

THE WASHINGTON VOLUNTEER

PUGET SOUND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

HTTP://WWW.PSCWRT.ORG/

MAY 2016

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, May 12, 2016

China Harbor, 2040 Westlake Avenue North, Seattle, Washington **Time:**
Social hour at **6 p.m.**; Dinner served at **7 p.m.**; Program at **8 p.m.**

MENU CHOICES: Mongolian Beef, Chicken, Salmon or Vegetarian

Dinner includes: salad, vegetable delight, General Tso's chicken, fried rice and fresh fruit.
Cost is \$21 for adults and \$10 for minors and college students, payable at the door, but reservations and meal choices are required. See below. \$5 if you are not ordering a meal

To make reservations and meal choices, use one of these options (most preferred listed first):

Click on <http://www.pscwrt.org/about/dinner-reservations.php>

Email **Rod Cameron** at: rodcam@comcast.net

Or lastly, call **Rod Cameron** at **206-524-4434**

Deadline for reservations is 12 NOON on Tuesday, May 10, 2016.

NOTE: Remember to turn off cell phones before the meeting so there are no distractions for the speaker. Thank you!



TIMOTHY B. SMITH WILL DISCUSS DIFFICULT AND BROKEN GROUND: THE TERRAIN FACTOR AT SHILOH.

Many factors combined to produce the major Union victory there. Timing, numbers, and leadership were critical, but perhaps the most dominant factor was the terrain. Drawing on his award-winning book *Shiloh: Conquer or Perish*, Dr. Smith will walk us through a detailed examination of the terrain factor at Shiloh, explaining how the ground, often described as a trap for the Union forces, was actually shaped perfectly for Union victory and Confederate defeat. Little-known features will be examined in order to understand more fully how the battle was funneled in certain directions, leading to a major advantage for the Federal forces. Albert Sidney Johnston famously proclaimed that he must conquer or perish that day, and he, and perhaps his Confederacy, perished at Shiloh largely because of the terrain and its effect on the fighting. An Instructor in History at the University of Tennessee at Martin, Dr. Smith is the author of a dozen books and dozens of chapters, articles, and entries.

IMPORTANT DISPATCHES

Annual Auction Review & Recap

A huge THANK YOU to all of you who participated in our annual auction. This includes Stephen Pierce, who spearheaded the planning and organization, Dick Miller our wonderful MC for the live portion of the auction plus the many volunteers who did all the little things that

helped make it a success. **This year the Auction took in \$1,857.00.** While this is less than the 2015 total, every dollar helps to bring in excellent speakers like Richard Sommers who gave a great presentation that night. As always, the PSCWRT Board will evaluate how things went and work to make the auction even better in 2017. **THANK YOU TO ALL WHO DONATED ITEMS AND BID ON ITEMS!**

PSCWRT Election of Officers- This month

As was mentioned in last month's Washington Volunteer, the bi-annual election of officers takes place at the May meeting every other year. This year, besides voting on a slate of candidates, two new board positions will need to be approved: Vice President – Partnerships and Vice President – Marketing. The members who have been nominated to fill those positions are Stephen Clayton and Susan Martin, respectively. **This is the slate of candidates:**

President: Mike Movius
Vice President- Successor: Nick K. Adams
Vice President – Programming: Pat Brady
Vice President- Editor: Mark Terry
Vice-President – Membership: Marilyn Rexilius
Vice President – Social Media: **Vacant**
Vice President – Reservations: Rod Cameron
Vice President – Partnerships: Stephen Clayton
Vice President- Marketing: Susan Martin
Secretary: Larry Jilbert
Treasurer: Jeff Rombauer

One automatic position on the board is Past President. This will of course be filled by Rick Solomon.

The Civil War Beckons: A Survey

By Mike Movius

We developed a survey to ascertain the thoughts and opinions of members of the Puget Sound Civil War Roundtable on a number of issues. The survey instrument was developed on January 28, launched on February 25, 2016 and concluded data collection on March 15, 2016. Two reminders were sent to the membership.

Inasmuch as the survey was administered online, there were a total of 37 responses by members of the round table. The questions asked were as follows:

Questions

1. How did you get interested in the Civil War?
2. What is it about Civil War studies that interests you THE MOST?
3. How long have you been a member of PSCWRT?
4. What do you like BEST about PSCWRT?

