

# LOWCOUNTRY CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

March 2008 Issue 71

## The Crater & the Seige of Petersburg

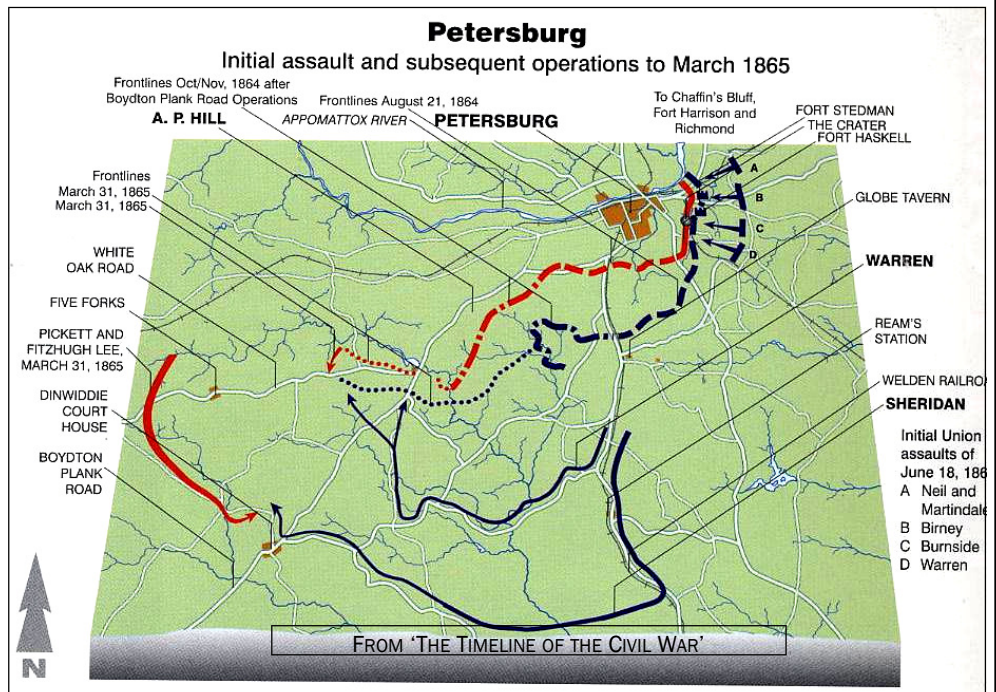
**T**he Richmond-Petersburg Campaign was a series of battles around Petersburg, Virginia, fought from June 15, 1864, to March 25, 1865. Although it is more popularly known as the **Siege of Petersburg**, it was not a classic military siege, in which a city is usually fully surrounded and all supply lines are cut off. It was ten months of trench warfare in which Union forces commanded by Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant assaulted Petersburg unsuccessfully and then constructed trench lines that eventually extended over 30 miles around the eastern and southern outskirts of the city.

Petersburg was crucial to the supply of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's army and the Confederate capital of Richmond. Lee finally yielded to the overwhelming pressure—the point at which supply lines were finally cut and a true siege would have begun—and abandoned both cities in April 1865, leading to his retreat and surrender in the Appomattox Campaign.

The Siege of Petersburg foreshadowed the trench warfare that would be common in World War I, earning it a prominent position in military history. The **Battle of the Crater**, part of the Siege of Petersburg took place on July 30, 1864. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Pleasants, commanding the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry of Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside's IX Corps, offered a novel proposal to solve the problem, a mining engineer from Pennsylvania in civilian life.

He proposed digging a long mine shaft underneath the Confederate lines and planting explosive charges directly underneath a fort in the middle of the Confederate First Corps line. The result was a disaster for the Union troops who pored into the resulting crater

where they became "fish in a barrel" for the Confederates.



### BIOGRAPHY OF EDWIN COLE BEARSS

BY KATRINA FRITTS

Edwin Cole Bearss was born in Billings, Montana on June 26, 1923. He grew up on his grandfather's ranch near

(Continued on page 4 BEARSS)

## WHISTLING IN DIXIE

BY BOB HAM

I had an untimely commitment that prevented me from being at the January meeting. From all indications it was a great success. We had the most dinner reservations this program year and the auditorium was packed - a great tribute to Jack Davis in presenting us with an outstanding program and thanks to you for your loyalty in attending.

