

National SCV Convention Notes & Summary
Montgomery, Al; July 14 – 17, 2011
California Division by Farrell D. Cooley

Introduction: While attending the National Convention in Montgomery, I recorded notes on various topics discussed. It is my intention to distribute these notes to every member within the California Division. This will be distributed electronically and for those members who still do not have an internet connection, they can obtain a hard copy from any Camp Commander.

This report omits protocol details.

1. The organization has 28, 943 members. We had 440 delegates among 79 camps who attended this reunion & convention.
2. The Virginia Division gave a presentation on the Oakwood Cemetery Project. They have over 12,000 graves that are unmarked. Restated, the graves have small cement blocks indicating a number that references the deceased. These are not marked with their names, dates and regiment, etc. The Virginia Division has been in conference with various political leaders and will have an appeals meeting with the Veteran's Administration within the next three weeks. They requested our members to contact Senator Web's office and let him know that these American Veterans deserve to be marked with stones by the VA. The laws are already established for the marking of graves by the VA and Confederate Veterans have been considered American Veterans by law. The discussion went further with explanations that the VA is refusing to supply stones for other organizations as well.
3. The library at Beauvoir is expected to be completed by October of this year. Everyone is invited to participate in the opening ceremonies. The estimated cost of reconstruction is around 11 million dollars. Be sure and check out: www.Beauvoir.org
4. Lt. CIC Barrow spoke about the leadership workshops offered throughout the South. On Oct. 1st they will conduct another workshop in Burlington, NC. I believe another is scheduled for Feb. 11th for Monroe, LA. Be sure and check out www.800mysouth.com for our new advertising project.
5. Jack Marlar one of our Field Representatives spoke to us about membership recruiting, retention and conducting meetings. Everything he said relates back to Business 101. Our perceptions and relationships are everything. Professionalism in the eyes of the public is absolutely necessary. Knowing how to utilize talent is critical. Using guest speakers that can be shared among different camps is important. Scheduling programs for the meetings is necessary. His presentation struck a chord with every member in attendance.
6. Our Chief of Staff, James Speicher sent out a request for every camp to have a camp specific e-mail address. The number of camps who responded was very low. Examples include g-mail, yahoo-mail, etc. Our Division Adjutant, Vern Padgett will be in contact with every commander in the division, if you don't already have a camp specific address. The purpose of

this listing is for headquarters to distribute information when necessary. They want to be able to communicate with any camp at any time.

7. Our Chaplain in Chief, Mark Evans talked about an e-mail list they use for all Chaplains. He suggested that anyone who is a Chaplain be on this e-mail listing. I don't have the exact e-mail listing for Reverend Evans, but if you are a Chaplain be sure and search our SCV web site for contact information.

8. Ben Hogan discussed the advantages of investing into the SCV's coin program. Each coin is for a state of the Confederacy. He presented a slide presentation showing the coins and spoke about investing in Silver, the return rate being very favorable. Each coin is \$99. He suggests investing in large quantities and selling them where you can increase the rate of return. I believe our geographic location is unfavorable for investing because our audience is very limited in this area. However, personal investments may be a good idea. Check the Veteran magazine.

9. We have a new website at www.150.com. However, I have not visited this site yet. The idea behind this site is for Divisions to advertise events in their states during the Sesquicentennial. For example, on Feb. 25th in Richmond, Virginia there will be a huge parade and Memorial Service on Monument Ave.

10. The reunion and convention for 2012 is set for Murfreesboro, TN, July 11-14. The host hotel will be the Embassy Suites again. Check out the Embassy Suites web site for when reservations will be accepted. They will sell out fast, and if you're not prepared may end up in a neighboring hotel, which isn't bad, but inconvenient.

11. The reunion and convention for 2014 will be Charleston, SC again.

12. Kirk Lyons, the attorney for SLRC, spoke on the Sam Davis Youth Camp. This camp is for youngsters up to I believe 18 years of age. They need campers or they need members to support scholarships for a camper. If you know of a young person who could attend, please look into the program. If you want to donate toward this program, check out our SCV web site. Everyone who spoke about the camp said it provides great instruction and leadership to our young people. They teach manners, history and more.

The next camp is scheduled for Clifton, TX on August 7th. Some objection to the date, but apparently, scheduling is a problem with the instructors of the camp. They intend to move the dates up to possibly June in the future.

