

## Friends of Wilderness Battlefield, Inc.

### 2022 Officers and Board of Directors

Bob Lookabill, President

Beth Stenstrom, Vice President

Stephanie Bianchi, Secretary

Jeff Slunt, Treasurer

### Directors

Suzanne Baxter     Gary Close

Kevin Hunt         Peter Kolakowski

Mark Leach         Joe Lefleur

Lynn McDonald     Greg Mertz

Ruth Pavlik         Don Shockey



**The Board of Directors of  
Friends of Wilderness Battlefield  
Host the 2022 Membership Meeting  
November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
at the  
Historic Wilderness Baptist Church  
Spotsylvania County, Virginia**

## **Annual Membership Business Meeting**

### Agenda

#### **Call to Order**

Bob Lookabill , President

#### **Declaration of a Quorum**

Stephanie Bianchi, Secretary

#### **Approval of 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes**

##### **2021 Financials**

Jeff Slunt, Treasurer

##### **President's Remarks**

Bob Lookabill

#### **Election of Members to the Board of Directors**

Pete Kolakowski, Governance Committee

#### **Announcements/Questions/Adjourn**

Bob Epp - Heritage membership presentation.

Beth Stenstrom -DAR presentation.

Lunch will follow the business meeting and then our guest speakers, Tom Van Winkle and Terry Rencell of CVBT.

Peter has been an active participant and member of several area nonprofits that preserve land and provide interpretation on the Civil War, U.S. Navy and other history of the area and Virginia. Peter lives in Madison, Wisconsin and continues to support history and preservation work and projects.

### **BETH STENSTROM (2023)**

#### **COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Beth is a Texas Aggie, earning her B.S. in Education, Curriculum and Instruction, and she received her M.Ed. from the University of Missouri in St. Louis in Psychological Counseling. She is a retired teacher who taught blind and visually impaired students at the Missouri School for the Blind for many years, and finished her career teaching Texas History to middle school students. She and her husband, Jim, are avocational archeologists, and have had quite a lot of experience with the Texas Archeology Society, the South Texas Archeology Association, and the Hill Country Archeology Association.

She is an officer in the Washington-Lewis DAR chapter in Fredericksburg, Virginia. She and her husband, Jim, are also charter members of the Friends of Chatham. Beth and Jim have a son and a daughter, three granddaughters, and one grandson. Hobbies include hiking, genealogy, photography, reading, and history!

### **Retiring Board Members - Mark Leach**

## **Gary Close (2023)**

A San Diego, California native, Gary grew up in and around Petersburg, Virginia, living amidst Civil War forts and artifacts. He received a BA, magna cum laude, in English Literature from the University of Virginia (Wise) and a Juris Doctorate from the College of William and Mary. He also completed two years of graduate studies in Mass Communication at the University of Tennessee.

Gary practiced law in the Culpeper area and in 1992 was elected Commonwealth's Attorney. For 20 years he served in that position before retiring. He developed an interest in genealogy which in turn led to an interest in Civil War history having discovered he is the descendent of three Union soldiers. One fought in the Battle of the Wilderness.

Besides his careers in journalism and law, Gary is an avid artist. His work is in the collection of the Culpeper County Museum and in the homes in Europe and the US. He is the author of "Breakout: The Roswell Legacy. Gary met his wife Linda during college, and they married a year after graduating and have two children.

## **PETER KOLAKOWSKI (2023)**

Peter was born in Manhattan, New York City and grew up in St. James, Long Island, New York. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and political science from Ripon College, Ripon, Wisconsin and a Master of Public Administration from American University. Peter was a resident of Fredericksburg since 1972.

Over his 40-year public service career, Peter first served in the U.S. Army for five years, then six years in executive management positions with the City of Fredericksburg, the last four as City Manager. He then worked in executive positions for VDOT for 15 years. His last 14 years before retirement was with the U.S. Navy at Naval Surface Warfare Center-Dahlgren Division as department head for operations.

## **From the President**

My first year as president, and the organization's 26<sup>th</sup> in existence, has been an eventful one. It was humbling to take over an organization with the fantastic national reputation that FoWB has for preserving, protecting and educating within and outside of the battlefield. The year was not without challenges, with the Park Service turning over their top three positions in the Park, and no formal agreement with the Park in place. However, with hard work and patience by all concerned, the year can certainly be considered a success. While attendance was less than it has been in years past, the lack of a Ranger at Saunders' Field will take a period of adjustment for visitors. Additionally, we spent much of the year under a mask mandate, did not interpret a full year and had no programs.

