



# MINIÉ BALL GAZETTE

The Official Newsletter of the Lowcountry Civil War Round Table, Inc.

November 27, 2019

Dear Lowcountry Civil War Round Table Members,

This is my last *Minie Ball Gazette*. I have enjoyed being your communications chairman. For over four years, I have attempted to provide you with timely, useful, and informative information about our speakers, their subjects and also give women and men new and interesting facts about the War Between the States.

Sandi Schroeder has volunteered to be the new communications chairman. Sandy has been active in the club for many years and is a true professional. She is familiar with the publishing industry and should prove to be a tremendous asset. Good luck, Sandy! I wish you well!

Most people moving to the Lowcountry from the North had no idea what went on in the South. During the war, most of my relatives were in the fight, so I am quite familiar with it and its aftermath.

We have a terrific team of executive officers who always step up to the plate to do the work for our fantastic club. Of course, they still need volunteers to assist. Volunteer!

It was a special time for me. Thanks go to past president Joe Rooney, who asked me to be communications chairman, John Kemp, for his amazing work ethic as program chairman, dear Dale Conroy for his excellent advice and wisdom, and efficient Joe Passiment. They are a credit to the club. I especially remember the glorious cruise we had on Port Royal Sound following the battle with Dr. Larry Rowland, local historian and professor emeritus at USC Beaufort, and Dr. Stephen Wise, Director of the Parris Island Museum providing the commentary.

I am moving home to Williamson County, Tennessee. I will be living near Franklin. The Battle of Franklin was fought on November 30, 1864, as part of the Franklin-Nashville campaign's Army of Tennessee that conducted numerous frontal assaults against fortified positions occupied by the Union forces under Maj. Gen. John M. Schofield. They were unable to break through or to prevent Schofield from executing a planned, orderly withdrawal to Nashville.

As a child, I remember riding my bike around the Battle of Nashville Monument. I have lived on nine significant Civil War battlefields in Tennessee and Georgia.

Many battles were fought in Tennessee, including the Battle of Shiloh, battles at Stone River, Chattanooga, Nashville, and Franklin. Tennessee was the last state to secede from the Union on May 17, 1861, and the first state to be readmitted to the Union on July 24, 1866.

I plan to become active with the Battle of Franklin Trust, which oversees the Carter House and Carnton Plantation. The Battle of Franklin was fought in the late afternoon and evening of November 30, 1864, and is recognized as some of the bloodiest hours of the Civil War. The Confederates suffered 6,606 casualties. Of the Union forces, 2,326 soldiers were killed. The **Carter House** was the command post of Maj. Gen. Jacob D. Cox, the Federal field commander of Schofield's delaying action. It became the

center of some of the heaviest fighting, as the Carter family and others huddled in the basement. By the morning of December 1, 1864, the home had been ravaged by bullets and parts of its roof splintered by cannon. East and south of the house, some 13 charges were made by Confederate soldiers. The most significant loss of general officers in the Civil War occurred in this battle. Captain Tod Carter, C.S.A., scion of the Carter family who had been with the army far from Franklin for much of the war, was mortally wounded on his family property and died in this house on December 2, 1864. **Carnton Plantation**, on November 30, 1864, was witness to the Battle of Franklin. Carnton became the largest field hospital in the area following the terrible battle, and in 1866 the McGavock Confederate Cemetery was established nearby. Today the cemetery holds the remains of nearly 1,500 Southern soldiers. Read *The Widow of the South*, the great book by Robert Hicks about Carrie McGavock, the hero of Carnton.

Hopefully, I can be a roving correspondent for the LCWRT and on occasion, forward Sandy a message about the Civil War in Tennessee.

Happy trails to you, until we meet again. Good luck in the future. God bless America!

With every good wish,

Caroline Wallace Kennedy

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## **Richard M. McMurry – Wednesday, December 4, 2019**

### ***Atlanta 1865: Last Chance for the Confederacy.***

The fall of Atlanta in September 1864 was an important strategic and psychological victory for the war-weary North, virtually assuring that the Union would win the Civil War while assisting Lincoln in his reelection efforts.

Richard M. McMurry, author of *Two Great Rebel Armies* and *John Bell Hood and the War for Southern Independence*, contributes a history of the decisive Atlanta Campaign to Brooks Simpson's and Anne Bailey's "Great Campaigns of the Civil War" series. Chronicling how the Union's western armies battled and outmaneuvered the Army of Tennessee of the strategic but increasingly symbolic city of Atlanta, McMurry describes the campaign as marked by William Sherman's inability to destroy the Confederate army in the field, Joseph Johnston's failure to block Union armies' turning moments, and the failure of John Bell Hood's imperfectly planned counterattacks to thwart the Northern offensive.

