

BUGLE CALL ECHOES



Vol. 8 No. 10, November 2000

San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table

Knowing in part may make a fine tale, but wisdom comes from seeing the whole.

November Program

Dr. David Davenport will be the featured speaker at the November meeting of the SJVCWRT. David, a round table member, is a past chair of the History Department at Fresno City College. He developed the curriculum and taught a course in Civil War history at the college. For several years he has been a member of the 6th Iowa Infantry of the Civil War Re-Enactment Society. He takes part in the annual re-enactment at Kearney Park each fall.

David will speak to the round table on Thursday, November 30, on "The Battle of Stones River."

President's Column

I want to thank everyone who came out and those people who worked on the fundraiser. We took in around \$600 after our expenses were paid. Thanks for a fine job. We still have three seats for the "Shenandoah Breakfast" on Saturday, December 2nd. Give me a call at 559/229-3654 if you'd like to join us.

The present round table board will complete their two-year terms at the end of this year. We will elect a new board at the November meeting for 2001-2002. We have people willing to fill most positions; however, we need a vice president and secretary (also, Carol Berry would be happy to relinquish her job as newsletter editor). If you could serve, please call me. All board members have served for several years. We need new members! The board generally meets once every two months.

We are planning a get together to celebrate the holiday season on Sunday, December 10. See page 5 of this newsletter for more details. It will be a potluck and will be at our home in the afternoon.

See you at the November meeting.

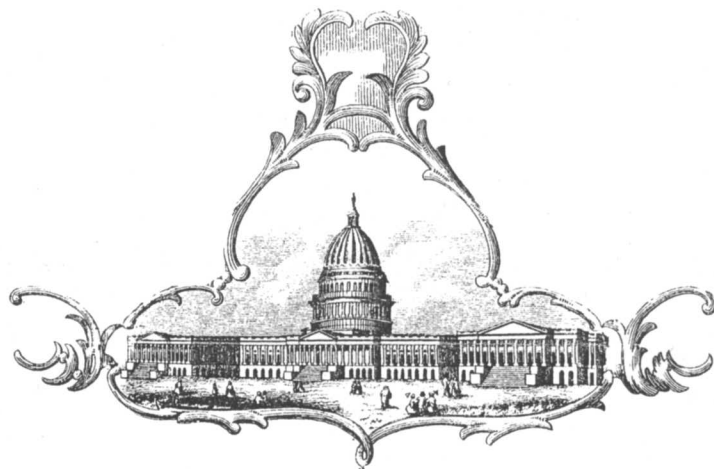
Ken Moats, President

November 2000 Meeting

The November meeting of the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table will be held on Thursday, November 30, 2000, at the Ramada Inn, Shaw Avenue and Highway 41 in Fresno.

A no-host social hour will begin at 6 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 7 p.m.

Please send your check for \$15 (\$10 for students under 25) to cover the cost of the meal to Gloria Carter, PO Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755, or call 559/322-9474 to advise her you will be attending the meeting.



MEMBERSHIP DUES

As the membership year runs from January to December, dues are now payable for 2001. A renewal form is located on the last page of this newsletter. If you joined the round table as a new member since September of this year, the dues you paid will carry you through 2001.

I'VE RECENTLY READ

by Rick Kubiak

Hard Marching Every Day: The Civil War Letters of Private Wilbur Fisk, 1861 to 1865, edited by Emil and Ruth Rosenblatt, published Lawrence, Kansas, University Press of Kansas 1992 (383 pages). It can be obtained from the Fresno Central Library.

Hard Marching Every Day is a collection of letters written between December 11, 1861, to July 26, 1865, by Private Wilbur Fisk, Company E, Second Vermont Volunteers. The letters (98 of them) were written to the

newspaper editor of "The Green Mountain Freeman," of Montpelier, Vermont, and were all signed "Anti-Rebel." This collection of Civil War letters is a literary treasury of the life of a common soldier, his hardships, struggles, anxieties, weariness, and also his patriotism.

