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Battle Cry

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Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table
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President's Message:

I thoroughly enjoyed George Beitzel's presentation on *The Lost Cause* thinking he avoided the usual emphasis on Jubal Early, R.E. Lee and Longstreet and surveyed the multitude of other factors keeping the phenomenon alive after all these years. George presents enlightening discussions getting to the heart of the matter. Thanks, George, for another sterling program.

Progress continues on the plans for the 2011 West Coast Civil War Conference which we will again host on November 11-13 at the Doubletree Hotel off Arden Way. Paul Ruud has led the committee which has negotiated a room rate of \$99 and a fixed blanket price for all meals. Best of all an ideal faculty of speakers has been scheduled including Craig Symonds, William C. (Jack) Davis, Brian Wills, James Stanbery and Larry Tagg. The latter two are well known to our group as is Craig Symonds who has graced us with his presence at several annual conferences and will be in San Francisco with Jim McPherson this November. Craig is a masterful speaker and the author of numerous books with a recent major prize winner *Lincoln and His Admirals*. Jack Davis was trained at Sonoma College, edited *Civil War Times Illustrated* close to twenty years, has been a regular on *Civil War Journal* on Television's History Channel, has also authored many books and is presently in charge of Civil War History Programs at Virginia Tech. Brian Steele Wills spoke at our 2000 Shiloh Conference and brought the house down. He spoke to us in 2006 at a local meeting and in Santa Rosa. He is probably the expert and has written a classic biography of Nathan Bedford Forrest. He is a warm person and an enthralling speaker. The committee is intending to keep the fee under \$200. A larger attendance will result in lower fees so as usual we trust our group will set that date aside and plan on attending. I believe this will prove to be a most successful meeting.

At our last board meeting the subject of opening each meeting with The Pledge Of Allegiance was discussed. Veteran's Day stimulated the idea although most of us know it is regularly recited prior to many CWRT meetings. It was agreed that feelings from the membership are important and several past objections were raised. Please get back to me or any board member if you feel for any reason we should go one way or the other. You are welcome to email or phone any of us.

February 10th we will be treated to a talk by a descendant of a Chicago's Irish Legion soldier. Professor James Swan of Nashville, Tennessee, will discuss a group of the windy city's immigrants from the old sod who fought with Sherman on the March and in the Atlanta Campaign. He will bring some of his books on the subject for those interested in purchasing. Come early for dinner and/or meet with Dr. Swan. Hope to see you there.

Don Hayden, President

Treasurer's Report:

The cash balance following the January 13, 2009 meeting was \$2,766.95. Thanks to Rose Browne, other members, and guests, the raffle brought in \$90.00.

George W. Foxworth, Treasurer

MINUTES

Sacramento Civil War Round Table

January 13, 2010

Hof Brau Restaurant, 2500 Watt Ave, Sacramento

Attendance-43

Members-36

Don Hayden, President	Fred Elenbaas	Betty Mitchell	Brad Schall
Silver Williams, Vice President	Alan Geiken	Bruce Nothmann	Richard Sickert
George Foxworth, Treasurer	Bob Hanley	Bev Passerello	Brent Ten Pas
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Joan Beitzel	Nina Henley	Anne Peasley	Susan Williams
George Beitzel	Wayne Henley	Rick Peasley	John Zasso
Roy Bishop	Dennis Kohlmann, PD	Horst Penning	<u>Guest-7</u>
Rose Browne	Lowell Lardie	Mark Penning	Jerry Cross
Ardith Cnota	Grace Long	Paul Ruud, IPP	Janis Herbert
Mitch Cnota	Jim Middleton, Editor	Nancy Samuelson	Andrew Mitchell
			David Mitchell
			Rob Mitchell
			Hana Nimerfrah
			Robert Schroeder

1. Meeting started at 7:04 pm. President Hayden welcomed members and guest. Our esteemed member Maurice Mitchell passed away in December. Members of his family were introduced and a minute of silence was held.
2. Member George Beitzel presented "The Lost Cause" assisted by Joan Beitzel, his wife. Thank you both.
3. Raffle was held and meeting adjourned at 8: 45 pm.

