

# TRAVELLER

Award Winning Publication of the General Robert E. Lee  
Camp, #1640

Sons of Confederate Veterans, Germantown, TN  
Duty, Honor, Integrity, Chivalry  
DEO VINDICE!

**February 2019**



**CAMP MEETING**  
**February 11, 2019**

**Speaker: Arthur Oliver**

**Topic: "Confederate Ironclads"**

**7:00 p.m. at the at the Germantown  
Regional History and Genealogy Center**

**Don't miss our next meeting!**

## Was Braxton Bragg Autistic?

Historians and medical researchers usually hesitate to diagnose historical figures with disabilities and disorders post hoc, but contemporary understanding of human behavior can actually inform our analysis of various Civil War successes and failures. Case in point: Braxton Bragg. By many accounts, Bragg has been recognized—by his contemporaries and ours—as possessing extraordinary intelligence, a superior memory, and a talent for drilling and organizing his men, yet almost all of the battles in which he engaged during the war ended in defeat, save for Chickamauga. Indeed, Bragg is often considered among the worst generals of the Civil War, even dubbed “the most hated man of the Confederacy” by his biographer Earl Hess. It is possible to reconcile Bragg’s gifts with his failures, if we consider, as some have speculated, that Bragg may have been on what we know today as the autism spectrum.

The American Psychological Association definition of autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, in its simplest form

describes it as a neuro-cognitive condition that “affects behavior, communication, and social functioning.” In fact, a list of common behaviors associated with ASD almost reads like a short biography of Bragg: difficulty with peer relationships; difficulty expressing emotions appropriately; failure to read body language and understand others; obsessive habits; inflexible adherence to routines; being prone to unexpected aggression; and seeing everything in terms of black and white.

Some of the best-known anecdotes about Bragg seemingly illustrate these characteristics quite well. In his memoirs, Ulysses S. Grant recalls an episode from “the old army” in which Bragg, stationed at a post of several companies, each commanded by a field officer, was himself commanding one of the companies while also acting as post quartermaster and commissary officer.

“He was first lieutenant at the time, but his captain was detached on other duty. As commander of the company he made a requisition upon the quartermaster - himself - for something he wanted. As quartermaster he declined to fill the requisition, and endorsed on the back of it his reasons for so doing. As company commander he responded to this, urging that his requisition called for nothing but what he was entitled to, and that it was the duty of the quartermaster to fill it. As quartermaster he still persisted that he was right. In this condition of affairs Bragg referred the whole matter to the commanding officer of the post.

The latter, when he saw the nature of the matter referred, exclaimed: ‘My God, Mr. Bragg, you have quarreled with every officer in the army, and now you are quarreling with yourself!’”



Many historians have questioned whether this incident actually occurred, yet even if it is apocryphal, Grant added that the anecdote was “very characteristic of [Bragg’s] nature.” He was “thoroughly upright,” Grant wrote. “But he was possessed of an irascible temper, and he was naturally disputatious. A man of the highest moral character and the most correct habits, yet in the old army he was in frequent trouble. As a subordinate he was always on the lookout to catch his commanding officer infringing his prerogatives; as a post commander he was equally vigilant to detect the slightest neglect, even of the most trivial order.”

Another widely told anecdote supports the portrait of Bragg as obsessively rigid with military rules, even to absurdity. In this instance, during the Mexican War, he and his men were enduring an artillery barrage at Monterrey when Bragg witnessed an American horse driver fall dead from his saddle. Bragg ordered his retreating men to halt, and ordered one of the other horsemen to dismount, turn around, and recover the dead man’s sword because it was public property that had been issued by the government. The horseman also took from the corpse a pocket knife, fearing that if he did not, Bragg would send him back for it.

Nearly every biographer has deemed Bragg “his own worst enemy” because of his lack of interpersonal skills, or his unusual obsession with organization and discipline. One of Bragg’s men, Samuel B. Church, admitted to placing a loaded and fused 12-pounder shell outside Bragg’s tent on August 26, 1847, attempting to kill him because he was such a strict disciplinarian. The explosion miraculously didn’t injure Bragg, which must have frustrated Church, because he tried again in October, only to fail once more.

In his 1991 biography *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat*, Grady McWhiney noted that even at the United States Military Academy, Bragg “prided himself on being the ugliest man in the corps and expressed his opinions on all occasions and all subjects in a most tactless manner. This was his way; he would always be outspoken, never able to conceal or moderate his views. As a consequence, some cadets thought him uncouth, brusque, and rude.” This sort of social crudeness is emblematic of ASD individuals, likewise the poor personal relationships it breeds with others.

