



THE RAMROD

North Carolina
Civil War Round Table

March 2018

2018 Programs
March: Ed Yoder

May: TBA

July: Scott Coleman,
Discovering Parrott rifles in
Chester SC

Sept: Mike Hill, NC Civil War
Atlas

**Please e-mail Membership
Secretary Dick Whitaker at
dwbiz53@gmail.com or call him
at 336-293-3980 to make
reservations. Payment of \$10 per
person can be made in cash or
check at the door. Make checks
payable to NCCWRT.**

The NCCWT is dedicated to the study and preservation of the history of the American Civil War. With the exception of January when we meet on the second Saturday, we meet on the third Saturday of these months: March, July, September and November at the K & W Cafeteria (Exit 143 on I-40/85) in Burlington.



**PULITZER
LAUREATE EDWIN
YODER TO SPEAK
AT MARCH 17
MEETING**

The NCCWRT is very fortunate

to have as our next speaker the esteemed journalist Edwin Yoder. A North Carolina native, Mr. Yoder's topic will consider the wave of desecration of Civil War monuments in North Carolina and throughout the South, as well as the attendant renunciation of history that has propelled the vandalism. He has written with eloquent insight about both the actual damage and destruction of the memorials and their virtual obliteration accomplished by removal to sites distant



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from their original location. In a sense, when he appears, Mr. Yoder will be accompanied by another remarkable journalist and academic, Douglas Southall Freeman, whose accounts of the biography of *R. E. Lee* and *Lee's Lieutenants* will further enliven Mr. Yoder's observations.

Mr. Yoder's life has been embossed with diverse distinctions, including his education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was editor of the student newspaper, *The Daily Tar Heel*, and at the University of Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. His distinguished journalistic career began at the *Charlotte News* and continued with editorial assignments at the *Greensboro Daily News* and *Washington Star*. At the *Star* he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for commentary. He next served as both a syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post Writers Group* and as a Professor of Journalism and Humanities at Washington and Lee. His op-ed pieces on a variety of topics, including the fate of Confederate monuments, have adorned the pages of *The News and Observer* for many years.

His work has appeared in many notable magazines, including the *Saturday Review*, *National Review*, *Harper's*,

and the Civil War Book Review. His seven books include *The Night of the Old South Ball*.

Please be sure to join us on March 17 for what is certain to be an extraordinary evening.



President's Column

Frank Ward

ED BEARSS GOES TO CHANCELLORSVILLE

Early this January, several of our members were fortunate enough to be among the throng in Raleigh that heard Ed Bearss recount the harrowing story of his near fatal wounding by machine gun fire when his Marine platoon attacked Japanese pillboxes on the island of New Britain in the Pacific. (Elsewhere in the newsletter is Gene Adcock's vivid account of Ed's

narrative.) The parallel between Ed's own you-are-there experience and his inimitable recitations of Civil War battles was unmistakable. Although I have heard him speak many times since becoming a member of the NCCWRT, I realized that I had never read any of his battalion-sized shelves of books and resolved to remedy the deficit at once.

An easy choice for an introduction was *Fields of Honor – Pivotal Battles of the Civil War*, which consists of transcriptions of sixteen of the tours that Ed has presented on his highly popular battlefield tours, from John Brown's pre-war raid on Harpers Ferry to Appomattox Court House. For me, the selection was obvious: Chancellorsville, which, as Ed remarks, "many scholars believe ... to have been [Lee's] finest offensive battle during the war." I had just finished re-reading Shelby Foote's incantatory, high velocity version, and over

the years, I have also consulted John Bigelow's methodical *Campaign of Chancellorsville* and the comprehensive chronicle of Stephen Sears, as well as the varied versions of Douglas Southall Freeman and Bruce Catton. However, it came as no surprise to me that the telling of Ed Bearss is as unique as the man himself.

Several of his admirers have invoked the shade of Homer in describing Ed's importance in preserving the history of the Civil War, and his attendant feats of mnemonic marvels echo the prodigious memory of the bards who roamed Bronze Age Greece reciting both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Indeed, when Ed rears back and, like blind Homer, closes his eyes, he enters his own theater of memory and imagination. (I concede that the analogy is imperfect; although Homer created the character Stentor, whose voice was as loud as fifty men together, there is no record that the poet

himself was possessed of a Stentorian voice, as Ed Bearss indisputably is.)



