

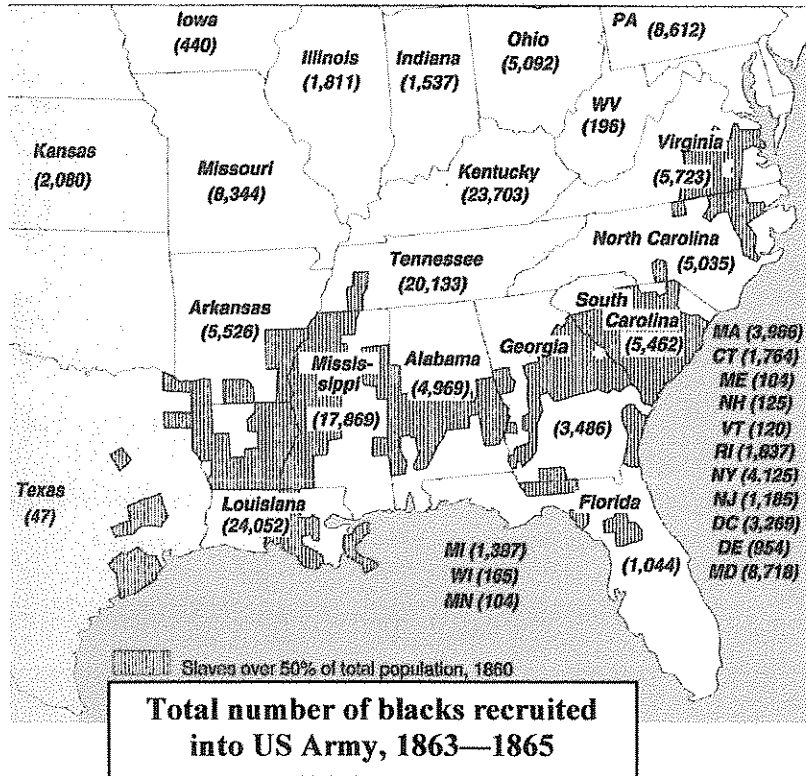
# THE CHARGER

October, 2000

381 Meeting

Vol.22 #2

## African-Americans in the Civil War



Tonight's speaker:

**Noah Andre Trudeau**

### “Like Men of War, Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862—1865”

His book is a major edition to Civil War literature even though Mr. Trudeau found it difficult to research this book as most of the African-Americans who wore Union blue were ex-slaves, most who could not read or write.

Other books by Noah Andre Trudeau:

- Bloody Roads South: Wilderness to Cold Harbor*
- The Last Citadel: Petersburg, Virginia*
- Out of the Storm: The End of the Civil War*

Any study of black troops in the Civil War must grapple with the confusing evolution of the naming conventions used to designate their units. At first, the cognomen followed the pattern applied to white regiments, with one significant addition. As each regiment was organized, it joined the service with a state name and number. Yet from the very beginning, African American units were seen as "different," so nearly every one entering the rolls bore an additional qualifier, either "A.D." (African Descent) or colored." Starting late in "1863, the U.S. War Department changed all this, redesignating most of the black units already in service as "United States Colored Troops,\*" or USCT.

*Noah Andre Trudeau*

**Date:** Wednesday, October 11, 2000

**Place:** The Cleveland  
Playhouse Club  
8501 Carnegie Ave.

**Time:** Drinks 6 PM  
Dinner 6:30 PM

**Reservations:** Please Call  
JAC Communications  
at (216) 861-5588  
(plus your meal choice)

About the

## ***Cleveland Civil War Roundtable***

The 127 men and women of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable reflect the ethnic, racial, and religious diversity of Greater Cleveland. Members range in age from 17 to 94 years old. The common bond is the belief that the American Civil War was the *defining* event in United States history.

Dinner meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May. The Roundtable meets at a private club of the Cleveland Playhouse 8501 Carnegie Ave. near the Cleveland Clinic.