Wilbur Fisk writes with intelligence, wit, and great thoughtfulness. His words are often extremely eloquent and yet his grammar often displays mistakes in the use of words and tenses that reflected his lack of formal education. Wilbur Fisk was born June 7, 1839, on a small farm in Sharon, Vermont. The Fisk family left Vermont in 1852 for the woolen mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, when their 30 acres of farmland would not support the family. They returned to Tunbridge, Vermont, on a newly acquired farm, after only two years, after which Wilbur, who was mainly self-educated, taught in a rural school district for seven terms. In September 1861 he enlisted in Company E, Second Vermont Volunteers. He felt that he should regret it in later years if he did not answer his country's call and become one of her defenders.

In a Decoration Day speech on May 30, 1894, the then Reverend Wilbur Fisk recalled the news in Vermont of the beginning of the Civil War. "I was in the P. O. (post office) with some other young men to inquire for the news. The postmaster, an aged man, said almost with tears in his eyes, 'The war has begun. I was in hopes something could have been done to have

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prevented it,' and he spoke as if he felt there was an awful calamity brooding over the nation. We boys who loved excitement did not take it so seriously as he did. We were ready to shout hurrah because now there would be a chance to teach the South a lesson, but we didn't realize how much it would cost us to teach it."

Private Fisk begins each of his letters with the date and his location. That he and other members of his regiment marched a great deal is easily discerned by a quick review of where his letters are written. Wilbur Fisk was involved in military duty in various parts of Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley (West Virginia), Maryland, Washington, DC, and New York. During the course of Fisk's military service his regiment was actively engaged in the Peninsula Campaign, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Cold Harbor, Gettysburg, Wilderness, Brandy Station, Gaines Mill, the quelling of the New York Draft Riots, and the Siege of Petersburg, as well as other minor battles and numerous skirmishes.

Private Fisk describes his life as an infantry soldier succinctly. "It was hard marching every day, sometimes hard fighting, and all the time hard living." He goes into details concerning the forced marches, lack of sleep, often inadequate food and clothing, and the bloody attrition of men as the result of the fierce battles. After the Battle of Gettysburg Fisk poignantly and eloquently expressed his horror of war when he states, "Here the troops halted for a short time, and those that wished to had an opportunity of looking over the field. I saw but a small portion of it, but I saw all I wished to. The rebel dead and ours lay thickly together, their thirst for blood forever quenched. Their bodies were swollen, black, and hideously unnatural. Their eyes glared from their sockets. Their tongues protruded from their mouths, and in almost every case, clots of blood and mangled flesh showed how they had died, and rendered a sight ghastly beyond description. My God, could it be possible that such were lively and active like other people so shortly previous, with friends, parents, brothers and sisters to lament their loss. It certainly was so, but it was hard to

realize it. I turned away from the heart-sickening sight, willing to forego gratifying my curiosity rather than dwell upon the horrors of the battlefield. I thought I had become hardened to almost anything, but I cannot say I ever wish to see another sight like that I saw on the battlefield of Gettysburg."

Private Fisk, along with his vivid descriptions of the everyday life of a soldier, such as a soldier's tent, food, clothing, picketing, guard duty, pay, drilling, also relates his thoughts about the war itself, slavery, and the rebellion of the South against the United States government. Much of Private Fisk's best written efforts were manifested in these letters. An example of Fisk's insightfulness is shown in a paragraph from his letter of June 17, 1863, in camp near Fairfax Station, Virginia. "If the rank and file of each army could have their way they would soon manage some way to inaugurate peace. But the war is on our hands and it must be fought out to the bitter end. A few bad men have conspired to destroy our Government and build another on its ruins, thus drawing thousands of others into the vortex of rebellion, and for the iniquity of these comparatively few, millions who have no personal feelings of animosity, must meet in arms and in cold blood slay each other. A day of fearful retribution must await those ere long, but while they live the mischief goes on. Meantime let Satan look out for his laurels." And upon the death of a fellow soldier Fisk empathetically writes, "Oh what would a brother or sister have given to have been with him then (on his deathbed) to have called his name and received back a pressure of recognition? What would his mother give now to drop a tear by his rude grave—a sacred spot that she may never be able to find? And thus have perished thousands since this year began. Verily war is cruel, and none more terribly so than this which the rebellion has forced upon us. God forgive those who started it, they knew not what they did."

Wilbur Fisk upon his discharge from the army and his return to Tunbridge, Vermont, writes his last letter to *The Green Mountain Freeman* on July 26, 1865, and ends it rather abruptly with,

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"Now that the war is over and I am no longer a soldier, I can not well inflict upon the reader any more 'soldier letters,' but hoping that I have furnished some entertainment in my rough way to others, while I have found a pleasant occupation for my own idle hours, I bid you a kind adieu."