5. Would you be interested in a PSCWRT-sponsored trek to a Civil War battlefield or two?
6. If you might be interested, please tell us where you'd like to go.
7. If given a magic wand, what improvements would you want for PSCWR? (Careful, IT'S MAGIC!!)
8. What is your month of birth?
9. Tell us about yourself
 - a. Name
 - b. Email address

Analysis

Question 1 - In answer to how respondents became interested in the Civil War, most said that they had a life-long interest either beginning in childhood, high school or through their family. Some said they became interested when they moved to a location near Civil War battlefield(s).

Question 2 – Respondents were pretty clear about their area(s) of interest in Civil War studies. Twenty-five percent are interested in battles and battlefields; nineteen percent are interested in people, personalities or behavior; eight percent are interested in war justification, belief systems or arguments; three percent are interested in culture, music, poetry or prose; and a whopping forty-four percent said they are interested in all aspects including economics, politics or slavery and language, regional differences or clothing.

Question 3 – Respondents were overwhelmingly new to the roundtable. Fifty-six percent have been members for up to three years; nineteen percent have been members for up to eight years; six percent have been members for up to fifteen years; and another nineteen percent have been members for over fifteen years.

Question 4 – Respondents were very clear about what they like best about the roundtable. Fifty-three percent like speakers and their presentations the best. Seventeen percent like a chance to interact with members best; fourteen percent said they like the chance to learn different aspects of that era; and another seventeen percent said they like it all or combinations of the choices, the newsletter, etc.

Question 5 – Respondents were pretty pragmatic about a PSCWRT-sponsored trek to battlefields. Thirty-three percent said yes, they would be interested; eight percent said they were not interested; thirty-nine percent said it depends on when and the cost; and nineteen percent said they were not sure.

Question 6 – In answering where would-be trekkers would like to travel, this is where the different life experiences played the biggest role. Of all of the battlefields, Gettysburg, Shiloh and Vicksburg received the most interest. However, when it came to theaters of war, most were interested in the western theater. One person advised an interest in seeing a “major reenactment”.

Question 7 – Given a magic wand, members made several great suggestions. In order of importance, members would like to change:

- Menu or food (7)

- Emphasis (5)
- Meeting location (4)
- Interaction between members (3)
- Outreach, field trips, and younger members (2 each)
- Members to take on leadership roles (1)

In terms of emphasis, some respondents felt there was too much emphasis on the dinner aspect. They decried the lack of emphasis on the purpose of the meetings, rather than on logistics. Others seemed to like the show and tell theater that we had during a meeting last year. One suggested holding our business meeting during the dinner hour. A couple thought that it might be interesting to have a conversation topic for small groups during the social hour.

The meeting location was a particularly interesting topic for change. Most find that it is a barrier to involvement because of the stairs, lack of elevators and availability of parking.

Question 8 – The birth month of respondents was dominated by November (10) and none for February.

The board will be discussing these and other suggestions in upcoming months.

With the election taking place this month, we decided to start a series of short articles- one per month- in order for you to get to know our board members better. Hopefully it will also be a catalyst for all of us to know one another better! We decided to start with Rick Solomon, who, after the May meeting will be transitioning to the post of “Past President” within the board structure.

Getting to know your board members: Rick Solomon

I first became interested in the Civil War in 1961 when the Civil War Centennial started. I grew up in New Jersey. I convinced my parents to take me to Gettysburg, Antietam and all the battlefields in Virginia. While going to Case Western Reserve University Law School in Cleveland, Ohio, I would read some of Lee’s Lieutenants each night after putting down my dry and boring law books. In a 1976 backpacking trip to the Pacific Crest Trail in Washington I had volume three of that book in my backpack.

In the past I have belonged to Civil War Roundtables in Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. I have been a member of PSCWRT since 1990. I used to have two cats named Antietam & Chickamauga. I have been to all of the major Civil War battlefields in Virginia, Tennessee, Antietam and Gettysburg (about 25 times). From 2002 to 2004 & again 2014 to 2016 I served as President of PSCWRT. In between I was Newsletter editor of the Washington Volunteer. I have served on the Board of Directors of PSCWRT almost continually for over twenty years. Some of my presentations to PSCWRT have been the Battle of South Mountain, Patrick Cleburne, Benjamin Franklin Cheatham, Jefferson Davis’s Three Visits to the Army of Tennessee, the

Stonewall Jackson vs. A.P. Hill Feud, George S. Greene, and the Four Lee to the Rear Incidents. I find Confederate generals to be more interesting than Union generals.

I am also a member of the Northwest chapter of the Society of American Baseball Research, having served as chapter president 2011 to 2014 and am a Yankees-Mariners fan. I enjoy Rock Jazz, and Blues with my favorite band being the Grateful Dead. I am working on a novel about Yogi Berra & Jerry Garcia becoming friends and, somehow, getting transported in time back to the Civil War and having adventures together.