The opposing forces in the Western Theater readied themselves for the 1864 campaigning season, with William T. Sherman stockpiling supplies for his drive on Atlanta and Joseph E. Johnston strengthening and repairing the battle-worn Army of Tennessee. That May, Sherman put his three armies—the Army of the Cumberland, the Army of the Tennessee, and the Army of the Ohio—into motion against awaiting Confederate forces in northwestern Georgia, in coordination with Ulysses Grant's orders for multi-pronged strikes into what remained of the Confederacy. Rather than throwing his men against Johnston's heavily fortified ridge-top positions, Sherman fixed his opponent while launching turning movements intended to cut Johnston's Atlanta rail links and render his position

untenable. James McPherson's Army of the Tennessee successfully seized Snake Creek Gap, which Johnston had unwisely left undefended. Although McPherson withdrew after coming tantalizingly close to cutting Johnston's rail lines and possibly trapping his army, his maneuver successfully compromised the Confederates' defensive line, a move McMurry identifies as the truly decisive moment in the campaign rather than Atlanta's fall. In the ensuing pursuit, Sherman ordered several small-scale, unsuccessful assaults, culminating in a multi-corps attack bloodily repulsed at Kennesaw Mountain. Johnston sought an opportunity to pounce on an isolated portion of Sherman's forces but was frustrated by Union forces' increasing proclivity for protecting their gains with field fortifications. Seeking to sever Sherman's supply route to Chattanooga, Johnston requested cavalry reinforcements from beyond his department. Jefferson Davis, displeased that Johnston had retreated more than half the distance to Atlanta without substantially offering battle, instead replaced him with corps commander John Bell Hood, a decision McMurry praises but argues came too late in the campaign.

John Bell Hood, schooled in the successful flank attacks of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, planned to strike back at Sherman, first as his troops advanced south across Peachtree Creek. Hamstrung by a dysfunctional high command and inadequate staff personnel, Hood's poorly reconnoitered attack failed. The same fate met the attacks Hood launched as Sherman drew closer to Atlanta. The opposing armies settled into siege warfare for most of August, but Sherman, realizing the 1864 elections drew close, launched a new flanking movement around Hood's left. Union troops successfully cut Hood's remaining rail line at Jonesboro, then repulsed and drove off Confederate forces, forcing Hood's evacuation of Atlanta.

McMurry's *Atlanta 1864* brings considerable sophistication to the study of the campaign, keeping it in the perspective of the critical presidential election campaign and the blunted Northern offensives in Virginia and along the Red River. His appendix essay on the Election of 1864 persuasively argues that Johnston's summer withdrawal tipped the political scales in Lincoln's favor even before Atlanta's surrender. Sherman, he praises for his substantial logistical skill in the planning stages of the campaign but faults him for lacking the offensive tactical ability and an operational killing instinct that would have enabled him to seize opportunities to destroy the Army of Tennessee. McMurry highlights Johnston for successful building back up his army but criticizes his proclivity for retreat and mutually antagonistic command relationship with Jefferson Davis. Notably, he contrasts Confederate postwar accounts (embittered by Hood's confidant handling of his army during the subsequent Nashville campaign), which claimed high morale and absolute confidence in Johnston with contemporary evidence that Confederate troops were genuinely dispirited his characteristic retreats.

McMurry presents both Sherman and Johnston as possessing certain strengths but glaring faults, yet much the same could be said for his analysis at times. While he accurately describes imperfections in Sherman's martial abilities, McMurry brings an often overt hostility to Sherman, writing, "*Success and victory...are like spackling paste. All three can cover up a multitude of mistakes and false starts and hide errors. In so doing, they create a misleading picture of what lies beneath the surface appearances. So it has been with Sherman's Atlanta campaign,*" He resentfully insists Grant erred in passing over George Thomas for command of western forces in favor of loyal subordinate Sherman, claiming Thomas would have successfully trapped and destroyed Johnston even though he had scarcely ever demonstrated any military aggressiveness. McMurry mainly credits Union victory to Johnston's timidity and oversight, the long odds faced by Hood, and Union numerical superiority (by a supposedly daunting ratio of 1.35 to 1), effectively glossing over all but Sherman's most obvious positive contributions. Oddly, he also takes exception to Grant's strategy for coordinated strikes on the Confederacy, with its emphasis on preventing Confederate forces from shuttling troops to embattled sectors, a goal McMurry attributes to "Chickamauga fever." Supposedly, any major transfer from one of the main Confederate armies would have enabled a Union breakthrough in the depleted theater and

ended the war sooner. The problem with this reasoning is that, followed to its limit, Grant should have divined that Lee's and Johnston's armies were perfectly proportioned to delay his forces as long as possible, and thus he should have allowed one theater to stalemate in hopes of unbalancing Confederate defenses. Furthermore, it overlooks the limits of Grant's authority, unable to redirect Banks' misguided Red River Campaign or to nominate better commanders for secondary operations in Virginia than political appointees Franz Sigel and Benjamin Butler.