Hard Marching Every Day: The Civil War Letters of Private Wilbur Fisk is strongly recommended reading as both an interesting and educational account of the Civil War written of the war time experiences of a rank and file participant and a patriotic advocate to the cause of the Union.

Bob Blair

When the September newsletter was published, Bob Blair's bio was incomplete due to the fault of no one but the editor. Here is the bio as it should have appeared in *Bugle Call Echoes*:

Bob Blair is a 1957 graduate of Washington and Lee University of Lexington, Virginia. He majored in English, intending to become a journalist. While attending the university he acquired the equivalent hours in history for a degree.

While at Washington and Lee, Bob played football for two years. He acted four years with The W&L Troubadours. He spent two years in summer theater with Williamsburg's "The French Fleet," at the Battle of Yorktown. Later, he was to act with the oldest Little Theater in America.

At Washington and Lee he maintained a four-year academic scholarship and stayed near the top of the Dean's List. Bob is the son of a professor who spent 43 years at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Bob is presently the editor of the Peninsula Campaigner of the Peninsula Civil War Round Table, San Carlos, California. He frequently gives talks to other round tables.

Battle of Perryville, Kentucky

October 8, 1862

The battle was brought on by Confederate Lieut. Gen. Braxton Bragg as a delaying action to insure safe withdrawal of a huge wagon train of supplies and to enable him to effect a junction with the army of Maj. Gen. E. Kirby Smith in the vicinity of Versailles.

In overall command of the Union Army (Army of the Ohio) was Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell, with Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas second in command. Buell had three corps. First: Maj. Gen. Alexander McDowell McCook. Second: Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden. Third: Maj. Gen. Charles C. Gilbert.

In overall command of the Confederate Army (Army of the Mississippi) was Gen. Bragg, with Maj. Gen. Leonidas Polk commander of the Right Wing and Maj. Gen. William J. Hardee of the Left Wing. Bragg had three divisions: Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Cheatham's; Brig. Gen. J. Patton Anderson's; Maj. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner's.

The main action began at 2:00 P.M. with a fierce charge by Brig. Gen. John A. Wharton's cavalry, on the extreme Confederate right, followed immediately by a rapid advance of Cheatham's entire line. Simultaneously, Buckner's and Anderson's moved forward, amid heavy cannonading from numerous batteries on both sides.

Cheatham's charge caught a large number of McCook's men (many fresh enlistees) unaware and off guard, far in advance of their lines, seeking water in the vicinity of Doctor's Creek. Both Cheatham's and Buckner's divisions drove McCook's men back to their former ill-formed positions and, after heavy, often desperate hand-to-hand fighting, dislodged his entire corps, pushing him back a distance of approximately a mile west of the Creek. On the Confederate left, however, Anderson was unable to dislodge the division of Brig. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, timely enforced by Brig. Gen. Albion Schoepf's division.

Later that afternoon, Anderson's advancing left was struck by a determined charge of Col. William P. Carlin's brigade (R. B. Mitchell's division, Gilbert's corps) between the Springfield and Lebanon roads, the charge carrying through Perryville and out on the Danville and Harrodsburg roads. Toward dusk, desperate staying actions by brigades of Col. John C. Starkweather (Rousseau's division) and Col.

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Michael Gooding (Mitchell's division) enabled McCook to stabilize his battered corps along a line immediately beyond the Russell house and Benton road. In his favor too were the coming of darkness and near exhaustion of the Confederates.

Gen. Buell, headquarters at the Dorsey house on Springfield road, was not aware that the battle was in progress until 4:00 P.M., too late to have Crittenden's corps, along Lebanon road, pivot around in an attempt to envelop the enemy forces.

After nightfall, Bragg finally realized that his small force faced practically Buell's entire army. This knowledge caused him to order withdrawal at midnight toward Harrodsburg. On the whole, the Confederate troops were better handled and used than those of the Union. The battle ended as a tactical victory for Bragg, a strategic victory for Buell, who held the field.

