



SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS, TEXAS DIVISION

# THE JOHN H. REAGAN CAMP NEWS

[www.reaganscvcamp.org](http://www.reaganscvcamp.org)

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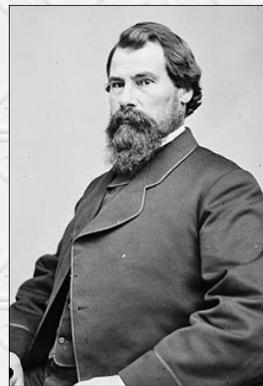
## COMMANDER'S DISPATCH

Happy New Year Compatriots,  
 Reflecting back on what the men and ladies of the John H. Reagan Camp 2156 accomplished in 2009 in honor and memory of our Confederate ancestors is rather amazing. None of this could have happened without the hard diligent work of some awesome camp members and the ladies of the Reagan Camp which are composed of spouses, and UDC and OCR members, and the support of the present and past ET Brigade commander. To recap our year we held our first and organizational meeting in January, received our charter on April 1st with 16 members, sent a delegate to the division reunion, held a great charter banquet in July, had wonderful historical speakers at each monthly meeting, formed and trained a honor and color guard, trained new cannoners for the artillery battery, hosted and/or was actively involved in four marker dedication/memorial ceremonies, had members who participated in several WBTS reenactments, adopted and maintained the home site of the late John H. Reagan, developed a web site, published a newsletter each month, held a Christmas party and awards banquet, and finished the year with 21 regular members, and 4 associate members. Wow!!! I have no doubt that our Confederate ancestors would have been proud to see that the legacy they left to us as to their faith, character, bravery, and principles, is still alive today in us. I look forward to another great year in 2010 serving with you in honor of and in memory of our beloved Confederate ancestors.

Our Sergeant-at-Arms Ronnie Hatfield and his wife, Leigh Ann, hosted our Christmas party at their country home near Tucker. They were to say the least, great hosts! The Ladies of the Reagan Camp did an outstanding job providing a wonderful meal. Ronnie Hatfield entertained us by reciting several of his Confederate poems. One poem titled, "Baked Apples, Ham, and Gingerbread," he wrote just for that evening as it was also the eve of the Battle of Fredericksburg. Ronnie stated, "when I sat down to write it, I was wondering what might be going through a young 18 or 19 year old soldier's mind, far from home for the first time in his life, about to miss his second Christmas with family, and what he might be daydreaming about. On top of that, I was also struck with the pain of those families then and now who lose loved ones to war, and the special sharpness of that sorrow happening so close to what should be a joyous time for those of us who celebrate Christmas as the birthday of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the wonderful gift he gave us." See page 3 to read Ronnie's poem. I might mention that another one of Ronnie's poems he recited was a very funny Confederate poem titled, "Christmas at Old Sarge's Place." We all had a very good laugh when he recited it.

Several awards were presented at the Christmas event and the photos are printed on page 7.

We were also very happy to induct two new members in to the Reagan Camp that evening. We



**John H. Reagan**

Oct 8, 1818 – March 6, 1905

Post Master General of the Confederate States of America

Secretary of the Treasury CSA

U. S. Senator from Texas

U. S. Representative from Texas

Chairman - Railroad Commission of Texas

A Founder and President of the Texas State Historical Association

welcome compatriots Frank Moore and Billy Newsom to full membership in the SCV and the Reagan Camp.

We have an **excellent guest speaker coming to our January 9th meeting.** See page 6 for more details. I look forward to seeing you there.

I hope all of you had a joyous Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Respectfully your obedient servant,

Marc Robinson

## CAMP MEETINGS

2nd Saturday of Each Month  
 06:00 PM  
 Meal served at each meeting.  
 Museum for East Texas Culture  
 400 Micheaux Avenue  
 Palestine, Texas

(Old John H. Reagan High School Building, Near State Hwy 19, five blocks east of courthouse)

Guests are welcome!  
 Bring the family.