But Ed is not an inhabitant of the literary salon. As he himself puts it, "I am a man of the battlefields. . . I served in the United States Marine Corps during World War II and know how a battle feels, sounds, and smells. Frankly, there is nothing like it. Anyone who has ever been there will never forget it." Similarly, no one who has ever heard Ed Bearss, on one of his incomparable battlefield excursions or at the rostrum, will ever forget it either.

The oracular authority James McPherson, who ought to know, describes Ed this way:

[H]is unique style . . . blend[s] on-the-spot descriptions of tactics and terrain,

colorful anecdotes about Civil War personalities both great and obscure, and

an appreciation of the larger strategic and political contexts of specific battles.

. . . [Furthermore, his] style personalizes the generals and politicians and

sergeants and privates who populate his battlefield tours [His accounts]

are the next best thing to being there.

As someone who has followed the Flank March many times and has as frequently walked the field from Hazel Grove to Fairview to the remains of the Chancellor house, if anything, Prof. McPherson understates Ed's ability to create arresting account of any Civil War battle, including that one.

It seems superfluous in a coals-to-Newcastle way to add tributes to those conferred by James McPherson, but I must

convey a few panegyrics of my own, strictly from the perspective of a genuine amateur.

Ed Bearss is always tactically, strategically, and psychologically astute. He is focused and disciplined, with a balanced assessment of both the capabilities and deficiencies of the leaders of the battles that he describes.

His language and tone is reminiscent of the brevity and clarity of battle dispatches. He is calm, restrained, and never excitable, although always enthusiastic. He conveys the self-control and calm command personified by General Jackson at 5:15 on the evening of May 2, 1863, when he instructs Robert Rodes to commence the attack on the XI Corps that is the culmination of the Flank March: "You can go forward then."

Although Ed is capable of conveying the broad sweep of combat exemplified by Stephen Crane's description of the Union Army as "a vast blue demonstration," he

also wields the telling detail. When Lee is angry, Ed captures the restrained aristocratic ire unforgettably: the back of the general's neck reddens, and one of his ears twitches. As Lee ponders an angle of attack, Ed is as economical as the Virginian's perception and decision: Lee hears the thud of axes in the center of the Union line and knows that an attack there would be a mistake. He captures the somber drama that perhaps foretells Jackson's death. After the late May 1 crossroads conference with Lee, Stonewall, perhaps suffering from pneumonia, leans his sword and scabbard against a nearby tree and lies down on the ground to rest. Just before dawn the arms rattle to the ground beneath the tree, and later, Jackson's aides interpret the event as an omen of the doom that awaits their leader at the moment of his greatest triumph. In addition to representing the crushing wave of Jackson's Corps breaking on the hapless

Germans of Howard's XI, Ed memorably notes the frailty of the initial opposition that it encountered; at the point of impact, "the regiments looking west number less than 700 men."

Ed's narrative is suffused with not only his incomparable knowledge of the battles he recounts, but with his personal experience as a Marine. As he tells of the wounds inflicted on Jackson, he cites his own war wounds in the Pacific to convey a convincing understanding of Jackson's terrible initial pain and its subsidence as shock settles in.

Often, Ed also deploys a droll sangfroid in vignettes that serve as a counterpoint to the chaotic swirl of battle. As the fighting reaches a crescendo on May 3, Ed describes the well-known incident when Joe Hooker is knocked senseless by a cannonball striking the porch column against which the general is leaning. He then

adds the detail that Fighting – now unconscious Joe – is moved from the Chancellorsville porch, then moved again to a different area of ground. Almost at once, a round explodes on the spot where Hooker had first been laid. As Ed notes, had Hooker's aides not moved him the second time, "that would have been the end of Hooker."

Similarly, in an unsentimental, matter-of-fact tone, Ed describes the death of Hooker's friend Hiram Berry: "General Berry crosses the turnpike to check on the fight for Fairview and is shot by a Confederate sharpshooter. That is the end of Hiram Berry."

