

# CMA Day on CA Campus—24 October 2025



Volume 35, Number 3

Fall 2025

## 2025 Grand Reunion—Special Memories



Another great reunion for the CMA Alumni Association was conducted 18-21 September. While our numbers go down a little with each reunion, there is still that great feeling of friendship and nostalgia for those that make the trip back to the familiar campus. Our reunion in 2027 will be recognizing those that graduated in 1976 and 1977 as they celebrate their 50th.



## Attending Columbia Military Academy

**Prologue:** To understand why CMA was such a life changing experience you need to know about my early upbringing. My brother Ed was always seeking ways to “break away” from the family—experience wild and different things. On the other hand, I was very content to be at home with my family—especially Mom. We had a special bond which I really didn’t understand but the best way to explain it was that she always made me feel safe and important. Therefore, the decision to leave this love and safety was extremely significant, even more than I understood at the time.

**The First Year:** For reasons I still do not understand, I made the decision to go early to CMA to try out for the football team. K had never played organized sports so I guess I thought it was a good idea. I even tried to get in shape running a few blocks each day before the fateful time in August 1954 arrived. Mom and Dad drove me to Columbia and “boom” dropped me off at school and left my life. Wow! What a feeling, going from the “womb” into a very hot, humid Tennessee afternoon. I was on the verge of panic and almost physically ill. All the players were housed together in Black Hall (a very fitting name for the way I felt). My education was about to begin in earnest.

Put simply, football was a disaster. I lasted less than one day. I discovered that CMA recruited their football players by using a class call Post Graduate and the first team had already graduated from High School. I didn’t even know how to put the pads in my uniform. The coaches were used to kids like me and simply made me a “blocking dummy” until school started. My education on the South also started. Being from Ohio, I was immediately identified as a Damn Yankee. One team member decided to call me Son of a Bitch. After several days of this, I made what was to be a great decision. I told him if he ever called me that again I would fight him. His immediate reply was to call me Son of a Bitch. I swung at him, hitting him somewhere in the face. Fortunately, other cadets jumped in and broke us up as he would have killed me. At least I had gained a little respect from my peers and he never did call me a SOB again.

School finally started and I moved to Johnson Hall, a newer building, and got a new roommate. Again, school was unlike anything I had ever dreamed of. We were required to wear uniforms at

all time—my only civilian cloths were blue jeans and white T-shirts for physical education. Each morning started with a bugle blowing, then formation before breakfast for roll call. We then marched to the mess hall (dining room), standing for a prayer, then sitting at attention until told to eat. Eating was a mad dash to consume maximum calories as nothing else would be available until lunch. Then it was off to classes.

Classes were held in the morning. Each subject was tested every week and our grades mailed to our parents. A bigger test was given each month until the end of the semester. If you failed to maintain a suitable grade average or flunked a class, you were required to attend study hall in the evening until the grades went up. Fortunately, I never attended study hall. Mom and Dad would send me an extra \$1.00 in my \$4.00 per week allowance if I got a 100 in any of my classes.

In the afternoon we had sessions of close order drilling and physical education. We each had an assigned M-1 rifle which we had to clean and march with. The M-1 was the standard rifle used by infantrymen in World War II. It weighed 9.5 pounds and would get heavy after awhile. We would then have formation for dinner and after dinner returned to our room to study from 7:00 until Taps at 10:00 PM. Such a schedule forced me to become organized and pay attention to details, schedules, time, etc; lessons I did not like at the time. However, it helped me greatly in later life.

But all was not drudgery. While I never lost the Damn Yankee tag, I started to make friends which helped greatly in the tough times. Sports were major events as there was not TV to pass idle time. Assuming we stayed out of trouble, we were allowed to go to town on Wednesday afternoon, Friday night, Saturday afternoon/night and Sunday afternoon. Town was about a mile from campus and, of course, we were always in uniform. Columbia had a movie theater and that was where I found my escape. Movies changed each time we had off (the theater owner knew where his money was coming from) so I would go every chance I had and leave CMA for a couple of hours. The movie was also my first lesson in Southern segregation. Black individuals had their own drinking fountains and were required to sit in the balcony. Such things were completely strange to me. Movies cost .25 so my \$4:00 per week held up.