[www.reaganscvcamp.org](http://www.reaganscvcamp.org)

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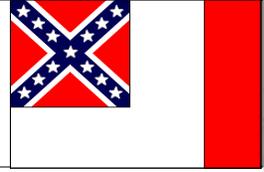
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## ON THIS DAY IN CONFEDERATE HISTORY

### January

by Kirby McCord



#### 1861

**January 2, 1861:** U.S. President Buchanan refuses to receive letters demanding the surrender of Fort Sumter from recently seceded South Carolina commissioners. He also orders reinforcements sent to the beleaguered Federal garrison in Charleston harbor. The *Star of the West*, carrying 250 soldiers will leave New York harbor in three days bound for Charleston in three days.

**January 5, 1861:** U.S. Senators from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas meet in Washington, D.C. No record of the meeting is kept, so no one really knows what was said, but immediately following the meeting, thirteen of the fourteen Senators advise their home states to secede; Mississippi Senator Jefferson Davis is the lone holdout. Meanwhile, Alabama state troops seize Federal Forts Morgan and Gaines, which guard the harbor of Mobile, even though Alabama has not yet seceded.

**January 6, 1861:** Following Alabama's example, Florida state troops seize the Federal arsenal at Apalachicola. The next day state troops occupy the Federal Fort Marion at St. Augustine, Florida. The day after, an attempt to seize Fort Barrancas at Pensacola is also made by Floridians, but Federal troops for the first time offer resistance, and the state troops retreat, suffering no casualties. Like Alabama, Florida has still not seceded.

**January 9, 1861:** The Mississippi legislature votes 84-15 to leave the Union, a move greeted with widespread public celebration.

**January 9, 1861:** The *Star of the West* is fired upon by South Carolina batteries as it approaches Fort Sumter. She returns to New York without having accomplished her mission. U.S. Major Robert Anderson in Fort Sumter complains to South Carolina Governor Pickens about South Carolinians firing on the flag of the United States. Pickens replies that a United States ship represents a hostile presence that the now-independent state cannot tolerate.

**January 10, 1861:** The Florida legislature votes 62-7 to secede.

**January 11, 1861:** Alabama's state convention votes 61-39 for secession.

**January 12, 1861:** Mississippi members of the U.S. House of Representatives leave their offices. U.S. President-elect Abraham Lincoln writes in a letter to a friend, "if we surrender, it is the end of us, and the government." New York Senator William Seward states, "I do not know what the Union would be worth if saved by the use of the sword." Seward will later become Lincoln's Secretary of State.

**January 19, 1861:** Georgia secedes on a vote of 208-89, despite Union support by Alexander Stephens, who will later become Vice President of the Confederacy.

**January 21, 1861:** Farewell speeches are delivered in the U.S. Senate by Senators from Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi, who are withdrawing from the chamber. The most poignant is delivered by Jefferson Davis, who according to his wife Varina, stayed up all night praying for peace following his resignation. In Boston, Massachusetts, ardent abolitionist Wendell Phillips hails the secession of the slave states, saying the Union is "well rid of them."

**January 24, 1861:** An ordinance of secession passes the Louisiana State Convention 114-17.

**January 29, 1861:** Kansas, with a state constitution that prohibits slavery, receives the necessary congressional approval to become the Union's 34<sup>th</sup> state. Ironically, if Southern statesmen had remained in Washington for the vote, Kansas would remain a territory.

#### 1862

**January 11, 1862:** U.S. President Lincoln accepts the resignation of Secretary of War Simon Cameron, who has been accused of fraud. Lincoln appoints Cameron as ambassador to Russia and replaces him with Edwin Stanton, who had been Attorney General under former President Buchanan.

**January 19, 1862:** 4,400 Union soldiers under General George Thomas (from Virginia), defeat 5,900 Confederates under General George Crittenden at the Battle of Mill Springs, Kentucky. Crittenden is representative of the tragedy of the Civil War: he is son of Kentucky statesman John Crittenden, who crafted the failed Crittenden Compromise, intended to avert Civil War, and brother to U.S. General Thomas Crittenden; the Crittenden family is literally torn asunder by the War Between the States. Still, the loss is due not to Crittenden, but to his dashing second-in-command, General Felix Zollicoffer who carelessly position almost a third of the Confederate army on the wrong side of the Cumberland River, exposing Crittenden's flank to Thomas. Federal losses are 261, while the Confederates lose 533. Mill Springs, although small, is strategically important, as it opens a gap in the Confederate defenses, allowing aid and comfort to flow from the North into pro-Union eastern Tennessee.

