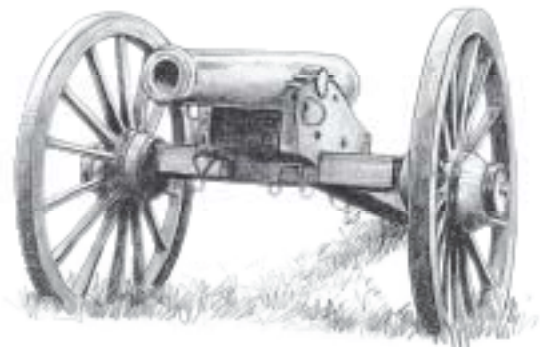


SAVE HISTORIC

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A Few Reflections on 2010

As this last year of the first decade of the 21st Century winds to a close, a few thoughts about that year seem appropriate here. In many ways it seemed like a lot of other years. We've had two work days at Antietam. In spring we planted several hundred trees in the East Woods reforestation project. This was particularly exciting to me because for years as a tour guide I had to wave my hand in that direction and tell people "Imagine this area as wood lot of mature trees interspersed with saplings, and almost no underbrush." In a few years that will not be necessary at all. I like that. It means we're restoring Antietam battlefield so that a returning veteran would recognize the area where they fought. That concept makes me very satisfied with our efforts.

This fall was a bit different experience; we built fence and cleared logs, brush and trees from the historic Piper lane leading from the farmhouse down towards the Middle Bridge. Along this road Confederate artillery deployed to support their comrades in the Sunken Road, later known as the Bloody Lane. As we worked I wondered what those sweating artilleryman thought about as they wrestled their heavy guns into position along the lane, and if any of them took a few moments to rest on the road bank where we sat to catch our breath.

While I think about time spent on the battlefield it reminds me that SHAF lost a good friend and strong supporter this fall. Dr. Joseph L. Harsh, known to many of you as "Joe" spent his boyhood wandering the battlefield. A tribute to him appears elsewhere in this newsletter, but some of my most treasured memories were sitting at the edge of the North Woods before dawn on September 17 just to see exactly when "first light" took place. We wondered what could those soldiers have seen 140-some years ago, and what thoughts crossed their minds and they gathered their belongings and fell in for battle. We will all miss Joe, and those precious musings that came whenever he led a tour. I like to think his spirit now wanders the field along with many of those men who did not live to see another sunrise.

We pursued a few opportunities this year, looking for a project to raise money and improve the battlefield area. Nothing has panned out, which frustrates me in a way, but then I think, how many other battlefields have the problem of no real major threats to the integrity of the site. How lucky we are that so much is already preserved. We have a few thoughts, and we'll let you know if anything comes up.

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available visit
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Our Mission

The mission of SHAF is the preservation and protection of historic sites within the Antietam valley that are related to the Battle of Antietam, the Maryland Campaign, or other Civil War activity in the region. We will accomplish our mission through public education, solicitation of funds, promotion of protective easements and advocacy.

SHAF was incorporated in 1986. It is chartered in Maryland as a non-profit corporation and is exempt from federal tax by Section 501 (c) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax deductible.

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Last, but certainly not least important, Antietam is losing a good friend and benevolent protector, as Superintendent John Howard departs into well-deserved retirement. In the fifteen years that John has run the park almost 60% of the land within the boundary has been acquired in fee or easement. Many walking trails have been established, the Pry House has been turned into a museum, a civilian museum will open soon in the Visitor's Center, restoration of the field, historic houses and other structures have been undertaken. This is only a partial list of John's accomplishments, which he is too modest to promote, but his tenure has been enormously successful. He will be missed. I have attended numerous meetings with John and one of things I will always remember is that he is the only person I know who has to tell you when he is angry. Otherwise you'd never know.