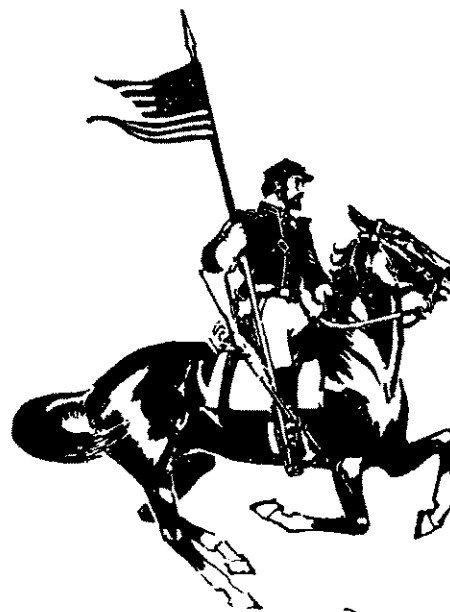
Dinner is \$20.00. Club dues are \$40.00 per year.

Membership information can be obtained from  
Dick Crews, daytime phone (800) 800-8310.

2000/2001 Dues: Cleveland CWRT  
c/o Bill Doty  
30460 Adams Lane  
Westlake, Ohio 44145

### **Cleveland Civil War Roundtable Presidents**

2000 Bob Boyda	1978 Richard McCrae
1999 Dick Crews	1977 James Chapman
1998 John Moore	1976 Milton Holmes
1997 Dan Zeiser	1975 Thomas Gretter
1996 John Sntula	1974 Nolan Heidelbaugh
1995 Norton London	1973 Arthur Jordan
1994 Robert E. Battisti	1972 Bernard Drews
1993 Kevin Callahan	1971 Kenneth Callahan
1992 Bob Baucher	1970 Frank Schuhle
1991 Joe Tirpak	1969 Donald Heckaman
1990 Ken Callahan Jr.	1968 Frank Moran
1989 Neil Glaser	1967 William Schlesinger
1988 Martin Graham	1966 Donald Hamill
1987 George Vourlojianis	1965 Lester L. Swift
1986 Tim Beatty	1964 Guy DiCarlo, Jr.
1985 Brian Kowell	1963 Paul Guenther
1984 Neil Evans	1962 Edward Downer
1983 William Victory	1961 Charles Clarke
1982 John Harkness	1960 Howard Preston
1981 Thomas Geschke	1959 John Cullen, Jr.
1980 Charles Spiegle	1958 George Farr, Jr.
1979 William Bates	1957 Kenneth Grant



# **CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE**

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE  
PO BOX 18900 CLEVELAND, OH 44118

(800)800-8310

Email: [RCrews5369@aol.com](mailto:RCrews5369@aol.com)

Web site: <http://members.aol.com/RCrews5369>

*President: William Vodrey*  
*Vice President: Bill McGrath*  
*Secretary: Lou Braman*  
*Treasurer: Bill Doty*

Executive Committee:

**Manard Bauer**  
**Bob Boyda**  
**Dick Crews**  
**Ty Somersfield**  
**Dale Thomas**  
**Dan Zeiser**

**CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE  
2000/2001 SCHEDULE**

*September 13, 2000*



The Novelist  
as Historian

**Shelby Foote**

*October 11, 2000*



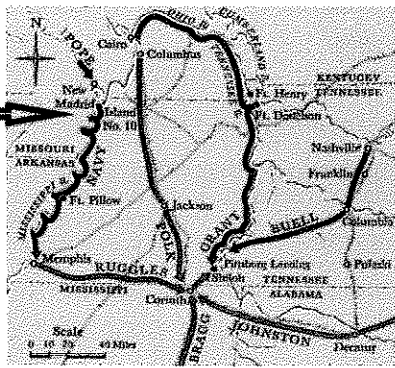
African-American  
Troops in the  
Civil War

