Doc was making a bomb which was going to be set off later that night, so I walked over to his room just to see what he was doing."

"At the time we had tables, we didn't have desks, so Doc was sitting at the table closest to the entrance to the room. I walked in and I saw him sitting with his cap on the back of his head, smoking a cigarette while he was working on this bomb. In front of him on the table was a pile of black powder and an open black powder container.

"When I saw him smoking a cigarette I said: 'Doc, you're crazy! I'm getting out of here!'

"Within what seemed like about 10 minutes, there was this explosion, so I went back to the room while trying to keep the crowds down because people were trying to flock to it.

"There was Hardee, his cap was still on the back of his head, but instead of being the blue gray, it was brown, and he looked to me like he was a bit dazed. I asked 'Are you all right?' and he said, 'yes', but he certainly was rattled!"

"I looked at the room and everything was in disarray, but the main thing I saw was that the wall had been moved about four inches away from where it was supposed to be."

While Hardee's room was in "disarray" it was nothing compared to what occurred in Jimmi Thurmond's room next door.

As Thurmond is quick to make clear for the record: "Well, in the first place, it

wasn't anybody in our room that had the bright idea of setting off a bomb. That was all out of the brain of Doc Hardee...."

"Russell Stewart was on his rack around CCQ time, just before CQ," continues Thurmond, "and Walli Schutt, our other roommate, was sitting at the table. I was gathering a few things together in preparation to go into Duke the next morning that was Saturday.

"'Buster' Kaaa and I were going down there to visit with a couple of girls whom we had met on the beach while down in Daytona. Everything was quiet and serene to be interrupted by a magnificent 'bang!' next door.

The wall [between the rooms] was not a permanent one and the smoke and the flames came over between the top of the wall and the ceiling. It was quite a surprise. The wall lockers were blown over and fell on the bed where Russell Stewart was napping and he came up like he was shot out of a gun. When we finally got settled and realized what had taken place, Russell said: 'well, that son-of-a-bitch next door! Out of all the rooms in barracks we had to be in the one next to Doc Hardee!'

We didn't know that it was Doc Hardee that did it, but we were pretty sure certain that he did. Russell was a very unhappy cadet that the quietness of the evening was disturbed.

There was a typewriter on the wooden locker that was secured to the wall and that barely missed hitting Walli Schutt by just a few inches. I had some of those things that fell off on me because I was standing right there in front of the lockers.

It was a quite a blast. It blew out the glass windows and the door and all the little glass diamond shaped windows on the outside. We finally decided that we needed to get that glass up. By that time it had attracted a few people. Buster was one of them because he was coming down to visit and discuss when we were going to be leaving the next day to go to Durham.

We were standing right there at the door, waiting for the stick check, and then Walli Schutt and Russell Stewart went down the stairs into the Concourse. We had to put a blanket over the door and over the windows such that it couldn't be detected as to what was going on inside, but we got all the glass swept up off of the stoop and on the inside and outside.

The place looked like a wreck. So when enough people had accumulated and Tom Massie was in our room, Tom Massie was our class president. We looked around to see all the damage that was almost indescribable. And he said: "All right, we got to get all of the furniture and all of the uniforms out of the room, get it completely cleared."

According to Prizzi, when he arrived at the room, "people started taking control of the situation and they were hustling. Everybody who wasn't directly involved in what they were going to do next was told to leave. I was chased away with the instructions to make sure

that OD (Officer of the day) doesn't come around.

"I got outside and somebody said to me: 'you know, we gotta keep the OD away from this part of barracks. The Officer of the Guard (OG) was in on what was going on, because he wasn't honor bound and so the next part of the project was to make sure that the OG made sure the OD didn't come around.'"

Tom Massie, First Class President took charge.

As Thrumand recalls, "...after we had formed all the details and Tom Massie said: 'I know I don't need to have to remind any of you here, the task before us. And I don't have to remind any of you here that is gonna take every one of us doing all we can in order to get these rooms back in order.

"And once we were all organized we set about the restoration. I remembered the marines saying: 'assess the situation, review your assets, make a decision and move out!' That's what we did.

"We set up details and had volunteers to manage each detail. There was a detail distributing our uniforms up and down the stoop such that they would not be accumulated all in one place. There was a detail moving all of the furniture not just down to the Concourse because the OC went through the Concourse and he would see all that furniture. So we put it outside and adjacent to the building.

"The other detail that we had to establish was a detail to have all the Rats ready to go get into somebody's rack who was working in one of those two rooms. That means that somebody had to keep an eye on the OC every minute of the night. And of course, the person who was running the detail to herd the Rats around and to watch the OC was a very important job.