The Confederate commander employed only 16,000 men and sustained 3,396 casualties; 510 killed, 2,635 wounded and 251 missing. Buell used between 22,000 and 28,000; sustained 4,241 casualties; 845 killed, 2,851 wounded and 515 captured or missing. The battle was one of the fiercest and bloodiest of modern times.

Had Buell and Bragg been better informed and more aggressive, the battle of Perryville might have been the decisive engagement of the Civil War in the West. After this battle, the Confederates never returned to Kentucky in great force; the state remained firmly in the Union.

Copied from a plaque at the Perryville Battlefield, Perryville, Kentucky

WEST COAST CONFERENCE

Sacramento was the site of the recent West Coast Civil War Conference, held at the Doubletree Hotel in that city. Speakers included Wiley Sword, Thomas Cartwright, Brian Steele Wills, Herman Hattaway and Jim Stanbery, and the presentations centered around the battle at Shiloh and the personalities involved in the fight.

The SJVCWRT was well represented; seen at various sessions throughout the three-day event were Ken and Barbara Moats, Frank and Pat Perry, Ron Markarian, Dave Davenport, Bill Head, Brian, Linda and Courtney Clague, Wayne and Bonnie Bowen, and Carol Berry.

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Memorial Service

On a recent Civil War trip, my travel partner (and co-worker) Gary Tindle and I stopped to visit the Lee Chapel at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. The Lee Chapel, built in 1867 under Robert E. Lee's supervision, is now a national historical landmark. Besides the chapel proper, the building houses Lee's office, which is preserved much as he left it for the last time on September 28, 1870, a museum which contains many of Robert E. Lee's artifacts, and the burial vault of the Lee family.

Among those buried in the vault, located on the lower level of the building, are Robert E. Lee, his sons George Washington Custis and William Henry Fitzhugh, and his father, Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee. Just outside the museum door is the grave site of Traveller, Lee's famous horse.

The date of our visit was October 12, the 130th anniversary of the death of Robert E. Lee. We arrived just moments before a memorial service for Lee was scheduled to begin. The memorial program consisted of the following:

Prelude: *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring* by Bach

Opening Sentences

Collect

A Reading from the Old Testament

Psalm 46

A Reading from the New Testament

Anthems:

Alma Mater, US Military Academy

Bist du bei mir by Bach

Remarks:

Patricia A. Hobbs, Director, Lee Chapel

I. Taylor Sanders III, Professor of History and
University Historian

John Y. Simon, Professor of History, Southern
Illinois University, Carbondale

Prayers

Hymn: *How Firm a Foundation*

Benediction

Postlude: *Largo* by Handel

The United Daughters of the Confederacy served as hostesses of the event. Those of us seated in the audience were able to view the famous statue of Lee reclining on the battlefield, sculpted by Edward Valentine. The statue is located in an alcove directly behind the dais area.

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Holiday Get Together

Who?

All members invited

When?

Sunday, December 10

Where?

At the Moats' home,
4780 N. Delno, Fresno
(NE corner of Acacia
and Delno between Shaw and
Gettysburg)



We plan to go to the Metropolitan Museum first (optional) to see the annual "Christmas at the Met," followed by a potluck at our house. If you are game for the Met, meet at our house at 1 p.m. to drop off your dish, after which we will carpool downtown. Admission is \$6. The show is a beautiful exhibit of Christmas trees in different styles from different periods. If you don't plan to go to the Met, meet us back at the house at 4 p.m.

If your last name begins with the letter A-M, please bring a casserole or salad; N to Z, bring a dessert. Plates, eating utensils, soft drinks and wine will be provided. BYOB if you prefer.

Call Ken or Barbara at 559-229-3654 by December 5th if you plan to come, and we hope you do. Let's give the year 2000 a good send off.



Gen. George E. Pickett

New York at Gettysburg

The following is an oration by Christian Boehm given at the dedication of the monument to the 45th New York Infantry Regiment, October 10, 1888, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania:

Comrades, Friends, Ladies of the Regiment and Fellow Citizens:

To us, the survivors, the good fortune has been granted to gather today on this spot that means so very much to us so that we may witness the dedication of a monument in honor of our comrades of the 45th regiment, fallen at the Battle of Gettysburg. At the occasion of this solemn act, dear Ladies and Gentlemen, let me give a brief account of the regiment's actions during the fierce three-day combat:

With golden rays the morning sun broke through on the first day of July 1863, and shone on the encampment near Emmitsburg where our regiment was preparing to march out of camp. Cheerfully and in perfect formation we marched; suddenly the not too distant thunder of cannons was heard; and advancing Union Cavalry reported to us that the enemy was pressing forward furiously. Now we proceeded for four miles at the quick-step; exhausted and breathless we reached Gettysburg.

