

# **BATTLE JOURNAL**

**2011**

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# The Battle of Mt. Pisgah: Nooooo!



Photo Credit: Nathan Scates

The end of the long and dreary off-season finally rolled around last weekend, with the Battle of Mt. Pisgah. This event replaced the one we normally had at Cheadle Lake, and I would have to say it was a splendid upgrade. The site is located in Springfield, about a 90 minute drive for me, and features one of the largest battlefields I've been on. The main field is primarily open, with rolling knolls in some spots and trees in random spots. It reminded me a lot of the field at Willamette Mission, complete with various trails through the woods that line the field's perimeter.

I was looking forward to this event for two reasons: the first being that it was the first event of the season, and the second, that it was the beginning of a season full of firsts. This year our company is sporting a new officer, plus three new NCOs, myself included, and I had been looking forward to seeing what being a corporal is all about. It is also our first season under the leadership of our new battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Eackman (I will probably refer to him as Colonel Eackman). The season promises to be full of new experiences and I was (am) eager to get under way.

I was the first military member of our unit to arrive, and I was initially put off by the location. It seemed like it was in the middle of nowhere and I wondered how many spectators would actually make it out to see the battles. I could not deny that the field was impressive in size and the surroundings were much more fitting for an 1863 campsite than those of Cheadle Lake (mainly no fire station right across the street, no major highways within eyesight of the field and no baseball diamond with a backstop on the field itself.)

I didn't find the military camp until Bill and Mikey arrived and found out from someone in the 116th PA where each company street was laid out. (At almost every other event I'd been to company flags had been posted at each spot, making each street easily identifiable, this year however, the powers that be opted to write each company name on a wooden stake instead.) Once we found our street, we set about establishing camp and had our tents up in no time.

We spent the next hour or so sitting around before the newly christened Lieutenant-Kyle showed up, who was followed by Donny and eventually Captain Bishop. At some point we decided it was time to get dinner, so Kyle, Mikey, Brian and I headed out to find some chow. We chose a local Denny's and stood in line for five minutes without even being acknowledged before opting for another restaurant. We ended up at a Taco Time (ala Cheadle Lake of last year), which garnered less than rave reviews from Kyle and Brian, though I don't recall Mikey and I complaining about it. After we got back to camp, I parked my truck and settled in for the evening. At some point, Brian told me that I would be corporal of the guard on Sunday and explained to me what my duties would entail. He told me that if any of the guards had a problem they would call for me and I said "then I immediately call for the sergeant of the guard", to which he replied (with a shake of the head) "No, no, Corporal. You must try to solve the problem first, then call for me." I'd known that ahead of time and just wanted to see what his reaction would be when I said it.

A bit after my chat with the First Sergeant, Donny broke out his officer's brazier and we got a nice little fire going thanks to the strong efforts of Kyle, who sacrificed the well being of his knee on many occasions snapping sticks, though he certainly had a hard time actually getting them in the pit...I don't remember what time I ended up going to bed, but it was a while after taps had been played.

I awoke Saturday morning before reveille, feeling awake even though I'd woken up a few times during the night from the cold. The rest of the company was awake and milling around soon after and we eventually sauntered down to civilian land to see if breakfast was ready.

Breakfast consisted of a sausage and egg scramble, oatmeal and fruit salad and was delicious as always. When we got back to camp, we farted around for a little while more before we geared up for our first parade of the season. I'm sure that everyone in the battalion knew we'd be doing plenty of drill since the good Colonel had always expressed his love for it in seasons past, but I don't know exactly what everyone was thinking of him as a battalion commander. Before we began, Col. Eackman spoke about it being a season of firsts (sounds vaguely familiar) and the importance of us taking our roles as reenactors seriously. He went as far to say that he believed our ancestors and the men who actually fought in the war were looking down on us from heaven and he wanted to make sure that we "made some angels smile." I had no problem with his sentiment (it showed me how seriously he takes the hobby and I respect that) but I heard more than a few snickers from the company to our left, and who would that be? HmMMM..oh yeah, the 79th, SUPPLIES!

