

The Washington Post

JULY 30, 1995

Magazine

# Field of Fire


WAR AND REMEMBRANCE AT ANTIETAM BY PETER CARLSON





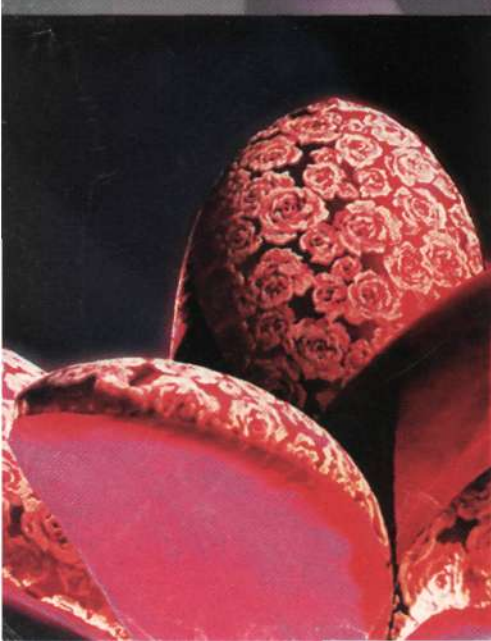
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President Lincoln meets with Gen. McClellan at Antietam on October 4, 1862, shortly before relieving him of command. Page 10.

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The people who visit the Civil War battlefield known as Antietam come searching for something—a fallen ancestor, a glimpse of history, a place to contemplate their country. What they find is an American tragedy—and the ground on which a nation's fate was determined **BY PETER CARLSON**



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Life is a competition: That's what she was taught at the parental knee. So when she ran into an ex-boyfriend her husband knew nothing about, there was only one thing to do **BY JENNIFER MOSES**

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### POETRY IN MOTION

WALT HARRINGTON'S "THE SHAPE OF HER Dreaming" [May 7], on Poet Laureate Rita Dove, was at least three times a wonder: beautifully written, terrific subject and a wondrous look at the creative process at work. As we follow Dove whittling one of her lambent creations, we can only marvel at this insight into the artist at work and the resulting gift of beauty born. And we feel we were there!

ROGER FENDRICH  
Bethesda

WALT HARRINGTON'S COVER PIECE IS HIS poetry. Rita Dove's poetry is her soul. Both writers widened our world. *Ad astra.*

RICHARD H. GRAMANN  
McLean

I'VE BEEN PRESENT AT MANY DELIVERIES, and I always cry at the moment of birth. Maybe that's why Walt Harrington's sensitive treatment of Rita Dove's work brought me to tears. I loved witnessing the birth of her poem! In addition, we readers were treated to a view of a poem's conception and gestation seldom available outside the fecund mind of the poet. Good stuff!

Then again, maybe I wept to see the agencies even a "real" poet goes through to deliver a viable creature. I remember thinking, "Yes, yes, that's how it is!" each time the poet tried a new form, discarded it and tried again. And I knew I was not alone, that no poet labors alone, as long as someone can write and print a story like "The Shape of Her Dreaming."

C.C. HIGGINS  
Alexandria

### STRAIGHT SHOOTER

"THE RIFLEMAN" [MAY 7] WAS A WONDERFUL, informative and basically unbiased article without the usual anti-NRA and anti-firearm cant of The Washington Post.

I suspect Patrick Symmes' original in-

tention was to expose the Office of the Director of Civilian Marksmanship as a government boondoggle that, in addition to wasting the taxpayers' money, contributes to the crime problem or the murder rate or something like that. In spite of the gratuitous sidebar sniping of Guy Gugliotta ["Pork Barrel Potshots"], who calls the DCM and its funding "stupid" without any substantiation, the piece was a refreshing journal of discovery for author Symmes, who discovered that gun enthusiasts are not wackos and that their sports are difficult and practice intensive.

As for his feelings, when he received his DCM gun, that his training had evaporated and his scores were not too good, there is but one cure—practice, and lots of it.

KEITH G. GRAHAM  
Fairfax

I WAS PLEASED TO SEE, FOR A CHANGE, A reasonable article in The Post about an aspect of the shooting sports. But I don't see why it had to be offset by Guy Gugliotta's polemic. I would suggest to Mr. Gugliotta that it is hard to understate the importance of the rifle—and the rifleman—in all of the wars since that weapon was developed, even after "machine guns made it possible to kill tens of thousands in a single day, almost without aiming." If the DCM programs have contributed to that importance, or to firearms safety, they're well worth it.

WILLIAM E. BONSTEEL  
Chevy Chase

### A MOTHER IS BORN

I WAS TOUCHED BY THE STORY OF PAT AND Lenox Barzey Trams ["Mother and Child Reunion," May 14], and I don't think Pat gives herself enough credit. How many confessed free spirits—how many of us, period—would have the patience and dedication to go through with an interracial, intercultural adoption, no matter how "romantic" it seems? Becoming a parent is the biggest commitment you can make.

Because Pat didn't experience the complete dependence of a baby, she may have judged Lenox more self-sufficient than he was at various stages. But many of her "mistakes" are the struggles that all parents face. We're all in love, to some degree, with a fantasy child, and we all have to decide how much of ourselves we impose on that child, and what he or she needs. And just when we've figured it out, it changes!

Welcome to parenthood, Pat. When you doubt yourself, look at that handsome and

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PAULA NOVASH LEAHY  
Severna Park

PAT TRAMS'S ARTICLE WAS A WONDERFUL Mother's Day piece. In a time when numerous adjectives that modify the word "mother" are often contemptuous (well-fare, single, working, lesbian), I congratulate you on choosing a piece that underscores the universal nature of motherhood, despite the myriad different presentations and contexts in which it occurs.

It reminds us again that not only does the mother "give birth to the child," the child "gives birth to the mother." Rarely do these two events happen at precisely the same moment. The birth of a child takes hours. The birth of a mother can take a lifetime.

MARTHA M. MANNING  
Arlington

### IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE . . .

MARC FISHER'S ARTICLE "HOW UGLY ARE We Really?" [May 14] addressed the German reaction to the Holocaust Memorial Museum. According to a speechwriter for Helmut Kohl, "We cannot understand why America wants its young people to go to that museum and come out saying, 'My God, how can we be allies with that den of devils?'"

As an American Jew I must say I do not see the Germans as devils. I see them—back in the '30s—as a population frustrated by economic setbacks, saddled with a weak, indecisive government, responding to the charm of a forceful leader who spoke with revolutionary fervor of his plan for restoring the glory of the fatherland. That his plan (his contract with Germany) consisted of simplistic solutions to complex problems was of no matter; his vision was broad and so was his appeal. Young politicians, thankful to him for their rise to prominence, rose to shout his name in unison every time he spoke.

Forceful leader, revolutionary fervor, simplistic solutions to complex problems, grateful young politicians—why does this all sound so familiar?

LEONARD GREENBERG  
Sterling

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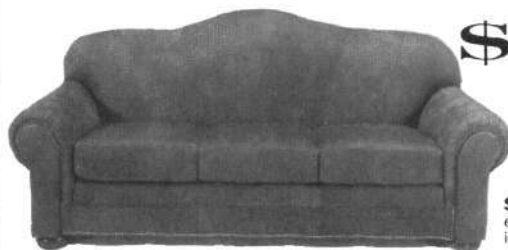


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## Loan Ranger

**T**HE PRESIDENT OF Chase Manhattan Bank, James C. Drozanowski, has written me a letter. It's a nice letter, on handsome stationery. Mr. Drozanowski suggests that I take a look at the interest rates on my monthly credit card statements. Then, in really gigantic purple letters, Mr. Drozanowski offers me a Visa with a "7.9 percent variable APR. Yes, you read it correctly. 7.9 percent APR."

I never think of bank presidents as the gigantic-purple-letter type, but there it is.

Usually, I like to answer my mail. But what should I say to Mr. Drozanowski? Should I tell him about Mr. Gooden? I've also received a nice letter from Bruce Gooden, senior vice president of FCC National Bank. Mr. Gooden says I have "an excellent credit history." He offers me a Visa Gold card with no annual fee and a fixed APR of only 6.9 percent. Then he says, "REMOVE GOLD STICKER FROM TOP OF LETTER AND PLACE HERE."

I never think of bank senior vice presidents as the gold-sticker type, but there it is.

Nigel W. Morris, president of Capital One, has also sent me a letter. Actually, Mr. Morris has sent me a lot of letters. He's probably my favorite bank president. This time Mr. Morris is telling me that I am one of his *best* customers and, because of that, he wants me to *save money today!* Well, Mr. Morris tends to use a lot of *italics and exclamation points!* Come to think of it, *a lot of bank presidents do!* You get used to it! Anyway, this time, Mr. Morris suggests that I transfer my balances to my Capital One account, all at my "low fixed APR of 5.9 percent!"

Yes, you read it correctly. 5.9 percent. This is why Mr. Morris is my favorite bank president. The problem is, Mr. Morris is planning to turn my beautiful 5.9 percent to a hideous 15.4 percent in October, so soon I'll be having to say goodbye to him. I feel kind of rude about that. He's been good to me.

But there are other bank presidents. Four inches worth of bank presidents, to be exact. That's how thick my pile of credit card offers is now. That's because I throw most of them away. The ones I deem worth reading—any offer with a teaser rate lower than 9 percent—I put in a wicker basket on my dining-room radiator where my cat Steve sometimes sleeps. When the pile exceeds six inches, Steve can't fit in the basket. So I throw the ones from the bottom away.

When I have a major purchase to make, I shoo Steve and start opening the letters.

Recently, it became apparent that I needed to spend \$4,000 on an amazing new multimedia computer. Why I need a new computer I won't go into now, except to say it has to do with a spilled Pepsi and a fried motherboard.

Anyway, I would never write a check for the price of the new computer and go on my merry debt-free way. In this day of plastic financing, that would be just plain silly.

For instance, if I charged my new computer to a Volkswagen Visa, I could get a 5 percent rebate toward the purchase of a new Volkswagen. If I said yes to a Shell MasterCard, I could earn 2 percent toward gasoline purchases. If I signed up for a Rolling Stones Visa, I could get discounts on Stones merchandise.

And if I charged my new computer to my current, beloved USAir Visa card, I could get 4,000 frequent-flier miles. Which is what I figure on doing. But the interest rate on that card is 18.9 percent, so naturally I'll need to transfer the balance over to Mr. Morris's 5.9 percent card until October, when I can transfer it over to Mr. Gooden's or Mr. Drozanowski's card. Unless a better offer comes in—for, say, a four-feature phone and a three-month membership in

Shoppers Advantage for only \$1, like I just got from Tom Spitale, manager of GE Card Services.

It's hard to decide. I still have about two more inches worth of letters to open. I'm organizing them very carefully. I have a chart. Name of bank. Teaser rate. Teaser rate expiration date. Annual fee. Bonus offers. I thus compare each offer. It occurs to me that I need my new multimedia computer to calculate the best financing deal to make on the purchase of my new multimedia computer.



I am spending an otherwise delicious summer evening swimming with the plastic loan sharks.

I'm not sure this is what philosopher Edward Bellamy was imagining in 1888, when he foresaw a world where money would be replaced by a card. That card would have been based on the credit workers built up by their labor. These cards are based on money that has yet to be earned.

Something has happened to the relationship between money and labor. Remember? There was something satisfying about stacking quarters into towers that stood as tangible symbols of the work you did, the lawns you mowed and the cars you washed. Those metal objects meant you contributed to the world.

What do these plastic objects we now collect mean? Something about freedom, we're told. Freedom from cash. Now I'm free to consume before I contribute.

And so. And so I am spending an otherwise delicious summer evening swimming with the plastic loan sharks. I hear the neighbor kids playing street hockey. I have a swift impulse, barely even a thought, to join them, to be 12 again, or younger, 6.9 percent younger than my youngest year, and live in a time when the neighborhood grocer would put the salami on your tab with a simple nod. ■



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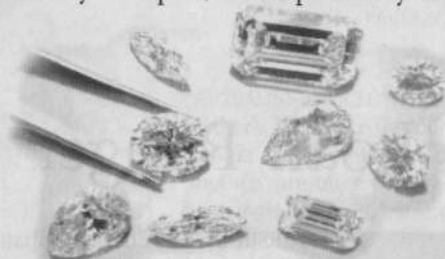
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# Movement for Piano

They're halfway up, too far to stop, and so they keep heaving even as the splintering of cheap plywood shatters the Saturday morning calm: Three men and a baby grand crest the make-shift ramp and come to rest on a landing.

Two steps done. Twelve to go.

Above them, up on another landing just outside the front door of this town house in McLean, stands Marianne Carter, who could be a ringer for Michelle Pfeiffer. She likes to sing at parties. Behind them, out on the street, is the truck. "PIANO PORTERS," it says on the side. "We baby your grand."

The three men have just pushed Marianne's new Weber piano from the back of the truck to the hydraulic gate, lowered it to the ground, and slid it from the gate onto a dolly. Then they rolled it up the sidewalk and over the plywood they laid upon those two small steps.