Immediately, four companies under the command of the fearless Captain Irsch bravely went forward and pushed the enemy sharp shooters back for a third of a mile, thereby making it possible to hook up with the First Corps which had been heavily engaged for a while already. This was done in spite of the enemy's twelve-pounder battery on Oak Hill that caused great devastation in our ranks but was attacked in turn by our brave skirmishers.

Finally, help arrives; along with the rest of our regiment under the command of the gallant Colonel Doebke, Dilger's brave Ohio Cannoneers came dashing and quickly silenced the aforementioned enemy battery, as well as a second one. Thereupon we advanced at the double-quick step, when suddenly several brigades of enemy infantry pushed back the right wing of the valiantly fighting First Corps, thereby threatening our left flank. The 45th quickly poured volley after volley into the enemy's flanks and, charging after the retreating enemy, took several hundred prisoners. With a Hurrah! we then advanced to McLean's red barn; the valiant Sgt. Linder and his comrades took 60 prisoners, followed by an additional twelve who appeared from a nearby

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trench to surrender. Alas, in that very same hour the fortunes of war eluded us. Our bravely fighting First Division, flanked by Gordon's and Dole's famous Georgia veterans, is heavily threatened in the rear.

Therefore, the bloody gains made had to be abandoned, fighting step by step, withdrawing to the college in front of the town. Meanwhile, our hard fighting left wing of the First Corps was outflanked by Heth's and Pender's North Carolina veterans streaming into town to the west of us. There we stood, still fighting stubbornly, between the college and the town, and Coster's vulnerable, brave brigade of Steinwehr's Second Division was powerless as well and could not stop the flood of the enemy's attack from the east. Then General Schimmelpfennig's bugler sounded the "Retreat at the Quickstep! Save yourself if you are able!" But the stubborn Captain Irsch, whose sharp eye had long recognized our calamity, shouted, "Comrades, it is too late for quick retreat; the situation calls for stubborn fight, imprisonment or death!" And as one we replied, "We will stand here and die fighting, or perish in prison!" So we advanced, the banner lifted high, through the streets congested with carriages, ambulances and refugees, towards the cemetery heights that promised shelter.

At every western street corner enemy bullets pierced our ranks; so we turned against the enemy enabling our brothers to retreat under cover; and so the bloody street battle continued. When bullets began raining from the east as well, it meant saving the regimental colors. So Colonel Doebke and the brave Captain Corn led the head of the column into a protected alley by the church, while the gallant Major Koch fell to the ground badly wounded, and the rear guard reached the alley under heavy attack from east and west alike. Then the bad news from the head of the column: We are in a blind alley - men and colors must escape over fences to the nearby cemetery. Protected by Irsch's heroic rear guard, under the leadership of valiant officers Lindemayer, Dietz, Hanf, Nitschke and the brave Ahlert, Leydecker, Gerson, Schlumpf and others, the charging enemy was repeatedly repulsed by taking shelter in houses and yards. For hours they continued to defy the enemy, capitulating only when no hope was left.

On July 2, the remnants of the regiment were subjected to heavy artillery-and infantry attacks. At 8:00 o'clock in the evening we were ordered to assist the hard pressed Twelfth Corps on Culp's Hill in order to relieve General Green's valiant brigade,

and repeatedly repulsed heavy enemy assaults resulting in heavy losses to our regiment.

The next morning, July 3rd, we handed over the entrenchments that were entrusted to us to Green's worthy troops and resumed our previous position on Cemetery Hill. Now the gallant General Schurz was in need of "volunteers" in order to eliminate the enemy sharpshooters in front of the town that were giving our cannoneers such a hard time; Sergeant Link, the bold, along with 20 fearless comrades, took over this task and was finally successful, but only after heavy sacrifices. This took place during the great storm, called "Pickett's Charge," threatening death and defeat to us and ruin to the country.