After he was done speaking, the Colonel began drilling us, and we were all a little rusty, which is to be expected after having eight months off. I must say though I am still surprised that some units can't even get the simple commands like "forward, march" executed correctly. The left most company in line-the 20th Maine-would start the movement with a half step instead of a full step which created gaps between every other company and the dreaded "accordion effect." I fail to see how one can get a maneuver as basic as this wrong, but alas it is possible. I mean the boys in the 79th were even getting it right! I suspect the reason why the 20th takes baby steps has something to do with having a commanding officer who demands respect and authenticity but calls cadence in the modern "left, right" way instead of the 1863 way, which Capt. Bishop was nice enough to point out to him several times quite loudly.

When we returned to camp, Mikey and Kyle assisted me in loading my pistol. I had been looking forward to using it for the first time since I had bought it (back in November I think) and I was squealing on the inside at the thought of finally getting a chance to break it in. As soon as officer's call was sounded we formed up and waited to start the long march on to the field, and a long march it was. I'm always amused how battalion goes out of their way to make sure we take the most roundabout way possible to get on the battlefield as opposed to just marching onto it from one end or the other as the Confederates typically do.

This battle was not anything special as I recall. The colonel wanted to emphasize on "long range volleys" so we stood at the far end of the field and shot at the boys in gray who were at the other end. It felt really silly to me, and I can't help but think I wasn't the only one who felt that way. One moment about the battle that sticks out in my mind was when the 4th Texas charged and I aimed and fired at their First Sergeant, who took a very nice hit. (When I think about it now, it seemed like a lot of boys in the 4th were taking good hits throughout the event and my hat's off to them for doing so.) There was also a sergeant or corporal in the color guard who kept asking me if I wanted him to fire my pistol for me. Yeah right, I went through the process of getting it loaded just so some farb-police yahoo can have all the fun of firing it. I'm rather embarrassed or put out to say that when I finally did fire Mr. Marston, Cpl. Cook-off made a gallant return, though I was the one who got the distinction this time. All I can say is at least I didn't keep firing it to see how much damage I could cause myself or anyone else...

Right before the battle ended, we took a group hit, and some of us less serious wounded began crawling and hobbling towards the rear. Mikey and I came upon Bill Coleman who was selling a terrific wound, and one of the Captain's dying orders was for the two of us to help him back. We each grabbed an arm and began dragging him along, while he groaned and moaned. We got about ten feet when he said "Oh Sergeant, might you carry my musket?" His tone made me burst into laughter almost instantly because I had a feeling it wouldn't end at just his musket. Mikey, being the good sergeant he is, grabbed the musket and slung it, and as soon as he did, Bill said "Oh Sergeant, would you carry my haversack?" which was shortly followed by his cartridge box. I don't remember Mikey's exact response (outside of the fact that it was in the negative) but he took it in a good natured way.

At the end of the battle some Yankee decided to skedaddle for the rear instead of facing his fate on the field, and broke for the woods. A couple of other soldiers shot at him for fleeing and instead of being a team player and taking a hit, he kept running like his name was Forest. I hate seeing scenarios like that play out because I remember seeing them as a spectator and thinking how stupid it looked. Sure, in reality not every fleeing coward who got shot at was hit, but in a reenactment when the action is almost at a stop and the eyes of the public are focusing on where any activity is, this kind of fiasco looks intensely dumb. I think it makes us all look like dopes and takes something away from the battle experience for participant and spectator alike...soapbox dismantled.

The second battle of the day would prove to be much more memorable, though not for reasons I'd necessarily like. We started much in the same way as we had the first, marching all the way around, just to come out on the other side and fire volley after volley out in the middle of nowhere. I was in a little bit of a mood because my knapsack straps were digging into my back and shoulders and the discomfort was really making the battle dull. I was spending more time looking at the Cornfeds than I was shooting at them, but at least this time the company was big enough that I had been posted in the middle of the company, instead of a file closer which meant standing next to the ever-perfumed lieutenant of the 79th. At some point I fired my musket and the percussion cap exploded, sending fragments bursting into my right eye. I was more startled than anything initially and I recall hearing myself make a noise, cupping my eye and falling out behind the line. Brian ran up to me before I knew it and asked if I was OK, and I said something to the effect of "I think so." I

didn't know if it was powder or part of the cap at the time (I figured out it was the cap because Captain Bishop told me the side of my nose had been cut) and it didn't really hurt as much as it was irritating my eye, if that makes sense. He suggested I flush it with some water, and after I did that I headed back to get on the line. I specifically remember thinking to myself to load and fire as soon as I got back because I didn't want my mind to associate bad things happening with firing my musket. As I was loading, Mikey stepped up on my left and shot his pistol three times, and got hits on each one. My initial thought was "no f'n way" (I mean really, the chances that all three dudes would take hits consecutively has got to be astronomical) but it was impressive, and I'm sure it was a memorable occasion for him. I fired my musket with no negative side effects and was business as usual from that point on.

