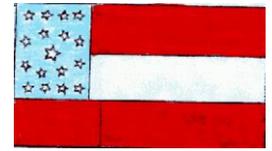




The Vidette

CALIFORNIA DIVISION

Sons of Confederate Veterans



The J. P. Gillis Flag



19 February 2003

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Published by Division Adjutant Vernon R. Padgett

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Gods and Generals Opens on 21st; SCV and Reenactors Prepare to Recruit

By Ed Mann, Commander, Richmond Howitzers
and Associate Member Camp 1208 SCV

I know that individuals have made contacts with local theaters for the purpose of having reenactors at the opening of "Gods and Generals" next weekend.

In order to take maximum advantage of the opportunity to "preach to the choir," that is, gain access to people who are already interested in the Civil War, we should make this a maximum effort. The recruiting potential is very good.

I am in contact with the folks at Edwards Theater and they are very interested in having reenactors at their theaters. My unit will cover a few of their locations, but I am interested in getting as many reenactors involved as possible.



Photo by Van Redin - © 2003 - Ted Turner Pictures - All Rights Reserved

theaters would like to have reenactors present during the opening weekend: Camarillo; Simi Valley, Valencia, La Habra, and elsewhere.

If your unit just might find it useful to engage in an effort that could result in new recruits in your ranks, let me know. Please let me know where you live so that I can give you the theater closest to you at Howitzers1@aol.com. If you prefer a different area, let me know. If you have others who want to participate but who cannot reply by email, let me know their names.

Regal Theaters is part of the same company that owns Edwards Theaters.

I have seen trailers for the movie on TV on a few occasions. Today, however, I heard the first radio commercial. Maybe I haven't been listening to the right stations.

I said that I would have more information tonight, but there was a little miscommunication, so I am still



Photo by Van Redin - © 2003 - Ted Turner Pictures - All Rights Reserved

Many of the Edwards Theaters are in Orange County, San Diego County, and, I believe, in Riverside County. A few are farther north. Many

waiting for info on Orange County and Long Beach locations in particular.

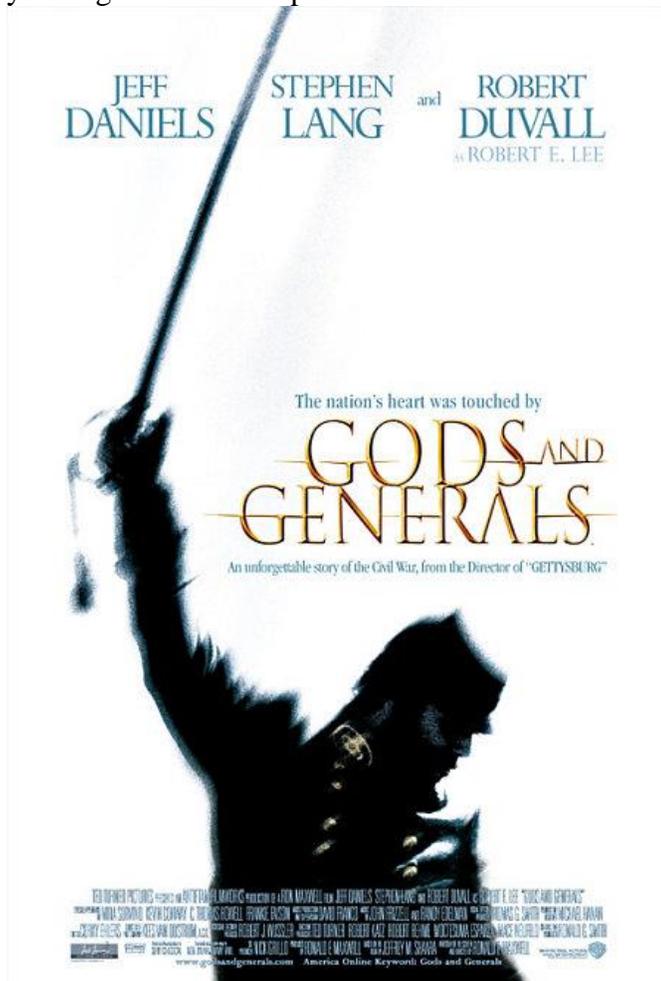
I have passed on info for San Marcos and Oceanside to the 3rd Engineers and 6th U. S. since that is in their neck of the woods. Aliso Viejo is also available. (I think that is in south Orange County, but I am not positive.) Should others be interested, let me know.