#### 1863

**January 1, 1863:** U.S. President Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves only in areas currently under rebellion.

**January 1, 1863:** Confederate General John Magruder launches an ambitious attack to recapture Galveston, Texas, which had been occupied by Federal troops since October, 1862. Utilizing troops returned recently from Sibley's New Mexico Campaign, including the Valverde Battery, Magruder's infantry seizes the city, bottling up Union troops on a barricaded wharf. But Union gunboats rake the shore and Magruder is unable to secure victory. Surprisingly, the superior firepower of the Union Navy is ineffective against two hastily armored "cottonclads", the *Neptune* and *Bayou City*, which ram the *USS Harriet Lane* and bluff the nine powerful ships the Federal Navy has on hand into retreat. The remaining Union troops in Galveston surrender and Magruder wins a resounding victory. Magruder's adjutant during the engagement is Albert Lea, whose son, Edward Lea is first officer of the *Harriet Lane* is seriously wounded in the fighting. When the smoke clears,

the elder Lea, in gray, finds his son in blue, crumpled on the deck of the stricken ship. The father rushes to find a doctor, while others, in gray and blue both, try to comfort the mortally wounded sailor. The young man smiles and rebuffs their efforts, saying, "My father is here." Before Albert Lea can return with medical help, Edward Lea succumbs to his wounds. Today, if you go to Trinity Episcopal Cemetery in Galveston, you will find a simple stone marker that reads: "Edward Lea, Killed in Battle Jan. 1, 1863. My Father is Here," a stark reminder of the lives lost in the War Between the States.

**January 9, 1863:** The French minister to the United States confers with the minister of foreign affairs in France in an attempt to act as mediator between the Confederacy and the Union. French diplomatic efforts, while hailed in Richmond, come to naught, as Southern Independence is demanded by the South and rejected by the North.

**January 11, 1863:** Fort Hindman, Arkansas, is captured by the Union. The attack reveals the ferocity of Confederate resistance, as the Confederate tally 109 killed and wounded, while Union forces suffer 1,062 casualties. 4,720 Confederates surrender when their ammunition is depleted.

**January 21, 1863:** U.S. President Lincoln revokes orders from General U.S. Grant that expelled Jews from the Federal Department of the Mississippi. Grant had issued the orders in response to profiteering from some civilians who happened to be Jewish.

**January 27, 1863:** Philadelphia newspaperman A.D. Boileau is arrested on charges that his *Journal* is publishing anti-Union material.

#### 1864

**January 6, 1864:** Federal Colonel Kit Carson traps a number of Navajo in the Canyon de Chelly. After burning their farms, he compels the Indians to make the 300-mile "Long Walk" to prison at Fort Sumner, New Mexico.

**January 18, 1864:** All white males between the ages of 18 and 45 (shortly to be changed to 17 and 50) are conscripted for service in the Confederate Army. Today large protests occur throughout North Carolina in opposition to the conscription laws.

#### 1865

**January 12, 1865:** Maryland statesman Francis P. Blair meets C.S. President Jefferson Davis in Richmond to discuss possible avenues for peace. Blair's personal scheme calls for the two sides to join together to expel the French from Mexico. Blair's hope is that this will restore a feeling of brotherhood between North and South, remove a potential military threat, and restore the Monroe Doctrine. The scheme does not meet the approval of either Davis or U.S. President Lincoln.

**January 15, 1865:** A combined land/sea assault led by U.S. General Alfred Terry and Admiral David Porter attacks Fort Fisher, North Carolina. 59 ships and more than 10,000 men are involved in the assault which ultimately captures the fort. Confederate General William Whiting and 1900 men are captured, after inflicting 1,341 casualties on the Union forces. Whiting later condemns Confederate General Braxton Bragg for not coming to his aid with 6,000 troops encamped less than three miles away.

