



# PEDOLOGUE

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Newsletter of:  
Mid-Atlantic Association of Professional Soil Scientists  
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## **2013 MAPSS Officers – with brief description of some of their duties:**

President: -- Acting, Brian Needelman. Ex-officio on all committees except Nominations.  
Past President: Barry Glotfelty -- Chairperson of Nominations Committee  
President Elect: – Brian Needelman -- To Develop Programs for his Presidential Year-2014  
Vice President: Carl Robinette -- Chairperson of Membership and Ethics Committee  
Treasurer: Sarah Roberts -- Ex-officio member of Finance Committee  
Secretary: James Brewer -- Keeps accurate records of MAPSS membership etc.  
Member at Large (1yr):– Robert Bricker -- Helps organize and promotes Assoc. meetings  
Member at Large (2yr): Ellen Mussman -- In Absence of secretary, record minutes etc.  
Ex officio Member: - Dean Cowherd-(NRCS MD State Soil Scientist)—consultant to council

Board of Directors: Board ensures the Council executes its duties, reviews actions of Council, meets with Executive Council at their board meetings etc.

Susan Davis to serve 1 year  
Del Fanning to serve 2 years  
Cliff Stein to serve 3 years

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### **Editor's Comments.**

2013 was a big year for MAPSS, but *Pedologue* in 13 only had two issues; the Spring 2013 issue published in June 13 was the last one. It had stories about the UM soil judging team, No. 1 in the 2013 National Soil Judging Contest in Wisconsin, and about the Northeast Regional Pedology Field Tour, June 3-7, 2013, hosted by the University of Maryland with much help from MAPSS. Much has happened since that time.

Two weeks after the Pedology Tour, the University with USDA NRCS, with considerable assistance from MAPSS, hosted the National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference in Annapolis, including pre-conference and mid-conference tours. MAPSS members Dr. Marty Rabenhorst for the University, and Maxine Levin of the national NRCS headquarters and NRCS State Soil Scientist Dean Cowherd did much to organize and run this big conference. In October, UM hosted the NE Regional Soil Judging Contest, in the Frederick, MD area. Dr. Brian Needelman for UM was in charge of the contest, an awesome responsibility as the contest came at the time of the federal government shut down. Marty coached the Maryland team. Again many MAPSS members and students pitched in to bring off a successful contest -- in which UM took second place to qualify for the national contest in Spring 2014, to be hosted by Delaware Valley College, Doylestown, PA, where another MAPSS member, Joe Valentine, will be a main cog in running that contest. Marty has contributed an article on the October regional contest for this issue, see page 7.

Afton Sterling was slated to be 2013 MAPSS President. In part because her job location moved to northern PA, she was unable to devote much time to MAPSS. Dr. Needelman, 2013 President-Elect agreed in Fall 13 to take Acting President reins as he prepared to be official elected MAPSS President in 2014. Brian also has taken on some administrative duties for managing soil science programs on campus as well -- during a time when office and classroom space for soils programs in H. J. Patterson Hall at the university have been diminished as all former office and classroom space on the first floor of the building are being given up for renovation and subsequent take over by university international programs. However, soils programs, including soil monolith exhibits, the soils teaching lab. and faculty labs and offices will continue, at least for now, in the basement of HJP Hall

The lull in *Pedologue* activity in the last half of 13 is largely attributable to my ailments and activities, beyond doctor's appointments, that have kept me busy. My health issues started shortly after the national soil survey conference, although I seldom felt bad physically. I first found I had a bad top front tooth, an infection in its root. That tooth was pulled in early July and replaced with a temporary bridge that also included the two teeth on either side of the pulled one -- the original teeth all broken off years ago as described in my *Toof Stories* that some of you may have had the opportunity to read. However, more serious was a hard lump, about an inch in diameter, I found in my right breast in mid-June as I checked for ticks after returning from the Pedology Tour. After a mammogram and biopsy in July, the lump was determined to be a form (tubal) of breast cancer (I learned that a small percentage of all breast cancer patients are men, I'm one). About the same time, July 27, my brother Charles, back home in northern NY, suddenly had a heart attack and died, a pretty serious blow to my mental constitution as well as to his family and many others. After Emily and I immediately after that time, spent a couple of weeks in NNY, the tumor and associated lymph glands were surgically removed at Sibley hospital in DC on Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>. The operation went well (actually enjoyable, I wrote a story about it at the height of the baseball season -- when the Nats tried hard but didn't make the playoffs), but afterwards the oncologist decided that to prevent cancer coming back that I should have chemo treatments. They started in early September and at first went well, but with the second (one every three weeks) dose in early October something slipped, although not realized at the time, and there was a leakage of the strong chemos into my left wrist -- where the chemos were put into my blood stream. Swelling and redness developed, which was initially treated