Marianne's piano now rests before the main stairs. It is swaddled and trussed with quilting and straps, standing legless on its long narrow side like a giant slice of toast with a bite taken out. It's worth \$8,000. It weighs 700 pounds.

Given the length of the piano and the pitch of the stairs, they can no longer roll it. Now it's goodbye, dolly.

"Let's go," says Brian Porter. He is the boss, he being the owner of the business, but he and the other two guys, Jim Beams and William Barry, have known each other since elementary school. Brian and Jim, both 36, are of average size, but they have square shoulders, cannonball biceps, legs that look like an anatomical drawing made flesh. William, the baby at 31, is barrel-chested and huge. He is also uncrushable, and they've proved it.

They lay more plywood on the stairs and rock the dolly easily from beneath the piano, leaving it aimed upward on the steps. Brian gets down on his

haunches and puts his right shoulder to the base of the piano. William stands above, ready to pull it by one of the straps. Jim scurries about, adjusting the plywood and ready to pull where he can.

"Ready, William?" Brian asks.

"Yeah."

"Ready, Jim?"

"Yeah."

A long silence ensues, during which Brian works his fingers left and right, micro-adjusting his grip.

"One," he says.

"Two."

"Three."

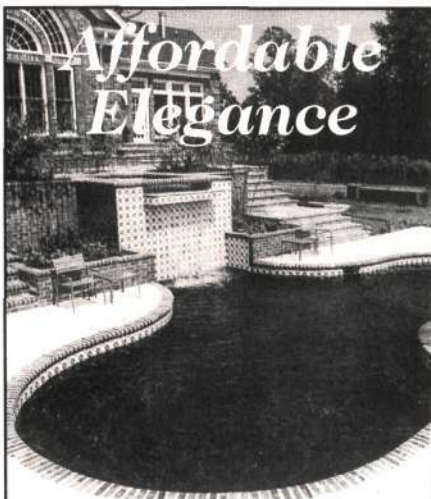
"HUHNNN!!" Brian says, loud as a cyclone ripping a house off its foundations.

The piano slides up one step.

"One. Two. Three. HUHNNN!"







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## R E A L T I M E

The piano is up two steps.  
Brian keeps calling out the cadence: "One. Two. Three. HUHHNN! One. Two. Three. HUHHNN! One. Two. Three. HUHHNN!"

The piano is most of the way up, and here it rests for a moment. But the men do not rest. While William and Jim wriggle around the crowded stairs to reach just the plywood, Brian holds the 700 pounds in place. His face assumes the look of an overripe pomegranate ready to burst.

"You got traction, babe?" William asks his boss.

Brian nods, and then they are back to it. "All set?" he asks.

"Yup," says William.

"Yup," says Jim.

"On three," Brian says, and he counts cadence again and emits another HUHHNN!

"Okay," says Jim. "We're over the top." And then there is a raw scraping and the piano begins to slide back down and there is that familiar sound of plywood splintering and Jim says very quickly "Okaymaybenot" and he and William throw their weight into it and stop the piano just as Brian is beginning to see black-and-white newsreels of his life.

They try again. Brian's voice rings out through the hushed subdivision: "One. Two. Three. HUHHNN!"

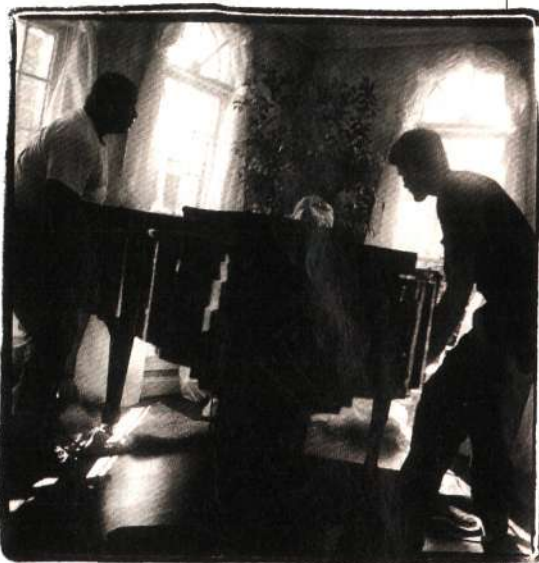
The Weber's nose moves firmly over the top, and one more heave puts its middle safely over, too. William leans on the front, gently levering the last 200 pounds of piano into the air, and then Jim gives it a push and the whole thing slides onto the landing.

Brian is not moving. He is bent over on the steps, hands on knees, ripping great gasps of oxygen out of the air. He remains this way for one minute and 10 seconds. Slowly his face reemerges from the monstrous red mask and he stands up and looks around, as though he had forgotten where he was.

To get the piano in the door, they have to rotate it left 90 degrees on a brick landing crowded with plants and people, then go up a single step and through the door.

All Jim has to say is "Angle, slide, angle, slide," and Brian and William nod and take up positions. William is on the outside, leaning against the railing. He allows as how this reminds him of the time a piano went out of control and broke

William allows as how this reminds him of the time a piano went out of control and broke through a railing and took him with it.



through a railing and took him with it, driving him into the ground as if he were Wile E. Coyote. He was unconscious for a couple of minutes.

"No big deal," he says.

Jim and William grab the heavy gray straps and rock the piano counterclockwise a few inches at a time while Brian pushes and pulls from the rear, using every inch of the landing to squeeze the rear end around. Once the piano is aimed straight at the door, they give a quick huff and the nose is inside the house. This is easy. They are relaxed and chatting.

They give another huff, pushing the piano farther inside along the left side of the doorjamb, and when they let go the whole world freezes, the clocks in the house stop ticking, and every pair of eyes watches the piano: It is tipping to the right, it leans just to the edge of going over, and yet no one can move fast enough to catch it. This time, gravity cooperates: The Weber tilts back toward its center and keeps on going until it thuds against the left side of the doorjamb. A random chord rings out into the street.



## REAL TIME

A few minutes later the piano is in the living room, still on its side. The three men slide it around the glassy black floor, smooth as a skating rink. They turn it this way and that, spin it around like a 700-pound top, and begin the undressing: First the straps come off, then the padding, then a double layer of plastic.

There is the piano: lustrous black, dustless, as reflective as a mirror. With screwdrivers they attach two of the three legs and then gently roll the instrument right-side up. They put the third leg under it, and there it is. Brian crawls around banging on the undercarriage with a rubber mallet, checking the fit of the parts.

It has taken 15 minutes to move the Weber 60 feet and up the stairs. Moving it the last inch takes longer.

"A little more this way," Marianne says, and they push it a little more that way. "This part should come this way," she says, and it does. "You should move this way a little bit . . . This comes out . . . just a little bit. A little bit more . . . Okay, now this should maybe come back that way a little bit . . ."

Finally, she is happy. William unwraps the bench, wipes the already clean surfaces and, using an antique-style key, unlocks the keyboard cover and exposes the shiny ebony-and-ivory array. With a slight bow, he hands over the key to the keys.

"How does it sound?" Marianne asks, and Brian slips onto the bench, still sweating, and picks out a delicate arpeggio. She answers her own question: "Good."

Outside again, William and Jim pack plywood and padding back into the truck. Brian takes a tattered scrap of paper from his pocket and reads.

They've already done the Weber and another baby grand in Falls Church. There are two uprights and another baby grand still in the truck to be delivered. There is an upright in Arlington going to Falls Church. A couple of uprights and a grand are awaiting pickup on Connecticut Avenue for delivery in Silver Spring.

"That's . . ." Brian runs his finger down the list. "Well, we've got to do about eight more today." ■

*Patrick Symmes last wrote for Real Time about the overnight shift at a photocopying shop.*

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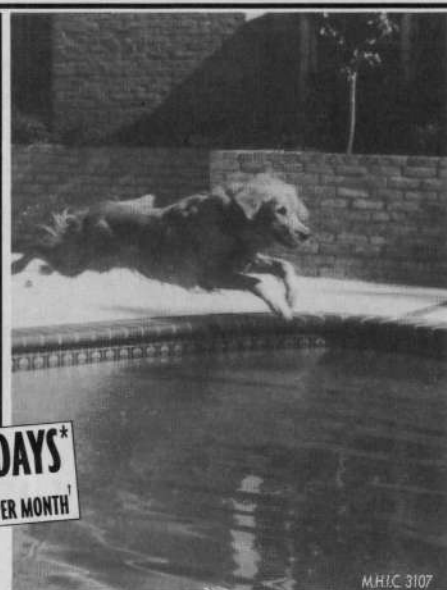
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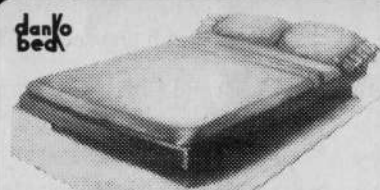
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# 'AND THE SLAIN LAY IN ROWS'

IT WAS THE BLOODIEST DAY IN AMERICAN HISTORY. BUT

FEW OF US KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM.

OR HOW THIS SAD AND TERRIBLE STRUGGLE SHAPED THE

NATION'S FUTURE BY PETER CARLSON

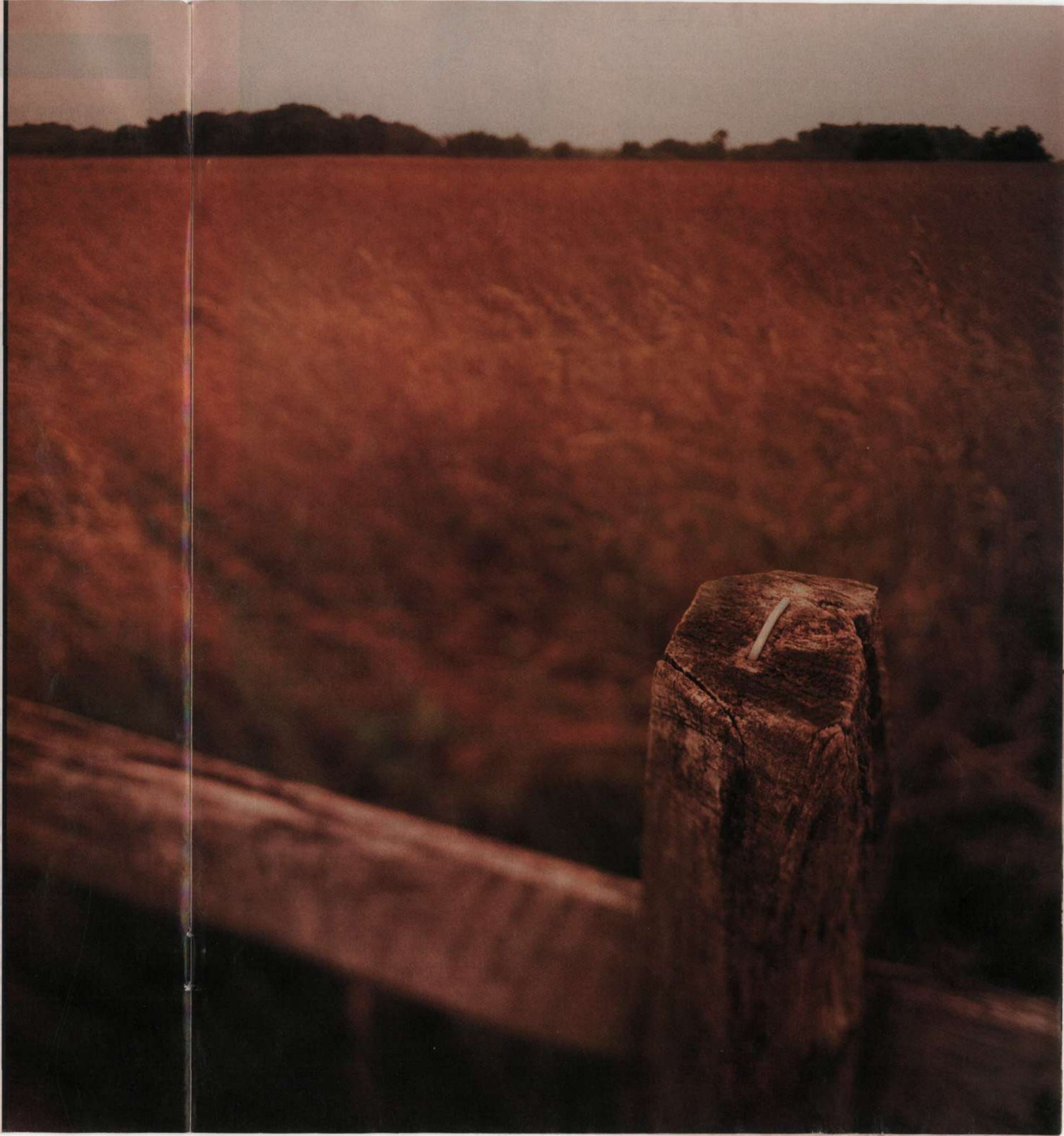
THERE'S NOT MUCH THERE.

It's just a field, really. But people come every day, sometimes from far away, to stand and look.

