

BRUNSWICK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

MEETING – October 2, 2012

J.E.B. Stuart's Last Ride

Speaker: Bobby Krick

Bobby Krick you are not only the voice for all things Civil War in the Richmond area but also an accomplished wordsmith. Using nothing but a two-sided map to guide us, we, your audience, were “fascinated” by both your knowledge base and smooth delivery detailing Jeb’s last ride. Readers, if you were there you heard this fascinating fact: On the hurried trip to Yellow Tavern, he stopped to see his wife and two children. Without dismounting, a very hungry Jeb ate a vegetable offering. He then leaned down and kissed Flora both hello and goodbye ---for the very last time. He was a master of reconnaissance and “invented” cavalry raids. Ironically, he was mortally wounded by a Union private frantically retreating from an unsuccessful Northern raid. The man simply aimed at a very large, very determined red-bearded mounted Confederate officer about 10-30 yards away. Stuart’s wound was mortal and he died the next day. Lee considered Jeb. to be almost a son and trusted in both his eyes and ears. (History softens criticism regarding his absence at Gettysburg). Don’t think for one minute, Bobby admonishes us, the South had no will to fight! He likens a tangle with Stuart’s 2800 men to be not unlike “poking at a copperhead.” Sheridan’s 12,000 infantry allow him to boastfully say: “If headquarters would stay out of it, I can whip Stuart out of his boots any day I choose!” Mead relays this to Grant who calls Sheridan’s bluff. He said: “So let him start right out and do it.”

More fascinating facts appear. Stuart frantically asks Braxton Bragg to send help from Richmond. He answers”: “He would rather not.” Why are we not surprised? Stuart’s mass aggressiveness causes his final battlefield words to be: “Go back, go back, do your duty, I’d rather die than be whipped!” Sheridan DOES carry this day but knows he can’t capture and hold Richmond so he heads for a flooded Chickahominy Creek and encounters for the first time in Civil War history –primitive but effective land mines. A swashbuckling George Custer has his cavalry there – they are mistaken for a bunch of “Turtles.” History does not record his response.

May 12, 1864 ends this fascinating 15 day raid finally proving the North has a real cavalry. Jeb’s final whispered words are: “God’s will be done.” Bobby ends with this famous Robert E. Lee quote: “I can hardly think of him without weeping openly.” On that day, Lee lost his greatest Cavalry Officer. He is buried in Hollywood Cemetery –Just 31 years old. A huge statue, in his honor, is placed on Monument Avenue in Richmond.

Submitted by Dan Fink

(By the way, if you were there, you can identify that veggie.)