**Noah Andre Trudeau**

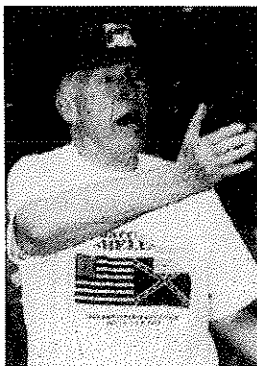
*November 8, 2000*

Island No.  
10

**Brian  
Kowell**



*December 6, 2000*



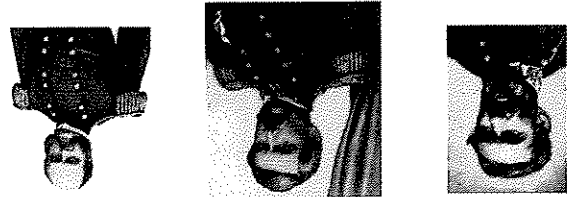
The Battle of Shiloh

**Ed Bearss**

*January 10, 2001*

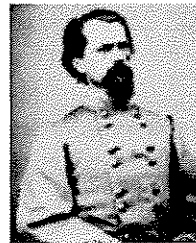
The Great Debate:  
*The absolutely worst general of the War*

Moderator: Dick Crews



(Some good candidates from a long list of prospects)

*February 14, 2001*



Gen. John B. Gordon

*Warrior & Survivor*

**Bob Boyda**

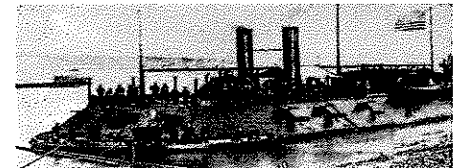
*March 14, 2001*



The Life  
of the Common Soldier

**The 51st Ohio Volunteer  
Infantry, Co. B**

*April 11, 2001*



"Infernal Machines"  
and the sinking of the USS Cairo

**Bill McGrath**

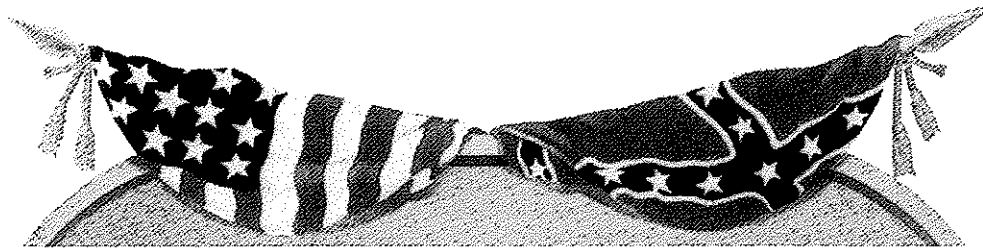
*May 9, 2001*



An Evening  
with General  
William T. Sherman

**E. Chris Evans**

Membership in the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable is open to everyone with an interest in the American Civil War and its period in United States history. Call (800) 800-8310, email: [rcrews5369@aol.com](mailto:rcrews5369@aol.com), or visit our web site <http://members.aol.com/rcrews5369>.



## Civil War flag controversy breaks out again

Following the Civil War flag controversy at the South Carolina capital a new flag dispute has started between Virginia and Minnesota.

During Pickett's charge, the futile and final Confederate assault of the Battle of Gettysburg, a bloodied and battered flag from a decimated Virginia infantry group was seized by a private from Minnesota, who claimed the trophy as a spoil of war. One hundred and thirty seven years later, Virginians are mounting another charge, albeit a far more civil one, to get the flag back.

Spurred by the fervor of a reenactors group in Roanoke, a group of senators from southwestern Virginia has put forth a resolution asking Minnesota to return the flag to its southern home. "It's a matter of pride," said Senator John S. Edwards (D-Roanoke), one of the sponsors of the resolution. *(Editor: Pride? They had it taken away from them in battle, where is the pride in that?)* Minnesota has refused to return the flag.

Officials in Minnesota say they need the flag for the same reason Virginia wants it: Because it is an important reminder of their state's role in the Civil War. Is it more important to Virginia than Minnesota? "I don't think so," said Ian Stewart, deputy director of the Minnesota Historical Society, which has the flag. "Unless there's a compelling legal reason to return it, we are not inclined to do so."

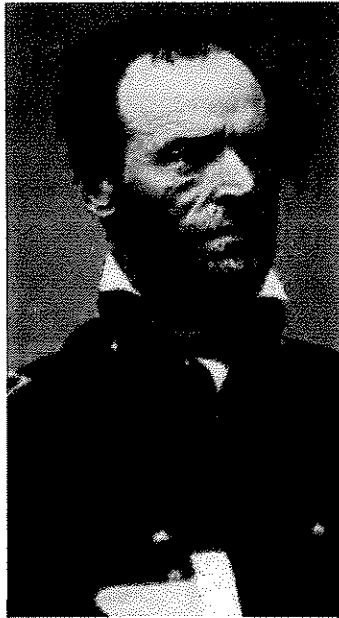
Reprinted from the Hagerstown, Maryland CWRT newsletter, *THE BUGLE CALL*.