with an anti-biotic as an infection, before it was realized that it was a chemical burn from the leaked chemos. This happened about the time of the soil judging contest, that I intended to attend, but on that cold windy day, with my wrist swollen and red, I decided not to go out and I took a week off from teaching my acid sulfate soils course as well. The wrist responded favorably to treatment with ointments. The burns have come under control, but still show up as bumps on my wrist. I had another mild operation in November to install a port on my upper left chest for taking blood out for testing and for introducing chemo treatments – no more messing with blood vessels in my wrist. However, I now I only get one chemo, called herceptin, that is targeted at tubal breast cancer like that removed along with associated lymph glands. Two other chemos I was getting, taxotere and carboplatin, which prevent cell division of all kinds of cells, have been permanently discontinued to permit good cells to heal the burn. With that cessation, my whiskers and hair are coming back – somewhat to the disappointment of Emily and others who liked me looking like Kojak, Telly Savalis. To make her happy, I first considered no longer having my kind of crappy looking goatee and mustache – I’ve never had the potential for growing a good full beard anyhow and still remember when I once had just had a little mustache and nobody noticed when I cut it off. But now I’ve changed my mind and I’m letting the beard, crappy looking or not, grow back. It saves time shaving and I avoid cutting myself with my razor, which is why I started having the goatee and mustache in the first place.

During the fall semester I did teach my one credit advanced undergrad/grad Acid Sulfate Soils course, as advertised in



the Spring 13 Pedologue issue. I really wanted to do it and it happened. Not many students (the Friday 8am class was not popular with most), but the few I got, plus some sit-ins and helpers who came, were wonderful. We had two all day Saturday field trips, the first one to the Stafford Co, VA airport and other places was joined by colleague Robert Quirk, Australian sugar cane farmer, who came to talk to the class about successful crop production with careful management of the hydrology on his farm on acid sulfate soils in northern New South Wales. The last trip was set up by fellow MAPSS member and course sit-in and major course helper Gary Jellick, with help from Susan Demas, was to see acid sulfate soils in NJ (a post-active green Ultisol in highly glauconitic sediments, but with *sulfidic materials*

within 2m of soil surface and potential and active ones in a tidal marsh, some of which are still harvested for marsh hay). It was getting dark as we left the last stop where the picture above was taken showing from left to right Loretta Collins, me hidden behind Daniella Miller, Gary with orange cap, my son Michael (he didn’t take or sit in the course, but did come on the trip, maybe he’ll help make some soil monoliths in 14, we’re planning on it), Caron Gala Bijl, Susan Demas (NRCS soil scientist in NJ) and Barrett Wessel (only undergrad in the course). We think the soil we were standing on, now a mineral soil, formerly had peat at its surface. It has some features that indicate that it may have experienced podzolization as peat decomposed and disappeared. I tried to teach the students to write soil genesis stories, and hope that one day one of them or someone will write this soils’ story to go with a monolith that I hope that we may one day collect.

The aspect of the course that was disappointing was the failure to attract students from engineering and other disciplines into the course. Two civil engineering students did start to take the course, one undergraduate and the other a graduate student. The undergraduate dropped out first, claiming that he couldn’t make it on time to his next class on other side of campus. The graduate student had to monitor an experiment at the morning class time and switched to an audit. Both students, who claimed to be in geo-tech programs, said that they were not getting training about acid sulfate soil issues in their other courses. MAPSS member Cliff Stein thinks that working engineers will pay to take the course to get training credits, so it seems that MAPSS should consider running another acid sulfate soils workshop. I haven’t decided whether

to teach the course again at the university or not or whether I could teach a two day workshop to cover the stuff I covered in the university course. I would like to write an acid sulfate soils book, but am having a hard time “getting off the ground”.