The weekends were also special in that each Saturday morning started with a full inspection of our rooms and the barracks. Everything we owned had to

be displayed, beds made so a quarter would bounce off of them, cloths folded to exact measurements, etc. If you failed, you got demerits. Demerits were worked off by marching around the Bull Ring with you rifle while the other cadets played sports or goofed off. I march one afternoon for two hours and new had another demerit in my two years. Sunday started off by marching that mile to town to attend church. We tried to stay awake and were successful if there were any good looking girls in the church. In the spring we would have a parade campus after lunch. Lots of folks would come out from town just to watch us march around. While it was a pain, it also made us proud to show off in front of the folks—we would never admit that.

Home sickness was my biggest problem that first year. I’d sit in class counting the days, hours, minutes and seconds till Christmas vacation would start. There was always a hollow spot deep in my stomach that could only be filled by home, Mom and Dad. Cleveland was too far from Columbia for my folks to drive and pick me up so they would send me a plane ticket. Wow, what an adventure flying alone from Nashville to Cleveland. In those days it was a twin engine prop plane filled with traveling salesmen and a kid in his CMA uniform. But walking off the plane and being greeted by my parents was like returning to heaven. I remember one flight when we were grounded in Akron due to bad weather in Cleveland. They put us on a bus which took us to the Cleveland airport. When I arrived, Mom and Dad were furious with me because I did not call to tell them what had happened and for awhile they thought the plane had crashed. I didn’t think it was a big deal but once I had kids of my own, I fully understood why they were upset.

**Senior Year:** My senior year at CMA was an entirely different experience. I had “status”, both from being a senior, plus rank, and ended up being a squad leader in Company D. K had about six other cadets in my squad and I was responsible for their attendance at formations, etc. It was my first taste a leadership; a taste that I would find that I loved in my future years. Another big factor in my senior year was a change in residence halls. I moved into Academy Hall. It was a small intimate building and supposedly for cadets wanting to enter a Service Academy. While the thought of going to West Point had entered my mind and my Dad had even

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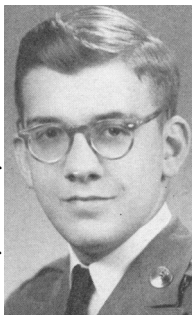


talked with a few friends about how to receive an appointment, nothing serious was ever done about the thought. My room was on the top floor and I had two roommates. Ed Willis (he would have quite an effect on my retirement years) and Lynn Parker Lovelady. With a name like Lovelady, Parker was always under the gun but as I understand it, he ended up flying B-52s and becoming an airline pilot with Delta. I have not seen him since my days at CMA. The hall also housed a number of those Post Graduate football players I mentioned earlier so nobly messed with the guys from Academy Hall—Ha! They were from Philadelphia so there were lots of Damn Yankees.

I was also able to do much better academically. While I was never good in sports, I did become the manager of the Baseball team. It was a fun job and, best of all, it allowed me to travel with the team so I was able to escape the campus during the spring of my senior year. I even got a Varsity Letter—a big deal at the time. I thoroughly enjoyed my duties as a Squad Leader and even made the finals of the marching competition at the end of the year. Maybe that's where I developed my "Command" voice that at times my one children did not like to hear.

Graduation was a wonderful time, just seeing Mom and Dad proud of their little boy. Looking back at CMA, I now realize that I learned a lot about myself—with lots more still to learn. I also broke the umbilical cord with my Mom, even thought I would still enjoy every minute of being in her company. It was my first major step towards becoming a man and little did I realize how many more steps I still had to climb. CMA also taught me to be proud of our country and realize that things I took for granted had to be worked for, and at times fought for.

