

Engineers Analyze Antietam

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On 5 June 1986, members of the staff and faculty of the Engineer School visited the Antietam National Battlefield at Sharpsburg, Maryland, on a staff ride. Fifty-seven staff ride participants spent the day walking the site of the bloodiest single day of fighting during the Civil War.

The trip was preceded by extensive preparation on the part of the participants. Everyone was given a package of information concerning the Civil War, the Antietam Campaign, men, equipment, tactics, and events which played a part in the September 1862 battle. Most participants read *Landscape Turned Red* by Stephen W. Sears prior to the trip, and a prebriefing was given by Dale Floyd, a historian from the Office of the Chief of Engineers.

Some participants were assigned to study the careers of prominent leaders of the North and South who fought in the battle of Antietam Creek. These individuals researched their assigned characters to discover what they did and why they acted the way they did. This information was shared with the group during the visit to the battlefield.

In addition to the Fort Belvoir personnel, Col. Brian Moore from the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks and Mr. Paul Chiles, Interpretive Specialist, from the National Park Service took part and assisted in the discussions. The battlefield discus-

sions usually began with the tactics employed in the battle and then digressed to idiosyncrasies of the Civil War leaders, engineer aspects of the battle, and to modern day techniques that could be applied if the battle were fought now. Maximum group interaction was encouraged from all participants to foster the exchange of ideas.

The staff and faculty of the Engineer School conduct quarterly staff rides to Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War battlefields. These staff rides consist of three parts: a systematic preliminary study of a selected campaign, an extensive visit to the actual sites associated with that campaign, and an after-action review to integrate the lessons derived from each. Maximum participant interest is generated before arrival at the sites to guarantee stimulated analyses and discussions. Battle analysis in the three phases mentioned above is thereby achieved. Overall, the Fort Belvoir staff rides result in increased historical mindedness for all participants and a much better understanding of the reactions of leaders and soldiers in the crucible of combat.

Captain Jacobovitz is the staff ride coordinator for the staff and faculty of the Engineer School.

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