Currently, we have Camarillo, Simi Valley, Valencia, and La Mirada covered.

I have been told that the starting times at all Edwards/Regal Theaters will be 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The running time for the movie is, I believe, 4 hours and 5 minutes, but this includes all of the trailers.

I was advised that if we had reenactors at the theater prior to 5 p.m we could catch that crowd as it leaves and get ready for the next showing.

Frankly, I think that the prospects of getting "hits" would be improved with the crowd that has seen the movie rather than with the crowd going in, something you might want to keep in mind.



I received a request that reenactors take extra kepis and forage caps for the theater employees to

help with the promotion of the movie. This may not be the case with every theater, but having a few extra hats won't hurt.

Ladies, this is not a male only activity. You are welcomed to turn out in your finest and help with the effort.

Edwards/Regal Theaters has contracted to show the movie for 4 to 6 weeks (I expect that it may vary with certain locations). My contact says that this is a fairly strong expression of support and reflects a belief in the strength of the movie by the company.

Let's hope that it has a very good run, since we all stand to benefit from its success.

Ed Mann, Commanding

Richmond Howitzers Howitzers1@aol.com



Historian turned reenactor Brian Pohanka

Hurray for "Gods and Generals"

February 16, 2003

By BILL KAUFFMAN, associate editor, *American Enterprise Magazine*

WASHINGTON--Mr. Lincoln said he liked his speeches short and sweet, so here it is: The new Warner Brothers picture "Gods and Generals" **is not only the finest movie ever made about the Civil War, it is also the best American historical film.** Period.

Writer-director Ron Maxwell's prequel to his epic "Gettysburg" (1993) is so free of cant, of false notes, of the politically conformist genuflections that we

expect in our historical movies, that one watches it as if in a trance, wondering if he hasn't stumbled into a movie theater in an alternative America wherein talented independents like Maxwell get \$80 million from Ted Turner to make complex and beautiful films about what Gore Vidal has called "the great single tragic event that continues to give resonance to our Republic."



Photo by Van Redin - © 2003 - Ted Turner Pictures - All Rights Reserved

Come Friday the 20th of February 2003, "Gods and Generals" will invade the nation's theaters in a commercial gamble by Warner Brothers that could be a masterstroke, à la Lincoln's maneuvering at Fort Sumter, or a disaster on the order of Pickett's Charge. The four-hour-plus "Gettysburg" was a commercial and critical success, but that and six dollars will buy Maxwell a cup of coffee in Hollywood.

Over eggs and toast in Charlotte, N.C., I spoke with the writer-director on the morning after his film was screened for one of those putatively Middle American "test audiences" that corporations solicit to grade shampoo, new flavors of M&M's, and big-

budget movies.

"They operate from fear and loathing and a complete lack of understanding of what this film is about," says Maxwell of studio executives. "They might as well be looking at hieroglyphics." In test markets like Charlotte, the film scored spectacularly high with men over the age of 35 and not so well with teenage girls.

I asked Maxwell why so few films are made about American history. "There's a feeling in Hollywood that the audience doesn't care," he answered. "I think that's because those who make the decisions don't care about history. Their field of view is contemporary. Many studio executives, because they aren't interested in looking beyond their own lifetimes, draw the conclusion that no one else is interested, either. They don't understand that an audience is out there. Of course, they haven't catered to that audience for decades."

