



Founded at Fort Harrison
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RICHMOND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

JULY 2026

"The Civil War was the biggest thing that ever happened to us. It was our Iliad and our Odyssey – and it remains our least understood war."

Bruce Catton

JULY 14, 2026

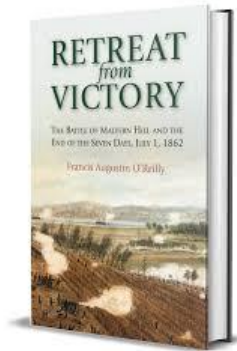
7:30 p.m.

**Weinstein JCC
5403 Monument Avenue
Richmond, VA 23226
(Sisisky Room; first room on the right as
you enter the building)**

**FRANK O'REILLY
"Retreat from Victory:
The Battle of Malvern Hill and the
End of the Seven Days,
July 1, 1862"**



The Battle of Malvern Hill on July 1, 1862, marked the climax of the Seven Days' Battles around Richmond. For the first time since the war began, the full might of Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Union Army of the Potomac and Gen. Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia met. The world watched and wondered as this high-stakes combat played out on the doorstep of the Confederate capital. McClellan's army emerged victorious with its superior positions and overwhelming artillery firepower. Yet, McClellan retreated from victory to establish a safe base on the James River. Lee's army secured a default



victory simply by holding the battlefield and saving Richmond from capture.

Frank O'Reilly's long-awaited *Retreat from Victory* is the first book-length treatment of this critical and pivotal battle.

O'Reilly examines the singular struggle at Malvern Hill in depth and from a wide variety of perspectives, including its implications for the war, the armies, the opposing governments, the people, and slavery. He pieces together the tactical movements of troops on the battlefield and the intentions of leaders on the front lines and in the halls of government in Washington, D.C., and Richmond. Above all, he gives voice to the soldiers, sharing their experiences in combat and on campaign.

Two decades in the making, *Retreat from Victory* draws on hundreds of primary sources – many previously unused – including official records, diaries, newspapers, and regimental histories.

This climactic Civil War battle elevated General Lee's career and marked the beginning of the end of General McClellan's.

Frank O'Reilly received both his BA and MA in American History with a concentration on Early American Military History and Civil War Studies. He did his undergraduate work at Washington & Lee University before joining the National Park Service at the Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park. He worked briefly at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and then returned to Fredericksburg as a historian in 1990.

Frank can often be found on the Civil War battlefields of Virginia – and occasionally, the battlefields of Europe. He wrote the award-winning *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock* (2003), which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. He has been a professional battlefield guide for 40 years and has led tours and staff rides from Manassas to Appomattox. Frank has lectured around the world on numerous topics of war and leadership. He lives in Fredericksburg, Virginia, with his wife and soulmate, Amy, and their Black Lab/Great Dane/Clydesdale puppy named Miles.

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

“Remembering a Great Historian, and Even a Better Person”

As I was cleaning out old emails recently, I came across one from the late James I. “Bud” Robertson, Jr., one of the greatest Civil War historians ever. I’m sure most of you have read at least one of his books and heard him speak at least once, maybe even at a Round Table meeting. If you ever had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with him, I think

you would agree that he was even a better person.

I had the honor of spending some time with Dr. Robertson on several occasions though the years. Although I did not hold any stature in the Civil War history world, from the first time to the last time, he always made me feel like I was the most important person in the room at that moment. I was never more than an acquaintance to him, but he always made me feel like a friend and an equal. Still, I never, ever felt comfortable enough to call him Bud.

I met him for the first time in 1990 at the Stonewall Jackson Symposium, which was hosted by the Stonewall Jackson House in Lexington. Robertson was one of a star-studded cast of speakers that weekend. Others included Bob Krick, Gary Gallagher, Dennis Frye, and Charles Royster. As a young history undergrad at James Madison University, I was in awe to say the least. When I had the opportunity to meet him at a reception, I told him about the research I was doing on Brig. Gen. John R. Jones. He listened intently, offered suggestions, and said he would give my name to someone who was working on a Civil War encyclopedia.

About a month later, a letter showed up in my mail addressed to "Dr. Dale Harter" from Richard N. Current, editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy* that was being published by Scribner's. Based on Dr. Robertson's recommendation, he asked if I would write the entry on Jones. I was floored. Even though I was an absolute nobody in the Civil War history profession (and certainly didn't have a "Dr." before my name), Dr. Robertson gave me my first publication opportunity. He didn't do this because he was a great historian. He did it because he was an even better person.