**January 16, 1865:** To provide for the 10,000 black refugees that have followed his army through Georgia on its March to the Sea, U.S. General William Sherman confiscates all of the land along the Georgia coast, including the islands, for the settlement of freedmen. Families are to be given "possessory" title to not more than 40 acres until Congress regulates their title. Almost all of the land will ultimately revert to its former owners, but many blacks hope the temporary order indicates that the Federal government will make land available to the new freedmen.

**January 31, 1865:** By a vote of 119 to 56, the U.S. House of Representatives passes the proposed Constitutional Amendment abolishing slavery throughout the United States, meeting the 2/3rds requirement. The proposal has already passed the Senate, and will now go to the states, where it must be ratified by 3/4ths of them before it will become the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. A critical question arises regarding the Confederate States: President Lincoln has insisted all along that the Southern States have never actually seceded, so will they count?



## BAKED APPLES, HAM, AND GINGERBREAD BY RONNIE HATFIELD, COPYRIGHT 2009



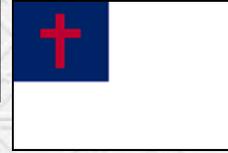
A cold wind cross the Rappahannock,  
that my blanket hardly slows.  
Another Christmas is upon us, with it's  
bitter ice and snows.  
Burnsides' boys are in the town we held  
two days ago.  
Now we're dug in here up on these  
heights, and I'm missin those at home.  
What a treat just being warm would be!  
Oh what I'd give just to be fed!  
Or just to smell my mama's kitchen,  
from my quilted feather bed!  
I hear the bands a-playin, theirs and

ours, to bring us cheer,  
but with the dawning comes the slaugh-  
ter, the terror and the fear.  
With a button from my haversack, I  
adorn a lonely tree.  
A battered pine not three feet tall, that  
shares my sentry post with me.  
The tiny tree and mama's kitchen, send  
warmer memories through my head,  
as I think of home and Christmas trees,  
baked apples, ham, and gingerbread.  
A shadow moves before me. Can't make  
him out in this dim light.

Who on earth would venture up this hill  
on such a ragged night?  
My daydreams make me hesitate, my  
reactions are too slow,  
but the shadow's bayonet is swift, and  
blood now stains the snow.  
Beside me lands the button, fallen from  
my lonely tree,  
I reach to find it and am puzzled, that  
my eyes no longer see.  
A peace and warmth at last surrounds  
me. I feel I'm back home in my bed.

## THE FIGHTING BISHOP

### BY FRANCIS DEVEREUX POLK, IV



I visited the Museum for East Texas Culture in October. My wife, son and I were vacationing in the Flint/Tyler area. We drove to Palestine to specifically visit the museum. While we were in the main floor hallway, Mr Dan Dyer greeted us. We began a pleasant conversation with Dan. After five minutes or so, I inquired about any Confederate history. It was then that Dan told me about John Reagan. He also mentioned his CSA ancestry. I thought that my great-great-great grandfather probably met John Reagan. I told Dan that I should have recognized Reagan because I have read much about the War and the government of the CSA. I then mentioned that I am a direct descendent of Lieutenant-General Leonidas Polk. Dan said that he knew of Leonidas (Leon' a dis). I told Dan that my grandfather was unique in American history. He is the only man to be both a general who was a field commander and a bishop. At that point in our now lengthy conversation, Dan invited me to write an article for the Reagan Camp Newsletter.

I am writing about the life of Leonidas Polk in two parts. This first article is about his life as an Episcopal priest and the second part will outline his military career in the CSA. Leonidas was born in Raleigh in 1806. The Polks were prominent citizens of the Raleigh to Charlotte area. His father, William and his grandfather, Thomas were both colonels in the Revolutionary War. Thomas was one of the primary authors of the Mecklenburg Declaration (of Independence) of 1775. Leonidas attended local schools in Raleigh. The family moved to Maury County, Tennessee. William and his four sons prospered as land owners and planters. Cousin James was a law-

yer in Columbia (the headquarters of SCV). During James' term in the White House, Leonidas' daughter, Frances was married there in 1846.

