



Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp #863, Conyers, Ga.

# GEN. JOE'S DISPATCH



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January, 2010

## Camp Officers:

**Commander: Tommy Cook**

[1st. Lt.Cmdr@joewheeler863scv.org](mailto:1st.Lt.Cmdr@joewheeler863scv.org)

**2nd. Lt. Cmdr: Joe Underwood**

[2nd Lt. Cmdr@joewheeler863scv.org](mailto:2nd.Lt.Cmdr@joewheeler863scv.org)

**Camp Adjutant: Steve Camp**

[Adjutant@joewheeler863scv.org](mailto:Adjutant@joewheeler863scv.org)

## Coming Events

January 23, 2010 - **Robert E. Lee Birthday Celebration** - Milledgeville, GA. @ 10:00 am.

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## SCV fights to honor veterans



By: Tammie Toler - Princeton Times

PRINCETON — Capt. Hercules Scott died at the age of 89 and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery. That's all the information his tombstone reveals, but Richard Lockhart and John Fleming know there's much more to Scott's story.

"He fought in Gettysburg and survived Pickett's Charge," Fleming explained, referring to the failed Confederate attack on the center of the Union forces during the third day of battle in Gettysburg, Pa.

As the two leaders of the local Sons of Confederate Veterans spoke Wednesday, they pointed to a photo of Scott's grave and a small wooden cross standing low to the ground at the front of his tombstone.

That cross was one of 49 the Flat Top Copperheads placed in tribute to the service of Confederate veterans buried inside Oakwood Cemetery last spring.

Aside from knowing their names and bits of their histories, most of these soldiers were complete strangers to Fleming, Lockhart and other 46 Sons of Confederate Veterans who volunteered their time and effort to honor the men who fought alongside their ancestors.

They raised funds to create small-scale replicas of the Southern Cross of Honor to pay tribute to local men who picked up arms in the conflict they pre-

ferred to call "The War Between the States." Traditionally, the Southern Crosses are cast iron and created in 11-inch squares. The local versions were only about 6 inches high and wide and were constructed of wood.

"Our purpose in doing this is simply to mark the Confederate veterans' graves," Lockhart said.



"There's no racism, no hatred, involved."

In May, the SCV members placed the crosses at the graves, where they reportedly remained and even attracted several visitors to the cemetery situated on Main Street in Princeton.

"The 48 Southern Crosses were installed so visitors to the cemetery could easily recognize their graves as those of Confederate soldiers and to give the deceased soldiers the respect and honor they deserved," Lockhart and Fleming wrote in a letter they distributed this week.

After the initial 48 crosses were in place, another descendant contacted the SCV and requested that a cross be placed on his grandfa-

ther's grave. The Copperheads happily located the grave and complied with the request.

From their perspective, the crosses drew historical tourists and Civil War buffs to Mercer County, where the state boundaries declared the region part of the Union, but local sentiment predominantly sided with the South. In one day, Fleming said what is now Mercer County rallied 1,200 men to stand against the Yankees, and there are several historic sites that helped decide the outcome of the Civil War.

"Our organization is a historical veterans' organization," Fleming said. "All we do is try to preserve Southern history and heritage. This is something to be proud of."

In fact, the SCV literature focuses on "heritage — not hate."

By September, however, the crosses became a point of contention between officials at the cemetery and the SCV. Early in the month, Lockhart said he received a call from a maintenance crew representative stating that he had seven days to remove the crosses because they were hampering the mowing and trimming process at Oakwood.

Lockhart, who couldn't believe the crosses were a hindrance or hazard, said he opted not to remove the crosses because the



# Our Commanders Comments



*By: Commander Tommy Cook*



Fellow members and friends of Joe Wheeler Camp 863,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I wish you all the best and safest holiday

season. As we celebrate the holidays let us all be thankful that you are in the south where in most cases it is still appropriate and customary to say "Merry Christmas". It's amazing to me that some people can find those two words offensive. In this era of continued political correctness I encourage each of you to wish as many folks as you can a "Very Merry Christmas" as I do you!

At our last meeting John Maxey was kind enough to remind us of some of our southern Christmas values and traditions, and Skip Driver read a first person account of Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. It was

written by a chaplain who described the scene as both hopeless and chaotic. There was no romanticism in this accounting which is often the case in the recounting of events from the war. In fact he pointed out that this description was consistent with his grandfather's recollections as well. I want to thank our members who provide information/programs and participate in our meetings in this manner. I hope that each of you will make a goal of sharing with the camp as John and Skip have. I think all members would agree that it is this type of involvement that will make our meetings more meaningful and interesting.

On January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 we will have our annual Lee-Jackson Dinner; it will start at **7:00 PM** which should allow ample time for the dinner, program and awards ceremonies. The Mills family will be joining us and I want to make it special for them. So, please make every effort to attend this event and as always bring your family members. The cost of the dinner is \$ 12.00 per person and we will be having true

southern cuisine - BBQ pork and chicken. We will also award the "Compatriot of the Year" and "Man of the Year" at the dinner. If you have not contacted Steve Camp (confederatesteve@comcast.net) please do so by January 03, 2010 to reserve your spot.

