

The Charger

CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P.O. BOX 5028 • CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

MARCH, 1982

VOLUME 25 NUMBER 7

214th Meeting

DATE: MARCH 9th

TAKE: ~~DR. JAMES "Bud" ROBERTSON~~

SUBJECT: "FEDERAL GENERALS- The Heroic and The Humorous"

THE HERMIT CLUB

COCKTAILS 6:00 P.M. DINNER 7:00

* SAME DATE - SAME PLACE *
TOPIC: "THE PAMUNKEY-CHICAHOMINY EXPEDITION, JUNE 12-15, 1862"

LAST-MINUTE PROGRAM CHANGE!

field of Civil War history, no stranger to members of and him speak here in 1974 with enthusiasm... through his writings. Not too many good. Dr. Robertson is the prestigious and heritage Civil War. Bruce, Bell, and herous for

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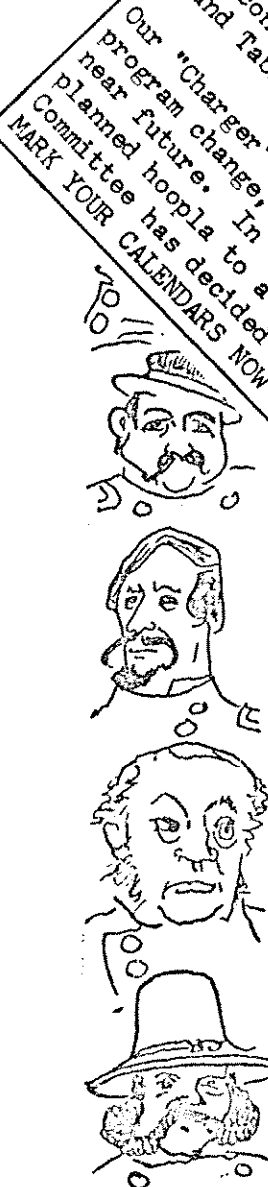
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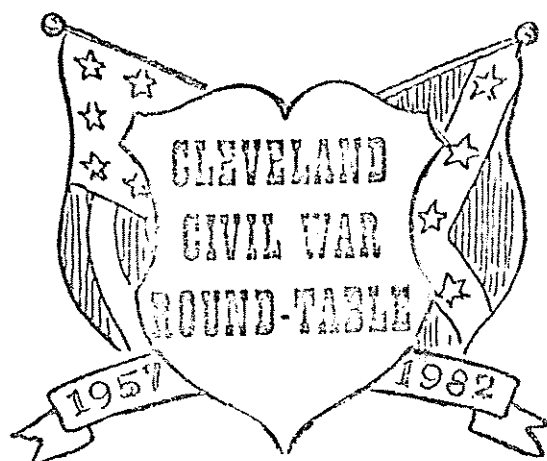
Due to unfortunate personal circumstances, Dr. Robertson has been forced to cancel his appearances with us on the 9th and the Western Reserve CWRT on the 10th of March. Charter member, ardent field-tripper, and outspoken composer of letters-to-the-editor Neville Bayless has consented on short notice to give us a second look at a program he presented to our Round Table on December 13, 1960. Thank you, Neville!

During the C.W.Cent
of the Centennial Commis
in the process, and was a
East Room for John Kennedy

Our speaker is the author
over 75 articles for historical
icals. He has taught at many univ
try and is presently teaching at t
Institute and State University at B

This will truly be a meeting to be remembered!





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 Vermilion, Ohio 44089-0444
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Dues: \$17.00 from Sept. to Sept.
 Non-resident members, \$5.00



Member Frank Gillan, at the last
 meeting, presented the club with
 a 9" x 1½" white marble disk from
 his collection of historic artif-
 acts. Carved on one side is
 "Sons of Veterans," and on the
 other, "Herman Brenner - 1895."
 It will make an excellent sounding
 board for the President's gavel.

Last Month's Meeting

Bill Stark delivered a well-research-
 ed and illustrated talk on the Civil
 War camps and hospitals of Cleveland.
 Mustering and training camps early in
 the war were located along what is
 now Woodland Avenue, between E. 30
 and E. 40. Camp Cleveland, a hospital
 throughout the war, was located in the
 "Tremont" neighborhood, the vicinity
 of what is now W. 7th and Jefferson
 Avenue. No trace remains of these
 facilities today, as slides of these
 areas plainly showed.