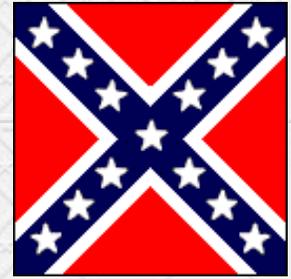
Leonidas returned to North Carolina to study at the University of North Carolina, naturally. I write "naturally" because his father, William, was one of the "wealthy planters" who founded the university and was on the board of trustees from 1790 until his death in 1834. Then in 1823, Leonidas received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Cadet Polk's closest friend at the academy was Albert Sidney Johnston. Their friendship lasted for more than forty years and only ended with General Johnston's death at Shiloh. Cadet Jefferson Davis was a friend. Other cadets who were acquaintances included CSA Generals: Robert Anderson, Charles Smith, Joe Johnson and Robert E. Lee.

However, Cadet Polk became more interested in becoming a minister than a Second Lieutenant. He did graduate in 1827. He then entered the seminary in 1828. In 1830, he was ordained and also married Frances Devereux of Raleigh. The married couple moved to Maury County. Leonidas served parishes there and built his mansion "Ashwood Hall". In 1838, he became Missionary Bishop of the Southwest. This episcopate, his territory, was vast and included: Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, the Indian Territory and the Republic of Texas! Obviously, he traveled much and was in East Texas. He may have been in the Palestine area because there is documentation that he was in: Buffalo, Nacogdoches and Houston. He formed a church "Foreign Committee" to fi-

nance the establishment of congregations and churches in this "foreign" land that was populated by so many "immigrants" from North Carolina and Tennessee. This vast territory was later consolidated into other dioceses. Leonidas became Bishop of Louisiana and moved to Lafourche parish. He built his next plantation home "Leighton" near Thibodaux. Yes, the bishop was now a sugar planter and well as Bishop. He did violate state law in Louisiana and Tennessee by teaching his slaves to read. He did this so they could read the bible. He held Sunday services for them, baptized and married them. His wife and children (as many as seven) participated in all of those religious events. Years later, he baptized soldiers including Generals Hood and J. Johnston, married soldiers including General John Morgan. In 1854, he moved to New Orleans. Now much of his energy was devoted to the founding of the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee. The University was chartered in 1858 and the campus construction began in 1860. In Dec. 1860, Leonidas wrote to President James Buchanan suggesting a peaceful settlement and have the "two parties to separate peacefully" and so this issue can be "amicably terminated". Then in late January 1861, he withdrew his diocese from the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. He led other bishops into the formation of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America.

This concludes Part I. Part II will begin with Bishop Polk writing President Davis in Richmond in May, 1861.

## NEW MEMBERS INDUCTED INTO THE SCV AND THE JOHN H. REAGAN CAMP #2156



Franklin Moore, Sr., above left, receives his SCV certificate of membership and SCV pin from Commander Marc Robinson, above right. Frank joined under Corporal Miles Bennett, Company K, 22nd Regiment Texas Infantry, CSA.



Billy Charles Newsom, Jr. above left, receives his SCV certificate of membership and SCV pin from Commander Marc Robinson, above right. Billy joined under Andrew Jackson Syfrett, a private in both Co. C 1st Regiment South Carolina Vols. and Co. F 2nd Regiment, Hagood's Artillery, South Carolina, CSA.

“DUTY IS THE MOST SUBLIME WORD IN OUR LANGUAGE. DO YOUR DUTY IN ALL THINGS. YOU CANNOT DO MORE. YOU SHOULD NEVER WISH TO DO LESS.”

-GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE-

NOTHING FILLS ME WITH DEEPER SADNESS THAN TO SEE A SOUTHERN MAN APOLOGIZING FOR THE DEFENSE WE MADE OF OUR INHERITANCE. OUR CAUSE WAS SO JUST, SO SACRED, THAT HAD I KNOWN ALL THAT HAS COME TO PASS, HAD I KNOWN WHAT WAS TO BE INFLICTED UPON ME, ALL THAT MY COUNTRY WAS TO SUFFER, ALL THAT OUR POSTERITY WAS TO ENDURE, I WOULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN.

