

SPOTLIGHT ON FRIENDS

The Honorable Edward R. (Ted) McPherson



INTERVIEW BY AMY GULINO

Ted McPherson has lived in Dallas, Texas the past 45 years, while frequenting his family home in Gettysburg throughout the year with his wife Sally, their children and grandchildren, and many guests from all over the world. Ted and Sally have been involved with the Gettysburg Foundation since its early days.

What first sparked your interest in Gettysburg?

EM I grew up in Gettysburg, attended school locally through fifth grade, including playing Little League baseball, and have many life-long friends throughout the community, as I have spent some time every year of my life in Gettysburg. Our family came to the region almost three centuries ago in 1738. My great-grandfather Edward McPherson, for whom I am named, built a house on Carlisle Street in Gettysburg 148 years ago in 1870, after owning a farm on McPherson Ridge, where, of course, the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg took place in 1863. We have a profound fondness for Gettysburg and the people here. Gettysburg gives a wonderful dimension to our lives, and lots of meaningful involvement. In fact, Sally was the fifth full-time employee of the Foundation when it was a couple of desks and telephones headquartered in Washington, D.C., as Director of Donor Relations. What a legacy created by the entrepreneurs Bob Kinsley, John Latschar, Bob Wilburn, and their teammates!

What does being a Friend of Gettysburg mean to you?

EM Being a Friend of Gettysburg includes supporting education and historical preservation. You enable, through the Foundation and its programs, people from around the world to be knowledgeable about the total meaning of Gettysburg within the context of the causes and consequences of the American Civil War. The Visitor Center and Museum, the restored Cyclorama, all the galleries, and the film are valuable productive investments. Combined with the passion for and dedication to Gettysburg of the Foundation's executives, staff, guides, and volunteers, the Friends of Gettysburg are part of a vital enterprise.

Where is your favorite spot on the battlefield?

EM Spots we consider special are, of course, McPherson Ridge and my great-grandfather's 90 acres from the McPherson barn up to where the Peace Light Memorial is today. That's a beautiful spot—the light changes out there with a view to the western hills over the course of the year. It's also the area where Sally and I have jogged for decades. We've enjoyed it for many, many years. I would also say two special places for anyone are: Little Round Top and the site of Pickett's Charge. When you get onto the field and see what the people did, the experience is remarkable. You had Texans coming on the morning of the second day from Chambersburg, 23 miles away, not all of whom had shoes and not enough water. They had been on the march with their heavy loads and go right into battle against the Union forces on Little Round Top that afternoon.

What Current Foundation Project excites you?

EM A blue chip program to me is *In the Footsteps of Leaders* under the superb leadership of Sue Boardman. The evidence of its effectiveness is the high quality of the clients, ranging from corporate chief executives and their staff, to the McDermott Scholars from the University of Texas at Dallas, to urban school principals from the Broad Institute. *In the Footsteps of Leaders* is a high-quality, unique experience using the battlefield as an applied laboratory brought to life by Sue and her staff. The lessons of leadership, character, decision-making under pressure, communications, agility, disruptive technologies, all become real and applicable to modern life. A second program that is critical is the preservation of the land and the physical assets. Also compelling is the education in scale at an affordable rate that goes on through the battlefield and visitors center with an enormous number of visitors each year. At the core of everything is, of course, preserving the effective public-private partnership. This model of the private sector working with the federal government and the National Park Service has been proven in the past to be a highly effective technique

and a bit unique, underlining the importance of sustaining collaborative relationships among the people responsible for leading the enterprise. I have always had high expectations as to what's possible for the Gettysburg Foundation.

What do you think of the new vision of the Foundation?

EM Vision, perhaps foresight, is the ability to see around the corner and make smart choices. The words in the Foundation's mission statement and vision of citizenship, patriotism, collaboration, and solving of problems through dialogue are a good extension from the Foundation's launch. The beauty will be in the execution. It is a useful statement of advancing relevance beyond Gettysburg's natural historical significance.

How do you see Gettysburg leading the nation-wide dialogue of citizenship, leadership, conflict, and conciliation in American democracy?

EM I have used as an example the issues with which Lincoln had to deal: preservation of the union, social changes in extremely meaningful ways, and so forth. Let's get newly elected representatives and bring them to Gettysburg and say to them, "OK, since you men and women of both parties tell us you are so good, let's see you start by solving some national challenges with less scale and degree of difficulty than with which Lincoln had to deal."

What leader from the battle resonates most with you and what do you think we can we learn from them?

EM I have already mentioned Lincoln. On site at Gettysburg to me, it is Joshua Chamberlin. After the Civil War he said, "Character is the firm, seasoned substance of soul." To me understanding the character and courage of the people, on both sides at Gettysburg, as real world leaders, has great value.

Why? Because people are the only source of a sustainable competitive advantage.