The inability to read or understand social cues, also a standard ASD attribute, is evident in Bragg’s handling of criticism from his commanders after his retreat from the Battle of Stones River (Murfreesboro) in January 1863—a move that drew sharp criticism from his subordinates, the press, and even the public. “Goaded by such denunciation,” McWhiney wrote, “Bragg decided to ask

his subordinates what they really thought of his military ability.” According to McWhiney, on January 10, 1863, Bragg read to his staff an article from the *Chattanooga Rebel* opining that Bragg had “lost the confidence of his Army—that a change was necessary & that the retrograde movement from Murfreesboro was against the advice of his general officers.” Bragg asked his staff to consider the charges and informed them that if he “had lost the confidence of his Army...he would retire.” The staff met and did, in fact, conclude, to Bragg’s surprise, that he should ask to be relieved, which he did not.

A host of circumstances influenced Bragg’s campaign failures, and not least among them were his poor relationships with men at all levels of service in the Confederate Army. Indeed, uncooperative subordinates are often cited as contributing to Bragg’s defeats. Doubtless some of his commanders, such as Leonidas Polk and William Hardee, shared in the blame, but it’s possible to reexamine their response to Bragg in a new light if we consider him “on the spectrum” in current parlance.

Concluding that Bragg was on the spectrum does make sense. He was obviously quite intelligent; he was an effective administrator; he is even called a good soldier by many respectable contemporaries when you are able to dig into the less-biased records. There were no logical reasons for Bragg to fail in the ways he did given the advantages he should have had. Perhaps lack of charisma was actually impaired social functioning; his obsession with organization actually a desire to maintain comforting routines in response to disability; generals who criticized and quarreled with Bragg were perhaps responding to their own inability to understand him as much as to Bragg’s inability to communicate effectively and understand them. In other words, he was very likely on the spectrum, and we should consider reinterpreting his critics now since they had little idea with what they were dealing. Perhaps we do.

*Jack Trammell is professor of sociology, criminal justice, and human services at Mount St. Mary’s University in Emmitsburg, Md. He specializes in disability and social history.*

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The Collierville Malco is bringing back **GONE WITH THE WIND**. Sunday, March 3, 1:00 pm

You can buy & reserve your seats on:

<https://www.fathomevents.com/events/gone-with-the-wind-80th-anniversary/theaters>

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**The Mid South Military History and Civil War Show** and Swain Wealth Partners Speaker Series is scheduled for Saturday March 30 & 31, at the Agricenter Showplace Arena. See the event flyers below for complete details

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**Yankee Carpetbagger Strickland Seeks Re-election – Memphis Communist Appeal Calls Removal of Confederate Monuments His Greatest Accomplishment**

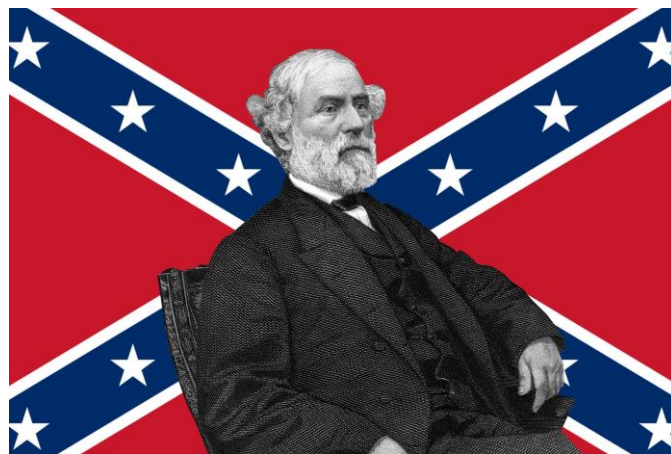
Memphis Comical Appeal reported Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland has announced he will seek re-election this October “surprising no one”.

Apparently, his campaign “has \$750,000 in the bank” and “his favorable rating is a high 78 percent, **if you believe a December poll paid for by his campaign**”. Strickland's highest-profile opponent will be former mayor Willie Herenton, “who seems poised to run a campaign in the mold of President Donald Trump — complete with ‘Make Herenton Mayor Again’ merch.”

