

AHEC expert tapped for Bush Gettysburg visit

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AHEC expert tapped to take part in Gettysburg Presidential visit

President George W. Bush, first lady Laura Bush and 19 of their colleagues and friends visited the Gettysburg battlefield Sept. 5. Dr. Richard Sommers, senior historian at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, was the military historian for the tour. White House photo.



November 5, 2008 – For the first time in several decades, a sitting United States President visited the historic Gettysburg battlefield on Sept. 5 when

President George W. Bush, first lady Laura Bush, and 19 of their friends and colleagues toured the area.

The group was en route to Camp David in Frederick County, Md., and decided to visit Gettysburg, explained Dr. Richard Sommers, senior historian at the U.S. Army Military History Institute. The first family had been invited to attend the reopening of the Cyclorama later in the month, but would not be able to make it.

The chief guide for the trip was Dr. Gabor Boritt of the Gettysburg College. Sommers was asked to be the military historian for the trip by Boritt.

The party traveled in four vans, with a historian in each one to narrate the history while they were going from place to place. Sommers was with the second group, including Karl Rove, former Deputy White House Chief of Staff.

They started at the Robert E. Lee monument, and worked their way to the Texas Monument, Little Round Top, the Angle, the National Cemetery and the new Visitors Center, stopping at each place to learn about it.

Amazed visitors at the battlefield were greeted by the President, who also posed for photos with them.

Among those who traveled with the President were:

- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings
- former Attorney General and Mrs. Alberto Gonzales
- former Deputy White House Chief of Staff Karl Rove
- former White House Counsel Harriet Miers
- former Under Secretary of State Karen Hughes
- former first lady's Chief of Staff Andrea Ball
- Civil War benefactor John Nau and his wife Bobbi

Sommers said he was happy and honored to be chosen for this event.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to represent the Army Heritage and Education Center and the Army War College in serving our country and our Commander-in-Chief," he said. "In my 38 years at the Military History Institute and the War College, I've had many wonderful experiences, but serving directly for the President and first lady is the highlight of my professional career."