



Albert E. Castel III

November 14, 2014

No obituary found for this tribute.

Tribute Wall



“ *Albert E. Castel III*

January 28, 2023 at 10:24 AM



“ *He was my mentor!!!-WMU-1967-Herb Swingle-Rochester,NY*

Herb Swingle - October 24, 2016 at 08:33 AM

“ My wife and I wish to express our condolences to the family of Albert Castel, who married my first cousin George Ann Bennett, mother of Ann and Charles. Al and his family used to make trips back to George Ann’s hometown of Fairmont, West Virginia from Kalamazoo, Michigan to see visit relatives and friends. Her mother (Eunice) and my mother (Madge) were sisters, daughters of Henry and India Triplett from Fairmont.

The first time I met Al was at our family home on Fleming Avenue shortly after he and George Ann married. My mother would always prepare a delicious meal for everybody each time they visited. Al thoroughly enjoyed dining over a home cooked meal, all the while enriching the conversation around the dining table by discussing historical events. As we got to know Al better, we learned he was a prolific writer who focused on Civil War history. Little did we realize at the time that he would become a highly respected author and one of the leading historians of the Civil War. Nor did we anticipate that any of us would become personally involved in some of his historical research.

I first visited with the Albert Castel family and my dear Aunt Eunice in the summer of 1965 in Kalamazoo after graduating from college and before entering the Marine Corps. I recall the delicious dinners George Ann prepared during my visit. She was a great gourmet cook and wonderful first cousin. Nobody walked away from her dinner table feeling hungry. My first introduction to the Greek pastry baklava, which was served after dinner, was at their home. It was so good. She also encouraged me to become involved in researching the Triplett and Harvey family histories through genealogy.

During the day when school was in session, Al and George Ann taught at Western Michigan University. They would take me on campus so that I could visit with Aunt Eunice, who was the girl’s dormitory director. We would converse about family and various topics of interest. Several times she introduced me to some of the female residents and even set me up with a couple of dates. They

wrote to me when I was in Vietnam. It was always a good feeling to receive mail from Kalamazoo during a period of time when there were few "round eyes" to talk to.

On April 30, 1987 a 20 year reunion of Vietnam Veterans from the Battle of Hill 881 South took place at Veterans Plaza in downtown San Antonio. I was among several invited guests to attend since a poem "Death At My Door" I penned during the battle was inscribed on the red granite base of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Titled "Hill 881 South," the large bronze statue depicts a Marine rendering aid to his wounded comrade who later died.

Al became interested in the origin of the poem and its inspiration, so he inquired about it. After some discussion he suggested I write about my combat experiences at Hill 881 South on April 30, 1967, near Khe Sanh. We talked some about writing an article together for publication. At first I was hesitant because I didn't want to go back to Vietnam in my mind and relive old and somewhat unpleasant memories. However, I gradually agreed (by his encouragement) to write about my recollections and send them to him. If somebody else other than Al had asked, I'm not sure I would have written anything. In any case, he felt there was some historical significance to merit writing about the poem's origin.

Al also requested a copy of my letters written to my family during 13 months of combat duty in Vietnam. I sent the letters, which were bound in a hard-back two-inch binder, to him along with a note saying there wasn't much in them related to actual combat. I had purposely written low-key letters to void upsetting my parents. Al returned the letters along with a draft copy of the story that included his opening remarks followed by my personal account and ending with his concluding remarks. After submitting the completed article to a magazine publisher he was informed that the battle had been just a "small skirmish" compared to other battles. This didn't sit well with Al, who recogniz

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“ Dear family of Albert Castel,
I was so sorry to hear of Dr. Castel's passing. I thoroughly enjoyed him as professor and learned a lot from him. I later went on to teach history myself. He will be missed.

Chuck Swanson, a student from the 80's

Chuck Swanson - November 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

RP

“ Al was a favorite both as a professor at WMU and later as a professional colleague. I remember him as being tough on spelling and punctuation, but breaking down in laughter when a young lady wrote a long essay on "navel combat." He was also a great favorite of Professor Alan Brown, now deceased. The world is poorer in both cases.

Robert Parks - November 20, 2014 at 12:00 AM