



Bugle Call Echoes

San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table
October 2006 Vol. 14 Issue No. 8

San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table 2006 Board of Directors

President: Brian Clague, MD [Linda]

P O Box 116 Shaver Lake CA 93664
559-841-7161 bclague@netptc.net

Vice President: Dr. Dave Davenport

6156 N Mitre Ave Fresno CA 93705
559-277-3283
davidpauldavenport@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Pattie Spencer

1548 W Vasser Ave Fresno CA 93705
559-233-1059 cell phone: 304-8170

Secretary: Phyllis Mann

4880 N Hulbert Ave #102
Fresno CA 93705 559-229-3778
pfm02@sbcglobal.net

Publicity: Shaun Ardemagni

2580 E Los Altos Fresno CA 93710
559-299-7453 rampchamp@aol.com

Newsletter: Bob Quist [Judy]

504 E Magnolia Avenue
Hanford CA 93230 559-582-9520
bquist1@sbcglobal.net

Directors: Mike & Gloria Carter

1576 E Cornwall Fresno CA 93720
mikecarter@paula.com
gloria.carter@cvcb.com

Past President and Membership:

Tom Carr [Kathy]

2577 South Argyle Avenue
Fresno CA 93727 559-268-4828
carrt@yahoo.com

A Note from Brian, *[who just returned returned from Germany last Thursday].*

There are lots of opportunities for club members to enjoy their interests beginning with the annual Civil War Reenactment at Kearney Park next Saturday, Sunday, Oct 21-22.

Vice President Dr. David Davenport and his committee has been busy preparing our booth and it promises to be something special and word has it that President Lincoln might stop by for a visit. In fact we may also see CSA President Jeff Davis and his wife Varina - wonder what would happen if the two presidents were to confront one another?

Treasurer Pattie Spencer is still looking for several more members to give her a call to help out in the booth so that all our members get to circulate and see what else is going on throughout the day. Why not find a couple of hours on the day you're going out to Kearney and give Pattie a call and help out at our booth? Her phone number is just to the left under our Board of Directors. On Saturday our booth could use one additional volunteer from 1-2 PM, two more from 2-4, and two also from 4 -6 PM. On Sunday three volunteers are needed from 10- noon and three more from 2-4 PM.

Our next dinner [always the last Thursday of the month] on Oct 27th features a talk by noted historian Dr. Jim Stanbery, who will be giving an overview of the upcoming November symposium being held in Sacramento on the topic "War on the Waters; Naval engagements in the Civil War". His overview should be most inclusive and entertaining. Try not to miss it.



Dinner Reservations

To make a reservation for our October dinner on Thursday, October 26th, at the Ramada Inn at the Shaw off-ramp on Freeway 41... contact Secretary Phyllis Mann at 229-3778

[afternoons or evenings, please] or e-mail her at:

pfm02@sbcglobal.net

Professor Jim Stanbery to speak on 'War on the Waters' at Oct. 26 SJVCWRT Dinner Meeting

Mr. Jim Stanbery, professor of history and political science at Los Angeles Harbor College, will be our speaker on October 26th. He earned his B.A. at Berkeley and his M.A. at Cal State University, Long Beach. Before joining the faculty at LAHC some 35 years ago, Jim served with the Peace Corps in the Philippines for two years. He is active in the Civil War Round Tables of San Gabriel and Orange County, the Drum Barracks Civil War Museum at Wilmington, and the San Pedro Historical Society.

Jim is no stranger to West Coast Civil War enthusiasts having spoken to us in Fresno on a number of occasions and to Round Tables elsewhere. On the 17th inst. he spoke to the Scottsdale, Arizona, CWRT on "*The Movies and the Civil War*". He is a learned and engaging speaker who promises to both teach and entertain us.

Jim's presentation to us on Oct. 26th will examine the "War on the Waters". We are all familiar with the clash of the ironclads *Virginia* and *Monitor* at Hampton Roads but this was but one of many hundreds of battles between Union and Confederate warships. All of these took place as the Union attempted to deprive the Confederacy of imported goods, to advance into the heart of the Confederacy along rivers such as the Tennessee, the Cumberland, and the Mississippi, and to control coastal areas.

The CSA, on the other hand, had to create a Navy almost from scratch, attempt to break the Union blockade, and to cripple the Union war effort by engaging in "piracy" [euphemistically called commerce raiding by those who laud the activities of the *Alabama*, *Florida*, and the *Shenandoah*]. In his talk Jim will identify Union and Confederate Naval Strategies.

Reservations for the dinner-meeting on Thursday, October 26th, must be made by calling Phyllis Mann at 229-3778, afternoons or evenings. We will also sell tickets to the dinner-meeting at our booth at the Kearney Park Civil War Reenactment on Saturday and Sunday October 21-22.

22nd Annual West Coast Civil War Conference Nov. 10-12

The Sacramento Round Table announced the following prices for attending one-day sessions for their War on the Waters West Coast Conference: Nov. 10th -evening session and dinner-\$35; all day Saturday with lunch and dinner-\$90; and Sunday brunch and program-\$35.

Contact Dennis Kohlmann of the Sacramento Round Table at (916) 726-4432 to see when these featured historians are making their presentations: Ed Bearss, Craig Symonds, Jim Stanberry, Dennis Ringle, and Kevin Foster.

Cost for all seminars and meals are now \$170. More information can be found at www.sacramentocwrt.com. Room reservations can be made at the Double Tree (800) 222-8733.

A Little Humor from *Blue & Gray LAUGHING*

A squad of Indiana volunteers scouting the mountains found an old woman in a log cabin. After the usual salutations one of them asked her:

"Well old lady, are you a secessionist?" "No." was her answer.

