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Was "Stonewall" Jackson's nickname a compliment or a nasty put-down?

In what ways are the First Battle of Manassas and Operation Desert Storm alike?

Which U.S. congressman was taken prisoner by Confederates after being discovered hiding behind a tree near Bull Run Creek?

Did a regiment of Georgia boys really play baseball with the skull of a slain Union colonel?

These were just a few of the questions bandied about last week at the first meeting of the Bull Run Civil War Roundtable in Manassas, a few miles from the ridge where Confederate General Thomas Jackson and his men "stood like a stone wall."

The meeting was proof that not everyone got enough of Civil War history from the recent 10-hour PBS documentary.

Roundtables like this one are for those who never get tired of talking about every aspect of the war — from the bloodiest battles to the oldest stories (Did a Virginia woman actually get impregnated by a bullet that went through a Union soldier's left testicle a half mile away?)

It seems odd that there has never been such a group in this city of Civil War battlefields and pick-up trucks with Confederate flags.

After all, there are roundtables all over the country. I attended one in Fredericksburg a few years ago in the basement of a now-defunct Hot Shoppes Junior restaurant.

The meeting consisted of a group of old men falling asleep to a lecture on Stafford County during Union occupation. "The Yankees stole anything they could eat," the speaker said. "They didn't leave a thing, not even a few hogs."

Most roundtable members snored on, their plates covered with pork-chop bones. Others coughed — there was an intense peer pressure to smoke pipes and be bald. No women were allowed.

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The scene was quite different in the Manassas public library at the first meeting of the Bull Run Roundtable.

The recruits — 20 men and two women — sat attentively in chairs. There were a few older people, but nobody that looked like Jefferson Davis. Many looked like they had stopped by after a long day at the office.

Organizer Bill Miller, who works at the Civil War Society in Clarke County, came to the front of the room to launch the campaign.

Miller seemed nervous. He may have already noticed that the name "Jeb Stewart" was written on the attendance sheet. Stewart, of Manassas, was named after the Confederate General Jeb Stuart. He was here to brush up on his Civil War history.

"I think you should know that I was raised in Massachusetts," Miller said slowly. "I know most of you are Virginians and I'm not afraid to say I'm a Yankee."

The audience laughed.

"I'm a Yankee, but I'm not going to apologize for it," he continued. "I live among you now."

There was another round of giggles. A muffled Rebel yell came from a big man in the back row.

"I'll try not to be loud, crude or obnoxious like other Yankees," said the remarkably soft-spoken Miller.

"That makes two of us — I'm from Chicago," yelled a sympathetic voice.

Miller wanted to make it clear that he wasn't another carpetbagger whistling "Dixie." He was a Civil War buff, ready to talk about the details of the single most important American event.

He also wanted to make it clear that he was glad the Union won.

"My sympathies are with the boys in blue," he announced. "Are you all rebels?"

"Certainly!" came the group's reply, as the man from Chicago shrewdly stayed quiet.

The guest lecturer, a battlefield park ranger, got up to talk about the First Battle of Manassas.

Five minutes into the talk, debates started concerning bullets and battle strategies and the colors of uniforms.

Miller (who urges anyone wishing to join to call (703) 955-1176) smiled from the back of the room and seemed to feel at home.