And to look ahead, the new decade will bring us a new Superintendent, unknown at this time. We are sure that there will be many good, qualified people who would like to take over running this wonderful place, and I look forward to announcing who that will be in a future newsletter. Also, it seems like it was yesterday and not 20 years ago that Antietam adopted a new General Management Plan that called for scenic restoration of the battlefield. That plan is now near expiring and a new effort will begin again soon. Rest assured SHAF will play an active role in crafting that new plan, as we did in the current one. People will come and go, but with the help of all of you, and thousands more, the field will remain forever. There is much comfort in recognizing that fact. Happy holidays and stay warm, we'll see you in the spring.

Tom Clemens
President

My Friends,

On December 31, I will be retiring from the National Park Service after 37 years of Service to the American people. It has been my honor and privilege that for 15 of those 37 years I have served as your Superintendent at Antietam. During that time we have done many wonderful things, and I am sure that his progress will continue in the future.

I emphasize the fact that we have done this together, no one person can protect, preserve and interpret a special place like Antietam. We all must work as one to succeed. Over the years I have been blessed with the finest staff in the National Park Service. You can tell from the quality of the work they do, to them this is more than a job. They dedicate their days to remembrance and preservation, and each day they do their respective jobs to the best of their abilities.

Our partners and friends who have supported the Battlefield over the years have given us the strength and will to move forward with landscape restoration and protection of our viewsheds. You, the members of SHAF, have always been there to support us. Another example of all of us working together as one. I thank you for your dedication to this place and for making my job much easier over these years.

When I first joined the National Park Service I never dreamed of becoming a Superintendent, let alone the Superintendent of one of the most important Battlefields in American History. It has been an honor to serve you here, one which I will never forget. I wish you all much success and happiness.

John Howard

SHAF Workday—Piper Farm Lane 11/6/2010



The subject of this newsletter's member profile, Bill Christen, hails from the Midwest, having been born and educated through high school in the Toledo, Ohio area and then moving to Detroit soon after graduation in 1965. There he began working for the Cadillac Motor Car division of General Motors as part of a cooperative education program at General Motors Institute (GMI), now called Kettering University, in Flint, Michigan. Bill graduated from GMI in 1970 with a degree in mechanical engineering and spent a total of thirty-seven years with General Motors. Twenty-nine of those were with Cadillac, where he worked on bumper design, carburetor development, sheet metal design, switches, and electrical wiring; the final eight were spent at the General Motors Tech Institute in Warren, Michigan, a northern suburb of Detroit, where he worked on body structure for smaller cars. He currently lives with his wife, Glenna Jo, in Warren and, since 2002, spends his retirement as a substitute teacher (elementary level) in the local school district.

Bill notes that in the 1980s and early 1990s, he worked part-time on a degree in industrial design (job-related) and fine arts at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit. While a change in his responsibilities at Cadillac required putting the degree pursuit on hold, he did manage to take enough fine arts courses to nurture his desire to be a painter; his medium of choice at the time was oils. He also admits that, while GMI was considered the "West Point" of the automobile industry and he did rise through the ranks at General Motors to the point of having a company car, he had a "George Custer-like grade standing" in his studies that perhaps prevented his rising quickly and far in the company ranks. In looking back, Bill assesses his professional pursuits and personal interests as follows: "It turns out that I was not a real 'car guy,' and while I could take a carburetor apart, I would rather spend time with art or history-related courses."

Bill met his wife in Gettysburg in July 1993 when both were reenactors participating in the 130th anniversary observance of the battle. Bill had been involved in reenacting and black powder shooting since

the late 1970s, and that July he was portraying the colonel of the First Minnesota. Glenna Jo, a Minnesota native, came to Gettysburg with a busload of Minnesota reenactors associated with the Western Brigade, which Bill commanded—and the rest, as they say, is history. The couple married in 1995, and over the past fifteen years they have accumulated a collection of period clothing and photos that they have shared with others by way of their writing, exhibits, and presentations. Their interest in historical interpretation also has led them to work in film; one of their movies, *Antietam: A Documentary*, was produced by Historical Films, Inc. That project brought Bill and Glenna Jo to the battlefield and membership in SHAF.

