

7440 Alexander Court,  
Fair Oaks, California. 95628  
July 5, 1975.

Dear Jay:

When I saw you in Billings a few weeks back, you asked if I would send you a little something regarding the founding and organization of the Little Big Horn Associates. I promised you I would.

On October 8, 1866, Robert B. MacLaine, Sr., a retired Master-Sergeant, U. S. Army, first broached the subject to me in a letter. For some time, we had been corresponding regarding a photograph album of commissioned officers of the 7th I was putting together. At that time, I had pictures of each one except for that of Surgeon James M. De Wolf (since then, I have gotten such a picture, and deposited a copy with the Custer Battlefield National Monument Museum) and Regimental Sergeant Major Sharrow. This one I am still looking for. In any event, Mr. MacLaine said

"Mike, I don't know what you think about it, but here's an idea dreamed up by Bob Ege of Great Falls, Montana, the Custer Historian I once mentioned. He thinks we should form a sort of club comprised of folks like us who are interested in Custer, the battle and honest history. This way, we could discuss by correspondence various aspects of the subject, helping to clarify any questions any one might have, and also debunking guys like (2 names omitted) and others, who fill the magazines with "I Rode With Custer" trash, of course, without their knowledge. It's just for our own good, discussing controversial aspects, etc., and trying to rip away some of the mystery still surrounding the battle. Bob is a former newspaperman, radio commentator, and has had several articles in Montana, the historical society quarterly. He assisted the late Dr. Kuhlman in his years of study and surveying details at the battlefield for his LEGEND INTO HISTORY. The club would be formed of charter members all accepted as bonafide students and historians of the fight, and would screen out all the (name omitted) types & future members. There would be no dues or any fees, only a couple of bucks once or twice a year to pay for the paper, ink, stencils, etc., to get out a monthly newsletter containing our various ideas and theories. It would be sent to various historical societies, and doubtless be given good mention."

So there you have it, the first mention of what was to become the Little Big Horn Associates. You will take note that it was Robert Ege who first mentioned the matter to Mr. MacLaine and who should be considered the "father" of the organization.

MacLaine's letter was received while I was in El Paso attending the annual meeting of the Western History Association. I replied to his letter on October 21, 1966, and in it said

"I think the idea you have discussed with Mr. Ege is a good one and you can count me in. Let me know how these things develop.

On November 15, 1966, Mr. MacLaine wrote

"I have not heard from Bob Ege for a couple of weeks, so cannot say more about the LITTLE BIG HORN ASSOCIATES except that I am very glad you are interested. I'm anxious to get everything rolling, and see what our first newsletter looks like. Perhaps he's busy on a story and will write this week. Since the idea was his baby, I hesitate to push him.

So here again, MacLaine gives the credit of the idea to Ege and this is the first mention of a name for the "club" - LITTLE BIG HORN ASSOCIATES.

MacLaine wrote me on November 15th, 1966, stating he had heard from Ege who outlined procedures for publishing the newsletter; that he didn't mind being the editor, but members should act as reporters, each contributing a column every month "or something like that." Ege also agreed to stand all costs of the first issue which would give him an idea of the cost and that after that the cost would be divided between the 12 charter members, and as more members were added the cost to each would be reduced accordingly. He also suggested that a proper letterhead be printed - a cut of the Garryowen insignia worn by 7th Cavalrymen with the names of the charter members on the letter head.

MacLaine's letter listed the 12 charter members and here they are alphabetically arranged:

Carl W. Breihan	Robert B. MacLaine, Sr.
Robert J. Ege	William J. McCulloch
Dr. Lawrence Frost	Herman C. Marmon
Michael Harrison	Jerry L. Roberson
Mrs. Bernice Hernandez	Major General Frank S. Ross
Clair Houseman	Jerry L. Roberson

Several letters passed between Mr. MacLaine and me and on January 7, 1967, he told me that Colonel Philip M. Shockley (Ret.) became a member.

In a letter dated March 11, 1967; MacLaine stated the membership had risen to 60, and that he and Ege had decided membership cards should be printed. When the cards were made up, MacLaine's name was carried as Executive Director as was Ege's.

On May 14, 1967, MacLaine informed me that Ege had informed him he could not edit the newsletter after the June 1967 issue. He further stated "this is a serious matter calling for action by all the charter members, who

in a sense, comprise the Associates Board Of Directors. Since there are 12 of us, and my involvement prevents my voting, I've asked Colonel Philip Shockley, our first "new member" to fill in, so that a vote of seven ayes or nays out of twelve voters, will make it official." "The matter is a simple one. We can let the Associates fold up, and the newsletter with us. In that case, since Ege has no assets, he tells me, I would be obligated to refund membership dues to some 60 nice people who trusted and believed in our Custeriana objectives, as in us. Or we can keep the whole thing alive by transferring all Associates' property, etc., to Tacoma, where I will try to publish the paper." And thus Bob MacLaine became the editor, executive director and man of all work for the Associates.

In a letter dated June 27, 1967, MacLaine sounded me out on the matter of his appointing a Board of Directors. He said he had also written General Ross about this. In his letter of July 3th, he said that General Ross agreed with me that he should NOT appoint a Board of Directors but rather an Advisory Committee.

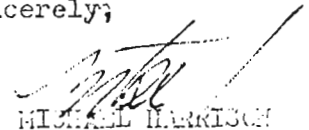
In a letter dated July 12, 1968, MacLaine suggested a Board of Directors composed of Major General Frank S. Ross, Colonel Philip M. Shockley and myself; and an Advisory Board (Editorial) composed of Art Day, Huch Shick, John Symonds, G. Bateman and Roger Williams. In my reply of July 24th, I agreed to serve on such a Board. In a letter dated July 25th to me, General Ross also agreed to serve. Colonel Shockley also accepted. I imagine the reason we three were asked to serve as Directors was because MacLaine had been writing to us for advice, suggestions and so on.

As you probably know, Ege and MacLaine came to a parting of the ways. I am not conversant with all of the details as my knowledge came only from MacLaine so I am not in a position to say whether Ege was wrong and MacLaine right or vice versa. That there was hard feeling there is no doubt and it would serve no purpose to go further into this matter.

Let it be said that all of the work devolved on MacLaine who in his later years, was a very sick man. Although faults could be found of his administration of the Associates it should be remembered that here was a man of dedication, a desperately ill man, short of Associates finances and trying to do a job all by himself. Where will we find another like him?

I trust from this, you will be able to put something together regarding the early history of the Associates.

Sincerely,

  
MICHAEL HARRISON

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