Eleven years later, when I was working as the librarian at St. Margaret's School, in Tappahannock, I heard that Dr. Robertson was doing a signing for his new book, *The Untold Civil War:*

Exploring the Human Side of War, at the Barnes & Noble on Brook Road in Glen Allen. I was coordinating a spring "minimester" program for the school and wanted to invite him to be the guest speaker at a schoolwide event that also would be open to the local Tappahannock-Essex County community. When it came my turn to greet him at the book-signing line, he greeted me warmly and immediately introduced me to the well-dressed gentleman who had been in line directly before me – Dr. Robert Lindgren, president of Randolph-Macon College. Once again, I was a nobody, but he made me feel like somebody. Of course, he accepted my invitation, packed the gymnasium at St. Margaret's, and awed a whole bunch of teenage girls with one of his legendary Civil War talks. And after he finished speaking, he took the time to speak with many of the girls, making each one of them feel like somebody.

Finally, in 2013, Dr. Robertson agreed to once again come to St. Margaret's, this time for the inaugural signing of his edited and annotated edition of *Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War*, by Judith Brockenbrough McGuire. The signing was held on campus in the Brockenbrough House, where McGuire moved after the war and operated a girls' boarding school until 1875. By the time of the book signing, Dr. Robertson had retired across the river on the Northern Neck. Although I'm sure he could have chosen a more prominent, better located spot for the book signing, he appreciated the historic setting. I also would like to think he did it, in part, because I asked him to.

The last time I saw Dr. Robertson was at a Christmas party he held later that year at his home on the Northern Neck. I was surprised when my wife and I received an invitation, which of course we accepted. Other than him and his wife Betty Lee, we did not know a soul at that party. The Civil War mementoes and art we saw in his house revealed he was a

great historian. An even better person greeted us warmly at the door and made a point that evening of making us feel at home in a company of strangers.

Dale

CIVIL WAR QUOTES WHO SAID IT?

1. "Were our liberties given us but to be trampled beneath the feet of Abraham Lincoln?"
2. "I have walked about the city [Savannah] several times, and can affirm that its tranquility is undisturbed. The Union soldiers who are stationed within its limits are as orderly as if they were in New York or Boston."
3. "The incapacity of the commander [Rosecrans] is astonishing, and it often seems difficult to believe him of sound mind. His imbecility appears to be contagious."
4. "Never be humble to the haughty. Never be haughty to the humble."
5. "You fellows make the best paid spies that can be bought. Jeff Davis owes more to you newspaper men than to his army."

Answers on Page 6

IN MEMORIAM

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of our friend and long-time member, Ruth Ann Coski.

Ruth Ann passed away on Tuesday morning, June 23, after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. Our heartfelt condolences and sympathy to John at this very difficult time.

The obituary for Ruth Ann is attached in a separate document.

MORE WAR HORSES

LITTLE SORREL

When Confederate forces captured the Union garrison at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, in 1861, several horses were among the many supplies gained. After, the Confederate commander Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson came and purchased two horses: a larger horse called Big Sorrel and a smaller horse he dubbed "Fancy," whom he planned to give to his wife, Mary Anna Jackson. However, Jackson took a liking to the small horse. He renamed him Little Sorrel – a name that would gain fame in the years to come.

Little Sorrel was born on the farm of Noah C. Collins near the small town of Sommers, Connecticut. He was a descendant of the original Justin Morgan horse born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1789. Morgans were prized horses – said to be calm under fire and built perfectly for army life. Little Sorrel was no exception. Several of Jackson's staff observed the steed's disregard for danger and apparent love of combat, much like his owner. Little Sorrel served Jackson for nearly his entire time as a Confederate officer; the mount saw battle at such places as the Virginia Peninsula, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. It was Little Sorrel that Jackson rode between the lines at Chancellorsville when he was shot and mortally wounded by friendly fire.



After the Civil War, Little Sorrel moved to Mary Anna Jackson's family farm in North Carolina. In 1883, she donated Little Sorrel to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). For the next couple of years, the horse wandered the grounds of VMI, a living reminder of the school's most famous instructor and one of the last equine links to

the Civil War. Little Sorrel died in 1886 at an astounding 36 years of age, exceeding the average horse's lifespan by six years.

DUKE

When an article published after the war took account of Gen. William T. Sherman's horsemanship, they recorded that, "General Sherman was a nervous and somewhat careless rider. He wore his stirrup-leathers very long, seeming to be almost all the time standing in the irons. This appearance was intensified by his habit of rising in the stirrups on reaching a turn in the road or some advantageous point of observation. While always careful of his animals, Sherman did not appear to have that fondness for them that is so common among good horsemen."



So who was the horse that carried the famous firebrand of the American Civil War?