After we got back to camp, Mikey and I posed for some photos for Nate then the three of us headed over to the concession area to get some ice cream. It is not period accurate, it is most farby, but oh was it f'n good.

When we were done with ice cream I started working on getting my musket clean, which was followed by my pistol. As much fun as it is to fire my pistol, I have to say I'm not sure how much I like the thought of cleaning TWO weapons instead of one. I have the sneaking suspicion however, the thrill of firing it will still outweigh the disdain of cleaning it for quite some time. Two of the caps on my pistol had fallen off during the battle so I had to fire those two chambers before I could start cleaning it. After the good Captain let battalion know I would be making a bang-bang in the camp, Mikey and I (followed by Nate who was catching it all on video) headed to the capping off area and fired it. I have to say Mr. Marston sounds much more impressive without ear plugs in.

Sometime after I was done cleaning my weapons, we headed to civilian town to wait for dinner. When dinner was done we had an impromptu company meeting-which was the quickest I've ever been a part of-and when that was done, Mikey and I helped Diane (the Captain's wife) clean pots and pans then headed back to camp. We spent the rest of the evening shooting the breeze either in or out of camp, and I ended up going to bed a bit after taps was sounded. My sleep was memorable because I was actually so warm, a rarity for me in reenacting. I don't recall doing anything different than normal, I just put my wool blanket over my sleeping bag and my greatcoat over the blanket and I was super toasty. I was so warm I didn't want to get up in the morning.

Breakfast on Sunday morning was French toast and sausages, and it was consumed with much gusto on my part. Before parade began, we were standing on the field and I overheard Captain Bishop talking with someone in another unit about the new ground charges that had been used the day before. The charges were much more impressive than those I'd seen in the past, and they really seemed like they added something to the show. The captain had told us the day before that they were safe enough to stand on when they went off, but he wouldn't recommend doing so. Whomever it was in the other unit said something about that, to which the captain said he'd seen a guy stand on one when it went off and he was fine even though his "little fellers had ended up around his neck." Needless to say, this elicited a laugh from most of us within earshot. Before we began drilling, Colonel Eackman had another talk with us and the topic was taking hits. He ordered the battalion to take a knee (eliciting a groan from all) and explained to us that we'd just taken a hit and that we didn't always have to go down in grand style. He also talked about using the "bloody handkerchief" to get more color on the field and make it more entertaining (and authentic) for those in the field.

After his speech, the colonel dismissed all of the officers and turned us over to the Sergeant Major, who asked for volunteer Second Sergeants and corporals to lead the battalion in the manual of arms. Mikey got picked second or third and provided some comic relief by ordering us to "right shoulder shift" though he himself went to "support arms." He took it like a trooper, as always.

We were spared the scenic route march for the first battle of the day and ended up coming on the field from the south side. The battle was ho-hum but one sight that stuck out to me was seeing the Confederate battalion marching across the field (towards the south) and behind a moderate rise, so only their heads and shoulders were visible. It kind of made me think about the "Sunken Road" at the Battle of Antietam, though in that scenario the Johnnies were holding the road and it was the Yanks who were appearing almost out of nowhere on the crest above it, pouring a murderous volley into those holding out there. I don't remember anyone taking any hits for me, and I took a couple of wounding hits before we were ordered to "rally on the colors." Right as we were being pushed off the field, I took another hit and Donny asked me if I was ok. My response was "I'll be fine, it's just a sucking chest wound."

After the battle, we returned to camp and Mikey brought me lunch from civilian land since I was corporal of the guard and had to stay close. When I had to post the second shift of guards I was amused to see the former Captain Pee-Pee Dance from the 20th as one of the privates assigned. Before I returned to camp I asked one of the young privates from the 116th if he had any questions about his duties and he asked which salute he rendered to the Sergeant Major. My first instinct was to say "Why, present arms of course," but I was nice enough to tell him the Sergeant Major was a NCO and didn't get saluted unless he wanted a nice dressing down.