Graves of patients who died at Camp
 Cleveland were found in the Monroe St.
 and Woodland Cemeteries, headstones
 being shown in the slides. Bill advised
 any listeners who might wish to visit
 the Woodland Cemetery grave sites to
 take along a "lookout," the neighbor-
 hood being a very tough one. He also
 indicated that the graves in the area
 were frequent targets of ghoulish vand-
 alism.

Our speaker also made a plea for member
 contributions to the Encyclopedia of
 Cleveland History. He is responsible
 for military history items for this
 publication, which is targeted for a
 1984 release.

John Harkness

* * *

Member Ray Swanson will be the speaker at our
 April 13th meeting. His topic will be the
 impact of railroads on the Civil War, with a
 discussion of why they had very little benefit
 for the Southern Cause.

Our May meeting will be the tradition-
 al Ladies Night. This meeting will be
 held at the lovely home of member Ken
 Callahan. Those who attended the meeting
 held there last year know the treat that
 is in store.

We welcome three more new members:

Kevin Callahan
 19101 South Park Blvd.
 Shaker Hts., O. 44122
Timothy P. Beatty
 20466 Williamsburg Ct.
 Middleburg Hts., O. 44130
L. Jonathon Groza
 23915 East Oakland
 Bay Village, O. 44140

FRED GILL'S BOOK REVIEW

FIVE POUNDS OF PAPER

Mary Chesnut 's Civil War Edited by C. Vann Woodward. Univ. Press, New Haven '8

This ponderous book has been the darling of reviewers. I have read nothing but great lauds for Mary Chesnut and even brassier hosannas for Yale Professor Woodward's immense scholarly work in restoring her Civil War journals to their pristine condition which had been sadly diluted by editors of previous editions. I was, therefore, anticipating with pleasure a look at this new work. Well, I have it here before me and do not - repeat do not - find it, as two eminent reviewers have said identically "...an indispensable source for study of the Civil War." I find I am one who can dispense with it.

Mary Chesnut was a fascinating character. But was she a literary great? Long ago I read in Edmond Wilson's Patriotic Gore her work was great literature. He even compared it to War and Peace! Well, consider that in another place and another time (1936): Wilson said, "The Communists...in the long run must always give way to any serious pressure from the people." Does this give you a feeling that Wilson's critical faculties may be a mite overblown? Even Woodward suggests she was a failed novelist. My long and dogged prodding of these journals so nicely clarified by Woodward, doesn't ring any literary chimes with me.

The facts are clear that Mary Chesnut was on the spot where much of importance happened in the Confederacy. She comments on these happenings of course. But are these comments indispensable to a study of the war? If they are, to get at them you must slog through dismal swamp after dismal swamp of gossip. Just plain old unadorned gossip - gossip which doesn't enlighten very much.

The interesting parts of this book are Woodward's lively sketch of Mary Chesnut 's life, her paradoxical abhorrence of slavery and her foreshadow of today's feminism and his detailed account of his winnowing of her journals and uncovering the absurdities of earlier editions of them, especially Ben Ames Williams contorted opus.

Woodward's work is a classic example of historical scholarship. Detailed and painstaking, it literally vibrates with scholarship. It surely evokes admiration from other scholars of history. It certainly appeals in the same way a paper entitled, "Parameter Quiddles and Effects of Monoaceticacid of Salicylicacid on Quarterans of Disassociated Ion of Free Yttrium" would appeal to a chemical scholar. Both, however, are a little outside the limits of an ordinary reader.

Mary Chesnut was a very interesting lady even if no literary genius, but I didn't need 886 pages to find it out.

Ed. Note: Fred is in Florida and went out of his way to get this review to us in time. In fact, he engaged a private courier, one Neville Bayless, to carry it back up north and post it from Cleveland.
I found the Mary Chesnut book such a bore that I couldn't find anything in it to illustrate. I guess I am still smarting from having suckered myself into paying \$29 for the thing.

REMINISCENCES OF BANNERMAN'S

by member
Frank Gillen

Continued from last month

My torch revealed stacks of cannon limbers and carriages, swathed in burlap, and they ran axle-to-axle, on and on into the darkness, like a huge mound of seaturtles. I judged them to be German relics of WW I.