-PRESEDENT JEFFERSON DAVIS-



### PRAYER LIST



- Our Country
- Sons of Confederate Veterans
- Please email or call to add/remove people to/from this list.

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**January 9th, 06:00 PM**— John H. Reagan Camp monthly meeting at the Museum for East Texas Culture. **Officer elections will be held.**

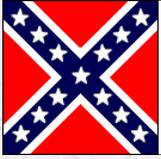
Meal will be provided by the Ladies of the John H. Reagan Camp—donations accepted.

**Program: Charles Hayes.** It will be a privilege to have Mr. Hayes and his wife Natalie as our guests. His biography is as follows:

Charles Hayes was born in Dallas. Graduate of Rice University, 1960 with a BA in physics. Graduate of University of Texas

1963 with MA in physics. Retired from Lockheed-Martin Corporation, Huntsville, Alabama. Resident of Tyler, Texas. Life Member SCV, Capt. James P. Douglas Camp #124, Tyler. Board member, Camp Ford Historical Association, Tyler. Owner of Art Galore, an internet art gallery: [www.b17.com](http://www.b17.com). Author of *The Gray and the Blue, A Comic Strip History of the War for Southern Independence*. His topic: **Humor during the War Between the States.**

**Reenactment** events calendar and photos at: [www.12thtexasartillery.org](http://www.12thtexasartillery.org) or contact Lt. Commander Calvin Nicholson, 903-391-3243 [cwnicholson@hotmail.com](mailto:cwnicholson@hotmail.com)



# JOHN H. REAGAN CAMP #2156 CHRISTMAS PARTY AND AWARDS BANQUET DECEMBER 12, 2009



Our host, Leigh Ann Hatfield and her husband, Ronnie, welcomed us into their beautiful country home. Thank you from all of Camp 2156!



**Outstanding member of the year award** recipient, Sgt. Ronnie Hatfield, left, Cmdr. Marc Robinson, right.



**Outstanding "new" member of the year award** recipient, Historian Dan Dyer, left, Cmdr. Marc Robinson, right.



Certificate of Appreciation recipient, John Brent Barnhart, left.



Certificate of Appreciation recipient, Chaplain Ed Furman, left.



Certificate of Appreciation recipient, Adjutant Forrest Bradberry, Jr., left.



Certificate of Appreciation recipient, Judge Advocate Kirby McCord, left.



Certificate of Appreciation recipient, Johnny McVey, left.



Ladies of the Reagan Camp, coordinated by Deborah Robinson (tan blouse) provided a great meal!



Left & left to right, Dollye Jeffus-UIC, Jean Stokes-UIC, Cindy Bobbitt-OCR have all contributed greatly to helping the John H. Reagan Camp this year! We can't say thank you enough to all of these Ladies who have helped us in upholding the Charge to the SCV.



## START OVER

BY BRO. L.E. "LEN" PATTERSON, THD.  
SCV CHAPLAIN, ARMY OF TRANS-MISSISSIPPI



Let's face it. We could all stand a little improvement. There are things we could do to make life better for ourselves, as well as those around us. Now, as we begin a new year, many people will do some self evaluation and resolve to make changes. Of course, changes are often good, if we stick to our resolutions, but there are times when change is not good enough. Sometimes we need to stop what we are doing and the way we are doing it, go back to the beginning, and start over.

This is what God did as recorded in the sixth chapter of Genesis. God had created man, but after about sixteen hundred years, man had become totally wicked. We are all familiar with the story of Noah and his ark. Mankind had become so evil and unchanging that God decided to wipe the slate clean and start over.

Our country is on the road to ruin because it has turned it's back on God and made immorality and sin normal and acceptable. We have turned from the faith of our founding fathers, and are following the ways of the unrighteous. As a country, we seem think we can change our direction without changing our ways. This country does not need changing, remodeling, or renovation. It needs restoration. This country has jumped the track and lost it's way. We need to clean house and start over.

And what of our Confederation? Are we being faithful to the Charge handed to us over a hundred years ago? Are we moving forward in the direction of honoring our brave Confederate forefathers and the Cause for which they gallantly fought? If so, then why are we further from our destination today, than we were fifty years ago? I know we have oppressors, and they have gotten stronger over the years. But, why haven't we gotten even stronger?