*The above write-up was extracted from Jim Rusk's autobiography. Jim also has two published books, "Jim and Kathy Rusk Love You" about their letters and memories from the Vietnam conflict, and "What Have We Done", a story of their family's challenges and successes in the Northwoods of Minnesota. Jim attended CMA for two years, graduating with the Class of 1956.*

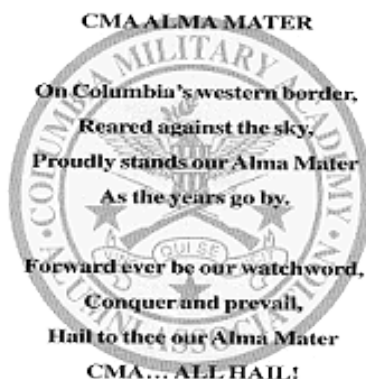


## CMA Endowment

Columbia Academy recently provided a report on the CMA Alumni Endowment Fund at Columbia Academy for the fiscal year of June 1, 2024 to May 31, 2025. Gifts totaling \$2,100 were made to the fund during the fiscal year and \$1,914.03 was withdrawn during this period to provide funds for renovations and improvements to buildings original to the CMA campus. For the fiscal year of June 1, 2024 to 31 May, 2025, the fund had a return of approximately 7.29%. The ending value of the fund on 31 May was \$55,687.39. All alumni are encouraged to donate to the CMA Endowment that will preserve the CMA Museum, CMAAA Scholarship and original buildings to the campus long after the Alumni Association exists. You can donate at any time, including as part of your estate planning.

## Columbia Academy Update

Columbia Academy celebrated many exciting milestones and accomplishments this past year. The addition to the Grimes Preschool building was completed in time for students to enjoy for spring semester. The tennis court complex was completely renovated, including the addition of two additional courts. Several state championship trophies were added to the collection and the upper school drama department delivered a stunning performance of Mary Poppins during last spring. In addition to academic accomplishments, the students performed over 9,000 hours of community service and raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Canned Food Drive and Walk for Water projects. Most importantly, the students were taught God's Word daily. At least 30 CA students made the decision to be baptized. CA is looking forward to the opportunity of having over 1,200 students throughout this school year.



## Celebrating 90



Bobby Bain ('72) and his wife Kathy celebrated SFC Ted Daw's 90th birthday with him on Sunday, July 27th. SFC Daw was part of the ROTC Military Department at CMA for the school years 1968-69 and 1969-70. While at CMA he was an instructor within the military department and was also the coach of the CMA Rifle Team. He and Bobby have maintained a close relationship since he left CMA.

## Submit Your Story for Inclusion in a Future Edition of the Bugle

As time goes by it is important that we do everything we can to keep the *Bugle* relevant and interesting to the alumni. History has shown that the readers really enjoy fellow alumni sharing stories of their time at CMA. The stories that are told during the CMA Reunions are priceless and should be shared throughout the Alumni Association. There are great stories that are the kind of things that alumni enjoy reading in the *Bugle*. These stories will be run in the *Bugle* and, depending on the number of stories received, may be consolidated and bound as a "Collection of CMA Memories". All alumni are encouraged to provide their favorite memory/story from CMA to be included in this collection. The memory/story can be whatever length is necessary. This section is another way for CMA alumni to share experiences through the *Bugle*. If you have a memory/story you would like to share with other alumni please submit it to Woody Pettigrew at the below snail mail address or you can e-mail it to [wpettigrew@knology.net](mailto:wpettigrew@knology.net).

Woody Pettigrew  
101 Sansberry Lane  
Madison, AL 35756



### Class Ring Display Case in CMA Museum

The Class Ring Case in the CMA Museum is gradually getting rings from each of the years of both CMA and Columbia Academy graduates. We still have a way to go but now is a good time to try and fill as many missing years as possible. While we know getting rings from the decades of the 1930s and 1940s will be extremely difficult, we should still be able to collect rings from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. We need rings from the following years: 1950, 1951, 1952, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1979. Please consider donating your ring to become part of the permanent history of CMA. To donate your ring, please get in touch with Ms. Jill Jones at Columbia Academy. Her phone number is 931-380-8509 and her email address is [jill.jones@cabulldogs.org](mailto:jill.jones@cabulldogs.org).

### CMA Day—October 24th

Columbia Academy will once again be hosting a CMA Day on campus this year. Friday, October 24th is the date and it promises to be another fun day on campus for any and all CMA Alumni that can participate. We begin the day attending their assembly in Old Main and then meet with some students for a question and answer session. Afterwards, we will visit classrooms and again talk with the students about our time at CMA and answer any questions they might have. We follow that up with lunch in the mess hall with the students. This has proven to be a great experience for both the students and the alumni that participate. If you are interested in participating this year, please let Tom Carr ([tkcarr@bellsouth.net](mailto:tkcarr@bellsouth.net)) or Mike Glover ([mdglove@yahoo.com](mailto:mdglove@yahoo.com)) know. We will meet at Old Main at 9:00 AM on the 24th. For those that are available, we will meet for dinner at Legends the night before.