This Pedologue issue does have some other things beyond these long editor’s comments. Susan Demas came thru with an article on last summer’s West Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientist Meeting and Technical Session. Also Marty contributed the soil judging article with wonderful picture of this year’s team. On the sad side I have put together, with help from others, obituary-type articles on Bob Kirby and Joe Gibson. Bob and Joe have not been recently active in MAPSS, but I very much like for MAPSS and others to know about individuals like them who over the years have contributed so much to the soil surveys of our region that many of us know and use in our activities. I hope that you will appreciate their stories and a couple of old time pictures..

Lastly, Secretary Brewer has contributed minutes of the MAPSS Executive Council Meeting on 1/8/14. These will be useful for review by MAPSS members in preparation for the MAPSS Annual Dinner and Business Meeting on Wednesday night, February 26 at the usual American Legion Hall in Crownsville, MD. I hope to see you all there.

### **MAPSS Executive Council Meeting 1/8/14, NRCS State Office, by Secretary Jim Brewer**

Members present: President Elect Needelman (also acting as 2013 President), Past President Glotfelty, Treasurer Roberts, Secretary Brewer, Member At Large Bricker, BOD members - Fanning, Davis, Stein; Ex officio Member: Cowherd, Member Verdone

**Needelman** called meeting to order at 12:10 PM

**Needelman** reviewed the minutes from last year’s Executive Council meeting and last year’s Annual Business meeting.

**Fanning** stated he wants to get a newsletter out before this year’s annual business meeting and was asking for any information or articles.

**Needelman and Glotfelty** reviewed current list of Council members, BOD’s and committee chairs. Glotfelty submitted nominations for 2014:

President Elect – Carl Robinette (needs to be confirmed)

Vice President - Robert Bricker

Secretary – James Brewer

Member at Large, 2 year – David Verdone

BOD, 3 year – Susan Davis

**Brewer** stated the need for filling standing committee chairs and more activity from them.

**Fanning** suggested Gary Jellick as possibly serving as Finance Committee chair

**Brewer** suggested not filling Constitution and By Laws chair (since no revisions are needed at this time)

**Needelman or Brewer** will send out an email asking for volunteers to fill chair positions where needed.

**Cowherd** will report on 2013 summer National Work Planning conference at business meeting

**Roberts** submitted Treasurer’s report for 2013 and projected budget for 2014; reviewed by council and approved (donations to soil judging, land judging and Envirothons for 2014). Increased budget by \$100 for land judging contest in case a portable bathroom is needed.

**Needelman** stated we may need to contribute to National Soil Judging contest in 2014 (being held at Del Valley).

**Brewer** will send out dues notice along with meeting notice to members.

**Needelman** presented possible projects for 2014:

Some sort of fund raising (training)

### Casual field tour

**Stein and Glotfelty** had discussion of possible engineering training related to stormwater design, and sanitarian training related to soil profile descriptions and maybe related to new COMAR regulations. Might need two or three sessions across state. Stein and Glotfelty are the council's contact to MDE and private engineering companies for that kind of training. Question on how many participants would there be? Stein stated usually <50 per session.

**Davis** discussed possible soils training for SCD's. Would need several months notice to get cost approved.

**Fanning** discussed monolith making as a fund raiser, maybe showing specific soil features for recipients (i.e. redox features). Question on who would be the buyer of them?

**Stein** discussed selling soil texture kits to health dept (had been done long time ago by UMD Agronomy Club)

**Davis** suggested making sand size cards or structure kits

**Verdone** discussed open pits available in area for training. Several at Patuxent Wildlife Center and BARC. Jeff Thompson of MDE may know of contact for Patuxent.

**Needelman** discussed improving relationship with NRCS NHQ soil scientists. Maybe invite them to business meeting/dinner. Through Dave Smith, director. Goal to get them as members.

**Fanning** stated that MAPSS member Sara Tangren has a position with Extension and may know of opportunities with their programs for a fund raiser.

**Brewer** suggested soils info (WSS, soil apps, Google soils, etc) training to private consultants and agencies, similar to NRCS 2011 Work Planning Conf, but more detailed.