You will see by our financial report that we are sound in that area. That is largely due to several bequeaths from deceased former Board of Directors and several generous donations from current members at large. While we are financially sound, our membership has suffered a decline and rebuilding that base will be an area of focus in the coming year. We will hold some member only events to keep our current membership up and sponsor tours for non-members to attract new members.

Additionally we need to recruit more interpreters. We scrapped by this year thanks to the dedication of our work force, both interpretation and maintenance. However, without increased numbers I fear folks will burn out and lose interest. Recruitment is the key. The good news is previous interpreters have expressed an interest in returning to the force and we had several folks sign up at the Orange Street Fair. We annually solicit membership at the Fair in all areas of the organization but particularly for our Heritage program.

We are attempting to migrate our membership correspondence to an email format. While some folks will still require mailed correspondence

we think the savings will be significant enough to warrant the change. This will bring us in line with most other non-profit organizations.

A special thank you to the Ground Force. Det Wilkins and his crew always have the grounds looking immaculate but they were particularly stressed this year with several major storms creating havoc. Also recognition goes to the Board of Directors for their time and effort in making the organization go. Without the dedication of the committee chairs and the members of those committees, the organization would grind to a halt. We not only had turn over at the Park but FoWB had four new Board members and a new leadership team for 2022. With that much turnover it is always difficult that first year but I think we have a strong foundation to build on as we head into our next chapter.

Looking forward to 2023, we have a slate of projects we are excited about sharing with the new leadership within the Park. We hope to expand the trail network around the Battlefield and have additional signage installed to enhance the visitor's experience. We presented our first scholarship this year to a local high school student and sponsored two interns for the Park to help them with an anticipated manpower shortage. We want to continue and expand our research efforts in several areas.

Other possible projects include helping the Park overhaul their library to make it more user friendly. We have also talked about creating a movie for Ellwood, something which most visitor centers have. We also think the addition of historically accurate figures in the Warren Room would enhance the experience for visitors. Not everyone agrees with that approach but certainly worth discussing.

Lastly I want to thank our members and donors. Without your support we would not have had 2,437 visitors and 1,696 volunteer hours this year. Please let us know you are a member when you visit Ellwood and look for an email inviting you to a special member's only tour later this year or early next year at the latest. Feel free to email me any time. Bob Lookabill

## **Ruth Pavlik (Three Year Term 2024)**

A native of suburban Pittsburgh, PA, Ruth graduated from Clarion (PA) University with a BS in Elementary Education. However, the majority of her professional life was spent in the field of volunteer administration. For the 14 years prior to her 2015 retirement, she was the Volunteer Coordinator for Hospice of the Rapidan (now Hospice of the Piedmont) in Culpeper.

Ruth has made Virginia her home for almost all of her adult life--beginning in Arlington, with two stops in Fairfax County, then Warrenton, and finally moving into her current home in Lake of the Woods in 2005. When planning her life after retirement, FoWB was at the top of her list of prospective volunteer opportunities. She serves as an interpreter, is Coordinator of the Junior Ranger Program and is a member of several Committees. Ruth also volunteers at the Orange County Visitors Center and does clerical work for LOWLINC, a senior citizen assistance group. In addition to volunteering, she is an avid sports fan, especially football and baseball, loves to read, do needlework, and travel. Ruth is the mother of two daughters and grandmother of four.

## **Jeff Slunt (Three Year Term 2024)**

Jeff holds a Ph.D. degree in Microbiology from the University of Virginia. He works from home for PRA International on a large colorectal cancer clinical trial. His wife is professor at the Chemistry department at the University of Mary Washington and they have two children, Todd and Madeline.

In addition to his treasurer responsibilities at FoWB, Jeff also volunteers at Mary Washington Hospital. An avid student of the Civil War he takes every opportunity to learn more about the subject. He frequents Park activities such as the "History at Sunset" series and other lectures and symposiums

## Treasurer's 2022 Annual Report

Dated as of September 30, 2022

### Luminaria Checking Account

Balance 9/30/2021 \$7,968.48

Balance 9/30/2022 \$5,247.37

Change

### FoWB Operating Checking Account

Balance 9/30/2021 \$69,845.03

Balance 9/30/2022 \$74,794.02

Change

### FoWB Money Market Account (Reserve)

Balance 9/30/2021 \$20,122.36

Balance 9/30/2022 \$20,133.35

Change

Total Cash assets 9/30/2021 \$97,935.87

Total Cash assets 9/30/2022 \$94, 927.37

FoWB is a not for profit 501(C)(3) Tax ID 42-1689437. Their books on a cash basis.

