

Civil War history is replete with information that is strange but true, accepted as truth but isn't, with questions that are unanswerable or arguable. Any so-called buff can conjure up an unending supply of "what ifs" and "how comes," and if pressed, can provide nearly all the answers. Given five categories [mystery, speculation, fact, fiction, and argumentative], here are a few questions/statements you might ponder—or add your own.

**MYSTERY:** Exactly where is Confederate General Richard Garnett buried? Did Elon Farnsworth commit suicide at Gettysburg—if so, why? Did Lewis Armistead really apologize after his mortal wounding when he supposedly said: "Tell General [Winfield Scott] Hancock that I know I did my country a great wrong when I took up arms against her...."? What really happened at Fort Pillow? Why is Phil Sheridan buried right in Robert E. Lee's front yard at the Custis-Lee Mansion in Arlington Cemetery?

**SPECULATION:** Could Abraham Lincoln and John Breckinridge have avoided war IF John Calhoun's proposed Constitutional Amendment for co-Presidents been in effect? Could Bernard Bee's immortal nickname for Stonewall Jackson have been an insult for Jackson's lack of movement at First Manassas? Why wasn't Federal General Jefferson Davis punished for his cold-blooded killing of fellow General William "Bull" Nelson?

**FACT:** How did JEB Stuart's father-in-law, Federal General Philip St. George Cooke, end up buried in Detroit's Elmwood Cemetery? How did Dan Sickles' leg end up in the Walter Reed Army Pathological Hospital Museum in Washington D.C.? What did John Wilkes Booth's throat ailment have to do with Lincoln's assassination? What was the final outcome of "Old Abe," the bald eagle mascot of the 8<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry?

**FICTION:** Robert E. Lee surrendered his sword to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. Lincoln suffered from Marfan Syndrome and would have died in six months if he hadn't been assassinated. Lincoln wrote the "Gettysburg Address" on the back of an envelope while riding on the train to Gettysburg.

**ARGUMENTIVE:** Did Henry Wirz deserve to hang for his role in the Andersonville death rate? Was slavery "the" cause of the War? Could the South have won the war if England officially recognized the Confederacy?

This month long-time MRRT member, Martin Brosnan, will answer some of his own questions with a program entitled, "History's Mysteries." How did Lincoln's death chair at Ford's Theater wind up in Dearborn, Michigan? Where is John Wilkes Booth's body? Why was Stonewall Jackson's raincoat taken to Scotland? Where is Libby Prison? Marty has entertained us in the past with such notable presentations on "Dan Sickles," "Henry Halleck, 'Old Brains' of the Union Army," and "Abraham Lincoln and the Development of the Army: December 1860-February 1862." Marty is a retired principal from the South Lyon school district. He also gives tours of Detroit-area cemeteries.

Come check out his new topic, "History's Mysteries," on **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24.**

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The October "Road Warriors" have returned from the Shenandoah Valley trip. The "weather gods" blessed us again as it rained the day we arrived and a couple of days after we left. Dennis Frye, as usual, was at his stellar best as he guided us through the 1864 Valley Campaign. We have given Dennis an Honorary Membership in the Michigan Regimental for his services to our organization over the years. Be sure to take a look at the photographs, listen to the stories, and make certain to ask how each person (40 total) actively participated in the Battle of Cedar Creek.

Our thanks to September speaker, Larry Hathcock, for his fine program, “The Battle of Hampton Roads: *U.S.S. Monitor* and *C.S.S. Virginia*.”

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Once again it’s time to pay your dues to the MRRT, and the good news is they haven’t changed (\$15 for regular/\$10 for seniors and students). Simply place your checks (made out to Carroll Tietz) in the envelopes provided and mail them in.

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QUIZ: All questions pertain to the month of November.

1. Who was Lincoln’s first Vice President elected on November 6, 1860? And, who finished second to Lincoln in this election?
2. On November 7, 1861, Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant defeated a small Confederate army at which Missouri site? And, which Confederate General showed up with reinforcements to drive Grant’s forces back?
3. On November 9, 1861, the Union War Department made some drastic command changes, creating a new Department of New Mexico and a Department of the Missouri. Which two officers were placed in charge of each?
4. In 1861 on the same day, which general took over the new Department of the Ohio? And, who did he replace because of a “nervous strain”?
5. On November 4, 1862, which New York Democrat was elected governor of the state? And, which man did he lose to in the Presidential Election of 1868?
6. On November 14, 1862, the Army of the Potomac was reorganized into three Grand Divisions. Which generals were selected as their leaders?
7. On November 23, 1863, a Union general, commander of the Army of the Cumberland, moved his army forward toward an eminence about a mile in front of the main Confederate position on Missionary Ridge. Name him and the elevation he ultimately captured.
8. On November 27, 1863, a Confederate general escaped from a prison where he had been incarcerated. Name him and the prison from which he escaped.
9. Which woman did President Lincoln write a famous letter of condolence on November 21, 1864, regarding her five sons “who have died gloriously on the field of battle”? And, what errors did he make in the letter?
10. The bloody Battle of Franklin, Tennessee occurred on November 30, 1864. Near which river was the battle fought, and from what elevation did John Bell Hood order the ill-fated assault?