*Read the story of the **First Minnesota** at Gettysburg and this idea of returning the flag will make you angry.*

*Dick Crews*

# The Most Overrated General

By Dan Zeiser



William Tecumseh Sherman  
*Overrated?*

Yes, I'm from Ohio. And yes, I love to point out the great accomplishments of fellow Buckeyes. And there is no doubt that he was a key player in the Civil War – one that we Buckeyes love to point to as a primary reason the North won the war. (Heck, I've even been to his childhood home in Lancaster. It is well worth the visit.) But William Tecumseh Sherman may just be the most overrated general who fought in the war.

For the first three years of the war, Sherman's contribution to the Northern war effort was minimal at best, negative at worst. He accomplished little and almost ruined his career. Commander of Union forces in Kentucky in 1861, Sherman was to coordinate an invasion of east Tennessee with efforts by local Unionists. In November of 1861, word of a Federal invasion reached Union partisans in east Tennessee. They went into action, burning railroad bridges and ambushing Confederates outposts while waiting for the Yankees to come. But they did not – solely because of Sherman. Concerned about a buildup of Southern forces in central Kentucky, he called off the invasion. Sherman's inflated estimates of Confederate strength and comments he made to reporters caused newspapers to call him insane. The administration relieved him of command and transferred him to an obscure post in Missouri. He grew despondent and suffered from depression. His career was saved by his friendship with Ulysses S. Grant.

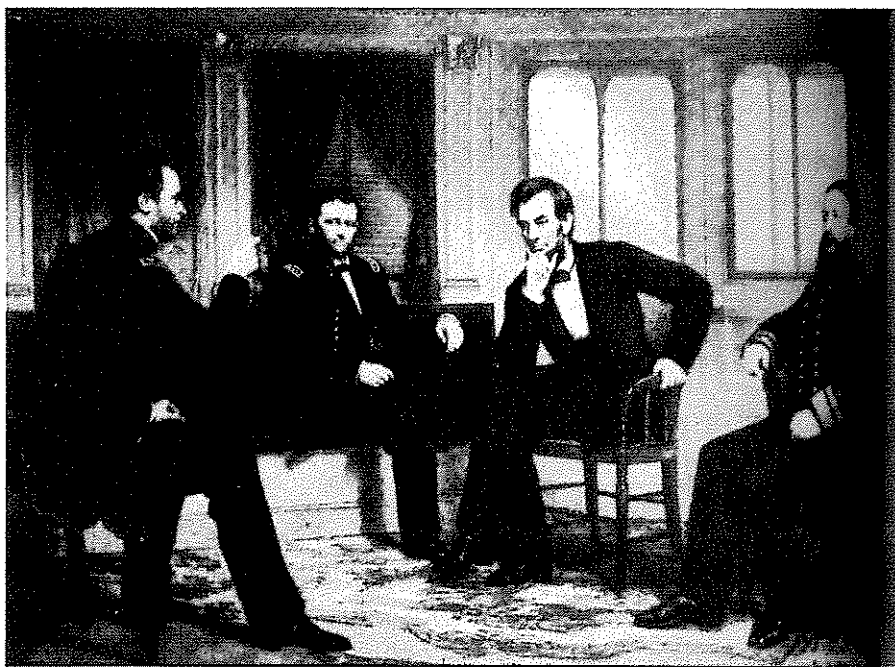
At Shiloh in April of 1862, Grant restored Sherman to command of a division. Here he again failed. When Albert Sidney Johnston attacked Grant's army on April 6, Sherman was completely unprepared. Overconfident, he had dismissed reports for some of his front-line colonels concerning increased noise and activity to the south. To one colonel who talked nervously about thousands of rebels nearby, Sherman reportedly said: "Take your damned regiment back to Ohio. Beauregard is not such a fool as to leave his base of operations and attack us in ours." Hours later, he would be proved wrong. Because Sherman commanded one of the two divisions that would receive the first blows from the Confederates, his unpreparedness almost led to a Union defeat.

