

The Washington Volunteer ... PUGET SOUND CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE ... MAY 2008

MEETING: Thursday, May 8, 2008

China Harbor, 2040 Westlake Avenue North, Seattle, Washington

MENU CHOICES: Mongolian Beef or Salmon

Dinner includes: salad, vegetable delight, General Tao's chicken, fried rice and fresh fruit. Cost is \$21, payable at the door. Social hour at 6 p.m.; dinner served at 7 p.m.; program at 8 p.m. Call **Marty Wingate** at 206-782-3941 or email her at martywin@earthlink.net to make reservations. **Deadline for reservations is Tuesday, May 6.** ☞

Fred Wilmoth Shares Insights into Contributions by Illinois

Fred Wilmoth will discuss *Illinois in the Civil War*, emphasizing camps, prisoners, disturbances, Southern sympathizers, home-front politics and key personalities and politicians, including wartime governor Richard Yates. Fred will cover Yates' wartime travels and battlefield visits, as well as Yates' support for, and occasional opposition to, Lincoln. Fred will also consider the regiments raised in Illinois and where they served, as well as some of the lesser-known men who performed sterling service and who rose to the rank of General.

Born and raised in Illinois, Fred Wilmoth went to the University of Illinois for two years before attending West Point, where he graduated in 1959. He served 30 years in the Regular Army, retiring as a colonel. Overseas assignments include Germany, Spain and two tours in Viet Nam. He does some part-time work with Northrop-Grumman as an analyst / consultant in support of U. S. Army computer-assisted exercises. His interest in the Civil War began in high school and he has been a member of PSCWRT about 20 years. He has lived in Seattle since 1986. ☞

NOTE: Remember to turn off cell phones before the meeting so there are no distractions for the speaker.

Annual Auction Termed a "Success"

The Annual Auction has become a tradition worthy of the effort, and this year the fund-raising event added about \$700 to the organization's treasury. And, it was a fun-filled event, with some interesting items up for auction.

After concerns about the viability of our treasury in the past couple of years, our treasurer Stephen Pierce now reports assets of nearly \$6,000, and we are in a more comfortable financial position. According to Pat Brady, our program director, we can look forward to at least two "out-of-the-area" speakers for next season. **We will need an Auction Chairman for next year**, so if you can fill this position talk with Leighton Wingate or Mark Terry! ☞

Nominating Committee Announces Slate of Officers

The following list is the proposed slate of officers for the 2008-2009 program-years.

Mark Terry -- president
Richard Miller -- vice president/successor
Pat Brady -- vice president/program chairman
Stephen Pierce -- treasurer
Anne Diemer -- assistant treasurer
Gary Larkin -- webmaster
Rick Solomon -- newsletter editor
Leighton Wingate -- immediate past president
Board of Directors:

Clarke Harrison, Jeff Rombauer, Jim Dimond, Rod Cameron, Charlie Ernst,
Andy Hoyal, Larry Jilbert, Paul Miller, William Trier

We are still in need of a Reservations Coordinator. Leighton Wingate will call for volunteers at the May meeting. If you can help with this vital function, please let Leighton Wingate or Mark Terry know. ☞

Ever Think about Becoming a Reenactor?

By Mark R. Terry

As spring approaches, and the Round Table season draws to a close, the 2008 reenacting season is just getting started. As a reenactor, I am sometimes asked how to get involved in The Hobby (as we call it). Rather than go into specific detail, it is important for prospective reenactors to have an understanding of what is required prior to going into the hobby. Please note that these are my thoughts and ideas based on my fifteen years of experience. Other reenactors may have differing opinions.

You should have a strong interest in history. This is actually a “must.” There are reenactors of practically every era of human history from Roman times to the Vietnam War. Whatever the era, a reenactor must have an intense interest to drive your motivation to do it. For me, I have always had an interest in the Civil War, so when I learned about a local reenacting group, getting involved was the next natural step. The motivation for me is to experience what those who fought went through in that time as much as it is realistically possible in this time.

You should have a steady source of income. Reenacting, like every hobby, has a price. Consider how much you want to put out, especially when you are just getting started. The hobby can be expensive. That is why the median age of reenactors is probably somewhere in the mid to late 30’s. It is not easy to afford reenacting without a steady income, a mode of transportation and time off to attend events. Another aspect to consider is whether or not other family members will participate with you.

