

The Charger

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. Box 444, Vermilion, Ohio 44089

APRIL 1984

233rd Meeting

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 3

DATE: APRIL 10

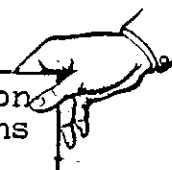
PLACE: THE HERMIT CLUB

SPEAKER: TIM MORAN

SUBJECT: "THE STRUGGLE FOR THE MISSISSIPPI-
A NAVAL VIEW"

TIME: PRELIMINARIES 6:00 P.M. Dinner 7:00 P.M.

For reservation
call Neil Evans
at 621-0150



YOU are in the act!

Members present at this meeting will imagine they are in Washington, D. C. and that they are U.S. Congressmen, circa 1863.

The speaker, Tim Moran, will play the part of a Naval Aide to President Lincoln.

Lt. Cmdr. Moran will report to the Congress on the Naval Campaign on the Mississippi River, from

the fall of New Orleans and Island #10 to the fall of Vicksburg.

* * * * *

Tim Moran has been a member of the Cleveland Civil War Round Table for many years. He graduated from Baldwin Wallace College in 1974, a history major, and a member of Phi Alpha Theta, an honorary scholastic fraternity. He has instructed students at Cuyahoga Community College in naval history, and has served the Club as Treasurer and Quizmaster. Tim is the son of Frank Moran, Past President (1967-68).

Sounds like a most interesting evening!

* * * * *

1957 CLEVELAND 1984



CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

President Neil Evans
Vice Pres. Brian Kowell
Secretary Tim Beatty
Treasurer George Vourlojianis
Sgt.-at-Arms Jack Allison
Executive Committeemen:
Tom Van Sickle
Ray Channock
Editor and Illustrator of
The Charger Stu Cramer...
Assistant Editor Hazel
Cramer
Editorial Office: P.O. Ex
444, Vermilion, Ohio 44089
216-967-5971
Dues: \$20 Sept. to Sept.—
Non-resident members \$10

REPORT ON LAST MEETING

BY BRIAN KOWELL

Neither snow, nor rain, nor
dense fog prevented 30 stalwart
members and guests from hearing
National Park Historian Dennis
Frye speak on "The Guns of
Harpers Ferry."

Mr. Frye gave the history and
reasons for the decision of
closing Harpers Ferry as a site
for a government armory and

arsenal. The need for arsenals was estab-
lished by President Washington and two locat-
ions were chosen - Springfield, Mass. and
Harpers Ferry, Va.. The latter was chosen
for four reasons: (1) ample water supply for
hydro power, (2) proximity of raw materials
in the surrounding walnut forests and nearby
iron ore supplies, (3) its inland defensible
position from foreign attack, and, most int-
erestingly, (4) the Washington family owned
substantial property in the area.

In addition, Dennis brought four
long arms that typified those manu-
factured at Harpers Ferry, and he
explained the evolution of arms
manufactured by these examples. He had the
gunnuts of the group drooling!



The last gun manufactured at Harpers Ferry
was in April 1861. Upon Virginia's secession,
the superintendent attempted to destroy the
facilities, but some of the machinery was sal-
vaged and transported south for Confederate
use. At the cease of hostilities, the U.S.
Government decided not to rebuild at Harpers
Ferry because of Virginia's treasonable act
of seceding.

Mr. Frye's presentation was understandable
and interesting. He satisfied the "experts"
with enough technical information but still
kept it simple enough for the novices.

Civil War Smiles by STU CRAMER



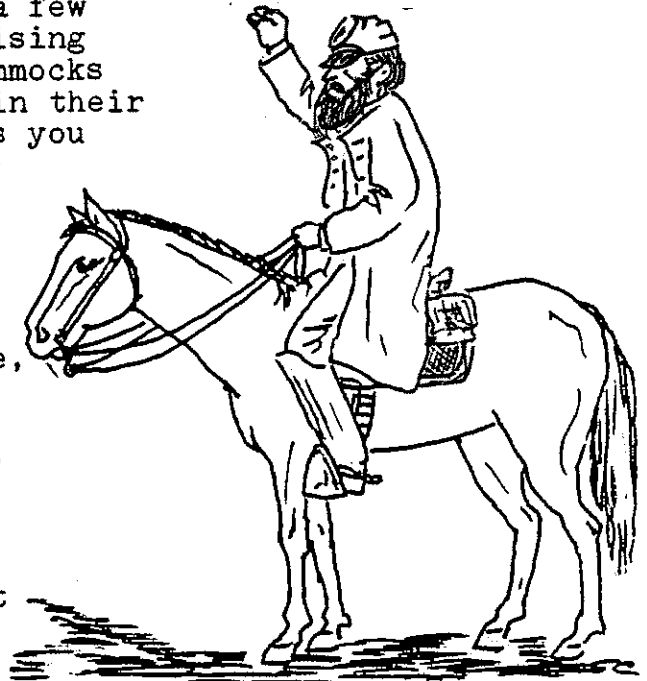
So, here we are,
stuck in Virginia.