Bill also states that his ties to the Maryland Campaign of 1862 actually have roots in the 1980s, when he first came to the Antietam area and spent significant time visiting Sharpsburg, Boonsboro, Middletown, Frederick, Hagerstown, Harpers Ferry and the various South Mountain gaps. He did so in order to research the location of a historical marker at Fox's Gap and acquire information for a short history of the Seventeenth Michigan Infantry; the reenactment and North-South Skirmish Association group with which Bill was affiliated then portrayed the Seventeenth. "I can remember open fields from the 1980s that now are filled with housing developments," he says. "I started to immerse myself in the history of the area and the fighting here. While I have no Civil War ancestors I did find a connection to the men of many regiments as I walked among the landscape features that were hardly, if at all, changed. As time progressed I was aware that some changes were unavoidable, but I knew that with careful and competent efforts much of the historical landscape could be preserved."

Among his other pursuits, Bill enjoys writing and some of that has been Civil-War related. For a decade he published *The Watchdog*, a quarterly journal for historical interpreters that dealt with the social and material culture of the Civil War period; the publication was a non-profit whose net proceeds were given to

A Tribute to Dr. Joseph Lee Harsh.

various historic sites, and SHAF always was a beneficiary. Recently he published a biography of the actress and Civil War spy Pauline Cushman, *Pauline Cushman: Spy of the Cumberland* (Roseville, Minnesota: Edinborough Press, 2006). [The book also has a Web site: www.paulinecushman.com] Currently, one of Bill's efforts is an assessment of the actions at Fox's and Turner's Gaps on September 14, 1862. The initial stage in the process involved putting various reports from the Official Records into a chronological framework; now Bill is taking firsthand accounts by soldiers from each side and integrating them into those OR snippets.

In concluding, Bill Christen notes that he and Glenna Jo have three grandchildren who keep them busy and who are the right age to be interested in visiting the places where history happened. They hope to bring those youngsters with them to Antietam in the near future, and the battlefield will be there to welcome them—thanks to the efforts of preservationists past and present, including the Christens and their fellow members of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation.

Dr. Joseph Lee Harsh, author of the famous trilogy *Confederate Tide Rising* (1998), *Taken at the Flood* (1999), and *Sounding the Shallows* (2000), passed away on Monday September 13, 2010. He had retired from George Mason University in 2002 and had been ill for several years. Many of the readers of this newsletter knew Joe through his books; I knew him as a teacher, mentor and friend. It was Joe that helped kindle my interests in Antietam, although I had been study the battle and volunteering there for many years. Joe's passion for history and teaching gained him much attention, many admirers and a host of friends. His wife Trudy chose September 17 as the date for a memorial service for Joe, allowing many of his former students and friends a chance to share their fond memories of Joe with those assembled. His contributions to the understanding of the Maryland Campaign are huge, and will prove a lasting legacy of his scholarship and writing skill. He will be sorely missed.

In addition to these great accomplishments Joe was an avid supporter of battlefield preservation, especially Antietam. Thus it is fitting that we eulogize him in these pages, as his contributions, financial and inspirational, helped advance our cause. In fact, thanks to his wife Trudy, Joe's legacy will provide more tangible benefits to SHAF as Trudy designated SHAF as a recipient of contributions in lieu of flowers to his funeral. Already over \$2,300 has been donated in his honor. More checks arrive weekly. The Board of Directors of SHAF, in conjunction with Trudy, are planning an appropriate use of this money to honor Joe's scholarship, his enthusiasm and his research skill. Plans are still fluid at this time, but we may sponsor a graduate student to perform research related to the Maryland Campaign and share their discoveries at an annual lecture on Sept. 17. This will require the cooperation and authorization of the National Park Service, which may need to wait for a new Superintendent. We will keep you informed of our progress, and if anyone wishes to add to this special fund please note on your check that it is for the Joe Harsh fund.

As always, we thank you for your support and help, and we wish all a happy holiday season.