We began the final battle of the event by taking another roundabout march onto the field, which some dubbed the "mud march." I think this was my first time marching in honest to goodness mud with brogans on and it was a slippery affair to say the least. For some reason I decided to take a lot of hits this battle (perhaps making up for the few I had taken the day before) and I went down five times in the first ten minutes or so. (On my last hit Donny said "Gee whiz you're gonna be perforated.") The battle was much like the others in the sense that we ended up engaging very little infantry and dealt mainly with dismounted cav. I suppose that's just the way things happened to work out at this event and really, I don't have any problems with the cav, I just kind of look at dealing with them as busy work. We pushed them back (a Maryland unit I think) and they proved themselves to be quite bulletproof, despite our best attempts. At some point, the 4th Texas showed up on our left and Kyle told me to deal with them. One man vs. a company: the odds were not good. I saw the first sergeant who'd taken a hit for me the day before loading his musket like his life depended on it and wanted to take a hit for him but was in the process of loading myself, so I had to do a Maryland cav impression and stay upright when he fired. As soon as I finished priming, I shouldered the General and fired, and he went down again. I owe this gentleman two hits now. One of Major Woods' sons fired right after I did and I hit the ground with pleasure. I have no problem taking hits for guys who take hits for us, and I hope the dudes in the 4th continue this trend throughout the season. I only wish I'd been able to go down for their first shirt.

The battle ended with us marching into the rear of the Confederates' position and the surrender of the few who were left standing. After recall sounded and I was headed to form up, Sgt. Major Olin told me "good shot." Apparently I had killed him, though I don't even recall seeing him when I was shooting at the end of the battle, that won't stop me from taking credit for it though. When we got back to camp the captain gave a short speech and we went about our first tear down of the season.

After I had gotten all of my gear repacked, I was standing around talking with Mikey and Donny when Colonel Eackman and Major Baker passed through to have some words. Before he left, I made it a point to stop the Colonel and tell him I thought he had done a good job and he seemed genuinely appreciative. (I did this at the suggestion from Donny, who told me the colonel would probably like hearing positive feedback. I want to make it clear that I honestly felt that way, it wasn't a reaction to Donny.) The colonel asked me how long I'd been in the hobby and I told him "only three years" to which he chuckled and said "only three years." He told Mikey and I we were both seasoned veterans and invited us to share any thoughts and ideas we may have with him

about battles, etc in the future. This is a natural segue to my next topic, which was the colonel himself. I remember telling Mikey on Saturday evening that it seemed like our battalion staff wasn't even in camp during the event, which was a stark difference from the previous season. I don't mean to say it felt like "big brother" was always hovering in the background last season, but I felt like we were always conscious of what we said and how we said it. Your company street could be the farthest away from battalion HQ yet it felt like they were right next door. It was a very nice experience, and I hope it continues to be this way throughout the season.

I noticed some pretty distinct differences between Colonel Eackman and Colonel Wallace, and though I won't cover all of them I will talk about a couple. The first and foremost was the acknowledgment of the crowd by Colonel Eackman. He talked about taking hits and making things look better for the spectators, which is something I never heard Colonel Wallace mention. It seems as if our new Colonel is aware that although many of us are in this hobby because we love and respect our history, we're also in it to entertain people. It's ok to look at a battle reenactment as a "show" because we indeed have an audience who has paid money to come see it and if we want to keep participating in these battles, we will have to keep the butts in the seats as the old expression goes.

One of the other noticeable differences between he and his predecessor was the efficiency and economy of movement. The colonel made it very clear that he wanted us to form up as soon as humanly possible after the battles so we could clear weapons, get off the field and get back into camps. I have never seen our battalion reform, clear and march off the field as quickly as I did Saturday morning and the rest of the event. There was no wasted time or movement, he was all business. I will say that while I appreciate a speedy departure from the field, I was upset to see our tradition of company sound-offs disappear (at the end of every battle each company is introduced to the crowd and shouts a battle cry or slogan that is specific to each unit), that is one thing I've always really enjoyed and I hope it will come back somewhere down the road.