FRED GILL'S BOOK REVIEW

3

Wicker, Tom. Unto This Hour, New York: Viking, 1984.

Civil War fiction is a swamp. It is a wide and irregular territory, filled with watery and spongy works. In a few places there are hummocks of high ground rising out of mushy sameness. A few of these hummocks dominate the scene. A few are startling in their beauty. Slogging through this swamp brings you to the hummocks and if this work occupies one of them, it is not one dominating the morass. In no way does it soar like the rise occupied by Crane's Red Badge of Courage or the one that bears the Civil War work of the Southern literary colossus, Faulkner. Read these, of course, and the writings of Thomas Wolfe, Shelby Foote, MacKinlay Kantor, and even Don Robertson and decide what hummock, if any, Wicker's work occupies. These and others rise above the miasma of the swamp.



"Old Jack" on "Little Sorrel"

Wicker knows about all there is to know about Second Bull Run but his account switches nervously from one side to the other making it touch and go to follow what happens in the battle, and it is no help in keeping the action clear. And do not expect the maps to be of much help either.

Wicker did a scholar's work on the battle. He admits to "... four" years of actual writing and continuous research" and "...discovered that a single 'undisputed' history of an event (especially a battle) seldom exists." His account of the Second Bull Run is not the single undisputed history of the event but maybe it is about as close as anybody will ever get.

The great pit into which so many Civil War novels fall is the multitudinous cast of characters so many writers seem to think they need to lull us into learning about a battle. This novel is no exception. Too many readers (including me) find it unrewarding and almost impossible to keep tabs on all those cardboard people. The fictional characters in this novel seem to be the same two-dimensional ones in similar works. Do these writers all patronize the same casting office? And why are Civil war novels, like this one, so confoundedly long? Six hundred and forty-two pages in this one! No wonder they have to get \$19.95 for it.



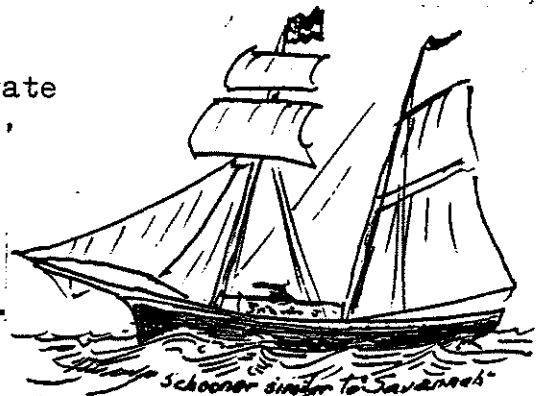
Do not let Wicker's Whiggish writing in that prominent New York newspaper he works for dissuade you from reading this book. Gear up your best mental slogging equipment and go to it. You will not get through it in a quiet evening in front of the fire, but it should be read for the picture of the battle and some of the superb action scenes. On the pages describing the Rebel raid on Pope's

continued on page 4



THE FIRST CONFEDERATE PRIVATEER

A privateer, as the name implies, is a private armed ship, fitted out at the owner's expense, but commissioned by a belligerent government to capture the ships and goods of the enemy at sea; or the ships of neutrals when conveying to the enemy goods contraband of war. The privateer differs from the pirate because one holds a commission and the other does not. Pirates when caught were put to death, privateers were treated as prisoners of war.



To the government with a small navy and slender resources, privateers were a great advantage; they cost the government nothing and were a source of revenue by receiving a percentage of the value of the captures, in consideration for the license. The United States capitalized on this in the War of 1812, taking some 2,000 British commercial ships to the tune of millions of dollars. In a proclamation issued in 1861, President Lincoln declared this practise illegal.