- Courtesy of Jonathan M. Steplyk, Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth, Texas

*Atlanta 1864: Last Chance for the Confederacy.* By Richard M. McMurry. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, c. 2000.)

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### **2019/20 Lecture Series for the LCWRT**

Jan. 30, 2020 Dr. David Stone "Vital Rails"  
Feb. 26, 2020 Jack Davis "Civil War Weather"  
Mar. 25, 2020 Jerry Morris "CSS Nashville"

**The December 4th meeting will be held in the Hidden Cypress ballroom!**  
**Please check each month's *Minie Ball Gazette* for meeting places in Sun City.**

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### **LOWCOUNTRY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE, INC. MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2019/2020**

Please **Print** All Information Below

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name First Name Badge Nickname

\_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name (Additional Household Member) First Name Badge Nickname

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Sun City Residents Only**

CAM number \_\_\_\_\_ CAM number \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

(We will keep this confidential!)

CURRENT MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_ NEW MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_

Household: Annual Membership (to Aug 31, 2020): \$40.00

We always need volunteers to continue making the LCWRT successful.

**Please check the area(s) for which you are willing to volunteer:**

\_\_\_ Program Committee: help select topics & speakers \_\_\_ Assist in Production/Distribution of the *Minie Ball Gazette*

\_\_\_ Assist on Program Night (Greeter, Collect Tickets or Guest Fees, Tally Program Attendance)

\_\_\_ Historian \_\_\_ Maintain Membership Roster \_\_\_ Work at Sun City Club Fair \_\_\_ Web Site Maintenance

Mail to or leave in "lower" box: **Joseph Passiment, 26 Schooner Lane, Bluffton, SC 29909-4305**

Make Check Payable to: **LCWRT Inc.** Any questions, please call **Joseph Passiment** at **732-995-2102**

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## LOWCOUNTRY CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE, INC.

### 2019-2020 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT John Allen 540 815 5651  
213 Shearwater Point Drive [woodystjohn@gmail.com](mailto:woodystjohn@gmail.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

VICE PRESIDENT Kay Allen 540 815 5651  
213 Shearwater Point Drive [babakayallen@gmail.com](mailto:babakayallen@gmail.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

TREASURER Ron Albert 207-205-7854  
156 Shearwater Point Drive [ralbert156@sc.rr.com](mailto:ralbert156@sc.rr.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

SECRETARY Dave McColloch 843-705-3060  
42 Concession Oak Drive [mccollochd@hargray.com](mailto:mccollochd@hargray.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

PAST PRESIDENT Mike Sweeney 843-707-7275  
318 Shearwater Point Drive [msweeney9@sc.rr.com](mailto:msweeney9@sc.rr.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

MEMBER-AT-LARGE Tom McNamara 843-707-0933  
56 Heron Bill Drive [tommcsr@yahoo.com](mailto:tommcsr@yahoo.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

### COMMITTEES

#### COMMUNICATIONS

Sandi Schroeder 843.705.9779  
23 Pink Camilla Court [sanindexschroederindexing.com](mailto:sanindexschroederindexing.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

John Foster 843-705-6444  
205 Benjamin Seabrook Court [fosterjp800@gmail.com](mailto:fosterjp800@gmail.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

#### MEMBERSHIP

Joe Passiment 732-995-2102  
26 Schooner Lane [passiment44@twc.com](mailto:passiment44@twc.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909 [joseph.passiment900@gmail.com](mailto:joseph.passiment900@gmail.com)

## **PROGRAMS**

Gene Sullivan 843-705-0964  
87 Doncaster Lane [etinh@hargray.com](mailto:etinh@hargray.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

John Kemp 201-845-4178  
317 Shearwater Point Drive [norwich68@gmail.com](mailto:norwich68@gmail.com)  
Bluffton, SC 29909

## **MINIÉ BALL GAZETTE**

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***NOTE: The website address for the Lowcountry Civil War Round Table  
(LCWRT) is: [www.lcwrtsquarespace.com](http://www.lcwrtsquarespace.com) and it  
can be used to get current and historical LCWRT information***