

Quite simply Brethren, that is why Carl Wheat convened the first Grand Council of Venerable Clampatriarchs. As he said then;

“Thus my worthy brethren, it was determined that, to advise and assist the Great Humbug and the several Clamproctors of the Corporation, there should be erected a Grand Council of Venerable Clampatriarchs...The chief function of the Corporation of E Clampus Vitus is to preserve inviolate and unsullied the name and style of the Order, protecting it from all and sundry unauthorized, unsuitable, inappropriate, unbecoming, indecorous or unprivileged use, whether by non-Clampers or by ill-advised or imprudent Brethren... and with the aid and advice of this Grand Council, the Clamproctors should be able to sustain the Order securely on its ancient and honorable plane, and to preserve it intact and unsullied for Clamposterity.”

And so it is my Brothers, even now with each Proctor assigned to liaison with specific Chapters, that need exists – it hasn’t diminished – quite to the contrary, the larger and more far-flung our Clampterritories become, the more difficult it becomes to share and teach the ideals, standards and culture of E Clampus Vitus.

You-all know what I’m talking about;

1. How many of you have decried the fact that it seems like the “new guys” aren’t being taught their things and stuff by their sponsors?
2. How many of you have also noticed that there are often fewer of those new guys year after year?
3. And how many of you have tried, in some way to share your learning and experience in the Order with several of those new guys, hoping that some of it will be retained and passed on?

And this then, my Brethren is the point of my talk today; that we are in danger of losing that which we all have worked so hard to maintain; our Ancient and Honorable Order’s name and style. By which I mean our ideals, standards, and culture. And what are these ideals, standards and culture?

I’ll give you my brief take in three comments;

First and foremost; we are an historical society. We exist to preserve western history. Beyond that, each Chapter, as a corporate entity may choose to engage in charitable work for their community, but that is and should remain a secondary function of the Chapter. As the Clampatriarch says in our ritual;

“Although merriment frequently surrounds our esoteric conclaves, there is a far more weighty and impressive side which should never be neglected. For we of E Clampus Vitus are gathered as well to revere the past, to delve into the doings of the early days, to discover the truths of our California background, and to recall the Brethren of the elder days. It is for this reason, and to signify this aspect of our fraternal efforts that we have raised throughout the diggings diverse monuments to the forgotten miners and our illustrious Brothers of old. Let them never be neglected by E Clampus Vitus!”

Twice in that short passage we are admonished to not neglect, not only our shared western history, but also the history of our illustrious Order!

So once again, to reiterate; we are first and foremost a historical society. History should and must remain the core tenet of our values.

Secondly, we are a fraternal organization. We are the only remaining non-collegiate men-only fraternity in existence today. If you stop and think about that for just a moment – in the nation – you get some idea of just how truly unique and important we are. But beyond that amazing fact, we are a brotherhood, a confraternity of men who celebrate their shared love of history, camaraderie, and fun.

But that word ‘brotherhood’ it means something. It means we are a group, an association and an organization. And it stands to reason, that we are stronger together than we are separately. As brothers we should be working together within our Chapters, but I’ve seen an awful lot of backbiting, bad-mouthing, and other non-supportive behaviors in several of our Chapters, unfortunately. We need to work together brothers.

Respect is a key component of brotherhood. Respect for one another and for each other’s chapters. It’s natural to hold one’s mother chapter in esteem, I do. But my love of Chief Truckee chapter in no way translates to my thinking I’m better than, or a better clamper than any other brother. As it says in our sublime constitution; Article 1, All members are officers. Article 2, All offices are of equal indignity. And we should remember, no matter how arduous the tomfoolery that takes place prior to HOCO, nothing makes you a brother of E Clampus Vitus except the passing of the staff of relief during the Hall of Comparative Ovations, and in that, we are all the same. So, let’s stop all this nonsense, this chest-

thumping, and treat our fellow brothers with the respect and dignity they've earned as brethren of E Clampus Vitus.

Another behavior I've noticed more frequently lately is the idea of attending a function, without paying the requested donation or rub. The idea behind that is something along the lines of "getting my money's worth". My brothers, we are a non-profit organization. We do not solicit the public for funds to accomplish our goals; we do that by holding functions and hawking Chapter goods to one another. We need to make this less about "What's in it for me?" and more about "How does it benefit ECV?"

And we should be working together as Chapters too, supporting one another and helping if necessary. I heard a great story this past year about how back in the day one of our Chapters helped out, cooking and having dual functions with another Chapter that was struggling at the time. As I said it was a great story and perfectly illustrates this point. We've seen some of that in response to the fires a few years ago, and that was amazing and awesome, but we shouldn't have to respond to a disaster to help each other out. Once again, we are stronger together than we are separately. Brotherhood is another of our core principles.

Third, we are a fun-loving organization that believes in not taking itself or ourselves too seriously. "Credo Quia Absurdum – I believe because it is absurd!" Merriment does frequently surround our esoteric conclaves! And it should, for this ancient and honorable order was created through the lens of humor and humor and its progeny, absurdity should always be an integral part of E Clampus Vitus and remain another of our core beliefs.

But let's remember what CQA is – and what it isn't.

It is poking fun at a PBC or the PBCs. It isn't degrading them.

It is holding the Humbug's gavel for ransom. It isn't taking it (or anything else) indefinitely.

Another aspect of not taking ourselves too seriously is remembering that this organization existed before any of us became involved in it, and it stands to reason that it will continue after we have passed.

"Pass it on to the next brother!"

Did you know that that sentence is the most repeated phrase in the ritual of initiation? Do you think that's by accident? I think the revivifiers also knew that egotism and hubris are a death sentence to volunteer organizations such as ours and that's why they made sure we repeat the phrase over and over again with every passing of the staff of relief. Because they knew that consolidating, harboring, and

clinging to chapter chairs, offices or positions, prevents, and stagnates the growth and development of a chapter, and built-in a warning against it in our ritual. We need to remember this and keep our Ancient and Honorable Order strong and vital! Absurdity, the ideas of having fun with each other, not taking ourselves too seriously, and being able to pass it on to the next brother, this is the third vital principle of our brotherhood.

And so, my venerable brethren, it falls upon all of us who care about this organization to work together to maintain our Order's name and style. Our very identity and existence. An historical society, a brotherhood, and a fun-loving organization. And as Carl Wheat recognized in 1955, and I reiterate now, this task is going to take all of us, working together, to achieve. But once again, I am confident that with help from my fellow Sublime officers, your Board of Clamproctors and this Grand Council of Venerable Clampatriarchs, we can maintain and sustain our Ancient and Honorable Order's name and style on its sublime plane forever! What Say the Brethren?!

Once again, I thank you for your most effulgent and ebullitious honor in selecting me to lead you-all in this effort for the next year. Truly I am deeply honored.

Presented: May 21st, 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David P. 'Warthog' Otero". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font. The name "Warthog" is enclosed in quotation marks. The signature is written over a faint, light-colored oval background.

David P. "Warthog" Otero
Sublime Noble Grand Humbug
E Clampus Vitus Inc.