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**You have continued to produce works, both fiction and non-fiction, in your retirement years at a steady pace. What is your daily writing routine?**

When Jean was alive, I woke up, did my morning exercises, ate breakfast with Jean and followed a cup of coffee to my office. My best ideas come between the time I get up and the time I get to my office. For that reason I discourage conversation in the morning until I have had an hour or two at my desk. After that I'm usually dealing with words and not ideas. When Jean finished her own work she would tell me that lunch would be ready in X minutes. I sometimes requested more time. Usually we had lunch about 1:30 or 2:00. I returned to my office and spent the afternoon rewriting or researching.

The only change in my schedule is that I have breakfast at my desk, usually lunch and sometimes dinner. Since Jean no longer calls me I usually have lunch when the creative energy is gone or the idea is resolved in some way. Lunch is usually after 3 and at least once after 5.

**What advice would you give to young authors?**

Be patient with yourself. Writing is a process; it takes time. Don't throw away early failures until your career is over. There was a reason you were trying to tell that story, but you failed. If the reason is still there perhaps you now know how to write it. Believe in yourself most when no one else does. After my first book was published a friend told Jean, "We used to laugh that Bob wanted to be a writer. We said, 'Who is he kidding?'" Never give up. If you reach the place where you love writing more than being a writer, where you hate to take the afternoon off for some other pleasant activity, you're a writer. Why would you give up that imaginary time and place where you are most alive except for physical or mental health issues? You may want to ask a trusted friend to destroy early and late writings that aren't truly you as a writer. No one wants to be remembered for their mistakes.

## **Battlefields of the Civil War**

*The Siege of Vicksburg: 18 May-3 July 1863*

Adapted from NPR and the Civil War Website

At an important junction of the American Civil War, in May 1863, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's armies converged on Vicksburg, surrounding the city and entrapping a Confederate army under Lt. Gen. John Pemberton. On July 4, Vicksburg surrendered after a prolonged siege. This was the culmination of one of the most brilliant military campaigns of the war. With the loss of Pemberton's army and this vital stronghold on the Mississippi, the Confederacy was effectively split in half. Grant's successes in the West boosted his reputation, leading ultimately to his appointment as General-in-Chief of the Union armies.

The Union siege lines and Confederate defenses were marked during the first decade of the twentieth century by many of the veterans who fought at Vicksburg, thus making Vicksburg National Military Park one of the most accurately marked military parks in the world.

Following the failure of the May 22 assault, Grant realized Vicksburg could not be taken by force and decided to lay siege to the city. Slowly his army established a stranglehold around the beleaguered city and cut off all supplies and communica-

tions from the outside world. Commencing May 26, Union forces constructed thirteen approaches along their front aimed at different points along the Confederate lines. Their objective was to dig up to the Confederate works then tunnel underneath them, plant charges of black powder, and destroy the fortifications. Union troops would then be able to surge through the breaches and gain entrance to Vicksburg.



Throughout the month of June, Union troops expanded their approaches slowly toward the Confederate defenses. Protected by the fire of sharpshooters and artillery, Grant's fatigue parties neared their objectives by late June. On June 25, along the Jackson Road, a mine was detonated beneath the Third Louisiana Redan, and Federal soldiers swarmed into the crater, attempting to exploit the breach in the city's defenses. The struggle raged for twenty-six hours, during which clubbed muskets and bayonets were freely used, as the Confederates fought with grim determination to deny their enemy access to Vicksburg. The troops in blue were finally driven back at the point of bayonet and the breach sealed. On July 1, a second mine was detonated but not followed up by an infantry assault.

Throughout June the gallant but weary defenders of Vicksburg suffered from minimal rations, exposure to the elements, and constant bombardment of enemy guns. Reduced in number by sickness and battle casualties, the garrison of Vicksburg was spread dangerously thin. Soldiers and citizens alike began to despair that help would ever come. At Jackson and Canton, General Johnston gathered a relief force, which finally took up the march toward Vicksburg on July 1. But by then it was too late; time had run out for the fortress on the Mississippi River.

Like other major battles of the American Civil War, casualties of the Siege of Vicksburg by both Union army and Confederate defenders were high. The Union army lost a large number of soldiers during repeated but unsuccessful attempts to break Confederate defensive barriers, which were on higher ground. The Confederate casualties came about from the Union army's attacks, but more so from starvation: weeks without food, water, and medicine. During the 46 days of the Vicksburg campaign, the Union lost over 10,142 people. In the Confederate army deaths were higher, but the total number of casualties was slightly lower than the Union's at 9,091. In the end around 30,000 Confederate soldiers surrendered, leaving their guns and ammunition behind. They were allowed to return to their homes after they were given food and water.



For more information, visit [www.civilwar.org/battlefields/vicksburg-campaign/](http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/vicksburg-campaign/).

**War is hell. – William Tecumseh Sherman**