Thanks also to Jack and Joyce Keller, our official hosts, for letting Jack stay in their home while visiting for his lecture and morning after. You have no idea how this helps our budgeting, but more important it gives our guest speaker the sense that he is most welcome and the word gets around among Civil War groups about our fine Round Table.

It is hard to believe, as we go to press, that we are approaching the last quarter of our year and we are already preparing for next year. I am happy to report the Executive Committee adopted the LCWRT logo that has been on display at the podium this year. The logo will soon appear on the Mini Ball masthead, stationery and other official LCWRT literature.

A special task force has been revamping our Operating Policies & Procedures giving greater understanding of the duties and responsibilities of our officers and committee chairpersons. These revisions will be presented to the Executive Committee for adoption at our next meeting. In addition the Program Committee is already hard at work putting together next year's programs and a nominating committee will be formed to present a new slate of officers.

### THANKS TO ALL WHO TOIL IN THE BACKGROUND

I have the honor to be invited as a guest speaker at the Hilton Head Kiwanis Club in February and the Hilton Head Rotary Club in March. It will give me the opportunity to tell these fine organizations about our LCWRT and the work we are doing in preserving Civil War sites and monuments.

Our March speaker was named by National Geographic as one of America's national treasures. Ed Bearss, no stranger to our LCWRT, will present "The Crater and the Siege of Petersburg" in a way that is only unique to Ed Bearss. He appears regularly on the History Channel and other Civil War documentaries and we are indeed fortunate to have him again to address our Round Table.

See you there **Bob Ham**

## Lowcountry Civil War Round Table Inc.

The Minie Ball Gazette

P.O. Box 2252

Bluffton, SC 29910

[WWW.LOWCOUNTRYCWRT.ORG](http://WWW.LOWCOUNTRYCWRT.ORG)

*Dedicated to Historic Preservation  
and Enlightenment*

Editors: Mitch & Marian Sackson

The Lowcountry Civil War Round Table Inc. is a

### Officers & Committee Chairpersons

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### Need a Copy of the Adobe Reader?

To download a free copy of the Adobe reader, copy the following link into your Internet Explorer:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat>

## FEBRUARY DINNER WAS ANOTHER WINNER

The catering by Golden Corral has been so good to date.

See you at our next dinner in March.

# The 2007-2008 Lecture Series

**April 9, 2008 *The Battle of Fort Fisher*: Chris Fonvielle**



The **Battle of Fort Fisher** was a joint assault by Union army and naval forces against Fort Fisher, outside Wilmington, North Carolina. Sometimes referred to as the "Gibraltar of the South" and the last major coastal stronghold of the Confederacy,

Fort Fisher had tremendous strategic value during the war. Wilmington was the last major port open to the confederacy. Ships leaving Wilmington via the Cape Fear River and setting sail for the Bahamas, Bermuda or Nova Scotia to trade cotton and tobacco for needed supplies from the British were protected by the fort. Fort Fisher was constructed mostly of earth and sand. This made absorbing the pounding of heavy fire from Union ships more effective than older fortifications constructed of mortar and bricks. The fortifications were able to keep Union ships from attacking the port of Wilmington and the Cape Fear River. On December 24, 1864, Union forces under Benjamin F. Butler launched a two-day attack. The battle was the largest amphibious operation until the Second World War.

**May 14, 2008 *The Port Royal Experiment*: L Rowland & Steve Wise**



L ROWLAND



STEVE WISE

The **Port Royal Experiment** was a program begun during the Civil War in which former slaves worked on the land abandoned by plantation owners. In 1861, the Union liberated the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and their main harbor, Port Royal. The white residents fled, leaving behind 10,000 slaves.