Later that year, in December, Sherman had what might be considered his first independent combat command. As part of one of Grant's failed Vicksburg campaigns, Sherman led over 30,000 troops up the Yazoo river north of Vicksburg to assault the Confederate defenses overlooking Chickasau Bayou. On December 29, the assault occurred. The 14,000 defenders repulsed Sherman's men with ease. He suffered 1,800 casualties to the Confederates 200.

Following the capture of Vicksburg, Sherman took part in the Union effort to raise the siege of Chattanooga. Grant was in overall charge of the campaign and placed Sherman in command of his left wing. While the remainder of Grant's army was to hold Bragg's Southerners in place, Sherman was to sweep down Missionary Ridge, securing victory for Grant. In other words, Grant was giving his friend the chance to be the hero. The results were far from ideal. Sherman took longer than planned to get into place to attack. When he finally did, his

corps was held in check by Cleburne's division. This necessitated a frontal assault on the ridge by George Thomas's Army of the Cumberland. The Cumberlanders charged the ridge and took it, securing the victory.

Of course, Sherman is best known for his capture of Atlanta and his march to the sea. Neither of these, while of political worth, held great military value. As Lincoln argued for years, the primary goal of a general should be to destroy the enemy. The capture of



March 27, 1865, Sherman meets with Grant, Lincoln, and Porter aboard the River Queen.

territory is meaningless so long as enemy forces are available to fight. On the other hand, destroy the enemy and you cannot be impeded from capturing its territory at your leisure. At the beginning of 1864, Sherman once again was placed in command because of his friendship with Grant. He had done little militarily to earn it. Grant's plan was for him to attack and destroy Lee in Virginia, while Sherman did the same with Johnston in Georgia. Unable to do so, Sherman settled for the capture of Atlanta. His primary goal, the Army of the Tennessee, still remained a formidable fighting force until destroyed by Thomas at Nashville. To top it all off, Sherman afterward convinced Grant to allow him to turn his back on the Confederates, now commanded by Hood, and march in the opposite direction!

Sherman's march to the sea and through the Carolinas was spectacular, but did nothing to change the outcome of the war. By the time he reached Savannah, Hood's Army of the Tennessee was destroyed, leaving Lee's Army of Northern Virginia as the only remaining effective fighting force for the Confederacy. It was already defeated, wasting away in the trenches of Petersburg. The South's defeat was only a matter of time.

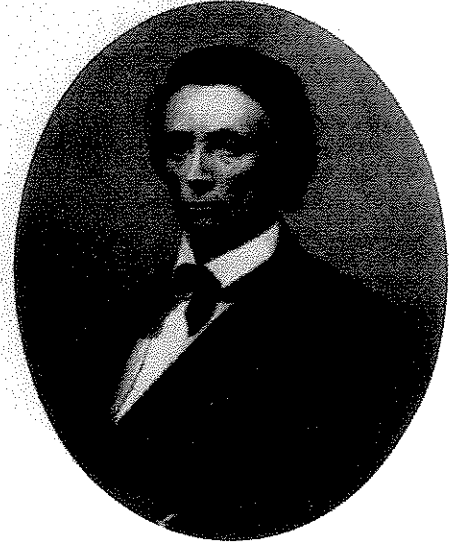
There is no question Sherman was an interesting man, perhaps the most interesting general of the war. He is also the most overrated general of the war. He never won an offensive battle during his career, preferring instead to conduct raids directed against the enemy's communications and civilian population. His most noted achievements, the capture of Atlanta and the march to the sea had no military value. Unquestionably, there was great political value to the former. With Lincoln's political fortunes waning because of the lack of military success, capturing Atlanta helped win reelection for Lincoln. However, Sheridan's success in the Shenandoah Valley and Farragut's capture of Mobile may have been enough to do the job. It will forever be subject to debate that Lincoln would have been returned without Sherman's contribution. Analyzing his contribution from a strictly military point of view, Sherman contributed little, if anything, to the North's war effort. He was, without a doubt, the most overrated general of the Civil War.

