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General Orders

Harrington's Brigade

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2020



OCTOBER, 2020 MEETING
Thursday, October 15, 2020, 7:00 pm

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
(please refer to article on page 3 of last month's newsletter for detailed information regarding using Zoom)

The HCWRT Presents Eric J. Wittenberg Speaking on:

“Holding the Line on the River of Death: Union Mounted Forces at Chickamauga”

Eric Wittenberg's talk this month will focus on the two important delaying actions conducted by mounted Union soldiers at Reed's and Alexander's bridges on the first day of Chickamauga. A cavalry brigade under Col. Robert H. G. Minty and Col. John T. Wilder's legendary "Lightning Brigade" of mounted infantry made stout stands at a pair of chokepoints crossing Chickamauga Creek. Minty's small cavalry brigade held off nearly ten times its number on September 18, 1863 by designing and implementing a textbook example of a delaying action. Both cavalry brigades, though badly outnumbered, managed to hold on as Confederate infantry delayed and searched for other avenues of advance. Their dramatic and outstanding efforts threw Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg's entire battle plan off its timetable by delaying his army's advance for an entire day. That delay cost Bragg's army the initiative at Chickamauga.

Mr. Wittenberg brings his expertise with Civil War cavalry operations to bear with vivid and insightful descriptions of the fighting and places

these actions in their proper historical contexts

Mr. Wittenberg draws parallels between Minty and Wilder's actions and those of Gen. John Buford on July 1, 1863. Much like Buford, both men sought to force the Confederates to deploy, thus slowing their advance and giving Union forces enough time to prepare for the coming assault.



Eric J. Wittenberg

About Eric Wittenberg

Eric J. Wittenberg is a native of southeastern Pennsylvania. As a third grader, he made his first visit to the battlefield at Gettysburg, which caused him to be hooked on Civil War history by the end of that visit. He has been to Gettysburg close to 100 times. His earliest memories of that first visit include the death of John F. Reynolds and the story of the stand of John Buford and his troopers.

Wittenberg is a graduate of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where he received his Bachelor of Arts in political science and economics. He received a master's degree

in international affairs at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and his juris doctorate at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Eric is a partner in the Columbus, Ohio law firm of Cook, Sladoje & Wittenberg Co., L.P.A., where he manages the firm's litigation practice.

Mr. Wittenberg is the award-winning author of 21 published books on the Civil War. His specialties are the Gettysburg Campaign and especially the Union Cavalry. His first book, *Gettysburg's Forgotten Cavalry Actions*, was named the winner of the Bachelder-Coddington Literary Award as the best new work interpreting the Battle of Gettysburg in 1998. The second edition of that book, published in 2011, won the Army History Foundation's Distinguished Writing Award for that year's best reprint. His 2015 book, *"The Devil's to Pay": John Buford at Gettysburg: A History and Walking Tour*, won the Gettysburg Civil War Roundtable's 2015 book award. He is a past president and past program chairman of the Central Ohio Civil War Roundtable, and works with the Civil War Trust on numerous preservation projects. Eric's most recent book is the subject of this month's topic, *Holding the Line on the River of Death: Union Mounted Forces at Chickamauga, September 18, 1863*. He has been a regular lecturer and tour guide.

Eric and his wife Susan reside in Columbus, Ohio.



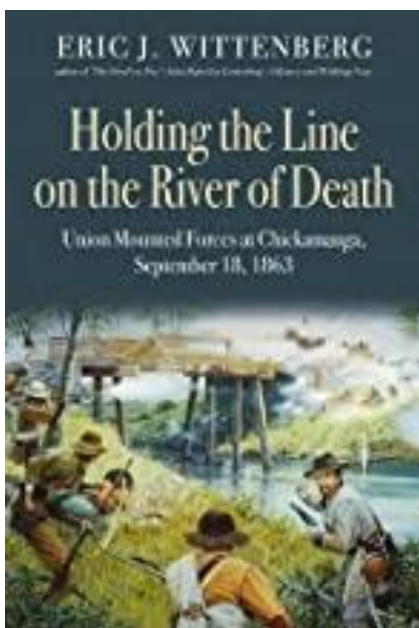
COMMANDER'S CORNER

By Mike Harrington

At our September meeting, the Houston Civil War Round Table entered into an unwelcomed new phase of its roughly 65-year existence: we met remotely via Zoom. As I emphasized at the outset of that meeting, your Board of Directors remains dedicated to returning to in-person meetings as soon as practicable. Please be assured that nobody on the Board believes that virtual meetings are a satisfactory long-term substitute for in-person meetings. We are keenly aware that meeting over the Internet deprives our members of the opportunity to fraternize with other members over food and drink, to participate in book raffles and trivia quizzes, and to meet and greet our speakers in the flesh.

Personally, I want to apologize for my own technical ineptitude and my histrionics at our September meeting. My role in future Zoom meetings will be less prominent.

Switching gears, we hear politicians of all persuasions telling us nowadays that the November 2020 presidential election will be the most vital, the most important, the most significant or the like, in the entire history of our nation. The history of the Civil War era gives the lie to such accusations, of course. Whatever sorts out this November, I can say with complete confidence that it will not result in the breakup of the Union and bloody, internecine civil war. The election results of 1860 will not be replicated in



2020, and for that all Americans may give thanks.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Walker Agnew

As we have started the 2020-2021 campaign, the Membership Committee would like to hear from those interested in helping out within the committee. We are always looking for new ways to attract new members as well as keep our current group. If you would like to help, please email me at walkeragnew@comcast.net. We can get together on the phone or via Zoom until we can meet in person. I would ask every member to think about a friend or acquaintance who might be interested in learning more about history through the excellent programs provided by our Round Table. A personal invitation is still the best way to get the word out.