Several private Northern charity organizations stepped in to help the former slaves become self-sufficient. The result was a model of what Reconstruction could have been. The former slaves demonstrated their ability to work the land efficiently and live independently. They assigned themselves daily tasks for cotton growing and spent their extra time cultivating their own crops, fishing and hunting.

By selling their surplus crops, the locals acquired small amounts of property. In 1865, President Andrew Johnson ended the experiment, returning the land to its previous white owners.

## Charleston Calling

This cell phone was found on a messenger in General Beauregard's command. Little is left to the imagination of the depth that some agents will stoop. By tracing the last call, it was found to be to Mary Chestnut asking as to when the next Charleston Ball was to be held.



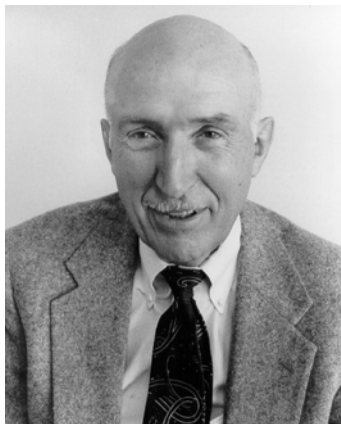
## LIBBA ROBERTSON

After a long illness Libba Robertson, wife of "Bud" Robertson has passed away. Libba accompanied "Bud" on most of his many visits when he spoke to our Roundtable and was a favorite to all. She was a lady of much charm and grace and will be missed by all who knew her. Those wishing to send their condolence to the family may do so. The address is: Dr. James I Robertson, 405 Stonegate, NW, Blacksburg, VA. 24060



## Lowcountry Civil War Round Table

(BEARSS Continued from page 1)



Hardin, Montana, in the shadow of the Rosebud Mountains and within a bicycle ride of the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. On the ranch, the E Bar S (E-S), he named the cattle for Civil War generals and battles; his favorite milk cow was called Antietam. He attended a one-room school at Sarpy, Montana until he went to St. Johns

Military Academy in Delafield, Wisconsin in 1937. Immediately following his graduation from Hardin High School in 1941 he joined the United States Marine Corps. During World War II he served with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Raider Battalion and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division in the invasion of Guadalcanal and New Britain. He was badly wounded by machine-gun fire on January 2, 1944 and spent 26 months in various hospitals.

He studied at Georgetown University and received a BS degree in Foreign Service in 1949. He wrote his thesis on Pat Cleburne and in 1955 received his MA from Indiana University.

**M**r. Bearss's career in the National Park Service began in 1955 at Vicksburg, Mississippi where he was the park historian. He located the Widow Blakely, a cannon used on the Vicksburg River defense and which had long been displayed at West Point as Whistling Dick. Other research led him and two friends to the long lost resting place of the Union ironclad gunboat Cairo. He located the two forgotten forts at Grand Gulf, Mississippi and contributed significantly to the establishment of Grand Gulf as a state military monument.

Historical studies Mr. Bearss has prepared for the National Park Service include those for: Vicksburg, Pea Ridge, Wilson's Creek, Fort Smith, Stones River, Fort Donelson, Richmond, Bighorn Canyon, Eisenhower Farm, the gold miners' route over Chilkoot Pass, the LBJ Ranch, Fort Moultrie, Fort Point, William Howard

Taft House, Fort Hancock, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, Ship Island, Boston Navy Yard, Fort Jefferson, Monacacy, and a wide variety of other parks.

He is the founder of the Mississippi Civil War Roundtable (1956), which later consolidated with the Jackson Civil War Roundtable. He received the Harry S. Truman Award in 1961 for Meritorious Service in the field of Civil War history. He was chosen Man of the Year at Vicksburg in 1963. In 1964, he was chosen to become a member of the Company of Military Historians and was voted a Fellow in that organization, and received the Nevins-Freeman Award from the Chicago Civil War Roundtable (1980) for his work in Civil War history. In 1983, he received the Department of the Interior's Distinguished Service Award which was followed by a commendation from the Secretary of the Army in 1985. He served as an ex-officio member of the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission.

