

# *The Charger*

## **CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE**

P.O.Box 444 \* VERMILION, OHIO 44089

MAY 1983

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 6

225th Meeting

### **Ladies' Night**

DATE: May 10th  
PLACE: The Hermit Club  
SPEAKER: Mr. Craig Schermer  
SUBJECT: Life of Mary Todd Lincoln  
TIME: Cocktails 6:30 P.M. Dinner 8:00 P.M.

Members will recall the talk presented by Craig Schermer two years ago, when he appeared in the full regalia of the British 64th Regiment of Foot, his subject Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Craig holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in history from John Carroll University and an M.S.L. degree from Case Western Reserve. Among several fields of research has been the life of the wife of the martyred sixteenth President. Mary Todd's happy earlier life and her tragic later years and life as the First Lady make a fascinating story.

## **MARY TODD LINCOLN**



**Please Make Reservation**

CALL BILL VICTORY AT 221 - 5419

# ROBERTSON TALK TERRIFIC

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Fifty-one members were present to hear Dr. Robertson speak on "The Common Soldier in the Civil War."

It was the first time I've heard him speak and I came away impressed. As President Bill Victory said afterwards it was the first time a speaker had far exceeded his credentials.


Dr. Robertson's talk was mixed with humor, fact, and understanding, which made me appreciate the sacrifices of Billy Yank and Johnny Reb. His information was gleaned from countless letters, anecdotes, and memoirs of private soldiers, most of the humorous and graphic.

Dr. Robertson pointed out that the Civil War was a conflict of the plain people. Despite the grandiose plans of generals, it was the common soldier who bore the real load. As one soldier put it, "If it hadn't been for officers, this war would have been over two years ago."

The common soldier faced many handicaps, such as poor training (if any), shoddy equipment (or lack of), tainted or inedible food (if they could get it down and keep it down), poor leadership and sickness. He was seemingly in the wrong place at the wrong time - with the advent of superior weapons, but with antiquated tactics and medical care. But with courage, honor, and humor, the Civil War soldier became the greatest fighter our nation has produced.

By Brian Kowell

\* \* \*



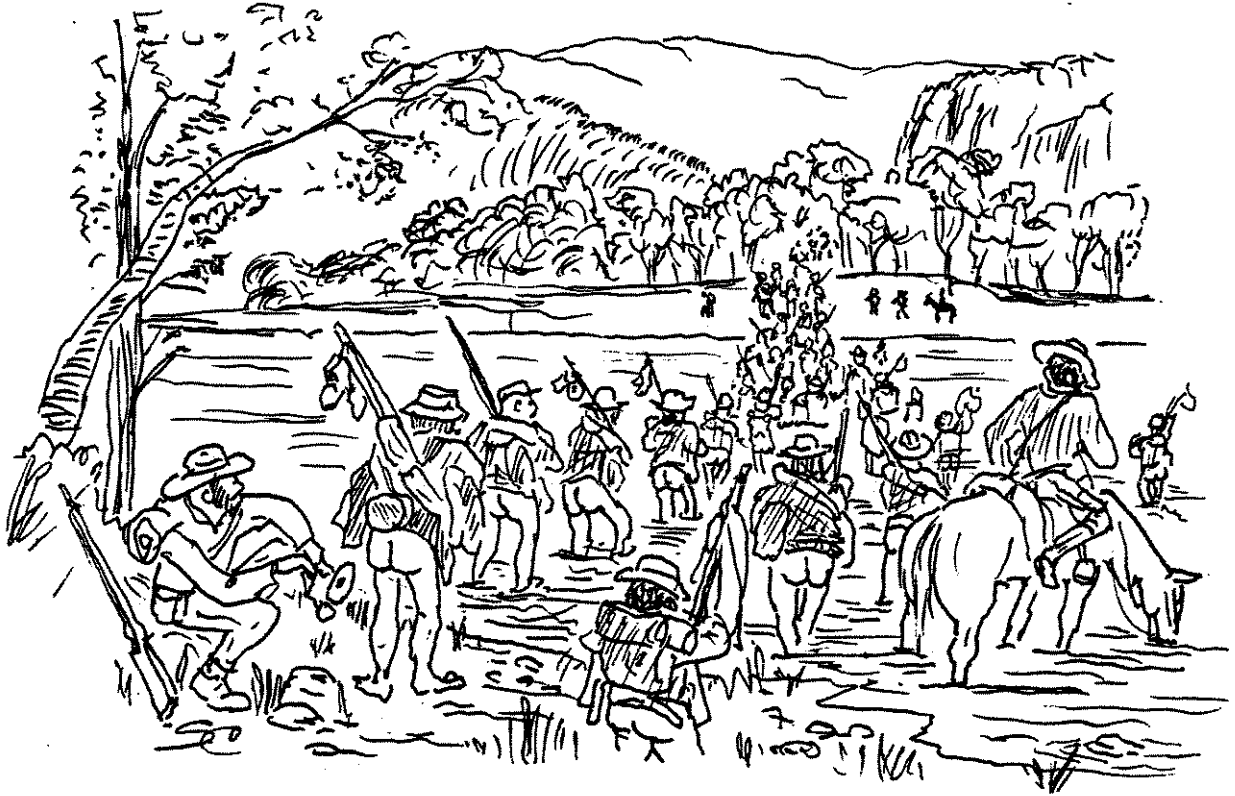
President Bill Victory  
623-4666  
221-5419  
Vice Pres. Neil Evans  
752-2296  
Secretary Tim Beatty  
Treasurer Brian Kowell  
Sgt.-at-Arms George  
Vourljianis;  
Editor and Illustrator  
of the Charger Stuart  
Cramer  
Assistant Editor Hazel  
Cramer 967-5971  
Dues: \$20 Sept. to Sept.  
Non-resident members \$10