**Brewer and Cowherd** discussion on soon to be changes in HSG's and other soil properties because of data calculations in NASIS. Changes could be significant to engineering industry. Possible training could be related to these changes and how to do HSG estimate in field. Also training on Soil Health to unknown audience???

**Needelman** reviewed potential fund-raising ideas; Sanitarian training and HSG/soils info training seemed to be the ideas with the most support and potential. Glotfelty and Stein will serve as initial ad hoc committee to develop possible sanitarian training. A committee for HSG/soils info training will be Davis, Jellick, Stein, Roberts, Glotfelty, and Brewer. We will solicit additional ad hoc committee members at business meeting and as necessary.

**Glotfelty** working on T-shirts for fund raising.

**Needelman** introduced idea of an extended membership for student who hadn't gotten a job after graduating. Discussed redefining student membership in Const and By Laws. Decided Brewer and Roberts would handle it as requested. Approved.

Brief discussion on any possible honorary members to be nominated for this year. None.

Brief discussion on February meeting. Will follow same format (including lack of liquor license) as last year. The UM 2013 National Championship soil judging team will be recognized in addition to this year's team.

**Brewer** reviewed latest discussions on getting MD legislators to recognize a state soil. Allegany County's SCD board is willing to pursue it with their contacts to the legislators. Ron Hawk is a key contact. Robinette would be the MAPSS contact. Needelman stated MAPSS would support Robinette in pursuing it through the SCD board.

**Fanning** discussed possible hosting of 8th International Acid Sulfate Soils Conference in the U.S. in 2016 and possibly in Maryland. He is hoping for MAPSS support if it happens. It would take a lot of work. There were about 130 participants at 7<sup>th</sup> Conference in Finland in 2012. Virginia Tech would help. Should know more after WCSS (World Congress of Soil Science) in Korea in June 2014.

**Cowherd** led discussion on NRCS Soil Health workshop this Feb. NRCS would like MAPSS to be a sponsor and provide limited refreshment at the one morning break (half day sessions at two locations, Upper Marlboro and Salisbury). MAPSS would be on agenda and be able to say something. Council thought it was a good idea

for advertising MAPSS. Audience would be farmers, SCD's, Extension, DNR, seed companies, etc. Cowherd and Brewer are involved with sessions and could handle it. Council approved it at a max of \$300 cost. **Stein** found what is needed for PE (Professional Engineers Geo-tech) engineers to get CEU's (PDH's) from any of MAPSS training. Need to become a "provider" using documentation on agenda, syllabus, resumes of instructors, etc. Need 2-3 months advance notice. Stein will prepare package. Needs past MAPSS trainings information from previous 3 years.  
Meeting Adjourned 2:25 pm.

**West Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientist Summer Meeting and Technical Session. July 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013. By Susan Demas**

On Friday July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013 The West Virginia Association of Professional Soil Scientist held its summer meeting and Technical Workshop on "Land Use and Management in Karst Regions". Mr. John Young, USGS, Leetown Science Center, Kearneysville, WV gave a presentation on the "Development of Methods for identifying surface depressions and sinkholes using LiDAR". Mr. Young is a Research Biologist (Bio-Geographer) at the USGS Aquatic Biology Branch of the Science Center. His main focus is to study the water variability and to identify threats to the regional water supply. Mr. Young specializes in watershed and landform characterization techniques using GIS to examine landform influences on the distribution of plants and animals. The study area included the Boyce quadrangle in Clarke County, VA. The main steps involved in evaluating the use of LiDAR for predicting the occurrence of sinkholes were as follows: (1) filter the LiDAR data for bare ground; (2) Interpolate the surface; (3) characterize the terrain shape index or the topographic position index (TPI); (4) classification of the depression type (not a depression, shallow, moderate, deep or very deep); and lastly to query for deep depressions. In order to compare expected circular shapes to the actual shapes, a rating index was utilized, 1=closer to being a circle and 1.8 = not circular with an index of 1.3 being the threshold for the circularity index for a depression feature not being a sinkhole. Utilizing LiDAR, edges of depression features known as "parapits" are highlighted whereas they may be difficult to discern a higher or lower elevation than the mean elevation. Using the "Fill Tool" in ARGIS allows for the calculation of the TPI score. Using remote sensing tools allowed for the discovery of twice as many depression features versus manual method of identification. Although not perfect in predicting all depression features, field checking is still an important step. Converting elevation values into a landform shape index was effective at highlighting depression features.