*Dan Zeiser*

# The Civil War's #1 Pain in the Butt?

## *The Life of Parson Brownlow*

By Dick Crews



William G. Brownlow, civil war editor and preacher was called by everyone *Parson Brownlow*. He was the editor/owner of the Knoxville, Tennessee newspaper, *The Knoxville Whig* and a circuit rider for the Methodist Church. He is best known as a southerner who strongly opposed secession from the United States and was scheduled to hang for his attitude.

He had a long list of enemies as he savagely attacked groups he did not like. On the top of his list were Mormons, Baptists, and secessionists.

His enemies did not take this abuse sitting down. Brownlow was threatened, sued, beaten up, shot at (and hit once), hanged in effigy, indicted, imprisoned, and exiled. Not only did this not silence him but gave more ammunition for his savaged broadsides.

About the **Mormons** he wrote: "If President James Buchanan would send an army to Utah, and exterminate the entire Mormon race, we will declare in favor of his administration."

On witnessing a **Baptist** foot washing ritual: "Never did I, before or since, see as many big dirty feet, washed in one large pewter basin full of water."

On Isham G. Harris, **secessionist Governor of Tennessee**: "His complexion is shallow—his eyes are dark and penetrating—a perfect index to the heart of a traitor—with the scowl and frown of a demon resting upon his brow. The study of mischief, and the practice of crime, have brought upon him premature baldness and a grey beard...He chews tobacco rapidly, and is inordinately fond of liquor."

Dick Crews is editor of the Cleveland CWRT's newsletter **THE CHARGER**.

The confederates arrested Brownlow and scheduled a hanging for his treason. On second thought the confederates did not want to make Brownlow into a martyr so they took him to the Union lines and dumped him.



A 1861 Southern Vigilance Committee in Memphis, Tennessee reviewing the local newspapers for disloyalty.

Parson Brownlow was a hero in the North and immediately went on a speaking tour. He also rushed into print a book with his articles against the confederate government. Even though a very disjointed book, it sold 100,000 copies. The Parson also removed from the book nasty articles he had written about Lincoln, northern members of Congress, and a dozen religions including Roman Catholic.

After the Union army took back Knoxville, The Parson returned home to start printing his newspaper again. Following the war the people of Tennessee who could vote, ones who took the loyalty oath, made William G. Brownlow Governor of Tennessee.

By most accounts he was not a good governor. In 1982, a group of Tennessee historians named Parson Brownlow as the **worst** governor in the State's history. Ranking him below Ray Blanton, a 1964 Governor who was sent to prison for selling State liquor licenses.

Clearly William B. "Parson" Brownlow should win the award for the *Civil War #1 Pain the Butt*. I am sure Jefferson Davis would agree. However, if courage is the measure, *The Parson* stacks up well. Faced with execution he spit in the eye of a confederate general asking him to sign a loyalty oath to the Confederacy.

After all is said, Parson Brownlow is one of the people who make the Civil War so interesting to study.

*Dick Crews*



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



My thanks to everyone for their cooperation and hard work in making Shelby Foote's visit go as smoothly as it did. We're all indebted to Dr. Kenneth R. Callahan, Mr. Evan Corns and an anonymous Roundtable member for their generosity in helping to bring Mr. Foote to Cleveland. Coordinating the event with the Western Reserve Historical Society gave me more than a few headaches, it's true, but I hope everyone had a good time, and I'm glad that Foote was so well-received.

Many people have since asked me about Mr. Foote and my time with him. What you see is what you get. What you saw in the Ken Burns series "The Civil War," and what you saw in the Norton Room at the WRHS museum, is pure Shelby Foote - no more and no less. He is a Southern gentlemen of the old school; soft-spoken, friendly, knowledgeable, and courtly. He asked if I minded if he smoked his pipe in the car - who was I to deny him a puff on his pipe? He is, as it happens, a stalwart Democrat. He's known Al Gore for years and regularly talks with him, most recently in late August; Gore even has a dog named Shiloh. Foote knows George W. Bush, too, and was Bush's guest at a Texas Rangers baseball game a few years ago. Foote remembers that Bush reacted with displeasure to his referring to George Will's views on baseball (apparently, the Bush family still hasn't forgiven Will for his perceived disrespect to then Vice President Bush, over a dozen years ago.)