They park their cars on a road that rises and dips with the rolling hills. They step out and glance around. They bow their heads to read the sign and then straighten up to stare out at the field. There's a split-rail fence and, in the distance, some farm buildings—a white silo, a fading barn. In between there's hay—30 acres of tall green stalks of grass topped with tiny seeds. When the breeze picks up, the stalks begin to quiver, then shake, then sway back and forth like sea grasses caught in gentle waves.

It's beautiful to watch, hypnotic and mesmerizing, but that's not why the people stand there for so long. They're staring at the grass but they're seeing something else, something that hasn't been

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUSSELL KAYE







RANGER JERRY HOLSWORTH, AT THE TEXAS MONUMENT, MOVED NORTH BECAUSE OF HIS FASCINATION WITH THE CIVIL WAR.

there for 133 years. They seldom speak. When they do, it's usually in a hush, nothing loud enough to drown out the drone of the crickets.

This field of hay is called "the Cornfield" because that's what it was at dawn on September 17, 1862. By noon, though, the corn was gone, cut to the ground by bullets and cannon shells, and the field was covered with thousands of dead or broken men. It was the bloodiest part of the bloodiest day in this country's history—the Battle of Antietam. Nearly 23,000 Americans were killed, wounded or missing in action outside Sharpsburg, Md., that day—nearly four times the American casualties on D-Day. When the sun set and the battle ended, the two opposing armies were still in about the same positions they'd been the previous night. Yet something was won that day, something so profound that George F. Will once called the Battle of Antietam "the second most important day in American history." July 4, 1776, gave us the Declaration of Independence. September 17, 1862, gave us the Emancipation Proclamation.

Today, few Americans know much about Antietam, and even fewer visit the battlefield. More than a million and a half tourists cram into Gettysburg every year and nearly a million visit Manassas, but fewer than 240,000 venture to Antietam. Those who do find that Sharpsburg hasn't changed much since the battle. It has a few inns, a gallery of Civil War art and a tiny museum, but not a single motel or souvenir stand or fast-food joint. Except for a small stone visitors center, a cemetery and some monuments, the battlefield, too, looks about the same as it did before the shooting started. Most of

the fields where soldiers fought and died are still farms where families coax crops from the ground.

Antietam is only 70 miles from Washington, but it's off the tourist track, away from the interstates, tucked into the beautiful hills of western Maryland. It's not a place you stumble upon by accident. People tend to come to Antietam in search of something—a fallen ancestor, a glimpse of history, a place to contemplate their country. They find a field, a sunken dirt road, an old stone bridge, a tiny white church—all of them haunted by an air of tragedy so palpable that it compels almost everyone to whisper, as if they were visiting a cathedral.

They stand silently, gazing out at the swaying grass of the Cornfield. Ask them what they're thinking and nearly all of them repeat some variation of the same three questions:

*How could they have done it?*

*Could we do it today?*

*Could I?*

"THE UNION FORCES IN VIRGINIA have suffered three *catastrophic* defeats in 1862," says Jerry Holsworth. "They have been *humiliated* by General Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley, *mauled* by Lee in the Seven Days Battle, and *again* at Manassas. They huddle around Washington, D.C., in a state of very low morale . . ."

Holsworth is a park ranger at the Antietam National Battlefield. He's standing behind the visitors center on a sweltering afternoon, delivering the standard half-hour orientation speech in his own flamboyant style. Spread out in a



semicircle around him are two dozen tourists in shorts and sneakers and T-shirts. Holsworth has asked where they're from, and they've replied Colorado, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio. Holsworth is from Texas. At 44, he's working his second summer on the Antietam battlefield.

And now he's standing in his Park Service uniform—gray shirt, green pants, Smokey Bear hat—telling the story of the battle, enlivening it with dramatic flourishes and plenty of body English. He tells how Robert E. Lee's Confederates have driven the Union army out of Virginia and back to Washington, how Abraham Lincoln is desperate for a victory so he can issue the Emancipation Proclamation, how Lee has seized the initiative by crossing the Potomac and invading Maryland, hoping that a victory on Northern soil will bring aid from England and France.

"Lee's army is suffering, folks," Holsworth says in his Texas drawl. "Half the men are barefoot. They're in rags. They've been fightin' continuously for three or four months without a break. Many of them are livin' on green corn and creek water."

Still, the Rebels easily seized the city of Frederick, and Lee decided to take a dangerous gamble. Knowing that Union Gen. George McClellan was a slow, cautious man, Lee figured that he could divide his already-outnumbered army, send part of it to capture the Union garrison at Harpers Ferry, and then reunite it—all before McClellan attacked. Lee issued Special Order 191, which detailed his plan. But one of his officers wrapped a copy of the order around three cigars and accidentally dropped it in a field near Frederick, where a Union soldier found it. It was passed up the ranks to McClellan, who instantly realized that he could destroy Lee's divided army piece by piece. He pondered this for 18 hours, then sent his army after Lee.

Holsworth sweeps his hand out in a long horizontal arc, pointing out the ridge that his audience is standing on. "Lee will bring what's left of his army here to Sharpsburg Ridge with the idea of giving up the campaign and skedaddling back to Virginia," he says. He pauses dramatically. "But that night Lee would see the letter that would change his mind. 'Dear General Lee: Harpers Ferry will surrender in the morning. Signed T.J. Jackson, Major General, Confederate States Army.'"

The next day, as promised, Jackson captured Harpers Ferry. He left Gen. A.P. Hill and a few thousand men to handle the surrender, then marched his troops back here, to the high ground between the Potomac River and Antietam Creek. Reinforced, Lee decided to stand and fight. The Rebels, about 40,000 strong, dug in along Sharpsburg Ridge. The Federals, 80,000 of them, prepared to attack. Everyone on both sides realized that tomorrow would bring a cataclysmic battle. The sun set amid the sound of sniper fire. Rain began to fall.

"THE DAY BEFORE THE BATTLE, the soldiers came around and said, 'You all better get out, there's gonna be a hell of a battle here,'" says Earl Roulette. "That was on my great-granddaddy Roulette's farm. He stayed during the battle. A lot of people took their families and went out along the river to a big cave."

Roulette had three great-granddaddies with farms on the battlefield—a Roulette, a Snively and a Rohrbach. He lives on a fourth farm, on the other side of town, near the spot where Lee made his headquarters. He farmed it for more than half a century before he retired—"wheat and corn and barley and hay and cattle, pretty much the same as they did then." In 1976, he sold a big chunk of it to a company that

built a development where the streets are named after Confederate generals—Lee, Longstreet, Jackson, Hill.

"Everybody thinks the Civil War was forever ago," he says. "I'm only 75 and a half, and my grandfather was 12 during the battle. He hid down at Snively's Ford. I remember my grandpappy talking about it. What I'm saying is: It's just one generation."

He's an old man with a bald head fringed by a few wisps of white hair, but he's still spry enough to hop up from his dining room table to fetch a few mementos. He comes back with an old document encased in plastic. It's a handwritten list of everything his great-grandfather William Roulette lost during the battle—8 hogs, 12 sheep, 3 calves, 3 barrels of flour, 155 bushels of potatoes, 220 bushels of apples . . . It goes on for page after page.

"See, this was September," he says. "These farmers were all ready for winter. In those days, you didn't run over to A&P or Food Lion to get your stuff. If you didn't have it in the fall, you did without till spring."

William Roulette filed his list with the federal government, hoping to be compensated for his losses, but his great-grandson doubts that he ever got a nickel. "He had to prove it was taken by the Northern army," he says, "and how the hell could you prove it when both armies were fighting there?"

He points to another item on the list—"burial ground for 700 soldiers." He smiles wryly. "Can you imagine 700 soldiers buried in your back yard?"

He puts down the list, rummages through a metal tray piled with battle relics he's found on his farm over the years—bullets, belt buckles, cannonballs. He picks out a dime. It looks almost new, but the date reads 1861. "It lay

**'Everybody**

**thinks the**

**Civil War was**

**forever ago,'**

**Roulette says.**

**I remember my**

**grandpappy**

**talking about it'**

A TOURIST GROUP GATHERS NEAR "THE CORNFIELD."





out there for over a hundred years," he says. "I just found it a couple of years ago."

He digs out a pair of bullets with tooth marks in them. "You've heard the expression 'biting the bullet'?" he asks. "Well, here's a couple that was bit on." He figures they were bitten by soldiers fighting the pain of getting a wounded arm or leg amputated—a common operation after the battle. "You don't go around biting bullets unless you got a pretty good reason."

He sorts through the pile and picks out a thin gold ring. He didn't find it on his farm; it was passed down from his grandpa Snavelly.

"A soldier died in their house," he says. "I believe it was an officer and not just a plain soldier. Whichever side it was, soldiers from the other side were coming and they had to get rid of him, 'cause if you had an enemy soldier in your house, you *were* the enemy. Feelings ran a little high along about then. So anyhow, they took him and they dumped him in the creek. And before they threw him in, my grandpa Snavelly took this ring off his finger."

He holds the ring gently between his thumb and forefinger. Its circle is broken. There's a piece missing, a section cut or worn away. He raises it up to where it can catch the sunlight that streams through the window, but it's too old and tarnished to glimmer.

"This meant something to somebody," he says.

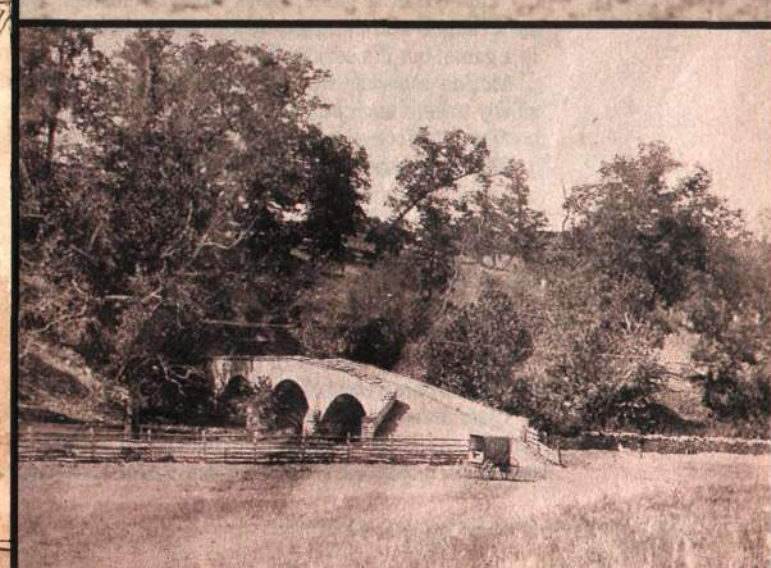
"NOW IT'S DAWN, September 17, 1862," Jerry Holsworth tells the tourists, speaking in the portentous voice of a newsreel narrator, "and out of the north woods emerges the First Corps of the Army of the Potomac under Joseph Hooker." He's pointing north, past the Cornfield to a clump of trees on the horizon. "They move forward into Jackson's line, *smash* into it! And the Cornfield changes hands! Jackson's line is crushed!"

Hooker's Union troops, about 10,000 strong, were headed for a little whitewashed church built by the German Baptist Brethren, a pacifist sect nicknamed the Dunkards. The church marked the northern flank of Lee's army, and Hooker's orders were to turn that flank and cut off Lee's escape route to the Potomac. As the dawn burned away the early-morning fog, Hooker's artillery pounded the Confederates in the head-high corn, sending cornstalks and mangled bodies skyward. Then his infantry charged, driving the Rebels into the woods near the Dunkard Church.

Thinking they'd won the battle, the Yankees began to cheer, but their celebration proved premature. John B. Hood's Texans, irked at missing what would have been their first hot meal in three days, counterattacked, shooting hundreds of Union soldiers and chasing the rest out of the Cornfield. Seemingly victorious, the Texans moved forward, right into the mouths of hidden Union artillery, which ripped into them at close range. Fresh Yankee troops, led by Gen. Joseph Mansfield, charged and drove the Rebels from the Cornfield again.

In the furious fighting, Mansfield was killed and Hooker was wounded, but the Federals held the advantage. The Confederate line was thin and another attack could break it, perhaps destroying Lee's army. Gen. John Sedgwick made that attack, leading 6,000 fresh Union troops toward the Confederate positions in the woods near the Dunkard

WHEN LEE  
DECIDED TO  
MAKE HIS  
STAND AT  
SHARPSBURG,  
MD., THE  
RESULT WAS  
CARNAGE—  
NEARLY 23,000  
MEN KILLED,  
WOUNDED OR  
MISSING IN  
A SINGLE DAY.  
CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP:  
ALEXANDER  
GARDNER  
PHOTOS OF  
CONFEDERATE  
DEAD NEAR  
THE DUNKARD  
CHURCH;  
THE BURNSIDE  
BRIDGE, LOOK-  
ING WEST TO-  
WARD REBEL  
POSITIONS;  
THE VILLAGE OF  
SHARPSBURG.





Church. Desperate, Lee rounded up a division of Rebels who'd just arrived from Harpers Ferry and rushed them into the woods. They got there just in time to catch the advancing Yankees in an ambush. Within 20 minutes, more than a third of Sedgwick's men lay dead or wounded, and the rest were running for their lives.