### Important Notice on *Bugle* Newsletter Mailings

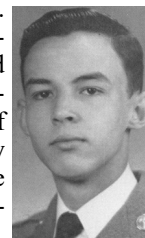
In an effort to reduce operating costs for the CMA Alumni Association, we are eliminating the hard-copy mailings of the *Bugle*. The *Bugle* is currently available in three different ways: (1) it is posted on the website at [CMAAA.com](http://CMAAA.com), (2) it is e-mailed to individuals on the e-mail list, and (3) it is mailed in hard-copy to individuals on the snail mail mailing list. For those that are currently receiving it via hardcopy, if you would like to start receiving it via e-mail, please contact Woody Pettigrew at the addresses below, provide an e-mail address, and he will get you on the mailing list. That also will work for anyone who is not currently on the e-mail mailing list for the *Bugle*. If you are not currently receiving an e-mail with the quarterly *Bugle* attached, please contact Woody and provide him an e-mail address and he will get you on the mailing list. The last mailout of the hardcopy will be with the Winter edition of the *Bugle*. Also, the Winter edition of the *Bugle* may be in a new format. It appears the program I currently use will no longer be supported by Microsoft so I may have to find a new way to prepare the *Bugle*. Hoping for the best...

Woody Pettigrew  
101 Sansberry Lane  
Madison, AL, 35756

## SILVER TAPS

### Orlando Salzedo, Class of '55

Orlando Antonio Salzedo, beloved father and grandfather, entered Heaven on May 29, 2025. He was 87. Born in Barranquilla, Colombia, Orlando attended CMA for two years, graduating with the Class of 1955. He went on to study mathematics at Middle Tennessee State University. After serving in the US Army, Orlando enjoyed a 31-year career with General Motors. He was preceded in death by his wife, Rheba. Surviving are his children, Ricardo Salzedo of Grand Blanc, Michigan and Tina (Todd) Jackson of Destin, Florida; and grandchildren, Houston and Emily Jackson. Orlando loved his family, including the many who live throughout the United States and Colombia.



Orlando Salzedo

### Ernest L. Taliaferro, Class of '56

Ernest Lenwood Taliaferro of Tallahassee, Florida, born in Osceola, Arkansas, passed away on August 29, 2025 at the age of 86, leaving behind cherished memories. He attended CMA for four years, graduating with the Class of 1956. In 1968, he became Public Relations Director for St. Vincent Infirmary in Little Rock, a 1000-bed hospital and trauma center operated by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. Though Ernest has departed this earthly realm, his legacy endures — a legacy of love that will continue to illuminate the lives of family and friends in the darkest of hours. May his spirit soar on wings of eternal peace, forever cherished in the tender embrace of memory. He was predeceased by his parents, Ernest L. Taliaferro Sr. and Bonnie Fay Ogan Taliaferro; his daughter Angelyn; and his siblings, Benjamin Wesley Taliaferro and Bonnie Lenora Taliaferro Hawkins. He is survived by his wife Marcia Vance Leonard Taliaferro. .



Ernest Taliaferro

### James A. Kennedy, Class of '58

James Albert (Al) Kennedy, 84, of Newnan, Georgia passed away Thursday, July 31, 2025. He was born January 10, 1941 to the late Carlton Abner

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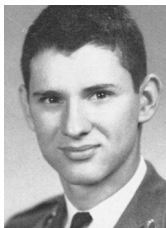
# SILVER TAPS