## Greg Mertz (Three Year Term 2024)

Greg was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. His interest in the Civil War developed as the result of the annual hiking and camping trips his Boy Scout troop took to Shiloh National Military Park in Tennessee, which helped him earn his rank as Eagle Scout. Greg earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Recreation and Park Administration from the University of (Missouri) in 1978. Six years later while working for the NPS he received his Master of Science degree from Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania.

Greg began his NPS career in 1980 as a Park Ranger at Gettysburg NMP and Eisenhower National Historic Site. Four years later he was assigned to the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP. He initially served as site historian at "Stonewall" Jackson Death Site. His next assignment was as site historian and curator at the Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitor Center. Greg's last assignment was as the Supervisory Historian for the F&SNMP in charge of visitor operations. Greg retired in 2021 with 40 years.

Greg's trained hundreds of seasonal employees, interns and volunteers on researching and conducting interpretive programs. Greg conducted numerous tours as well as authored many Civil War articles for numerous national publications. He also authored the book "Attack Them at Daylight and Whip Them: The Battle of Shiloh, April 6-7, 1862".

## **FoWB Annual Membership Meeting Minutes for the Saturday, 13 November 2021 session.**

President Leach called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM. Acting Secretary McDonald announced a quorum was present and attendance was 64 members. The 2020 minutes and the 2021 financial statement were approved.

President Leach presented highlights from the year. He stated he was pleased with the financial state of the organization and membership was at 220 members. He mentioned that at the Park's request we had six folks receive background investigations. This required filling out forms and traveling to Shenandoah Park to be electronically fingerprinted. He mentioned the new website which he hoped would be active in January 2022. President Leach then announced his retirement as president, but agreed to stay one additional year on the Board.

Superintendent Kirsten Talken-Spaulding spoke to the meeting, covering changes to the Park system and that with thoughtful planning our partnership will continue to endure.

Director Kolakowski moved that the slate of new Board members, Stephanie Bianchi, Joe Lefleur, Greg Mertz, and returning members Baxter, Pavlik, and Slunt be accepted. That motion was seconded and unanimously approved. Director Epp made presentations to new Heritage Program inductees and presented some membership pins to interpreters.

President Leach adjourned the meeting at 1215.

## **Stephanie Bianchi (Three Year Term 2024)**

Stephanie received a B.S. in Biology with minors in Chemistry and Anthropology from the University of Arizona, and a Master's in Information Science from the University of Maryland. She served as a reference librarian at Georgetown University, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Department of State. She was library director at the Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality, the U.S. EPA's Corvallis Research Laboratory, and the National Science Foundation.

She has lived in Fredericksburg since retiring from federal service. She enjoys caring for her horses, mule, and dogs, gardening, and making quilts. She is a fan of Old Time Radio and has an extensive collection of radio programs from the 30's, 40's, 50's, and 60's. She participates in the Great Backyard Bird Count.

## **Joe LaFleur (Two Year Term 2023)**

Joe was born in Montgomery County, MD. His schooling through junior college was in Darnestown. After three summers in Spain, a few university courses and various certifications, Joe was led to Northern Virginia construction management jobs. Years of managing large commercial construction projects and contracting residential jobs ended in frequent work and falling in love with the Wilderness. He and his wife Katy bought their home on the Battlefield in 2005, piquing his interest to explore and study the area.

Walking his dog at Ellwood Joe met the Grounds Force and began working with them. He began as an interpreter at Ellwood in 2015 and also took FoWB's stewardship of the Wilderness Tract. Joe monitors and maintains the property for public use, mainly from Boy and Girl Scout camping and history study.

**\*\*Don Shockey (2025)**

Don was born and grew up in Lafayette, Indiana. He holds a BS in Business Management and a MS in Business Administration and is DA Certified Level III in Acquisition Logistics. Don joined the US Army serving in the areas of communications and intelligence. In addition to a number of assignments in the US he had overseas assignments to Korea, Germany, and Italy. He retired as a CWO

After retirement he continued to serve the US Army as an Army Civilian with the Communications - Electronics Command serving as a branch chief, retiring in 2016. Don has had a lifelong interest in Civil War and family history. He has five great grandfathers who served in the Civil War. One of those ancestors was in the 10th Pennsylvania Reserves and served with the 5th Corps at the Battle of Wilderness. Don has been an Ellwood interpreter since 2017.