Another featured speaker was Dr. Dan Doctor, Geologist, USGS Reston, VA who spoke on "Marl, tufa and travertine deposition in the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia". His presentation focused on insights gained from his study and what these new insights might mean for land and water quality management in karst watersheds. Dr. Doctor is a research geologist and geohydrologist specializing in karst. He is currently serving as a field geologist conducting 1:24,000 scale geologic mapping in the Great Valley of Virginia and West Virginia, and is working on a new digital compilation of the National Karst Map. The study area was at the mouth of Spout Run where it empties into the Shenandoah River, near an ancient tufa waterfall and an extensive marl deposit. Travertine contains laminated crystals of calcite and tends to be associated with higher energy environments in contrast to marl which forms in areas of low flow. Water quality parameters for temperature, dissolved oxygen, and calcite saturation were measured below and above the waterfall. Dissolved oxygen levels are closely related to diurnal changes, as during the day photosynthesis and dissolved oxygen increases but drop off just prior to dark. Calcite saturation occurs if value is above 0 and precipitation takes place. Calcite saturation was found to be higher below the water fall than above due water fall turbulence and CO<sub>2</sub>. Dr. Doctor's findings were as follows: (1) Marl and tufa (porous) deposits are common in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia; (2) calcium carbonate precipitation is a natural process within streams and contributes to sediment load; (3) most marl and

tufa deposits are being eroded today with streams incising older deposits of Holocene age (last 10,000 years); (4) computer modeling shows a significant contribution (15%) of old deep water feeding springs that precipitate marl in the Opequan Basin; and (5) more work is needed to assess calcium carbonate precipitation rates in streams and to account for this process in a TMDL guideline.

Lastly, Michael Harmon gave a presentation on “Karst implication in nutrient management”. The presentation focused on the issues karst geology brings to the nutrient management process and he examined the existing setbacks and BMP in place in WV. Mr. Harmon is an Agriculture and Natural Resources County Agent with the WV Cooperative Extension Service and a Ph.D. candidate at West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV.

On Saturday July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013, a field trip was made to the Carr property to examine karst features and travertine deposits marl soils and to discuss local geology and hydrology in karst environments.



Sinkhole in karst geology landscape, West Virginia.

**University of Maryland Soil Judges Head to the 2014 National Contest, by Martin Rabenhorst.**

On Friday, Oct. 25, 2013, the University of Maryland Soil Judging Team placed second in the Northeast Regional Soil Competition that was held near Frederick, MD. The University of Maryland entered two teams among a field of twelve, from six universities including Delaware Valley College, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Rhode Island, Richard Stockton College of NJ, and Wilmington College of Ohio. In addition to Maryland’s A Team finishing in 2nd place, the Maryland B Team was close behind in 4th place. Maryland had three students among the top ten individuals (John Desmond – 2nd, Tyler Witkowski – 3rd, and Jessica Rupprecht – 9th), where contestants examined soils at three sites that included an Alfisol formed in alluvial terrace deposits, an Inceptisol in younger flood plain deposits and an Alfisol formed in colluvium over old alluvium. The group portion of the contest utilized two sites that featured a very challenging Fragiudult topped with a mantle of human transported materials (HTM) and a Hapuldalf formed in colluvium/old

alluvium. This (group) part of the competition was won by Maryland's B team (with Maryland's A team placing 3rd). During the week of practice and competition, students examined, described and interpreted the soil profiles and landscapes at nearly twenty sites, which proved to be a wonderful educational experience. The overall (combined) team rankings put the Penn State University B Team in 1st place followed by the University of Maryland A Team in 2nd, the University of Rhode Island A Team in 3rd, the University of Maryland B Team in 4th, and Delaware Valley College in 5th. Maryland, Penn State and URI will represent the NE region in the National Collegiate Soils competition contest next Spring (2014), that will be hosted by Delaware Valley College in Doylestown Pennsylvania, where it is anticipated that over twenty teams representing seven regions from across the country will participate.



