

## Mission, Membership & Merriment

**A**s I travel throughout Clamperdom, it pleases me to see the young and old faces of new Red Shirts who have recently joined the order. Constant and continual renewal is a mission-critical element necessary to the longevity of any organization. All organizations have made mistakes in the past, but have continued to thrive through learning this simple fact.

It's important to continue the education of our new members. Take the time to tell them more about the history of the organization and the things we do and have done. Educate them about Carl Wheat, Ezra Dane, Leon Whitsell, and Adam Moore. Share with them the list of books written by Clampers about Clamperdom. One of my favorites is *Men will be Boys* by Lois Rather, a renowned Widder.

To the best of my knowledge, we have erected over 3,000 historical monuments since the early 1930s. That is something to be proud of, wag yer tail about and hang yer hat on from now until the cows come home. Tell new members about this great accomplishment by our organization, which now spans ten western states.

Remind our newest members that the three pillars of ECV are:

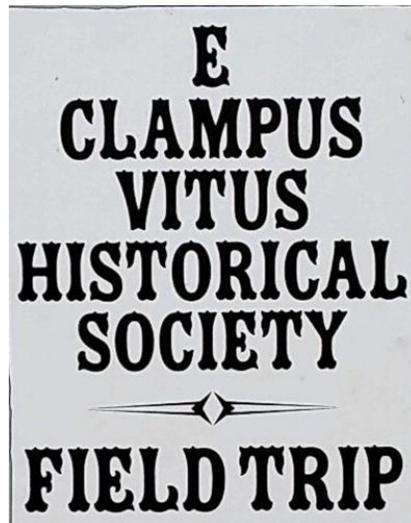
1. *Mission*
2. *Membership*
3. *Merriment*

Our mission is history! The 1915 Articles of Incorporation for E Clampus Vitus included the following language:

The stated purpose of the fraternal organization is to preserve and protect history and to perpetuate the knowledge of history..”

Of course our other mission includes Widders and Orphans eloquently described as *Per caritate viduaribus orphanibusque, sed prime viduaribus* which of course means we protect the widows and orphans, especially the (young) widow.

For myself, I like to focus on what I think of as our primary mission: the preservation of US western history. We are a history organization! When I speak to other folks or organizations about E Clampus Vitus, what I tell them is “Our claim to fame is the placement of over 3,000 historical markers, and we’ve been doing this since the 1930s.” Our primary method for the dedication and preservation of western US history includes the placement of historical markers. Many Clampers I’ve talked to as well as myself would like to see all of our art work, images, T-shirt graphics, banners, and proclamations reflect our mission of remembering western US history and the explorers, pathfinders, pioneers, settlers, native Americans, landscapes, and resources of this great nation. I don’t recall hearing that our mission involves other topics such as skulls, crossed bones, or motorcycles not pertinent to the true purpose of E Clampus Vitus, which is the preservation of the history of the Trans-Mississippi West. Historical images pertinent to our mission have always reflected well upon the organization.



You’all make me proud every time I see a new plaque or monument erected. This is our lasting legacy, our claim to fame. This legacy we leave behind with our historical monuments inspires new generations of Americans to explore the unique story of the American West. Much of our nation’s history is the story of the West. Our plaques preserve that American character and exceptionalism embodied in the settlement of the western frontier. When a young person first reads one of our history plaques, that single moment of truth often becomes a catalyst for a lifetime of adventure exploring US history. Each member of ECV can be proud of this accomplishment. This is what we are about! I am often reminded that our Clamper’s Creed calls for each of us to “never fail to appreciate a bit of Western lore.

Membership in this Ancient and Honorable Order is also of the utmost importance. Without new members our benevolent organization would languish and die on the vine. New blood is necessary for the continuation of E Clampus Vitus. We want new members who will make us proud. Those who have a genuine interest in history and merriment are good candidates to fill this role. How the public perceives us is of utmost importance to the longevity of ECV, just as new members are of the utmost importance to continuing the good work and frivolity of E Clampus Vitus. So, my friends, when sponsoring new members, please... *choose wisely!* Consider well the kind of initiation your poor blind candidate will be exposed to. One that uses humor and celebrates the history of this organization and the western US or one that just runs 'em through an intense physical (and public) humiliation ordeal. The combined use of seemly decorum and good old-fashioned Clamp-Sense by every member has always gone a long ways toward the preservation and protection of our Ancient and Honorable Order. This notion is supported by the words of Carl I. Wheat, presented at Grand Council in 1955. He wrote that members and Chapters of E Clampus Vitus "must never draw the name of E Clampus Vitus into the least disrepute or dishonor."

Just as mission and membership are of utmost importance, having fun at what we do, merriment, is integral to our activities, mantra and organization. For the most part I believe all Clampers have lots of fun at meetings, functions, community charitable activities, and monument erections. Without humor and harmless levity the world would be a much duller place in which to live.

Our Clampers Creed reminds us to "never take myself serious," and to "always appreciate a little bit of the ridiculous." Playing practical jokes on our Brothers and potential new members is one of the many joys of life, as well as a time-tested ECV ritual. Remember to tell new members that our frolicking friar fun is limited to harmless frivolity. Persons and property should never be harmed, damaged, or destroyed during the perpetration of our many humorous gags. It's much more sublime to have some fun with your buddy without hurting him or damaging his possessions, even in the smallest of ways.

I am proud to be a Clamper, proud of each and every Chapter and Outpost, and proud of every member of this Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus. Only by acting in concert can we all improve E Clampus Vitus and make it into an organization that will live on into the future.

When I first became a Red Shirt over 30 years ago, the organization had about 20 fewer Outposts and Chapters than we do currently. We have grown! We now have 52 Chapters and Outposts. Wow! A remarkable renewal of the Order, thanks to each and every member without whom we would be a smaller and poorer organization.

Thank you for being a Red Shirt and member in good standing contributing to this great Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus. Keep up the good work, Brothers! For me, being a member of E Clampus Vitus is most SATISFACTORY!!!

I leave each of you with the following thoughts on the continual renewal of E Clampus Vitus. It is up to each of us to sponsor worthy candidates who will carry on long after we are gone. Walter Lippmann, a twentieth century journalist and commentator, once wrote "The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him other men with the conviction and the will to carry on." Let's not lose sight of where we came from and the history of E Clampus Vitus! We need new members who are capable and have the desire to appropriately and vigorously carry on where we have left off.

Sincerely, your humble and loyal servant,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Wensrich". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "B" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

**Bill Wensrich**

Sublime Noble Grand Humbug

# Poor Blind Candidate Initiations without dirty PBCs

The way Adam Lee Moore, Carl I. Wheat, Leon O. Whitsell and Geo. Ezra Dane intended



Adam Lee Moore and George Ezra Dane interrogating PBC's at chapter 49's chartering.

James W. Marshall Chapter 49—1936



L.W. Loomis enlightens the PBCs to James Marshall—1948



Amatuca Ch. No. 1849—Mariposa County 1954



Columbia—1956



Wm. Bull Meek-Wm. Morris Stewart Chapter No. 10—1967



Yerba Buena Chapter No. 1—1976