Goodnight, President Davis

("Thus always the .44 Mag")

By Mr Poe, Chief Psychopomp, The Fire Eater
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I flew, not but a few weeks ago (April 16th, to be precise) to Mississippi. To Biloxi, where Dixie meets the somber waters of the Gulf. I traveled there not to admire the view, though it is quite bracing at that, but to stand where Jefferson Davis had stood: on the porch at Beauvoir, and on the beachfront, where he and Varina must have held hands many a night to watch the sun fall over God's Country.

Jefferson Davis is, to put it mildly, one of history's least understood men. At the same time, he is also one of history's most important figures, and not just for the presidency he held from 1861 to 1865, a presidency most Yankee Court historians dismiss as "brief," or "insignificant." In those four years, however, President Davis secured a place in the hearts of his fellow countrymen (and I ain't talkin bout no Yankee America either). Certainly, many disagreed with him politically, policy-wise, and personally, but to understand how large an impact he made upon the Southern psyche (and as a Psychopomp, I know a thing or two about such matters), you must reflect on the funeral procession which translated his remains from New Orleans (one of my old stompin grounds) to Richmond. The procession was one of the largest ever held in America, North or South (and who cares about Northern processions anyway?).

When the train carrying his casket departed from New Orleans for Biloxi, children at Biloxi gathered to place flowers for 300 yards along the track. White rhodendrons. Over 20,000 folks gathered at City Hall in New Orleans to bid farewell to ol' Jeff Davis. The Yankees, as might be expected, pretty much ignored the event. Even though Davis had been a soldier in their army, and even though he had been their Secretary of War from 1853 to 1855, the Yankee refused to lower his candy-striper in honour of Davis. Which, if you think about it, is just fine and dandy. Why would Davis want the candy-striper to honour his funeral? The Stainless Banner was much more appropriate, if you ask me.

In Alabama, the Stars and Bars hung above his casket where he lay in state in the supreme court headquarters. On the wall, written in evergreens, were the words: "He suffered for us."

And that is why I flew to Biloxi. To pay homage to the man who, indeed, suffered for us. To the man whom the Yankee Court historians would tirelessly and breathlessly excoriate as a "traitor," even though two special prosecutors warned them that Davis, whom they tortured in a dungeon at Fort Monroe for two years, could never be tried for treason. Why? Because secession was not against the Constitution. (Try reading the 10th amendment.) In a way, over the years, Davis has become a symbol more than a real man; a symbol of both defeat and victory. Victory?

Yea, verily. Richard Weaver wrote that after the War the Yankee was surprised that Southerners did not exactly rue their Southern-ness. Indeed, one of the ironies of the War is that the Southerner emerged from it with the knowledge, as Weaver put it, that the War "had secured for him a great consolation prize—the conviction that man for man he belonged to a superior breed," a breed which could never be "reconstructed." If Southerners were tragic victims, as Weaver claimed, they were also held in the arms of a God the Yankee could never know, for the Yankee worshipped at the altar of mercantilism and ceaseless industrialist progress; and their saviour was not the Christ of Bethlehem, but the skeletal atheist of Illinois.

It was with this knowledge in mind that I came to Biloxi, as well as to give a small gift to President Davis. I pattered about Beauvoir for a while (which is admirably repaired after the recent storm there), stared at the porch and tried to imagine Jeff and Varina sitting there in their rocking chairs of a summer's night, and then headed down to the sand across the highway. When Jefferson Davis lived at Beauvoir, the sand would have extended a good football field or three farther into the South than it does now, what with erosion and suchlike.

I went close to the water, removed the small picture of an equally small derringer from my beak, and dug a hole for it there. After I placed the picture in the sand, I uttered a prayer for Davis and for Dixie, turned one last time to look at the old homestead, and then headed back home. As I flew over Beauvoir exactly at 10:15 PM on that April 16th, I sang aloud three small words, which I'm sure Davis would have appreciated: "Sic Semper Tyrannis," which is Latin for "Thus always the .44 Magnum."

Beavoir, home of President Jefferson Davis after the Yankee invasion of Dixie.

About the Author

Mr Poe was born in a graveyard in Hoyt, Oklahoma (then the Indian Territory) between two Confederate gravestones. Upon reaching maturity, which is not really all that difficult for a raven (a week after all), Mr Poe migrated first to Jekyll Island, Georgia, where he roamed from Savannah to Key West.

After brief stays in the Canary Islands, Antiqua, Guatemala, and Osceola, Missouri, Mr Poe settled in the Marshes of Glynn, Georgia.

At an early age, Mr Poe began his lifelong study and love affair with Dixie, resolving never to eat Southern carrion, but only the Yankee variety (which, it turns out, is found in abundance in Georgia). Upon hearing of the Fire Eater and its mission to create contemporary Southern culture, Mr Poe "volunteered" for the position of Fire Eater Psychopomp, which position he now holds because, as he put it, "No one else could do it."

As is true of certain varieties of *corvus corax*, Mr Poe holds certain psychic abilities which, he claims, makes him the logical choice for Chief Psychopomp of the Fire Eater.

Email Mr Poe.

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