## SLATE

The slate of new officers for 1983-84 proposed by the nominating committee and to be voted on at the May 10th meeting is as follows:

For President: Neil Evans  
For Vice-Pres: Brian Kowell  
For Secretary: Tim Beatty  
For Treasurer: George  
Vourljianis  
For Sgt.-at-Arms: Jack  
Allison  
New Executive Committeemen:  
Tom Vansickles and Ray  
Channock

# SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN



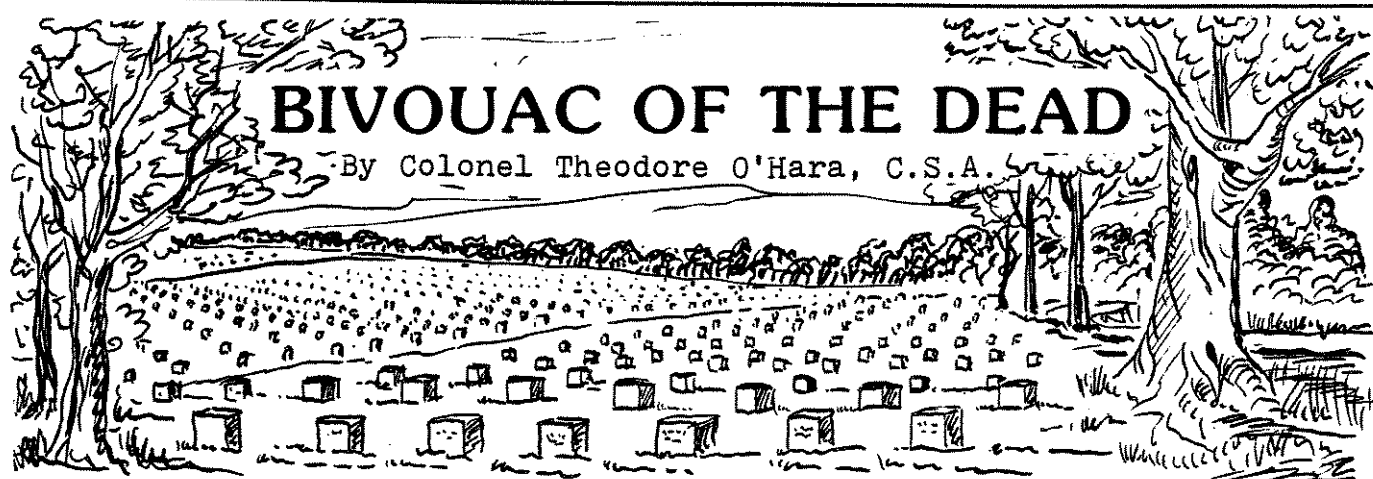
On many a forced march the soldiers of both sides had to ford creeks and rivers fully clothed. The misery of continuing their advance with pants soaked and shoes squishing has been noted in a great many memoirs and regimental histories.

