

On The Skirmish Line

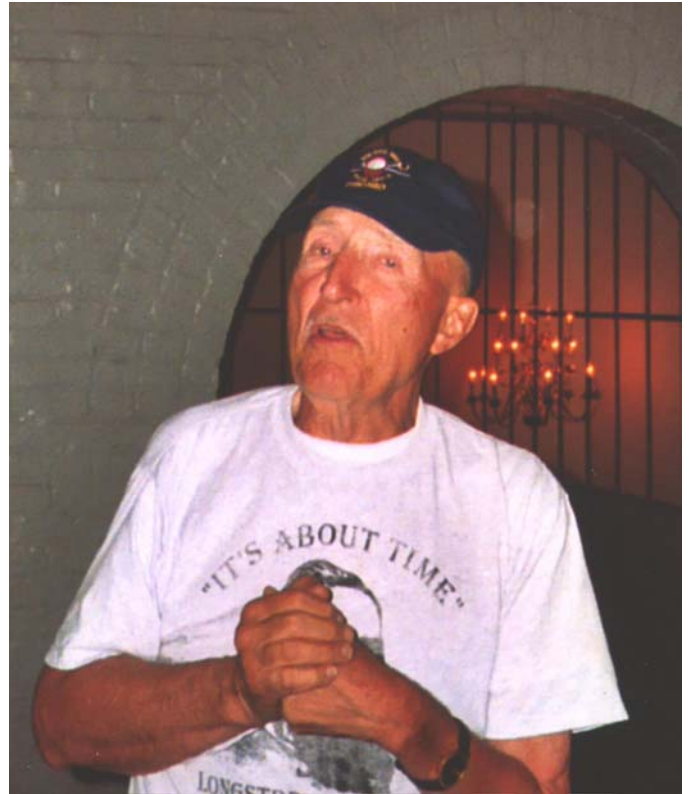
The Newsletter of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust

Ed Bearss Speaks at Annual Meeting

Members of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust gathered in Fredericksburg during the first weekend in May for its annual meeting. They toured area battlefields, visited the places that they had been instrumental in preserving, and examined battlefields that still need to be preserved. The integrity of the May 1 battlefield at Chancellorsville, for instance, remains threatened despite a recent success in preventing it from being rezoned for dense development. The highlight of the annual meeting itself, however, was the incomparable Ed Bearss.

Ed spoke about his first visits to the Fredericksburg area battlefields, comparing their condition then and now. In the early 1960s, the National Park's holdings at places like Chancellorsville and the Wilderness consisted of thin ribbons of land along trench lines. The areas in between were in private ownership and would be susceptible to development when new highways made them accessible. Efforts since then have preserved many hundreds of acres of critical terrain. The battlefields look better than ever, with many previous gaps carefully acquired and protected, but the threat to many other sections of this hallowed ground is still extremely high. Ed noted that the train has passed some places by. The exceptionally intact battlefield at Shiloh comes to mind. At Fredericksburg, however, he warned that the freight train is thundering down.

During the question and answer period, someone asked Ed which battlefield site was his favorite. Diplomatically, he responded that there were favorite places at every battle-



field. At Fredericksburg, the Stone Wall and the Willis Hill area (that was the CVBT's first preservation victory) are tremendously evocative.

Who, he asked, could not be moved by looking across the ground where Union ranks had been decimated by accu-

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President's Corner

Mike Stevens

It has been said that “in the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” That is why all of us involved in the leadership of CVBT are so deeply appreciative of you, our members.

Your support has been both generous and ongoing, clearly reflecting the depth and the sincerity of your commitment to battlefield preservation and to CVBT.



Because of you hallowed ground, ground “well-watered with the blood of heroes,” has been saved forever, will be there for you, for your children, for your children’s children, will be there for as long as there is an America.

