

Let's have an Educated Conversation!

We were given our charge way back in 1896 by General S.D. Lee and it gets read at almost every SCV function. So, how do we as an organization, and more specifically as a camp, go about fulfilling that charge? Well, there are many ways we do this. We hold celebrations, we mark and decorate the graves of our ancestors, carry on traditions handed down over the generations, we do lots of things. However, there is one of them I feel is of the utmost importance. Something that our society is missing on the whole today, that being “*education*”! And when I say “education” in this context I am specifically referring to the history of our nation. We no longer are really teaching history and civics in our schools. Instead children are only taught a few basic facts, larger events are quickly covered with the deeper meanings barely even mentioned. Large portions of our nation's past are never even mentioned and thus how can a student ever be expected to tie it all together and have an understanding of who we are or how we have become the nation we are today? They cannot. Instead in today's educational system it is the hope that this very basic information our students are given equips them with the means to be able to pick the correct answer on a multiple choice standardized test. That is not education! So what are we to do? How can we help?

Well, we can't correct all the short comings of our educational system by any stretch of the imagination but what we can do, is what I feel is an essential function of our camp as part of maintaining the charge we were given...we can educate!!!! And that has to start with ourselves! Right here at home within our own ranks. For if we ourselves don't know our own history, how can we teach others? How can we expect anyone else to listen to the story of our Southern Heritage that we profess to promote if we can't present it accurately, factually and just as important, present with an even temperament? When you know the facts, understand the historical significance, and are aware of conflicting views (or opposition to the truth in many cases), you are much more apt to be willing to engage someone in conversation about a subject, no matter what subject that might be. That is what is called having self-confidence! That self-confidence is something we must have when it comes to being able to talk about our Southern Heritage and then be willing to share, albeit, “educate” others!

As you may know from my first Commander's Corner post and/or from hearing me talk at one of our recent camp meetings, one of my goals for the camp is to get active. Part of being active is to offer some opportunities to our camp members to go out and visit places that can help us educate ourselves. We have a ton of history right here in our own back yards in Southeastern Tennessee and North Georgia (not to forget NW Alabama too). We should be able to talk with folks about our own area's history. If we can't, who can!!! So on that note, our first camp outing is to the Tennessee State Museum on March 16th. I highly encourage anyone who can to attend. The museum is free to visit and we have arranged a showing of the Civil War flags they have under conservation. Not everyone is privy to these!!! While the State Museum has a nice Civil War collection on display, it like most museums has many more items behind the scenes that there just isn't room to display all at once. We will have the opportunity to view some of these wonderful items. Another fast approaching event here in March is the reenactment over in Bridgeport, AL on the weekend of March 24th and 25th. Go, get out there, learn about this event and its history. Support the folks who work hard to put it on. Take the time to talk to some of the reenactors! I can almost guarantee that you will learn something that you never even

remotely thought of before. Most of the reenactors are more than willing to share a story about their ancestor(s), the unit they represent, and about the uniform they are wearing. So, what are you waiting for? Go, see, and have a great time!

Again it is about education! Am I talking about the old mantra of reading, writing, and arithmetic? No, and as you can see by my own bumbling writing style with bad punctuation, maybe a misspelled word or three, and terrible sentence structure I am certainly not saying we need to be scholars in that sense either. What I am saying is, by us knowing the facts of our own history, being able to put into those facts into their rightful historical context we will be confident and be able to carry on a dialogue with others. Too many times today we see, hear, and read of people who seem sincere about whatever it is they are promoting but when asked about any background, deeper meaning, or their goals, they have little to offer. Let's not be counted among these. Let us know our own history and what we symbolize. Let's be confident of our own past, what we represent, and why. While the war against our Southern Heritage rages nationwide, we as individuals and as a camp can do our part by knowing and promoting our own history and heritage right here at home to those around us!

Respectfully yours,

Nick Norwood

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