

## **BRUNSWICK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

**MEETING – March 7, 2017**

**“THE LONG MARCH HOME”**

**SPEAKER: Brian Jordan**

Brian Jordan stomped out the “Blue-Gray” thinking and replaced it with a heightened awareness level in us. That march was the same for all who participated in that trip through hell called war. The participants become permanently set apart and never quite put that hell behind them. They carry many visible scars and even more invisible ones. The post-war objective was about national mending, not military victory.

Our late, great Southport Historian Suzy Carson awakens us to an unknown Southport soldier who walked from Appomattox to home, with little more than the clothes on his back. Any individual facts about him have gone to the grave with Suzy. We, therefore, can freely name him “Johnny Southport” and imagine, through his eyes of one, the story of many.

His journey begins on a Southern spring day and his destination is well over 200 miles of possible rain soaked roads filled with the scars of war at every turn. He will see mass destruction and a scared population — more” determined” women than men — and an aura of hopelessness everywhere. They are not just survivors but sometimes maimed and broken victims of war. The scars will run more than skin deep and he will see despair in many eyes.

Yet our Johnny represents survival. If he heeds the words of Walt Whitman, there WILL BE opportunities for “words that heal, hearts that mend, hope of a lasting peace and a place where everyone can seek justice.” He is a symbol of what Alexander Pope once said, “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” Yes, there seems to be a faint light at the end of the tunnel.

Johnny, Brian tells us, needs to look forward to hearth, home and healing. Johnny must bury the hate and not let race be a factor. Johnny has many unfinished things yet to do at the end of his march home. He must deal with his demons and not cover them with alcohol. He must rise above his personal character flaws and put as much of the past behind him as possible.

*Ya just had to be there* to hear Brian tell us about Henry Hartwell — a man who could not and would not put the past to bed. It involved Henry, plus his bulldog and a “re-constructed” picket line. A nightly charge was made on that Confederate fence for years.

Brian puts facts before us that show there are still many Johnny Southports with us today. Johnny would have been devastated by what the war had done to Southport and probably found “home” to be nothing but a spot to place his bedroll under a mighty live oak tree (if only those trees could talk!).

If you think what Johnny lived is just history, Brian reminds us that there are about 49,000 homeless vets from the Iran/Iraq conflict living in America today. Different battle — same scars!