The difference I will cover comes down to the difference in personalities. Colonel Wallace always came off as being full of bravado to me. He could be a bit loud and boisterous, which aren't necessarily bad things, it just seemed to me that he enjoyed the role of colonel more than actually being one. To this point, Colonel Eackman has struck me as someone who leads with a more quiet confidence. He seems very laidback and doesn't look fazed when things are going against him. (Granted this was his first event so in reality, he hasn't had time to have a lot of stuff go wrong yet.) I really liked the fact that he extended an invitation to Mikey and I to come to his tent after hours and share thoughts and ideas with him, that's something I never saw Colonel Wallace do- interact with the enlisted men on that level. It's not so much the fact that a battalion commander is associating himself with the privates that I like so much, it's more that he's open minded enough to listen to other ideas and opinions.

This was only the second event I've been to that was a first for the club, and I have to say it blew Parrett Mountain out of the water. We had a bigger turnout of men on both sides, a larger crowd and I think overall, everyone enjoyed themselves a bit more. (I have a hard time saying I've never enjoyed an event because I love this hobby, what I mean to say is that people look back on each event with different levels enjoyment.) I enjoyed the size of the field, working under a new colonel and testing my mettle as a second corporal and had a blast in the process. The things I wasn't crazy about were being so far away from the crowd on the field and exchanging long range volleys, but being a veteran of other the next fields will be trampling over, I know these won't always be issues. I could have also done without cap fragments in my eye.

As far as my first event as corporal goes, I think I did fine, and in reality there wasn't much asked of me. I found some areas I need to work on, and those will be the things that challenge me



over the season. I just hope the lieutenant of the 79th lays off on the cologne between battles or else I'll be sporting nose plugs as well as ear plugs on the field from now on.

One thing that really impressed me after I got home was seeing the amount of press coverage this event garnered. I was able to read a couple of newspaper articles and watch a couple of news clips (one of which our very own Donny was prominently featured) and we were portrayed in a very positive light, something that can do nothing but help this hobby we all love so much.

I believe the Battle of Mt. Pisgah was a success on many levels and I hope we are invited back next season.

*Next up: The Battle of Port Gamble, June 25-26. Mikey, Kyle and I will be attending and falling in with the 15th AL, Company H for this event.*

## Port Gamble '11: You've Got A Great Look!



*Home sweet home: the bayonet station is visible in the foreground; our tent is the first on the right.*

I was eager to go to Port Gamble this year after the experience I had last year, and was looking forward to it even more so because Kyle was also planning on attending. The plan was for he, Mikey and I to fall in with Matt Cleman's home unit, the 15th Alabama, Company G. Kyle had to bail out a couple of weeks before the event due to real world priorities, but Mikey and I decided to go anyway, figuring it would be fun to fall in with a Confederate unit. I was especially looking forward to it just for the opportunity to wear the most comfortable pair of reenacting trousers in the world that Captain Mason's wife had made for me the year before.

We arrived around five in the evening and showed up in Union camp instead of Confederate camp because the camps had switched sides at the last moment and we had not been told about it. We ended up in the same camp as we did last year, and once we found the 15th, we got set up quickly. We had to wait quite a while to park because there was such a ferocious traffic jam in camp,

so we walked around town a little bit then sat around until things settled down. After we parked, we took a few pictures of the town and camp and an obnoxious five or six year old ran past us at one point and gave us the business for using technology that wasn't available during the Civil War. (I began referring to him as the Five Year Old Farb Police from that point on.) Personally, I'm not back in the 19th century until Saturday morning so I don't have any qualms about using cell phones or cameras up until that point. More importantly, I'm really not worried about what an unruly little snot has to say about it anyway.

We didn't do much the rest of the evening, and basically stayed around camp. Mikey took a killer profile picture of me sitting next to my lantern and I liked it enough to upload it to Facebook right then and there. We decided to call it an evening around 9 or so (I was tired from the drive anyway) and we shot the breeze until I dozed off.