Ed concludes his narrative, not in a sense of unqualified celebration as "Lee's finest offensive battle of the war," but with a sober reckoning of the butcher's bill"; because of the catastrophic loss of his "good right arm" when Jackson is mortally

wounded, "If Chancellorsville was Lee's masterpiece, it was a costly one." And again, at Lee's moment of triumph, a reminder of the war's inexorable vicissitudes. At 10:30 on May 3, as "the last Yankees leave Chancellorsville and the burning tavern," Lee enters the clearing to the cheers of his veterans. "But the supreme moment of his life as a soldier is interrupted and marred by bad news from Fredericksburg," where the Union has broken through Jubal Early's thin lines and driven the Confederates from Marye's Heights. Glory might be fleeting, but the pleasure of the narratives of Ed Bearss abides.

Treasurer's Report

Feb 2018 NCCWRT Financials	
Opening balance	\$7,557.68
Income	
Dues	\$90.00
Outgo	
K &W Tip (cash)	
K &W Fee	
Speaker Fee	\$100.00
Ending Balance	\$7,547.68

Joint Meeting
North Carolina Civil War
Roundtable
Raleigh Civil War Roundtable
Minutes of the Meeting
January 6, 2018

Welcome

Ted Kunstling, President of the Raleigh Civil War Roundtable welcomed members of the North Carolina Civil War Roundtable and New Bern Civil War Round Table to the joint meeting at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh.

Introductions

Special guests and visitors were welcomed and introduced.

Presentation of the T. Henry Gatton

Award

Ted Kunstling on behalf of the RCWRT announced the selection of the person to be awarded the T. Henry Gatton Award. The 2018 recipient is Randy Sauls. Ed Bearss was the first recipient of the award in 2008.

Remarks

Frank Ward, President of the North Carolina Civil War Round Table was introduced and provided a brief history of the NCCWRT. He recognized the efforts of Ted Kunstling and Gene Adcock in the organization of the joint meetings between the NCCWRT and the RCWRT.

Program

Dave Waller, Program Chair, introduced our guest speaker, Ed Bearss. Ed is one of the most respected Civil War scholars. Did a Union Surgeon save Ed Bearss' Life? That was the question asked of Ed and he spent some time answering that question by talking about his own experience while serving in WWII. Ed's day with destiny was on January 2, 1944 when he was shot four times. He has a special appreciation for the advances made in medicine from the Civil War with Dr. Jonathan Letterman's ideas and changes to present day medicine.

Ed shared his own experience. He talked of his squad and the fateful amphibious assault including the squad members whose lives were lost and those who were wounded and survived. He described how his wounds were tended to and the medical care he received. Ed compared his medical care to

the care he would have received during the Civil War.

With the innovative and progressive medical care proposed by Major Jonathan Letterman, more lives were saved. Major Letterman developed the field dressing station and field hospital with both being supported by an ambulance corps. A "third tier" was the large, more distant hospital where convalescent care could begin. More wounded men could be evacuated from the battlefield faster.

To conclude his presentation, Ed answered the question posed to him by saying that the medical care introduced by Major Letterman did indeed save his life.

The meeting was adjourned.

Did A Union Surgeon Save Ed Bearss' Life?

I asked our quintessential guest speaker at the combined meeting of NCCWRT and RCWRT held at the NC Museum of History a rhetorical question: “Did A Union Surgeon Save Ed Bearss Life?” Ed concluded his riveting presentation with an emphatic, “Yes!”

In his inimitable style, Ed reminded his audience of several facts of which most of us were totally unaware. What follows is a series of stories that Ed told about people, events and times.

First, his grandson, Andrew Olmstead, was in the audience. It was the

first public presentation that Andrew had ever heard his famous grandfather give! Second, Ed said that only in the last 20 years has he been able to talk about his extraordinary automatic-fire wounding on January 2, 1944. Ed's Marine Corps 2nd platoon was caught in a 2-machine gun crossfire. Different machine guns produce very different rates of fire power and cause very different injuries. Ed was wounded four times by the relatively “slower” firing machine gun and hence, his wounds were limited to three extremities (and his buttocks!). He could see the tracer rounds moving from his left to right only inches above his head.