I had been told that the castle was built of average cement that was so poor that the walls had to be reinforced with Civil War musket barrels. I actually prized one out...but would you believe, I forgot and left it on the dock.

Trying to find my way up to the next floor, I flashed my light all over that dead black cavern I was in, and finally the finger of light disclosed a concrete stairway cast into the wall at the farther end. Climbing over a slimy pile of rotting saddlebags, I wound my way around stacks of strange shapes and broken boxes, finally arriving at the stairway, but much to my horror found there was no railing. To make matters worse, the crumbling concrete had trickled down and filled the steps with sand. Me, I'm scared of heights...how was I to get up that long narrow 14' flight? But I'd come too far and waited too long for this to stop, so mustering up all my courage and digging my toes into the sand and not looking down or sideways, I made it. It was an ordeal, slipping and panting, I tell you. But imagine my surprise to discover that the castle had been built on a hillside and one could enter directly into several of the upper floors by just walking in from the outside!

On the next floor I came across a large pile of sacks, about 30' long and piled stairway-fashion almost to the ceiling. I pulled out my sharp knife and slit a few, and out poured some Spanish-American Mauser cartridge boxes. Several also contained some big hairy spiders. In another room the floor was strewn with mouldy blue cloth-covered pith helmets from the 80's or 90's hundreds of them. I also walked over a carpet of iron artillery grease water buckets all hand-banded, of Civil War vintage.

I had a narrow escape on the 4th floor after skirting row upon row of decaying cavalry saddles. I stopped; guess some sixth sense was working as I played the beam of my light up along the walls. When I turned the light down to the floor, there, about 3 inches from my feet was a great 12' hole where the floor had rotted through - to the open floor about 15' below. It is hard to describe the confusion of junk strewn about - an infinite variety of every conceivable military item; parts of bayonets, wooden naval shutters, huge powder cans, some 4' in diameter wooden boxes with their covers ripped off, leather by the tons, but with brass buckles and parts cut off for salvage. This, my first visit to Bannerman Island, was indeed an adventure.

