



150th Anniversary of bloodiest battle passes

Monday was the 150th anniversary of the bloodiest single-day battle in American history.

On Sept. 17, 1862, Union forces under Maj. Gen. George McClellan attacked Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee along the Antietam Creek near Sharpsburg, Md. It was the first major battle in the Civil War.

The Confederate force, outnumbered nearly two to one, fought the Union Army to a standstill. Lee withdrew the next day and poor Union leadership allowed him to escape.

3,654 men were killed, with another 17,000 wounded, all of them Americans. The true tragedy is that the battle was tactically indecisive. Though the Union force was superior, McClellan failed to commit much of his army and ended up letting Lee escape, something that would plague Union commanders throughout the rest of the war. The only bright spot for the Union about the battle was that it ended Lee's invasion of Maryland.

Had McClellan pressed his advantage, he might have been able to destroy Lee's army and end the threat of the Confederacy's single greatest general.

20,000 men was a large price to pay with little to show for it.

Americans today are not used to those kinds of casualties in war. In the entirety of the Iraq War, 4,805 Americans were killed in eight years. Compare that to nearly 5,000 dead in three days at Gettysburg and 6,821 dead in 30 days on Iwo Jima.

Modern wars are different, and while the sacrifice of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines is no less meaningful today, we should still take lessons from our past.

The United States has become increasingly divided in recent years. It is no longer the Blue and the Gray, but the Blue and the Red. We have become as bitterly separated over things like health care and Social Security as we were over slavery and state's rights 150 years ago.

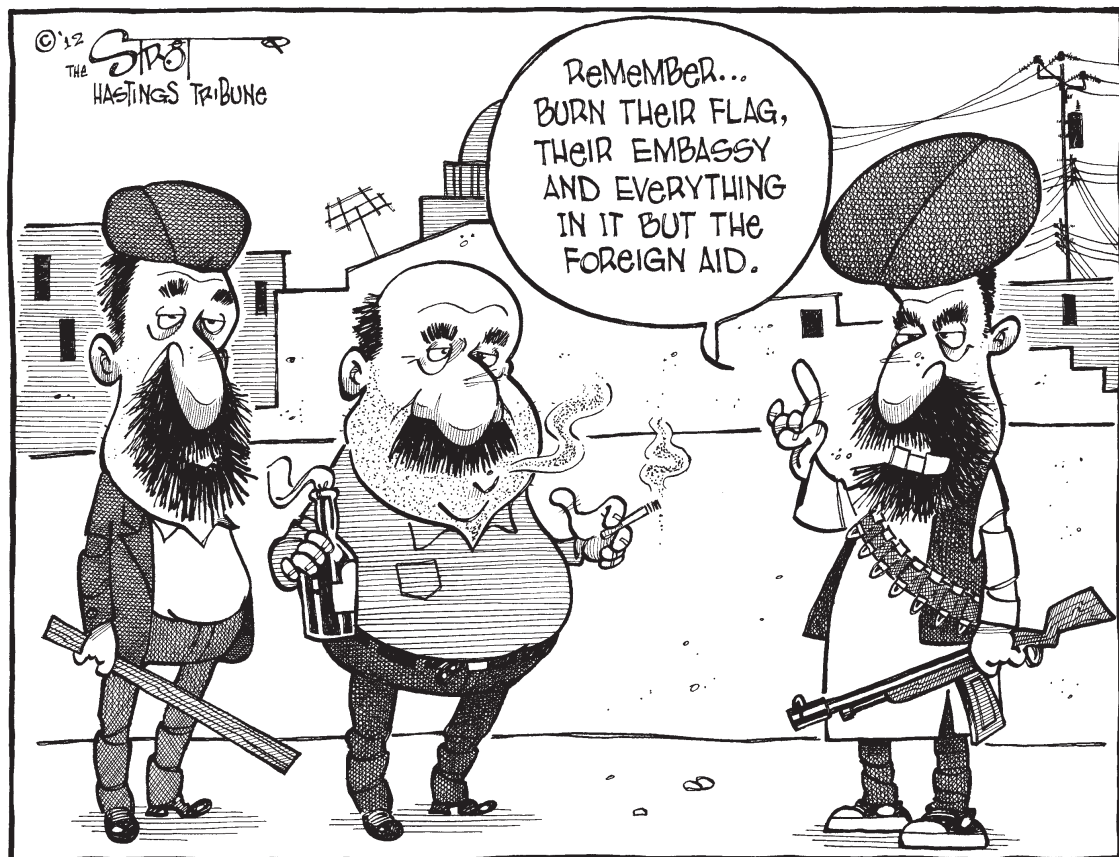
We simply cannot afford another Civil War. The last one cost more than half a million lives and completely destroyed the economy in the South.

What would a civil war look like today? Red States and Blue States are scattered around, and no state is completely homogenous between liberals and conservatives. There would be no Mason-Dixon line, no clear dividing line between opposing nations. It would truly result in a country going up in flames.

The bottom line would be that with advances in technology, another civil war would be utterly devastating. America nearly destroyed itself 150 years ago, and if brother fought against brother today, it would truly destroy itself.

We must remember that there is more that unites us as Americans than divides us, that despite our political differences, we must learn from our past and keep those differences in the realm of discourse, and not let it come to arms.

— Kevin Bottrell



Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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Sometimes when the world around me seems as bad as it can get, a look back into history helps with some perspective.