**Continuing Board Members**

**Suzanne Baxter (Three Year term 2024)**

Suzanne M. Baxter and her husband Mark, retired to the Lake of the Woods in 2016. They looked for a community close to children, grandchildren and a lake and a golf course.

Suzanne was born and grew up in Niagara Falls, NY. She and Mark met in high school and they married after college, and have lived in Niagara Falls and Fairfax, Virginia, before coming the LoW. They have two children and five grandchildren.

Suzanne is a graduate of SUNY at Geneseo, with a BS in Library Science and an MS from Niagara University in Educational Administration. Suzanne's career included 26 years in Catholic education as a high school librarian she retired as head librarian. In addition, she worked many years in private industry as a technical librarian. Also she has previous volunteer work with the Humane Society of Fairfax, Girl Scout adult education and PTA president.

**Ellwood Committee Report**

*Don Shockey - Chair*

Visitors for 2022 totaled 2,437. Volunteer interpreter hours totaled 1,696.

While we opened to the public later than usual this year, we did receive Park training and added four new interpreters to the force. It is difficult to assess the impact of the pandemic on attendance but it is safe to say the mask mandate alone caused some folks to not enter the house. The lack of special programs on the property also contributed to the lower numbers although it is difficult to place an exact number due to that issue. We also had a shortened season, opening on 9 May and closing 9 October. We hope to increase our number of interpreters in the coming year and return our "newbie" training regime to the program.

**Battlefield Resources Committee Report**

*Kevin Hunt - Chair*

*Det Wilkins, Ellwood site chair*

Battlefield Ground Force (BGF) continued to provide outstanding upkeep to the grounds and several associated Wilderness Battlefield grounds. Work is performed year round with a major emphasis this year on clearing dead fall from the various storms we have endured. Park Day was cancelled again this year, the downed trees making it unsafe for volunteers. A special thank you to Joe Lefleur for maintaining and stewarding the Wilderness Tract for FoWB. All required reports were filed with the State.

## **Communications Committee Report**

*Beth Stenstrom - Chair*

The Communications Committee is responsible for the website and when the new Park agreement is completed we can go active with the site. This will be a major improvement over the old site. The chair co-administers the Facebook page and the constant Contact account which has over 1,200 contacts. The committee also sends out a most impressive newsletter four times a year and handles press releases in coordination with the Park and special use permits when required.

## **Governance Committee Report**

*Pete Kolakowski - Chair*

The governance committee is responsible for keeping our by-laws updated and serving as the Nominating Committee for the Board of Directors. They have identified candidates and will present five candidates for the Class of 2025 and one nominee to fill a vacancy for the Class of 2023 at the annual meeting. The Governance Committee is always looking for new members from the general membership. If you think you might be interested please contact Pete Kolakowski and he can provide details.

Since joining FoWB in 2014, he has volunteered as an interpreter at Ellwood and served on the Ellwood committee since 2016. He has always been interested in history, and was excited to move to Spotsylvania. His interest in Civil War history peaked when he had the opportunity to participate in several staff rides including tours of Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Antietam.

## **\*\*Bob Lookabill (2025)**

Bob was born in West Virginia. He holds a Master's Degree in history from Marshall University and in Strategic Studies from the Naval War College at Newport. After teaching history and coaching baseball and football at the high school level for ten years Bob took a position with the Defense Intelligence Agency. After his retirement from DIA, worked for several defense contractors, both overseas and in the States. He is fully retired. He is a retired Navy Reserve Captain. He has been an interpreter at Ellwood for twelve years and currently serves as President. He is a member of the Fredericksburg Civil War Roundtable He has two sons and three grandsons.

## **\*\*Lynn McDonald (2025)**

Lynn McDonald grew up as an "army brat" until her parents landed in Virginia in the 1970s. Her education and working life was spent in Northern Virginia. Her employment was in administration and technical work for The MITRE Corporation where she produced technical reports for over 30 years.

Lynn's interests are primarily in history and nature. One of her favorite childhood memories was family camping trips, especially in a wilderness. Her parents lived on Mine Run Road where she discovered the Wilderness Battlefield. When she discovered it was the first battle between Grant and Lee, Lynn did a deep dive into the story and has now become involved with the work preserving the story. Lynn now resides in Orange County. She has one son, Zach, living in Northern VA and extended family in the area.



