

LIBERTY LIVES HERE

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"Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!" Patrick Henry

Liberty is all throughout this land on which we stand. 228 years ago, 4,000 men smashed, clashed and struggled here over this fight for Liberty. Look around you. On that Sept. 8th morning until noon, the infantry, artillery and cavalry of 1,650 British subjects defended their country and King led by Lt. Col. Alexander Stewart, against the attacking infantry, artillery and cavalry onslaught of 2,300 rebels, commanded by Gen. Nathanael Greene. We would call them Patriots. Look around you. Fought here at Eutaw Springs near Nelson's Ferry on the roads between Charles Town and Camden and Granby. This epic struggle, this pitched battle and brutally bloody encounter of long over four to five hours soaked into the grass, dirt and ground on which we stand today. Greene wrote, "It was by far the hottest action I ever saw and the most bloody for the numbers engaged." (to Lafayette, 9.17.81) What price was paid here! 251 killed, 367 wounded, 74 missing on the side of the rebellion; Crown forces lost 85 killed, 351 wounded, 430 missing & captured. The largest field battle in South Carolina with 30 percent casualties on one side and 50 percent on the other. Liberty suffered here. Liberty bled here. Greene proclaimed right after about this battle: "Never did either men or officers offer their blood more willingly in the service of their Country." (to Pres. McKean, 9.11.81) Look around you. Liberty lives here.

Liberty is freedom coupled with responsibility. Here, only three of our lifetimes ago, 336 responsibly gave their last full measure of devotion – their lives - in this fight; 718 more gave some of their blood in their understanding of that responsibility. Another 500 likely had their Liberty taken by the opposite side. Over 1,550 people paid a very high price here. Not numbers but individual Delawareans, Marylanders, Virginians, North and South Carolinians; yes, Yankees and Brits, too - fathers, sons, husbands, brothers all.

Eutaw Springs was not just a day. It was a whole army campaign from August 21 to September 16 – 25 days with a Patriot march of 120 miles to get here and, the day after battle, another 25 miles chasing the British to Fludds Plantation and Monks Corner, then back. A long, hot, costly campaign amidst campaigns. Two days after the battle (without knowing), Thomas Paine wrote his friend Greene. "Your enterprise, address, management and success to the southward have exceeded every thing I could hope for...How have you contrived without money to do what you have done I have scarcely a conception of. But I am inclined to suppose you have acted like a judicious and honest Physician in desperate cases, that is, you have cut the matter short, and in order to save and serve the Country, have made people do what they otherwise would not have done tho' their own good was the object, for it is seldom that men situated between friends and enemies judge the best for themselves." (9.10.81)

Look over this field around you. Everybody in the South who was anybody (except Sumter) was here. Col. Andrew Pickens was knocked from his horse by a musket ball and his life saved by his sword buckle. John Eager Howard's collarbone was broken by a ball. Col. Richard Campbell fell mortally wounded in the chest but heard of the British retreat. "I die contented." Col. William Washington was wounded in one of the countercharges and captured by the Brit's Marjoribanks, before he was in turn severely wounded. Manning, Eggleston, Armstrong, Marion, and the gallant names go on and on. Light Horse Harry Lee wrote that a number of soldiers fell transfixed by each other's bayonets. Three myths I must directly address. In the midst of many charges, countercharges and crisscrossed orders, the whole of the Patriot Army did not fall into a drunken stupor in the British camp. They rather unraveled in keeping lines, energy and momentum so long amidst the westward and southward British tent camps, being against and unable to take the huge brick plantation house which was the stronghold citadel of the British. 2) Militia fired 12-19 rounds here and Continentals pushed back the British with strong use of bayonets. 3) Greene did not abandon but left a strong picket on the field at the edge of the tent camp while the rest of his army temporarily pulled back up to seven miles to drink and refresh. A day and a half later, the Patriot Army chased the British to Monks Corner and Fairfield Hospital, capturing their rear guard along the way. Eutaw is Greene's Patriot victory and Congress thus so declared.

Why be here today? We must do our part to preserve Liberty – in our institutions, in our minds, in our hearts, on this land. My daughter recently graduated as an airman into the U.S. Navy and excitedly reported back to her daddy about taking the oath of office as a sailor to defend the Constitution. After congratulating her so proud and time later, I asked her how she can defend something that she has never read? Have you actually read the Constitution? How about you state constitution? Liberty requires our vigilance as much as our might. Greene writes of conducting matters with good conduct. Do not fake it; reread it and the Declaration...our national faith. Would it not be interesting to have spirited discussions about these living creeds in our businesses and churches and restaurants... than about just health care insurance or football or cars.

Our minds and hearts are still protected and produced in the ramparts and redoubts of our homes. Turn off TV; read a Revolutionary book...aloud...with your children and grands. Think about Liberty and what part you will play or produce to keep it alive. Today we stand on two and a half acres saved of this core battlefield almost nearly a mile long and half mile wide. Look around. You would not know it. It is for our generation to bring much more of this bloody field backto save and interpret this sacred soil for our children and theirs...alive as a special place for Liberty. In 1781, they gave the red; let us add the white of historic interpretation and the blue of pprotection. Greene and others talked exuberantly of the conspicuous conduct and intrepidity here of his Continental Corps. They did so much to bring about the Patriot victory at this battle of Eutaw Springs. 4,000 individuals made a stand and a big difference here. What is our conduct? To what do we intrepidly act? What are we doing for the common good of our Liberty?