Saturday began with a camp inspection, something I hadn't been a part of since my days in the 2nd VA. The company first sergeant (whose name escapes me) and Lieutenant Rounds went from tent to tent, checking to make sure all farby gear was out of sight and inspecting weapons. When the first sergeant got to me he inspected my rifle and commented on how serious I looked. After he inspected my weapon, he complimented it and said "You have a great look, I really like it. I like how you have that distant stare." (This was the first of four or five times he said this to me over the course of the weekend. It didn't take long for it to become an inside joke between Mikey and I.) I wasn't sure how to take this because I remember Bob Olin telling me when I first fell in with the Bloody First that the "thousand yard stare" was part of the position of attention (or position of the soldier as it was called in the Civil War era) so I didn't know if the first sergeant was condescending me or just ignorant of that fact. I'm hoping it was condescending because I feel that's something a first sergeant should know...

Shortly after inspection, we fell out for company drill, which ended up being one of the most frustrating experiences I've had in reenacting. I don't know if the company had brand new recruits in the ranks at this event or if they just don't know how to march, but I was ready to chuck my musket about five minutes into it. It seemed to me we spent a lot of time working on wheeling and firing by files when perhaps the time could have been better spent on learning some of the fundamentals such as facings and marching. To make matters worse, the first sergeant would call cadence in modern lingo -"left, right"- instead of period lingo-"one, two." This is one of my BIGGEST pet peeves in reenacting (right up there with hearing people say "Come on guys" instead of "boys" or "lads"), so naturally it drove me crazy. I felt a little insulted that Mikey and I were asked to undergo additional drill after we got back to camp when it was clear that there were others who needed instruction far more than we.

At morning parade the battalion commander handed out promotions that hadn't been made "official" yet, and I'm pretty sure that every member in every artillery unit in the club got promoted to lieutenant or major. During the ceremony, Union units were moving behind us to drill on the field and I heard Capt. Strand's very distinctive voice boom as the 4th U.S. moved past us, and I must admit, I squealed a little on the inside.

When the time came to form up for battle I got a surprise greeting from John Norman who was falling in with the 7th TN. (Some of you may remember Mr. Norman as the gentleman who serenaded the confederate camp with his rendition of "The River" back at Willamette Mission in 2009.) I don't know John very well, most of our interactions have come through Facebook but he has always been a very pleasant fellow and he seems like someone I could along with pretty well. Despite not knowing him well, it was nice to see another familiar face from the Oregon club.

Naturally, I don't recall much about the battles, and nothing specific sticks out about the first one. I do remember one of the staff officers (all of whom but the commander looked to be

about 20 years old) who looked completely horrified the first time he ordered us forward. The look on his face amused me enough to get it mentioned here. The battle itself was like every other battle, lots of noise, smoke and confusion. We did however get exposed to something that the 15th likes to do that they call "fire by file, consecutive ranks." Fire by file means that each file (front rank man and the rear rank man behind him) fire their muskets at the same time, and that each file fires as soon as the previous file is done. When done correctly, it's a thing of beauty, when it's botched (as it often is) it looks dumb. Every other unit I've ever fallen in with executes this command in the traditional manner (as described above), but the 15th does it with each man in the front rank firing by file, followed by the rear rank. I suppose the effect is supposed to look something like a ripple or domino effect, and it probably looks nice when done correctly but I failed to see the point of it. The first sergeant seemed especially fond of this command and I rarely saw it executed even close to correctly.

After the battle we headed up to sutler row and bumped into Carl from the 4th U.S. who had put together an impressive display of a soldier's rations, which included ten pieces of hardtack, a certain amount of beans, a couple of apples and a pound and a half of salt pork. He had ten or twelve rations laid out neatly in a row, and it was one of the best things I've seen in reenacting. Kudos to him for his hard work on getting it all together, it looked fantastic.

When we got back to camp we helped Cpl. Cleman run the bayonet station. The corporal had built the station himself and set it up (two burlap bags filled with straw held on a rope between two poles) as a way to drill the soldiers on the use of the cold steel, but it ended up attracting the public like crazy. There were points when there were literally groups of people standing around watching and waiting for a chance to try their hand with it. I can say I had more fun helping run the station than I did at any point on the field.

