

# One Hundred Thousand Honors

## The funeral of the H.L. Hunley Crew

The odyssey of a life time started on April 16, 2004, when Compatriot Terry Binkley, my wife Karen and I travelled to Charleston, South Carolina to attend the funeral of the third crew of the Confederate submarine, the H.L. Hunley.

The Hunley was the first submarine to ever sink an enemy warship; this would not be repeated until German submarines sank ships during World War I. Although the Hunley's mission was accomplished, they went to their watery grave in 1864.

Upon arriving in historic Charleston, we located our motel. Fortunately, we had made our reservations much earlier because I soon learned that due to no rooms being available near Charleston, people were being sent as far as Savannah, Georgia.

The atmosphere was electrifying with the excitement and anticipation of the events scheduled for the next day – April 17.

We knew when we arrived at 5:00 a.m. Saturday morning and boarded onto one of the many buses that were chartered to transport the participants to the Battery at White Point Gardens, that we were involved in an incredible, historic, and solemn undertaking.

Upon arriving at the Battery, overlooking the bay and Fort Sumter, we exited the bus and entered into a dense fog. The fog, softly illuminated by gleams of light from the 5:30 a.m. sun, had a mysteriously strange, haunting effect on my mind.

The next several minutes were spent registering for the event, and receiving white gloves and a black arm band. All the while, ghostly, uniformed Confederate soldiers, townspeople, and charming ladies of the 1860s constantly emerged, and then disappeared, into the dense morning fog. Karen, Terry and I, also dressed in period attire, were mentally transported back to the year 1864. The feeling and aura was right out of an episode of Rod Serling's "Twilight Zone."

As the morning sun climbed higher into the heavens and the fog dissipated, we were dispatched to our staging area to wait for the funeral procession. The Sons of Confederate Veterans units were lined in accordance to their army and in alphabetical order of their divisions. The first army was the Army of Northern Virginia, with the last division being Pennsylvania. The second army was the Army of Tennessee with the Florida Division second in line. The third army was the Army of Trans Mississippi.

The whole area was buzzing with multiple activities. In the sky, an airplane flew overhead towing a lengthy Confederate banner, and sailing on the water was a large sailboat with a giant-sized battle flag.

Prior to starting the funeral march, Division Commander John Adams and Lt. Cmdr. Don Young inquired if I knew of any individuals that would carry the various Confederate flags of our Division. With very little prodding, Compatriots Terry Binkley, Jay Cross, and I volunteered. I was honored to carry the Bonnie Blue (the flag of the Republic of West Florida and the flag under which President Jefferson Davis was sworn in) for almost the entire length of the procession.

Immediately prior to the start of the sacred service, the caskets of the eight crew members of the Hunley arrived. They were transported in

modern hearses and were placed on their individual biers by former navy submariners, all wearing navy blue colored sport coats.

These modern dressed pallbearers were then magically morphed into pallbearers of the 1864 era, consisting of Confederate soldiers, sailors and marines.

The time that we had been anxiously awaiting was now at hand. The ceremony was conducted by several dignitaries and men of the cloth with prayers, the reading of poems, and the recounting of the brave deeds performed by those now being honored. Then, floating across the air drifted strains of the haunting, soul touching song, "Shine on Hunley, Shine on."

At the conclusion of this beautiful ceremony, overlooking the harbor and Ft. Sumter, the Confederate pallbearers placed each of the caskets, all of which were draped with the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Confederate Flag, onto individual horse drawn wagons. We were now ready to begin the approximate 5 to 6 mile procession to Magnolia Cemetery.

When the procession started to move, we, the Florida Division, were almost directly behind the Pennsylvania Division. There were only a few from the Alabama Division between us. Karen really wished that we had our camera. She wanted a picture of the Pennsylvania flag, having the keystone with the distinctive SCV logo on it.

We stepped out to an awaiting throng of flag waving, cheering, appreciative spectators who lined the sidewalks, rooftops, balconies and overhead highway bridges that lined the route to the Magnolia Cemetery.

As we entered onto the main thoroughfare, overheard by us was a reporter, who had received one of the over 400 issued press passes, loudly exclaim, "They are still coming, they are still coming!" The reporter was referring to the approximately 10,000 participants of the procession, which included the many re-enactor units, horse drawn wagons, bagpipers, brass bands, drummer corps, and a large number of "ladies in mourning" dressed in black.

Let it be noted that I recently learned that one of the "ladies in mourning", who is a great asset to the Southern Cause, was our own Kathy Carter, who at the time, was not known by any of us. Another lady that wore the black attire and marched the lengthy distance was Mary Ann Langford. Her husband, Compatriot Bill Langford, watched the procession and was heavily involved in photographing the event.

Directly behind the men of the Florida Division, steadfastly marching in heavy period dresses, were several of our gracious and lovely ladies, including Karen Hurst, Cathy Adams, Lainie Cross, and Annette Lindsey. Though enduring the heat, thirst and many other discomforts, our ladies demonstrated their Southern hearts, making us all proud.

Often during the "stop and go" march, ones spirit could have easily gotten lost into another period of time - hearing the clanging of swords, cadence being called to the marching troop, the sounds of the horse drawn wagons, the excitement of the music, and the cheering of the crowds.

Commander Clement Lindsey and his companions soon learned that it pays to be in the right place at the right time. These lucky and fortunate "Sons of the South" were chosen to be with the wagon that carried the funeral flowers. They got a front row seat to the main event.

As we entered into the Magnolia Cemetery, due to the thousands of people that occupied virtually every square foot of ground, we were dismissed.

The commander of the honored Hunley crew, Lt. Dixon, was a Mason from Mobile, Alabama. Masons from the city of Mobile were in attendance to perform the Masonic Rites for him.

Terry, Karen and I, exhausted, left the cemetery and headed to a nearby restaurant where I told the waitress to just keep bringing pitchers and pitchers of the “wine of the South” – that being sweet tea to non-Southerners. Afterwards, we retired to our motel.

During that afternoon, the local television news reported that a motorcycle club entered the Magnolia Cemetery. Their purpose was dignified and honorable as they slowly rode past and tossed flowers into the still open grave.

The next morning, Sunday, Karen, Terry and I went back to the grave site. We found that the grave, guarded by four uniformed South Carolina troopers, had been mostly covered by earth. Scattered on top of the earth-covered caskets could be observed, not only flowers, but several SCV membership pins.

Karen, the trooper that she is, who had sustained several blisters on her feet, looked down into the grave of these heroes of the South and somberly stated, “It is an honor to be here”. Many words can be spoken about that experience, but that simple, sincere statement of Karen’s, said it all.

Our home state of Florida was well represented by Compatriots and ladies from each of its regions, such as Jim and Sylvia Darby, and by so

many others that I do not know. Each of us would have to acknowledge that the Hunley ceremony had to be one of the most prominent experiences in our lives.

The events of the day of “100,000 Honors” controlled our hearts, and were the topic spoken during our journey back to Florida. That weekend, we, the privileged ones that participated in this once in a life time event, were truly blessed.

If the reader would like to sample or re-live the experience, I suggest that you contact the South Carolina Division, Sons of Confederate Veterans, and order their DVD production of “The Hunley Experience.”

May a merciful God continue His Blessings on us!

Harry D. Hurst

4<sup>th</sup> Florida Division Lt. Cmdr

Sons of Confederate Veterans