Thankfully, Sherman told everyone in a letter. In 1888, famous portrait artist E.F. Andrews wrote to Sherman to inquire who his favorite wartime horse was. Sherman replied that "...my favorite horse during the war was the one I rode at Atlanta, and whose name was Duke. He was a bright bay, had a white star on his forehead, and one white foot (left hind foot). I have a good portrait of him by Trotter of Philadelphia now hanging in my office."

Newbold Trotter's portrait of Sherman riding Duke still survives, but not much is known about Duke's life after, or even during, the Civil War. Duke was the horse that carried Sherman on his famous March to the Sea. A photo even survives depicting the two outside of Atlanta. After the war, Sherman was in command for a time in Mississippi and eventually rose to commanding general of the United States

Army. While history doesn't note the fate of Duke, it can be speculated that Sherman thought of his mount and the wartime experiences they faced together when he glanced to Trotter's painting in his office.



Of the roughly three million horses and mules that took part in the conflict,

it's estimated that half perished in the process. But their contributions have not gone without recognition. In places like Middleburg, Virginia, and Murfreesboro, Tennessee, memorials stand to pay tribute to the horses and mules who were casualties of war. Between battle and the grueling work of hauling heavy supplies and weapons, these creatures were pushed to their limits.

In Middleburg, the "Bridled Veterans" Horses and Mules Memorial was sculpted by Tessa Pullan in 1997. It acknowledges that of the approximately 1.5 million draft animals lost to the war effort, "many perished within twenty miles of Middleburg" – during these impactful cavalry-heavy battles in June 1863. It sits outside the National Sporting Library and Museum. Meanwhile in Murfreesboro – upon the Stones River National Battlefield – there stands a statue commemorating the 32,000 horses and mules that served in the Battle of Stones River. Of this figure, it is said that roughly 3,000 were either killed, disabled or captured. And, of course, we have our own monument to the War Horse and Mule here in Richmond which stands outside the Virginia Museum of History and Culture.

These four-legged creatures were a crucial thread in the complex fabric of the Civil War, and their fierce and determined spirits are far from forgotten.

From ABT website,
August 2023

Answers to "Civil War Quotes"

1. Brig. Gen. Simon B. Buckner in a speech in Russellville, KY, September 12, 1861
2. Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren in a telegram to the Sec. of the Navy, Gideon Welles, January 4, 1865
3. US Assistant Sec. of War Charles A. Dana in a telegram to Lincoln, October 16, 1863
4. Jefferson Davis, Wilmington, NC, January 4, 1863
5. Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, quoted in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, December 7, 1861

**A WARM WELCOME
TO OUR NEW MEMBERS**

**WILLIAM ASHEY
LEWIS BENDLE
ROBERT CHESTEEN**

EVENTS OF INTEREST

July 18, 6:00 p.m. Petersburg Battlefields Foundation's History at Sunset Tour, "The History and Preservation of Fort Fisher." Earthworks are a physical reminder of the Civil War. Discover what earthworks reveal about military engineers and the lives of common soldiers at Fort Fisher. Learn about the ongoing efforts of park staff and volunteers to preserve the largest earthen fort at Petersburg National Battlefield.

Meet at Fort Fisher, 23803 Flank Road, Petersburg. The program is free. Questions, call 804-732-3531.

October 2-4. The Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area presents the 28th Annual Conference on the Art of Command in the Civil War: "Partisan Warfare in Northern Virginia." Three-day conference in the Middleburg Community Center. Award-winning speakers and a bus tour of Partisan Warfare sites in Northern Virginia. More information and to register go to www.piedmontheritage.org/events.

BEFORE THE STORM

"I know of no horror so terrible as the period just preceding the shock of battle."

Pennsylvania soldier Frank Holsinger in a postwar account of his experiences in combat

"It was the first time that I had ever been called upon to face death. I felt that in a few moments some of us standing here, vainly trying to jest and appear careless, would be in eternity. Would it be this friend, or that one, or myself?"

Edmund Dewitt Patterson, 9th Alabama Infantry, in his diary during the Peninsula Campaign, May 6, 1862

From *Civil War Monitor*, Summer 2026 Issue

UPCOMING MEETINGS

August 11: Dr. Charles Fennell, *The Restoration of Culp's Hill: The Sad State of Historical Preservation at Gettysburg National Military Park*

September 8: Melissa Winn, *Grant's Conscience: The Unique Camaraderie Between Ulysses S. Grant and his Chief of Staff John Rawlins*

October 13: Troy Harman, *How Did Technology Shape North and South in the Lead-up to War as well as Shape Wartime Strategies*

November 10: (Annual Dinner Meeting) Dr. William C. "Jack" Davis, *Jefferson Davis and R.E. Lee: A Model Relationship?*

December 8: Hampton Newsome, *Gettysburg's Southern Front: Opportunity and Failure at Richmond*

Attendance at June Meeting: 68