## **Beverly Ellis (Three Year Term 2025)**

Beverly grew up in western Pennsylvania until age fourteen when her family moved to Woodbridge. She has lived in Virginia most of her life. She and her husband Norman moved to Fredericksburg in 1996, building in the Chancellorsville area. They have two sons, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Beverly and Norman's children live in Spotsylvania County and Falls Church, Virginia. Beverly has a bachelor's and a master's degree in U.S. History from George Mason University, with an emphasis in antebellum South and the Civil War. She taught U.S. history in Prince William County for over thirty years and worked in teacher support areas part-time for another seven years, retiring in 2015.

Beverly loves to travel and has visited many countries around the world, including Israel, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Mexico, France, Spain, and England. She also loves history, and with her husband has visited many historical sites all over the U.S. She is an avid reader, quilter, knitter, and scrap booker. When Beverly retired, she continues her love of music by taking piano lessons, which she had not taken since childhood. Beverly is very active in her church, Wilderness Community Church, which she and her husband helped plant in 1999. Most importantly, she loves spending time with her family and friends.

## **\*\*Kevin Hunt (2025)**

Kevin was born in Worcester, MA. He graduated from UMass-Dartmouth (then known as Southeastern Massachusetts University) with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering and from George Washington University with a Masters in Engineering Administration. He moved to Virginia in 1979 and worked at the US Army's Night Vision Laboratory as a systems engineer until he retired in 2013.

## **Membership Committee Report**

*Bob Lookabill/Beth Stenstrom - Co-Chairs*

With the retirement of Milbrey Bartholow, Bob and Beth have tried to keep membership afloat until a permanent replacement can be found. We notify members when renewals are due. Our membership continues to decline, a problem faced by most non-profits we have spoken to. Regenerating membership will be a major focus going forward in 2023 as well as finding a permanent chairperson.

## **Heritage Committee Report**

*Bob Lookabill - Acting Chairman*

Unfortunately, due to personal reasons, Dan Sheron was forced to resign as chairman. A new chairperson will be appointed in 2023. The Heritage program has added at least six new members and has a few in the pipeline. Membership in the Heritage program honors a relative who served in the military at the Wilderness or a civilian relative who had some affiliation with Ellwood. The Staff will assist you in researching and preparing your package. Bob Epp would be your point of contact at Ellwood via the website.

## Education and Outreach Committee

*Currently Vacant*

The Outreach chair resigned late in the year as we had little activity without a signed agreement with the Park. They did coordinate a fantastic program featuring retired Park historian John Hennessey. John's talk was titled "War to Utter Submission" and concerned the local area after the Civil War ended. It was held at the Fawn Lake Country Club and was very well attended. The History in Our Backyard series, headed up by editor Mike Mikoloskos, continues to provide interesting and informative historical articles for various publications in the local area.

## Program Committee

*Currently Vacant*

The once robust FoWB programs committee fell victim to the lack of a signed agreement with the Park. We usually sponsor about 8 activities throughout the year highlighted by a Battle of the Wilderness Anniversary program. We hope to resume these programs once the agreement is signed.

## Nominations for Board of Directors

**\*\* Denotes Incumbent Member Nominated for Re-election**

### **Ben Hamm (One Year Term 2023)**

Ben was born and grew up in a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. When he was in eighth grade he wrote his first term paper on the Battle of Gettysburg. He was cited by his teacher for outstanding work and received an A+. He later attended Gettysburg College where he spent many weekends roaming the battlefield.

He graduated with a degree in political science, joined the Peace Corps working in Afghanistan in a rural development program. Upon completion of his service he backpacked thru East Africa and Asia, camping on the Serengeti, viewing Mountain Gorillas, trekking in the Himalayas and Burma.

He received a Master of Science degree in forest ecology and soil science from the University of New Hampshire. He spent the next eight years as a Soil Scientist in Utah, on the Tongass National Forest in Alaska and on the Navajo Tribal Reservation in Arizona. He spent the next 22 years working for the Environmental Protection Agency cleaning up contaminated properties in the Superfund Program. He worked on the Community Empowerment Board in the Office of Vice-President Al Gore. Ben and his wife Maureen have three adult children and two grandchildren. Ben and Maureen are Master Naturalists. He has been at interpreter at Ellwood for two seasons. In his spare time he reads American history books and hikes and bikes on the local battlefields.