Next, each platoon had a skirmish line established within feet of the enemy. On command, they opened fire on the enemy. In Ed's squad, each man was 5-8 feet apart. He hears the anguished cries of the wounded but mostly they come from the

men in the rear. The mortally wounded make no sound. “Reynolds, Hughes, Speed, and McMillan die instantly. Sackstesler eventually succumbs. These were my friends and comrades. I say their names every time I talk about war in the Pacific Theater.”

Fourth, “Would I have survived these wounds in the Civil War? Not likely--- almost any one would have been fatal. I survived and my wounds changed my life and made me more successful than I would have been otherwise”.

Last, as the audience filed out, the question repeated again and again was “*Has anyone here ever heard a World War II veteran tell his story of survival*”?

Special Events

Appomattox Court House National Historical Park

153rd Anniversary of the Surrender

April 6, 2018 - April 12, 2018

(All programs start in the Visitor Center lobby unless otherwise noted)

Friday April 6, 2018

10:20 a.m. *Two Rivers, Two Railroads, and a Highway: The Appomattox Campaign* by Albert Carter

11:20 a.m. *Five Forks, the fall of Petersburg and Richmond* by Chris Bingham

12:20 p.m. *Prelude to Appomattox: Sailor's Creek, High Bridge and Cumberland Church* by Chris Calkins

1:20 p.m. *The Appomattox Campaign* by Alyssa Holland

2:20 p.m. *The Battles of Appomattox Station and Appomattox Court House* by

Patrick Schroeder (In Visitor Center Theater)

3:20 p.m. *Village Tour* by Albert Carter

5:00 p.m. *A Visit to Old Appomattox with George Peers* by Patrick Schroeder (a first-person living history program)

7:00 p.m. *The Hannah Reynolds Story* by Wolfbane Productions (in front of the Kelley House)

Saturday April 7, 2018

9:30 a.m. Tactical Demonstration (Meeks Field)

10:20 a.m. The Battles of Appomattox Station and Appomattox Court House by Patrick Schroeder (In Visitor Center Theater)

10:30 a.m. Reading the Names of the Emancipated (McLean Field)

10:50 a.m. *Lee and Grant Photo Op* with Thomas Jesse and Curt Fields (McLean House)

11:20 a.m. Two Rivers, Two Railroads and a Highway: The Appomattox Campaign by Albert Carter

11:50 a.m. Confederate Firing Demonstration (Meeks Field)

12:20 p.m. Coleman site Archeology by Archeologist Dr. Kevin Fogle (In Visitor Center Theater)

12:50 p.m. Cavalry and Artillery Demonstration (Meeks Field)

1:20 p.m. *Lee and Grant Photo Op* with Thomas Jesse/Curt Fields (McLean House)

1:30 p.m. Reading the Names of the Emancipated (McLean Field)

1:50 p.m. Salute at Appomattox by Bob Swift

2:20 p.m. *Paroles and the Oath of Allegiance* by Patrick Schroeder (Clover Hill Tavern)

2:50 p.m. Stacking of Arms (on stage road east of the Courthouse)

3:20 p.m. *Lt. Gen. U. S. Grant, the Last 48 Hours* by Curt Fields (Union Camp near McLean House)

3:50 p.m. Federal Firing Demonstration (Meeks' Field)

4:20 p.m. Two Rivers, Two Railroads and a Highway: The Appomattox Campaign by Albert Carter

5:20 p.m. *A Visit to Old Appomattox with George Peers* by Patrick Schroeder (a first-person living history program)

7:00 p.m. *The Hannah Reynolds Story* by Wolfbane Productions (in front of the Kelley House)

8:00 p.m. Reading the Names of the Emancipated (McLean Field)

Luminaries (4,600) through the village and choir music by the Diamond Hill Soulsters (choir on McLean porch)

* All day: *Parole Printing Demonstrations* (inside Clover Hill Tavern)