We pledge to be in the preservation fight until the Final Role is called, and we ask that you continue to stand with us, remembering that when we preserve the hallowed ground of a Civil War battlefield we don’t just preserve land; we also preserve the memories and the meaning, the sacrifices and the stories, of the men in both blue and gray who fought and fell there, men whose bond to cause and comrade and country was so strong that they were willing to die rather than to deny it, men whose blood and bravery have forever mixed with the soil, staining it with honor and everlasting significance.

We thank God that we live in a country that can produce such men as these. May we never forget them, nor dishonor their memory.

On The Skirmish Line is published for the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust membership at PO Box 3417, Fredericksburg, VA 22402. The CVBT is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Virginia’s Civil War battlefields. All contributions are tax deductible. A financial statement is available, upon request, from the Virginia Office of Consumer Affairs. Our latest IRS Form 990 is also available on our website.

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CVBT Changes Leadership

A change of command occurred at the CVBT annual meeting. John D. Mitchell stepped down as the group's president, having served four years in that capacity.

During that period, John negotiated land deals, found funding for land acquisition in unlikely places, and kept local and state governments focused on battlefield preser-



Erik Nelson (left), and Jerry Brent discuss preservation issues with CVBT's outgoing president John Mitchell at the Annual Meeting.

vation. His dedication and exceptional effort were nothing less than phenomenal.

John isn't leaving the CVBT Board, though. He is still actively working deals and staying true to the cause.

The new CVBT president brings other skills to the job. Mike Stevens, a dedicated preservationist and careful student of the Civil War, will maintain the group's momentum as we keep moving on.

One would be hard pressed to find anyone who is more inspirational in speech or more measured in thought. He brings exceptional organizational abilities and will keep this group focused on preserving battlefields.

Those CVBT members who were present also voted on a slate of nominees to the CVBT Board of Directors. Robert K. Krick and Kevin Leahy were voted on to the Board as new members. Harriett Condon and Lloyd Harrison were reelected to a second term. Steve Stanley was reelected to a third term. A full listing of Board members is contained in this newsletter. Detailed individual information is posted on our website.

Member Feedback

I think this endeavor is one of the most meritorious undertaken in the Fredericksburg area. Not only is the organization helping to preserve American history, but it is also providing publicity for the importance of our past. I am proud to say that I am a contributing member of this organization and that my children will be able to experience this land and all that it means.

Andrew Fiske, CVBT Member
Lexington, Virginia
via email

Bearss Speaks at Annual Meeting

(Continued from page 1)

rate Confederate fire. At Chancellorsville, Ed noted that he always enjoyed visiting the site of Lee and Jackson's final meeting (near the CVBT acquisition known as McLaws' Wedge). At the Wilderness, the chosen site was the scene of the first "Lee to the rear" incident. During one of Ed's early tours to that site, one of the attendees was shocked to learn that the Tapp field was still in private ownership and promptly committed himself to acquiring it for inclusion in the National Park. That level of interest and selfless



dedication is evident in many of our CVBT members today and it is humbling to be in their presence. Finally, the Bloody Angle, at Spotsylvania Court House, drew out Ed's admiration for those who had endured the endless hours of close combat.

As always, Ed Bearss was inspiring and encouraged us to press on with acquiring the ground that had helped to define America.

CVBT sponsors Memorial Day Dinner and Tour

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust helped to kick off the Fredericksburg Area's Civil War Weekend on Friday May 23rd, 2003 with a dinner and lecture to honor historian and friend of CVBT, Frank O'Reilly.

The dinner held at Brock's restaurant in downtown Fredericksburg was well attended by over 65 Civil War enthusiasts in town for the Memorial Day weekend activities. Mike Stevens, President of CVBT, served as Master of Ceremonies and welcomed Frank and all those attending, many of whom came from outside the state and as far away as Texas.

After dinner, Frank spoke to the group about local preservation efforts and his experiences while researching his latest book, *The Fredericksburg Campaign, Winter War on the Rappahannock*.



Photo courtesy Steve Stanley

Frank O'Reilly (second from right) leads tour participants at the City Dock in Fredericksburg.