Mr. Bearss retired on September 30, 1995 after 40 years with the National Park Service and almost 50 years of federal service. He continues to lead Battlefield tours for the Smithsonian Institution, National Geographic Society, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Civil War Roundtables, and other military history organizations.

Mr. Bearss is the author of many works. Among them are *The Battle at Wilson's Creek*, *Forrest at Brice's Cross Roads*, *The Vicksburg Campaign*, *Steele's Retreat From Camden* & *The Battle of Jenkins Ferry*, *Rebel Victory at Vicksburg*, *Decision in Mississippi*, *Sinking of an Ironclad*, and numerous other books and publications including more than a hundred historical articles in scholarly journals.

Ed Bearss is a retired Chief Historian of the National Park Service. Ed comes from a long line of Marines. His father was a Marine and his close relative "Hike'em" Hiram Bearss was a Marine general who was awarded the Medal of Honor. He and his wife of many years, Margie Riddle Bearss, work together as an historical writing team. They have three children: two are former marines and one is a historian.

### Notice About Sale of 50-50 Tickets

Due to the pressures of the volunteers who perform the sale of the 50-50 tickets and the required counting and creation of the awards, sales of the tickets will cease at 6:15pm. So if you do not partake of dinner, make sure you arrive before that time if you wish to contribute to the 50-50 drawing.

# GENERAL GEORGE DOLES (CSA) AND THE OVERLAND CAMPAIGN by Steve Bacon

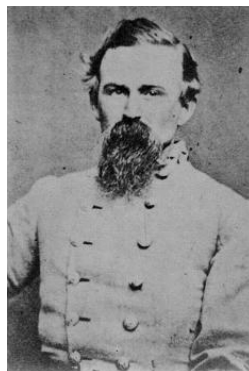
**G**eneral George Doles was the commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia Volunteer Infantry Regiment (CS) and then, commander of the famous Doles-Cook Brigade. He was born in Milledgeville, Georgia (the Georgia state capital during the war) on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1830. His father was a tailor and George was happy to attend the local "common" schools. George became a successful businessman in Milledgeville and was elected captain of the "Baldwin Blues"...the local militia. The Blues were famous for participating in the Mexican War and the final assault on Mexico City (led by none other than Lt George PICKETT).

When the war began, Doles enlisted in the Blues (which became the 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia by consolidating with 9 other companies from around the state). He was immediately "re-elected" to the position of company captain of Company H of the 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia. After the Regiment was "commissioned" in Augusta and became the 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia, he was elected to be the overall commander with the rank of Colonel. The regiment was sent to Virginia to become part of what would be the Army of Northern Virginia.

The unit was placed into "combat" at Norfolk Virginia and had the position to watch the famous battle between the USS Monitor and the CSS Virginia in 1862. The regiment then participated in the Peninsular Campaign where Doles was wounded at the Battle of Malvern Hill (led by General Robert E. Lee).

In late 1862, the 4<sup>th</sup> became part of Ripley's Brigade in D.H. Hill's Division. It participated at the Battle of Sharpsburg (Antietam) and made a stand on the end of the infamous farmer Miller's "cornfield". Ripley fell wounded and Doles assumed command of the entire brigade. Doles was given official command of the brigade in November of 1862 and was promoted to Brigadier General.

In 1863, the 4<sup>th</sup> as part of the now Doles Brigade watch from the sidelines at Fredericksburg (extreme



Confederate right flank). But it's moment of glory came at Chancellorsville. The 4<sup>th</sup> anchored the center of the entire line commanded by Stonewall Jackson on that famous evening. The 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia literally charged up the Orange Plank road and CRUSHED the entire Union XI Corps (ok... they had a little help).

Originally, the brigade had the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> NC regiments by at the time of Chancellorsville, they were transferred out and replaced by the 12<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Georgia...Doles' entire Brigade was now made up of Georgians (which also included the 44<sup>th</sup> Georgia).