13. Mr. Bragg talked to us about the Stephen D. Lee Institute. The next scheduled event is for Feb. 3-5 in Savannah, GA. They are booked with the Desoto Hotel for \$129 a night.

14. Mr. Trip Wilson who runs the JROTC program talked to us about the ROTC program available. It is suggested we make application for the award. The cost is \$30. Also, we can sponsor a ROTC award, if you don't have a young person to acknowledge. Be sure and search our web site for that information. I can help you with this if needed.

15. Headquarters has approved the Graves Registration Project started in Texas, and expanded it to include all graves, wherever they are buried. (The CA division must create a spreadsheet, noting every Confederate in California and send to our compatriots in Texas for inclusion. Fortunately for us, we have Margaret Alley's book as a starting point.)

16. The Guardian Program goes hand in hand with the Graves Registration. Everyone encourages using the Guardian Program and what that entails is every member will be assigned or will volunteer to monitor and take care of a certain amount of CS graves in your neighborhood. In reference to California, I know most camps jointly visit with all their members the graves about once a year. Orange County has graves centrally located and their maintenance is manageable. However, middle California or Northern California the graves may be spread out and using this program will be helpful in keeping track of our graves and their well being. There is also a link connected to our National web site, see: graves registry

17. Dr. Thomas Hiter, Chief of Heritage Defense gave a very inspirational presentation. He spoke on four major topics. The first deals with the free stones from the VA. He mentioned that WWII Veterans are passing away at the rate of 1000 a day and each of them is entitled to a stone. CS Veterans somehow get passed over with this situation, and with the government being broke it doesn't help. The second issue was Battleflags being denied use in cemeteries. He highly recommends we read the State Law in this area. The most recent case deals with a Church cemetery in Georgia. The third issue dealt with patient Mr. Perry who while in the hospital was told he couldn't have his little Battleflag on display over his bed.

The fourth issue was a little different and more involved. He introduced a term to the audience called, General Systems Theory in which he studied and started using during a recent meeting with our CIC, Mr. Givens. Based on principles of management he worked with Cmdr. Givens to analyze all the questions previously mailed out to the Division Commanders and Division Adjutants. Essentially, it all boils down to three major points to the Mission Statement: 1. Develop a strategy where we can achieve 50,000 members by 2016. 2. Train our leaders to lead. 3. Claim our truths. Summarized as The Vision for 2016, they say everybody has a vision and everybody should be included in the decision making process. This is validated by previous comparisons of successful companies in existence today.

18. If anyone wants the exact language used by Congress that establishes the Confederate Veteran an American Veteran, please let me know. Headquarters has this information.

19. The Jefferson Davis Society will be putting together some kind of presentation or memorial service on the 1st day of June at Hollywood Cemetery. Be sure and search the internet for more information.

20. During our last business meeting, CIC Givens and Dr. Hiter divided the convention body into groups based on the research they did on the questions. The groups were; education, training, marketing, public relations, and growth.

You would be amazed to hear them talk about our POOR performance in relation to the answers they got back on the surveys they sent out prior to the convention. Once divided in groups, we talked about why we are in the condition we are in. All the notes from the groups

were given back to Dr. Hiter and Cmdr. Givens to research further. We'll be hearing about their recommendations very soon through the e-mail contacts method.

Of interest was their discussion on growth dealing with why members drop out. They pointed out several causes, such as bickering, not feeling welcome, and not involving members. About ½ of those who responded said they thought headquarters failed to work at retention. Another interesting discussion revolved around education where only ½ of our members have ever presented anything in a public, private, or home school. Makes you wonder how our history will ever be known to the outside world; not to mention the future of the SCV. On another note, the average age of an SCV member is 58 at this time.

21. The ATM (Army of Trans Mississippi) also held a business meeting. The ATM won an award for gaining the most camps between the Army's. They mentioned the need to get on board with graves registration. They also talked about the MRS system in which our dues are requested with a form that encourages donations for various categories. They mentioned the JROTC program and suggested everyone get involved. Kirk Lyons visited our meeting and promoted the Sam Davis Youth Camp. They also sold ATM lapel pins for \$5 each.