Welcome new members! Beverly and John Passerello, and Brent Ten Pas.

Eddie Keister
Secretary

Coming Programs 2010		
Feb.10 th	Jim Swan	Chicago's Irish Legion
Apr. 14 th	Tom Mays	Champ Ferguson
Aug. 11 th	Jim Stanbery	The Cracker Line

MAURICE M. MITCHELL

March 13, 1927 – December 28, 2009

Maurice M. Mitchell, a member of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table since 1998, passed on Monday, December 28, 2009, in Carmichael, California. A Celebration of Life was held on Wednesday, January 6, 2010, at Town and Country Lutheran Church, 4049 Marconi Avenue, Sacramento, CA. A reception followed the service. Also on January 6, Maurice was laid to rest with United States Army Military Honors at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon, CA.

The following is a reprint which was blessed by Betty Mitchell and family:

Maurice Malcolm Mitchell was born on March 13, 1927, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He graduated from San Jose State University in 1949. From 1952 to 1954, he served as a Corporal in the United States Army in Korea. He taught history, civics, and driver's education in several Valley (Sacramento and San Joaquin) high schools.

When he started a job as an Item Manager for the US Government at Norton Air Force Base in Southern California, he met, through friends, the love of his life, Betty Grace. After getting married, Maurice and Betty moved with her two sons to Sacramento when they transferred to McClellan AFB. After legally adopting Matthew and David, Maurice and Betty added Tina, Rob, and Les to their brood. (Rob and Les are twins.)

As a member of Town and Country Lutheran Church, Maurice was an usher for more than forty years. He was president of the school's Parent Teacher League, served on the Board of Education, and taught the adult Bible Class, "Bethel Series."

In 1993, Maurice and Betty retired from McClellan AFB after twenty-eight years. Not one to sit still in retirement, Maurice began an association with the California State Railroad Museum as a docent and enjoyed sharing the story of the mail car's place in railway history. Maurice was a member and often guest lecturer for the Sacramento CWRT. In the late 1990s, Maurice spent two years as a Senior Assemblyman for the State of California.

During the 2000 Census, Maurice took a job as a census taker and was welcomed into South Sacramento area homes due to his ability to speak Spanish. He was a member of the Renaissance Society of California State University, Sacramento. Maurice spoke at local high schools about the Korean War. His passions were music, history (especially the Civil War), the Spanish language, theatre and opera, traveling with Betty, and college football and baseball. Maurice was an avid reader and never stopped learning.

Maurice is survived by his wife, Betty; sons, Matthew, David, Robin and Leslie; daughter, Christina; and grandchildren, Andrew, Meghan, Kyle, Katie, Chynna, and McKenzie.

Family and friends would agree that Maurice was a hero – a quietly elegant, unassuming, and caring gentleman who was never afraid to take on responsibilities to further a good cause. He was someone who truly had the "Right Stuff." I agree. Also, I will miss the talks Maurice and I had about the latest book I should read. He was always right. I will remember Maurice.

George W. Foxworth, January 21, 2010

Jefferson Davis and the Civil War Era by William J. Cooper— Review by M. Wolf:

William J. Cooper is the Boyd Professor of History at Louisiana State University. In 2000, he published "Jefferson Davis, American," a massive biography of one of the most simultaneously reviled and revered figures in American history. It won many awards, and is certainly the definitive biography of the Confederate president.

This book (2008) consists of nine short informative and cogently argued essays, each of which originated as a lecture, mostly after 2000. Professor Cooper is an excellent speaker, as well as a good writer. I heard him at a Lincoln symposium at the University of Richmond last month, where I purchased the book.