How much does it cost to get involved? On the average I would say that a complete uniform, weapon and accouterments will come to about \$1,000 to \$1,500. Some of those costs can be mitigated by borrowing items, but most units will require recruits to “pay their way” in a year’s time, so that is only a temporary solution.

You should be physically fit. The term “physically fit” here does not imply you have to be some kind of Olympic athlete. It simply means being able to perform actions at reenactments without putting yourself in some kind of medical risk. Obviously, factors such as age, activity level and body weight are critical. Also note that Civil War soldiers wore wool uniforms and that most reenacting events take place in warm, sometimes hot weather, which could exacerbate a preexisting condition. Having said all of this, most events are not overly strenuous, unless you join a unit that performs marches on a regular basis or you attend events where long marches will be required.

The Next Step. If you have said “yes” to all of the above, then it is time to go to the next level. Which is what do you want to reenact? There are many ways you can go, depending on your interests, gender, age and other factors. Reenacting is a social activity by its very nature -- at some point you will need to join some kind of group, unit or club that reenacts the War both here and around the country. There are groups that reenact almost every imaginable kind of military unit, both North and South. There are also many Civilian roles that can be portrayed. I have deliberately avoided any kind of detail (“buy this weapon, get this equipment”) because every unit has their own standards of what is required to portray what was historical for that unit -- more or less.



The best way to take this step is to attend reenacting events -- take your time, visit all the camps, ask about their philosophies and standards and what they require of their members. You will be surprised at the wide range of levels of activity, authenticity and historical accuracy. Keep in mind that you can always change your mind and switch memberships if you join a unit you later find isn't a good fit -- there are always other alternatives.

The “Alternatives.” In the last fifteen years, I have run the full gamut of The Hobby on the military side -- from being wide-eyed in wonder and excitement to being so disgusted that I wanted to quit the hobby -- and back again! I bring this up because if you want to enjoy reenacting for more than a couple years you need to find what it is that motivates you to keep doing it. This inner motivation varies widely among reenactors. For me it is and has always been, “What was it like to live like the soldiers?” This took me from the wider group of reenactors to a smaller but highly motivated group often called “hardcore” reenactors, although to me that title is pejorative. I would rather our group be called “campaigners”, because our portrayal is what a soldier would look like and live while “on campaign.” At each event I am challenged to learn and grow, and that keeps things new and interesting for me.

Growth and Giving Back. As a reenactor, you naturally will learn a lot of details about the common soldier. This doesn't happen all at once, but is a gradual thing. What I find enjoyable about this hobby is that it is educational, not only for the reenactor, but those around him/her. One of my favorite things to do is to put on my uniform and equipment and give a presentation for a classroom or school. Doing so brings history to life for the kids. Participating in memorials, dedications, parades, seminars, or simply doing public relations for our own Round Table, in uniform, allows me to share my knowledge and experience with others and hopefully gets them excited about Civil War history.

So that, in a nutshell, is what it takes to get into Civil War reenacting. If you have any further questions, there are several reenactors who are active members of our Round Table, or you can contact me at: 425-337-6246. Local events will be listed on the Internet at: <http://www.wcwa.net/>. I urge you, if you have ever thought about reenacting, to do so. Even if you don't stay in the hobby long, you will learn more than you ever thought you could about the War and what the boys in Blue and Gray went through. 🐼

A Visit to the National Civil War Museum

By Rick Solomon

My son and I were visiting a friend of mine who lives forty miles north of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in mid-April. On a beautiful Tuesday morning, since my friend and his wife were working during the day and their son was attending high school, my son and I drove down to Harrisburg to check out the National Civil War Museum. This museum has been around since 2001 and is located in Reservoir Park just east of downtown Harrisburg. It's in a huge red brick building on top of a hill in which one has a 360 degree view of Harrisburg. Gettysburg is about thirty miles south of this museum.

Outside of the museum is a sculpture of Sgt. Richard Kirkland, CSA, giving a fallen Union soldier a drink from a canteen on December 14, 1862, a day after the battle of Fredericksburg. Thousands of Union soldiers had fallen the previous day in numerous attacks upon an almost impregnable Confederate line on Marye's Heights. In viewing these failed attacks Robert E. Lee said to his Old War Horse, James Longstreet, “It is good that War is so terrible. Otherwise we should grow too fond of it.”