An intelligent look at Dixie

The epigraph to "Gods and Generals" is from George Eliot: "A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship. The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead." Maxwell thus tips us off even before the first strains of the powerful John Frizzell-Randy Edelman score that what we are about to see is not the Hollywood-squared version of the Civil War, in which Father Abraham and the purehearts vanquish blackguard slaveowners and the drooling proto-Klansmen who fight for them.

The abolitionists, God bless them, were right on the big issue of the day: 'tis a painfully incomplete "freedom" that includes the right to own men, women, and children. To the extent the Confederacy was built on man owning, it was repellent. But as Maxwell understands--seemingly alone among those few who have deemed the Civil War worthy of celluloid--this was not the only issue, and to some Southerners, **it was not even the major issue.**

"Gods and Generals" is loosely based on a novel by Jeff Shaara, son of Michael Shaara, whose beloved novel "The Killer Angels" was the source of "Gettysburg." In the earlier film, Maxwell's rendering of Pickett's Charge and the Battle for Little Round Top were shattering in their depiction of valor and carnage. But if "Gettysburg" is an absorbing film, it is very much an anatomization of that famous battle.

This film is a character study: not merely of

men at war, but of specific men in a specific war. Maxwell follows four of the war's best officers-- Confederates Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson and Robert E. Lee, and Joshua Chamberlain and Winfield Scott Hancock of the Union army-- through three battles leading up to Gettysburg: First Bull Run, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville. His focus settles on Jackson, seemingly the most forbidding of the quartet, a strange, distant, severely religious lemon-sucking man of the western Virginia mountains.



Maxwell expects to draw flak for his depiction of Confederate soldiers as human beings rather than the racist caricatures, which the viewer expects in a modern film. "The culture has stiffened into a politically correct straitjacket," he says. "People don't feel they have permission to question certain shibboleths: among them that the Civil War was fought only for slavery."

Maxwell provides the fairest, most eloquent exposition of the Southern point of view ever presented on film-- and yet as counterpoint we have always Joshua Chamberlain, the fighting scholar of the 20th Maine and the conscience of the movie, reminding us that black-skinned Americans are being held as chattel. "I do question a system that defends its own freedom while it denies it to others," Chamberlain tells his brother, and here we have the paradox of the CSA.

Jackson Takes Center Stage

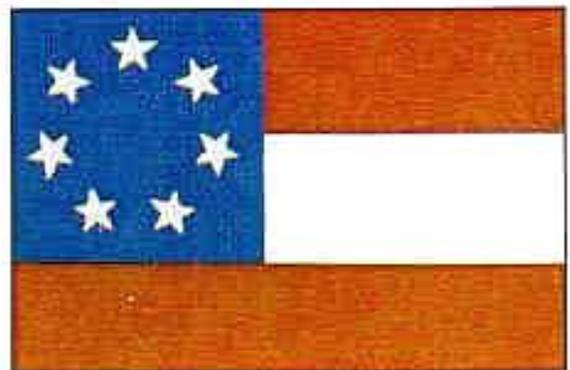
Contra Chamberlain, General Jackson frames the

war as a question of competing patriotisms: "Though I love the Union, I love Virginia more."

He explains to his Shenandoah Valley volunteers at the war's outset: "Just as we would not send any of our soldiers to march in other states and tyrannize other people, so will we never allow the armies of others to march into our state and tyrannize our people." Jackson describes the fight as a conflict between the industrial North and the agrarian South. Defeat means not just the liberation of slaves; it would augur "the triumph of commerce, banks, and the factory."

Maxwell makes Jackson, played by Stephen Lang in a career making performance, the film's emotional and narrative centerpiece. His Stonewall is devout and adamant, but also quite capable of tenderness, as we see in a lyrical passage depicting Jackson's fondness for a doomed 5-year-old girl.