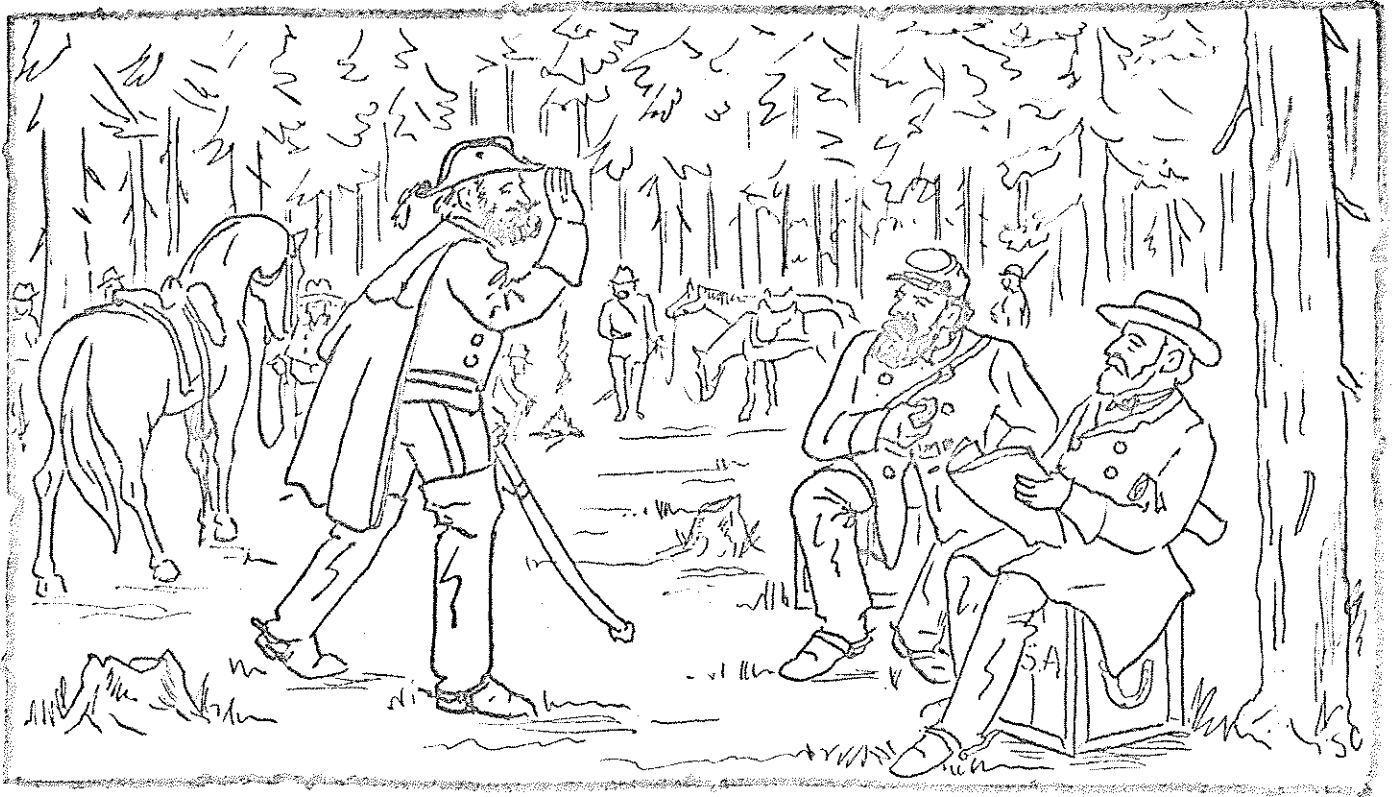
I returned several times and was always impressed by the vast amount the place had contained. This, of course, was after 1920 when the arsenal had blown up, a section of the stone wall blown to the mainland. Cities and villages along the Hudson River had been shaken and hundreds of windows were shattered. Bannermans salvaged what they could and did not use the island from then on. I have learned that the castle and its contents have now burned to the ground, and Bannerman Island as such is no more. As I understand it, the title has reverted to the State of New York. While I'd still like to go back and have another look, I count my lucky stars that I did get there and had the opportunity to explore amongst the debris of this country's military past. With West Point only four miles downstream; the Cold Springs Foundry at Newburgh, New York, the entire area is steeped in American history.

This concludes Frank's reminiscences.



Bannerman's Island from Mainland

SCENES I'D LIKE TO HAVE SEEN



On the night of May 1st, 1863, while the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia were aligning their ponderous corps and divisions a few miles from Chancellorsville, Generals Lee and Jackson held an historic meeting.

Moving into a pine woods a few yards from where the Plank and Furnace roads crossed, the two famous Confederates turned up discarded Federalhardtack boxes and seated themselves out of the hearing from the curious who had been attracted to these prominent figures. Jackson, who had made a personal reconnaissance, reported to Lee all the information he had been able to gather, coupled with his own observations. As they talked, the moon slowly rose, the shadows took strange shapes, and their conversation began to canvass the possibility of turning the Federal right flank.

As if in answer to this possibility, General Jeb Stuart rode up, bursting with some exciting news. Stuart had just come from General Fitz Lee, and had the reports of the cavalry scouts, which revealed that the Federal line did not extend to the Rapidan River, or rest on any intermediate strong point; that it was thus definitely "in the air."

The case for a flank maneuver became a determination in the minds of the two leaders. The only question was whether or not there was a road that led to the Federal right, one that was not too long and under cover. Stuart left immediately to learn if such a road existed.

You will recall that such a hidden road was discovered, and by morning Jackson's entire corps was on the 12-mile end run that resulted in disaster for the huge Union army, and after some inexplicable boners "Fighting Joe" Hooker retreated. Chancellorsville was a great victory for the South, but it cost the life of "Stonewall Jackson."

What a sight that must have been when the three famous generals met there in the flickering light of a campfire to plan the bold move that won!

TRIAL OF MARY TODD LINCOLN

Washington, D. C. in 1860 was a seething cauldron of rumours, gossip and vindictive back-biting. This, of course, has always more or less been the norm, but at that date there were added the deadly ingredients of disloyalties, divisions and intrigues between the sympathizers of both North and South. Many were the instances of character assassinations amongst this hotbed of jealousies, but the victim of victims was the new First Lady.