Exhausted, both sides pulled back. By mid-morning, the battle for Lee's northern flank had ended in bloody stalemate. The Cornfield, captured and recaptured four times, was strewn with more than 10,000 dead or wounded men. "Pale and bloody faces are everywhere upturned," wrote George Smalley, who covered the battle for the New York Tribune. "They are sad and terrible, but there is nothing which makes one's heart beat so quickly as the imploring look of sorely wounded men who beckon wearily for help . . ."

Answering their calls was a 40-year-old former Patent Office clerk named Clara Barton, who had volunteered to nurse the wounded. When a soldier lying in the Cornfield called to her for a drink, she bent down, lifted his head with her right hand and held a cup of water to his lips. As she did, a bullet passed through her sleeve and into the man's chest, killing him instantly.

**With one  
quick push,  
McClellan could  
have cut Lee's  
army in two,  
then destroyed  
it. But he never  
gave the order.**

SHANNON MOORE IS STANDING under a shade tree near the Dunkard Church, wearing red sneakers, red shorts, a Minnie Mouse T-shirt and a cardboard sign that identifies her: "Clara Barton."

She watches as the other 35 fifth-graders from Pleasant Valley Elementary School in Knoxville, Md., prepare for battle. Their teachers divide them into Union and Confederate armies, and each kid gets a card that reveals his or her fate. Number ones are head wounds, twos are stomach wounds, threes are leg wounds. It's an exercise designed to demonstrate what medicine was like on the Antietam battlefield. The two little armies spread out on the field next to the Dunkard Church, just behind a metal memorial to Kershaw's Brigade of the South Carolina Infantry, which fought there. "Nearly one half of the officers and men of the brigade," it reads, "were killed and wounded in less than 15 minutes."

Kris McGee, one of the fifth-grade teachers, gives some last-minute instructions: "The theatrics—we need 'em, but don't overdo it."

"This is not a game," says Mike Weinstein, the park ranger who designed this program. "It's partially a game, but it's serious."

McGee gives the word, and the two armies march slowly toward each other.

"Twos!" McGee yells.

The twos in both armies fall to the ground, victims of fictitious gunfire.

"Ones!"

The ones drop in their tracks, some of them writhing and moaning theatrically.

"Threes!"

They fall, too.

"Okay, that's the end of the battle," McGee says. "Freeze where you are."

Clara Barton and her assistants begin separating out the wounded. They've been instructed in the pitiless art of Civil War triage: Wounded torsos are ban-

daged, wounded limbs are amputated, wounded heads are given up for dead.

Barton kneels beside a boy wearing a Chicago Bulls T-shirt. She pulls out a bloodstained bandage and wraps it around his midsection, right over the Bulls logo.

Nearby, a wounded girl lies moaning. "Clara Barton, help me," she says. "Clara, help me."

"Okay, nice job," says McGee. "Give yourselves a hand."

They applaud themselves, then file into the Dunkard Church and sit in its austere wooden pews.

"What I would like to hear from you is your reactions—what you thought and felt," says Weinstein.

"It was kind of weird," says one girl.

"Weird?" says Weinstein. "Why?"

"In the real battle, they didn't call out numbers," she says.

"Would you rather that we shot you?" Weinstein asks. He turns to another girl. "You were one of the last ones taken to the hospital. How did you feel about that?"

"Like I was going to die," she says.

"Who were the number ones?" Weinstein asks. "How were you treated?"

"Left alone," says a boy.

"What was your wound?"

"Head wound."

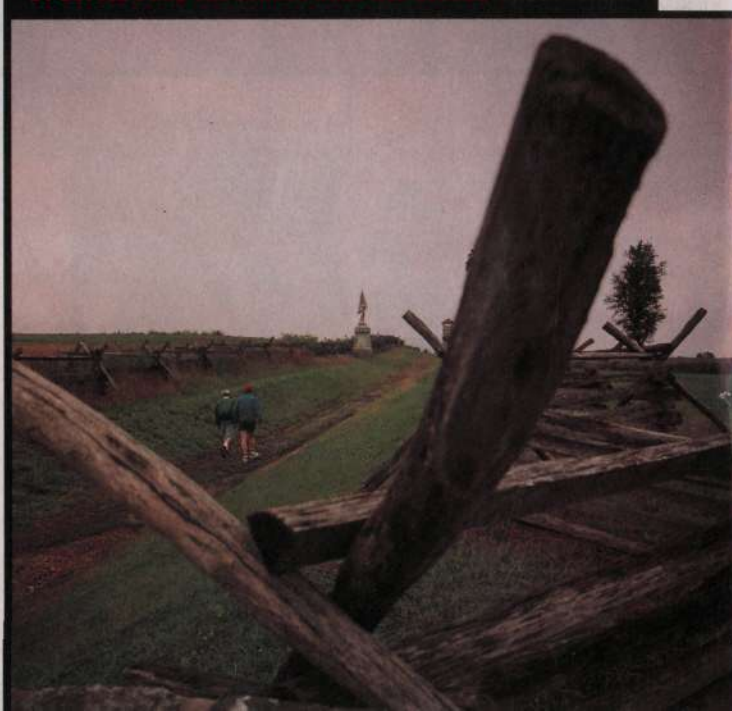
"We know that there was nothing you could do for a head wound in the Civil War," Weinstein says. "The surgeon had to decide who he could help."

He passes around a photograph of Clara Barton. "She brought supplies to the surgeons on the battlefield," he says. "These were not army supplies. They were her personal supplies. You know what the surgeons were using to dress wounds before Clara Barton got here? Grass. Leaves. Corn husks. How would you feel getting your wounds dressed with corn husks?"

The kids grimace and groan.

"It was very common for legs to be amputated in the Civil War," he continues. "They would take a sharp knife and cut through the skin, then they would take a saw and cut the bone." He distributes photographs of a field hospital set up in a barn. "The surgeons liked barns because they

BY BATTLE'S END THE SUNKEN ROAD HAD BECOME "BLOODY LANE"





believed that air was good for you. They didn't know about germs."

Now, he prepares to pass around two pictures of bloated, stiffened corpses on the Antietam battlefield. They are famous photographs taken by Alexander Gardner two days after the battle and exhibited a few weeks later in Mathew Brady's Manhattan gallery, inspiring a horrified reviewer to write: "Mr. Brady has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war. If he has not brought home bodies and laid them in our door-yards and along the streets, he has done something very like it . . ."

"These are pretty strong photographs," Weinstein warns. "The purpose is to show you that this wasn't a game."

Their curiosity whetted, the kids crane their necks to catch a glimpse. But when they see the grisly images, they don't recoil or gasp. In fact, they hardly react at all.

In the 133 years since these photographs shocked New York, even 11-year-old kids have seen far worse countless times, live and in color, right in their living rooms.

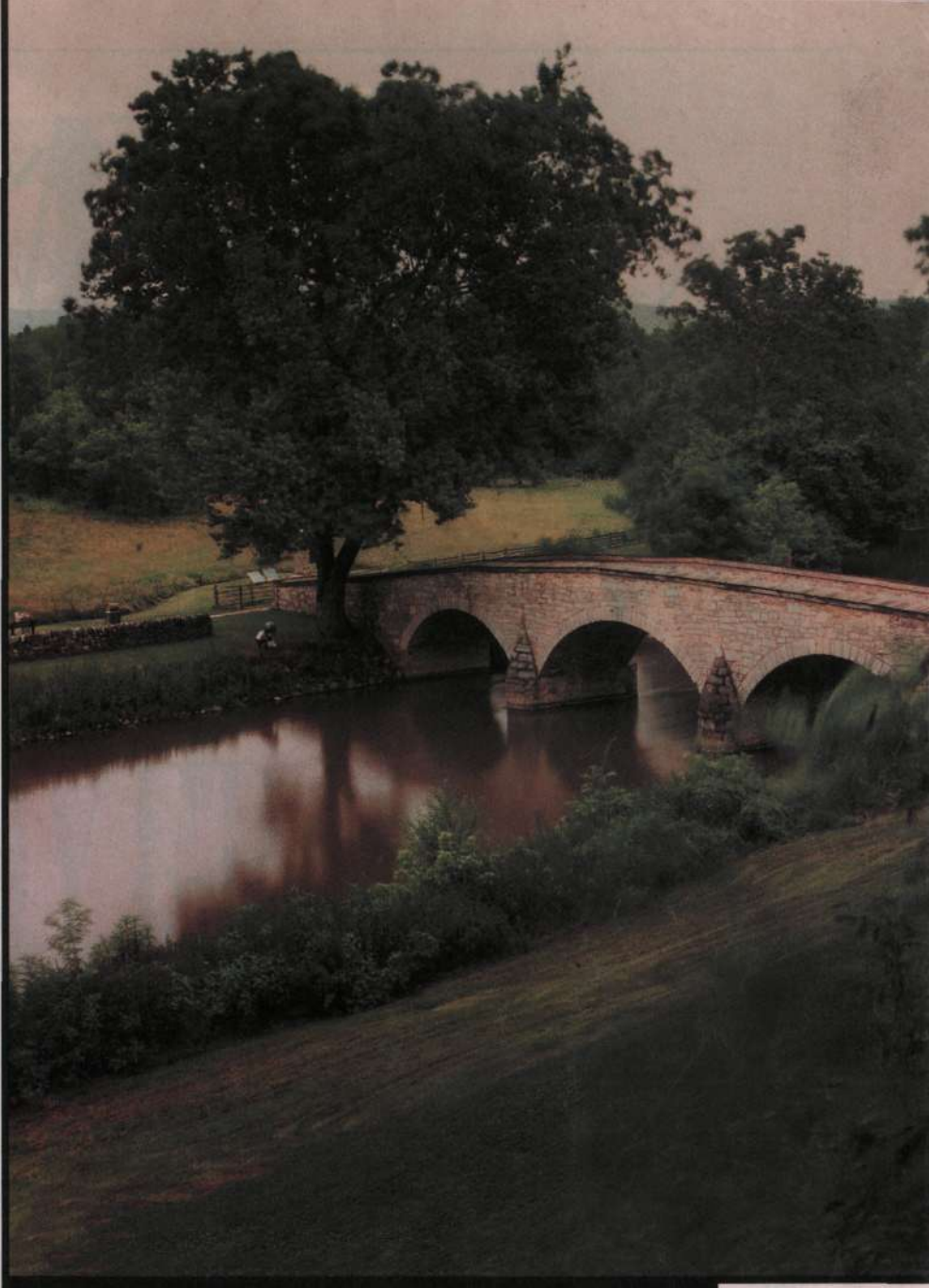
"IF YOU TURN AROUND, folks, you'll see a road like most of you have in your own home town," says Jerry Holsworth.

He points south, to a sunken dirt road set behind a snake-rail fence about 500 yards from the Dunkard Church. "See, back in the Civil War, folks didn't like to get caught in traffic any more than we do today. So what do you do? Why, you build a bypass, that's what you do. This is the Sharpsburg, Maryland, Civil War bypass. Over the years, it had worn down from heavy use, and folks called it the Sunken Road."

The Confederates were crouched in that Sunken Road. It made a good natural trench—even better after the Rebels tore down William Roulette's fences and piled the rails in front of them. Dug in, they waited for the Federals to attack.

Just as the battle in the Cornfield died out, the attack came. Gen. William French's division was supposed to follow Sedgwick's troops to the Dunkard Church, but French's men got lost in the smoke and confusion and marched, shoulder to shoulder, right toward the Sunken Road. The Confederates waited silently, watching the Yankees march over the crest of a hill that ran parallel to the road about a hundred yards away—first the American flags appeared, then their heads and shoulders. Finally, when the Rebels could see the bluecoats' belts, they rose and fired, blasting away 150 men in French's front line.

The Federals retreated, regrouped, then returned. Again the Rebels blew them away. Again they fell back. Again they attacked. Again they were driven back, suffering terrible casualties. Finally, after three hours of fighting and the arrival of reinforcements, the Yankees seized a little hill above the Rebels' right. From there, they could fire down into the Sunken Road, killing Confederates by the



THIS SYCAMORE AT THE BURNSIDE BRIDGE STILL STANDS 133 YEARS LATER.

score. It was, one Union soldier said, like "shooting sheep in a pen."

The Rebels fled, leaving behind so many dead comrades that, as one Union soldier put it, a man could have walked the road from end to end without ever touching ground. The Sunken Road had earned a new nickname: Bloody Lane.

Now, the Confederate line was broken in its center. With one quick push, McClellan could have cut Lee's army in two, then destroyed it. He had fresh troops ready to go. But he never gave the order to attack.

"It would not be prudent," he explained.

A BATTERED OLD school bus now painted the color of dried blood bounces into the parking lot and rumbles to a stop at Bloody Lane.