President Jefferson Davis issued a "letter of marque" in May, 1861, to the Savannah, a fifty-four ton low black schooner, with raking masts, a converted pilot boat with a crew of nineteen.

Dropping down the Ashley River and out of the Charleston harbor one night at dawn the Savannah overtook the Joseph, a Yankee brig carrying tons of sugar, bound for Philadelphia from Cuba.

Taking over the Joseph, a prize crew set off for Charleston, leaving the Savannah to seek more victims. Unfortunately, she tackled a disguised Union brig, the heavily armed Perry, and was in turn captured. Later, the crew of the Savannah was paraded in New York in irons, and the whole affair was publicized all over the country, leading to a great legal hassle.

The trial that took place received international attention. "The only question for the Court and jury to decide," commented the New York Herald, "was whether the act amounted to piracy, either under international law or under United States statute." Lincoln did not answer a letter from Davis which threatened retaliation if the prisoners were hanged.

In the British House of Lords, Lincoln's proclamation making privateers pirates was debated, with the conclusion that "The Northern States cannot claim the rights of belligerents for themselves, and, on the other hand, deal with parties not as belligerents but as rebels."

The Savannah's crew was declared "not guilty" and thus spared the fate of pirates. They were sent to prison and later exchanged.



FRED GILL'S BOOK REPORT

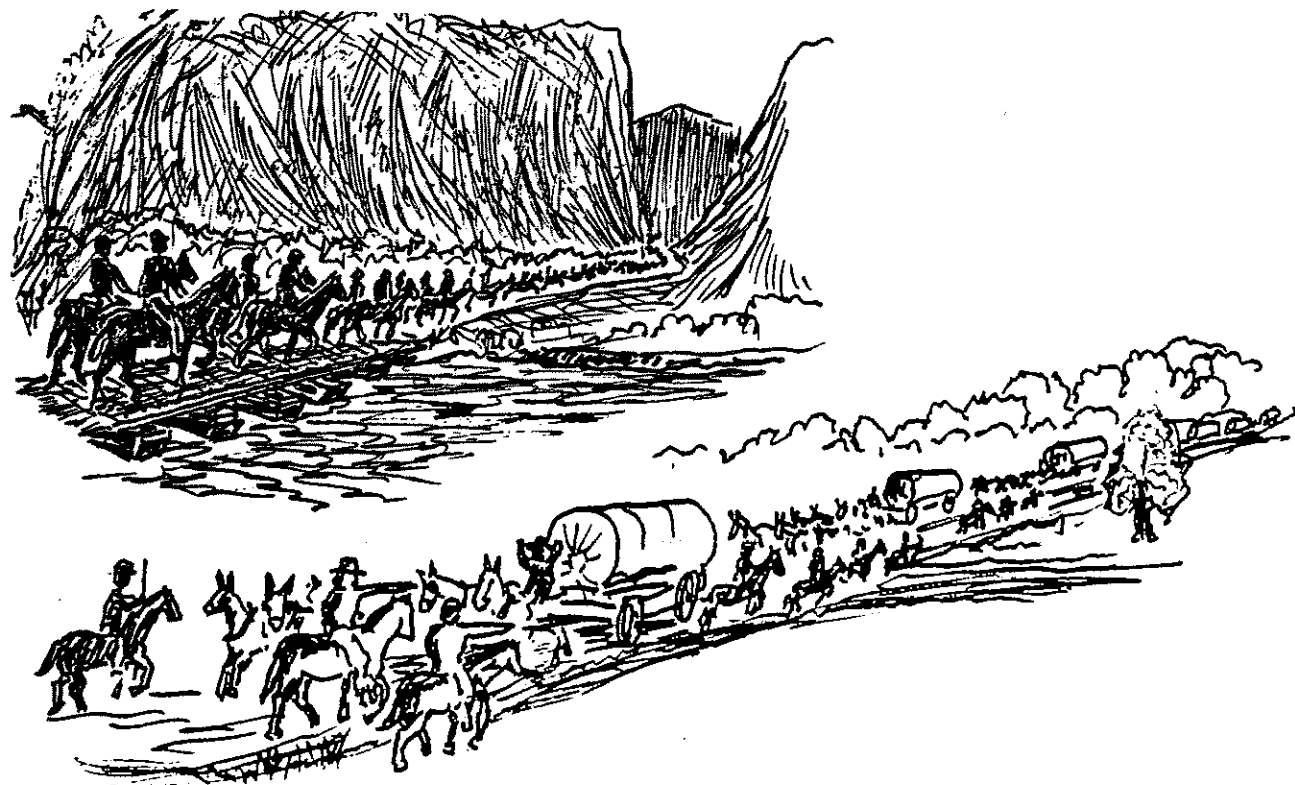
supply depot at Catlett's Station, for one you can almost hear the yells of triumph and desperation, the pounding of hoofs and terrible clang of weapons. You almost smell the dust and smoke and feeling of rising tumult.

