HANS LAUZEN | Defending Ideals

A native of Aurora, Illinois, Lieutenant Commander Hans Lauzen first visited Monticello with friends during a trip to the nearby University of Virginia. Lauzen is an active-duty United States Naval Officer, currently serving at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, where he studies space systems operations. He also serves as a Monticello Young Advisor, an initiative started in 2019 by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation to gather new ideas from young Americans on how to make the stories of Monticello accessible to every generation.

There is no place quite like Monticello. With its natural and architectural beauty, it truly is a slice of heaven. Monticello always inspires a deep emotional response from Americans and foreign visitors alike. Freedom. Innovation. The pursuit of happiness. As one crests the summit of the mountaintop, it’s hard not to reflect that without Thomas Jefferson, there would be no Monticello or American spirit articulated in his Declaration of Independence. Generations later, I count myself blessed to be an American still charged with defending those virtues fought for so many years ago.

PAUL & WENDY TACKETT | Love and History

Paul and Wendy Tackett co-founded iEval, an evaluation consulting firm located in Michigan. When Paul was 4 years old, he read a book about Colonial America and was captivated by the ingenuity of Thomas Jefferson. To inspire other children, Wendy has written a children’s book about Thomas Jefferson called The Jefferson Wish. As part of an ongoing New Year’s Day tradition, the Tacketts travel to Monticello to take the first tour of every year.

When I started dating Wendy 30 years ago, she embraced my love for history, particularly Thomas Jefferson. Our honeymoon became a pilgrimage to Jefferson’s primary homes: Monticello, Poplar Forest and Williamsburg. We began our lifelong commitment to introduce family and friends to the ideals of intellectual independence, educational freedom, and religious liberty by bringing them to these places that are so dear to our hearts. Monticello is special — it recharges my soul and renews our joint commitment to embody those ideals in today’s world.

Visit monticello.org/inspired to see more stories of those who have been inspired at Monticello.