When a wider river was encountered and time not so pressing, it was customary to allow the troops to pull off shoes and pants and wade in, holding powder, gun and clothing over their heads. When the weather was hot the footsloggers often took advantage of the opportunity to cool off by removing even more of their clothing.

One diarist wrote, "It was a most amusing sight to see so many bare bottoms bobbing across the water."

We've often wondered what happened when the other shore was reached. Did the column bunch up while the men redressed, or did they string out for miles ahead and gradually fall out to pull on socks, shoes and pants?





# BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD

By Colonel Theodore O'Hara, C.S.A.

This poem is considered by many the greatest martial elegy in the English language. Couplets from it have been inscribed on military memorials throughout the world, from the iron tablets at Arlington; among the solemn rows at Shiloh, the quiet glens at Chattanooga, on monuments and scrolls on Flanders fields to the rocky slopes of Iwo Jima. Usually the name of its author is not given, and the fine old soldier-poet is all but forgotten - a poor return for his valiant service in the field and for the literary gem he bequeathed us. A study of Colonel Theodore O'Hara revealed many interesting facets, but first, here is the original (continued on next page)

(Original Version in twelve stanzas)

- I. The muffled drum's sad roll has beat  
The soldiers last tattoo;  
No more on life's parade shall meet  
That brave and fallen few.  
On Fame's eternal camping-ground  
Their silent tents are spread,  
And Glory guards, with solemn round,  
The bivouac of the dead.
- II. No rumor of the foe's advance  
Now swells upon the wind;  
No troubled thought at midnight haunts  
Of loved ones left behind;  
No vision of the morrow's strife  
The warrior's dreams alarms,  
No braying horn nor screaming file  
At dawn shall call to arms.
- III. Their shivered swords are red with rust  
Their plumed heads are bowed;  
Their haughty banner, trailed in dust,  
Is now their martial shroud;  
And plenteous funeral tears have washed  
The red stains from each brow,  
And the proud forms, by battle gashed,  
Are free from anguish now.
- IV. The neighing troop, the flashing blade,  
The bugle's stirring blast,  
The charge, the dreadful cannonade,  
The din and shout are past;  
Nor war's wild note, nor glory's peal,  
Shall thrill with fierce delight  
Those breasts that nevermore may feel  
The rapture of the fight.

- V. Like the fierce northern hurricane  
That sweeps his great plateau,  
Flushed with the triumph yet to gain,  
Came down the serried foe.  
Who heard the thunder of the fray  
Break o'er the field beneath,  
Knew well the watchword of that day  
Was "Victory or death".

- VI. Long did the doubtful conflict rage  
O'er all that stricken plain,  
For never fiercer fight did wage  
The vengeful blood of Spain.  
And still the storm of battle blew,  
Still swelled the gory tide—  
Not long our stout old chieftain knew  
Such odds his strength could bide.

- VII. 'Twas at that hour his stern command  
Called to a martyr's grave  
The flower of his own loved land,  
The Nation's flag to save,  
By rivers of their father's gore  
His first-born laurels grew,  
And well he deemed the sons would pour  
Their lives for glory too.

