



July 12, 2022

To: All Chapters, Outposts, NGHs

Re: **Protecting our Order, Part 2**

By: **Brandon Wilding, XNGH-P**

On January 27, 1838, Abraham Lincoln would deliver one of his earliest published speeches entitled “The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions” before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois. In the speech, Lincoln stated, “At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer. If it ever reach us it must spring up amongst us; it cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen we must live through all time or die by suicide.” Lincoln’s warning was that the United States would not fall to foreign armies, but that its destruction would come from within through the rejection of Constitutional law.

As an Order, we would be wise to heed the words of Lincoln. As we continue to grow as an Order, we continue to grow more vulnerable to ourselves. Egos, gossip, and rumors weaken the foundations of any great organization, and we are not exempt from those parasitical devices. In fact, with the advent of social media, the destruction of our great Order is more of a reality than it has ever been.

Social media as a whole is not a bad or a divisive tool. Throughout 2020, many people were able to stay connected with brothers and share time catching up on what we all cherish; history, friendship, and a commonality of purpose. However, outside of those core functions, social media can become our greatest downfall. It can create a forum that allows the general public a firsthand

account of our rituals and secrets. It can take the political and religious opinions of individuals and place them upon the whole of the Order. It can drive resentment through rumors and half-truths. And it can create factions that are divisive and separate us as an Order. This letter hopes to address some of the issues that E Clampus Vitus faces in the wake of social media and offer a few suggestions that may prevent this great Order from self-destruction.

I. Fanning the Flames of Discontent

Over the last fifteen years, our great Order has had its share of drama. Tensions between ourselves have grown, been fueled, and embraced by the tool of social media. Simple matters that should have been handled in face-to-face forums, were plastered all over computer screens, and personal attacks became the catalysts for the destruction of friendships, relationships between chapters, and even chapters themselves. Unfortunately, this practice of “taking it to the computer” is growing and may soon be the downfall of our great Order.

ECV pages on Facebook and other social media forums should serve four main purposes. First, let us never forget, that we are a historical organization whose aim is to share the lost and forgotten history of our area. This should always be our focus on social media. We should be sharing the history of our chapters with other brothers. Historic photos, short stories, and interesting facts should be what make up the ECV pages on social media. Second, we should be sharing event information. Social media is an amazing forum for reaching out to corners of Clamperdom that are outside of a chapter’s typical membership. We should use this to our advantage and embrace the opportunity to bring new brothers to our chapters. Third, as we grow in our communities we should be sharing our community outreach and our accomplishments with each other. Fourth, a funny story or a joke goes a long way. To make each other laugh or smile is a powerful thing.

Beyond those purposes, social media can be destructive to our Order. If your username has “ECV” or “Clamper” attached to it, it is no different from wearing a red shirt in public. You represent the entire organization, and your actions and words become the actions and words of all of E Clampus Vitus. Intolerance, sexism, racism, and general hatred have no place in our Order. If you are a person that enjoys political debates or generally “stirring the pot” on social media, then you should consider removing anything connected to ECV from your username. It is not wrong to discuss politics, or other things that we were taught not to discuss over dinner, but your views can be construed as the overall beliefs of the Order, and that is not the message that we want to send out as a group. We are the Ancient and “HONORABLE” Order of E Clampus Vitus, and our words and actions should be that of honorable men. Respect for each other and others goes a long way.

We have heard it stated many times, even our current Sublime shouted it from the rooftops at GC this year, but let us be reminded that there is no such thing as a private page on the internet. The general public has access to all of our pictures, words, and rituals when they are posted on social media. We currently live in a world where people are looking for a reason to condemn and destroy social groups. We are an Order that raises thousands upon thousands of dollars for our communities, and puts up hundreds of historical markers. Yet one misunderstood comment on a “private page” could start a whirlwind that could destroy everything that we, and those that came before us, have built.

In reality, a Doins is where we should be sharing social camaraderie, and it is our only real “private page.” It is our sacred ground. At a Doins we can discuss, debate, argue, and poke fun, but in a constructive setting that can’t be misconstrued, reposted, and shared with people outside of our membership. When we debate things face-to-face, we are forced to better understand each other and we can ask questions and fully comprehend each other. Social media is not truly social. It creates a façade. It infects us as a social group and robs us of the environment where we can truly grow as an Order.

II. A Picture is Worth a Thousand Destructive Words.

During the events of Hurricane Katrina, a single photograph was used to tell two different stories by the media. The photo showed a young couple wading through the high waters with food and supplies in their arms. One news outlet used the photograph to show that the people of New Orleans were weathering the conditions and still providing for their families. Another news outlet used the photograph to show that looting was out of control in the area and that military assistance was needed. This is the danger of photography. Without proper context, it can be used to push false narratives. Photographs of a Doins and HOCO are the Achilles' heel of our Order online.

I am sure that we have all witnessed a brother taking pictures of PBCs throughout the pre-initiation and HOCO, and when that brother is confronted they often say, "I am not going to post them online," or "It is going on a private page." These pictures are then more than often seen within the following weeks on social media. It is understandable, we are all historians, and we want to record our history, or show other brothers what a PBC had to go through. However, those pictures and videos are the very things that are destroying our Order. We all took a vow to bite off our tongues before giving up the secrets of our Order. Yet we allow this act of destruction to continue during our events.

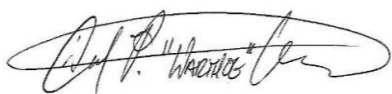
The solution to this is simple. The way that we keep photographs off of the internet is by prohibiting phones and cameras to be out at our events. Whitecoats, officers, and graybeards of each chapter need to be watching for brothers filming and photographing any part of the pre-initiation or HOCO. We all need to speak up and demand that all pictures and videos of these sacred events be stopped. We need to police ourselves online and remove content that puts us at risk. This does not only protect us from being misrepresented by the public, but it also eliminates the possibility of our rituals becoming public knowledge. Keeping our rituals secret is not important because we have something to hide, but because it is a cherished rite of passage and gives PBCs something essential to look forward to. Don't forget how exciting it was when you were shown the secret signs of our great Order. We should guard those moments and make them available only to the brothers who will soon no longer grope in the darkness.

III. Summing Up

Eliminating cameras and phones at events has to start at the ground level of every chapter. It must become a part of our culture and spread to the internet. We need to monitor ourselves and protect this great Order from internal destruction. E Clampus Vitus has reached a critical point with this exposure, and if we don't create a checks and balances system, we are going to crumble from the inside. We must hold our rituals and "secrets" sacred and preserve them for the future. While online, share history, event information, charity outreach, and jokes, and save the good-natured ribbing for the events.

It is easy to view E Clampus Vitus as an organization that is as hardy as the miners that made it a great social community. However, with the rise in technology and the double-edged sword of social media, ECV finds itself in a very vulnerable state. Secret organizations no longer have secrets, and with every exposed element, social organizations are crumbling at a rapid pace. The saddest part of these groups' demise is the fact that most of these groups crumbled from within. From rituals being posted online, secrets being shared, rumors being circulated, lines being drawn in the sand, or probably the most damaging, photos being posted with no explanation or back story, social groups find themselves in the crosshairs of a new world. ECV is currently facing a detrimental future. If we, as the protectors, don't fight against the disease that is eating at our noble foundations, then we will soon "die by suicide."

In Vitus' Service,



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