"Are you a unionist?" "No"

"What are you then?"

"A Baptist-and always have been!"

BOOK REVIEW
First Lady of the Confederacy:
Varina Davis's Civil War
by Joan E. Cashin
Belknap/Harvard Univ., 403 pp, \$29.95

AFTER ACTION REPORT
for SJVCWRT Meeting
on September 28, 2006
by Ron Vaughan

This review is by Jonathan Yardley, a book reviewer for the Washington Post Book World and was provided by Charlie Jorgensen.

In the antebellum South, white women, like black slaves, were expected to stay in "their place." As Joan E. Cashin, a history professor at Ohio State, writes, they "were expected to marry young, have many children, and devote themselves exclusively to the family." They "did not attend universities or enter the professions, and in Mississippi, unlike New Jersey, they had never voted and were not expected to have the faintest interest in public life."

Varina Howell was born into this world in 1826 and accepted its conditions, but not always happily and, as Cashin notes, with "a series of bewildering questions" that eluded easy answers.... Legitimate [questions] that almost certainly occurred to Varina Howell before, during and after her marriage to Jefferson Davis in Feb. 1845 in Natchez. She was 19, and he was 36. Ten years earlier he had married Sarah Knox Taylor, the daughter of Zachary Taylor, but she died of malaria less than three months later, a loss that left Davis "nearly crushed with grief" and reverberated throughout the 4 1/2 decades of his marriage to Varina.

Davis -- planter, soldier, politician -- was a handsome, commanding man whom Varina claimed to love right up to -- and beyond -- his death in 1889, but he was also stern, demanding and headstrong. He accepted without question every clause of the Southern code, and he expected his wife to honor that code as well. Varina by contrast "wanted a reciprocal relationship, a companionate marriage in which husband and wife both had obligations."

For a decade and a half before the Civil War, she had accompanied her husband to Washington, where he represented Mississippi as congressman and senator, and served as secretary of war under President Franklin Pierce. In 1861 he was chosen

Please turn to page 4

This meeting was a little different, in that the 30 members watched a CSPAN video presentation. The last *Bugle Call Echoes* provided an ample biography of Mary Chestnut and author Dr. Elizabeth Showalter Muhlenfeld, so I will not repeat that here.

If you stayed away from this meeting, because you thought a video would be boring, you missed out! What made the event truly memorable, was that the author was interviewed on the site of the Mulberry Plantation, S. C., where Mary Chestnut lived. We were able to view much of the beautiful grounds of the plantation. Dr. Davenport fast forwarded through some of the parts of the video, that were less interesting, especially the viewer call-in questions, which he said were mostly inane. If I had been a caller, I would have asked her if she had any relation to Daniel Showalter, the California secessionist politician that shot a Republican and fled to the Confederacy.

According to Dr. Muhlenfeld, Mary C. is interesting to modern readers, because of her behind-the-scenes knowledge of the CSA government and her many "irreverent" views and comments about Southern leaders, slavery, and feminism. If you wish to view the program, you may contact Dr. Dave to borrow the video, and watch in the privacy of your own home.

An added feature of the meeting was a brief presentation by Wayne Scott, about his recent trip to Illinois-- including the Lincoln home and museum. He appeared at the museum in his Lincoln re-enactment outfit, and startled some visitors who mistook him for a wax figure! The highlight of his research at the museum was to find that one of his ancestors and Lincoln's father were cousins, or something like that (I can't always take notes fast enough to get it straight!)

Be sure not to miss the next meeting, when we will have a no doubt rousing lecture by Jim Stanberry.

First Lady of the Confederacy: Varina Davis's Civil War

continued from page 2

president of the CSA. She was First Lady of the new nation, a role she had not bargained for and that did not especially suit her....she had not favored secession and did not believe -- never believed -- that the South could win the war.

In addition to her qualms about the war, she simply had other things on her mind. Her marriage was never easy, she was frequently separated from her husband, tensions between them at times were extreme. Like many women of her period she saw too many of her children to their graves -- all four of her sons died while young, her beloved youngest daughter died in her early 30s, and her other daughter lived to mature adulthood -- and struggled through serious illnesses of her own.

As the Confederacy reached its final months, even the first lady had to scramble for food, and at the end, she, like her husband, was on the run. With her husband in prison awaiting the trial that ultimately never was held, Varina was warned that white Southerners might be hostile toward her. Instead she found herself lionized.

The irony of this surely amused her and may well have anger her. Certainly she showed little

enthusiasm for her husband's efforts to solidify his own image....His self-esteem ballooned...as he assumed a new role as symbol of the 'Lost Cause' and he seemed to expect his wife to defer to him as members of the public did." He lived a quarter-century after the war, always depending on the generosity of others, rarely holding a real job. He fell rather foolishly in love with a woman named Virginia Clay and had a strange relationship with another named Sarah Dorsey. He almost certainly was unfaithful to Varina, but divorce was out of the question, and she always did her duty, no matter how much she may have disliked it.

Her life took an interesting turn after his death. She moved to New York, which she loved, and did occasional pieces of journalism. In 1893 she had a friendly meeting with another famous widow, Julia Dent Grant," and the two became friends.

Varina Davis died in Oct. 1906. [During her marriage to Jeff Davis] " she made many sacrifices for a cause she did not fully support and for a husband who did not fully return her love." Cashin's book leaves no doubt that she was in fact a considerably more interesting person than her husband, and a better one as well.

San Joaquin Valley
Civil War Round Table
PO Box 5695
Fresno CA 93755