"There's never been an OC in the history of the Institute that was any more observed than this OC. And the interesting part about it is he never came over to new barracks. He was always over in old barracks, but we had to make certain that we had the Rats out ahead of where he was such that any empty rack would be filled when he came by and looked in the windows and shined his light in there and counted the people. A very, very important detail.

"Then we took a look at the wall and we tried to budge that wall by pushing it back into place. It had a deformity about two inches from the top middle and obviously they had used a very heavy wire layer in order to support that wall.

"We couldn't budge it. So we knew then that we would have to jack that wall back into place. Buster's detail was to go down to the Standard Oil Station -the gasoline station - down there on 11 and Letcher Avenue. He got one of 'Pete's Cabs' and brought the jack back such that we could set it up to jack the wall back in place.

"Now, back there over-looking looking the Nile there were some other used utility poles and four by twelves that were lining the edge of the decline while going down into the end of the Nile and that was set up there to get



The infamous "Doc" Hardee, official bomb maker of the Class of 1956.

Photo from the 1956 VMI Bomb

people from going over this over the side and also for bumper blocks.

"We selected some appropriate lumber and that jack was pretty heavy, but we put a six by twelve on the opposite wall. That opposite wall was a concrete wall, so we had to put a block under that [the jack] because if we didn't those casters on that jack would have penetrated the wall and would have exacerbated the problem.

"And we had people holding the four by twelve and then of course, people holding the jack, Buster being one of them, and then people that had to hold up the utility pole that we extended across the room to borrow against the other four by twelve on the wall that had deformed.

"We jacked that wall back and discovered that when we released the pressure, it came right back to where it was and fractured off more of the plaster on the wall. So we jacked it back in again. We discovered that we had to go past vertical center in order to reset that wall because it had taken a permanent set and just making it back to vertical would not hold. We had to go beyond that to the point where it would hold. Then we discovered that still wasn't enough to secure the wall. Somebody, and I wish I could remember who it was said: 'well, what we can do is cut some wedges then drive those wedges in along the top of that wall and that will hold it.'

"So we did that and applied pressure on the jack to put the wall back in its place and drove those wedges at the top in order to secure it. Now that was an amazing idea and had that not been done, we could have not controlled that wall. But every time we would Jack the wall more flecks of plaster would fall on the floor.

"We looked at that and said, 'well, we've got a problem here'. I never was a admirer of liberal arts, but [BR] Jerry Real said: 'I've got an idea. Be back soon.' Well, his idea was that he got "Suitcase Simpson" [William M. Simpson, Instructor in Art and, ironically, Faculty Advisor to The Bomb yearbook].

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“So Jerry Real and Suitcase Simpson came back and when Simpson came in the room, he thought that was just the greatest thing since sliced bread. He brought his little suitcase that was full of plaster and he mixed that plaster in the lavatory in the corner. I don't remember who it was that spread the plaster on the walls, both sides, but nevertheless, it was quick drying. So when we plastered that wall, you couldn't tell that it had been fractured. Now those two events were very meaningful. Had those guys not come forward, those with those ideas, we could have never completed that project. I had a much greater appreciation for Liberal Arts Majors after that! That reinforces the point about someone never being indispensable because those two guys had amazing ideas that enabled us to really complete the project.

“Tom Massie knew some people down there and buildings and grounds, and he was able to get the tools and get the glass and the putty so we had the detail that installed the glass in the windows and the doors and put the putty back in. All along the doors were closed and the blankets were over the windows, and that was like a sauna in there because there were a lot of people that were working in those two rooms.

As the evening went along and we were straightening out the wall, putting in the glass, we had to unscrew the wall lockers from the wall and move them out with all the rest of the furniture. Then we had to clean the walls because the black smoke that had come over the top of that wall had spread to the wall. So there was a detail doing that. If it hadn't been for Tom Massie knowing somebody in buildings and grounds where we could get the tools and all the rest of the materials that we needed we wouldn't have been able to do that either.

“Everyone had to wear his garrison cap [while working] and you know why? There was no place to put them except on their heads. We had to wash down the walls and the ceiling to get the black smoke off of it.

“I remember at the time that we surveyed the damage and what we would need. We would need tools, and we needed paint. Nobody, not one person, said: ‘well none of us here are carpenters or we can't, that's not our job, we don't have the tools or we don't have enough time to do that.’ No one brought up any negative comments like that. We were all of one accord that we were going to get it all straightened out.

“We were nothing but a bunch of 21-year-olds and none of us were carpenters, but that didn't make any difference. We didn't know any different. And we knew that we were going to undertake that job and get it done. So when we got the wall in, got the glass in, we re-painted the walls and the ceiling back to the original paint on both sides.