In his opening essay, Professor Cooper briefly reviews the judgments of other historians over the past fifty years. He writes, "I have no intention here of challenging the overwhelmingly prevailing view of Davis's political delinquency as Confederate president. Rather, I will ask why it occurred." Professor Cooper readily concedes—and describes—Davis' 1861-65 deficiencies, but demonstrates that in the two decades before the war, Davis was very much a devoted patriot.

Davis loved his country, and was no secessionist. "He never advocated disunion, though he did believe in the constitutional right of secession. He repeatedly argued that the situation of the South was not so desperate as to call for breaking up the Union. He agreed to serve on the Committee of Thirteen, charged by the Senate to search for a way to reconcile Republicans and southern Democrats." Senator Davis was a close friend of New York's senator, William Henry Seward, and Professor Cooper writes, "I am convinced that Davis' major hope for a deal between Republicans and the South rested on his relationship with Seward." All efforts at compromise failed, and Davis wrote of his "unutterable grief" when the Union for which he fought (and was wounded) in Mexico, and "for which my father bled" (in the Revolution) was dissolved. "Those who knew Davis...testified to the emotional and psychological agony that gripped him."

However, once the die was cast, Davis devoted himself to the Confederate cause: "Awareness of this mindset is essential to comprehend Davis's approach to his presidential task...Disagreement or questioning or any hint of egotism became for him a challenge to the cause, a sign of limited commitment....Jettisoning politics for a holy calling, Jefferson Davis wounded himself and his cause, perhaps fatally."

In subsequent essays, Professor Cooper discusses Davis' opponents within the Confederacy, such as Gov. Joseph Brown of Georgia, who frustrated Davis' efforts to conduct the war. He cites historian George Rable, whose "path-breaking study of Confederate politics, 'The Confederate Republic' (1994), correctly avoids placing states' rights at the center of debate." Rather, the crucial division was between believers in national unity and believers in "the politics of liberty," i.e., those who "interpreted laws like conscription and increasing executive authority as dangerous threats to fundamental rights and liberties." (So, Professor Cooper, you're saying that Jefferson Davis was a Hamiltonian?)

Davis certainly had his vociferous critics, and they are familiar to us. Rep. Henry Foote of Tennessee called for "people to rise, sword in hand, to put down this domestic tyrant." Robert Toombs (who led Confederates at the Burnside Bridge at Antietam) called Davis "a stupid, malignant wretch." Vice-President Alexander Hamilton (!)

Stephens termed his boss "execrable," and his brother Linton said the Confederacy needed a Brutus to save them from the "little, conceited, dogged knave and fool." Despite all this, Professor Cooper writes that "The Confederate Congress usually gave the president the legislation and the authority he requested. No matter the vituperation of Davis' political foes, Congress never acted in any significant way to curtail executive prerogatives...In a real sense all the sound and fury was just that, sound and fury."

In his essay, "The Politics of Confederate Command," Professor Cooper discusses the 1861-62 Confederate defense line which "was stretched far too thin, breaking at several points. General Albert Sidney Johnston was given an impossible task, and "critics have pounded Davis for failing to honor the great military principle of concentration." Davis the West Point graduate knew perfectly well about concentrating forces, but Davis the President was beset by state governors who demanded military protection. "If this new nation could not or did not provide protection, then any state might ask why remain in. This influenced Davis's decisions during the war." In 1877, he wrote, "It was easy to say other places were less important...but if it had been heeded as advised, dissatisfaction, desertions, and opposition of State Govts would have soon changed apathy into collapse."

Other essays discuss Lincoln's "masterstroke" in snookering Davis into starting the war at Fort Sumter; the deficiencies of Generals Joseph E. Johnston and Braxton Bragg; Davis' unfortunate insistence on being his own secretary of war and a micromanager; and his disastrous refusals to order recalcitrant and disputatious generals, such as Leonidas Polk in Kentucky and Theophilus Holmes in Arkansas, to do their jobs, and his meek acquiescence to their insubordination. "Simply put, Davis did not have the steel or ruthlessness to make absolutely essential command decisions."