If you have not paid your dues yet, please send those in asap to Barry Brueggeman (his mailing address can be found on the return address page in this newsletter, as well as the membership application on page 5).



REMEMBERING ED BEARSS

1923 – 2020

By Marsha Franty

The commanding voice no longer rings out across hallowed grounds. The baton no longer directs our gaze to charging troops or active artillery. The determined, booted stride no

longer leads us across the contested fields. But we shall remember.

It was my good fortune to join other members of our Round Table on many field trips we took with Ed. Over the years, we covered all the major Civil War battlefields from Pennsylvania, down to Georgia, and west to Louisiana. One of the most memorable stops was at Antietam, on a blustery, freezing cold day. We shivered as we congregated in Dunker Church to consume box lunches as sleet fell on the historic cornfield. The bone-chilling weather did not deter Ed from escorting us through the battlefields, down to Bloody Lane, and on to Burnside Bridge. Another year, I believe it was during our excursion to Brice's Crossroads, Shiloh, and Corinth, that we had dinner one evening in an old house, restored as a restaurant and supposedly haunted, where Ed regaled us with the "off the field" activities of Earl Van Dorn. While Ed could readily cite specific regiments, brigades, and divisions engaged in every encounter, he always managed to include personal details about the individuals involved. He particularly reveled in reporting some of the more unsavory or scurrilous stories, as he did with Van Dorn and Dan Sickles, for example. These embellishments made the military events more memorable to all.

During a Gettysburg Seminar with another group, Ed led his band of followers in a mock Pickett's Charge. It was July and the temperature that day was nearly three digits. That did not deter Ed, who designated file closers to make sure that no one dropped out. Of course, we had to follow that exercise with a climb up Little Round Top to imagine the incredible fighting that took place there. Once again, weather conditions had no impact on our respected leader.

Ed's expertise extended to World Wars I and II, and his European tours were just as engaging as his Civil War tours. The Brueggemans and I were participants in several. During our first trip to Normandy (2007), Ed secured a visit to the farm where scenes of *Band of Brothers* had been filmed (he was not happy when some of us were distracted by horses that ambled over to nibble our ears!) as well as to lunch in a large and ancient home which Nazi officers had commandeered for their headquarters. After

the war, the owner returned to the home where he and his wife welcomed us for lunch as their grandchildren played outside. The owner graciously recalled the history of the house over the centuries and shared with us a very poignant poem he had written about his memories. We visited another couple in the area who shared not only their family photo albums of the occupation and the liberation, but also a bottle of homemade calvados! During that trip the veterans in our group participated in placing a wreath and lowering the American flag at Omaha Beach Cemetery. When we returned to Normandy in 2018 (this time with my son joining me), we were witnesses as Ed received special recognition from Cemetery officials as he once again lowered the flag. In a brief ceremony the flag was then presented to him. In Italy, we came upon a group that was preparing for a reenactment of the Allied invasion near Anzio. After introductions and a few old "war stories," Ed was driven around the area in a vintage jeep with flags flying as we all cheered him on...such a celebrity! So many wonderful memories! Yes, we shall remember.

Rest in Peace, dear Ed. The impact you had on those of us who cherish our history and knowledge of its participants is immeasurable. Your efforts to preserve historic battlefields assures that in the years to come others will learn to appreciate our history as well. Yours was a life well-lived. Semper Fi.



Ed's last visit to the HCWRT, January 2019. Shown with Marsha and her son Trip



Marsha and Ed during a 2017 field trip to the Belleau Wood battlefield



Marsha, Ed, and Gary Chandler



Ed with the late Norm Lewis, January 2017



HOUSTON CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE 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. For additional copies of this form please go to www.HoustonCivilWar.com

Membership Type

(CHECK ONE BOX ONLY.)

- \$50 – Individual
- \$60 – Family
- \$25 – Student/Faculty or Out-of-Town
- Existing Member - Address / Information Update Only

JOINING BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND MAY 31

NON-RENEWING members joining in the months of January through May will automatically be enrolled as members for the current and following year's speaker series ("campaign").

Name: _____
(FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST)

Address: _____

City: _____ St _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Cell Home Work

Email Address: _____

In which format would you like to receive your newsletter?

- Email (PDF)
- U.S. Postal Service (Printed)

How did you learn about us? _____

FOR FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS ONLY

Family Member Name: _____
(FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST)

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Home Work

Email Address: _____

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

Mail your completed application and dues to: **Houston Civil War Round Table**
C/O Barry G. Brueggeman
3706 Lonnie Wood Drive
Houston, TX 77059

2020 - 2021 SPEAKERS CAMPAIGN

- Oct. 15, 2020 Eric J. Wittenberg: *"Holding the Line on the River of Death: Union Mounted Forces at Chickamauga"*
- Nov. 19, 2020 Brian Steel Wills: *"Inglorious Passages: Noncombat Deaths in the American Civil War"* (2020 Vandiver Award Recipient - rescheduled from May 21, 2020)
- Dec. 10, 2020 Stephen Davis: *"Hood's Great Attack East of Atlanta, July 22, 1864 (Or, Why Jackson's Flank Attack at Chancellorsville Succeeded and Hood's Did Not)"*
- Jan. 21, 2021 Danny Sessums: *"Arkansas Post"*
- Feb. 18, 2021 Lorien Foote: *"The Dogs of War"* (rescheduled from April 16, 2020)
- Mar. 18, 2021 Timothy B. Smith: *"The Real Horse Soldiers: Benjamin Grierson's Epic 1863 Civil War Raid Through Mississippi"*
- Apr. 15, 2021 Stephen Kinnaman: *"Merrimack: Biography of a Steam Frigate"* (rescheduled from March 19, 2020)
- May 20, 2021 Don Frazier: *"Tempest Over Texas"*

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