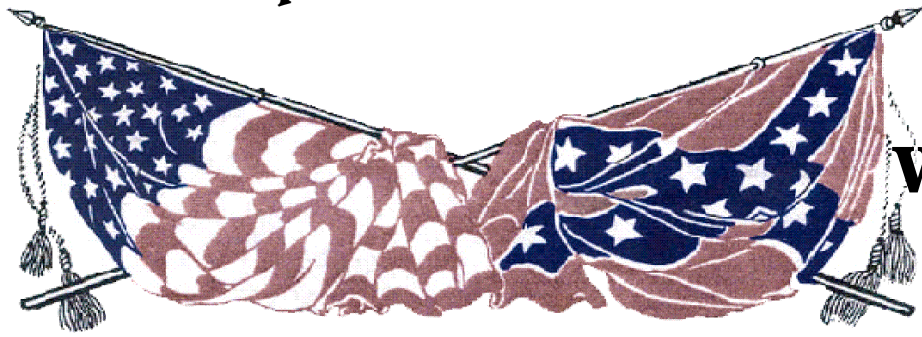


"The Late Unpleasantness" October 2009



South Bay Civil War Round Table

October 27th Meeting Speaker:

Larry Comstock & Rene Accornero "Pickett's Charge and the Retreat from Gettysburg"

Holder's Country Inn

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Message from the President:

We had a well attended meeting for the beginning of our 21st year. Among the guests was Lee Meredith, one of our lifetime members, who was in town for the evening. Lee is a retired United States Army officer turned author, whose books have included Grey Ghost: The Story of the Aircraft Carrier Hornet (Rocklin, 2002) and Facts about the Titanic (Rocklin, 2003). Lee now spends a majority of his time with the Titanic Exhibition and traveling the country to speak about Titanic. The rest of his time is spent in researching and writing about historical topics of interest.

Rene Accornero, our Treasurer, reported that in our 2008-2009 Season, the South Bay Civil War Round Table contributed \$1,400 in matching funds to our members who made donations to their favorite battlefield site or organization. That would mean the

SBCWRT and its members contributed \$2,800 for the preservation of Civil War sites. In response to this activity, the members voted to continue our adopted policy of matching the contributions made by our members. If you would like to take advantage of this, you can contact me, our Preservation Chairman, Bill Noyes, or Rene Accornero.

Our speaker for the evening, Tom McMahon, presented a thought provoking topic on "Life, Death, and Religion in the Civil War." He certainly has the background for it: A former Catholic Priest, Army Chaplain, and trained in Psychology. It was a very interesting presentation that led to a lively discussion.

Steve Wetlesen, our new Vice President, made an interesting recommendation regarding something

that used to be done in earlier years - discussion panels. A topic is selected and presented by the panel and then thrown open to general discussion. It sounds like a great way to take advantage of the depth of historical knowledge represented in the SBCWRT. Any suggestions/recommendations?

By the time you read this, Rene Accornero and Larry Comstock will have returned from a seminar at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in preparation for their presentation in October and November on "Pickett's

Charge and "Lee's Retreat." These presentations should be well worth inviting a guest!

Several of our members will be attending the West Coast Civil War Round Table Conference in Clovis, October 23-25. The experience should generate some very interesting reports from our members.

John Herberich, President

Summary of September Presentation submitted by Tom McMahon

Tom McMahon set the scene for his talk on LIFE, DEATH, AND RELIGION in the Civil War by establishing his position as ordained Catholic priest, former US Army chaplain, and California licensed Mental Health Therapist. Tom chose the title of his talk based on the work in which he has been involved for over 50 years.

Who knows the psychology of the men who were combatants in the violence of the American Civil War? Surely not ourselves as we simply were not there. Yet members of the audience could be carrying the DNA of ancestral people who served both in South and North. Tom used the DNA of the Irish Brigade as best Tom would read of such and trace in his own Irish background family, his great grandfather being a resident of San Francisco during the Civil War. Emphasis was heavy on the GOOD DEATH, the age old experience of dying surrounded by family, an archetype or fundamental way of life learned in childhood which was shattered by the massive number of battlefield deaths with bodies left unattended for days. We heard the story of Confederate Corporal Montgomery as he wrote his blood stained death letter to his father, knowing that his family would cherish his last words.

Massive changes in burial practices came about, such as The Funeral Home and embalming, along with abuses of grieving parents and the government hastened to find suitable burial ground. We heard Abraham Lincoln as ministerial person delivering his Gettysburg address over the ground hallowed (made holy) by the blood of those who died in battle.