Following dinner, Frank led the group on a walking tour of Civil War sites in downtown Fredericksburg. As always Frank was a hit with the crowd, leaving them wanting more. The Board of Directors would like to thank Frank O'Reilly for his help in making this evening a success and for all he has done in the past for the Trust and for preservation. Thank You Frank!

We goofed!

We've found a way to ensure that our members are diligently reading the newsletter...include lists and omit someone's name!!

We goofed on our Charter Members list in our previous newsletter. We were chagrined to discover that we'd left out **Don Troiani**, noted artist and supporter of CVBT, and **Walter Tucker**, a CVBT supporter in Richmond.

Mr. Troiani has donated numerous prints to be used by CVBT for fundraising purposes. He joined us at the December 2002 book-signing for Frank O'Reilly and even agreed to pull the winning name for the Troiani print raffle!

Mr. Tucker has been a generous supporter of CVBT, making yearly donations for both membership and specific property campaigns. He is always there for us!



CVBT on the Web

Back issues of our newsletter, *On the Skirmish Line*, are available for download on the CVBT website.

These are Adobe .pdf files and can be viewed using Adobe Acrobat Reader on either a PC or MAC.

Go to www.cvbt.org and click Newsletter Archives

CVBT Annual Meeting—2003



Photo courtesy of CVBT member Tim Pence



Photo courtesy of CVBT member John McCauley

From top left, clockwise: Sunday Lunch, Smith's Run tour, CVBT member John McCauley takes a break on Saturday's tour, Sunday tour, and (center) Salem Church stop on Sunday's tour.

CVBT creates award to honor Ralph Happel

In April of this year, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust was surprised and extremely pleased to receive a \$150,000 donation from the estate of the late Ralph Happel.

Mr. Happel, a long time historian with the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, recognized the unique historical value of our area and had directed that a portion of his estate be used to support CVBT's efforts.

To honor the work and perpetuate the memory of Ralph Happel, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust has established the Ralph Happel Award.

Mrs. Opal Ritchie, executor of the estate, joined us at this year's Annual Meeting as we announced the estab-

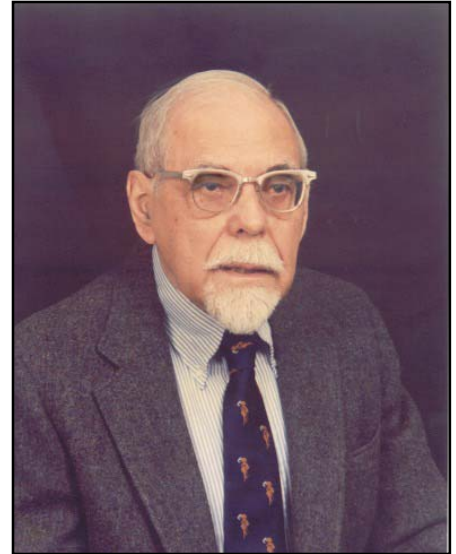
lishment of this award.

The award will be presented annually to an individual or group to recognize outstanding contributions to preservation issues in the Central Virginia area.

A native of Fredericksburg, Virginia, Ralph Happel led a distinguished career as historian and author with the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park from 1936 until his retirement in 1972.

A graduate of James Monroe High School in Fredericksburg, he received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Virginia.

During the Great Depression, he headed the local Writer's Project un-



Ralph Happel
1911—2002

der the Works Progress Administration (WPA), researching many of the lesser-known historical sites and treasures in the Fredericksburg area.

Memorial Bricks Installed at Fredericksburg Battlefield

The CVBT has placed another set of memorial bricks in a small plaza on the Fredericksburg battlefield.

Two of them, purchased by CVBT Board member Lloyd Harrison, tell a rather tragic story. Two brothers, James Anthony Harrison and Pinckney McDowell Harrison, saw action with the Pee Dee Light Artillery, near Hamilton's Crossing, on 13 December 1862. During the fighting that day, one was killed in action and the other mortally wounded.