Not only was she hated for her plainness and Southern heritage, but there was the fact that so many looked down their noses on her "backwoods," "uncouth" husband, who, in their eyes, had attained his high office on a fluke. Some of the vicious rumours about the lady still persist, even though disproved time and again.

Spiteful attacks on the character of Mary Lincoln continued into the 20th Century; such as an article that appeared in the Washington Star, Jan. 19, 1930, featuring letters written by Mrs. Lincoln to one Abram Wakeman, a Postmaster, implying some sort of illicit romance while she was still in the White House. Life Magazine, always on the lookout for something sensational, took up the story of this collection of letters playing up the angle that they were said to be worth \$100,000. It turned out that no such sum was ever offered, and serious students easily exploded all implications. Dorothy Thompson, the noted columnist, in a timely essay stated, "A whole school of historians has arisen which interprets history upon the snakeseye view of gossip columnists."

The most telling assassination of Mary Lincoln's character on a nationwide scale was the work of William H. Herndon, Lincoln's erstwhile law partner. On Nov. 16, 1866, he gave a lecture in Springfield, Ill., which made a malicious and acrimonious attack on the widow Lincoln, and laid the foundation for the myth of the Lincoln-Ann Rutledge romance. It was a fabulous piece of fiction concocted out of small-town gossip and his own imagination. The speech was a sensation, and it resulted in many more engagements.

Herndon lost no time in embellishing his creations, as is the custom of those who find that the juicier they make their talks, the more lucrative they become. He averred among other things that Lincoln had told Mary he loved another, and that their marriage was a farce.

In 1889 "Billy" Herndon put it all together in a biography of Lincoln, cashing in to the last penny on his association with his partner of long ago. The book painted Mary as an ill-tempered shrew, discounting her role as mother of four Lincoln sons, three of whom died at early ages.

Mrs. Mary Ruth Randall, in an article in the September, 1949, issue of The Abraham Lincoln Quarterly entitled "Mary Lincoln: Judgment Appealed" attacked the dependability of other phases of Lincoln history which have come from Herndon's "...vast scrap basket of second hand or hearsay evidence and gossip."

There is no doubt that Mary Todd Lincoln was an eccentric person, given to intense jealousy and extravagance, but no more so than many other women in the public limelight. Her extensive purchases exceeding her budgets somewhat dim in the light of similar actions by First Ladies before or since. (One is put immediately in mind of what Jackie, Lady Bird and Nancy spent for White House china.)

The real culmination of Mary Lincoln's humiliation came on Tuesday, May 19, 1875, when she was placed under arrest, taken into custody under a threat of force, rushed into a courtroom where a jury waited - already impaneled and sworn in - was tried, declared insane and confined in an institution. By nightfall the next day, she sat alone in the gloom of a room with a

barred window, branded by court order "Mary Lincoln, Lunatic."

Who swore out the warrant to bring this about - who committed her? Her only remaining son, Robert Lincoln.

This sordid story is set forth in detail in Trial of Mary Todd Lincoln, by James A. Rhodes and Dean Jauchius, Bobbs-Merrill, N.Y., 1959. This book gives the entire detail of the trial. The whole affair assails one's olfactories with the attar of politics.

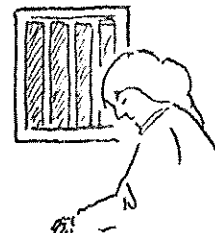
As the next presidential election approached (1876) the Republican Party was split between the Stalwarts (Grant faction) and the Liberals. Robert Lincoln was a Stalwart but was too much of a sapling for presidential timber. But his name was political magic. The Liberals had to do something to keep him from taking a political sleighride or providing one for the opposition. So Judge David Davis (very close to Robert), Leonard Swett and Isaac N. Arnold, all old friends of Abraham, put their Liberal heads together. They were died-in-the-wool politicians, not sentimentalists. It was this trio that set Robert up as a patsy by persuading him to commit his mother, who had been making his life miserable over her finances.

The three "old friends" made all the arrangements, collecting witnesses, letters from doctors and other "evidence" of Mrs. Lincoln's derangement. On the bench sat Judge M.R.M. Wallace, Democrat and known political enemy of the late President Lincoln. Swett made the arrest, and Arnold acted as Mrs. Lincoln's attorney.

