



On Henry: Inspiration, Mentor and Friend

My favorite story about Henry Deeks, or Dan as he was also known, predates the digital era, when collectors relied on printed catalogs to purchase Civil War artifacts. What distinguished his catalog from others was timing. Henry had a specific date and time (always 5 a.m.) to call and order. These moments made me feel like a child on Christmas morning, wondering what gifts I might find beneath the tree—the culmination of weeks of anticipation.

I recall sitting spread eagle on the floor of our sunroom with the phone, a cup of strong coffee, and my catalog, covered with notes and a list of numbers, each representing an item I desperately wanted. Then, at 4:55 a.m., I began speed dialing, hoping to hear Henry's pleasant voice instead of the blaring beat of a busy signal. On two occasions, I heard the magic words, "You're the first caller."

When I learned of Henry's death of cancer on April 23, a few days shy of his 73rd birthday, memories of those catalogs and the morning rituals that attended them flooded my mind. I also reflected on the many interactions we had at shows. The table Henry shared with Roger Hunt was always my first stop. Henry's towering and slim figure was a signpost that made him easy to find. A humble man, he always greeted me with a warm smile, a handshake and words of encouragement. Moreover, he wanted to know how I was doing as a whole person, beyond the narrow lens of my collecting interest.

Years later, when I took on my current role with *MI*, Henry's compassion and humanity further inspired me. He emphasized the importance of the community of collectors, and the combined strength of the individuals who march in its ranks.

To me, thinking about collectors as a community was new. But it had always been a part of Henry's DNA. Those timed catalogs he issued back in the day illustrated his commitment to the community—everyone, be it a new or veteran collector, had an equal chance to purchase any image in it provided they were willing to get up out of bed and put in the effort.

It comes as no surprise that news of his passing prompted such a wellspring of emotion from the community he valued so highly. One of the notes that touched me the most came from Jim Quinlan of the Excelsior Brigade, who observed, "Now he is walking side by side with all those soldiers he had in his CDV collection."

You can read a few of the tributes to Henry in *Mail Call*.

I spoke with Henry a few days before his death. No speed dialing this time, just me telling my iPhone to "Call Henry Deeks." We did not talk long, for he had not the energy. At the end of the conversation, I told him to be strong. He replied, "You be strong too."

I will, Henry.

Editor & Publisher



Courtesy Roger Hunt.

Henry Deeks at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Mass., June 3, 1991.



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