

OPEN LETTER TO ALL CLAMPERS #7 – March 9, 2019

Sponsors

As spring time approaches many of you have plans to be off to a busy new season of Clamping. I applaud you. You're involved with the organization. Some of you probably have plans to Sponsor a prospective new member this year or maybe next year. I ask that you first step back for a moment and consider the full responsibilities of an ECV Sponsor; it's our duty!

I previously shared with you the three pillars of E Clampus Vitus®:

- Mission,
- Membership, and
- Merriment.

Drilling deeper, *Sponsorship* I believe, is the most important element of the membership pillar. I've often pondered and invite you to ponder the following:

1. What does it take to be a good Sponsor?
2. What are the duties and standards Sponsors should hold themselves to?
3. How does one successfully bring a good Brother into our illustrious Order that will help sustain the Order?

Far too many Poor Blind Candidates are brought to a Doin's for their initiation into this Ancient and Honorable Order without proper preparation, education and enlightenment. It's not up to the Hangman and Vigilantes to do everything. Much of it is up to you!

Sponsors have a duty to prepare their candidate before the function. Sponsors have a duty to bring in only qualified quality candidates. A good Sponsor knows that we do not need more Clampers, but rather we need more good Clampers. It is a disservice to this great fraternal organization to bring somebody in who can't help make the Order proud and better than before he entered the Hall of Comparative Ovations.

Below are the usual qualifications for a new noviate:

- Does he have a sense of humor?
- Can he take a joke?
- Does he get along well with others?
- Is he interested in history? Does he have a real interest in history?
- Is he trust worthy? (If in the slightest doubt, wait for another function).
- Would he make a good Brother to others?
- Does he have potential to work for the Chapter or at least be involved by attending meetings?
- Can he manage his alcohol intake? (It's OK to get shit faced, but only in a safe, calm and quiet way without unchecked temper flare-ups and when no Clamper duties have been neglected--if he can't do that, then either layoff the booze or stay away from ECV).
- Is he willing to contribute--roll up his sleeves and do some work on behalf of our Order without complaining?

These qualifications are all very important, especially the aspect of candidates having a genuine interest in the preservation of history. Now consider these. Would you invite your candidate over to your home for a dinner or a BBQ? Would you let this man play with your kids unsupervised and would you introduce him to your Widder? Would you leave him alone with your family? Have you known this person for a long time—long enough to really get to know him? (For me my measure is at least three years. It takes me at least that long to really get to know someone).

I think in many cases the answers to the above questions are “yes.” However, there have been instances when none of those tests were carried out. Is your candidate someone you know and drink with, but has never met your family or been in your home to socialize? If the answer to this last question is “no,” then you probably shouldn't be bringing him into E Clampus Vitus!

So how does one successfully bring a good Brother into our illustrious Order, one who will help sustain the Order? How does one prepare to bring in prospective candidates? Methods to better know and understand the demeanor and other personality elements of your new prospective noviate follow:

1. Invite him to a Clamper function that allows civilians to attend—see if he likes being around other Clampers and their Clampsite. Functions that allow this are often Widders Balls, the Koyote Howling, Vituscan Missionary excursions, and other ECV functions such as family day picnics.
2. Invite him over for a family BBQ if you haven't already done so.
3. Play practical jokes on him in front of others to measure his response and determine his demeanor.

4. Make sure he understands the full depth of our motto *Credo quia absurdum*. Our ritual is full of humor and exemplifies CQA.
5. Ask another Clamper buddy what he thinks—is this candidate worthy?

Once you're sure your candidate(s) passes the above tests then do your part as a Sponsor. It's your duty to adequately prepare your candidate prior to the Doin's, protect him during the function, have a little fun with him and play with his mind a little.

STEP 1--EDUCATE YOUR CANDIDATE

Find some ECV books or publications. Give him ECV history to read and prepare himself for the upcoming interrogation. Make this part of his initiation by telling him he better "got damn" well know the answers to these questions or he will suffer the wrath of the Hangman! Bringing a candidate to an ECV function who has no knowledge of Carl Wheat, Leon Whitsell and Ezra Dane is criminal. Prepare your candidate with some knowledge and the answers to potential questions he may be asked. Explain some ECV terminology to your candidate ahead of time. Does he know who the NGH, PBCs and Greybeards are? Does he know what their role is? Does he know what the Hewgag is and what it's used for? If you don't know, then educate yourself first. Keep the content of the ritual reading secret. Lord knows there are over 100 books and booklets that have been published about various aspects of ECV history. Find one and use it.

STEP 2—EDUCATE YOURSELF

Read the PBC policy posted on our website: www.ecvinc.org. Adhere to the policy and protect your candidate from others who appear to have not read the policy. On page one of the policy you can find the following philosophy:

“Humorous humiliation of PBCs does not mean demoralizing or humiliating prospective candidates. All members of E Clampus Vitus were once PBCs. This process is not just about how we bring in new members, but is more importantly about who we ask to become a member of E Clampus Vitus.”

STEP 3—PREPARE YOUR CANDIDATE

Prepare your candidate by telling him ahead of time to:

- Wear (old clothes)—not demeaning or women's attire.
- Never wear anything red—cover red tattoos or other with duct tape.
- Never touch anything red.