Perhaps we need to be mindful of why the Sons of

Confederate Veterans was founded. Perhaps we need to remember the importance of our roots and our mission. Perhaps we need to reunite as a band of brothers shoulder to shoulder in the front line trenches. Perhaps it's time to quit trying to be nice guys and get offended. Perhaps it's time to get mad at those who would dishonor our Confederate ancestors, and start over.

Sometimes people need a new beginning for themselves. If you're a Christian, but don't feel as close to God as you once did, like the old preacher said, "Guess who moved." You can start over. Just turn around, He's not as far away as you think.

To those who have not committed their life to Jesus Christ, God promises a new beginning. In 2 Corinthians 5: 17, the Scripture says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." So, if life seems to have gotten out of hand and you need a new beginning, just turn to Christ, receive Him as Lord, and Start over.

Bro. Len Patterson, Th.D  
Chaplain, Army of Trans-Mississippi

"IN ALL MY PERPLEXITIES AND DISTRESSES,  
THE BIBLE HAS NEVER FAILED TO GIVE ME  
LIGHT AND STRENGTH."

-GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE-



## EXCERPTS FROM THE PAST—JOHN H. REAGAN BY MARC ROBINSON



Reading about historical events and people from those who were actually there makes the reading all the better to me. Here, from pages 191-194 in John H. Reagan's *Memoirs*...published in 1906, he writes first hand about General Robert E. Lee. John H. Reagan writes:

"On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, 1864, the second battle of Cold Harbor was fought, in which General Lee had less than 50,000 men, while General Grant had more than 100,000. In that battle the loss on the Federal side was over 13,000, while the loss on the Confederate side was probably not as many hundred. This disparity was due to the fact that the Confederates were assaulted in their trenches.

On the morning of that day, Judges Lyons and Meredith, two of the State judges living in Richmond, and myself, rode out to our line of battle, crossing the Chickahominy at Mechanicsville, and passing along a few hundred yards in the rear of our line of battle until we came in sight of General Lee's headquarters, on the field at the Gaines' Mill farm. Several squads of Federal prisoners were brought back to the road we were riding on as we passed down the line. When we got in sight of General Lee's headquarters, I suggested to Judge Lyons and Judge Meredith that I would ride down to where General Lee was. They did not go any farther. We could see that the enemy's shells were falling on the field about General Lee. A few hundred yards in the rear of his headquarters were probably fifteen or twenty acres of forest trees, surrounded by cultivated land. At that time there was a good deal of anxiety, both in the army and among the civilians, about General Lee's exposing himself too much in battle, accompanied by a feeling that his loss would be of the greatest consequence; and Judges Lyons and Meredith suggested that I should inquire of General Lee whether he might not send his orders and receive his reports, covered behind that timber, as well as in his then exposed situation. I said to them that I would see the General, but did not know about making suggestions to him as to his headquarters in the midst of a battle.

When I reached the camp there was none but an orderly with him, his staff officers being away on duty. After passing the compliments

of the day, I said to him it seemed that a great deal of artillery was being used.

"Yes," he replied, "more than usual on both sides." He added, "That does not do much harm here." Then, waving his hand toward the front, where the rattle of musketry made a noise like the tearing of a sheet, he observed: "It is that that kills men." He then remarked that General Grant was hurling columns from six to ten deep against his lines at three places for the purpose of breaking them.

"General," I said to him, "if he breaks your line, what reserve have you?"

"Not a regiment," he replied. "And," he added, "that has been my condition ever since the fighting commenced on the Rappahannock. If I shorten my lines to provide a reserve he will turn me; if I weaken my lines to provide a reserve, he will break them." He also said that he had to fight and march his men without sufficient rest, and that exhaustion and the want of vegetables had caused the loss of more men than the bullets of the enemy. He said he had advised them to use the buds of sassafras and of grapevines as a substitute for vegetables, but that this was a poor substitute. He asked me, on my return to Richmond, to see the commissary-general before going home, and to urge him to send as fast as possible all the potatoes and onions he could. "Some of the men now have scurvy," he said.