Tom's final encouragement was for serious students of the American Civil War to be aware that human beings were the basic participants, persons with feelings and hope for a good life and that we might have this in mind in today's warfare lest partly paraphrasing Lincoln "those of old and these modern warriors will have died in vain".

Preview of October Presentation: Pickett's Charge

R. Lawrence Comstock

This talk details the status of the Army of Virginia after the first two days of the battle of Gettysburg and discusses the alternatives available to General Robert E. Lee for the third day. What factors led Lee to choose a frontal attack on the center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge? This talk then details the massive artillery barrage followed by the advance of Pickett, Pettigrew and Trimble's divisions toward Cemetery Ridge. Where was the "High-Water-Mark" of the advance and what actions by the Union Army led to the repulse of the Charge? Lastly, you will hear comments on the Charge by participants.

QUIZ: NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST

by John Herberich

1. Born in Tennessee, the son of a blacksmith who died when he was 12, and raised on a farm in Mississippi, how many years of formal education did he receive?
2. By the time he was 40, Nathan Bedford Forrest was a millionaire, living in Memphis, Tenn. How did he make his fortune?
3. Many will argue that Forrest was the greatest cavalry leader and tactician of all time. Where did he get his military training?
4. What was Forrest's simple philosophy in waging war?
- 5.. Which Union general feared Forrest more than any other Confederate Cavalryman because he was "amenable to no known rules of procedure, was a law unto himself for all military acts, and was constantly doing the unexpected at all times and places."?
6. Although a natural born leader and tactician Forrest bristled under command. To which of his commanding generals did Forrest purportedly say, in the presence of others, in October of 1863: "I have stood your meanness as long as I intend to. You have played the part of a damned scoundrel, and if you were any part of a man I would slap your jaws... You may as well not issue any orders to me, for I will not obey them...and...if you ever again try to interfere with me or cross my path it will be at the peril of your life."?
7. The cause of the above outburst was because, in breaking a promise made to Forrest, this general took his command away from Forrest and gave it to whom?
8. Known for his "fearlessness" since childhood, Forrest was always leading his men in the charge, and the first to attack, no matter what the odds. How many horses did General Forrest have shot out from under him?
9. How many times was Nathan Bedford Forrest wounded in battle?
10. "Bedford Forrest's ferocity as a warrior was . . . legendary" Never one to avoid a battle, and known

for fighting with a blind fury in hand to hand combat, Forrest is credited with killing how many of the enemy?

11. What famous WW II general carefully studied Forrest's campaigns and tactics?
12. In fact, the tactics created by Forrest for his cavalry are still applied by the military today, in what areas?
13. After the war, Forrest tried his hand at what business venture, and failed?
14. What was Forrest's most infamous activity after the Civil War?
15. According to Forrest biographer, Andrew Nelson Lytle, who was it that advised the above organization in a letter written in 1866 that General Forrest would make the best candidate to organized it in the South?

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Lytle, Andrew Nelson. Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company. Nashville, J. S. Sanders & Co. 1931. (Southern Classics Series - 1984).

Wills, Brian Steel. The Confederacy's Greatest Cavalryman: Nathan Bedford Forrest. Kansas: University Press of Kansas. 1992


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The Wills book is considered to be the most comprehensive and accurate.

Preservation Report by John Herberich

As previously mentioned, two of our South Bay Civil War Round Table members will be at Gettysburg during the 50th Anniversary of the Gettysburg Battlefield Foundation. "Its creation was the result of a national cause that spread internationally - the preservation of the 'hallowed ground,' the blood-soaked battlefield at Gettysburg where the future of the nation was decided . . . the site that most vividly portrays the sacrifice, bravery, triumph and tragedy of the War Between the States . . ." Kathi Schue, President of the Preservation Association outlined the accomplishments during their 50 years: "the saving of almost 1/3 of the Gettysburg battlefield; the restoration and endowment of Pennsylvania's and several other state monuments that mark those three days in 1863; the purchase and restoration of the 145 acre Daniel Lady Farm; education events with school children and other groups and organizations; the search for Camp Letterman's cemetery," and more. The SBCWRT has been a small part of this success through its members' donations over the years.

As usual, the editor encourages any comments, corrections, or additions for future newsletters. *Thanks to all contributors to the newsletter; it makes life easier.*



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