- Answer all queries with a resounding “*Yes sir, Mr. Clamper sir!*”
- Keep his eyes averted and looking down.
- Only take instruction from his Sponsor and the Hangman and his Vigilantes.
- Show respect and have a sense of humor.
- Communicate ahead of time if he has disabilities, is thirsty, cold or in pain.
- Be responsible for his actions and that his poor behavior would reflect poorly on you (which it will).
- Tell the Hangman and NGH who his Sponsor is when asked. We all need to work toward changing the culture of some and to discourage the practice of telling PBCs not to divulge their Sponsor’s name.

STEP 4—FIND A GOOD FUNCTION

ECV is a history organization; celebrating history is our primary mission. Take your candidate to a Chapter that provides your candidate with a:

- History lesson as part of the initiation.
- PBC Handbook.
- Quality experience.

STEP 5—HOLD YOURSELF TO A HIGHER STANDARD

This activity is up to you. Only you can make it the best experience possible for your candidate. If you didn’t go thru a dirty initiation yourself, why are you asking your friend and PBC to do so? Walk the talk! Tell your friends this is your PBC and this is the way it’s gonna happen. Don’t let them distract you from supporting a proper initiation the way Carl Wheat, Ezra Dane and Leon Whitsell would have wanted it done.

Make sure your PBC gets a red shirt once he survives the three Ordeals. If the Chapter holding the event doesn’t give a shirt to all the graduates then it is your responsibility to buy him a red shirt.

A proper Sponsor’s duty is to be patient and select only candidates he knows will do well as Clampers. If you have to “talk him into it” he likely is not a good choice.

And please, do not “drop off” your candidate like it was soccer practice and let him learn the ropes on his own. Sponsors need to supervise and occasionally check in on their candidate(s) during the initiation.

The night before, use good natured fun and humor. This isn’t Fort Benning, Georgia. There’s no need to get your candidate dirty or put him through boot camp. Tease

him and have him serve you and your buddies' drinks—by all means. Harmless humor goes a lot further in the long run than physical humiliation.

STEP 6—ACCOUNTABILITY

You are accountable for a safe and proper initiation of your PBC. You are responsible for protecting him and insuring his safety. If things are not going according to Hoyle you need to step in and remove your PBC from the initiation or address any issues with the Hangman and NGH. There are plenty of Chapters who conduct great initiations. If you run into one bad apple function, there are over 50 other Chapters/Outposts whose functions you can attend. You don't have to go to a local Chapter function. Mix it up!

STEP 7—THINGS I DO WITH MY CANDIDATES

- Take your PBC out to breakfast but have them sit at a different table than you. Make it funny while in the restaurant; have them sit in silence unless spoken to by you.
- Make sure your candidate is hydrated and fed before turning him over to the Hangman.
- Have them do chores (e.g., wash windshields, etc.).
- Have them make a vegetable necklace to wear. Celery, carrots and other hard vegetables laced up with fishing line can be funny (Hint: keep necklace in ice chest until just before wearing).
- Have fun. Use humor to prepare your candidate, tease him before, during and after his ordeal. Make it memorable for him. Give him the PBC quiz beforehand.
- Perform a ritual that you and your buddies usually do.
- Explain this is about the absurd—*Credo Quia Absurdum!* Make sure your candidate can properly repeat this phrase and explain it.
- When your candidate graduates buy him an ECV book and maybe a pin or two (something he can have to remember this function).
- Reinforce the positive listed above.

For the good of the Order please take the time to be a good and proper Sponsor. Make your Ancient and Honorable Order proud. After the function is just a memory along with many others, continue to be a sustaining member by encouraging your XPBC to attend meetings and participate in making ECV a better organization. Lead by example my friends!

I leave you with the following excerpt from past publications pertinent to this topic. This is something you can share with your PBC prior to his initiation.

Clampers are most noted for their boisterous love of life, for embracing the absurd, and for their respect and charming civil courtesies (“Seemly Decorum”) afforded other Clampers and their families. Prime requisites to becoming a Clamper in good standing include a well-developed sense of humor, an open mind, an interest in history, a cast iron stomach, a thirst for the finer harvests of the land, an ability to display the sign of the well jackass, and a keen ear for the sound of the Hewgag. If a man has these qualities, as Friar Tuck and Friar Sasquatch did, and strikes up a friendship with a Clamper, he may soon find himself “taken in” by the Ancient and Honorable Order.

Soon, it will be your turn as one of the Brethren of ECV to invite prospective members to join the Order by going through a Chapter initiation, just as you are doing today. If a man is asked to join he should know the invitation is only given once. If it is refused it may never be tendered again. But men of any intelligence and character so invited would hardly be likely to turn down such a signal honor. Clampers are not made, my friend, they are born! Like the gold from our pioneer settler’s past, they just have to be discovered.....by you!

Remember, the person you bring into the Order today is the one who will likely have to carry on once you’re gone. He will be the one to carry the Order’s mantel and have the responsibility to continue to make ECV the greatest Fraternal Order on earth. Choose wisely friend!

Thank you for letting me share this information. As always, I remain your humble and loyal servant.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Wensrich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the bottom.

Bill Wensrich

Sublime Noble Grand Humbug

NOTE: Much of the genesis for this letter came from the publication *I, Clamper* written by my friend, one nefarious Bovinius Stercus (aka John Ortiz, XNGH).