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Kennedy and Ruby Drake Kennedy. Al grew up in Culleoka, TN, and attended CMA for four years, graduating with the Class of 1958. He then graduated from Duke University in 1962 where he majored in mechanical engineering with honors in Tau Beta Pi, Pi Tau Sigma, Pi Mu Epsilon and Phi Beta Sigma. He began his engineering career at Monsanto Chemical Company (1962-1972) in Columbia and continued to work with Monsanto in East Stroudsburg, PA, and St. Louis, MO, and Chemtech Industries (1973-1977) also in St. Louis. In 1977, Al joined the William L. Bonnell Company and settled in Newnan, GA. In 1989, he established his own company, Kennedy Eurotech. He worked as a consultant to many in the aluminum extrusion field, wrote technical articles, and represented international high-tech companies in the aluminum community. His technical manual, Extrusion Press Maintenance Manual, is considered a benchmark textbook on the subject. In 2024, the Aluminum Extruders Council bestowed him with the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. He continued to consult and to work on keeping his manual updated until only months before his death. Al was a member of the Newnan Kiwanis Club for over 45 years and especially enjoyed sitting at the ticket gate at the fair every fall and greeting everyone. His warmth and his gentle wit will be missed by his family and his friends. He was a longtime member of the Church of Christ and was most recently worshiping with the Cedar Grove Church of Christ in Fairburn, GA. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Dr. John Henry (Jack) Kennedy. Al is survived by his wife of 62 years, Sandra Richardson Kennedy, son Andy (Karen) Kennedy; daughters Alice (Craig) Jackson and Elizabeth Brownlee; five grandchildren; one great granddaughter; and sister-in-law, Nancy Wildsmith.



**Al Kennedy**

## **Donald B. Harmon, Class of '63 Post Graduate**

Donald B. "Don" Harmon passed away on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025. He was born March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1944 to Harold and Christine Hardison Harmon. Don graduated from

Columbia Central High School in 1962 and then attended CMA as a Post Graduate with the Class of 1963. After CMA, Don played one year of football and track at Austin Peay University. He then enrolled at Memphis State University where, after interruptions for military service, he graduated with a degree in Industrial Management. During this period Don married Jan D Harmon who was his valued companion for the rest of his married life of 57 years. Don received a commission in the Tennessee Army National Guard in 1969 and returned to Columbia and became a member of the General Electric Plant Start-up Team in 1971. During his 6 ½ years with Columbia G.E. completed the US Army Quartermaster Officer Basic and Advanced courses and was elected President of the Columbia Jaycees. Don was promoted to G.E. Unit Manager for the start-up of a new refrigerator plant in Decatur Alabama in 1977. He served in numerous leadership positions for the next 23 years in Decatur. He was a member of the inaugural 'Leadership Decatur' class in 1992 and a Decatur Commodore in 1993. His final assignment before retirement was Internal Quality Manager. His Army National Guard career of 28 years was highlighted by commanding the 279<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion, headquartered in Huntsville, Alabama from 1986-1988. His military active reserve ended in 1993 as a Colonel. After his G.E. retirement in 2000, he was hired by Temple Electric in Decatur. However, as the pleasures of his farm in Eva, Alabama required more and more of his time, he departed Temple in 2004. Due to health issues, he sold his farm in 2017 to return full-time to his Decatur residence. Don was inducted into the Columbia Central High School Hall of Fame in 2024 to recognize his life accomplishments. Don was preceded in death by his parents, his brother, Larry Wayne and his son, Barron Harmon. Don is survived by his loving wife of 57 years, Jan; his daughter Sheldon (Steven) Bell; four grandchildren; and his aunt, June Turner.

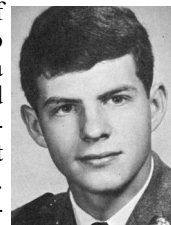


**Don Harmon**

## **William S. Decker, Class of '66**

William S. Decker, III, of Memphis, Tennessee, and better known as Bill to

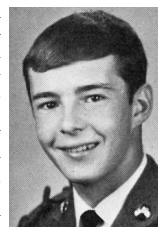
his friends and family, died July 27<sup>th</sup>. He attended CMA for two years, graduating with the Class of 1966. Bill was proud to serve his country as a Captain in the United States Army 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. During his time in service, he became fluent navigating I-40 between Fort Bragg and Memphis. It was on one of those many trips home that Bill was introduced to his wife Kathy, and the rest is history. After serving his country, Bill came home and finished his degree at the University of Memphis where he gained the entrepreneurial skills he used to continue his life of service by serving his community. Bill worked for many years with his wife at the Memphis Plywood Corp and Ply-Plastic where he eventually became President. Bill also served a term as President of the Lumberman's Club. After many decades serving his community, Bill and his wife sold the companies and enjoyed a good life traveling together and spending time with friends and family. Bill is survived by his wife of over 52 years - Kathy W. Decker, two daughters - Elizabeth Ashley Jenkins and Mary Kathleen Todd, two grandsons - Tyson Jenkins and Grayson Jenkins, a brother - Rusty Decker, and a sister - Connie Decker.