I said to the General that there was some uneasiness about his being exposed so much, and that Judges Lyons and Meredith, who had come out with me, had suggested the inquiry whether he might not cover himself by the forest trees in his rear, and from there send his orders and receive his reports as well as from this exposed position.

His reply was that it was best for him to be as well up toward the front as he could, and that when the shells had begun to fall on the field, he had ordered the wagons containing the quartermaster, commissary, medical and ordnance stores to fall back behind the forest trees. He added: "I have as good generals as any commander ever had, and I know it, but still it is well for me to know the position of our lines. To illustrate this," he continued, "in forming my right, I directed that it should

cover Turkey Hill, which juts out on the Chickahominy valley so as to command cannon range up and down the stream. In forming the line, however, this was not done, and on yesterday afternoon I had to direct General Breckinridge to recover that position by an assault which cost us a good many men. "

General Lee's lines were then about seven miles from Richmond, and he was confronted by a well equipped and well organized army of more than double his numbers. And thus situated in the midst of a great battle, he was calm and self-possessed, with no evidence of excitement; and in his conversation showed he was thinking of the condition and wants of the brave men under his command, as well as guarding with invincible courage the besieged capital of the Confederacy. Mrs. Jefferson Davis, the widow of the President, in her *Memoir* of him, says that "in April, 1864, in General Lee's tent meat was served twice a week. His bill of fare was a head of cabbage boiled in salt water, sweet potatoes, and a pone of corn bread; when he invited an officer to dine with him he had, to his astonishment, four inches of middling; every one refused from politeness, and the servant excused the smallness of the piece by saying it was borrowed." This shows how the greatest general of the age consented to live and to suffer privations in the struggle for justice to the people he was serving. When we remember that if General Lee had taken sides against his own people and State, he could have been Commander-in-Chief of the armies of the United States, and that he had to abandon his great landed estate and palatial residence fronting Washington City on the Potomac, and that his family, but for the kindness of friends, would have become homeless refugees, we can understand the unparalleled sacrifice this heroic general made in supporting and defending the cause of right. I can but feel that God made him one of the bravest, best, and most patriotic, as well as one of the greatest of men."



## JOHN H. REAGAN CAMP 2156

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The citizen-soldiers who fought for the Confederacy personified the best qualities of America. The preservation of liberty and freedom was the motivating factor in the South's decision to fight the *Second American Revolution*. The tenacity with which Confederate soldiers fought underscored their belief in the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. These attributes are the underpinning of our democratic society and represent the foundation on which this nation was built.

Today, the **Sons of Confederate Veterans** is preserving the history and legacy of these heroes, so future generations can understand the motives that animated the Southern Cause.

The SCV is the direct heir of the United Confederate Veterans, and the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. Organized at Richmond, Virginia in 1896, the SCV continues to serve as a historical, patriotic, and non-political organization dedicated to ensuring that a true history of the 1861-1865 period is preserved.

Membership in the **Sons of Confederate Veterans** is open to all male descendants of any veteran who served honorably in the Confederate armed forces. Membership can be obtained through either **lineal or collateral** family lines and kinship to a veteran must be **documented genealogically**. The minimum age for full membership is 12, but there is no minimum for Cadet membership. **Camp associate membership** is available as well to those who are committed to uphold our charge and do not have the Confederate lineage.

## CHARGE TO THE SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS

*"To you, Sons of Confederate Veterans, we will commit the vindication of the cause for which we fought. To your strength will be given the defense of the Confederate soldier's good name, the guardianship of his history, the emulation of his virtues, the perpetuation of those principles which he loved and which you love also, and those ideals which made him glorious and which you also cherish."*

Lt. General Stephen Dill Lee, Commander General,  
United Confederate Veterans,  
New Orleans, Louisiana, April 25, 1906.



Camp meetings: 2nd Saturday of  
Each Month - 06:00 PM  
Meal served at each meeting.  
Guests are welcome!  
Museum for East Texas Culture  
400 Micheaux Ave.  
Palestine, Texas  
(Old John H. Reagan High School bldg.  
Near State Hwy 19, five blocks east of  
courthouse)