

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil war  
Department of Kentucky  
Nelson-Garfield Memorial Camp #3  
Serving Northern Kentucky  
October 31, 2008

Letter from the Camp Commander Oct. 31, 2008 -- Bernie O'Bryan

Dear Brothers,

If I may impose on Andrew to reproduce this newsletter and send to our members without email please. Also, Andrew, please submit an expense report for the postage over this last year so we may reimburse your expenses.

I am excited about a couple of things today and this newsletter may seem like a "stream of consciousness" at times.

First, on Saturday, Oct. 25, 2008, we co-hosted with the James A. Ramage Museum an interesting and at times emotionally moving talk on Civil War Chaplains -- and a thanks to Andrew I am spelling "Chaplains" correctly this time! One must always watch those "elected" you know, but spelling correctly may lose support from the "Bad Spellers" wing of our troupe -- we shall see in the next election. Speaking of Elections, please vote, early is fine, but often may get one into trouble.

Well, I digress, back to the Chaplain's talk. We were treated to hearing directly from a real Chaplain in todays real military, "Bill Dickens" who is in the Air Force and has served overseas, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkistan and some very hard time on the French Riviera (God is merciful at times huh). Today, he continues in service in a frequently called up guard unit. At other times he is pastor of Adult Ministries (Sick visitations, special programs, etc.) at Calvary Baptist Church in the Latonia neighborhood of Covington, Kentucky. He wrote his college graduate school dissertation on Civil War Chaplains and has expanded that into a book. He has also written several smaller self published books as well, all are available for sale, his Email address is [bdickens@calvarybaptistky.org](mailto:bdickens@calvarybaptistky.org), phone 859-491-1955 in case you wish to purchase one or more.

I took some notes during the lecture which was supplemented with a computerized Slide show of photos. According to my notes: the rank of chaplain was not created until 1864 in the Union Army (whatever is said about the union, assume that Confederates were more decentralized and less formal). Before that time Chaplains were considered officer without rank, they seemed to draw the same pay as a Cavalry Captain. Why Cavalry? It was so that they could get the extra pay to maintain a horse! Sometimes, the Chaplains also held other positions within a regiment. Some actually fought in the Artillery or infantry or cavalry. On water, each ship's captain could appoint a chaplain if he says fit.

At least one female was a Civil War Chaplain, Ella Hobart, who was picked by the First Wisconsin Heavy Artillery. Her name was submitted to Washington, but she was never approved, for approval would have "legalized" women serving in the military and as officers! The First Wisconsin did not back down, even from the military's Top Brass, they paid her salary and expenses out of their own pockets. Apparently, after the war in her old age she was granted "back pay", but she was never enrolled in the service. The powers that be would recognize that she provided a service, but not that she was ever in the military.

Black units also had their difficulties. There were 14 Black Chaplains; of those was Chaplain Henry Turner of the First United States Colored Infantry. Units could pick their own at the beginning of the war, but later on the Administration in Washington would appoint someone and assign them to units. No matter the color or sex of the chaplain, it was not easy service.

Often the Chaplain was the most educated person in a regiment, as such they would teach, write letters for soldiers, write letters to family about a wounding or death, read correspondence for the wounded, offer prayers, services and counseling, perform post master duties, collect and lend books as a librarian, tend to the wounded and dying and death, gather foods and in their "free time" would help with kitchen, cleaning, paper work or what ever.

Modern Chaplain's in today's military are more structured, they now have a chaplain corps and must be approved by their denomination while serving. Chaplain's today do receive basic combat training and are not suppose of ever command a unit, unless it is a unit of chaplains. However, in they are pressured to do so in emergency situations, for example protecting the life of wounded. Today's chaplains are expected to provide religious services for all religions in their units unless the respective clergy is available.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, our military has required that Christian and Jewish Chaplains refrain from wearing a cross or Star of David so as not to "offend" the Moslems or break local laws. In many areas of the Middle East it is a major crime to preach the gospel or bible to those not Christian or Jewish already. Even today, the life a chaplain is lonely, as everyone has someone to turn to except the chaplain -- unless their is another chaplain in another unit available.

