

NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER, 2008

The Seventh Annual Congress at Marietta has been completed. A total of 13 letters of thanks were written and sent to various vendors and people who helped us. The receipts have been gathered, the After Action Report is nearing completion and work has started on the Eighth Annual Congress in Tupelo, MS.

By starting now on arrangements in Tupelo, Corinth and Florence, I hope to beat out other weddings, family reunions, sorority parties and the like that will want to use the limited meeting rooms and banquet facilities when we want to use them. Every firm has an answering machine, and it is hard to talk to anyone on the first call. Everyone wants to call back when it is convenient to them. But, the process is started.

There are some loose ends or echoes of the Seventh Congress; I want to relate to you while the thoughts are fresh in my mind.

H. David Richardson, Haworth, OK

Many asked, "Where is David?" This was the first Congress that he was unable to attend. He was unable to use his vacation time and his chain of command felt that he was needed for a special project and would not let him use 1 1/2 days of vacation. I offered to write a letter on his behalf or make calls in an effort to explain what our organization does and that each Congress is much like a wedding--there is no second showing, no alternative performance. It wasn't going to be allowed.

Famous Locomotives

The General is located at the Southern Museum in Kennesaw. The Texas is in another museum in Atlanta. Both were involved in the Great Train Chase. Somewhere in the swirl of events I think I got the two locomotives mixed up as to which museum they were located.

Perryman Picnic

Jon Perryman had wanted to host this picnic for years. He was finally able to do it and it was enjoyed by all who could attend. The pig was 132 pounds and had to be ordered two weeks in advance from a meat

supplier. It was cooked to perfection by his friends and served to the delight of all. Yes, the pig was named by Jon -- Sherman.

Tour Bus Microphone

On Saturday morning the lunches arrived on time and the tour bus arrived on time. The iced down chests of water were on time and loaded into the bus. Before the departure, I asked the bus driver to turn on his microphone. It was soon learned that the microphone was not working properly and there were multiple problems with it.

I knew we were on a tight schedule and if there was a replacement bus it would take time to exchange busses on short notice. Some busses were already being sent by FEMA to New Orleans to help with the hurricane evacuation. It was not likely to get a replacement bus in any amount of time. The driver was asked to keep working on the microphone. A decision had to be made and soon.

I decided to depart with the faulty microphone . The solution to try to talk to the group from the center of the bus aisle was not going to be very good. Most of the comments were to be made when we were out of the bus. While on the bus Kay Borden and Bob Price did their best to talk over the road noise. No matter which way the speaker was faced, someone would be behind them.

We tried to make do. Sometimes there is no good alternate solution. As it turned out, the bus we were on was ordered to be back in Marietta by 4:30 so it could be prepared to be sent to New Orleans. We arrived at our hotel at 4:35 P.M. and the bus departed for the home office.

Misplaced Cell Phone

Soon after the bus left the hotel, I was told that a cell phone was lost and thought to be on the bus. The owner had to meet a person at a downtown Atlanta hotel, and he had never been there before. He had to leave right then. I said I would work on it.

I went to my room and called the bus company and explained which bus was involved. It was being fueled and cleaned for the New Orleans trip while I was talking. The voice sounded hurried because he had, " A lot of busses to get out". I asked him to look for the phone on the bus. He did and reported that , " It's not there." I asked him to look again

as it had to be there. The voice came back with, " Where was the person sitting ?"

I told him, "Not in the front and not in the back, but more in the middle on the passenger side-- not behind the driver." He went to look again, and finally I was told, " I found a phone." But, he wanted me to identify it as the lost phone. I told him to open it and dial 3 and the number that would come up would be the wife's number. He could call and she would identify it. He didn't want to make a long distance call. So, I told him, " I know he lives in North Carolina, and I'm looking at the phone book that lists North Carolina area codes. I'll read the codes to you, and you tell me if one matches the number". The last area code read matched.

Then the problem was how to get the phone. Finally, I suggested that he has the phone taken to the desk at the Hilton in Marietta and leave it there and the owner could identify it with the desk clerk at a later time. This plan was agreed to, and it was done that way. What a deal. It was plain to me that the voice I got on the phone was not happy about looking for a lost phone. The bus driver and I had looked at the bus before he left and did not see anything. The phone must have been on the floor, under a seat. It all turned out OK because it was found before the bus was sent to New Orleans.

Heritage and Tourism

In the world of the fast-growing tourism market, what we do would be classed as " heritage tourism". The Rome News Tribune ran an article about Rome , Georgia's Fort Norton and Myrtle Hill Cemetery and how they could be included in the sites featured in commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War.

During the Civil War Rome had arms factories, rivers, forts, hospitals and railroads. It was the second most fortified Georgia city, not counting the seacoast cities. Sherman bypassed Rome rather than to try to take it.

The Chairman of the Georgia Civil War Commission, John Culpepper, released numbers from a survey on heritage tourism. The average visitor to historic sites is age 50 with a household income of 68,333 and spends 51.73 per day. Seventy per cent stay in local hotels, averaging two to three nights in each place.

Some of you will recall that John Culpepper was our guest speaker at the Fourth Annual Congress held in Dalton in 2005. As the Utilities Manager of the City of Chickamauga, Georgia, he discussed the impact of tourism in Walker County. The impact will likely increase with the 150th Anniversary and all the celebrations and events at battlefields and towns.

These kinds of articles are important to us and this one was forwarded by e-mail by Kay Borden. These articles not only tell what is happening, they often tell the names of local historians who might be a future speaker or tour guide. This article highlighted a cemetery that we may have overlooked. It gives some names that can be researched further. We do know that General Stovall came from Rome, Georgia and was a captain of the local artillery unit at the beginning of the WBTS. He had been a captain of the Rome Guards as far back as 1852.

Greenwood ,the Stovall home in Rome still exists. There are enough ties to General Stovall and the marches of the Army of Tennessee that Rome could be a stop on a future Congress. There is so much to see and do. We have to stay focused and work on our heritage one year at a time.

Updated Addresses

If you are reading this and your e-mail address or phone has changed, please send me the new information so that we can stay in touch.

That is all I have for this month. Next Newsletter will be out about October 15.

Mike Griggs
President