“It was about daybreak when we finally finished those two rooms with the wooden wall locker back on the wall, all

the furniture and all the uniforms back. We were through and everyone went back to his room and I guess we weren't very far away from BRC [Breakfast Roll Call] so we did that and I, as a gesture, going out the room after I'd shaved, christened the project with old spice shaving lotion by sprinkling it around the room. Of course the fragrance didn't hurt either.

“Probably if it [the repair of the wall] was left up to the buildings and grounds people, they wouldn't have had that done by even now. But when you get to 21-year-olds and get energized and, and persuaded, we all got after it.

“At about 10 o'clock that morning, I was in the room, packing my suitcase to go to Duke and in comes Col. Henry Kerlin [Commandant of Cadets] and the Assistant Commandant Lee Nickels. I, of course, came to attention. Henry Kerlin said ‘at ease’ and I watch[ed] his face [as] he was looking around that room, checking every detail that he could see. There was a smile that sort of came across his face. He first asked when he came in: ‘is this the room where the explosion occurred?’ And I said, ‘No, sir!’ It wasn't the room. It was in the room next door. I didn't need to say anything, nor did he ask ‘cause he then knew which room it was, where the explosion occurred, but I could see a look of satisfaction on his face.

“I don't know to what extent he thought the damage occurred, he didn't say and I didn't inquire, but he was very proud of the fact that those rooms were in inspection order.

“He went around the room and Lee Nichols never said a word. Henry Kerlin didn't say anything to speak of either. He saw my suitcase on the table and said, ‘Mr. Thurmond, are you going on a weekend?’ I said: ‘Yes, sir. Buster and I are going down to Duke’ and he said: ‘enjoy your weekend, you've earned it.’

“We had to trim it all right, even with the wall such that it couldn't be discovered. Henry Kerlin was looking at that wall, and if he saw those wedges, he didn't say a thing about it, but that was a remarkable idea. The right idea at the right time is priceless.

“With that, he and Lee Nichols left, and I have to assume that they were completely satisfied with what they saw.

“I've often thought about all those guys that came to the rescue. It wasn't their room and they could have enjoyed a night in their sacks.

“At one o'clock Buster and I were on the way to Durham. I guess I probably got into the shack last night at 1:00 a.m.. That was a long time that we were awake. We came back on Sunday afternoon and I took Col. Kerlin at his word and had a good time because we had earned it.

“I thought it was a magnificent expression of unity and I don't think they did that to save Doc Hardee's hide. They did that because it was a thing to do and we all could do it and we did it. I've remembered those gentlemen for a long, long time. On a couple of reunions, I took



Class of '56 president Tom Massie (holding the jack handle) leads his BRs of the Class of '56 to position a floor jack from the local gas station to jack the blown wall back in place.

Photo by Jimmi Thurmond '56



Jimmi Thornburg '56 (without the Garrison cap) checks the wall alignment as his Class of '56 BRs hold 4x12s in place and ensure the wall is correctly re-aligned after the blast before inserting wedges to secure it.

Photo By Jimmi Thurmond '56



4x12 being positioned by BRS in the Class of '56 to align with the utility pole used to force the wall back in place.

Photo by Jimmi Thurmond '56

my wife into that room and showed her those little wooden wedges that were driven in that wall to hold it in place.

“I understand that the way it was discovered and got back to COL Kerlin was that the guys in buildings and grounds were sitting around the table down there in their office, enjoying a cup of coffee and they were talking about that.

You remember back in World War II ‘loose lips, sink ships’. That's exactly what happened there. They were talking and the Superintendent of Building and Grounds overheard that and it finally got to the administration. Other than that, they would have never known it.

“I don't think they [the administration] had any intention of doing anything about it once they saw it, I could see Kerlin's face. He was trying so hard to restrain his expression of satisfaction and approval, but his face said it all.

“He [Nichols] had a poker face. Never changed expressions. He stood there inside the door, the usual Lee Nichols, standing legs apart, hands on hips, but he was a great guy. I don't think we have Henry Kerlins and Lee Nichols and Jimmy Morgans and Col. R.A. “Buzz” Marris [Professor of Engineering] and people like that there [VMI] anymore - like those gentlemen.

As told to Cadet James Mansfield by Jimmi Thurmon '56, Jack Prizzi '56 and Peter McCrary '56 with research support from Bob Morris '79 and the VMI Archives.



Jimmi Victor Thurmond '56
Photo from the 1956 VMI Bomb



Thomas Massie, President of the VMI Class of 1956
Photo from the 1956 VMI Bomb



Jack Anthony Prizzi '56
Photo from the 1956 VMI Bomb