According to the Strickland backed poll, “Of the black men surveyed, 72 percent said they ‘strongly approve’ of Strickland and 19 percent said they disapprove. Meanwhile, 68 percent of white men surveyed said they approved of Strickland while a high 26 percent said they ‘strongly disapproved’.” According to the CAs sycophantic editorializing, **“That relatively high disapproval rating could have something to do with the city removing its Confederate monuments, perhaps.”**

Continuing in its shameless boot licking, the CA offered the following vote of confidence to the incumbent, **“once Strickland begins using his money on ads touting the removal of Confederate monuments... (he) has reason to be optimistic about his chances.”**

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**The General Robert E. Lee Camp #1640  
Sons of Confederate Veterans**

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<http://www.tennessee-scv.org/camp1640/>

Or visit our Facebook pages at:

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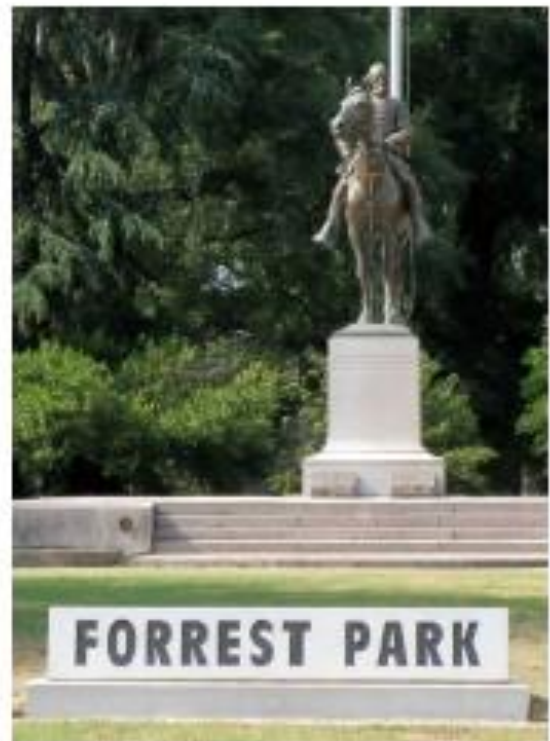
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Eugene Forrester	Donald Harrison
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**SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS**

# Help Save General Forrest



The Memphis City Council has passed a resolution to remove the Forrest Equestrian Statue from Forrest Park and to dig up the graves of General Forrest and his wife MaryAnn from beneath the statue.

The SCV and the Forrest family descendants must raise money to fight the city in this second attack on General Forrest. We need your help.

## Help us to save the graves and monument of General Forrest

Can you, or your camp or Division donate \$100, \$500 or \$1000 to the defense ?

Please sign me up as a supporter.      No membership fee.

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Contribute through PayPal at our ally at : [www.citizenstosaveourparks.org](http://www.citizenstosaveourparks.org)

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### Forrest Park Defense Fund

PO Box 241875,    Memphis, TN    38124

# MID-SOUTH MILITARY HISTORY

&

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105 S. Germantown Parkway  
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**Saturday, MARCH 30, 2019 (9AM - 5PM)**

**Sunday, MARCH 31, 2019 (9AM - 3PM)**

Admission: Adults - \$10.00 Veterans - \$5.00 Children 12-under - FREE

Contact: Mid-South Military History & Civil War Show  
P.O. Box 171251  
Memphis, TN 38187-1251  
Contact - Donald Harrison - (901)832-4700 - [dwharrison@aol.com](mailto:dwharrison@aol.com)  
PR/Advertising - Lee Ann Robertson - (662)279-0538 - [midsouthmilitaryhistory@gmail.com](mailto:midsouthmilitaryhistory@gmail.com)



[www.midsouthmilitaryhistory.com](http://www.midsouthmilitaryhistory.com)  
<https://www.facebook.com/MilitaryHistoryCivilWarShow>

The Mid-South Military History & Civil War Show is pleased to be affiliated with MIKE KENT & ASSOCIATES.

# **2019 Mid-South Military History & Civil War Show**

Swain Wealth Partners Speaker Series

**SATURDAY, MARCH 30, 2019**

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11am – Brandon Beck – “First Meeting of Lee and Jackson in 1861.”

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Noon – Randy Bishop – “Tennessee Civil War Battlefields.”

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1pm – Tim Poole – “World War 1 Doughboy.”

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2pm – Cecil Brunson – “Vietnam POW Tells His Story.”

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3pm – Marc Thompson – “Taxes and Tariffs as Causes of the Civil War.”

**SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2019**

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Noon – T.J. Jones – “Memphis Belle of World War 2.”

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1pm – Larry McCluney – “Mississippi Central Railroad Campaign.”

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2pm – Ted Alexander – “Lee at Sharpsburg.”

**Agricenter Showplace Arena**

**105 Germantown Parkway**

**Memphis, Tennessee 38018**

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**Traveller** is the monthly newsletter of:

The General Robert E. Lee Camp #1640  
Sons of Confederate Veterans  
and

The Mary Custis Lee Chapter,  
Order of the Confederate Rose  
P.O. Box 171251  
Memphis, Tennessee 38187

Steve M. McIntyre, Editor

**Next Camp Meeting \*\* February 11, 2019**  
Germantown Regional History and Genealogy Center, 7779 Old Poplar Pike, Germantown, TN