

# VIRGINIA TECH *magazine*

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## Letters to the Editor

Please let Homer Hickam ["The Birth of Skipper," vol. 22, no. 4] know that I thoroughly enjoyed his article. I wish he had stated if the present cannon is his. I thought there had been a smaller cannon in use prior to the one now used and that it was used in the '50s. Bill Hoover ['44], who works with me here, was at Tech in 1940 until after Pearl Harbor, and he remembers the corps using one of the two cannons that sat up on the hill above the Mall at games. In 1942, after talk of melting down the cannons for war use, they disappeared and never showed up again. Most likely they're still sitting in a Southwest Virginia barn!

**J. Glenn Duncan, PE '60, Botetourt County, Va.**

*Editor's note: We turned to Homer Hickam '64 for a response: "The old Skipper is retired and in the corps museum. The present Skipper was brought in, I believe, by SM Frank Longrie who advises the cannon crew for General [Jerrold] Allen [commandant of cadets]."*

Just a few thoughts on the creation of the Skipper. That brass sure was heavy in the back of my '55 Chevy station wagon! Gears, parts from the arsenal, and a lot of "fired" brass from the range at the arsenal. The wooden, split-pattern for the casting was made on campus in the old McBryde Hall (the mold was made from the pattern in Roanoke). Both were delivered to the foundry on the east side of Roanoke. For some reason, I do not remember picking up the finished casting, but my next "road trip" was to Lorton near Manassas with a rented "u-haul" to pick up the carriage. The carriage was made in the prison. I remember having to leave the other cadets who rode with me outside the gate they only allowed the driver into the shop area where the carriage had been made (the shops at Lorton were making many of the same type carriages for the parks at the Civil War battlefields in the state).

**Henry L. Wyatt II '65, Forest, Va.**

I certainly enjoyed Sonny Hickam's story about the birth of Skipper. It brought back many fond memories, and I want to fill in a part.

One evening after the drive to collect brass and funds for the cannon had wound down, Butch Harper came to our room to talk to my ol' lady, Ken DeKay '64, and me about a problem he had. Not only had not enough brass been collected, but Butch was about \$500 short of the negotiated price and was looking for help. I offered to present the problem to "D" Squadron if he would agree that if we bailed him out, the cannon crew would come from "D" Squadron. He agreed and I called a squadron meeting to discuss the proposition. We raised the money, the corps got its cannon, and Sonny commanded a squad of "D" Squadron rats.

**Curt Huffman '64, Conifer, Col.**