Inside are 20 members of the *continued on page 24*







# MY EX-BOYFRIEND'S BACK

By  
Jennifer  
Moses

Illustration by  
Carolyn Fisher

*Lately* I've been feeling optimistic. Which is totally uncharacteristic of me, because my typical modus operandi, that which has seen me through my more difficult moments, like childbirth and Thanksgiving dinner with my entire extended family, has been one of unrelenting surly gloom.

Let me elaborate on my current happy mood. Despite efforts to the contrary, I still have managed not to inflict complete psychic damage on my older son, now 5½, nor have I done something incredibly stupid to either one of

*And we're gonna have a dinner party. Whose idea WAS this, anyway?*



Washed, add a little vinegar, then a little BROWN SUGAR.

my 1½-year-old twins, like drop them on their heads in the bathtub.

- I've restocked the toilet paper supply.
- I've been pleasant to my mother three times in a row.
- I've washed my hair.

So it was in this clean, refreshed, relaxed, self-actualized frame of mind that I happened to run into an old boyfriend, and then, a week later, invite him over for dinner. No big deal, right?

Only for me it was a big deal. A big enough deal. Because, first off, this was a boyfriend my husband didn't even know I had had, which opened up a whole long inquiry that I'm not going to go into right now. Second off, this boyfriend, whom I had dated for a few minutes when I was a hip single gal living in New York and he was a first-year law student, knew things about me—or more specifically, had witnessed certain embarrassing moments that I'm not going to go into right now—that no one else knew about. And it turned out that—after all these years during which I assumed he was still living in New York because that's what the ex-friend of mine who had originally introduced me to my boyfriend had told me—he (my boyfriend) was in fact NOT living in New York, but rather living just a couple of miles down the road from me in Washington, in a rival all-Volvo neighborhood. And, and this is where it gets really gross, in this small-world, can't-turn-over-without-bumping-into-a-lawyer-who-some-other-lawyer-you-know-used-to-sleep-with-town, my boyfriend, it turned out, had been working, for *five*, count them, *five* years, with my father. Who, like my boyfriend and my husband and both my sisters and most of my neighbors, is a lawyer.

Which meant that my boyfriend knew all about me, except that he didn't, really, because my father, for whom he'd been working, never talks. Even so, it was creepy to think that if he *had* in fact known all about me, and was *still* in fact friends with my ex-friend who had originally introduced me to my boyfriend, then this would mean my ex-friend knew all about me, too. And this is the kind of ex-friend who definitely shouldn't be on the receiving end any such gossipy tidbits about you as: "Did you hear about Jennifer? Not that there's any news, because, after all, she 'retired' from her so-called 'career' doing whatever it was she was doing, and is now staying home with the kids, whining." No, you do *not* want your ex-friend to know this about you. Especially if your ex-friend happens to be CEO of a multimillion-dollar company in Connecticut, and is in the midst of decorating a beach house.

Yes. Well. Whew. I'm glad I got that off my chest. Because now I'm ready to describe the meal I made. Because after consulting my two former college roommates, my across-the-street neighbor Amy, my 5-year-old son's best friend, Nicholas, my next-door neighbor's nanny, and our babysitter (code name "Ta Ta"), I decided to call my boyfriend and invite him to dinner after all. Because it

turned out that my boyfriend was himself married and the father of a 2-year-old son, and his wife, another lawyer, surprise, surprise, had a second bun in her oven, so chances were that he wasn't going to say anything embarrassing at the dinner table about me, the kind of thing that makes me cringe to think about, such as—never mind.

SO IT WAS in a spirit of yuppie one-upmanship that I issued the invitation to dinner at my house. Let me explain. Life is a competition. Anyone who tells you otherwise is lying. I learned this at the parental knee. I come from the type of family where we children knew what was expected of us. And what was expected of us was that we all go to either Harvard or Yale, like our brilliant cousins in Boston. Fortunately, my parents were realists, and they recognized early on that I was blessed with strengths other than academic ones, such as having good hair. And yes! I might not have gone to Harvard, or even to a lesser branch of Harvard, but to this day I not only have "good" hair, the kind of hair that hairdressers coo over, but also, I have the *best* hair in my *entire* family! So put that in your pipe and smoke it, why don't you?

My boyfriend, however, had gone to both a fancy college and fancy law school, and was now working for the same major-league law firm where my father has been known for years as a "moosehead," making my boyfriend, arguably, a more "successful" person than I am. My boyfriend's wife, too, had the kind of fancy-shmancy resumé that people in places like Chevy Chase and Cleveland Park go ga-ga over, and I was intimidated before I even met her.

I still had one card left, though. I mean, besides my hair. I still had my cooking skills—which is to say, I had my mother. Because the truth is that, despite my best intentions, just reading recipes fills me with dread. So I called my mother, to whom I had recently been pleasant three times in a row, and got her recipes for:

Chicken with artichokes and onions baked in clay.

Sweet-and-sour red cabbage.

Noodles.

Salad.

Wine.

And for dessert, I decided, we'd do something sinfully simple. Something luscious yet easy. Something, in other words, that you can buy. Strawberry sorbet smothered in fresh strawberries, with some dark chocolate Bahlsen wafers on the side.

Because, as everyone now knows, thanks to the profusion of food magazines that show full-color glossy pictures of such meals as double-truffle onion pie followed by chicken *Anglaise* on a bed of herbed mustard greens accompanied by a frisson of grilled baby vegetables and twice-sauteed wild rice, it's important to remember to turn the oven ON. No, what I really meant to say is that it's impor-

for HOURS and HOURS, making sure that cabbage doesn't



then a little vinegar, and so on, until it tastes

Right

tant to have a mix of easy and less-easy foodstuffs on your plate, as well as a mix of texture and color. Hot and cold. Fluffy and solid. That sort of thing.

"I'm looking forward to your coming," I said to my boyfriend on the phone.

But then, after I hung up, I wondered: Did I make an inadvertent but terrible pun full of sexual innuendo? What *had* he and I talked about, lo those many years ago?

"They're coming, I mean arriving, around 7:30," I told my husband. "They're bringing their kid. Be home on time or I'll kill you."

I had to have a game plan (all the cooking magazines tell you so) because you don't want to have to do everything at the last minute and discover, a few minutes before your little dinner party is supposed to start, that you forgot to go grocery shopping. Check this out: A full day before the event, I went to my neighborhood Safeway, and I even managed to take a list of ingredients with me, so as not to forget, for example, the chicken. Then, on the morning of our fete, while my 5-year-old was at school (in my neighborhood you start your kid in school while he's still in diapers, on the theory that you have to get him into the right nursery school in order to get him into the right day school in order to get him into the right college in order to get him into the right law school), I made my mother's wonderful sweet-and-sour red cabbage.

MY MOTHER'S WONDERFUL SWEET-AND-SOUR RED CABBAGE (a k a "glutinous cabbage"):

Ingredients: margarine or butter, red cabbage, white vinegar, brown sugar, apples.

Method: In large skillet, melt some margarine if you keep kosher, or some butter if you don't. Chop up a bunch of red cabbage, and, while you're at it, chop up some apples. Add cabbage and apples to skillet, then add some water. Cover and simmer on low until cabbage is wilted. Watch with horror as small toddling daughter reaches for butcher's knife. Grab knife away. Wonder just how piercing her screams can get, and if, at a certain point, she'll actually puncture her own eardrums. Run after small toddling son as he attempts to toddle out the front door and into the street. Tell 5-year-old that you just don't want to hear the Power Rangers tape that your sister, his aunt Binky, the one who lives in New York and has snot-free living room furniture, gave him for his birthday. No, you *mean* it. Because if you have to hear that wretched tape one more time, chances are that you'll die a violent death, right here on the kitchen floor, and then won't he feel guilty? When cabbage is sufficiently wilted, add a little vinegar, then a little brown sugar, then a little vinegar, and so on, until it tastes right. Notice white slime on floor: Clean it. Notice white slime in hair: Begin to cry. Simmer, on low, for hours and hours and hours, making sure that cabbage doesn't congeal into little clumps of purple glue. Add salt and pepper. Serve warm.

So like I said, I made the cabbage, and it was yummy-good. My boyfriend ended up having two helpings.

When he and his wife and kid came, I mean arrived, at our house, around 7:30, our 5-year-old was practicing his Power Ranger karate moves in the living room, and the twins were bathed and newly diapered and wearing their "bunny suits" (zip-up pj's with feet). My boyfriend's pregnant wife was bearing gifts—board books for the twins, and a puzzle for our 5-year-old. My boyfriend's 2-year-old son smiled and said: "Pleased to meet you." Then we all sat around making nervous small talk, mainly about how hard it is to make partner.

But dinner was well underway. Because in addition to the red cabbage, which was simmering aromatically on the stove top, the chicken and the other stuff were ready to go. As was the table, which I'd set with the "good" china, which we take out at least once every 2½ years, when we have company. It was just like my mother's old dinner parties—*grown-up* dinner parties; the table was pretty, the kids were clean, there was food and wine, and the only things people were talking about had to do with practicing law. Except of course at some point during my mother's dinner parties, my brother and I would put on a one-act play in the living room called "Daniel, Daniel," written by me, and involving a girl who gets lost in the woods while being chased by bayonet-wielding storm troopers.

IN A MINUTE I will get to the recipe for the chicken with artichokes and onions baked in clay that I've made a thousand times before, and trust me, it is seriously delish. But for right now, a word or two on cooking in clay. For some reason that I can't fathom, the prospect of cooking in a clay cooker intimidates a lot of otherwise excellent and adventurous cooks. And it shouldn't, because it's really really easy. The trick with a clay cooker is that you immerse the whole thing in cold water for 15 or 20 minutes before you stick your ingredients in it—that way the clay itself soaks up the water, and then, during cooking, slowly releases its moisture into whatever is inside. This way you ensure that your meat is moist and juicy. After you've arranged all your ingredients inside your pre-soaked cooker, you place the cooker in a cold oven, and *then* set the temperature, usually at around 425 degrees. If you don't start with a cold oven, the clay can freak out, withholding its moisture or voting Republican in the local elections.

My mistake, then, was *not* that I forgot this small but vital step, nor was it that I forgot to turn the oven ON. Nor did I even make the same serious mistake that I had made at a dinner party not long before. That time, I happened to forget that the Sears repairman had recently made his bi-monthly visit to my kitchen, this time to "fix" the "lock" on my oven door that had become permanently locked. He kept fiddling with the on/off and lock/unlock mechanism until, at last, he was able to charge me \$93.42 for the fol-

Notice

White Slime

on floor:

Clean it.

Notice

White Slime

in

HAIR:

LOW

Simmer on



Begin to

CRY:



lowing advice: "I suggest you be more careful in the future." Though he hadn't actually fixed the lock/unlock device so that I'd be able to lock my oven, he had managed to unlock the lock, so at least I could *use* my oven. Oh—and this is the important part—while he was at it, he'd mistakenly taken the nobby-thing off the oven's control panel. He did, however, put it back. How was I to know that he put it back upside down? So that when I went to set the oven at 425 degrees, I was really setting it on "clean"?

At any rate, *this* time—i.e., the night I had my boyfriend and his wife and kid over for dinner—I did not incinerate the chicken. I merely cooked it for such a long time that it kind of gooped up into this thick artichoke-encrusted muck that resembled the stuff that they used to serve us at Langley High School, where I was in the class of '77 (" '77 Is Heaven"), which was so bad that even the jocks wouldn't eat it.

What an incredibly dumb chick, you're saying. No wonder she didn't go to Harvard. She probably couldn't even spell Harvard. Why didn't she simply check to make sure that her chicken was chickening away properly? Well, you see, what happened was that, an hour or so after I'd composed my chicken and put it in my cooker and placed the cooker in the cold oven, which I then set at 425 degrees, my 5-year-old went outside to play and, within seconds, disappeared. Okay, I thought. Let's be sensible. He's either (a) lost, (b) lying in the middle of the road, a victim of a hit-and-run accident, or (c) kidnapped by those two men who drove up a few minutes ago in what seemed to be a plumber's truck but is actually a specially designed kidnapping-mobile. By the time I'd found him (he was next door, *shnorrin*g cookies) and made sure that he understood that if he ever disappeared again without telling me where he was going I would have to send him right back to the orphanage, it was time to feed all three of them, give them their baths, etc. In the meantime, the glutinous cabbage was giving off such a pungent and yummy odor that who could tell that the chicken was turning into a frazzle of artichoke-encrusted goop?

Here's the chicken-and-artichoke recipe: Soak clay cooker. Place minced garlic, chopped-up onions, mushrooms and whatever else might be good (like carrots or apples) in the bottom of the cooker. Coat pieces of chicken with a flour-and-paprika mixture. Place chicken and canned artichoke hearts in cooker. Pour in some chicken broth and some sherry or wine. Place in cold oven, then set oven at 425 degrees. Cook until done, about, in my case, an hour or two before I actually opened the oven door to see how my chicken was progressing.

"Screw it," I said when I discovered my mistake. Then, seeing as I might have caused a slight ripple of embarrassment among my guests, I said: "I don't mean that literally." This, of course, made things worse, and I went around the rest of the evening wondering if I had said, "I don't mean that literally," or, "I don't mean that clitorally." What *had* my boyfriend and I talked about, lo those many years ago?