The museum occupies two floors. A self-guided tour begins on the second floor. There are seventeen galleries on the self-guided tour. The first gallery, *A House Divided: 1850-1860* gives a timeline of incidents and issues prior to the Civil War. The second gallery, *American Slavery: The Peculiar Institution, 1850-1860*, explores slavery as seen by nineteenth century Americans. Here a mannequin program demonstrates a slave auction where a mother is sold to a different owner than her twelve year old son. At about five of these galleries is a video program, “*We the People*”, which tells the ongoing story of ten fictitious characters at different points in the war. For example two brothers, one who fought for the North and the other who fought for the South, tell their stories. At two *Battle Map* galleries, one covering 1861-1862 and the other from Stones River to Appomattox, James I. “Bud” Robertson, gives a brief description of various campaigns and battles. The fifth gallery is an excellent collection of weapons and equipment. The eleventh gallery concerns *Gettysburg* with an excellent mural of a Confederate attack during Pickett's Charge. The twelfth gallery examines *Civil War Medicine*. Here are several mannequins demonstrating a Union soldier who is about to have his leg amputated. Other galleries discuss *Naval Warfare, Civil War Music, Fort Sumter, Making of Armies, Women in the War and Lincoln*. There are some wonderful videos of the Fiftieth and Seventy-Fifth Reunions at Gettysburg.

All-in-all I think the curators did an excellent job in putting these galleries together to give the general public an overview our Greatest American Tragedy. However, if one wants to have an in depth examination of a particular battle, campaign or general, this museum will leave one unsatisfied. Nevertheless we spent about three hours looking at the various exhibits. More information on this museum can be found at this website: www.nationalcivilwarmuseum.org.

Feel Like a Little Cooking ... ?

Submitted by John Hinds

These recipes from A Civil War Cookbook are printed for those Round Table members who might like to replicate and enjoy three of the gustatory delights of the Civil War.

CORN DODGERS -- A white cornmeal biscuit recipe: one pint white corn meal; scald by adding just enough boiling water to moisten the meal, stirring it all the time; work in one tablespoon of butter or lard and when cool add one well beaten egg; one teaspoon of salt and two tablespoons of milk; mix well, put by spoonfuls into a large well greased baking dish or baking pan and bake brown on both sides.

RICE GRIDDLE CAKES -- Recipe: To one cup of boiled rice and one-half cup of milk add three egg yolks, two tablespoons of flour and a little salt, then beat the whites to a very stiff froth, stir them into the other ingredients and fry as soon as possible after they are added on a hot, buttered griddle. They are light, digestible and especially nice for invalids.

FLANNEL CAKE -- Recipe: Make a batter of one-half pint of milk and one-half pint of flour with one tablespoon of soda sifted into it; beat in one teaspoonful of melted butter, a little salt and one egg; add more milk if the batter is too thick. Bake on a griddle. ☞

Online Resources ...

Visit www.reddingauction.com to learn about a special auction of authentic Gettysburg Battlefield Firearms, relics and hundreds o other related items from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The auction is scheduled for May 9 & 10, 2008.

Database publisher Alexander Street is providing free access to these parts of “The American Civil War Online” through April 30th at http://alexanderstreet.com/resources/civilwar_access.htm; “The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries,” The American Civil War Research Database,” and “Illustrated Civil War Newspapers and Magazines.” No registration is required. A username and password are provided on that page for logging in.

DEADLINE FOR THE SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

Send any news items for the September issue of The Washington Volunteer sent to Rick Solomon (ricksolo@integraonline.com) no later than August 20, 2008.

2007-2008 OFFICERS

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Puget Sound Civil War Round Table meets on the second Thursday of each month, September through May. The PSCWRT is a 501c3 organization, and as such, donations you make to the organization are tax deductible.

Membership Dues

Dues are \$20 for an individual and \$25 for a couple. You can mail your dues to the PSCWRT, c/o Stephen Pierce, 8008 190th Street SW, Edmonds, WA 98026. **Questions?** Email is horseless1@juno.com, or call him at 425-640-8808.