It is no accident that "Gods" precedes "Generals" in the film's title, for God is a constant and pervasive presence in the film. Jackson and Lee invoke God's name, and see themselves as instruments of His will. As Jackson tells his wife upon his deathbed, "Pray for me. But in your prayers, never forget to use the petition, 'Thy will be done.'" We wait for the kicker: In modern films, religious men must be exposed in all their hypocritical sanctimony. Surely Jackson's piety will be lampooned, or revealed for the oleaginous sham that it is. But no. Maxwell even has the gall to depict Jackson committing a wholly unexpected act of tolerance!

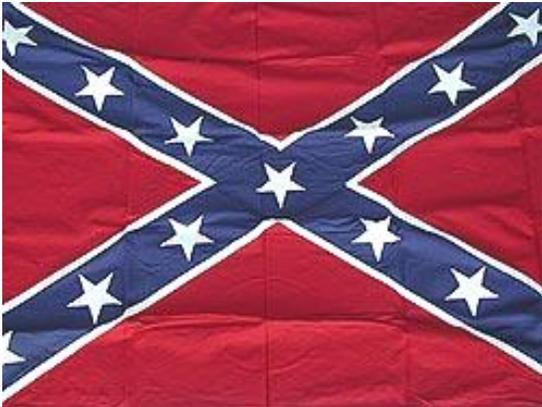


As Stonewall sits at the deathbed of General Maxcy Gregg, Jackson urges Gregg to "turn your thoughts to God." Gregg patiently replies that he is "not a believer." Jackson answers, "then I will believe for the both of us." It is a quiet moment that resounds.

Black Southerners in the Confederate Army

Jackson's relationship with his cook, Jim Lewis, a freeman of color, is rich and unsentimentalized. They

shake hands upon meeting--Jackson calls him "Mister"--and if the times leave no question as to Lewis' social subordination, Christian morality has a way of confounding matters. As the men pray on a winter's eve, Lewis offers an impromptu petition: "How is it Lo'd, can you 'splain sumpin' to dis ol'Virginy man? How is it a good Christian man like some folks I know can tolerate dey black brothers in bondage? How it is Lo'd, dat dey don't jes break dem chains?" The tragedy of American politics is that the South hadn't an answer.



Lewis (subtly played by Frankie Faison) and the film's other significant African-American character, a domestic slave named Martha (played by Donzaleigh Abernethy, daughter of civil-rights titan Ralph), are not the usual ahistorical cardboard cutouts, but complicated human beings actuated by love, loyalty, and a yearning to be no man's vassal. Yet, I tell Maxwell, he's in for it. Contemporary etiquette requires movie slaves to speak the King's English, outwit their cruel and thick-skulled white masters, and have the rebellious gleam of Nat Turner in their eyes.

Maxwell wonders if audience members will think that Lewis' status as a freeman is a put-on: "They'll just have this received wisdom that all blacks in the South were slaves." Yet "how can you not have Jim Lewis" in the film? "He was with Jackson all the time. He was in the inner circle.

"Viewers will be jolted by the sight of black men laboring in the Confederate cause. "Ninety percent of the cooks, quartermasters, or wagonmasters were African-Americans," says Maxwell. **"The Confederate Army couldn't have crossed the street without African-Americans, let alone fight a war."** **What is Patriotism?**

One of the film's signal virtues is its respect for place. In a beautiful moment written by Maxwell, Robert E. Lee surveys the lovely land around

Fredericksburg from atop a hill, before the battle. Lee explains to his adjutant that this is where he met the woman who would become his wife. He muses, "It's something these Yankees do not understand, will never understand. Rivers, hills, valleys, fields, even towns: To those people they're just markings on a map from the war office in Washington. To us, they're birthplaces and burial grounds, they're battlefields where our ancestors fought. They're places where we learned to walk, to talk, to pray. They're places where we made friendships and fell in love. They're the incarnation of all our memories and all that we love."