22. Send letters to the VA. <http://www.va.gov>

Be sure and reference the US Code, Section 2306 of Title 38, "headstones may be furnished by the VA if the grave is unmarked." In 1958, Congress pardoned Confederate service members and extended benefits therewith.

Also, it was suggested that we send letters to the House and Senate. You can find your representatives at <http://www.contactingthecongress.org>. It is a human rights violation that they are not given the dignity of their names on their final resting place. One point is this: If they can go against their own policy and deny us markers, what will be next? Please write and call today. The appeals case is within the next 60 days.

23. SHILOH 2012, a 150th anniversary event, March 30 – April 1.

Register at: www.cleburnes-division.com

Visit: www.shilohbluegray.com

24. Budget Summary FY 2011:

Income: \$1,167,000

Expenses: \$1,167,000

Excess: \$0

25. The delegates passed by voice vote 3 resolutions. Each of them passed without opposition and for the betterment of the SCV. Unfortunately, I did not take notes on the resolutions.

26. CALIFORNIA DIVISION DONATION: It was an honor for Dr. Vern Padgett, Past Division Commander Kenny Ramsey, and I to join on the national stage of our organization and make the donation for the Elm Springs Museum for the amount of \$3000.

We followed the Tennessee Division who donated \$20,000. This part of our experience was very rewarding, I'm very proud of the California Division and its members. (As a side note, Mr. Ed Butler the Past TN Division Cmdr. approached me later and said that we made many men embarrassed. Not understanding what he meant, he explained that proportionally, dollar for

dollar per man, we exceeded their donation of \$20,000. Now, I don't know how many men they have in their division, but we only have 224 and 12 camps.)

27. Many more happy times took place while in convention. I cannot elaborate on everything, but I must write about the awards luncheon. Our division has been doing well, though our numbers are low. We have some special and dedicated people in this division. I hope you supported my request for nominations and in cases where I didn't get any; I took it upon myself to nominate certain individuals for awards. Headquarters publishes an award pamphlet in case you're interested.

One award that is highly respected is the Hoover Law and Order Award. I was a little embarrassed to recently learn of this Life Member in Camp 1804, considering his story happened in 1976. We as an organization should have known and made a big deal of this member many years ago; I guess that events and people sometimes fall between the cracks within our busy daily lives. Nonetheless, we did get it done during the Montgomery Convention.

Sheriff Ed Bates retired, received the Hoover Law and Order award. This is a very distinguished award and during the awards luncheon, Exc. Director Ben Sewell and National Administrator Bryan Sharp asked me to speak on this man. I had the fortunate opportunity to say a few words about the case to the audience. If you're not familiar with the case, Sheriff Bates prosecuted and imprisoned the two young men who kidnapped 26 school children and the bus driver in Chowchilla, California. Sheriff Bates is one of our own and a Life Member.

28. The Banquet and Ball: This event is the final event and everyone dresses in their finest attire and or Confederate Uniform. The very elite awards are distributed and then the Debutante Presentation and Grand Ball. Outstanding indeed!

29. The tours are another part of the convention I almost forgot to mention. I'll say these tours were amazing and incredible. We visited the Alabama Court House where Jefferson Davis stood for inauguration address. They have on the grounds one of the biggest monuments to the Confederacy that I've ever seen. It is absolutely beautiful. We visited the Alabama Archives and History building where we saw their exhibits. We were given a unique tour in the basement where they have the original flags of Alabama's Confederacy. This was an OMG moment, truly breathtaking to say the least. After most people returned to the buses, the tour guide started opening up cabinets with more preserved Battleflags, each being preserved for history's sake. We took pictures of every flag they allowed us to see. That was incredible! Next door, we visited the White House of the Confederacy where Jeff and Varina Davis lived for the short time they were in Montgomery. Every room of the house is filled with their family artifacts. I saw up close the Mississippi rifle owned by Jeff Davis and the flag that was draped over his casket while it lay in state at the MS Court House. Again, this was truly amazing stuff!!!

30. We also toured Confederate Park which is a State Park that is dedicated to the Confederacy. They have a museum and for us they arranged for a regimental drill using live fire with Yankee Blue targets. Wow, another truly amazing experience.

31. The music was fantastic too! We saw a concert by Bobby Horton, and they had a couple of Southern type blue grass bands that played at different events. All in all this reunion and convention was just beautiful and rewarding.