Foote has a 100,000-word draft novel which he began before writing "The Civil War: A Narrative," but put it aside while writing the trilogy. The novel, entitled "Two Gates to the City," has been sitting in his desk drawer for decades; he later tried to revise it but has given up. "I'm not the same man now that I was when I started writing it," Foote said, and he intends to burn it rather than let it be published posthumously by his family or his publisher. I was horrified to learn that any Foote novel - even one he's not completely satisfied with now - would be destroyed before it ever saw the light of day, but Foote was adamant that it would never be published.

As many of you know, Foote has a personal policy against signing autographs. When we arrived at the Glidden House, two men I'd never seen before were there with clip boards and books. Foote gently declined, explaining that he signs books only for family or close friends but not for people he doesn't know. That's just his policy. At the museum, he told a particularly insistent autograph hound, "I'm sorry, I just think that's foolishness. There are authors across the country, sitting in bookstores signing their own books, when they really ought to be at home writing!"

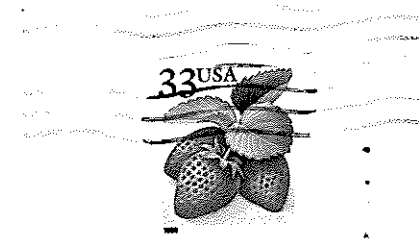
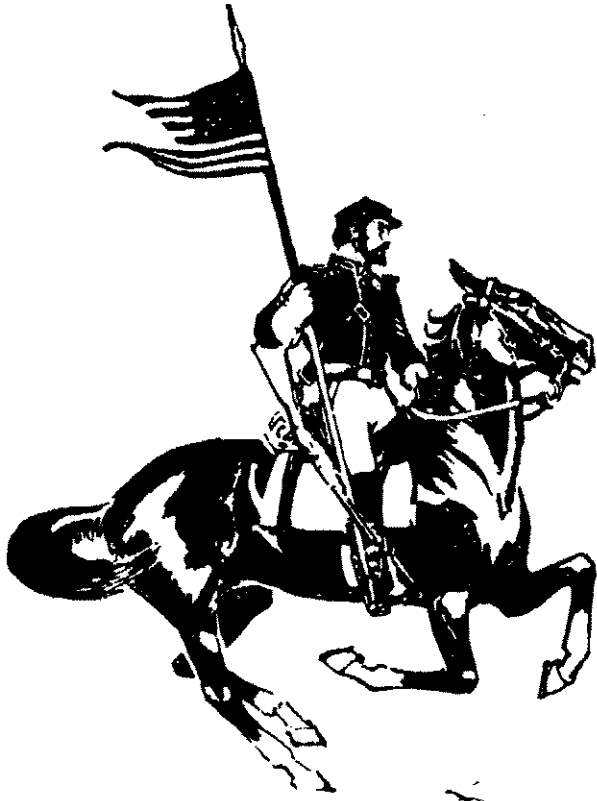
Foote was asked to speak a few years ago at the commissioning ceremony for the guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam. He was given a tour of the ship and said afterward, "whoever takes on the U.S. Navy has got to be out of their minds."

Foote is a renaissance man, able to talk with equal ease about Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, Stonewall Jackson, or Bill Clinton. I was delighted to have him visit, and very sorry to see him leave. The last thing he said to me at the airport was, "you've all been awfully kind to me. Please give my best to everyone in the Roundtable."

Our speaker for Wednesday, October 11 is another author and historian, Noah Andre Trudeau. Please be sure to call J.A.C. Communications in plenty of time to make your dinner reservations.

*William Vodrey*

President, CCWRT



Dale Thomas  
23971 Mastick Road  
No Olmsted, OH 44070

Cleveland Civil War Roundtable PO Box 18900 Cleveland, OH 44118

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## LIKE MEN OF WAR

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**BLACK TROOPS**  
IN THE CIVIL WAR  
**1862-1865**

**Noah Andre Trudeau**

**Wednesday**  
**October 11, 2000**