Enjoy your stay on this middle ground hummock but stay out of most of the rest of the swamp.



SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN

5



These scenes could never have been seen. They took place on a night so caliginous that not the slightest glint or movement could be seen. The movement was approximately 2,000 Union cavalrymen escaping the army of Stonewall Jackson surrounding and dominating the heights at Harpers Ferry, September 14th, 1862.

Following the defeat of the Union Army at Second Bull Run, General Lee invaded the north into Maryland, hoping to swing that neutral state into the Confederacy, threaten Washington and Baltimore, and possibly gain

the fervently hoped-for recognition by England and France. After occupying Frederick and Hagerstown, Lee found it necessary to secure his line of communications back to Richmond via the Shenandoah Valley. To that end he had to have possession of Harpers Ferry, held by 12,000 Federal troops commanded by the elderly Colonel Dixon S. Miles. Daringly, Lee sent almost half his army under Jackson to accomplish that objective.

Jackson invested the Union forces at Harpers Ferry and threatened to attack on the 15th. Miles, looking up into the mouths of fifty rebel cannons ringing the place and outnumbered and out-positioned, called a council of his officers and it was unanimously decided that surrender was the only thing to do. Except the commander of the Union cavalry, Colonel Benjamin "Grimes" Davis, who insisted that he lead his men out of the trap, and argued until Miles gave in. Davis was an Alabama-born Mississippian, a graduate of West Point, Class of 1854, a captain in the 1st U.S. Cavalry when secession came, who chose to remain loyal to the Union.

That night, Davis and another colonel with the same name, personally led his horsemen, two by two, over a pontoon bridge to the Maryland side of the Potomac River. They walked, as quietly as possible (Miles did not want his infantry to know the cavalry was making a get-away) and then broke into a gallop as soon as they reached terra firma.

continued on page 6



PREVIEW OF FIELD TRIP

It is now official that the coming FIELD TRIP will be to Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville Battlefields. Fieldmarshals Marty Graham and Bill Kostic contacted Bob Krick of the Park Service at Fredericksburg, who suggested the week-end of September 28, 29 and 30. This information was presented at the March meeting and accepted by the members. If time permits the troops will touch on the Wilderness battle.

More details will be forthcoming in the May and Midsummer issues of the Charger, but now is the time to mark down those dates and decide to join this highlight of our year.

* * * *

7TH CIVIL WAR SHOW

The 7th Annual Civil War Show will be held April 28 and 29, 1984, at Ashland College Convocation Center; 200 tables of junk to buy, sell or trade. Several of our members are regular attendees, and they say it is a good show.

* * * *

LET US REMIND YOU AGAIN of the Gettysburg Battlefield Preservation Association. They need your help. You can join for \$5 (but they'll sure take more than \$5 and it's tax-deductible--send as much as you can!); the address is GBPA, Box 1863, Gettysburg PA 17325. Author/historian/photographer Bill Frassanito is leading the group at present.

SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN

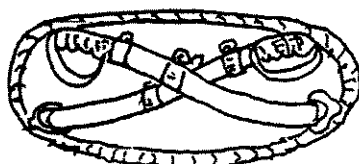
With the help of a local old settler, Col. Davis followed a winding, twisting path, through lanes and woods, to avoid Confederate pickets. They took an old by-road at the foot of Maryland Heights, the very same one on which John Brown led his cutthroats into Harpers Ferry. Then, by way of mountain paths leading north towards Sharpsburg, Davis set a killing pace, his troopers strung out on the trail for miles back.