The family records note that the dead soldier was wrapped in Maxcy Gregg's blanket (who, apparently, had already been killed). Neither brother knew of the other's fate, however, and their older brother undertook the sad task of traveling to Virginia to bring them home.

Another brick, purchased by member Charles McDaniel, recognizes George Weedon, of the 4th Virginia Cavalry.

We are proud to be able to place bricks that recognize those who campaigned through this area.

If anyone is interested in memorializing an ancestor, please visit our website or write to us at the CVBT address.

A donation of \$100 will purchase a brick that can accommodate three lines of 14 characters each. The limited space can be a challenge, but the emotional impact of these bricks can be quite compelling.

Is it time to Renew your Membership?

Just a reminder that we rely on our members to check their renewal date on the mailing label of each newsletter.

If we haven't heard from you in a while, we will send one post card reminder! This is the extent of our renewal notification process and helps ensure that more of your donation is used for "dirt and grass".

The date listed on the label is the date your membership is/was due to be renewed.

ID: 12345

Aug 2003

CVBT MEMBER

123 MAIN ST

FREDERICKSBURG VA 22401

Sunshine Lady Foundation Helps to Clean up Battlefield Land

Chancellor High School wrestlers provide the muscle

The Sunshine Lady Foundation has stepped forward again to help the CVBT fulfill its mission. The Trust's property at Smith Run has an old house on it, a deep well that needs to be capped, and what looks like decades of accumulated trash and equipment. Before this site can be interpreted and made accessible to the public, these hazards must be removed. Nearby development gave this task an added urgency as new houses usually include young children who could get hurt there.

On Saturday, June 7th, CVBT volunteers as well as a team of wrestlers from Chancellor High School, in Spotsylvania County, jumped in to handle this work



The wrestlers who participated were: **Mark Miller, T.J. Canning, Dustin Curtis, David Staab, Robert LaClaire, Matt Brunsheon, Craig Wherle, Omar Huggi, and Jordon Jeffords**; along with their Coach, **George Holzworth**, and "Team Mom", **Alison Jeffords**.

These young men provided some very enthusiastic assistance despite the rainy, wet conditions that day! For over two hours they hauled trash and debris, filling a dumpster with everything from rusty buckets to bedsprings and car parts. They worked as a team and were definitely "good sports"! Our thanks to the Chancellor HS Wrestling Team.

Preserving battlefield terrain often includes cleaning up elements that don't belong on hallowed ground. This work is arduous and messy, but usually quite rewarding.

Our thanks is due to our hard working volunteers, the strong young men of the Chancellor wrestling team, and of course the Sunshine Lady Foundation for providing the funding to handle these critical tasks.

As nature takes its course and gently covers the bare spots where trash and a house used to be, the evidence of all this labor will slowly disappear. The integrity of the overall site, however, has been restored, and the safety of those who will explore this ground has been enhanced. Thank you.

RENEW TODAY!!

Renewing Member New Member

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

email address: _____

Membership Category:

Annual Member—\$35

Active Member—\$135

Sustaining Member—\$250

Patron—\$500

Benefactor—\$1,000

Life Member—\$5,000

Life Patron—\$10,000

Corporate Member—\$500

Corporate Patron—\$1,000

Method of Payment:

Check

VISA

MasterCard

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiration: _____

Signature (required for Credit Card)

Please return completed renewal form with credit card information or a check payable to: **Central Virginia Battlefields Trust**
Mail completed form to: **CVBT, Attn: Membership, PO Box 3417, Fredericksburg, VA 22402**

We do everything we can to make sure your donations go to **“Dirt and Grass”**. To help keep our costs down we rely on you to check your mailing label to see if your membership is due for renewal. If your membership is current, but you know of someone who would like to join CVBT, please pass this membership form on to them.



**CENTRAL VIRGINIA
BATTLEFIELDS TRUST**

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