I did my best to clear up the confusion by explaining, calmly, that the chicken was a tad overcooked. I had, however, managed to make the noodles (recipe: boil water, stick noodles in, drain) and the salad. (I made my favorite: Boston lettuce, avocado, scallions and unsalted peanuts. Then I made this dressing: vinegar, Dijon-style mustard, sugar, salt and pepper.) My husband, God bless him, had brought bread from the upscale bread store down the street—the kind of store that also sells \$20 jars of mushed-up imported black stuff in

olive oil. "Come on into the dining room," I said. Then I said: "I mean: It's time for dinner. Why don't you enter the dining room?" Then I said: "Sorry." My husband, who usually resembles his father, was looking more and more like the late Ayatollah Khomeini, and my boyfriend's wife was looking at me as if I had invited her over for dinner only to overcook the chicken and then say a lot of stupid and incomprehensible things. And the whole time I was thinking about whether it would be ethical to ask my father, the "moosehead" for whom my boyfriend worked, if he could threaten to hold up partnership if my boyfriend should so much as breathe a word about me to my ex-friend, the Connecticut CEO.

WE SAT DOWN, and the table was really pretty, and the chicken was surprisingly edible, and, after all, there's nothing worse than chicken that you cut into only to find this tough, pink, undercooked gristle that you have to somehow gracefully dispose of in your dinner napkin. Plus which: We had plenty of wine, thank God. Of course my boyfriend's wife, who was about to have her second child, wasn't drinking, which was a shame, because she didn't seem to realize how completely hilarious it was when I told this little story about how, years earlier, when my boyfriend called me this one time, I, in my nervousness, answered that I'd been waiting "breastlessly."

Come to think of it, my boyfriend didn't seem to think this story was very funny, either. My husband was looking more and more like the ayatollah. Well. Just at that moment, we heard a loud thump and then a piercing shriek from upstairs, where we had sent the two older boys to watch the Sesame Street Hanukkah video. We all ran up the stairs, where my boyfriend's son was lying on the floor with a bloody nose, and our son was sitting on the sofa, with this weird little smirk on his face. "I had to teach him a lesson," he said. Then he turned to my boyfriend's wife and said: "He's a brat." My boyfriend took his son down the stairs, with his wife trailing close behind, and my husband and I proceeded to scream at our kid, because, after all, if we had failed to scream at him, our 18-month-old twins might have remained sleeping soundly. As it was, however, they both woke up and began to cry.

But the evening was not over yet, and I must report that my boyfriend and his wife remained calm and pleasant. We quieted the boys, put the twins back in their cribs, and went back to the dining room for dessert. Ah yes. Strawberry sorbet with fresh strawberries, with a side of dark chocolate Bahlsen wafers.

"Bottoms up," I said, lifting my glass and indicating the bowls of sorbet and strawberries before us. Then I realized that once again, I might have made an unintended sexual pun, and said: "So? What are you going to do if you don't make partner?"

At the time, it seemed as if hours elapsed before my boyfriend and his family were gone. But in retrospect I'd say that the evening went fairly well. By the time my husband and I had cleaned up the dishes and gone upstairs, our 5-year-old had passed out on the sofa and all we had to do was carry him, in his Aladdin pajamas, to bed. The twins were sleeping soundly. By the next afternoon, my husband and I were talking again, and I knew that no old boyfriend of mine could ever come between us. ■

*Jennifer Moses is a frequent contributor to the Magazine.*





## Fish Faithfuls

**CRISFIELD SEAFOOD RESTAURANT—8012 GEORGIA AVE., SILVER SPRING. 301-589-1306.**

Open: Tuesday through Thursday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., Sunday noon to 9:30 p.m. Closed Monday. No credit cards. No reservations. Smoking in bar only. Prices: appetizers \$4.75 to \$15.25, entrees \$10.50 to \$39.50. Full dinner with wine or beer, tax and tip \$28 to \$48 per person.

**CRISFIELD AT LEE PLAZA—8606 COLESVILLE ROAD, SILVER**

**SPRING. 301-588-1572.** Open: Monday through Thursday 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., Saturday 4 to 11 p.m., Sunday 4 to 10 p.m. AE, CB, DC, MC, V. Reservations recommended. Smoking in bar only. Prices: appetizers \$5.50 to \$12.50, entrees \$4 to \$23. Full dinner with wine or beer, tax and tip \$28 to \$48 per person.

The Crisfield restaurant on Georgia Avenue deserves to be called a Maryland institution. (Okay, a Silver Spring institution.) After all, it was serving stuffed shrimp and crab imperial when Harry Truman was in the White House, when cars still had fenders and when most folks considered squid just another form of bait.

Eight presidents have come and gone, cars have sprouted fins and shed them, and people now pop fried calamari like potato chips. But nothing much has changed at Crisfield. Not the menu. (People still don't eat squid here.) Not the ancient neon sign, a faint beacon in the lonely Georgia Avenue night. Not the massive old U-shaped bar, heavy as a battleship. Not the black-and-white tile floor that reminds you of the bathroom in the house where you grew up. Not the baby-blue, cinder-block walls with the faded celebrity photos hanging askew or

the exposed pipes or the original tin ceiling. Some people love this funky ambience. They see in Crisfield's well-seasoned dining room a certain Trillinesque charm: Plain-and-old can be something special if it's the genuine article, the idea goes. Others, less captivated, say Crisfield reminds them of a YMCA locker room.

Perhaps to make both groups happy, several years ago the management opened another, more modern Crisfield on nearby Colesville Road. It, in turn, has recently been taken over by new owners. The dining room at the newer place is conventionally pretty, with dark green walls, carpeted floors and a few art deco touches. Although the menu retains all the time-honored standards of the original, it breaks with the old Crisfield's traditional Eastern Shore fare by featuring a few pastas, by daring to include newfangled stuff like zucchini, and by offering a short but well-chosen—and reasonably priced—list of American wines. (Paul Masson and the Gallo boys still predominate at the old Crisfield.) And the newer place accepts credit cards. At the old Crisfield, unsuspecting diners who pull out their plastic are

sent off to the ATM down the street to get cash—an unusual policy in a restaurant where dinner for two can easily come to \$75.

At either place, it's important to calibrate your expectations. Crisfield earned its credentials by serving impeccably fresh seafood, plainly cooked and served in big portions. It's never been known for variety, nor for zippy seasoning. As a matter of fact, some of the dishes hover precariously at the border between simple and bland. And Crisfield isn't famous for bargains, what with broiled fish going for about \$18 and the broiled combo for \$22.50.

At both restaurants, the steamed shrimp has been acceptable if not truly succulent. At the new place, we found it quite dry on one visit, moister the next time. The crab cocktail at both is simply a mound of pure lump meat, to which you can add lemon or cocktail sauce; it's sweet, fresh and generously portioned. (At \$12, you'd expect no less.) Clams casino, available only at the new place, are fresh and plump, nicely seasoned and not smothered in bread crumbs. The clam chowder at both Crisfields is rather like a thick, barely seasoned potato soup. The new



The Georgia Avenue Crisfield: Still briny after all these years.



place has a cream of crab that's equally thick but better endowed with seafood flavor. Both restaurants serve a seafood bisque, again as thick as gravy but nicely spicy. The best of the soups is the crab gumbo, occasionally available at the old place. It's crammed with crab, chunky with tomatoes and vegetables, and, unlike some of the other dishes here, it's seasoned with spunk.

Salad at the old Crisfield means iceberg lettuce with commercial dressing packed in those tear-open pouches the



Something special at the old Crisfield.

airlines use. There are real greens at the new place, and a good house-made vinaigrette. (But beware the Caesar salad, whose dressing tastes like mayonnaise.) If you're a bread lover, have some before you leave home.

Crisfield's best-known entree is its crab imperial, and it's still an excellent dish at both places—plenty of lump meat, a consistency that's light but not over-moist and just enough seasoning to escape blandness. The two Crisfields diverge when it comes to crab cakes. At the original, the cakes are commendably airy and grease-free, with a delicate crust and, like the imperial, just enough flavor to be interesting. At the new place, the crab cakes' interiors on two visits had a near-liquid consistency.

Both kitchens broil snapper and rockfish very well; the fillets are big and thick, and taken off the heat in time to preserve texture and juiciness. But there was a big difference in the swordfish. At the old place, it was an immense, inch-thick slab, moist and sweet-tasting; at the new place, thin and dry. The crab stuffing for the fish dishes seemed firmer textured and better seasoned at the old Crisfield (although it was still too bland for our liking); at the new place, more mayonnaise, less zip. The same goes for the stuffed shrimp.

We generally found the fried foods, including the famous french fries, some-

what lighter at the old place. (For the non-seafood person in your party, consider the old Crisfield's fried chicken, remarkably light and with a fine, crackly skin.) But even at the old Crisfield the frying seems a little inconsistent. One night we waxed rhapsodic about the delicacy of the fried seafood, but the next time around it was no better than ordinary.

At both restaurants, the soft-shell crabs have been outstanding, barely coated with a thin, crisp batter and bursting with juiciness. At the other extreme, the lobster tail at each place was so dry we needed the melted butter as a lubricant. Among the pasta dishes at the new Crisfield, the linguine with clams is a creditable version, with chewy pasta, a chunky, nicely herbed tomato sauce and plump, fresh-tasting clams. And at \$8.95 it's a good buy.

There are a few worthy desserts at each restaurant. At the old one, go for the fine poundcake, laced with rum and topped with chopped walnuts; at the new place, it was somewhat rubbery. At the new Crisfield, look for the dark, intensely flavored chocolate brownie.

These days you can choose a seafood restaurant by pointing almost at random to a world map. Would you like your sea bass gingered and garlicked in a Thai restaurant? Your grouper wine-d and olive-oiled in a Mediterranean one? How about some tandoori salmon? When you're boggled by the options and you feel like some briny comfort food, you can always build yourself a good meal at either of the Crisfields. Just make sure you keep their special strengths and weaknesses in mind. ■

*Mark and Gail Barnett are freelance restaurant critics. Phyllis C. Richman is on vacation.*

#### SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

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Civil War Society, a group based in Berryville, Va., that sponsors battlefield tours and seminars. These are hard-core buffs. They've come from Ohio, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, even Bermuda to ride canoes down Antietam Creek with historian Dennis Frye. Last night, Frye, who grew up near Antietam and has been studying it since was 4 years old, delivered a long, passionate lecture on the battle. This morning, he marched the group across the battlefield so he could explain exactly what happened to Sedgwick's division. Now, he has stopped the bus for a few words about Bloody Lane.

"These attacks were never ordered by McClellan," he says. "They were accidental. They happened because they couldn't see Sedgwick. They were lost."

Frye isn't thrilled to be explaining all this from the bus. "The only way you can understand a battlefield," he likes to say, "is to stand on the battlefield." But he's eager to get his students into canoes for their trip down the creek, so he has to cut this lecture short. He asks if there are any questions.

"How many casualties were there here at Bloody Lane?" asks Lawrence Donohoe.

About 3,000 for the Federals, Frye replies, more than 2,000 for the Confederates.

"In three hours?" Donohoe asks.

"Right," Frye replies.

"Incredible," Donohoe says.

He's a 68-year-old lawyer from Louisiana, a short, portly gentleman with glasses and a gray mustache. This is his second trip with the Civil War Society. He went to Gettysburg last year. His interest was sparked by Ken Burns's Civil War series on PBS. "All those old pictures intrigued me," he says.

Now, as the bus chugs down the road, Donohoe recalls the day some 60 years ago when he met his grandmother's uncle, who had fought for the Rebels at Vicksburg. "He was kind of a scary fellow. He wore dark clothes and had a long gray beard and a walking stick, and he was frightening to a little fella like me."

After the fall of Vicksburg, grandma's uncle got home to Louisiana by grabbing hold of a big log and floating across the Mississippi. Or so the family legend goes.

"I'm intrigued by the fact that: Here I am, alive, and I talked to a fellow who actually fought in that war 130 years ago," Donohoe says. "It's amazing."

"Don't forget your great-great-grandfather," says his son, Tim Donohoe, a psychologist and Civil War buff who has researched the family tree.

"My great-great-grandfather was killed



at the Battle of Mansfield," Donohoe says, referring to the fighting along the Red River in Louisiana in 1864. "We tried to find his grave, but we couldn't. . . All we know is that we could trace him to the battle and he never came home. He was a young man who just never came home."

The bus stops at the Pry house, where McClellan made his headquarters during the battle. Frye wants to show the group what McClellan could and could not see from his command post.

Donohoe is talking about a book on Antietam that he tried, and failed, to read. It contained those Alexander Gardner photographs of the battlefield. "I would take a look at that book in bed," he says, "but I found I could not look at it without crying. I'd look at those faces and read the names of these kids 17, 18, 19 years old and I'd get tears in my eyes. I was touched by the fact that so many of these young kids got killed there. It's such a sad thing."

Donohoe shuffles off the bus with the other buffs and starts up the hill to the overlook where McClellan watched the carnage unfold in the valley below.