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On Monday, September 29, 1862, a tragedy occurred in the Union high command as Indiana Brigadier General Jefferson C. Davis cold-bloodedly shot and killed Major General William “Bull” Nelson. Many of the circumstances behind this act remained muddled, but certain facts are irrefutable. Davis had come to Louisville to assist Nelson in preparing to hold the city against the Confederates. Nelson, an overbearing and enormous man of violent temper, was overbearing; Davis was considerably sensitive. The result was a personality clash, at the climax of which Nelson ordered Davis out of his department. Distraught, Davis left, but presently returned, bringing the Governor of Indiana, Oliver P. Morton, with him. Morton, too, was angry with Nelson over his alleged mishandling of Hoosier volunteers during the fighting at Richmond, Kentucky a month earlier. The two Indiana men accosted Nelson in the lobby of the Galt House Hotel just after an early breakfast. In the flare-up that ensued, Davis demanded satisfaction for Nelson’s supposed rudeness, and when Nelson called him an “insolent puppy,” Davis flipped a wadded calling-card in Nelson’s face. Enraged, Nelson laid the back of a ham-sized hand across Davis’ jaw. Davis fell back, and the burly Nelson turned on Morton, asking if he too had come there to insult him. Morton wisely said he had not, and Nelson started up the staircase to the second floor.

“Did you hear that damned insolent scoundrel insult me, sir?” Nelson demanded of an acquaintance coming down the stairs. Nelson went on up the stairs, then down the hall, but soon heard someone behind him call out his name. Turning, he saw Davis standing at the head of the stairs with a pistol in his hand. Davis had not come armed to the encounter, but after staggering back from the slap, had gone around the lobby asking bystanders for a weapon. He received the pistol from a Captain Gibson and started up the stairway. Gibson called out to him, “It’s a tranter trigger. Work light.” At a range of less than eight feet, Davis shouted to Nelson, “Not another step farther!” He then shot Nelson directly in the right breast. Stunned, Nelson turned and fell, muttering, “Send for a clergyman, I wish to be baptized.” Gathering around the mortally wounded man, some men managed to lift the 300-pound giant onto a bed in a nearby room. “I have been basely murdered,” said Nelson. Half an hour later he was dead. Nelson’s remains were buried, successively, in Cave City Cemetery, Louisville, and finally in Maysville, Kentucky.

Many officers and civilians witnessed the murder, and some called for Davis to be hanged. Others, including Brigadier General Horatio G. Wright, defended Davis’ actions as those of “aggrieved party in an affair of honor.” Likewise, the influential Governor Morton took Davis’ side in the altercation. Commanding General Don Carlos Buell had Davis arrested, intending to try him for murder, but before he could appoint a court or even prepare to conduct an investigation—indeed, before Nelson’s blood had time to dry on the rug outside the door—Buell found matters out of his control. Too busy to concern himself with Nelson’s slayer or spare the officers for a court to try Davis, Buell recommended that Henry Halleck appoint a commission to look into the case. But nothing came of this, not even the filing of charges. Later that month a Louisville grand jury indicted Davis for manslaughter, but the matter went no further. Davis was admitted to bail and released. Presently he was back on duty, having acquired a reputation as a man whom it was advisable not to provoke. He died in Chicago on November 30, 1879, of pneumonia, complicated by jaundice and anemia, without ever publicly expressing regret over taking the life of a brother officer.

#### QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Hannibal Hamlin and Stephen Douglas in the popular vote, John Breckinridge in electoral vote.
2. Belmont and Leonidas Polk
3. Colonel E.R.S. Canby and Henry Halleck
4. Don Carlos Buell and William T. Sherman
5. Horatio Seymour and Ulysses S. Grant
6. Right Grand Division: Edwin V. Sumner, Left Grand Division: William B. Franklin, Center Grand Division: Joseph Hooker
7. George H. Thomas and Orchard Knob
8. John Hunt Morgan and Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus, Ohio
9. Mrs. Lydia Bixby and only 2 were killed, 2 others deserted, and 1 was honorably discharged
10. Harpeth River and Winstead Hill

A reminder of our next meeting date: **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24**, for Martin Brosnan’s presentation, “History’s Mysteries.” The meeting begins at 6:30 P.M. at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). It promises to be a fun evening. See you there.

And, don’t forget our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.