Post Traumatic Stress is a real problem and Chaplains are now prohibited from more than a few deployments in combat areas. In Civil War times this syndrome was known as Nostalgia or by other names. At the end of the talk, Rev. Bill Dickens showed a short "movie" of photos taken overseas with music playing in the background, and I was not the only one with tears in my eyes at the end of that.

At the meeting Saturday, we voted to host the annual Lincoln Day dinner between the SUVCW camps of Hamilton, Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky (we usually rotate between groups). I appointed Steve Clifford and myself to a hosting committee and welcome any volunteers how want to help with this event. In the past, the meals have

been "pot luck" or banquet seating with the hosting camp having to guarantee the reservation (if someone does not show up, the money is still owed by the hosting camp. Given the uncertain weather in February and the occasional absentee, some hosting clubs have lost money in the past. I want to avoid that. So, I have made arrangement to meet in a room of a real Historical Log Cabin, fitting for Lincoln, on the banks of a creek. Mark your calendar for February 12, Thursday at 7:30 PM (later time to give those traveling extra time to arrive) at the Log Cabin Inn, a restaurant at Hands Pike and Madison Road in Covington (turn on to Hands Pike, then take your first right to get into their parking lot). They have a family style meals ranging from \$5.99 (Hot Brown) to a full slab of ribs for \$15.99, with a typical mean at 8.49 including two sides. Liquor is available too. I can vouch for their quality, my wife and I eat there fairly often. Additional, There isn't a room charge for room rental, nor do we have to guarantee the number attending, each person can order from the menu (and they always have a special or two) after they arrive. Each person can pay for their own meal. However, I suggest we will ask for a small donation to go towards the speaker, whoever that turns out to be and supplement those funds with our camp funds if necessary. They have two rooms for parties, one seats can seat about 40, the other perhaps 50 or more. Bring wives, significant or even insignificant others, neighbors, friends, etc.

I also suggest we have a camp Christmas party there to review the place. It is only a couple of miles away from our regular meeting place of the James A. Ramage Civil War Museum. I will see if Dr. Ramage is available, if he is we should pick up his meal and provide \$50 or more. If he cannot speak, I have a short backup entitled "Lincoln as remembered by General Lew Wallace" in which I could discuss those two men interactions and relationships over the years. Mine talk is free -- there again perhaps one gets what they pay for and though Dr. Ramage has a museum named after him, I do, as "Gen. Wallace" pretend to be a man who had a museum named after him as well -- which is as close as I am ever likely to be to that!

I have received a fund raising proposal from the American Civil War Museum in Gettysburg, PA. They have a catalog of mementos, gifts, books, etc. and our members will receive a % 5 (five percent) discount, and our club a %5 (five percent) "donation" on the merchandise bought through the program. If you have been to Gettysburg, you may remember this one as it is a private museum and gift shop across the street from the old Gettysburg Park Visitor Center. They usually would have some re-enactors camped on their front lawn, though I had been "less than impressed" the ones I saw. In the re-enactor community we call those Farby (Far be it for me to say anything, but...). But the gift shop did have a very nice selection of all things Civil War related. I will bring the catalog to the next meeting, but until then check out their web site: [www.gettysburgmuseum.com](http://www.gettysburgmuseum.com) you can even get a copy of their catalog sent to you from this site or view their online store. The items on their online store are souvenir and collectable focused, but their are some interesting things. Check it out, if you decide to buy something, please let me know first so the camp and make a few bucks too.

As always, I talk a lot. Hopefully, there are a few useful thoughts among all of these. I

look forward to seeing you all again at our next meeting or events. If you haven't attended in a while, please make a point to at least come to our December meeting in which we elect officers. Anyone can be an officer; one has only to look in my direction. We really need new "blood" to fill our ranks and I hope that some who had not been very involved before step up to the limelight and take on some responsibility and provide us with new ideas.

Fraternity, Loyalty and Charity,  
Bernie O'Bryan, Camp Commander, Nelson-Garfield Memorial Camp 3, Department of Kentucky, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.