Sunday, April 8, 2018

- 9:50 a.m. *The Appomattox Campaign*
by Alyssa Holland
- 10:20 a.m. Infantry Demonstration (Meeks
Field)
- 10:50 a.m. *The Last Salute* by Bob Swift
- 11:00 a.m. Cavalry and Artillery
Demonstration (Meeks Field)
- 11:20 a.m. *Lee and Grant Photo op* with
Curt Fields/Thomas Jesse
(McLean House)
- 11:50 a.m. *Lt. Gen. U. S. Grant, the Last
48 Hours* by Curt Fields (Union
Camp near McLean House)
- 12:20 p.m. U. S. Colored Troops at
Appomattox by Chris Bingham
- 12:50 p.m. Stacking of Arms (on stage
road east of the Courthouse)
- 1:20 p.m. Two Rivers, Two Railroads,
and a Highway: The
Appomattox Campaign by
Albert Carter
- 1:50 p.m. Paroles and the Oath of
Allegiance by Patrick
Schroeder (Clover Hill Tavern)
- 2:20 p.m. *The Army of Northern Virginia
at Appomattox* by Chris
Bingham

- 3:00 p.m. Lee departs from the McLean
House as the surrender meeting
concludes
- 3:30 p.m. *Going Home: The Confederate
Soldier Experience* by Ernie
Price
- 4:00 p.m. *The Battle of Appomattox
Station* by Patrick Schroeder
(on site at **Appomattox
Station Battlefield**)
- * All day: *Parole Printing
Demonstrations* (inside Clover
Hill Tavern)

Monday, April 9, 2018

- 9:20 a.m. *Battle of Appomattox Court
House* walking talk/tour with
Patrick Schroeder
- 10:20 a.m. *A Warrior in Two Camps: Ely
Parker* by David Wooldridge
- 11:20 a.m. *Village Tour* by Albert Carter
- 12:20 p.m. *Lt. Gen. U. S. Grant, the Last
48 Hours* by Curt Fields (near
McLean House)
- 1:20 p.m. *Leadership and the Surrender*
by Ernie Price
- 2:20 p.m. *Surrender and Commissioners
Meeting* by Chris Bingham
- 3:20 p.m. *Going Home: The
Confederate Soldier
Experience* by Ernie Price

* All day: *Parole Printing Demonstrations* (inside Clover Hill Tavern)

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

10:20 a.m. *Two Rivers, Two Railroads, and a Highway: The Appomattox Campaign* by Albert Carter

11:20 a.m. *Emancipation: The End of Slavery in Appomattox* by David Wooldridge

12:20 p.m. *Historian's Museum Objects Program* by Patrick Schroeder (In Visitor Center Theater)

1:20 p.m. *The Surrender and Commissioners Meeting* by Brandon Chamberlain

2:20 p.m. *The Last Salute* by Bob Swift

3:20 p.m. *The Printing of Paroles* by Robert Moeller

* All day: *Parole Printing Demonstrations* (inside Clover Hill Tavern)

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

10:20 a.m. *The Appomattox Campaign* by Alyssa Holland

11:20 p.m. *The Last Salute* by Bob Swift

12:20 p.m. *Going Home: The Confederate Soldier Experience* by Ernie Price

1:20 p.m. *The Surrender and Commissioners Meeting* by Brandon Chamberlain

2:20 p.m. *Historian's Museum Objects Program* by Patrick Schroeder (in Visitor Center Theater)

3:20 p.m. *The Printing of Paroles* by Robert Moeller

* All day: *Parole Printing Demonstrations* (inside Clover Hill Tavern)

Thursday, April 12, 2018

10:20 a.m. *Two Rivers, Two Railroads, and a Highway: The Appomattox Campaign* by Albert Carter

11:20 p.m. *Surrenders After Appomattox* by Chris Bingham

12:20 p.m. *Joshua Chamberlain and the Stacking of Arms* by Patrick Schroeder

1:20 p.m. *The Appomattox Campaign* by Alyssa Holland

2:20 p.m. *U. S. Colored Troops at Appomattox* by Chris Bingham

3:20 p.m. *Village Tour* by Albert Carter

* All day: *Parole Printing Demonstrations* (inside Clover Hill Tavern)