The accused was not given time to select her own attorney, no opportunity to summon any friendly witnesses or time to prepare a defense; she was denied the statutory right to participate in the selection of jurors. At the trial Arnold did not challenge any testimony against her and the right to cross examine was never invoked. A kangaroo could have hopped across the courtroom and no one would have seen it.

The fact that Robert had committed his mother to an insane asylum cooked his political goose, as was intended.

Thirteen months later, after the Reformer Rutherford B. Hayes had been elected, a second insanity trial took place, and Mary Todd Lincoln was declared SANE. Her property was restored to her and she was given her freedom. The whole trial only took four minutes. Her lawyer? Leonard Swett.



-Thanks to reader Clem Frank for valuable information. Other sources: Lincoln Lore, Trial of Mary Todd Lincoln *ibid*, Mr. Lincoln's Wife, by Anne Colver, Reveille in Washington, by Margaret Leech.

* * * * *

In November, 1929, the Atlantic Monthly announced that beginning in its December issue, a serial would appear in three parts, being the original love letters between Abraham Lincoln and Ann Rutledge. These were supposed to have been a new discovery, the alleged manuscripts coming from one Wilma Frances Minor, of San Diego, California, and sold to the magazine editor, Ellery Sedgewick, who had them authenticated by "experts" (but not quite expert enough.) After the first two installments, the series was withdrawn. Too many handwriting experts disagreed with their authenticity, and too many historians attacked them, pointing out countless discrepancies as to chirography, chronology, geography and history.

From Bulletin of Lincoln Life Foundation, January, 1970
(Above greatly condensed)



A good joke was told by a Confederate prisoner about a member of his company from Mississippi, who had never been near tidewater until his regiment reached Pensacola, and encamped near the Gulf of Mexico. Of course the first thing in order was a good wash. Being always accustomed to fresh water, and in utter ignorance of the briny properties of the Gulf, this man dipped up a bucket of water, sat down near several of his comrades, and went to his tent for soap and a towel. A few minutes later he began his ablutions in earnest, and at once filled his ears and eyes with brine. Recovering his shock, and rubbing his burning eyeballs furiously, he shouted: "I can lick the blasted galoot that salted this water. Blamed queer if a man can't draw a bucket of water without some infernal fool putting salt into it." He dashed the water on the ground in a great rage and immediately secured another bucket of the same, amid the shouts and jeers of the others.

-Sent in by member Ray Swanson

* * * *

Jeff Davis, worried about Chattanooga, rushes into the War Department and asks, "What dope do you have on the west?" "Only General Bragg," was the answer.

* * * *



Ever hear of Brig. Gen. Wladimir Krzyzanowski? Or Brig. Gen. Leon Jastremski? The first served in the Union Army, while the second was a Confederate from Louisiana. These and other Poles were the topic of a meeting last year of the CWRT of Wilmington, Dela., presented by Charles Klczewski, one of the founders of the Captain Stanislaus Mlotkowski Memorial Room at Fort Delaware. Mlotkowski was a Federal artillery commander from 1861-1865. And did you know there was a Polish Legion from New York in the Union Army, and a Polish Brigade in the Confederate Army? Just zcthot yzude like to knowski.

* * * *

A letter from the Chattanooga Civil War Round Table asking if we would be interested in helping them take on the project of trying to have the Medal of Honor presented to two Ohio soldiers, Pvt. George D. Wilson, and Pvt. Perry Shadrack, the only two of the 20 who participated in the Andrews Raid ("The Great Locomotive Chase") who did not receive the medal. Both of these Ohio men are buried in the Chattanooga National Cemetery. As you recall, the Andrews Raiders were the first ones ever to receive the medals. Pvt. Sam Slavens, Co. E. 33rd Vol. Inf., was the last member of the group to receive the honor, July 28, 1883. On this March 25th, 1982, it will be the 120th Anniversary of the first issue of the Medal of Honor. The U.S. Postal Service has announced plans to issue a commemorative stamp in 1983. Any members interested in such a project, see John Harkness.

* * * *

Misery is General Custer turning to his troops and saying, "Don't worry, men, reinforcements are on the way - by Amtrak!"