- VIII. Full many a norther's breath has swept  
O'er Angostura's plain—  
And long the pitying sky has wept  
Above its mouldering slain.  
The raven's screams, or eagle's flight,  
Or shepherd's pensive lay,  
Alone awakens each sullen height  
That frowned o'er that dread fray.

continued on page 5

## THE BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD

- X. Thus 'neath their parent turf they rest,  
Far from the gory field,  
Borne to a Spartan mother's breast  
On many a bloody shield;  
The sunshine of their native sky  
Smiles sadly on them here,  
And kindred eyes and hearts watch by  
The heroes' sepulcher.
- XI. Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead,  
Dear as the blood ye gave,  
No impious footstep here shall tread  
The herbage of your grave;  
Nor shall your glory be forgot  
While Fame her record keeps,  
Or Honor points the hallowed spot  
Where Valor proudly sleeps.
- XII. Yon Marble Minstrel's voiceful stone  
In deathless song shall tell,  
When many a vanquished age hath flown,  
The story how ye fell;  
Nor wreck, nor change, nor winter's blight  
Nor Time's remorseless doom,  
Shall dim one ray of Glory's light  
That glides your deathless tomb.

Like the fierce northern hurricane  
That sweeps his broad plateau,  
Flushed with the triumphs yet to gain,  
Came down the serried foe.  
*Our heroes felt the shock, and leapt  
To meet them on the plain;  
And long the pitting sky hath wept  
Above our gallant slain.*

poem, written to commemorate a monument to those Kentuckians who made the supreme sacrifice during the Mexican War. (1857)

Later, when it began to be used in United States military cemeteries and at various dedications, stanzas V, VI, VII, and VIII were omitted because certain words referred to the Mexican conflict, and the author altered the Vth stanza to unite the two parts to make the poem a true elegy for any war. The altered Vth verse is given below the XIIth at the left.

Theodore O'Hara, son of famous schoolmaster Kean O'Hara, was born on Feb., 11, 1820, raised in Kentucky and graduated from St. Joseph's College at Bardstown. He was admitted to the bar along with his lifelong friend John C. Breckinridge in 1842. He did not care for that profession and turned to journalism, becoming editor of the Frankfort Yeoman. In 1845 he wrote a famous elegy "The Old Pioneer," a poem honoring Daniel Boone for the ceremonial burial of that noted Kentuckian at the State Cemetery of Kentucky.

One of the first to volunteer when Congress declared war on Mexico, O'Hara was commissioned Captain and Assistant Quartermaster of U.S. Volunteers. He was with General Scott's Army, being quartermaster of General Gideon Pillow's Division. This division took part in the battles of Vera Cruz, Cerro Gordo, Contreras and Chatultepec. O'Hara was promoted to Major for gallantry on the field.

After the War with Mexico he was employed by the Tehuantepec Railroad and was sent to Mexico City to seek government aid in behalf of the enterprise. He soon terminated this job when he became completely carried away by General Narisco Lopez's scheme to invade Cuba and liberate it from Spain. The General raised volunteer regiments in Kentucky, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and O'Hara was elected Colonel of the Kentucky Regiment. The invaders successfully landed in Cuba, and at the head of his regiment whose numbers had been filled out with native Cubans, O'Hara led a charge that captured the Spanish barracks at Cardenas. But he was shot through both legs, almost mortally - the first foreign blood ever to be shed in Cuba's struggle for independence. The invasion was repulsed, and General Lopez's forces retired to Key West. A later invasion was also defeated, and the garroting of Lopez and 181 Kentuckians who were executed is another story.

Having recovered from his wounds, O'Hara launched into journalism again as proprietor and editor of the Louisville Times, 1852-54. He vigorously supported the candidacy of Franklin Pierce, and in one editorial attacked General Winfield Scott as being no friend to the Catholic Church or the Irish. In 1855 he was appointed by President Pierce as a Captain, and he accepted the commission to the famous 2nd Cavalry, the one with so many later Civil War generals - Albert Sidney Johnson as its Colonel, R. E. Lee, Lt. Col., George Thomas and Don Carlos Buel, majors;

Although he did not accompany his parents to the Ford Theatre the night his father was murdered, Robert Todd Lincoln was at the bedside when Abraham Lincoln died the next morning. Thus began a disquieting association with presidential assassinations that haunted Lincoln's life.

