



General Orders

PANNILL'S TEXAS BRIGADE

VOLUME 16

January 2005

G.O. 6

" MEET THE PRESS"

OUR SPEAKER: EDWIN C. BEARSS



Ed Bearss in action

Ed Bearss has been well-known to the Houston Civil War Round Table for many years. In fact, he received our Vandiver Award of Merit, which was then called the Houston Civil War Round Table Award, the second year we pre-

sented it, in 1983. These days, Ed's fame has covered the world, and he has been referred to as a "national treasure." He is certainly an expert on most military battles, and has no peer when it comes to Civil War battles and history.

Born and raised in Montana, Ed grew up on his grandfather's ranch, where he named the cattle for Civil War generals and battles. His favorite milk cow was named Antietam.

Ed joined the Marine Corps and fought with the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion and 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal and New Britain during World War II. After being badly wounded by Japanese machine guns, he spent 26 months in different hospitals.

In 1949, Ed received a B.S. degree in Foreign Service from Georgetown, and later earned an M.A. in history from Indiana University.

His career in the National Park Service (NPS) began in 1955, at Vicksburg, where he was the park historian. His research there led to the finding and raising of the gunboat *Cairo*, which is now a museum in its own right. Ed's stellar work while at Vicksburg led to his transfer to Washington, D.C. in 1966. He was the NPS Chief Historian from 1981 until he retired in 1994. He had served 40 years with the National Park Service and 50 years in government service.

Retirement brought Bearss a new, full-time career as military (especially Civil War) tour guide extraordinaire. His schedule is so busy, you have to book him 2 -3 years in advance to get him! And don't try to find a spare day in his year's calendar - it won't be there.

It is a special treat to have Ed visiting us as our speaker this month.

Jan 20, 2005

Briar Park Club
2603 Timmons Lane @ Westheimer
Command Post (Cash Bar) 6:00 PM
Dinner and meeting 7:00 PM

RESERVATIONS - REQUIRED BY 10:00 AM TUE

Dinner is \$30 and **reservations are required by 10:00 am Tuesday morning**; we would prefer them made by Monday night. The lecture only is \$3. Please help us by calling **Robert** at **281-890-0556** by Tuesday morning before the meeting. Tell him also if you need a special meal. Cancellations must be made 48 hours in advance.

OUR TOPIC: "MEET THE PRESS"

This month will provide an interesting change of format for our meeting. Given Ed Bearss' extraordinary knowledge of all things Civil War, he will be the expert who gets "grilled" on any and every topic of the war, in a "Meet the Press" kind of exchange.

A panel of Round Table members, moderated by Bill Pannill, will do the "press" questions, but everyone at the meeting will also have an opportunity to ask Ed ANYTHING about the war.

QUIZ QUESTION

We'll have no quiz question this month. Back next month . . .

BOOK RAFFLE

Books to be raffled in January are: *The Coastal War: Chesapeake Bay to the Rio Grande* by Peter M. Chaitin, donated by the Jim Godlove; *The Civil War in Art: A Visual Odyssey* by Doranne Jacogson, donated by Jim Godlove; *Twenty Million Yankees* (Time-Life Books), also donated by Jim Godlove; *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War: The Tide Shifts*, also donated anonymously; *Battle Cry of Freedom* by James M. McPherson, donated anonymously; *Rebel Sabers: Extracts from "Bullrun to Bullrun"* by George Baylor, also donated anonymously; and 4 assorted Civil War magazines.

Raffle tickets are 50¢ each, or 8 for \$3 - the more you buy, the better your chance of winning.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

by William Pannill

ON ED BEARSS

The Ken Burns series on PBS brought me back to the saga of the Civil War. Of all the 11 hours, my most memorable parts consisted of two talking heads: Shelby Foote and Ed Bearss.

Foote did steal the series. Courtly, and with the most melodious of Mississippi accents, Foote mesmerized the viewer with his person. But Ed Bearss captivated the viewer with his knowledge, growled from the side of his mouth like the ex-Marine that he is.

It was the lure of hearing more Ed Bearss that enrolled me on my first field trip with the Round Table, the trip to Gettysburg.

We had dinner the first night in the Cashtown Inn, where General Lee had spent the night before the battle. You can see that inn in the movie *Gettysburg*, as the actor Martin Sheen watches a marching band while he impersonates Robert E. Lee.

A former member of our Round Table, Frank White, had gone with me on the field trip. When we drove back to the inn that evening, the rest of the bus (as is our wont) had surged into the bar, but Frank and I hung back for some reason. After 10 or 15 minutes, Ed walked in and stood there by himself. No acolytes adored him. So we walked over and offered to buy him a drink, and he accepted.

All I remember asking him is, "How do you prepare?" I had been dumbfounded at Ed's ability to reel off regimental names and numbers at each bus stop. "In the room at night," he said.

Watching him since then, I believe Ed has a photographic memory. He closes his eyes so often during his riffs on the battlefields that he must be rereading the notes he studied the night before.

Since the Gettysburg field trip, Ed has been our guide on each field trip except one. This year, he led us through the Shenandoah Valley. Surely, I thought, he will not recall all the unit designations of two separate campaigns in the Valley, one by Stonewall Jackson in 1862 and the other by Jubal Early in 1864. There were too many small battles, and the campaigns are off the main trails.

