IN MEMORIAM

John C. Fredriksen, 1953-2014

We have just learned that the noted War of 1812 scholar, John C. Fredriksen, passed away in July 2014 after waging a losing struggle against a brain tumor. For more than three decades, John was a steady and major contributor to studies of the war, particularly in the field of bibliography.

John Conrad Fredriksen was born in February 1953 at Quonset Point Naval Air Station in Rhode Island where his father was serving in the United States Navy. John always wanted to pursue a military career himself but was prevented from doing so because he suffered from asthma. He dropped out of high school and embarked on a career in film animation as a cartoon artist. He later obtained his GED and entered UCLA as an undergraduate in history and, before he had earned his BA degree, published his first title, *The Resource Guide for the War of 1812*, in 1979. With the advent of computerization, work became scarce in the field of animation and John concentrated on academic studies. Following the award of a BA degree from UCLA in 1980, he obtained several more university degrees in library science and education, culminating in a Ph.D. in history which he received from Providence College, Rhode Island, in 1993.

John was a prolific author and wrote or compiled at least 35 titles ranging in subject matter from model airplanes to dinosaurs. Some of his books were *Chronology of American History*, *The B-45 Tornado: An Operational History of the First American Jet Bomber*; *Civil War Almanac; Men into Space; Fighting Elites: A History of the U.S. Special Forces; Dino-Guide: The Saurian Source Book and Honey West*, a study of the TV series. As well as writing, mainly about military history, John retained an interest in films, particularly war films and had an impressive collection of foreign productions, including many rare Japanese and Soviet films. He once told me that he had a dream to use cartoons to teach history to schoolchildren as he was very concerned about the demise of the study of history in the western world, which took place in the 1980s and 1990s.

Where John really made his mark, however, was his work on the War of 1812 - indeed he became the conflict's foremost bibliographer. Following publication of his *Resource Guide*, he brought out *Free Trade and Sailor's Rights: A Bibliography of the War of 1812* in 1985 and this work, along with Dwight Smith's *The War of 1812: An Annotated Bibliography*, which appeared in the same year, were for more than a quarter century, the standard reference works for their subject. John followed *Free Trade and Sailor's Rights* with *Shield of Republic/Sword of Empire: A Bibliography of United States Military Affairs* in 1990 and *War of 1812 Eyewitness Accounts: An Annotated Bibliography*, in 1997. John's bent in terms of historical study was always toward bibliography, so much so that his doctoral dissertation, *Niagara, 1814: The United States Army Quest for Tactical Parity in the War of 1812 and its Legacy*, actually has bibliographic notes on the citations and subjects in its endnotes. Much of this work ended up in his useful 2009 title, *The
But John did not neglect manuscript sources. Throughout the 80s and 90s, he annotated a series of period memoirs and correspondence collections, which appeared as articles in state historical journals. In 2010, he gathered these articles together and brought them out as *The War of 1812 in Person: Fifteen Accounts by United States Army Regulars, Volunteers and Militiamen*, an invaluable source. He annotated the diary of Dr. Usher Parsons, who served on the Lake Erie squadron and published it as *Surgeon of the Lakes* in 2000. John also wrote two titles on the war which were only partially bibliographical in nature: *Officers of the War of 1812 with Portraits and Anecdotes: The United States Army Left Division Gallery of Honor*, to which I contributed an introductory essay, in 1989 and *Greencoats and Glory: The United States Regiment of Riflemen, 1808-1821* in 2000.

Always proud of his home state, John launched a project to bring the remains of Master Commandant William Henry Allen, USN, a fellow Rhode Islander, back home. Allen had been the captain of the brig, USS Argus, when she was captured by the British sloop-of-war, HMS Pelican, in 1813. Mortally wounded in the action, Allen was buried with full military honors in Plymouth, Britain and it was John's personal mission to return Allen to his native state. In this, John unfortunately failed, but he was able to secure Allen's posthumous induction in the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame in 2013.

It is only fitting that John Fredriksen was inducted this month into that same prestigious order. It is very doubtful that his work as a bibliographer of the War of 1812 will ever be surpassed and with the advent of digitalization, Google books and the Internet Archive, his published guides have are invaluable to the student of the war. John worked right to the end. At the time of his death in 2014, John was completing a work entitled *The War of 1812. U.S. War Department Correspondence, 1812-1815*, an annotated index of some 11,000 letters from the correspondence of the Secretary of War written by 2,400 different authors. It will be published by McFarland sometime in the New Year.

In closing, one can only say that John C. Fredriksen will be sadly missed by the entire War of 1812 community.

Donald E. Graves