Photo Caption: University of Maryland placed second overall among a field of twelve teams from six universities at the 2013 NE Regional Soil Competition. Front row: John Desmond (2nd place individual, kneeling). Middle row: Keegan Rankin, Chris Seitz, Tyler Witkowski (3rd place individual), Sara Mack, Jessica Rupprecht (9th place individual), Jaclyn Fiola. Back Row: Chris Palardy (Asst. Coach), Martin Rabenhorst (Coach).

### **Robert Martin (Bob) Kirby, By Del Fanning**

In response to a 2013 Christmas letter that I sent to Bob Kirby, I learned in response from his daughter, Meghan Hope, that Bob died at age of 91 on Dec. 10, 2013. Bob is likely not remembered by many current MAPSS members because he retired from USDA SCS (now NRCS) in 1983, before MAPSS was organized. However, Bob was heavily involved with soil survey programs as an SCS soil scientist in Maryland during my first two decades at the University as well as before that time. While employed full time with SCS, he was my second graduate student. Bob completed his M.S. in 1971 with thesis topic "Determination of Percolation Rates of Four (4) Coastal Plain Soils". During his program he took my graduate level soil mineralogy course, called Advanced Soil Mineralogy, the first time I taught it, Fall semester, 1964, as one of three students (the others

were my other graduate student at the time, Mike Tapper, and Carroll Stottlemeyer, a graduate student advisee of Dr. Strickling). Each student made a model using styrofoam balls of the atomic crystal structure of a silicate clay minerals with the balls held together with sticks that were pieces of pipe cleaners. Bob used big, 1-2 inch diameter balls, whereas Mike and Carroll used smaller balls. I ended up using these models throughout my teaching career and still have them (moved in January 2014 to my “new” office, Room 0111 H. J. Patterson Hall) and I commonly think back about the students who made them when I use them. Bob’s daughter Meghan was pleased with this story when I told her about it, that the model Bob made when she was two years old in 1964 is still being used.

Bob was heavily involved in the soil survey of both Prince George’s and Anne Arundel Counties, MD, reports published in 1966 and 1970 respectively I think, and was senior author of both reports. Susan Davis, who was in charge of the more recent updates of these surveys, tells me “I only know Bob through the two very useful binders full of old OSDs and correlation information that he left in Anne Arundel Soil Conservation District, in care of Lillian Griffith.” She also says “I think it might be useful to look through the paper soil surveys to fill out their (thinking about Joe Gibson too) MD soil survey careers a little. Unfortunately, I only have St. Mary’s and Charles surveys on my desk here in Leonardtown today, but Bob Kirby is listed as one of the surveyors in the Charles County and St. Mary’s County surveys.” I think that the lines separating mapping delineations that Bob and his collaborators placed on the maps of these surveys are likely to remain on maps that are used of these counties for a long time to come, internet ones as well, because little active work to actually remap these counties with new line-work is likely to take place for a long time, if ever.

Bob was born Nov. 11, 1922, and was reared in Columbia, South Carolina. He became a World War II veteran. He served in the Coast Guard, 1941-45, aboard ships in Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean theaters. He attained the rank of Lieutenant and witnessed and participated in sea battles. He reported witnessing a sinking British ship with a sailor with head out of a porthole as it went down close to his ship, during a battle in the Mediterranean Sea, a memory that he said haunted him many years later. This story is adapted from a Greenville, NC, “The Daily Reflector” newspaper article about Bob’s military experiences on the occasion of the anniversary of D-Day, June 6, 2010 that Bob shared with me at the time of its publication. After the war Bob went to the University of Maryland where he obtained his B.S. in 1951 and met and married his wife Bonita, who predeceased him in 1993.

Bob told me stories about some of his soil survey experiences. One was about a young worker who apparently worked for him and was fired for texturing with his gloves on. Another was about a man with a house on Eveboro sand who installed a septic tank sewage disposal system. When asked about how it worked, he said, “great, but now my water tastes like sh..t.” Apparently it was an example of a poor filter. A picture of Bob reportedly taken of him after he returned from military duty after the war is inserted on the following page.