Once again, for three long and rainy days, Ed's eyes would close as he communed with the spirits, his arms would fold across the chest, and the left side of his mouth would open in a perfect imitation of a Marine drill instructor (one job Ed didn't have).

Then out would roll the story of the battle: unit names, unit numbers, heroes, goats, fools, and all. There is no better way to learn history. At one point during our Gettysburg trip, I remember thinking to myself, what is the use of naming all these vanished formations?

When I reached the end of the second day's battle with a completely new understanding of Gettysburg, Ed's method became clear. He paints the battle in all its complexity until you can see it for yourself.

But not until the Shenandoah Valley trip did I realize why Ed remembers all those regiments. He recites the names and numbers of the regiments because he has dedicated his life to making sure we do not forget these heroes.

At the age of 81, still able to outwalk and outtalk anyone on any tour bus, Ed continues to bring the past to life.

Long may he growl.

MAKE MEETING RESERVATIONS

Last month's meeting was a perfect example of what happens when our members don't call in meeting reservations. Because our reservation number was small, we were put into an extremely small area behind another group's meeting, and could initially enter our space only from the outside.

The number of reservations we called in for dinner were exceeded by more than 20%. The number of reservations for those attending the lecture only was exceeded by about 200%. Club staff scrambled to set up extra places for dinner, and we ran out of room to set up chairs for the lecture only.

We play a guessing game every month trying to figure out how many might not show up and how many extras we might have, and it's an impossible game to win. The Briar Club is only prepared to accommodate a plus-or-minus 10% fluctuation. As you can see, we far exceeded that in December.

One more time, please call in your reservation, for either the lecture or dinner, before Tuesday noon.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Houston Civil War Round Table is dedicated to the study of the civilian, military and cultural aspects of United States history during the period of 1861 - 1865 and to the preservation of historical sites and artifacts.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone No. _____

Email address _____

Mail to: **Houston Civil War Round Table**
P.O. Box 4215
Houston, TX 77210-4215

NEW MEMBER

\$40 - Individual joining in Apr - Dec

\$20 - Individual joining in Jan - Mar

\$45 - Family joining in Apr - Dec

\$22 - Family joining in Jan - Mar

\$15 - Student or Out-of-state

RENEWAL

\$40 - Individual

\$45 - Family

\$15 - Student or Out-of-state

NOTE: For memberships or subscriptions outside the U.S., extra cost of postage to mail the newsletter will be added. Cost may vary; please write to inquire.

NEW BOOKS OF INTEREST

Brigadier General Tyree H. Bell, CSA, Forrest's Fighting Lieutenant, by Nathaniel Hughes, Jr. with Connie Walton Moretti and James Michael Brown, has been published by the University of Tennessee Press, communications Department, Knoxville, TN 37996-4108. Cost is \$45 plus shipping.

Historian Hughes collaborated with descendants of Bell on this biography of one of Forrest's leading officers. Dealing primarily with his CW years, the book also provides info on his last years.

Walker's Texas Division, CSA: Greyhounds of the Trans-Mississippi, by Richard Lowe. Published by Louisiana State University Press, P.O. Box 25053, Baton Rouge, LA 70894-6461, Cost is \$39.95 plus shipping.

HCWRT member Mike Harrington reviewed this book for

The Civil War News (December 2004 issue), calling it "the definitive history of Walker's Texas Division." Harrington notes that this first published history "mat at last throw off the blanket of Trans-Mississippi obscurity and achieve rightful recognition as one of the Confederacy's most effective fighting units."

The Confederates of Chappell Hill, Texas: Prosperity, Civil War and Decline is the second book written by Stephen Chicoine, a member of our Round Table who has decamped to Minneapolis. The just-published book describes the pre-war prosperity of Chappell Hill, a town in Washington County that is located a few miles from Washington-on-the-Brazos.

Chicoine writes about the anger of the population that led up to secession, and about the men who served in the Confederate Army. He describes their wartime experiences through their journals and letters. He also covers Reconstruction and the resistance to Federal occupation.

The price of the book is \$45. Bill Pannill will bring order forms to the January meeting. You might ask him how to go about getting one autographed by the author.

Chicoine is a graduate of Stanford University and an engineer. He serves as chief executive of a Christian charity in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.



ED COTHAM TO SIGN NEW BOOK AT JANUARY MEETING

The long-awaited book on Sabine Pass by our esteemed RT member Ed Cotham has been published. We have been trying to work with his schedule to have an autographing session at a RT meeting, and January is it!

The book has been getting marvelous reviews, as it should - our Ed is very good.

He will bring copies of the book to sell, but if you have already purchased a copy, bring it in for him to autograph.

HCWRT SPEAKERS 2004/2005

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| Feb 17 | Jason Philips
"Confederate Invincibility" |
| Mar 17 | John Simon
"Grant and Lee" |
| Apr 21 | Mauriel P. Josslyn
"The Immortal 600" |
| May 19 | James Ramage
"Gray Ghost: John Singleton Mosby" |



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