I have my own Law Office in Burien where my law practice is in Plaintiff's Personal Injury, mostly car accidents. I am divorced with a 27 year old son, Derrick, who still lives with me. Some of my International Travel has included Spain, Gibraltar, Morocco, Israel, the Galapagos Island, Kenya, Tanzania, Australia and New Zealand.

PSCWRT is an organization that I love and will continue to attend meeting until the day I die. Any future president of PSCWRT can call on me for help or advice.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Why I think Robert E. Lee was the best general of the Civil War

By Rick Solomon

To be an effective general during the American Civil War was no easy task for either the Union or the Confederacy. The Fog of War and the technology of 150 years ago made communication difficult between Army, Corps, Division and Brigade commanders. Just because a superior general gave certain commands didn't mean the subordinate general would follow those commands. A good combat general wasn't necessarily a good administrator and visa-versa. Robert E. Lee was both.

A lot of people talk about Lee being "the Marble Man.", that is that he hardly ever got excited and that he almost always kept his emotions under control. With his Revolutionary War father, "Lighthorse" Harry Lee, largely absent during young Robert's childhood, his mother raised him by herself and instilled upon him a sense of duty and to be under self-control. An example of Lee's self-control is that he never got a demerit during his four years as a cadet at West Point which had been up to that time unprecedented. Another example of the importance that Lee attached to self-control occurred at the Mule Shoe at Spotsylvania. When Ewell began beating fleeing soldiers over their backs with his sword, Lee ordered Ewell to restrain himself stating, "How can you expect to control these men when you have lost control of yourself. If you cannot repress your excitement, you had better retire." But there are numerous times when Lee did lose his self-control. During a cabinet meeting in May 1862 while Joseph E. Johnston had his Rebel troops retreat to the Gates of Richmond Lee exclaimed with tears in his eyes, "Richmond must not be given up! It shall not be given up!" Another bunch of instances where Lee lost his self-control were the four Lee to the Rear incidents of May 1864 at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania.

Perhaps Lee's greatest talent was his ability to judge officers – which ones would make good generals and which would have to be removed. When it came time to remove someone Lee did this with great tact and in a seamless way so that the removal was almost unnoticed. An example of this was immediately after the Peninsula Campaign when poorly performing generals such as Holmes, Huger, Smith and Whiting were transferred out of the Army of Northern Virginia to other assignments. Generals who performed well such as Jackson, Longstreet, A.P. Hill and, late in the war, Gordon, were advanced and given more responsibility.

No one could question Lee's bravery. Because of his solo scouting at Cerro Gordo and the Pedregal during the Mexican War his commander, Winfield Scott, said that Lee was "the very best soldier I ever saw in the field" and suggested that the government should insure Lee's life for \$5 million per year! The numerous times Lee was under fire, such as the aforementioned Lee to the Rear incidents, demonstrated that Lee was fearless for his own personal safety.

Another area that Lee excelled in was criticizing generals in a tactful way. He usually did this in a relatively private setting. After his disastrous attack at Bristoe Station Lee reprimanded A.P. Hill by stating "Well, well, General, bury these poor men and let us say no more about it." When the long absent Jeb Stuart arrived at Gettysburg late on the battle's second day, Lee rebuked him by stating, "well, General Stuart, you are here at last."

Another area that Lee was virtually unsurpassed or equaled by any other general in the Civil War was in his successful gambling or risk-taking. I think only Stonewall Jackson or Nathan Bedford Forrest come close. Numerous contemporaries described Lee as "Audacity Personified," which is the title of a book edited by Peter Carmichael. A few examples of this are (1) at the start of the Seven Days Lee taking the divisions of Jackson, Longstreet, D.H. Hill and A.P. Hill north of the Chickahominy River and attacking the lone Union V Corps under Porter while leaving only Magruder's division south of that river to hold off the other four Corps of the Army of the Potomac; (2) Lee sending half of his men under Jackson to march 50 miles and get in the rear of Pope's Army of Virginia while his other half under Longstreet remained behind to hold off McClellan's Army of the Potomac; (3) Making a stand behind Antietam Creek with just a small part of the Army of Northern Virginia while the divisions of McLaws, Walker and A.P. Hill arrived on September 16 and 17 with the entire Army of the Potomac facing opposite him; (4) Perhaps his greatest gamble of all – Chancellorsville, aka Lee's Masterpiece – in which the Army of Northern Virginia was without the divisions of Hood and Pickett under Longstreet. Lee left Early's division along with Barksdale's brigade at Fredericksburg to hold off Sedgwick's Second Corps. Lee held off the other six corps of Hooker's Army of the Potomac with only McLaws and Anderson's divisions while Stonewall Jackson made his famous march and flank attack with the divisions of Rodes, Colston and A.P. Hill.