See Picture of Bob in Military Uniform on the next page



R. M. (Bob) Kirby in uniform after he returned from duty after World War II to his family home in South Carolina. Bob did much soil survey work in Maryland prior to retiring to North Carolina in 1983. He was a resident of Greenville since 1988.

### **Joe Gibson, By Del Fanning**

Information for this article has been gathered from several sources including an on-line obituary and memories and pictures sent with e-mail messages from MAPSS members.

Joseph "Walter" Gibson, 73, of La Plata, MD formerly from Bushwood, MD passed away on January 16, 2014 in East Stroudsburg, PA. Joe was born May 22, 1940 in Bushwood, MD, the son of the late Thomas Laurie and Essie Mae Owens Gibson. He was the loving husband of Melanie Andrea Downs Gibson, whom he married on September 10, 1966 in Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Bushwood, MD. He is survived by his children; Julie Scoville (Doug) of Fairfax, VA, Jenny Gibson-McCann (Mark) of Philadelphia, PA, and Joe Gibson of Catonsville, MD and 2 grandchildren; Derek and Dominic.

Many old time MAPSS folks remember Joe thru soil science connections. He was trained in soil science at the University of Maryland, where he received his B.S. in 1969. He was a member of the first University of Maryland soil judging team to win a Northeast Regional Soil Judging contest -- a contest hosted by Penn State in Fall, 1968. A picture of that team from the Maryland soil judging history files that Dr. Rabenhorst has been putting together is inserted here (next page).



From left, Dr. John Foss, coach, John Baxter, Carl Robinette, Lawrence Meeks, Joe Gibson, Dr. Fred Miller, Assistant Coach.

I guess that this picture was taken at an Agronomy Awards banquet in Spring semester 1969. My memory is that Carl Robinette was the No. 1 individual in that contest and that Joe was in the top ten individuals. This was a momentous win for Maryland because it started a streak in which Maryland won (finished first) in the NE contest for 9 straight years before it came in 2<sup>nd</sup> in the regional contest in Maine in 1977.

Joe went on to a career as a field soil scientist first with USDA SCS in Maryland, but then with the U.S. Army at Ft. Belvoir, VA, retiring after 35 years of service in 2001. Prior to college Joe served in the United States Army for two and half years, from 1962 to September, 1964; he was Vietnam War veteran. He worked on several soil surveys in the Maryland region including St. Mary's and Kent Counties and Washington, DC. Dick Hall, deceased MAPSS honorary member was among the several soil scientists that Joe worked with. Dr. Foss contributed the photo below of Joe with Dick on an SSSA field trip in Western U.S.

Gibson Story continued with another picture on next page



Picture of Dick Hall and Joe Gibson on SSSA field tour from Nevada to Arizona (year not remembered) supplied by Dr. John Foss. Joe was a founding member of MAPSS.

Joe was a very practical man. For a time when I think he switched from SCS to work for the Army, he was a plumber. He told me that he had to quit that because he had so much work it was too much for him to handle. His on-line obituary indicates that he was a building contractor for J. W. Gibson Construction Company for 45 years. Among other activities he apparently restored VW “bug” cars.

#### **Calendar of some coming events:**

**Feb. 26, 2014. MAPSS Annual Membership/Business Meeting. On Wednesday Night, as in previous years. 4-8pm, American Legion Hall, Crownsville, MD. Guest Speaker, Mike Folkoff, Professor of Geography and Geosciences, Salisbury State University, Salisbury, MD. Topic: Mill Pond Catena on Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, Case Study of Wicomico County.**

**April 3-4. National Soil Judging Contest, hosted by Delaware Valley College, Doylestown, PA.**

**June 8-13, 2014. World Congress of Soil Science, Je Ju, Korea. See [www.20wcss.org](http://www.20wcss.org)**

**November 2-5, 2014. Soil Science Society of America and American Society of Agronomy Annual Meeting, Long Beach, CA.**

**Future articles etc. Pedologue needs articles, pictures, poems, cartoons, letters to the editor or other things soil scientists and/or other readers of Pedologue may be inspired to submit. Please submit such items to the editor, preferably to [DelvinDel@aol.com](mailto:DelvinDel@aol.com). Be an author, support your newsletter, it's a way to promote yourself and your work and things we all need to know about soils and the environment.**