

John Grant Griffith's 86th Birthday Party

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Kenneth L. Smith-Christmas

At noon on Monday, 15 July 2024, twenty-seven friends of Chapter Member John Grant Griffiths gathered at the Golden Corral Restaurant in Fredericksburg, Virginia, to help him celebrate his 86th birthday. Included in the group were a few members of the Company of Military Historians' Chesapeake Chapter, as John (or "JGG", as he is also known) has been a long-time member of the group.

Organized by retired Marine colonel Mike Burns and Alan Zirkle (both local Civil War Roundtable members), the event was a repeat of the birthday parties they have organized for JGG over the past few years. As he had done at last year's party, John's long-time friend (dating back to 1962) and former supervisor at the Marine Corps Museum, Chapter Member Ken Smith-Christmas gave a brief presentation, chronicling JGG's life and his involvement in military history. As most everyone at the event was aware, John is the Great-Great-Grandson of Gen Ulysses S. Grant, and his maternal great-grandfather was the former Secretary of War, Elihu Root.

Tim Terrell, one of John's former "comrades in arms" from the First Maryland Regiment (1964-1983), was there from the Chapter. JGG was a founding member of that famed Revolutionary War living history unit. Hermes Knauer, also a CoMH member, and the retired chief conservator of the arms and armor collection at NYC's Metropolitan Museum, came by rail from Ashland, Virginia, and, once again, photographed the occasion. Hermes had helped with JGG at the CoMH meeting in Stafford in 2023, as well as attending last year's birthday party. Members from two of Fredericksburg's Civil War Roundtables (JGG is a member of both) and their spouses were also in attendance, as well as members of the Sons of Union Veterans, and other living history groups. John has been involved in Civil War living history since the mid-1950s, when he helped found the North-South Skirmish Associations' 1st Maryland

“Blackhats”, in which he served during the Civil War Centennial. After moving to the Fredericksburg area in 1988, when he became the Curator of Ordnance for the Marine Corps Museum, JGG has participated in scores of local historical observances and events.

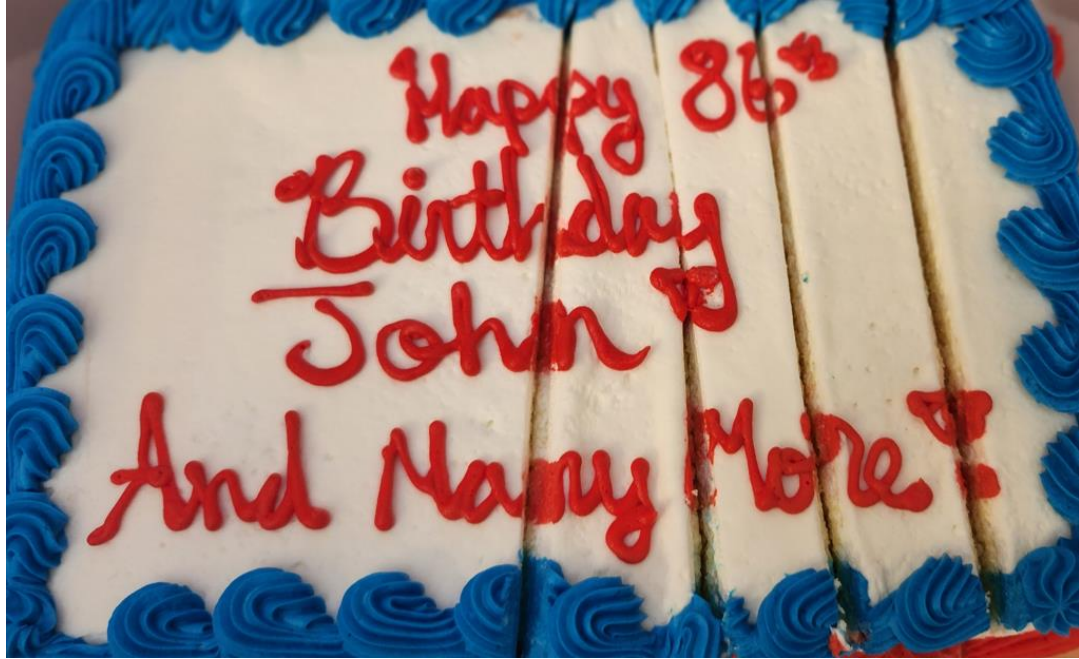
Photo Captions

(Please include acknowledgement of Hermes Knauer below)

1. John Grant Griffiths (“JGG”) poses for the camera on his 86th birthday.
2. JGG thanks Dan Gilbert for coming to the party. Dan was a member of the Appin Stewarts, a Jacobite living history group, along with JGG’s late half-brother, Dick Griffiths.
3. Chapter member Ken Smith-Christmas catches up on things with Dan Gilbert, whom he knew through his involvement in Scottish music and culture, as well as through his work with historical firearms.
4. JGG is very fond of deserts, and the cake that Mike Burns provided was soon devoured.
5. As he had done in the past, JGG cut the cake with an original USMC M1859 musicians’ sword.
6. As in previous years, the party provided a good opportunity for JGG’s many friends to meet up again with each other. Chapter member Ken Smith-Christmas (on left) talks to Civil War Roundtable member, Bob LaChance,, who had served alongside Ken as a drummer in the City of Alexandria Pipes & Drums. They also share connections through the National Museum of the Marine Corps outside Quantico VA.

All photographs are courtesy of Hermes Knauer, a Company of Military Historians member, who was instrumental in enabling JGG to attend the April 2023 Annual Meeting in Stafford, Virginia.

“Let us gather at **1200 on Monday July 15th at Golden Corral** and break bread on John's birthday”.....





Bob La Chance and Ken CS



Ken with Dann Gilbert