**Bill Decker**

## **William Nunnally, Class of '66**

William (Bill) Henry Nunnally II, age, 73, passed away peacefully on February 11, 2022. He was the son of Betty Jane C. Nunnally and Walter S. Nunnally II both deceased. He is survived by his wife Rosann Bond Nunnally and brother Walter S. Nunnally III and wife Sarah Chaffin Nunnally. Bill attended CMA for three



**Bill Nunnally**

years as a member of the Class of 1966. He graduated from the University of Tennessee at Martin in 1970 where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Education. He was commissioned into the United States Army and was a graduate of the Army Ranger School. After leaving the Army he attended Boston University and received a Master's Degree in Counseling and Human Services. He

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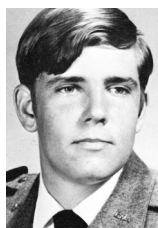
# SILVER TAPS

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founded Music City Marketing, a tobacco cigar and accessory wholesaler in 1975. In 1985, he founded Uptown's Smoke Shop, named by Forbes Magazine as one of the top ten smoke shops in the world. In the early 1980s, he and his partners founded the Sante Fe Natural Tobacco Company in Sante Fe, New Mexico where they manufactured American Spirit organic cigarettes. His hobbies included sailing, traveling, reading, wine collecting and enjoying fine food and wine. In 2019, Bill and his wife Rosann established a scholarship fund at UT Martin bequeathing \$22 million to the university. As many as 100 students a year from Hickman and surrounding counties will receive four-year scholarships to Bill's alma mater.

## Brent H. Burt, Class of '73

Brent Holton Burt, age 70, of Duck River, Tennessee, passed away on August 14, 2025. He was born on January 13, 1955, in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, to the late Edward Wallace Burt and Jeraldene Messer Burt. Brent was a proud alumnus of CMA having attended for 6 years and graduating with the



**Brent Burt**

Class of 1973. He was a dedicated member of Little Lot United Methodist Church and a man of strong faith who loved the Lord and his family fiercely. He found great joy in the outdoors, especially hunting, fishing, and farming. A certified Master Gardener and beekeeper, Brent was also gifted with his

hands, particularly when restoring old cars. His presence, kindness, and talents will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him. In addition to his parents, Brent was preceded in death by his grandparents, Buford H. and Jessie Benson Burt, and his brother, John Leslie Burt. He is survived by his son, Brian (Amber) Burt; granddaughter, Keeli E. Burt; grandsons, Cayden James Keeling and Michael Ayden Caudill; brother, Edward Lawrence Burt; sister, Mrs. Jimmy (Sherri Burt) Darnell; and a host of extended family and cherished friends.

## Rhonda Ryland Foust, Class of '78

Rhonda Ryland Foust, age 64, of Manchester, TN, passed from this life Wednesday, June 4, 2025. Rhonda was born in Daleville, AL to her late parents Richard Ryland and Rachel Campbell Ryland. She attended CMA for 8 years graduating with the Class of 1978. She worked as an



**Rhonda Foust**

accountant for Kasai North America. Rhonda was a huge Elvis fan and enjoyed listening to his music and watching his movies. She also loved classic country music. She showed up for everything her grandchildren were involved with and loved spending time with them. She is survived by sons, Cody (Tabitha) Foust and Cole (Kelly) Foust; fiancé, Mike Deaton; brother, Bill (Renee) Ryland; sister, Donna Kelley; seven grandchildren; three nieces; one great niece; and one great nephew.

BUGLE QUARTERLY is published quarterly by the CMA Alumni Association. First Class postage paid in Columbia, TN.

POSTMASTER: Please forward address changes to CMA Alumni Association, 804 Athenaeum Place, Columbia, TN 38401-3156.

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