

IBC#4 Patriotic Instruction – Volunteers vs Appointees - April 2018 – Brother Ross Schwalm

From *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses Grant, Includes both Volumes* (Kindle Edition) Chapter XXXII

The Vicksburg Campaign or more appropriately, the quest to find a way to get the father of all rivers to flow freely, started in the Fall of 1862. Major General US Grant, in command of the Department of the Tennessee, started very early in trying to figure out how to crack the nut known as Vicksburg. By April 1863, he resolved upon a plan to run the gauntlet of cannons at Vicksburg to establish a foot hold south of Vicksburg. He issued Special Orders, No. 110 at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana on April 20, 1863.

Three corps of the Army of Tennessee would move from Milliken's Bend to Perkin's Plantation. To logistically support this number of troops, six steamers with twelve barges in tow with supplies and rations, would run the gauntlet. On the night of April 22, 1863, they ran by the batteries. Five got through and one was sunk. About half of the barges got through with their needed freight.

What is patriotic about this incident is the volunteerism of the men who guided and crewed the ships. As paraphrased from the text: When we first proposed to run the blockade with river steamers, only two captains or masters were willing to accompany their vessels and only about one crew worth of men. Volunteers were called upon from the Army. Men who had experience in any capacity of navigating the western rivers were requested. Captains, pilots, mates, engineers and deck-hands enough presented themselves to take five times the number of vessels planned for moving through this dangerous ordeal. Most of the men were from Logan's division composed generally of men from the southern part of Illinois and Missouri. All but two of the steamers were commanded by volunteers from the army and all but one so manned. "In this instance, as in all others during the war, I found that volunteers could be found in the ranks and among the commissioned officers to meet every call for aid whether mechanical or professional. Col W. S. Oliver was master of transportation on this occasion by special detail."

This passage struck me as extremely relevant to our current military as well as to our need for volunteers in the Sons to do all sorts of good deeds. Earlier in his memoirs, I also found sage warning about our current need to mind ourselves around the media in recent general orders:

Direct quote from Chapter XXV - "Correspondents of the press were ever on hand to hear every word dropped, and were not always disposed to report correctly what did not confirm their preconceived notions, either about the conduct of the war or the individuals concerned in it." I added a little note in my Kindle - "still happens to this day".

Another sage warning that is manifesting itself today also hit me like a BFO – Blinding Flash of the Obvious:

Chapter XXXII - "In time of war the President, being by the Constitution Commander-in chief of the Army and Navy, is responsible for selection of commanders. He should not be embarrassed in making his selections. I having been selected, my responsibility ended with my doing the best I knew how. If I had sought the place, or obtained it through personal or political influence, my belief is that I would have feared to undertake any plan of my own conception, and would probably have awaited direct orders from my distant superiors." I saw this passage as "take responsibility for your actions" which seems to be lacking in many aspects of America today. Grant continued: "Persons obtaining important commands by application or political influence are apt to keep written record of complaints and predictions of defeat, which are shown in case of disaster. Somebody must be responsible for their failures." Be on guard, brothers, for memo writers and politicians not performing their responsibilities to the nation!