During the 1863 Campaign into Pennsylvania, the 1300 man brigade was key to the first day of fighting at a little crossroads town called Gettysburg. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the brigade assaulted the Union XI Corps once again...and once again, crushed them and drove them completely through the town (ok...they had a little help again). The brigade that day saw 46 killed, 106 wounded, and 67 captured...16.6% of the entire unit. The brigade was placed in the center of the line west of town and was on the flank watching the famous Pickett's "Charge" on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day.

In 1864, Doles led his brigade on the Overland Campaign, fighting in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania. This was one of the toughest moments in the unit's history. It was placed at the infamous "mule shoes" and was overrun by overwhelming force. The brigade suffered 650 casualties...about half of those were captured. With the aid of several other brigades, the lines were restored...but it was an awful afternoon! During the Battle of Cold Harbor on 2 Jun of 1864, at Bethesda Church, Virginia, a Union sharpshooter spotted the General walking along the tops of the trench lines inspecting his troops and their placement. The sharpshooter shot Doles through the left breast and the General died instantly. Commander of the Doles Brigade passed to the second-in-command Colonel (later Brigadier General) Phillip Cook (in command of the 4<sup>th</sup> Georgia).

The General was escorted home back to Milledgeville and is buried in Memory Hill Cemetery in Milledgeville...about 3 blocks away from his state capitol building.

## MARCH 2008 DINNER

**Rotisserie Chicken • Meat Loaf • Salmon**

Please make your reservations early.

It needs to arrive by Thursday March 6<sup>th</sup>.

Thanks

## Lowcountry Civil War Round Table

### Winter Fund Raising Drive

The Lowcountry Civil War Round Table is pleased to announce a promotional event involving the sale of subscriptions to the *Civil War Historian Magazine*. The promotion will run from January 1, 2008 through March 31, 2008. At the end of the designated time period the publisher will tally the orders and send the LCWRT \$14.50 for every new paid subscription order. **This offer does not apply to phone or website subscriptions.**

Copies of *The Civil War Historian* will be on display at our February 13, 2008 meeting. Applications for subscriptions will also be available. Our group has been assigned **FLC108** for their promotional code. This code must be included with each order. The key code will allow the publisher to track subscribers from the LCWRT.

**If you will allow us to process your subscription we will reduce your cost by \$4.50. The price to you would be \$24.45. The annual subscription rate for the *Civil War Historian***

**which is currently published six times a year is actually \$29.95. We would effectively be sharing part of the rebate offered to us by the publisher.**

Members are free to mail their subscriptions directly to *Civil War Historian*, P.O. Box 838, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387 using the subscription form with the assigned code. Should you choose to do so, you must pay the regular price of \$29.95. Subscriptions mailed directly will not receive a discount and LCWRT will qualify for the entire rebate.

We sincerely hope that you will take advantage of this promotional offer. Not only will you be receiving a fine magazine, but you will also be helping to provide the LCWRT with some needed income. All of you know that the costs associated with everyday life have escalated. The costs of running this organization have been similarly affected.

We look forward to assisting you with our fund raising efforts. See form on back page.

# 1/2 Price Feb-May

**Please Print All Information**    NEW ☐    RENEWAL ☐ (besides name, fill in only changes below)

_____	_____	_____
Last Name	First Name	Badge Nickname
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Additional Member Name	Badge Nickname	
Address _____	City _____	
State _____ Zip Code _____	Phone(    ) _____	E-Mail _____

### New Enlistment:

Single: \_\_\_\_\_ One Time Initiation Fee \$25.00 + Annual Membership \$14.00 = \$39.00 ☐

Household: \_\_\_\_\_ One Time Initiation Fee \$35.00 + Annual Membership \$20.00 = \$55.00 ☐

### Re-enlistment:

Single: \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Membership: \$14.00 ☐

Household: \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Membership: \$20.00 ☐

Mail to \_\_\_\_\_  
or leave in "lower" box:  
Make Check Payable to LCWRT Inc  
Any questions, please call Brenda at 705-3432

**BRENDA BACON**  
**53 Murray Hill Dr**  
**Bluffton, SC 29909**

## The Dinner Menu for March 12 2008

**Rotisserie Chicken • Meat Loaf • Salmon**

**Okra & Tomatoes • Carrots • Mashed Potatoes**

**House Salad with Carrots, Cucumbers, Onions, Peppers, Tomatoes, Cheese and  
Several Types of Dressing • Dinner Yeast Rolls with Honey Butter**