Now undisturbed by the enemy's sharp shooters, our artillery started to mow down Pickett's valiant men with solid shot and canister; however, of the few volunteers but few returned, and they were all wounded.

On July 4 we were assured of the great victory; the enemy offered parole to the 45th prisoners, as well as to others; but this was denied since it was considered dishonorable to obtain one's freedom from the beaten enemy while still on the field of battle. It was also believed that the badly beaten enemy would be incapable of taking the prisoners across the Potomac, let alone all the way to Richmond, and that the victorious Army of the Potomac would capture the entire enemy force along with us, or at least force the enemy to release us on this side of the Potomac. But it did not happen that way; the same differing opinions and actions from the top that had brought so much calamity to our brave army before, robbed us of the fruits of the hard fought victory this time as well, thus passing up the opportunity to end the rebellion at once.

While great masses of militia threatened the enemy from Harrisburg, with the Army of the Potomac in his back and French flanking him at Harpers Ferry, General Lee entrenched at Hagerstown and calmly waited until the rain-swollen Potomac allowed him to cross over with his 5,000 prisoners of war; and so the gallant men went to Libby Prison and Belle Isle, and later on to Macon, Charleston, and Andersonville where so many of them sacrificed their lives for the Union under most dreadful agony, or who now miserably waste away in both body and spirit.

After Gettysburg, the 45th Regiment was transferred to the 20th Corps under General Hooker and

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participated in the battles of Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga, Resaca, Kenesaw Mountain, the East Tennessee Campaign, the relief of Burnside, as well as many other lesser important battles and skirmishes, and can look back with just pride at its past.

May this magnificent monument forever demonstrate to future generations that sons of the German nation fell here as heroes and good patriots, and that those who are born in a foreign country are capable to fulfill their duty to their adopted fatherland, and when necessary, bravely lay down their lives.

Comrades of the 45th Regiment, this monument must always remind us to defend the honor and good name of the regiment with the same ardor and spirit of sacrifice as our commander Irsch did. Furthermore, we want to sincerely thank the esteemed comrades, Captains Feldstein, Wehr and others for their kind participation.

The duty now has been fulfilled,
Our tribute been presented to the Fallen;
The magnificent monument is now unveiled,
Let us remember them once again with affection,
Slumber on, dear comrades,
May nothing disturb you in your sweet rest
Until the graves in all the states will open up
For the universal grand review;
Then, just as we did 25 years ago,
We will stand together again brave and true,
Free from sorrow and earthly dangers
To joyfully enter into the new life.

The above dedication was originally delivered in German and was translated into English by Ulli Baumann, Pittsburgh, PA, October 2000.



Monument at Bull Run

PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR 2000

Date	Speaker	Topic
January 27, 2000	Membership	<i>Show and Tell</i>
February 24, 2000	Robert Snowden/ Black History Month	<i>The Underground Railroad</i>
March 30, 2000	Cathy Rehart/ Women's History Month	"A Twist of Fate"
April 27, 2000	Fred Bohmfalk	<i>William Sherman: His Early Years</i>
May 25, 2000	Ken Bruce	<i>McClellan and the Seven Days Before Richmond</i>
June 29, 2000	Wayne Bowen	<i>Ella Carroll's Role in the Civil War</i>
July 27, 2000	Phil Avila	<i>Brush Strokes of War: A Slide Presentation of Civil War Art</i>
August 31, 2000	Bob Ritchey	<i>Lofty Goals, Resolute Struggle and Deep Disappointments</i>
September 26, 2000 Note date change! This is a Tuesday.	Bob Blair	<i>General George Thomas: The Battle of Nashville</i>
October 26, 2000 Fund Raiser	Vern Crow	<i>Thomas' Legion: One of the Most Unique Commands in the Civil War</i>
November 30, 2000	Dave Davenport	<i>The Battle of Stone's River</i>
December 10, 2000	Potluck – see page 5 of newsletter for more details	

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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please begin/renew my membership in the San Joaquin Valley Civil War Round Table. My membership category is checked below:

_____ Individual \$25 _____ Family \$35 _____ \$10 Student or Newsletter

Name _____

Address _____

Clip this membership form and send it with your check to the SJVCWRT, PO Box 5695, Fresno, CA 93755. The membership year is from January to December. Five dollars of each membership goes towards preservation.