Finally, with the worst of the danger past, the pace moderated after the column struck the Hagerstown turnpike about two miles north of Williamsport. Now came the dramatic climax of the escape that did not lose a single man.

At a crossroads Colonel Davis ran into the reserve ammunition train of Confederate General James Longstreet. Taking advantage of the darkness, and his soft southern accent, he diverted the wagontrain divers, and captured 97 wagons each drawn by six mules, about 300 escort infantrymen, and for good measure, a large herd of cattle.

The zig-zag round-about route covered by the column in 14 or 15 hours measured about 60 miles. The long wagontrain and tired troopers were welcomed by the citizens of Pennsylvania, and long before they reached Greencastle, the people lined the road handing up fruit, cakes and pies.

These were scenes that marked a triumph for the horsemen in blue for a change. As a footnote, old Colonel Miles was killed by a shell fragment the day of the surrender. Ben "Grimes" Davis was killed at Beverly Ford, 1863.



LAST WEEKEND my wife and I took a sentimental journey to West Point, that magnificent and historic military post set high above a sharp bend of the Hudson River, an enormously vital spot in our early colonial war days. Over 50 years ago I had made my only other journey to this place and wished as a young lad to become a cadet in the Long Gray Line. It was not to be, but it flashed back vividly when I returned and saw the cavalry barracks and stables above what is now known as Buffalo Soldier Field. In the early 1920s cavalry training was high priority in a cadet's life, and horse training was taught by cavalry units whose history had included black cavalymen, whom the Indians called buffalo soldiers. I was impressed by this those many years ago, and now the stable and barracks buildings are used for administrative purposes.

The weekend was beautiful Indian summer, and the colors still hung onto the trees down in the headlands of the Hudson Valley. The gray granite structures dominate the bend in the river where the great iron chain had been strung across from Trophy Point to Constitution Island during the Revolutionary War to seal the river to British traffic. On this point of the post stand the historical monuments. The Battle Monument, a great shaft of polished granite which is the only monument in the United States erected to the officers and men of the Regular Army who fell fighting for the Union during the Civil War. This monument commands a majestic panorama of the Hudson River sweeping down through the great northern portal of the Highlands past its mighty guardians, Storm King Mountains on the west and Breakneck Ridge on the east.

At this point also is the Kosciusko Monument, dedicated to the famous Pole, whose work at West Point and artillery positions at the Battle of Saratoga were of such vital importance to America in the Revolution. The Sedgwick Monument honors the Civil War general, killed at Spottsylvania. The monument is cast entirely from Confederate cannon captured by his men. These historic points overlook the bend in the river and the famous Flirtation Walk, the riverside trail reserved for cadets and their fair guests, who can descend hand in hand to the water's edge (and trudge back up again).

—o—

WEST POINT reeks of history. At Trophy Point once stood the West Point Hotel. This ancient structure dated from 1829, and through its lobby strode at one time or another Grant, Sherman, McClellan, Stonewall Jackson, Winfield Scott, in his older days called "Old Fuss and Feathers." Also two men who attended West Point

but never graduated. Edgar Allan Poe was dismissed after eight months of insubordination, and James MacNeill Whistler. He was fine at drawing but weak in chemistry and failed in his third year at the academy. "Had silicon been a gas," he later said, "I would have been a major general." Mrs. MacArthur stayed at the West Point Hotel for four years, daily supervising her son Douglas' progress in achieving top honors in his class of 1903. Today the only thing remaining of the West Point Hotel is the front porch lamp now hanging in the Thayer Hotel.

The Thayer Hotel, where we stayed, was built in 1926 and has its share of history. Most of the great World War II heroes stayed there at one time or another, and its dining room housed a confidential meeting in 1937 between Charles Lindbergh, just returning from Europe, and Chief of Air Corps "Hap" Arnold. How many others of our country's great leaders have dined and slept there?

We were privileged to witness the last full dress parade of the year of the Corps of Cadets. What a sight as the brigade of cadets marched by the reviewing stand, colors flying, marching on the same historic Plain where in years before had marched in similar formation Lee, Jackson, Grant, Pershing, MacArthur, Patton, Eisenhower. The West Point Museum houses the uniforms, the medals of these great American men.

