



# THE HARPER FAMILY NEWSLETTER

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## Confederate Scout and Spy, William J. "Bill" Harper

by Clyde C. Cale, Jr.

William J. "Bill" Harper was born on Clover Run, Tucker County, Virginia now WV) on March 20, 1814. He was the sixth child of Adam and Margaret (Wamsley) Harper. He, like half of his brothers, never married.

The Civil War served as a release point for the intense energy and burning zeal of the fearless and restless Bill Harper. Harper was officially connected with the army of Northern Virginia, and by reason of his superior courage, knowledge, skill and recognized ability, was assigned to Scout duty. A more ultra-Southern sympathizer could not be found in Lee's or Jackson's armies.

Many Unionists considered him a bandit that guided a band of cut-throats through Western Virginia stealing and burning everything within their reach. This reputation given to him is based on unfounded information, and is simply not true. He was feared by Union Scouts because of his great courage and bravery, and had been marked for death by Union forces for a long time - but never once was his capture or death ordered by President Lincoln, as many have stated.

Harper threw himself into the Civil War with reckless daring. In June of 1861, the Confederates force were occupying Randolph County, and Federals were occupying Preston County - thus placing Tucker County between two hostile forces in a kind of "no man's land." The Harper brothers, William and Ezekiel, volunteered in the Confederate Service, and were employed as Scouts and guides most of the time - because of their familiarity with the mountain regions of Western Virginia and Maryland. During this time, Ezekiel was in Barbour County, and William in Preston, both watching the movements of the Federal troops.

In December 1863, Bill's cousins - two sisters, Catherine and Hannah of Monterey, Virginia - decided to visit the home of their father, Leonard

Harper (uncle of William), who lived six miles above Circleville in Pendleton County. Their brother, Jacob, a member of Company C, 62nd VA Regiment, had died just three months before of Typhoid fever contracted in the Gettysburg campaign. This was the first visit the sisters had made to the old homeplace since their brother's death.

Arriving late in the evening, the sisters were greeted by their cousin, Bill, who had made a surprise visit to see his uncle Leonard. In conversation with Leonard, Bill was advised that it was not a wise, prudent, or safe idea to stay overnight at the Harper home.

Being a man of reckless courage and daring, and not having been to see his relatives in a long time, he decided to disregard the warning and spend the night. When it became time to go to bed, Catherine showed Cousin Bill his sleeping quarters in an upstairs bedroom in the loft. He requested that she remove all the feathers from the bed, because he did not know where he

might be sleeping the next night, and did not want to get used to luxurious or comfortable beds. He then placed his pistol and large knife on the window beside the bed, remarking as he did so that he might need them before morning.

The sisters occupied an adjoining room, and Catherine said she was so nervous and apprehensive that she couldn't sleep all night long.

Unknown to all at the Harper home, earlier that evening Colonel George R. Latham of the Federal army had called Capt. Sampson Snyder into his office and demanded that he and his men go out and find Bill Harper and bring him back dead or alive.

After several hours of traveling, Snyder and his men picked up Bill's trail in the deep snow that had fallen during the night. Later, after they had lost the trail and, being so close to old Leonard Harper's house, they put two and two together, and thought



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# Changes in Our Family Tree



## Births:

- Karen Lund Merritt, granddaughter of Elizabeth (Harman) Painter Leonard, has a new granddaughter, born to her son, Tom, and wife, Christy.
- Tamara "Tami" Joyce (Yonke) Lescoulie and James (Jay) Lescoulie have a new daughter, Halena "Halle" Mara, born 9/4/16 in Newport Beach, CA.
- Karen (Lund) Merritt's son, Tommy, and wife had a daughter, Emily Ann Merritt, born 08/30/16.
- Born 11/10/16, Annalee Harman is daughter of Chase Harman, granddaughter of Eric Harman, and great-granddaughter of Ed & Patty Harman.
- Jack Corrick and Marion became great-grandparents in March. Their granddaughter Megan gave birth to Amelia DeJager. Amelia's grandparents are Susan and John Groetsch.