**Blueberry Pie • German Chocolate Bars • Lemon Bars • Fruit**

**Sweet & Unsweetened Tea • Lemonade • Decaffeinated Coffee • Water**

**Dinner Reservations no later than Thursday March 6 2008. Meeting is at Bluffton High School. Social @ 5pm • Buffet @ 5:45 • Meeting @ 6:45 • Presentation @ 7:00**

All Members are invited to the General Meeting. Reservations are required **ONLY** for DINNER.

**Dinner Reservation For March 12 2008**

**NO LATER THAN THURSDAY MARCH 6 2008**

Number of Dinners: \_\_\_\_ @ \$12.50 each = \$ \_\_\_\_

Name 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Name 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Guests: \_\_\_\_\_ List Guests on additional  
paper if necessary

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

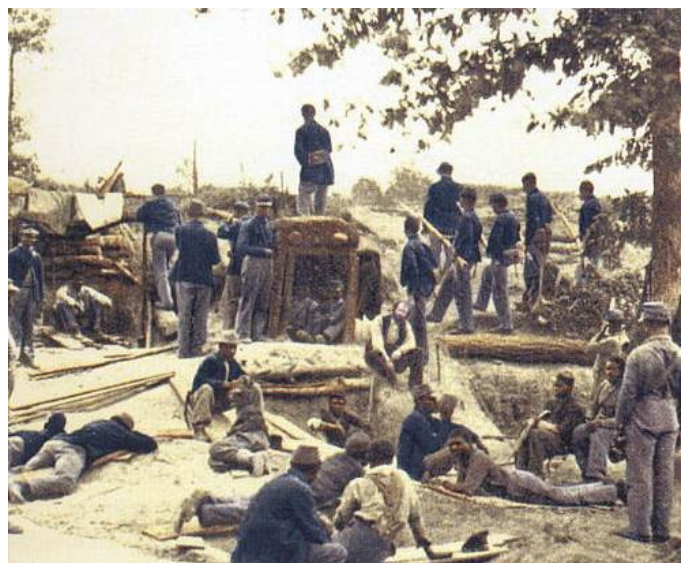
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DON'T MAKE OUR COOKS ANGRY



BLACK SURVIVORS OF THE DISASTER OF THE CRATER WHERE ABOUT  
300 COLORED TROOPS WERE KILLED.  
From 'The Timechart of the Civil War.'



March 12 2008 Issue 71  
**The Crater & the Siege of  
Petersburg**  
**By America's Most Famous  
Civil War Speaker**  
**Ed Bearss**

**Lowcountry Civil War Round Table  
Inc.**  
The Minnie Ball Gazette  
P.O. Box 2252  
Bluffton, SC 29910



## CIVIL WAR HISTORIAN MAGAZINE

Help our Fund Drive by subscribing to the Civil War Historian Magazine which is available for viewing at the March meeting. See story on page 6. Use the form below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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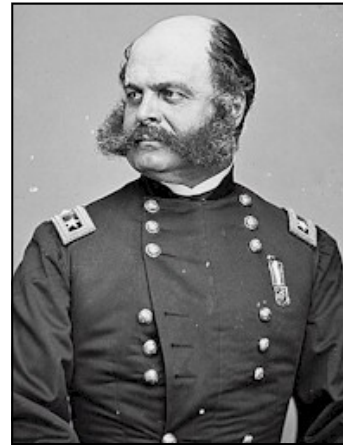
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Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Enclose a check for \$24.95 payable to LCWRT.  
Hand in at the March meeting or mail to:

**Johanna Verwer**  
**16 Trescot Lane**  
**Bluffton, SC 29909**

Or leave the form and check in  
the lower box at her address



MAJ. GEN. AMBROSE E. BURN-



We thank Palmetto Electric  
for their allowing the LCWRT  
usage of their meeting room

for our *Morning After*.