This film asks the vital question: What is patriotism? "For Chamberlain, the fundamental unit of patriotism is the United States of America," says Maxwell. "For Jackson and Lee, it is their state. The men are equally patriotic; they are admirable in that they have a sense of the group that transcends their individuality. But what are the borders of that country?"

Growing in Our National Imagination

The war seems to grow in the national imagination as it recedes in time. I ask Maxwell why. "It's the only major war fought on our soil," he replies. "It ravaged our country, especially the South. The other American wars were fought against 'aliens': This was a family feud. Americans who can trace their ancestry back to the 19th century have a direct relationship to the war. And the tension between individual and local decisions and federal-government decisions is still with us today."

Maxwell says that his Civil War films "would be impossible to make" without the thousands of dedicated re-enactors who compose his cinematic armies. He attributes the popularity of re-enacting to a desire "to return to what people think was a simpler time, a time of greater moral clarity."

A Retreat to Traditional Values?

He says this without condescension; in fact, with sympathy. "These are particularly confusing times because of the rapidity of change. We no longer live our lives in one locality. We're moving all the time, changing jobs. Our children and parents are spread out over continents. Through television we are kept in a state of constant agitation. No generation before ours has been under such assault on what many believe to be traditional values. So I think people want to retreat: to leave the whole bloody 20th century behind"-- even to find solace in the bloodiest fields of the 19th century.

Defending the Confederacy

A decade has passed between the release of "Gettysburg" and the appearance of "Gods and Generals." I ask Maxwell if his understanding of the war has changed. "Yes," he instantly replies. "My sense of the tragedy of the war has been deepened. That's why I wanted Shakespeare to comment on the war through Booth."

Yes, that Booth.

In a device as audacious as it is brilliant, Maxwell has a pair of traveling Southern Shakespearean actors, James Harrison and John Wilkes Booth, offer a running commentary on secession, war, and the duty of the artist. Booth had a flair for Shakespearean regicides. "It's almost as if he was trained by the greatest writer who ever lived to kill the monarch," marvels Maxwell. The Booth scenes are witty and foreboding. There is an unnerving moment when Booth, playing MacBeth at Washington's Grover's Theater, locks eyes with Lincoln as he declaims, "I see thee still, And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood."

Fanny Chamberlain, wife of Joshua, asks Booth after a performance of Julius Caesar whether his Brutus is a hero or villain. Booth replies, "It is for the audience to decide who is hero, who is villain. We simply play the parts allotted to us."

Maxwell understands just how startling it will be for an audience to see Southerners presented as men who believe they are fighting a defensive war against Yankee imperialists. But Fanny's question, he says, really applies to this entire astonishing film.

The phrase "great American novel" was coined by John W. De Forest, who wrote the first important novel of the Civil War, "Miss Ravenel's Conversion From Secession to Loyalty" (1867).

From Stephen Crane to the Shaaras, American writers have engaged this central event in our national history with wit and fury and imagination, but our filmmakers have largely scorned it as a tedious interlude in a school textbook.

Until Ron Maxwell, who has given us an American masterpiece about the most myth-laden, destructive, and regenerative episode in American history. Who are the heroes? Who are the villains? You decide.

BILL KAUFFMAN is associate editor for *American Enterprise Magazine*. This article originally appeared in the March 2003 edition of the magazine. **Copyright 2001 The Free Lance-Star Publishing Company.**

Gods, generals, and the wisdom of a Tech professor

By Darrell Laurant

Lynchburg News and Advance

Saturday, February 15, 2003

Just call him Stonewall Robertson.

When Ron Maxwell, director of the new Civil War movie "Gods and Generals," asked Virginia Tech professor and author James I. Robertson Jr. to be his technical adviser, he was serious about it.

Robertson's book on Stonewall Jackson is considered a classic of its genre, bolstered by five years of intensive research. And since Maxwell wanted his Confederate general to be as authentic as possible, Robertson was given the authority to "stonewall" any footage that didn't ring true.