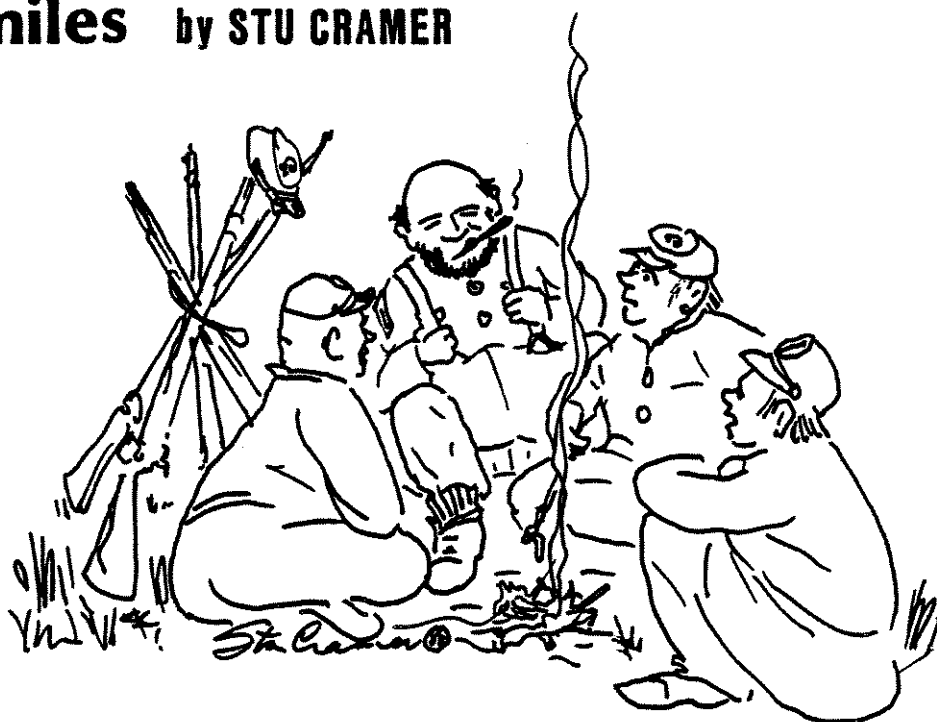
In 1881 he was walking through the Washington railway station with James A. Garfield when Garfield was shot. Twenty years later, in 1901, Lincoln was stepping off a train in Buffalo, New York, just as an anarchist shot William McKinley, who was at a nearby reception. In each case Lincoln was on the scene in minutes. By a final curious twist of fate, when Robert Todd Lincoln died in 1926, his grave in Arlington was placed near the site where John F. Kennedy, the fourth President to be assassinated, would be buried.

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-Americana Magazine

## Civil War Smiles by STU CRAMER

"I wasn't born great  
and I haven't  
achieved greatness,  
but I'm still hoping  
that it will be  
thrust upon me."



### THEO. O'HARA

Kirby Smith, Earl Van Dorn, among the captains; with Hood and Fitzhugh Lee among its lieutenants. O'Hara was on recruiting duty when the Civil War started and he resigned to join the Confederate army as a captain. He was on General A.S. Johnson's staff at Shiloh; later became a light colonel and served as Assistant Adjutant General under his old friend General Breckinridge, who mentioned O'Hara for gallantry in action at Stone's River. Evidently his colonelcy was temporary because he served under Gen. Joseph Johnson as a captain of infantry until the end of the war.

Colonel O'Hara (as he was always referred to) never married, but had several love affairs as attested by many of his other poems. Although the "Bivouac" elegy was his most famous, and was read at his burial when he died of typhoid fever in 1867, this little ditty bears out the many references made to his Irish wit:

I'd lie for her,  
I'd sigh for her,  
I'd drink the river dry for her-  
But I'm damned if I'd die for her.

