



BUGLE CALLS, OCTOBER 2020

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

OBITUARY: ED BEARSS

Edwin (Ed) Cole Bearss passed away on September 15, 2020, in Mississippi, where he had recently moved after living over 50 years in Arlington, Virginia. His wife Margie Riddle Bearss and his daughter Sara Beth Bearss predeceased him. He is survived by his brother Robert (Pat) Bearss, his son Edwin Cole Bearss, Jr. (Annika), and his daughter Mary Virginia (Ginny) Bearss, three grandsons, four great grandsons, and two nieces. Ed was born in Billings, Montana, on June 26, 1923, and grew up on his family's ranch on Sarpy Creek. At age 18, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. On January 2, 1944, he was badly wounded in Cape Gloucester, New Britain. He spent two years convalescing in Navy hospitals. Using the GI Bill, Ed graduated from the foreign service program at Georgetown University in 1949 and obtained a master's in history from the University of Indiana in 1955. Ed soon found his calling in the National Park Service. He was park historian at Vicksburg from 1955 to 1958 and then historian for the Southeast Region until 1966. In 1958, he married Margie Riddle, a schoolteacher whom Ed courted in an odd manner: on his second visit to Ms. Riddle, Ed brought her a cannonball! While at Vicksburg, Ed was central to the discovery and raising of the USS Cairo, a Civil War ironclad sunk in the Yazoo River in December 1862. To help finance the recovery effort, Ed was a victorious contestant on "The \$64,000 Challenge." The

vessel now resides in the Vicksburg National Military Park. In 1966, Ed joined other research historians at the headquarters of the National Park Service, responsible for historical sites of the 19th and 20th centuries, including the homes of Presidents Carter and Johnson. By 1981, Ed was named Chief Historian of the NPS, a position he held until 1994. While with NPS, he testified many times before Congress. He also served on the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, established by Congress to guide it on priorities for battlefield preservation. In 1990, Ed achieved national and lasting fame as one of the commentators in Ken Burns' movie The Civil War. By this time, too, Ed had established a new career as teacher, lecturer and tour guide, educating and leading literally thousands of people across battlefields of almost every American war. He continued leading tours until late 2019. Ed leaves two extraordinary legacies. As a public historian, he is the author, editor or contributor of more than 25 books, 100 scholarly papers, countless NPS monographs and oral histories. As a preservationist, he is responsible for the creation, expansion, and restoration of historic battlefields, houses, and other sites integral to American history. For his contributions to the field, Ed was recognized numerous times, including receiving honorary degrees from Lincoln College and Gettysburg College, the Distinguished Service Award from the Department of the Interior, the Wailes Award (the highest historical award from the State of Mississippi), and awards from various Civil War Round Tables. In 2005, the Smithsonian Institution named Ed as one of 35 people "who made a difference: to our world. The National Park Service Edwin C. Bearss Fellowship Award and the American Battlefield trust Edwin C. Bearss Lifetime Achievement Award were established in his honor. He is a Fellow of the Company of Military Historians and a lifetime Trustee of the American Battlefield Trust. At the time of his death, a bipartisan coalition of members of the U.S. Congress had been sponsoring a resolution to award Ed the Congressional Gold Medal. Private inurnment services will be held in the Bethel Baptist Church Cemetery, Brandon, Mississippi. Memorial services will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, his family requests that gifts be made to the American Battlefield Trust for preservation projects in Mississippi. www.battlefields.org/remembering-ed-bearss.

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1. OCTOBER MEETING CANCELLED, as it does not appear to be open to groups.

2. UPCOMING EVENTS:

***CHECK OUT THE CIVIL WAR CONGRESS WEBSITE FOR THE MANY EXCELLENT ZOOM LECTURES.**

"Fridays with Grant" is very good! Many lectures have also been posted on Youtube.

***October Kearney Park Civil War Cancelled!**

***NOVEMBER WEST COAST CWRT CONFERENCE POSTPONED UNTIL NOV. 2021.**

***November 12 Meeting? Illene Iverson, Speaker?**

***December Christmas Party?**

3. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

No message received from Michael Spencer.

4. AFTER ACTION REPORT

BY RON VAUGHAN

The Civil War Zoom lectures via The Civil War Congress have been excellent entertainment, especially during this time of COVID 19 shut down. They are free, but if you wish, a donation may be made. Many lectures are, or soon will be, available on Youtube.

The "Friday's With Grant" lectures by Dr. Curt Fields are excellent. He presents in first person, wearing a general's uniform, inside a tent with a field desk set up like a working headquarters. Dr. Fields is extremely knowledgeable about Grant. The lectures focus less on battle details, and more on what Grant was thinking and his opinions on matters. The Zoom chat feature, enables the listener to ask questions, which Dr. Field will answer. The lectures vary in length, from 30 minutes to an hour, then a similar length of time handling the questions. CWC President Mike Movius does an excellent job in organizing and moderating the lecture series.

5. CIVIL WAR HUMOR

From "The Blue & Gray Laughing"

"A private in our company felt the demoralizing influence of war. One day, he gravely remarked, "I'll tell what, boys, if this war goes on much longer, another Devil will have to be appointed. This old fellow can't attend to all the business that will be on hand."