The final essay is about Davis' significant role in the mythology of the Lost Cause. "Nowhere in Davis's exposition of Lost Cause ideology...does slavery appear...In his book, he downplays slavery as causing secession...That contrasts fundamentally with Davis' clearly expressed view in 1861 (and before) that he regarded slavery as basic to secession and the Confederacy." Professor Cooper concludes that "Davis and his fellows, in the 1870s and 1880s, did their work stunningly well. (Their) interpretation of the coming of the war dominated nationally for a long time, into the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, it remains amazingly vibrant even in the 21st century."

As I've noted, Professor Cooper frequently refers to other historians and their books in these essays. In his portrayal of the ante-bellum Davis, he cites David Potter's "The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861" (1976; completed by Don Fehrenbacher) as the best work on those crucial thirteen years. He also cites Professor Potter's 1960 essay on Davis in "Why the North Won the Civil War" (1960, edited by David Donald). I just bought the latter book, which consists of five excellent essays by historical icons such as Richard Current and T. Harry Williams. These old paperbacks are inexpensive on-line, and I heartily recommend this one.

In this bicentennial year, we are all thinking of Lincoln. These books remind us of the complexities and foibles of the other government of 1861-65 and of the "almosts" and "ifs" of history.

"The March to the Sea" (December, 1864) ■ By Herman Melville

Not Kenesaw high-arching,
Nor Allatoona's glen—
Though there the graves lie parching—
Stayed Sherman's miles of men;
From charred Atlanta marching
They launched the sword again.
The columns streamed like rivers
Which in their course agree,
And they streamed until they flashing
Met the flashing of the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
That marching to the sea.

They brushed the foe before them
(Shall gnats impede the bull?);
Their own good bridges bore them
Over swamps or torrents full,
And the grand pines waving o'er them
Bowed to axes keen and cool.
The columns grooved their channels,
Enforced their own decree,
And their power met nothing larger
Until it met the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
A marching glad and free.

Kilpatrick's share of riders
In zigzags mazed the land,
Perplexed the pale Southsiders
With feints on every hand;
Vague menace awed the hidiers
In forts beyond command.
To Sherman's shifting problem
No foeman knew the key;
But onward went the marching
Unpausing to the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
The swinging step was free.

The flankers ranged like pigeons
In clouds through field or wood;
The flocks of all those regions,
The herds and horses good,
Poured in and swelled the legions,
For they caught the marching mood.
A volley ahead! They hear it;
And they hear the repartee:
Fighting was but frolic
In that marching to the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
A marching bold and free.

All nature felt their coming,
The birds like couriers flew,
And the banners brightly blooming
The slaves by thousands drew,
And they marched beside the drumming,
And they joined the armies blue.
The cocks crowed from the cannon
(Pets named from Grant and Lee),
Plumed fighters and campaigners
In that marching to the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
A marching bold and free.

The foragers through calm lands
Swept in tempest gay,
And they breathed the air of balm-lands—
As who should say them nay?
The regiments uproarious
Laughed in Plenty's glee;
And they marched till their broad laughter
Met the laughter of the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
That marching to the sea.

The grain of endless acres
Was threshed (as in the East)
By the trampling of the Takers,
Strong march of man and beast;
The flails of those earth-shakers
Left a famine where they ceased.
The arsenals were yielded;
The sword (that was to be),
Arrested in the forging,
Rued that marching to the sea:
It was glorious glad marching,
But ah, the stern decree!

For behind they left a wailing,
A terror and a ban,
And blazing cinders sailing,
And houseless households wan,
Wide zones of counties paling
And towns where maniacs ran.
Was it Treason's retribution—
Necessity the plea?
They will long remember Sherman
And his streaming columns free—
They will long remember Sherman
Marching to the sea. ■