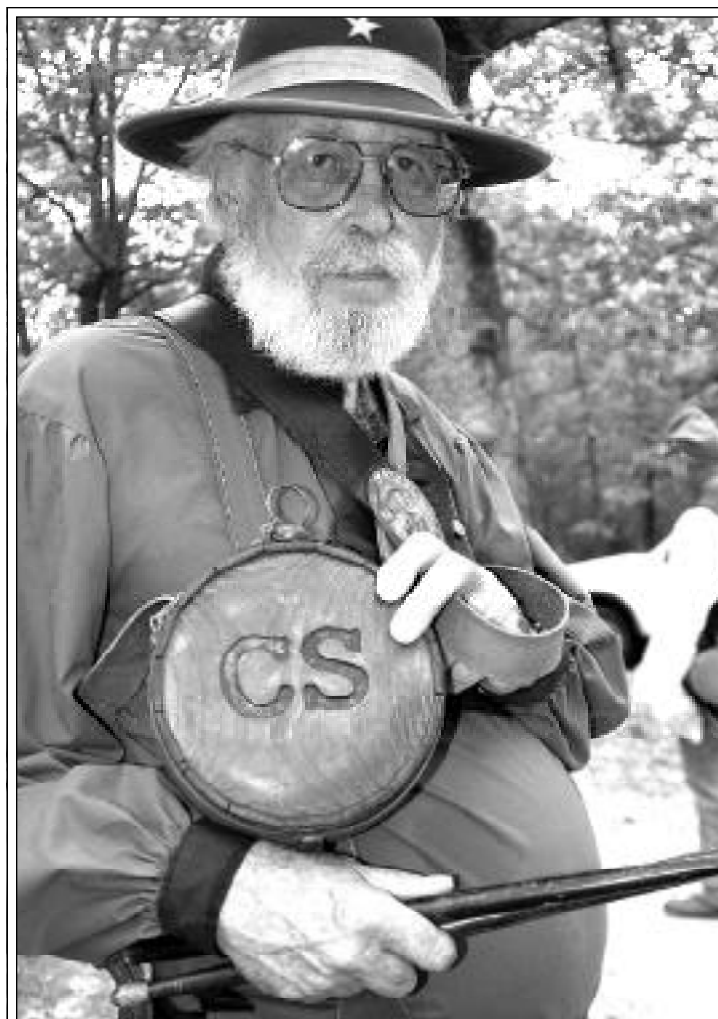




Members of the James Bell, Sr., family and dedication participants are, from left, Jerry Haymes, Ronnie Bell, Joyce Fountain and Ronda Bell Churchwell. Other Bell family members in the background are Sharon Crank, Jana Bell, Robert Churchwell, Randall Bell and Ronald Stringer. Joan Bell (not pictured).



In his authentic Civil War dress for the Confederacy is David Hay of Lone Star. He is also the drummer for the Lone Star Confederate Color Guard. photo by Corneill Abeles

Southern Cross ceremony at Pleasant Hill and Bell Cemeteries

# Confederate veterans memorialized at gravesites

By Neil Abeles  
 Monitor Correspondent  
 Joyce Fountain of Gilmer is certainly doing her part to memorialize Confederate veterans of the Civil War. She has accomplished the paper work and gathered family, friends and re-enactment actors for ceremonies to place a Southern Cross of Honor at the graves of 21 of them.

Four were memorialized Saturday, September 7, at the Pleasant Hill and Bell Cemeteries at Bryans Mill. The first dedication was for Pvt. John Lenard Morgan who was in the Dawsons Arkansas Infantry. His great, great grandson Ronald Stringer read the biography and unveiled the cross at the Pleasant Hill Cemetery. The three at the Bell Cem-

etery were Pvt. James Bell, Sr., of the 22nd Georgia Regiment of Militia, and two brothers George and Robert Black who were of the South Carolina Rifles and the Company B, 1st Regiment of the Texas State troops respectively. Ronda Bell Churchwell of Naples, a great-great-granddaughter, and Ronny Bell of Omaha, a great-great-grandson, of James Bell Sr., read his biography and Joyce Fountain, a great-great-granddaughter, read the biographies of George and Robert Black. Ronny Bell assisted Fountain in the unveilings.

The ceremonies of Southern Cross dedication are somber yet refreshing observances well worth being attended by the general public. The services are elegant and draw from obscurity Civil War veterans and their graves. The presence of authentic Civil War actors, the words spoken and realistic actions taken by the participants teach important lessons. For these four dedications, four re-enactment camps participated.

- They included:
- The General Walter P. Camp, No. 1455, Longview
  - The Upshur County Patriots of Gilmer
  - The John Gregg Camp of Longview
  - The Red Diamond Camp of Texarkana
- The re-enactors conducted a distinguished ceremony. Scriptures and poetry were read, pledges given and biographies told by family members.

Perhaps the most memorable moment came when a widow dressed in black walked out in silence to place roses upon the graves. The living soldiers stood at attention and saluted.