"The first shooting I went to," Robertson said, "I saw something very quickly that didn't seem right. I told him (Maxwell), and they re-shot the entire scene."



Six times, Robertson went out to either Lexington or Hagerstown, Maryland, to watch filming. Later, he served as a gatekeeper for the first director's cut.

"There are a few little things in the final film that could be nit-picked," Robertson said, "but all in all, I thought it turned out very well. It's a much better movie than 'Gettysburg,' in my opinion."

For Robertson, a nationally prominent Civil War

historian and regular commentator for National Public Radio, involving himself with “Gods and Generals” was a calculated risk. Credibility, after all, is everything for someone in his position.

“I knew about Ron Maxwell, though,” Robertson said. “I knew how committed he was to making this movie, and I knew he was a stickler for detail.”

Like “Gettysburg,” the first film in Maxwell’s Civil War trilogy, “Gods and Generals” emerged in large part from Ted Turner’s deep pockets.

“Without Ted Turner,” Robertson said, “this film would never have happened. Hollywood is usually not comfortable with historical movies.”

That’s because history throws a rigid exo-skeleton around the screenplay, defying any director or screenwriter to alter dates or events or characters to fit his or her own ideas about what should have happened. (“Why does Napoleon have to be short? Let’s make him tall, and let’s use Denzell Washington in the role.”)

Those who try to cheat history risk the fierce and collective wrath of historians, history teachers and history buffs everywhere — and, in the case of Civil War movies, a small army of re-enactors. Besides, Robertson added, “the Civil War is still controversial, and Hollywood doesn’t like controversy.”

And finally, what surprises can be inserted into a movie like “Gods and Generals”? Ultimately, the North is going to win, and Stonewall Jackson is going to die, shot accidentally by his own troops.

The surprises, Robertson said, are more subtle, embedded in the nuances of the characters. “I think people who see this movie are going to be most surprised by Stonewall Jackson’s religious faith,” Robertson said. “This may be the first Hollywood movie in history where the main character prays. The Christian soldier idea really comes through.”

In his epic documentary series on the Civil War, Ken Burns dismissed Jackson as “a pious, blue-eyed killer.”

That, to Robertson, is simplistic.

“It’s true that he believed in taking the fight to the enemy,” he said, “and that he originally adopted a ‘black flag’ policy, which meant taking no prisoners.

Those were things he got from the Old Testament, though, and as the movie goes on, he softens. There are some touching scenes with him — it’s a five-handkerchief film.”

“Gods and Generals” takes place during the first three years of the war, and traces the parallel lives and

careers of Jackson (Steven Lang) and Union officer Joshua Chamberlain (Jeff Daniels). Whenever



Another shot of historian turned reenactor Brian Pohanka

possible, director Maxwell used actual Civil War battlefields for his filming, explaining: “Because the battles were influenced by the lay of the land, it wouldn’t have been fought the same way if the land were different.

“And we wanted to capture the foliage and architecture, because that’s unique to the regions.” As in every Civil War movie, re-enactors were more than happy to participate. Maxwell used 10,000 of them in his re-creation of the Battle of Bull Run.

The problem with battle scenes has always been that the only way to achieve true realism would be to actually kill the actors. Even the most agile stuntman is hard-pressed to simulate a body flying away from an exploded shell.

“That’s where computers come in,” Robertson said. “The computer effects are a lot more apparent in this movie than with ‘Gettysburg,’ and it’s amazing how realistic these battles will seem.”

The movie is more than three hours long. Unlike the actual war, it contains an intermission.

“I think people will need that,” Robertson admitted.

The uncut DVD version, however, will stretch more than six hours. The entire Battle of Antietam — the bloodiest conflict of the war and one of the most lethal battles in the history of armed conflict — was cut out from the screen version entirely.