Imagine our country truly pulled apart and no certainty what direction it would go in. That was the United States 150 years ago.

On Sept. 17, 1862 the Confederate Army under Robert E. Lee seemed to have gained enough momentum to bring the North to its knees. Abraham Lincoln desperately needed a victory from his Army of the Potomac.

The two forces gathered near Sharpsburg, Maryland on opposite sides of the Antietam Creek.

As the morning fog mixed with cannon and rifle smoke little could anyone imagine that this day would mark the single bloodiest in American military history.

Union soldiers led by General George McClellan locked grips with Lee's Army of North Virginia as men fell in Millers Cornfield, Sunken Road and on the stonebridge over the creek. Ground lost was regained as the blue and gray uniformed men fought on.

In the end some 22,717 casualties were recorded.

The battle at Antietam was at best a draw, however when Lee retreated to evacuate his wounded

the North claimed victory.

But by stemming the Confederate tide Lincoln was able to use the moment to issue his Emancipation Proclamation soon after.

With Antietam the battle changed from a conflict between state's rights to a battle for individual rights. It was a defining point in why the war was fought and what our nation would become.

So maybe we aren't as lost as it seems.

The Gardener

By Kay Melia



I can't see your calendar from here, but mine says we're almost in mid-September! Seems like only a couple of weeks ago it was August. At last we can expect wonderfully moderating temperatures, gobs of rain, and tons of college and professional football games. Some of us might even discover a few tomatoes on those drought stricken vines out there in the backyard that have experienced unprecedented stress since we planted them last May.

In reality, the only guarantee we have for the rest of September is the football. The rest of the above is basically hopefulness.

Still, and this may be a bit of a stretch, late September is a great time to give some thought to just exactly what happened in our garden this summer, and to actually do a little bit of planning and preparation for our 2013 garden.

It may seem to be a bit early to

review and plan, but in my opinion, it is the very best time. This year's garden production, or lack of it, is fresh in our mind and is a great time to make some written notes that will be extremely appreciated next spring when it becomes garden preparation time.

So grab a pencil and paper and jot down a few words about what happened out there this summer. I did that yesterday, and I know that when next spring arrives, there will be some valuable ideas contained in that bad handwriting that I would have otherwise forgotten over the winter months.

Sometime next month, when all garden production has ceased, the first order of business will be to clear the plot of all spent plant life, shredding all the old vegetable plants with my mower, burning or hauling away the old tomato vines, and then commandeering a couple of truckloads of

clean shredded leaves, which will be spread evenly over the entire garden surface.

You know the next step, don't you? I will plow all that good stuff into the soil just as deeply as I can. Then, and only then, will the garden season be over for another year.

And then, after a few months of personal hibernation, I will again plow the whole plot. I will relish the feel of that rich soil and smell the freshness resulting from a few months of rest as the biodegradable materials I added are all integrated into the best seedbed anyone can imagine.

This is also a great time to jot down the names, the varieties of the vegetables that you grew this summer, and if there were certain disappointments, make a note to yourself to try a different variety next spring. Plan to try something new for a change

I have found it extremely helpful to make lots of notes to myself right now about this year's effort. The information I provide myself now becomes my guide for next year. I have also put in my order for a normal summer next year.... less heat, more rain, no weeds, etc, etc, etc!

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GOD SAYS
 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.
Romans 12:9, 10

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Bathing Suits

We went to Denver to take Kristy and Kodey to the airport so they could go home. One went to Washington state and the other went to California. Naturally we had a five-hour wait in between flights.

Since Kodey was leaving at 8 a.m., we decided to go to Denver the night before. I told the kids that we would get a room at a motel that had a swimming pool so I would take plastic bags to put the wet suits in.

We got to Denver early afternoon and they checked out the swimming. Sure enough it had a pool but they wanted both Kurt and I to go with them. The problem was that our swimming suits were still in the camper at home.

We decided to go shopping for cheap swimming suits on sale. Sure enough both of us found one. Kurt needed a new one; I really don't know why as he never goes swimming but it had been a lot of years since he got a new one. (That was

at my request because his old swimming suit was what I would call a speed-o.) I, on the other hand, didn't need a new one but I told him I would buy the cheapest suit I could find.

Kurt found a pretty light blue suit with all the style of the year. I finally found a black one that was hanging on a hanger that said it was a 24 women's. I told him that really wouldn't fit so we started looking for a smaller size. It wasn't long till Kodey found one and it didn't have a tag but was on a size 18 hanger. I told them it might be a little big but I could make it work.

We went back to the motel and each one took a turn getting dressed. I went in last and took the suit off the hanger and notice that the strap that went around the neck didn't have a clip on the end. I decided it would be fine I would just go in strapless and sit in the hot tub.

I got into the suit and was more than a little surprised as it could

wrap around me twice. I got it off and found a tag on the inside that had the usual made in "China" and the size was a 26 woman's.

I put my clothes back on and carried out the suit. The kids were disappointed, Kurt was secretly happy because the trip to the pool was over and as for me, well first I was glad it didn't fit and second I didn't want to disappoint the kids. So I made do.

I took the black strap and put it over a car key and strung it into the little slot. Then I went to the bathroom and I pulled it around my neck until it was tight enough to hold and I tied it in a knot.

On the walk to the pool I could feel the material slapping into my skin so I knew I would be crawling into a hot tub and sitting very still.

It always amazes me how you can make things work if it is for the grandchildren.

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