## Deaths:

- Dr. Michael Karickhoff, 86, died, Dec. 31, 2016, in Kokomo, IN. Mike was born Feb. 26, 1930, in Buckhannon, the son of O. Earle Karickhoff and Myrtle (Mauzy) Karickhoff. He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Susan (Given) Karickhoff. Mike graduated from Buckhannon-Upshur High School in 1948 and West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1952. He received a Master of Science degree from the University of Maryland in 1955 and earned a PhD from Purdue University in 1958. He worked for E.I. DuPont as a polymer chemist in Circleville, Ohio, until 1970, when he became a Research Chemist for the Sherwin-Williams Company in Chicago until his retirement in 1990.
- Geraldine "Jerry" (Montoney) Leitner who died on February 4th. Jerry was the daughter of Gay Harman Montoney, daughter of Elmira (Harper) Harman (12th child).
- Donald Wayne Fuller, 88, of Cumberland, MD passed away Aug. 12, 2016. Born July 6, 1928, he was the son of the late Walter Mason and Blanche (Cooper) Fuller, grandson of Elizabeth (Harper) Cooper (16th Child). Donald graduated from Allegany High School in 1947, then served our country in the Army as a Military Policeman in Augusta, Ga. He also participated in a training film for the Army. He then achieved his BS in Mechanical Engineering from West Virginia University. He was employed at

If you're in the Harman area on the day before the Reunion (Sat., 1 pm), we could use your help with setting up the picnic tables at the Reunion Pavilion!

Annual Harper Reunion  
May 28, 2017 1:00 pm  
Harman, West Virginia



Allegany Ballistics Laboratory, then later by the Allegany County Commissioners as a building supervisor. He was a lifelong member of the First Presbyterian Church. He enjoyed working word puzzles, fixing things - especially his grandchildren's toys - and riding his John Deere lawn mower. He was called "Mr. Fix It," fixing cars, appliances, anything that needed fixing - "Uncle Donald could fix it!"

- Robert W. "Bob" Fuller, 91, died in Charlotte, NC on October 15, 2016. Born May 11, 1925 in Cumberland, MD, he was the son of the late Arthur and Ethel Powell Fuller, grandson of Elizabeth (Harper) Cooper (16th Child). Bob was a Navy lieutenant and served on the USS Purdy DD734 in World War II and at Naval Ordnance



Supply Office during the Korean War. An electrical engineer from Georgia Tech and the University of Louisville, after 44 years of service, he retired from Square D Company as Carolina sales manager.

- Correction to last year's obituary for Billy Junior Harper: He had only one daughter, Kathy Ford of Orlando, FL. Nancy was his stepdaughter & Sonny was his stepson. He also had ten nieces, not just one as mentioned.

There are just 10 grandchildren of Jacob C. & Susan (McDonald) Harper who are now living.

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## From the Harper Cemetery Association Board of Directors



Dear Family and Friends:

It is that time of year again to make plans for our annual time of getting together and sharing in a time of fellowship and good food. Our reunion this year is on Sunday, May 28, 2017, at the Harper Pavilion, located on the Harper Farm, 2.2 miles East of Harman on Route 33. Turn in at the Jacob C. Harper Cemetery sign and drive up the gravel road keeping to the right at the farmhouse where you will find the pavilion.

Our internet website is [www.jacobcharper.org](http://www.jacobcharper.org) where you will find information that has been posted for your use. The content is updated with the annual reunion photo and other information supplied by Marsha Fuller and posted by our website manager, John Harper.

Visit the family cemetery which is located further up the road on the farm. The cemetery is maintained by Danie Ours and family with funds supplied by donations and with a perpetual care fund established by the Board of Directors. We encourage donations and bequests to keep the fund going for time to come. The cemetery is for any family member who wishes to be buried there.

