

Stewardship

How many of you have heard the memorable phrase indented below? Probably all of us! I first heard it almost 25 years ago from Sid Blunner, XSNGH. That's when I met him on my first winter Vituscan Mission where Molar Mechanic Mike "Doc" Johnson, Head Abbot at the time, led us to the Camp Rock Mine.

If you ain't plaque'n, then you ain't Clampin!'

I've never forgotten Sid's famous quote or Mike's function! Those words remind us of who we are and what we do. Linked to those words are fundamental values for this organization we all cherish and uphold. We often don't think about it directly, but those values require our thoughtful Stewardship and sustaining support for the good of the Order. So, how do we better understand these obligations?

As we all know, the three pillars of E Clampus Vitus® have long been:

- Mission,
- Membership, and
- Merriment.

Below the foundation of these critical support columns holding up this Ancient and Honorable Order lay three supporting principles. Each of us can make a difference by embracing these principles. Known to many, these principles are:

1. Stewardship,
2. Sponsorship, and
3. Support.

I have previously written about being a good and proper Sponsor. In this letter I want to share my thoughts about what it takes to be a good Steward of ECV and what each of us must contribute to provide sustaining support for our illustrious Order.

What is *Stewardship*? The dictionary defines the word as:

“.. an obligation for the careful and responsible care of something entrusted to one.”

What has been entrusted to each of us is an incredible organization of which we've all decided to become members. It has been entrusted to us by those who received the staff before us, by its modern day revivifiers and by your sponsor to you! To me, being a good Steward is someone who consciously supports the organization in a positive way through their actions and words. They walk the talk!

A RARE PHOTO OF OUR REACTIVATORS

The picture printed below, taken by Eric Falconer, at the Grand Council meeting in May of 1957, in the garden of the Murphy's Hotel, is probably the only picture showing the group of Clampatriarch who were responsible for the reactivation of E Clampus Vitus.



Back row, left to right:

Howard Reamer

Harry Tait

Edgar Jessup

Robert Woods

Front row:

Dr. Albert Shumate

Leon Whitsell

Carl I. Wheat

Sid Platford

Archie Stevenot

Those good Stewards who received the staff before us

How does this apply to each Clamper? I can think of a few things and I'm sure you can come up with other illustrations. What comes to mind for which we should each be a good Steward follows. Embodying the values of the Order include:

- Mission
- Mottos
- Creed

ECV is a history organization! We celebrate western US history; that's what we do. How can you be sure? One way is to always think about our Clamper Creed. It reminds us with the following encouragement:

“may I never forget the stout hearted men who settled a great western wilderness and the heritage we have today. May I never fail to appreciate a bit of western lore.”

Each of us can live up to the admonishment of our creed by continually communicating our mission to the public and reminding our Brothers about who we are. Celebrating and remembering long-lost historical facts and stories about history bring us together in a positive way. It also brings us closer to our local communities through our many historical monument erections. Each of us should continue to further our education about ECV. Read some of the old ECV books and some of the newer treatises. Support our many historical Treks. Be a contributor by attending some of these functions. Make sure you teach new Brothers the history of Carl I. Wheat, Leon O. Whitsell, George Ezra Dane, Adam Lee Moore, Joe Zumwalt and Ephraim Bee.

“Pass it on to the next Brother.” Does this sound familiar? It means so much more than sharing the staff or a bottle. It's a symbol of our fellowship. Embracing your fellow Brothers with open arms and forgiveness goes a long ways. Opening up your camp at a Doin's, looking out for the safety of fellow Redshirts, supporting the host Chapter and Grand Council by following their rules and requests are ways we can all be good Stewards.

Use our mottos to further the organization and explain its core values to others. A good way to tone down any heated argument is to recall CQA. How many times have you been told you just got CQA'd? It's a joke, its funny, it's absurd. Let's never lose sight of:

Credo quia absurdum: I believe because it is absurd.

Being a good Steward means thinking responsibly about what you post on social media. If in the slightest doubt, don't do it. One single degrading picture or post causes the good Steward efforts of hundreds of your Brothers moot. If you do this you just pulled the rug out from underneath a lot of good men and all their hard work. For the love of Pete, they're your own Brothers! The damage to the organization is incalculable. A good Steward will remind their Brothers not to do this.

Being a good Steward also means being civil and courteous. Being a good Steward means always conducting yourself in public with “seemly decorum.” Behavior is important. We want to project a positive image. This will get all of us a lot further down the road with the public as well as any young or older Widder when they know how you conduct yourself. They will then appreciate you even more when you tell them with CQA gusto:

Per caritate viduaribus orphanibusque, sed prime viduaribus, we “protect the widows and orphans, especially the (young) widow.

Let’s not take for granted our role and responsibilities of being good Stewards for ECV. And don’t take for granted the older members who have been good Shepherds for this illustrious Order long before any of us arrived on the scene. Learn from these old wise men. Consider their points of view, and be willing to let heated discussions and differences of opinions go. If it doesn’t go your way this year, there’s always next year to make your views better understood. What’s most important is the Order, not the individual! Seek first to understand, before asking to be understood.

Each Chapter needs sustaining support from every one of their members. Your time and money spent on behalf of the Order is your donation to a worthy cause. Attend Chapter meetings. Attend Chapter functions. Contribute what you can to make those positive experiences for all. Consciously go about your day with the thought of being a good will ambassador for ECV. By working together we can insure the longevity, vitality and strength of this Fraternal Organization?

To embody this sacred trust and honor that has been placed before each of us, to care for and carefully protect our Order is the mark of a good Steward. Set the example. Set the standard for good Stewardship. It’s up to you! It’s our obligation.

Continue to show good Stewardship by protecting what ECV stands for and work to improve our reputation. Without ongoing sustaining support and Stewardship from each member we have no future. Please do your part to make this Ancient and Honorable Order proud. When you look down the long road you travelled across Clamperdom and see a resilient organization, know it didn’t just happen that way. It came about because each of us made it that way through our own good Stewardship of E Clampus Vitus.

Let's never forget what ECV founder (revivifer) Carl Irving Wheat wrote to the Board of Proctors in May 1954. His words still remain vivid and to the point today.

“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, or unprivileged use, whether by non-Clampers or by ill-advised or imprudent brethren. The corporation is the legal holder of the name E Clampus Vitus and may lawfully prevent any unauthorized use of these words.”

Thank you for reading this letter. In closing I want to also thank you for the opportunity to serve this illustrious Order as your Sublime Noble Grand Humbug. It is an honor! I also look forward to seeing many of you at Grand Council this month and to bringing in the new Sublime Noble Grand Humbug. I wonder if CQA awaits him?

As always, I remain your humble and loyal servant, and entrust you with the care and protection of ECV and its signs and symbols.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Wensrich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

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).