"This is quite an emotional thing for me right now," he says softly.

"THE FINAL PHASE of the battle concerned the lower bridge—the Rohrbach Bridge," says Jerry Holsworth. "After this battle, it will be forever known as the Burnside Bridge. Why? Because Ambrose Burnside is ordered to take his Ninth Corps and *seize the bridge! Take Sharpsburg!* The bridge is defended by 400 Georgians—and they have the best defensive positions on the field!"

Holsworth is really rolling now. Sweat is pouring from under his ranger hat and dripping down his face, but he keeps moving, telling the story of the battle with plenty of gestures and exclamation points.

"Early in the morning, Burnside *attacks!* And it *fails!*"

"Early afternoon, he tries again! And *fails* again!"

"The third time, though, he *takes the bridge!*"

Holsworth pauses, looks at his audience. "Is there anybody here from Georgia? Your guys just ran out of ammunition."

He returns to his storytelling mode. "Burnside brings the entire Ninth Corps—9,000 Union soldiers—across that bridge, forms them in line of battle, and begins to *attack Sharpsburg!* Sharpsburg is defended by an under-strength Confederate division—barely 2,000 men. They're hopelessly outnumbered! They're being pushed back *everywhere* because Burnside's attack is *relentless!*"

"Take Sharpsburg and Lee's escape will be cut! Lee is watching this disaster from a

place pretty close to where our national cemetery is today. There, he's watching the destruction of his army! There, he's watching the end of the war in *total defeat!* There, he's watching the lives of every one of his soldiers who has died so far in this war *lost in vain!* He has a broken wrist on one hand, the other hand is sprained—both from a fall off his horse a few days earlier. He can't hold a telescope, so he calls over a staff officer. He points in the direction of Burnside Bridge: 'Who are those men?' Staff officer comes over, pulls open his telescope"—Holsworth mimes the action as he describes it—"looks in the direction of the Burnside Bridge, says, 'General Lee, they're flying the United States flag.'"

Holsworth stops. "If you remember, don't say a word! But I'll bet most of you forgot."

He resumes his story: "Now, Lee sees dust clouds from another direction! 'Who are those men?' The staff officer brings forward his telescope, looks in the direction of Harpers Ferry, says, 'General Lee, they're flying the Confederate and Virginia flags.' Lee turns to the staff officer and very calmly says, 'It is A.P. Hill from Harpers Ferry.'"

Holsworth pauses dramatically, then proceeds. "Hearing the shots very early in the morning, A.P. Hill has moved his division out! They've marched 17 miles in eight hours! He's brought his whole division across the wide, rock-bottom Potomac River! It's one of the great military miracles in American history—because now, as Burnside is about to seize Sharpsburg and *end the war*, A.P. Hill suddenly appears on his left flank! *Crashes* into it! *Throws* Burnside back to the bridge! *Ends* the battle! *Saves* Lee's army!"

"YOU DON'T KNOW what a thrill this is for me," says Edmund Burnside Sr. as his son pulls his white Oldsmobile into the parking lot overlooking the Burnside Bridge.

He's so thrilled that he can barely wait for the people who are climbing into a car with Indiana license plates to hurry up and move out of the way. "Come on, you damn Yankees, get on in!"

Finally, the Indiana Yankees drive off and Burnside's son, Edmund Jr., parks the Olds. They climb out and walk past a group of tourists studying a sign about the battle.

"If these people only knew who was walking by them," says the senior Burnside.

"Calm down, Pop," says his son.

But he can't calm down. Burnside, 71, a retired General Motors manager, is all keyed up. He has come all the way from Georgia to see where his most illustrious relative fought. Gen. Ambrose Burnside was, he says, the nephew of his great-great-grandfather. Growing up in Michigan, Burn-

side was aware of this connection to history, but he never paid much attention to it. Then, in the '50s, GM transferred him to Georgia, where he learned that many Southerners looked askance at his surname. One day, he was introduced to a man who immediately asked if he was kin to that Yankee general. Burnside proudly answered yes, and the man promptly threw him off his property. "They take it real serious down South," he says.

Curious, he started reading up on his distinguished relative. To his dismay, he found that many historians regard the general as a bumbling incompetent. In fact, quite a few of them blame Gen. Burnside for failing to get his troops across Antietam Creek quickly enough to seize Sharpsburg. "Burnside wasted the morning and part of the afternoon crossing the stubbornly defended bridge," wrote James M. McPherson in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Battle Cry of Freedom*, "when his men could have waded the nearby fords against little opposition." Other historians disagree, however, arguing that the creek was too difficult to ford, and Edmund Burnside Sr. is firmly convinced that they are right. So convinced, in fact, that he once delivered a lecture defending the general to a group of Civil War buffs in Georgia. And now he has come to Antietam to see the place for himself.

"I didn't know his bridge was this big," he says when he catches his first glimpse of the stone span. He lights up a cigar with a white plastic tip and watches the tourists wander by. "I could give these tourists a thrill if I tell 'em who we are," he says. "They want a history lesson? We'll give it to them. Give me a crowd! I'll tell you about this bridge!"

His son doesn't look too happy about that idea. A 28-year-old tree surgeon, the younger Burnside is a Civil War buff, too, but he's more interested in reenacting battles than in rehabilitating the Burnside name. The two men pose for pictures on the bridge, then cross to the other side—the side that Burnside's troops attacked from—and look at the scene from the general's perspective.

Not surprisingly, the elder Burnside quickly concludes that it would have been impossible to ford the creek. "If they woulda got across the water, they couldn't crawl across the bank," he says. "You've got a 10-pound rifle and 60 pounds of equipment on your back."

"I'd hate to be in the first dozen or so to get across," says his son.

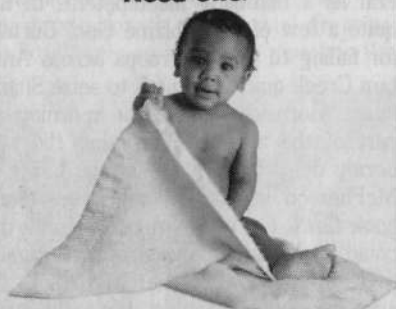
On the bank, the Burnside's read a Park Service sign quoting Henry Kyd Douglas, a Sharpsburg native who fought with the Confederates at Antietam: "They might have waded it that day without getting



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their waist belts wet in any place. Why Burnside's Bridge? Is it sarcasm?"

"Stupidity," the senior Burnside mutters in disgust. "This is what the authors like Bruce Catton and all them bastards that wrote books about Burnside—this is what they write."

A few yards away is a monument to the 51st New York Infantry, the regiment that seized the bridge. In steel letters, its plaque proclaims that the men took the bridge "at the point of a bayonet."

"They didn't use any bayonets here!" Burnside scoffs. "This is the kind of crap that I just blow my stack about! I'm gonna come here with my spray can and say, 'Burnside says bull!'"

As they walk back across the bridge, though, his spirits improve. "I love it!" he says. "I love walking where he walked!"

He stops, puffs on his cigar, thinks. "Actually, he *rode*," he says. "His horse's name was Major."

"THE NEXT DAY, Lee—his men down to their last two or three rounds of ammunition—will stand on this ridge and *dare* McClellan to attack him again!" says Jerry Holsworth. "George B. McClellan, true to his personality, will not attack. That evening, Lee will take his army back to Virginia, thus ending the battle and the campaign."

And so the bloodiest one-day battle in American history ended in anticlimax. With 30,000 fresh troops that he'd held in reserve, McClellan could almost certainly have crushed Lee's battered army if he'd launched an attack on September 18. But he was, as historian Stephen W. Sears wrote, "so fearful of losing that he would not risk winning." So Lee was permitted to retreat, rebuild his army and fight on for another 2½ horrific years.

Still, the Union army had repulsed the Confederate invasion and driven the Rebels off Northern soil. That was certainly a victory, and Abraham Lincoln, a man with a deep mystical side, had already privately concluded that "if God gave us victory" it would be an indication that "God had decided this question in favor of the slaves." Somewhat less mystically, Lincoln had already concluded that a crusade against slavery would infuse the Union cause with a new moral fervor—and keep England and France from intervening in support of the Confederacy. On September 22, five days after the battle, he issued a proclamation decreeing that on January 1, 1863, all slaves held in rebellious territories "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

"As a result of this battle—as a *direct* result of this battle—Abraham Lincoln will issue the Emancipation Proclamation that will begin the process that will eventually put an *end* to slavery in the United States

of America," Holsworth says. He has come to the conclusion of his speech. "Today, it doesn't really matter where you're from, folks, or who your ancestors fought for. I'd like to encourage all of you to visit our national cemetery. There, you'll find the final remains of 4,776 Americans who, here on Sharpsburg Ridge on September 17, 1862, gave up all of their tomorrows so that this nation might have a new birth of freedom. Thank you."

His audience applauds. Somebody says, "That was wonderful!" Holsworth takes off his Smokey Bear hat and mops the sweat off his balding pate. Half a dozen people rush up to congratulate him. A couple from Oregon tell him that they've traveled cross-country, stopping in national parks all the way, and his speech was the best they've heard yet. Somebody else tells him he speaks with the cadence and the spirit of an inspired evangelist.

"I grew up in a Baptist church in Dallas, Texas," he says, smiling. "And we *are* evangelists here. Our religion is this battlefield. We love it more than words can describe."

He pulls out a pack of cigarettes. "Mind if I support the North Carolina economy?"

Nobody minds, so he lights one up, takes a long drag, and starts talking about how he came to work here. He'd spent 13 years teaching history in Dallas, but he got sick of middle school kids and decided to try something new. A Civil War buff since he was 7 years old, he'd been spending a couple of thousand dollars every summer visiting battlefields, so he decided to move to Virginia, where he'd be closer to them. "I was going to spend the rest of my life studying the Civil War," he says.

And he has. First, he started volunteering at Antietam; then, a couple years ago, he got a job as a seasonal ranger. Now, he works summers at Antietam and spends his winters writing freelance newspaper and magazine articles, many of them about the Civil War. These days, he's toying with the idea of writing a novel that would popularize the battle of Antietam the way Michael Shaara's bestselling novel *The Killer Angels* popularized the Battle of Gettysburg. "We've got so many human interest stories here," he says.

All these activities have the same goal: remembrance. "How do we thank those people who we'll never meet, who did these things 130 years ago?" he asks. "The answer is: We can come here and remember. We make them immortal when we remember."

THEY CLIMB OUT OF the blue-and-tan pickup truck, leaving the motor running, as if they're only going to take a quick look at the Cornfield and then move along. But they end up lingering for a while.

EVERY WEEK IN THE  
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They look down at a sign titled "Every Stalk of Corn." It's illustrated with a Gardner photograph of dead soldiers lying next to a split-rail fence, and it quotes Union Gen. Joe Hooker's description of the Cornfield after the battle: "In the time I am writing, every stalk of corn in the northern and greater part of the field was cut as closely as could have been done with a knife, and the slain lay in rows precisely as they had stood in their ranks a few moments before. It was never my fortune to witness a more bloody, dismal battlefield."

They read the sign, then stand for a long moment, silently staring out at the field where the tall grass trembles in the gentle breeze.

"I try to envision what they had to go through, what they did and how they did it," says Kevin Master, a 22-year-old college student from Palm, Pa. "I don't think the people of this country will do the things they did anymore. Attitudes change. Government changes. I don't know if people will fight."

"I don't know if people have that respect for the government anymore," says his fiancée, Barbara Decker.

"They're too much involved in material things," Master says, "and not what this country really stands for—the democratic ideals."

They look at the Cornfield for another few moments, then climb back into the pickup and drive off, headed for Bloody Lane and the Burnside Bridge.

The Cornfield is quiet for a while, and then another car pulls up and two brothers step out. Their great-grandfather fought in a West Virginia regiment that stormed the Sunken Road, and they've come to see the battlefield. They, too, read the sign, and they, too, begin to stare silently out at the field of grass.

"It's just incredible to me the way these people fought," says John Pratt, 40, a corporate investigator from Mount Gilead, Ohio. "I think I wouldn't have done it. I wish I could, but I tend to think I would have looked for a wall somewhere to hide behind."

"I don't believe in war," says his brother Ray, 51, a steelworker from Weirton, W.Va. "I believe it's a waste. But I admire their courage. I don't think the generation we have now would fight that way."

"They kill each other in the street," says John. "They just won't fight for a cause."

"What a waste," Ray says, looking out at the field where 10,000 men once fell. "When you think of the widows and the orphans—what a waste."

In time, they, too, move on, and the Cornfield is quiet again. Across the rolling country road stands a beige farmhouse with a white satellite dish in the yard and

red, green and purple clothes hanging out to dry. Little white butterflies dart playfully past metal plaques erected by the War Department a hundred years ago. Designed to teach military tactics to young soldiers, they are simple, matter-of-fact statements of where a regiment was and what it did. Here at the Cornfield, however, the various plaques end with chilling statistics: "Of the 550 engaged, 323 were killed or wounded," or "226 officers and men, of whom 186 were killed or wounded."

