



# THE GRAPESHOT

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.meets @

Scottsdale Civic Center Library  
(Auditorium)

3839 N Drinkwater Blvd  
Scottsdale AZ

3rd Tuesday of the month

September thru May

(no meeting December)

6:40 PM - 8:45 PM

\$35 Annual Dues (individual)

\$45 Annual Dues (family)

**EVERYONE WELCOME**

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## AN EVENING WITH ED BEARSS



## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

JANUARY 21, 2014

6:40 PM

Scottsdale Civic Center Library  
(Auditorium)

The “Civil War Walking Encyclopedia” is back! Edwin C. Bearss, U.S Park Historian, Emeritus, is one of the foremost Civil War historians on the planet. Growing up on a rugged family cattle ranch in Montana through the depths of the Great Depression, listening to his father (a Marine in World War I) read accounts of military campaigns, jump-started his lifelong interest in military history. His favorite milk cow was named Antietam. Bearss is a celebrated tour guide, lecturer, author and authority on all aspects of our Civil War. *Smithsonian Magazine* featured him in 2006 as “an American who made a difference.” He has also been called “The Homer of the American Civil War.” Bearss was a featured commentator for Ken Burns’ PBS Series, *The Civil War* (1990), which is still the most popular program broadcast by that network to date. The Civil War Trust created the Edwin C. Bearss Lifetime Achievement Award for achievements in historic preservation, and made him the first recipient in 2001. This U.S. Marine Corps veteran of World War II is a speaker much in demand, and has a busy schedule leading tours of historic battlefields. We are fortunate to have him speaking to our group once again and in a bit of a different format with a question and answer session.

## BOOKWORMS IN THE BASEMENT- A Point of View on Civil War Reading

By Bill Spoehr  
SCWRT Member



### *LIKE ALICE, "FOLLOW THE RABBIT"*

Retired West Point history instructor, Col. John Votaw, Ph.D., believes readers "must decide what they are seeking and frame questions to be asked while reading", for asking good questions reduces "aimless wandering" through the vast looking glass of Civil War books and articles.

For Votaw, "the study of history is not a great search for details in the pages of dusty books; it involves the discovery of knowledge in the broader sense and the enrichment of the intellect." Thus, "thoughtful" readers interact with their books and ask questions along the way - and, as author Carol Reardon has commented: "Once they learn to ask questions - look out!"

Sir Michael Howard, the British military historian, said that a "general rule of study" is to approach history "in width, in depth, and in context". *Width*, a broad reading on a number of topics, develops an appreciation of change and a "flexibility of mind", for "only by seeing what does change can one deduce what does not." For example, reviewing Lee's tactics at Second Manassas and Chancellorsville clearly foreshadows Norman Schwarzkopf's 1991 ground campaign in Iraq.

*Depth* encourages exploring a topic through varied sources; readers "must get behind the order subsequently imposed by the historian, and recreate by detailed study the omnipresence of chaos, revealing the part played not only by skill and planning and courage, but by sheer good luck." Votaw rightly observes that "History is not an exact science"; deep reading provides a solid foundation for your own conclusions and opinions, and a substantive basis for questioning accepted "truths".

Finally, Howard challenges readers to consider *Context*. Wars are the tangible evidence of societies in conflict, and are "fully understood only if one understands the nature of the society fighting them." Social, political and economic histories, antebellum, wartime and reconstruction era memoirs and writings, among others, are essential to a more objective and complete understanding of the Civil War.

Do I follow my own advice and have an approach to reading? Um, well, sort of. I've learned that an interesting subject causes deeper reading. While in the depths, less familiar topics appear; following those "white rabbits" wherever they lead provides width and context. My 2013 experiences plunged me further into Gettysburg (I am a Gettysburg-phile) with 2 trips to the battlefield and books on the campaign and the Iron Brigade. Allen Guelzo's commentary on the Army of the Potomac's political diversity led me to volumes on 19th century American society and politics. All is not ordered and logical, however, for Robert Citino's *The Wehrmacht Retreats* somehow crept onto the summer's nightstand, while *Lee's Lieutenants* remained my constant companion on plane flights.

So, like the snowy hare, we're late for our date with history. Off to 2014 - I'm certain a wonderful journey is ahead. Happy New Year!

*Bill Spoehr, an accounting executive, holds a M.A. in Military History, cum laude, from Norwich University, and B.S. in Economics from Allegheny College, where he also minored in History. His great-grandfather served with the 198th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry from 1864-65.*



### UPCOMING ROUND TABLES:

- Feb 18th : **Terry Winschel**...*Shut Up As In A Trap: Citizens Under Siege*  
Mar 18th: **Eric Mink**.... *A Sternness to His Countenance: Stonewall Jackson in Pictures & Art*

### UPCOMING EXHIBIT & PROGRAMS AT CIVIC CENTER LIBRARY (in collaboration with the SCWRT)

February 5 - March 21, 2014....  
*Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*

February 5, 2014...7:00 PM  
Daniel Stashower presents.....*The Hour of Peril: The Secret Plot to Murder Lincoln*

February 20, 2014...6:30 PM  
Professor Brooks Simpson presents *Lincoln And The Constitution: Disunion and Dissent, Slavery and Freedom*

April 1 - 21, 2014  
Civil War 150