

Letter: 'Bob' Barker Passes

December 2018

With the recent death of Robert E. Lee "Bob" Barker, Charleston, and especially Drayton Hall, has lost one of its most memorable proponents of historic preservation. Though reared on Long Island, N.Y., he grew up with a deep love for the South because his mother was a Carter from Virginia and directly related to Robert E. Lee, hence the full name she gave him.

After moving here in the mid-1970s, he became perhaps the most sought-after tour guide at Drayton Hall, mentoring countless staff, including me, until his gradual retirement a few years ago.

An ambassador for historic preservation, he used his eye for good design and his appreciation of history to sell about \$400,000 in Drayton Hall memberships, far more than any individual at any National Trust for Historic Preservation site.

A son of the South, Bob loved to tell stories. A favorite of his was about his first visit to Drayton Hall, before it became a museum property. Knocking on the tall front doors, he was invited in by Charlotta Drayton, Charles Drayton's aunt. He demurred, explaining "I have a puppy in my car, and I can't leave him in the car, and he might have an accident in the house."

She responded, "Bring him right on in. Puppies have been piddling on these floors for 200 years."

To celebrate his life, one may donate to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Charleston or to the Robert E. Lee Barker Interpretation Fund at Drayton Hall.

God rest your gentlemanly soul, Bob, and I bet, with silver spoon in hand, you are already giving tours and telling stories in the Big House in the Sky.

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