"The widow had to remain dressed in black for a year and a day," said Esther Linton of Gilmer who is a member of the Order of the Confederate Rose and of the Chapter of United Daughters of the Confederacy. She was the widow for this ceremony. "The widowed man had to wear an arm band for a short period of time, then he could remarry. But, then, he probably had a home full of children and needed the woman." When the firing in salute of the old Civil War rifles by the authentic-appearing soldiers came at last, their powerful sounds scared some of the children present into crying.

Among the words spoken were those of Robert E. Lee in his last address to the Confederate Soldier.

"You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed; and I earnestly pray that a merciful God will extend to you his blessing and protection."

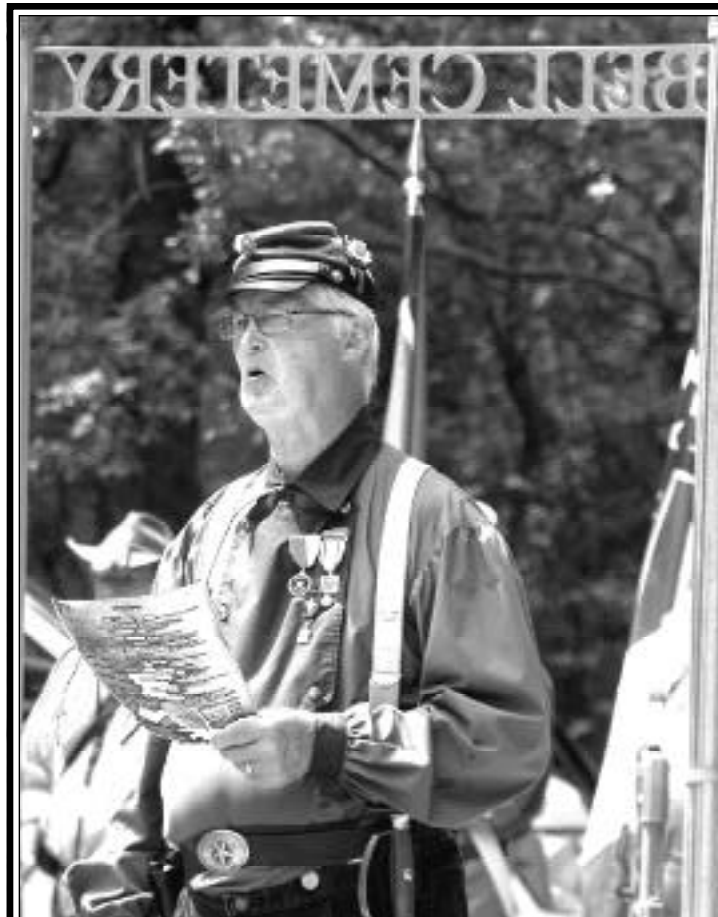
"With an unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous consideration of myself, I bid you an affectionate farewell." Photographs from the ceremony at the Bell Cemetery are included in this feature.



Members of the Lone Star Honor Guard prepare their rifles to give a three blast salute to Confederate veterans at the Bell Cemetery in Bryans Mill. photo by Corneill Abeles



Southern Cross of Honor marker which can be placed in memory and tribute at the graves of Confederate Civil War Veterans. The one above is for George W. Black in the Bell Cemetery at Bryans Mill. CA photo



Paul Hamilton of Ore City, the commander of the Lone Star Color Honor Guard, is giving this following reading at commemoration ceremonies for four Confederate veterans at the Bell Cemetery in Bryans Mill. CA photo

## "The Flag My Grandpa Knew"

by Ronnie Hatfield

"I remember now, each morning, he'd rise before us all, and I'd hear his muffled footsteps as he padded down the hall. The many years he'd labored had left his body bent and gray but Grandpa had a reason for getting up each day.

"A well-worn box sat on a shelf beside his rocking chair ... inside the box a tattered cloth of crimson, blue and white ... and he'd gaze at it each morning with tears that dimmed his sight.

"On special days he raised it still on the pole outside our door, and he'd tell us kids in reverent tones what that cloth stood for.

"The red reminds me of the wheatfield where Pickett's men were slain, when 7,000 good men fell amidst the bloodied grain.

"The blue, I guess, brings back to mind the loneliness and cold of a Shenandoah winter a thousand miles from home.

"And the pure white stars? Well, they're generals for Jackson, Stuart and Bee. And that big one in the middle there is for Robert Edward Lee!

"Each bullet hole is a battle won, each tear a comrade lost, each stain is for a wounded friend who paid the final cost."

"O! Grandpa must have loved that flag, he stayed near it every day, and so took it with him when he finally passed away.

"And if there's a flagpole up in heaven, there's no tear in Grandpa's eye, cause I know he's back in uniform and his beloved flag flies high."



Bugler Paul Hamilton of Ore City stands with the Lone Star Honor Guard at the opening of ceremonies of tribute for four confederate veterans whose graves are located at the Pleasant Hill and Bell Cemeteries at Bryans Mill. photo by Corneill Abeles



The widow of the fallen soldier will be dressed in black for a year and a day. Participating in a Southern Cross Ceremony was Esther Linton of Gilmer.