# 1983 FIELD TRIP SHAPING UP

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Although special mailings on the Field Trip will be sent out during the summer, the main features of this CCWRT jamboree can now be announced. In the last 25 years we have had trips to all the major battlefields (sometimes more often). So something new is now being offered in a group of secondary, lesser known battlefields that will prove different and new to all of us. These fields are close to each other in Northern Virginia, easily reached from Cleveland by car pools.

Trip planners Brian Kowell and Neville Bayless state that places to be covered will include many of the following: Brandy Station, Kelly's Ford, Cedar Mountain, Mine Run, Jackson's march around Pope to Manassas, and possibly Bristow Station and Clark Mountain.

To guide us on this esoteric journey we will have the expertise of Ed Bearss, our genial leader on many past field trips, and than whom there is no "thanwhomer" on Civil War battlefields. It is expected that brief printed material on these fields will be furnished to each participant so they can study in advance.

The days in the field will be Saturday and Sunday, October 1st and 2nd Headquarters will probably be at Culpepper, Virginia. So with the Who, When and Where all set, get your affairs in order, tell your wife and plan for a fun-filled Field Trip in '83. MORE LATER.

Neville Bayless

Ed. Note: Than whom  
there is no thanwhomer  
as a field trip planner.

\* \* \* \* \*

## WELCOME

The following four names have been approved for new membership:

William Miele, 420 Willard Road, Aurora, Ohio 44202

David Johnson, 3644 Stoer Avenue, Shaker Heights, Ohio 44122

William Kostic, 59 18 Maplewood Road, Mayfield Heights, Ohio 44124

David Goldthorpe, 620 South Main Street, Amherst, Ohio 44001

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Next issue of The Charger will be the midsummer extra - sometime in July or August - and will resume Fred Gill's popular book reviews.



Charles Henry Smith, a Georgia lawyer, was the celebrated southern humorist "Bill Arp." Generations after the War he was called "the Will Rogers of the Confederacy." He spoke for the south in the time of the trouble and afterwards. Once a reporter asked him for the details of his career in the Confederate army. He replied, "Well, I reckon I'll have to go into the bloody details and gory facts. I killed more Yankees than they did me."

\* \* \* \*

General Joe Wheeler, C.S.A., was wounded 3 times, had 16 horses shot out from under him and was in command in over 100 engagements. "Fightin' Joe" indeed!

\* \* \* \*

When Jackson's Stonewall Brigade was chasing General Banks' army out of the Valley, passing through Winchester, the fleeing Federal retreat became a rout. Arms, knapsacks, blankets, and all sorts of accoutrements were strewn along the streets. General Banks rode among the confusion trying to restore some semblance of order.

"My God!" he shouted at a mob of fleeing soldiers, "don't you love your country?"

"Yes," came a loud reply, "and I'm trying to git back there as fast as I can."

\* \* \* \*

For as long as anyone around can remember, some 800 black vultures have wintered near the Gettysburg battlefield. Local legend has it that the carrion-eating birds got their liking for Gettysburg after coming to feed on the carcasses of the hundreds of dead horses.

Excerpt from the Wall Street Journal, from reader Betty Johnson.

\* \* \* \*

Lincoln, whose formal schooling was, as he described it, in "littles," short periods not exceeding two months and totaling no more than a year, was awarded an honorary L.L.D. in 1860 by Knox College. In 1864 he was awarded an L.L.B. degree by Columbia University and in that same year an L.L.D. by Princeton. What price glory!

\* \* \* \*

Abe Lincoln, 6' 4", had an amiable weakness for measuring heights back-to-back with other tall men. He took an almost childish pride in his height and physical prowess. A champion wrestler and strong man. Traits of a very person; not those of the demigod some authors would make him.

\* \* \* \*

**WANTED:** The Hidden Lincoln, The Lincoln Nobody Knows; Abraham Lincoln, by Herndon, A. L. The Prairie Years and A.L. The War Years, by Carl Sandburg. If you care to sell, call Stu Cramer, 216-967-5971. Send in YOUR want list.

\* \* \* \*