Much has been written by authors such as Connelly, Nolan and Bonekemper, that the Confederacy, Lee in particular, should have pursued a defensive strategy that would have avoided costly set-piece battles and conserved limited Rebel manpower. During my first presidency of PSCWRT we had our speaker, Robert G. Tanner, author of *Retreat to Victory?*, speak against this position. I agree with Tanner. The North had more men, food, railroads, ships, and other resources than the South. The Confederacy's only chance of winning the Civil War was to break the Union's will to keep on fighting. This could best be done by whipping

Federal Armies. Lee believed this and acted upon it. If the Siege of Petersburg, the capture of Mobile Bay and Atlanta, and Sheridan's successful Shenandoah Campaign hadn't occurred, McClellan may very well have been elected president in November 1864. "Little Mac" may very well have sued for Peace and allowed the South its independence. Then what would have happened? I would love to talk with any of you about any of the above.

It was a pleasure being President of the Puget Sound Civil War Roundtable the past two years. I believe my successor, Mike Movius, will be an excellent "helmsman" of our Roundtable for the next two years. Please give him your support and a helping hand. Strike the Tent!

Rick Solomon, President

THE LAST WORD

An End and a Beginning

By Mark Terry

When it comes to the PSCWRT, this is a melancholy time of the year. We've been meeting together since the previous fall, going full speed ahead, having meetings, eating dinners, listening to speakers, contacting members, taking a field trip, doing surveys, going to cemeteries to find our "honored dead", and spending a lot of time on the Internet.

As the 2015-2016 Round Table season comes to an end, I want to thank Rick Solomon for his leadership as President. This was his second time at the helm and I appreciate what he did on the board, as well as writing his monthly column for the Washington Volunteer. I am glad that he will be continuing on the board as "Past President". I can't wait to hear how his Civil War novel which includes Yogi Berra and Jerry Garcia is coming along (if you don't know what I mean, you haven't read the entire newsletter!).

I also want to welcome Mike Movius as our new President, beginning over the summer and into this fall. Mike has done a sensational job as Webmaster, building it up and not coincidentally, introducing the PSCWRT to the world on Social Media, drawing the interest of many- some who have since become members. Mike has also spearheaded the "Washington Project", the search for Civil War veterans buried in Washington State.

Obviously, I also want to thank all those members on the board and many others who have done their part to make our meetings interesting and meaningful over the course of the year. It is only through the effort of each and every member that we improve and hopefully continue to grow!

So, as we end one season, we are looking forward to another. We pray you have a wonderful and restful summer and that we will all be recharged and reenergized when we meet again on Thursday, September 8, 2016. See you then!!!

DUES & DONATIONS

The PSCWRT season goes from September to the following May. Dues should be paid in September. Dues are payable either at the meeting or by mail: \$20 per individual, \$25 for a couple. Also, donations are gratefully accepted. These will help secure speakers for our meetings. Please note that all donations are tax deductible as the PSCWRT is a 501(c)3 organization. Mail to: Jeff Rombauer, Treasurer, 22306 255th Ave. SE, Maple Valley, WA 98038-7626. Call 425-432-1346 or email: jeffrombauer@foxinternet.com.

We welcome your article or research submissions for the newsletter, but they may be edited for space. The deadline for the September 2016 Washington Volunteer is Monday, August 22, 2016. Please have it in Mark Terry's hands via email or snailmail by then. Thank you!

2015-2016 OFFICERS

Elected:*

President: Rick Solomon, ricksolo@ricksolo.com

Vice-President-Successor: Mike Movius, webmaster@pscwr.org

Past-President: David Palmer, davidpalmer7@comcast.net

Vice-President-Programming: Pat Brady, 206-246-1603, patsbrady@comcast.net

Vice-President-Editor: Mark Terry, 425-337-6246, markimlor@comcast.net

Vice-President- Membership: Marilyn Rexilius, marilyn.rexilius@frontier.com

Vice President-Social Media: Mike Movius, webmaster@pscwr.org

Vice President-Reservations: Rod Cameron, 206-524-4434, rodcam@comcast.net

Treasurer: Jeff Rombauer, 425-432-1346, jeffrombauer@foxinternet.com

Secretary: Larry Jilbert, 253-891-4022, LJilbert.CJilbert@comcast.net

**All, except for Past President, an automatic position.*