

OPEN LETTER TO ALL CLAMPERS – June 1, 2018

The Old Guys

I am honored and humbled to be given the opportunity to serve you and our benevolent organization as Sublime Noble Grand Humbug for the next year. My goal has always been to make E Clampus Vitus better and to seek out members and learn from them. Your ideas and what you have to say are very valuable. If you have a notion or are curious about something, please contact me through this web site and share with me what yer thinking (sngh@ecvinc.org).

Now “thinkin’” can be calamitous at times. Clampers by nature are curious creatures! As a curious and cautious Clamper myself, I would like to share an old idea with each of you. I’d like to see you share this notion with other members of E Clampus Vitus as well. It involves a way to learn more about our organization and its history, as well as the history of your local Chapter. How were things done by the Chapter in the old days? What were some of the most interesting plaques ever erected and Doins’ ever held by your Chapter? The best way to find out is to seek out one or two of the most senior members of your local club or anywhere in E Clampus Vitus. The knowledge you can extract from these guys is immense. You would be amazed! You’ll learn more about ECV talkin’ to an old timer than you will talking to all of your current officers combined. I wish I could have interviewed the likes of Don Louis Perceval (the man who created our Coat of Arms), Coke Wood, or Sid Platford, or Carl Wheat and his buddies Dane and Whitsell, or Bill Huff, Archie Stevenot, Lawton Kennedy, Al Shumate, or even Ephriam Bee and Joseph Zumwalt, and all the other old-time Clampers who could tell you a whole bunch and more about E Clampus Vitus. After you walk away from long talks, wild tales, and small-time banter with one of the more renowned old timers in your own group, you will have gained a much deeper understanding and respect for all of the work it takes to operate an organization the size of this Ancient and Honorable Order. You will learn more than you ever imagined you could.

I had the good fortune and good luck in my development as a new Clamper to learn from a few wise and learned old men. If you get to know some of the old guys, at least one out of ten that will become a lifelong friend and mentor. We all need a mentor to get us safely on to the next chapter in life. Take a few minutes and take the initiative to introduce yourself and spend some time talking to the old guys at your Doin’s or a Chapter function. You’ll be surprised at what you find out. It will change, improve, and broaden your perspective on ECV.

In the old days when I was active in the New Helvetia Chapter I inadvertently found myself talking to a pair of the old guys who attended every meeting. One was Al Wilson; his side kick was Larry Harrison. They were both in their 80s at the time. To me, at that stage of my life, they were really old! Larry lived to be 93 years old, Clampin’ all the way. Ex-Sublime Al died at almost 90. He was at Grand Council right before his death. Once I got to know these old Patriarchs, they willingly shared the history of ECV with me as they knew it. I learned so much from these “old guys.” Other old guys who willingly shared their ECV books, paperwork, and stories with me were Jim Ragsdale of Humbug Chapter, Tom Barry from

William Bull Meek-Stewart chapter, and Glenn Hearrell from Billy Holcomb. Over a long period of time I got to know Sid Blunner from Billy Holcomb and have learned from him as well. E Clampus Vitus has a whole bunch of wise men. I have mentioned just a very few of them in this letter. Seek them out and learn from them. You don't have to agree with everything they say, but find out their perspectives on E Clampus Vitus and its history.



Al Wilson, Dennis Hazelbaker, and Larry Harrison--1993

Learning is a lifelong activity; it never ceases. When I was planning my TRASH Trek I had the opportunity to work with Marsh Fey, Dail Turney, Rod Stock, and Geno Oliver. They were a treasure trove of information and help. From this activity I learned that your first stop in the acquisition of information for and about ECV is the old guys, the old old old Ex-Humbugs.

I encourage you this year to seek out an old-time Clamper. Mine him for information and for the best and oldest tales of Doins' long ago. Sometimes ya gotta be patient because they can be slow at times to give up all their knowledge. When all is said and done, the time spent will be well worth it. It's more than a one-time activity. Build a relationship with them. Talk to them over a number of days and years. If it isn't working out, then find another old-timer and talk to him. I am blessed to have gotten to know a number of the "old guys!" Many a Clamper has learned from them, and modeled their ECV behavior after them. Their knowledge is waiting to be discovered and mined... by you. New friendships will result. Lasting friendships with members is the highest standing within the Order.

One last request; please respect these guys for what they've done and their memory. They made your Chapter click in the old days. Your Chapter might not be here today if it hadn't been for them. Let us pay respect, and remember and esteem these ECV guys of old.

Bill Wensrich
Sublime Noble Grand Humbug
E Clampus Vitus®, Inc.