Now, a woman, two boys and a dog walk along the edge of the Cornfield and sit down on the base of a monument to the troops from New Jersey. It's a 20-foot-tall pedestal crowned with a statue of a soldier



**EARL ROULETTE,  
A FARMER FOR  
MORE THAN  
HALF A CENTURY,  
HAD THREE  
GREAT-GRAND-  
FATHERS WITH  
FARMS ON THE  
BATTLEFIELD.**

raising a sword over his head. The two boys—Kevin Kunkel, 9, and his brother Scott, 10—are filling out the Junior Ranger activity booklet they got at the visitors center. Their mother, Debbie Kunkel, 40, is gazing out at the Cornfield.

"I get goose bumps sitting here," she says. "I wonder, when it comes down to it, how many of us could pick up a gun and charge into the lines?"

She and her sons have come from Pennsylvania to camp nearby. They're here because she wants them to learn about their country's history. "I don't think most Americans really understand the significance of this," she says. "I worry about the generation coming up. We have a really hard problem talking about slavery issues and black-white issues, and they need to be talked about."

She is a slender woman with curly hair. As she talks, she is petting the family sheep dog and looking out at the Cornfield, imagining the battle that was fought there and the soldiers who fought it. "I'm a psychologist," she says, "and I get into wondering

what they were feeling. What gave them the courage?"

She thinks a moment, then tries to answer her own question. "You're in a situation where you've got two possibilities—you win or you die. It's the fight-or-flight thing. I kill this individual or he kills me. There were also those who ran in fear—more of them than we realize. Men would literally pick each other up and say, 'Let's go! Let's go!' I think in those days to be a coward was such a disgrace"—she mimes the act of shooting herself—"that you may as well do it yourself. I don't think we have as much of that now as we did then—fighting was a way of life."

Her son Scott has finished his activity book, and she turns to him. "You're a 10-

year-old," she says. "Could you pick up a drum and march to war?"

"I wouldn't want to," he says.

"Could you have done it?"

"I don't know."

They move on, heading off to see the rest of the battlefield. Other tourists come and go. Then the sun begins to set and the people stop coming.

To the west, the horizon is splashed with pink. To the south, a half moon hangs in a sky turning a darker shade of blue. There is no breeze at all, and the grass in the Cornfield is perfectly still. There is the sound of crickets and a motor running at a nearby farmhouse. The sky darkens. The motor stops. Far away, a train blows its whistle, then blows it again, then again. The whistle fades as the train moves on. Now the only sound is the chirp of a million crickets. A faint breeze rises. The grass quivers, then sways gently.

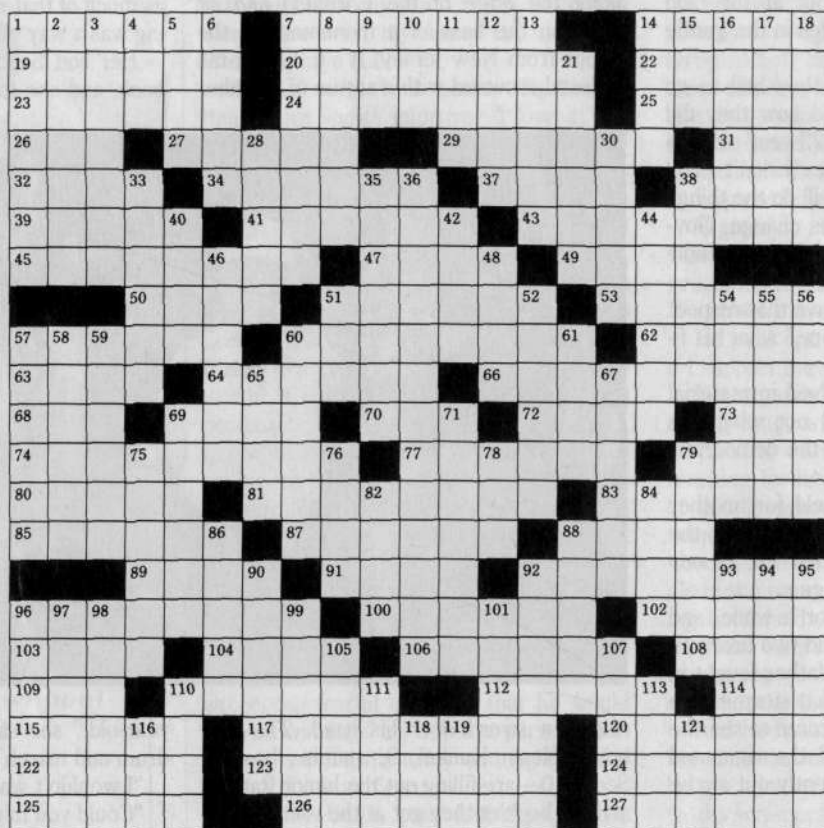
It's night now, and the Cornfield—the bloodiest part of the bloodiest day in American history—is as peaceful as any place on Earth. ■



# Literary Decline

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- 102 Oscar de la —
- 103 Without warranty
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- 110 Au — potatoes
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- 96 With 74 Across, author of stepquote
- 97 Sights
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- 110 Singer Marvin
- 111 Jerk
- 113 Jr.'s jr.
- 116 HST follower
- 118 Wd. part
- 119 Something in the water
- 121 Neck style

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## Failure in the Key of F

**W**E ARE NOT ALONE.

I make this statement in light of an article in an academic journal called *Popular Music and Society*. The article, written by a college professor named Cherrill P. Heaton, is titled "Air Ball: Spontaneous Large Group Precision Chanting."

The article concerns a phenomenon that often occurs at basketball games when a visiting player shoots an "air ball"—a shot that misses everything. Immediately, the crowd, in a sportsmanlike effort to cause this player to commit suicide, will start chanting, "AIR-ball . . . AIR-ball . . ."

Prof. Heaton, who teaches English but is also interested in music, noticed an odd thing about the "Air Ball" chant: The crowd members always seemed to start at precisely the same time, and in perfect tune with each other.

"As any director of a church choir or secular chorus knows," Prof. Heaton writes, "getting a mere 20 or 30 trained singers to sing or chant together and in tune is not always easy. Yet without direction . . . thousands of strangers massed in indoor auditoriums and arenas are able, if stimulated by an air ball, to chant 'Air Ball' in tonal and rhythmic unison."

But there's more. Using his VCR, Prof. Heaton taped a bunch of basketball games; he discovered that, no matter where the games were played, almost all the crowds chanted "Air Ball" in the same key—namely, F, with the "Air" being sung on an F note, and the "Ball" on a D note.

This is an amazing musical achievement for Americans, who are not noted for their skill at singing in unison. Listen to a random group of Americans attempting to sing "Happy Birthday," and you will note that at any given moment they somehow manage to emit more different notes, total, than there are group members, creating a somber, droning sound such as might be created by severely asthmatic bagpipers, so that the birthday person, rather than feeling happy, winds up weeping into the cake. It's even worse when Americans at sporting events attempt to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner," because not only does this song contain an estimated 54,000 notes, but also the crowd has only the vaguest notion of what the words are, so what you hear is a cattlelike sound created by thousands of people murmuring uncertainly, in every conceivable key, about the ramparts' red gleaming. And yet according to Prof. Heaton, somehow these same sports fans, all over the country, almost always spontaneously chant "Air Ball" in the same key, F.

I decided to check Prof. Heaton's findings out for myself. Under the carefully controlled scientific conditions of my living room, I chanted "Air Ball" out loud several times. I then picked up my electric guitar, which I keep close to my computer for those occasions when, in the course of my research, I develop an urgent journalistic need to sing "Mony Mony." Using this guitar, I figured out which key I had chanted "Air Ball" in: It was F.

Still skeptical, I called my office. The phone was answered in a spontaneous manner by a writer named Meg Laughlin.

I said: "Meg, I want you to do the chant that basketball fans do when a visiting player shoots an air ball."

And Meg, with no further prompting, said: "Nanny nanny boo boo?"

Meg is not a big basketball fan.

Continuing my research, I called Charlie Vincent, a professional sports columnist who claims he has never sung on key in his life, and who immediately, without prompting,

chanted "Air Ball" smack dab in F. Then I

called professional musician and basketball fan Al Kooper; he not only chanted "Air Ball" in F, but also told me that, back in the 1960s, he used to spend hours eavesdropping on people and painstakingly writing down the musical notes that they used in ordinary conversation.

"Hey, cool!" I said. "What did you do with this information?"

"I lost it," he said.

Anyway, my research convinced me that Prof. Heaton is correct: Something is causing Americans to chant "Air Ball" in F. But what? I believe that the most logical explanation—you probably thought of this—is: extraterrestrials. As you know if you watch the TV documentary series "The X Files," when anything weird happens, extraterrestrials are almost always responsible. In this case, beings from another galaxy are probably trying to communicate with us by transmitting powerful radio beams that penetrate basketball fans' brains and cause them to "spontaneously" chant in the key of F. I imagine that eventually the aliens will switch the fans to another key, such as A, and then maybe C, and so on until the aliens have musically spelled out some intergalactic message to humanity, such as "FACE A DEAD CABBAGE."

Or it could be something else. I have no idea what they're trying to tell us; I just know we'd better do what they say. And now if you'll excuse me, I'm feeling an overpowering urge to do "the wave." ■





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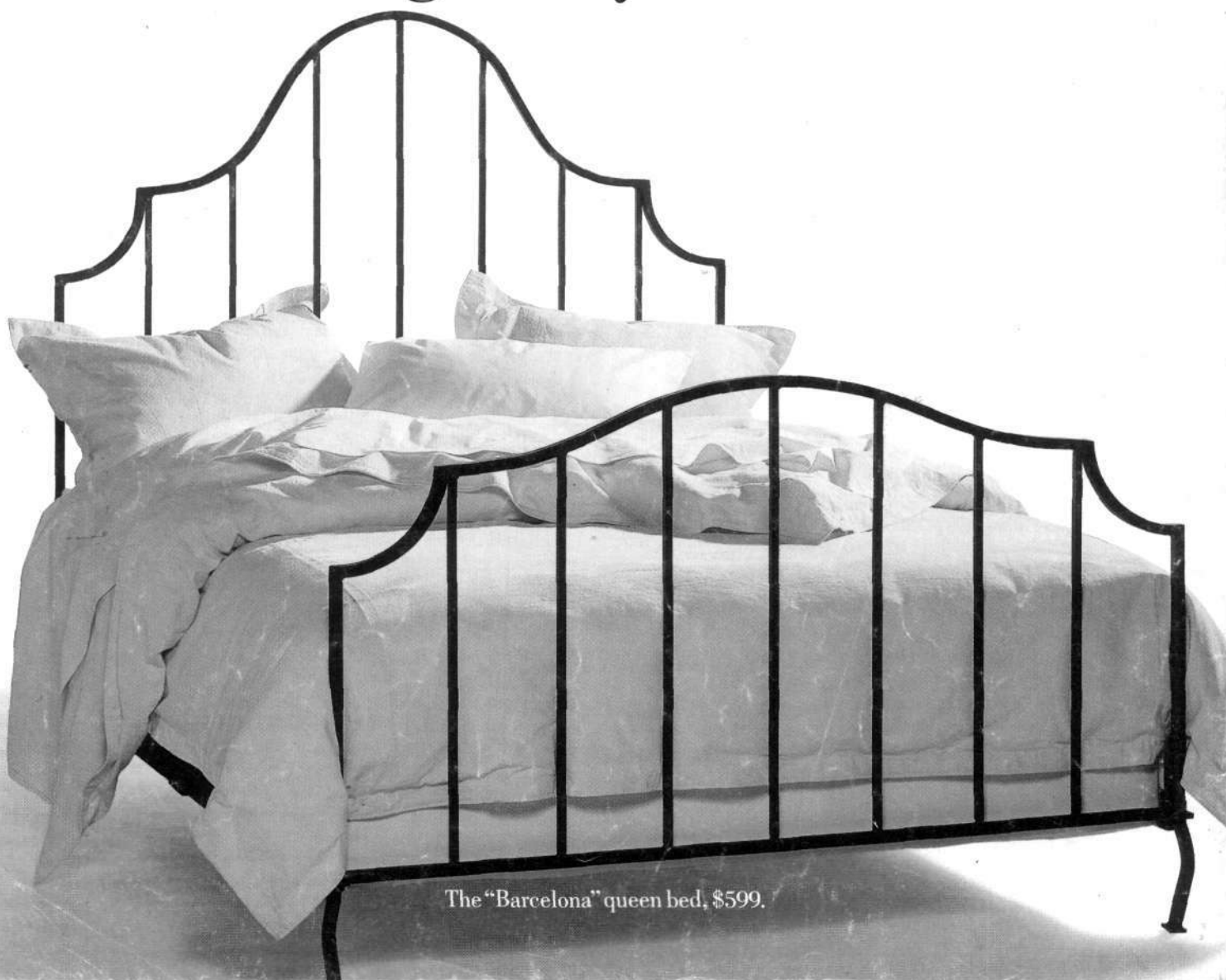
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