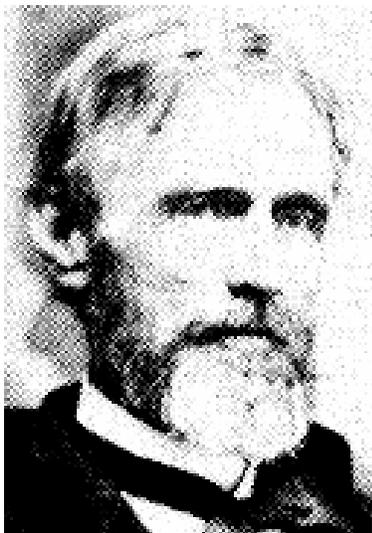
Robertson had high praise for Lang’s portrayal of Jackson, as well as Robert Duvall’s lesser role as Gen. Robert E. Lee.

“I got to know the actors, and found most of them to be delightful,” said Robertson. “Robert Duvall is a big Virginia Tech football fan. I was trying to tell him things about Lee, and he was asking me what kind of quarterback Marcus Vick is going to be.”

New Hollywood pals. The power of life and death over a Hollywood script. Does this mean James Robertson might be thinking of buying a house in the Southern California hills? Probably not.

"I prefer," he said, "to look at Hollywood from a distance."

WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



"All We Ask is to be Let Alone"--- President Jefferson Davis

*We feel that our cause is just and holy; we protest solemnly in the face of mankind that we desire peace at any sacrifice save that of honour and independence; we ask no conquest, no aggrandizement, no concession of any kind from the States with which we were lately confederated; **all we ask is to be let alone**; that those who never held power over us shall not now attempt our subjugation by arms.*

-- President Jefferson Davis, 29 April 1861

California SCV Web Site

Check www.scvcalifornia.net for the California SCV website. Gary Waltrip, Commander Camp 1440, The Stainless Banner, San Jose, continues to expand and add to the web site. See Gary's own site at www.RebelGray.com.

Since the last issue of the *Vidette*, Webmaster Waltrip has posted new Home Pages for Camp 2007 Long Beach and the Tehachapi/Bakersfield Camp, in formation.

Commander Waltrip has also put past newsletters of the Inland Empire Camp 1742 up for viewing, and past

newsletters of Camp 1208 Los Angeles as well. Take a look at our fine work!



SCV Life Membership

Apply for Life Membership by completing application at www.SCV.org. Fee is \$300 if you are 59 or younger; \$200 for those aged 60 to 69, and \$100 for those aged 70 and older. Mail check and form to HQ. Life Members are assigned to Camp 2 and are also listed on local Camp rosters with "LM" instead of an expiration date.

Sewing for Reenactors II: What is Homespun?

By Toni Van Beveren and Vernon Padgett

Homespun is a loose-weave fabric, similar to heavy cheesecloth, only not as loose or soft. It has a spongy feel, with a hand-loomed, tweedy appearance.

How is Homespun Made?

Homespun is made with irregular, coarse, slightly twisted uneven yarns of wool or cotton. Genuine homespun is produced in very limited quantities. Much power loom cloth is now being sold as genuine homespun. It was originally an undyed woolen cloth spun into yarn and woven in the home by peasants and country folk the world over.

What Does Homespun Look Like?

Sometimes it is difficult to just look at and say, "This is homespun." Most people won't know it if it hit them in the face. My advice is go to a museum and have a look, or if not a museum, then a textile book. Another way to learn what it looks like is to go to a reputable fabric store that sells it and have the sales clerk show you some samples. Or ask for a sample from a company that sells it. Since homespun is not sold in all fabric stores, and it is not used in today's clothing, you would not recognize it if you have not seen an example of it.

If I Have a Cotton Shirt, am I Able to Tell From Looking at it Whether it is Homespun?

If you were to compare your homespun shirt to other cottons, you would be able to see why it is different. But to just explain it might not suffice for most people, since there are some other fabrics that could be confused for homespun just by looking at it, because of their loose weave.