Our meal will begin a 1:00 pm after the family photograph and the blessing. It is a covered dish affair with lots of good food. Those attending from far off and do not have means of preparing a dish should not worry about coming. There will be plenty. Please register when you arrive so that we can keep our contacts updated. Those who have email addresses will receive the newsletter electronically along with the letter. Those not having electronic connections will receive a mailing.

The Board of Directors will meet following the door prize drawings. Anyone wishing to communicate and send donations can mail their donations to our treasurer, Eleanor Nestor, 7936 Dry Fork Road, Hendricks, WV 26271

We look forward to seeing you there!

- *Stelman E. Harper, President, Board of Directors*

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he may have gone there.

Along about morning, Catherine heard several people talking and moving around outside the house. Soon, led by Capt. Snyder, the soldiers began coming up the stairway yelling, "Where is Bill Harper?" and "Kill Bill Harper." She met them on the stairway, and had the presence of mind to extinguish the candle they carried by a motion of her skirts, and all were left in total darkness. She was seized by two of the attacking party, one holding her by both arms, and with the muzzle of a pistol pressed against her breast. She was then led down the stairs - they thinking that she was Bill in feminine disguise.

When Capt. Snyder saw that they had made a mistake and captured a woman instead of the man they were after, he ordered his men to surround the house, and went upstairs in search of his man. Leonard Harper's wife, Phebe, denied that Bill was there, but Capt. Snyder wouldn't take no for an answer, and demanded that she conduct him to the loft. She took a candle and proceeded him to the top of the ladder. He examined the beds and other hiding places, and failed to find Bill. Phebe had started back down the ladder when Synder decided to look out the window. Just below the window was the roof of the porch, covered with the newly fallen snow.

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## Perpetual Care Fund



Mail to: Harper Cemetery Association, 7936 Dry Fork Rd., Hendricks, WV 26271-8016

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street & City: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Harper Cemetery Association  
7936 Dry Fork Rd.  
Hendricks, WV 26271



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In the excitement, Bill had grabbed one of the white sheets from a bed and cautiously opened the upstairs window. He lay on the porch roof, covered himself with the sheet, and prayed that he was camouflaged. Unfortunately, while looking at the roof, one of the soldiers noticed a white heap that looked out of place. Sensing that it was suspicious, he hastily raised the window and jumped down to the porch roof. Just as he did, the 'heap' rolled off, and Bill freed himself from the sheet and began running across the yard to an adjoining field.

Another version states that, when Capt. Snyder peered out the window, Bill saw him, and, assuming he had been discovered - although he hadn't been - fired through the window with his pistol and, even though at point-blank range, missed his target. I find the first theory most believable, since it came from the words of Capt. Snyder himself. Besides, Bill was an excellent shot and would not have missed a still target at so close a range.

Snyder then yelled to his men, "There he goes, don't let him get away." Several shots were then fired at Bill while he was jumping off the roof, but all

missed their mark. Once on the ground, he ran past his assailants toward the Orchard, running near the fence. Snyder wanted to take him alive, and tried to reach him with his hand, when Harper gave him a slash with the knife. Snyder later said this was the reason he then shot Bill. As Bill lay dying, one of the soldiers shot him in the breast several more times.

After this atrocity, the soldiers plundered the house, stealing baby clothes, food, and horses. (The two visiting sisters had to borrow shoes to get back to Monterey, having had theirs stolen in the raid, and to depend on a neighbor for horse and buggy transportation.)

When daylight came, Phebe was able to locate Bill's body, frozen stiff, covered with coagulated blood, and mutilated by the hogs in the pig-pen where the soldiers had tossed the body. The events of that awful night proved such a shock to her nerves that she became a palsied invalid for the remaining twenty years of her life.

- Article originally printed in *The Glades Star*.  
- Photo of Bill Harper courtesy of McClain Printing Company from *History of Tucker County, West Virginia* by Homer Floyd Fansler

**Mark Your Calendar for Next Year!**  
**Harper Reunion is *always* the Sunday of Memorial Day Weekend**



We had 190 people at last year's Harper Reunion. Hope you can join us this year!