I drove around the post at night, a history buff, savoring the thrill and excitement of being on historic ground. Mine was the only car making the rounds on Friday night. Most of the post was dark, but the Cadet Barracks flanking the historic Plain were ablaze with light as the over 4,000 young men and women labored in their studies to become future officers of our armed forces. I paused at a magnificent sculpture high above the chapel at a turn of the road next to Michie Stadium. Three soldiers were pressing forward, and the inscription read: To the Cadet Corps — The Lives and Destinies of Valiant Americans are Entrusted to Your Care and Leadership.

Down beside the statute of Douglas MacArthur, I stood looking out onto the historic Plain and read his words, illuminated by the lights of the Cadets' rooms:

Your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars. All other public purposes will find others for their accomplishment. Yours is the profession of arms — The will to win — the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that the very obsession of your public service must be: duty, honor, country.

The article on the left is a reproduction of the column that appeared in the Bennington (Vermont) Banner, a regular feature in that newspaper by our Member Bob Thum. We've saved it since 11/26/80; one of our favorites.

* * * *

FOR LINCOLN BUFFS

Third Annual Forum on Lincoln and the Union. Sponsored by Civil War Round Table Associates, will be held May 3-5 in Washington, D.C..

Write to Jerry Russell, National Chairman, P.O.Box 7388, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217.

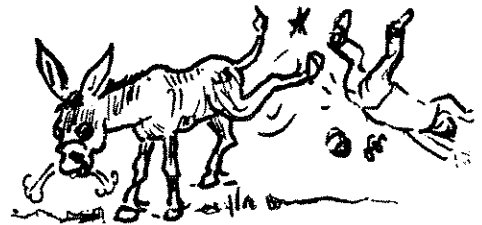
* * * *

LADIES' NIGHT

COMING UP MAY 8th.

Great program...best speaker of them all - Dr. James "Bud" Robertson. The ladies will love him! Probably will be held at the Greys' Armory. More later.

Reservations a Must



WWI veterans liked to tell about the inscription on a monument in France marking the grave of an army mule:

"In memory of Maggie, who in her time kicked two colonels, four majors, ten captains, 24 lieutenants, 42 sergeants, 432 other ranks and one Mills bomb."

OLLAPODRIDA

There is the story of the pompous Civil War general who was described in a local paper as being "battle scared." He indignantly demanded a correction to what should be "battle scarred." The paper retracted the first description and stated they should have called him "bottle scarred."

From Bob Thum's "Thumprints"

* * * * *

In 1861 a John R. Randall wrote the following lyrics for citizens of Maryland with Southern leanings:

The despot's heel is on thy shore,
Maryland, my Maryland!
His torch is at thy temple door,
Maryland, my Maryland!
Avenge the patriotic gore
That flecked the streets of Baltimore,
And be the battle queen of yore,
Maryland, my Maryland!

To the tune of
"Tannenbaum"

There are a couple of bills in the Maryland State Legislature that would change the wording, according to an article from the Baltimore Evening Sun, to less warlike meanings. The despot in the above was President Lincoln, and the flecks on the streets of Baltimore were those of the mob that attacked the first U.S. soldiers to march through that city. We wonder if a couple of years later when General Lee invaded Maryland, some might have been applying the despot role to him.

* * * * *

In the March-April issue of Americana magazine in an article about restoring Louisiana Plantation Mansions, a legend is mentioned in connection



with "Nottoway," completed by the Randolphs in 1859. It was 10 years in its building and while located on the west bank of the Mississippi, the house escaped damage during the Civil War. The legend has it that a Union officer aboard a gunboat that was shelling the mansion realized that he had been a guest at "Nottoway." He disembarked, strode over the levee, and personally apologized to Mrs. Randolph. When he discovered that the family's firearms had all been confiscated,

he gallantly presented the Randolphs with his own pistol. Can any of you shed light upon the story?

* * * * *

In the same issue there was a story about raising the "Hardluck Ironclad" USS Cairo, sunk by a Confederate torpedo in the Yazoo River, December 1862. Located intact in 1956, the five-hundred-ton vessel was salvaged in 1964. There was no mention of our friend Ed Bearss, NPS Chief Historian, who was responsible for the discovery, raising, and restoration of the sunken Union gunboat, the only one to survive the war.

* * * * *

Did any of you readers of the March issue of Civil War Times Illustrated magazine note that our member Marty Graham had in it an article entitled "A Hero's Death," from the reminiscences of one John P. Brogan, during Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley Campaign?