We formed up for the second battle around 2:30 and headed onto the field for another go with the Yanks. There were two memorable moments about this battle for me: at one point after we fired a volley there was a dense smoke screen on the field and I could see Union troops double timing it onto line through the haze, which looked very cool. The second moment also involved a volley that we fired that was right up there with the "perfect volley" from the 2nd VA a couple of years ago. For as much as the company boned on firing by files, I will give credit for the volleys that we put out. That was something the 15th seemed to excel at. There was also a moment on the field when I had taken a fatal hit (something I think I did in all but the very first battle) when I opened my eyes and everything had changed to a kind of grayscale and eventually returned to color. I've had this happen a few times on the field and always thought it was kind of cool, though I'm not sure if it's something I should be worried about or if it's just my eyes readjusting to my surroundings. After we got back to camp, Mikey and I held off cleaning our weapons so that we could fall out to take part in filming for a movie called "Boncrusher" that opened with scenes from the Battle of the Wilderness (one of the battles I've always been most interested in). We were waiting for the director/producer to come back and tell us when to meet him but it ended up falling through because none of the Yankees wanted to play. Curse you Washington Yanks! The Yanks in Oregon would've done it with pleasure!!!

When we finished cleaning muskets I decided to eat dinner at a barbecue place that was right across the street from our camp. (The 15th does not do company mess like the 69th does and barbecue sounded a lot better than beef jerky or Chunky soup. It was also after the public left and my farby awareness reduces quite drastically at that point.) I ordered a pork sandwich with beans and Carolina style cole slaw, and it was one of the best things I've ever eaten in my life. I plan on going back to Port Gamble next year just so I can eat there again, that's how good it was.

After dinner we headed back to camp and shot the breeze with Captain Brock and a few other members of the unit. The captain told us we had done a fine job on the field and invited us to fall in with them whenever we'd like. Corporal Cleman also oohed and ahed over my uniform for

the third or fourth time and even showed off my jacket to his wife, which I thought was pretty funny.

A dance was scheduled at 7 that evening and the camp pretty much disappeared when the time rolled around. I headed into the tent to change clothes and I think Mikey headed off to find Donny. I ended up staying in my tent for the rest of the night, writing notes for this blog, enjoying a Hershey bar and eventually falling asleep.

When I awoke Sunday morning, the sky was as clear as I'd ever seen it and I couldn't believe how bright it was for 5:30 in the morning. (I wake up even earlier in real life so waking up at this time usually doesn't bother me too much.) I found a port a john, did my business, then walked up a slope right next to camp and just stood there watching the camp coming alive. The air was chilly and crisp but the quiet was nice (I forgot how loud camp can be in the evening, something that apparently applies in Washington as well) and I enjoyed the sights of smoke wafting up from fires and the smell of the same smoke and from the few who were ambitious enough to begin cooking breakfast.

To begin the first battle of the day, the cadets of the VMI were allowed on the field to engage a Union unit and artillery. The VMI (Virginia Military Institute) is made up of young boys and girls who aren't old enough to take the field and fight for real. We'd seen them drilling all weekend, and I for one had no idea they were actually taking part in a battle. They had a couple of younger reenactors who were old enough to carry muskets so they could actually have some smoke come from their battle lines, and those who didn't have real muskets used toy ones and yelled BANG on firing commands. I wasn't sure what to expect at first but it ended up being quite entertaining. I was legitimately concerned when the 20th Maine wheeled onto line to face them because they looked like giants taking on the lollypop guild, but the cadets held their own (with much cheering and motivation coming from the rest of the confederate battalion) and they ended up driving the infantry off the field and capturing the guns. I enjoyed every minute of it and I was glad to see that the kids got a chance to play like the big boys do. I can only imagine how badly they want to be on the field doing the same things we do and it was good to see them get a chance to take part in it. Two things stick out about the first battle: 1) the old fart on my left stuck the barrel of his musket in my face at least once, and if the first sergeant hadn't been standing right there and grabbed it I would've hit him over the head with it (this particular person shouldn't be on the field in my opinion, he was usually on my left or right in each battle and he wasn't paying attention to anything and in the rare instance that he was he didn't know what to do anyway. I don't know if he was a FNG or not but he had no business being on the field with a musket.) The other thing that I remember well was at the very end of the battle when we were driving the Yankees off the field, the unit to our left fired a volley and the Union color bearer took a hit in the groin, which probably looked pretty crude since he was so close to the spectators, but was both amusing and something I hadn't seen before.

