

Why I Participate in the Sons of Confederate Veterans

By Eric Farmer

Commander Maddox asked in our last meeting (18 February 2020) to ask ourselves why we are active members in our Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. In my case, I had already thought long and hard about that very question, but thought others may want to know about my motivations and the events that led up to my joining the SCV. In order to do this, we have to examine my past, my present, and where I want to be in my future. The decision to join was not an impulse, nor a lifelong dream, nor was I in any way groomed to be sympathetic, let alone proud, of my heritage as a descendent of Southern Confederate soldiers. Had you told me four or five years ago that I would have I probably would have either laughed at the idea, or been insulted. Why did my attitude change?

I suppose it began with two of my grandparents. My maternal grandfather was born under questionable circumstances, with significant discrepancies pointing in the direction that he was not the son of the man he took his name from. Now, my grandfather, or at least as I knew him, never agonized over this lack of certainty about who his father was and how he came to be. He was always sure of himself, and no matter whom his father was, there was no changing him. That said, I always believed he would have liked to know for sure about his roots. Sadly, he passed away in 2009, before we learned definitively who my great-grandfather was (we discovered in 2019). My paternal grandmother, on the other hand, is a Southern lady from Missouri, who was always very proud of her pedigree. I particular remember her telling me not to use “gentleman” as a word to describe any young man, because I am one, and a gentleman was “a man with manners and of fine breeding.” She never talked to me about the War, nor her ideas and pride in

being of the Southern culture and descendent of Confederate soldiers. But, she encouraged me that to know one's roots was a blessing, and that no matter what you found, you could always find an ancestral line to be proud of. It was due to these grandparents, one with a known history, and one without, that motivated me to research my own.

The results, as you may have guessed, was that I found that I am the descendent of at least three Confederate soldiers, one of them being from my grandfather's side (PVT Eli Honey, who was captured and survived less than two months in a Federal prison camp in Illinois, died 1862), and two being from different branches of my father's (another died in 1862, the other survived the War). So how could I be proud of my heritage, with that kind of ancestry? My kin fought to keep slavery intact! Or so I thought at the time. I began to research, hoping to find something that might help me understand them. And my research was, at least in my mind, as if the trumpets had sounded and the walls of Jericho had fallen, only the faith and trumpets that brought down the walls was the words and actions of those of the Confederate cause, and the walls of Jericho were the walls which defended the government lies I had been told since I was young enough to read. I learned that being a Confederate descendent meant not that your ancestor fought for slavery, something which meant so little to so many of them, but that our ancestors fought in self-defense. The soldiers of the United States fought believing that they were saving their country, but the soldiers of the Confederate States fought believing that they were fighting in defense of their homes and loved ones. The enemy was in front, and their hearths were behind. They were the last bulwark, the Spartans at Thermopylae, who fought against the tyranny of a foreign power (Note: slavery was a part of Greek culture, and no Greek city-state depended on it so much as Sparta, yet under the Achaemenid Persian Empire, slavery was rare; history is written by the victors).

How did that influence my present situation, and my situation as adjutant in Jefferson Davis Camp 175 of the Colorado Division in the Sons of Confederate Veterans? I took a look around at my peers. My peers who demean anything Confederate, or don't care. The more vocal tend to opt towards hatred rather than indifference. They malign my ancestors, and stand as judge over things they neither know nor care to learn. They hate racism, so they claim. So do I. They hate the history of the institution of slavery in our country. So do I. They hate my ancestors over a misunderstanding in what they stood for. A deliberate misunderstanding taught with a purpose by the very government our ancestors feared and fought against. Our history was written by our enemy, and we received no mercy in their assertions of our noble Southern warriors. I couldn't stand it, I wanted to do something, and so I did. I joined the SCV in the hope of being able to one day say proudly in a crowd of diverse peoples, that I am the descendent of the soldiers of the South, the glory boys in gray, Confederates, and not fear that someone has taken offense. The best way to do that is through education, which is what the SCV is all about. And it is my dearest wish to pass down the truth to future Confederate descendents, that their ancestors were heroes of the like of Hector, defeated and dragged through dirt, but held in high esteem even by those who actually had the courage to face them on the battlefield. That they can hold their heads up high, and never lose that indomitable spirit that assuredly must have been inherited.