

BRUNSWICK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

MEETING – January 9, 2013

U.S. GRANT AND THE BATTLES OF FORTS HENRY AND DONELSON

Speaker: ED BEARSS

Ed, we give you HUGS all around for another sterling presentation. Your vast storehouse of knowledge gave us a window of wisdom and wonder to a “Grant” who is walking HIS way thru the human condition. Your carefully chosen thumbnail sketches give us much food for thought. Being at the right place at the right time was huge for Grant. Small events can make gargantuan differences in history.

Had a Doctor’s son not flunked out of West Point, that empty spot would not have been available for our HIRAM ULYSSES GRANT. Can you imagine what peer group pressure would do to a student nicknamed HUG, Ed asks us? U.S. Grant spent his formative years in Georgetown, Ohio not far from his birthplace. Evidence of his engineering skill came early. You can still stand on the massive stone step in front of Dr. Bailey’s home in Georgetown, Ohio. It was moved from a creek bottom over a mile away using a horse, wagon and unique pulley system developed by a 14 year old named U.S. Grant. He had no helpers! Personal initiative can start at an early age and persist throughout one’s life. Does this help, Ed asks, answer why he is called Unconditional Surrender Grant –not HUG?

After the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson, the road leading to Shiloh is open. Some would say this clear Grant/Union victory in 1862 sealed the outcome of the war “of Northern Aggression.” The resolve of good people fighting for what they felt was right prolonged the bloodshed for another three years.

Ed weaves, for us, a pattern of Grant’s design. He drops a few stitches to sidestep “know nothing Halleck” and weaves forward with his prime purpose – sew up the river system into a cross stitch of Union control. Ed suggests, as do others, this devotion to the big picture makes Grant a better General “because he could care less about what his enemy is doing.” He just won’t be diverted from his task at hand. By the way, if in attendance, Ed told you which officer wore an ill-fitted “RUG.” (a nice tidbit?)

So, Fort Henry floods and is lost in one hour (Grant doesn’t even play a part with his 17,000 infantry). The battle for Fort Donelson has hiccups but ends as a Union victory as well. Nathan Bedford Forrest has a temper tantrum and rejects surrender. Brigadier Generals Floyd and Pillow advance then retreat – lose their nerve –panic- then SURRENDER UNCONDITIONALLY to terms offered by U.S. Grant.

Ed points us to advantages and misfortunes experienced by Grant. He does aggressively use the Naval ironclads and woodclads under his Army command, works his plan, (unaware that his superiors were considering relieving him) and achieves victory. A celebration is in order and Grant gets more cigars than he can smoke. Ed tells us Grant is one of those men for whom one drink is too much and 1000 are not enough. This lethal combination leads to a painful death in 1885 but not before Grant has his chance, as President, to help mold and massage this great Nation. That Presidency, Ed tells us, is a chapter for another day. Come back again and again, Ed. – you fill our minds as vessels and light them as lamps.

Submitted by Dan Fink (Ed Bearss can't be done in half a page!!!!!!!!!!!!)