I look forward to seeing you at the Lee-Jackson Dinner on January 12<sup>th</sup> – Your attendance is needed and appreciated; please make it special by joining us!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Yours in the South,

Tommy Cook



**The Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler Camp # 863**

**Sons of Confederate Veterans**

**Cordially Invites You**

**to the**

**28th Annual Lee-Jackson Dinner**

**January 12, 2010 7:00 pm at the**

**Philologia Lodge,**

**1005 Milstead Avenue,**

**Conyers, GA.**



**RSVP by January 4, 2010 Call 770-760-8200 or e-mail: [commander@joewheeler863scv.org](mailto:commander@joewheeler863scv.org)**



# Flags Across Georgia Up-Date



By: Jack Birdwell, Georgia Division Commander



Gentlemen,

I'm proud to announce that the Georgia Division's Flags across Georgia project has secured three new prime locations to erect large flagpoles as listed below.

100 ft flagpole off interstate 75, at exit 71, in Tift County near Tifton. This highly visible location will allow our Battle Flag to be seen from both directions on I-75.

60-70 ft flagpole off State highway 82. Highway 82 is a major four lane state highway going East to West.

60-70 ft. flagpole off interstate 20, west of metro Atlanta at the Thornton Road exit. This section of Hwy 20 has eight lanes and is heavily traveled.

Each of the 60 -70 ft flagpoles will be able to fly 20ft X 30ft Confederate Battle flags and the 100 ft. flag pole will be able to fly a 30 ft. X 50 ft Confederate Battle flag. What great exposure for the Soldiers flag and our Heritage! Establishing these locations has been a major goal of our Division and with the up-coming Sesquicentennial of the War Between the States these poles will play a large part in reminding the public of the upcoming anniversary, the sacrifices our Confederate Soldiers made for our freedom, an independent South and promote our Heritage at the same time.

I would like to make a call for all Camps in the Georgia Division to be part of this great endeavor by contributing to the Flags across

Georgia Project to help fund the cost of purchasing these poles and the flags that will fly on them. If every Camp in the Division gives at least \$100 or more, that would enable us to

purchase two of the 60 – 70ft. flagpoles. If your Camp can give more, that's even better, it will enable us to purchase the other flagpoles.

Please make all donations payable to The Georgia Division referencing the Flags across Georgia project and send to Division Adjutant at P.O. Box 217, Eastanollee, Ga. 30538. Any help your Camp can make will be greatly appreciated and rewards of seeing a giant Confederate Battle flag flying in a highly visible location is priceless. Remember if you or any member of your Camp knows of a highly visible location please, contact me anytime.

Live the Charge,

Jack Bridwell

Georgia Division Commander



# Robert E. Lee Birthday Celebration



By: Dan Coleman, Division Judge Advocate



Gen. Robert E. Lee's Birthday Jan. 19th

The Robert E. Lee Birthday Celebration will be on Saturday, January 23, 2010 in Milledgeville.

We will assemble at the old Governor's mansion from 10:00 A.M. until 10:45 A.M. for our march to the Capitol.

Promptly at 10:45 A.M. we will begin our march. The parade to

the Capitol will probably last around 15 minutes.

The Capitol will be open at 10:00 for those unable to make the short march.

Despite the rain, we had over 150 attendees last year. Everyone appeared to love the new location, the accommodations, and the history.

**NOTE: On Robert E. Lee's Birthday in 1861, the Articles of Secession were approved in the very chambers where we will meet.**

I have asked for accommodations for 250 people this year. If everyone knew what a great event this is, that would not be enough. One member told me that he had such a great time last year that he was bringing his family this time.

**This is clearly the greatest Division gathering other than Convention..**

There is room for all, so place this on your calendars.

Dan Coleman, Division Judge Advocate.

**MAJ. GEN. JOSEPH WHEELER CAMP #863,  
CONYERS, GA.**

805 Commerce Drive  
Conyers, GA. 30094

E-mail: [commander@joewheeler863scv.org](mailto:commander@joewheeler863scv.org)



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## SCV fights to honor veterans



*By: Tammie Toler - Princeton Times (Continued from Page 1)*

United States government had recognized Confederate veterans as legitimate American war veterans and allowed the marking of their graves.

There are an estimated 800 other war veterans buried inside Oakwood and Resthaven properties, and Lockhart said the management seemed to have no problem mowing around American flags and even the occasional spike of artificial flowers that appear in violation of the business's floral guidelines.

To Fleming and Lockhart, focusing specifically on the Southern Crosses seemed to be an act of disrespect and discrimination.

When they didn't remove the crosses, Oakwood crews did. In recent weeks, most of the crosses were pulled from the soil surrounding the graves, and the SCV members were outraged.

"Really, we feel like they've desecrated the graves of all these veterans," Fleming said this week.

The insult ran so deep that SCV members questioned the legality of removing the Southern Cross, a symbol approved by the government to represent service to the Confederacy, from graves of men declared American war veterans.

At Oakwood, however, representatives said safety was their only concern. Curtis Shrader spoke briefly with the Times this week, though he pointed out he worked in sales and not in the grounds crew. Keith Miller, of the maintenance department, reportedly sent word through Shrader that the crosses were removed because they were complicating mowing around the soldiers' graves.

"Keith says, after the mowing season, they can put them back up," Shrader said.

The mowing season ends once grass stops growing for the fall, usually in October or November, depending on the weather. Of course, the crosses would fall into contention again come spring, unless the matter is resolved before then.

SCV members worried that the crosses may have been demolished or thrown away, but Shrader reported they were being held securely at Resthaven Memorial Gardens, of which Oakwood is a part.

A call to a grounds crew supervisor had not been returned as of press time. As they contemplated their next steps, Fleming and Lockhart said removal of the crosses was insensitive at best and discriminatory at worst.

"A cemetery is a history of people — a perpetual record of yesterday and a sanctuary of peace and quiet today. A cemetery exists because every life is worth loving, remembering and honoring — always," Lockhart and Fleming wrote on behalf of SCV members.