When we returned to camp, the Bonnet of Shame (something that began at Willamette Mission last year) made an appearance. The bonnet is given as punishment by the captain for some grievance (real or imagined) and the soldier who it's given to must wear it for a period of time prescribed by the captain. Mikey got it the day before (if I recall) for some loading violation and he wore it happily for his five minutes and mock flirted with several soldiers. I believe this is where I began using the expression "I do believe I have the vapors" in the most southern, feminine voice I could muster. This expression would catch on quite quickly at the next event.

At some point the Captain told Corporal Cleman he had to wear it because he left camp without permission and the corporal tried to talk his way out of it for two or three minutes before finally accepting his fate. It struck Mikey and I odd that he wouldn't just take his punishment, he was after all the person who came up with the bonnet of shame concept.

Mikey and I headed back up to sutler row before the second battle and saw the 4th U.S. posing for a company picture near the same spot Mikey had gotten soccer kicked the year before and when we were walking back to camp, Captain Strand saw us and yelled "YOU TRAITORS!" Mikey and I got a kick out of it and it was nice to be remembered, even if it was in a negative fashion.

Before the last battle of the event began, we marched onto the northern end of the field and stood in the shade near the artillery. As we waited, the first sergeant walked past me to say something to someone else and when he walked back, he stopped and said "You really do have a great look, I love it. It's very sharp." For crying out loud, man, thank you for the hundredth time.... I was on hyper alert in this battle since the reenactor who'd put his musket barrel in my face the previous battle was on my left, so I spent more time watching what was going on around me than paying attention to the battle. I ended up taking a fatal hit about fifteen minutes into it (thus ridding me of the need to have my head on a swivel) and spent the rest of the fray prostrated on the field. As the battle was drawing to a close, I saw Mikey get captured by the 4th and Captain Strand mock-strike him with the handle of his sword and chuckled to myself. Mikey told me after the fact that he'd been taken to the battalion staff as a prisoner and decided to make a run for it, prompting their Sergeant Major to shoot him. Mikey took a hit and the adjutant walked up and "stabbed" him, to which the chaplain (none other than Donny himself) asked "Was that really necessary, Captain?" The adjutant replied "He had a fatal wound and I was putting him out of his misery, that's all there is to it."

The reenactors of the 15th made us feel very welcome and seemed like good people who really enjoy what they do. Captain Brock is a very capable officer and Matt is one of the most dedicated reenactors I've met and the hardest working recruiter I've ever seen. There were some members who seemed like they didn't take things seriously enough (for me at least) and some definite safety issues that caused me some concern. The Washington club has a reputation in Oregon for being a little more loose with the rules than we are, and I suppose that could just be my years under close supervision and heavy emphasis on safety talking. However, nobody likes a loaded musket barrel in their face and that was enough to make me question whether or not I'd fall in with them again.

Overall, I had a fun time in Port Gamble and I'm glad I decided to go again. I will give the 15th (and other units in Washington) all the credit in the world for level of camp theater and interaction with the public that they display. This was something I noticed last year and I saw it again this year, and the Washington club soundly thrashes those of us in the Oregon club in this regard. Almost every unit I saw I had some kind of display near the front of their company street to catch your attention, and the camp was well packed between battles with interested spectators. The time I spent in camp helping with the bayonet station and watching the interaction of reenactors and spectators really made this event enjoyable.

*Next up: The Battle of Willamette Mission, July 2-4.*



## Willamette Mission '11: Don't Trust A Fart



Willamette Mission has historically been one of my most anticipated events of the season. I can't explain why I look forward to it so much, but I have a feeling it's because it's been a three day event the last couple of years and since it's the first event of the summer, turnouts tend to be very good. When I got back from Port Gamble I had two days to get everything cleaned, loaded and repacked before heading out for this event, and though it seemed like a bit of a time crunch, I definitely enjoyed waiting only forty eight hours between events.

I got into the event site around 2 in the afternoon and got to experience what has become one of my favorite sights in reenacting: turning right down the back trail that leads to Union camp and seeing a tent city forming before my very eyes. There is something comforting about seeing those tents, it's almost like an announcement that I've made it to 1863 and that the reenacting gods are happy to have me back. When I rolled into the camp of the 69th, Donny, Marshall and Austin were already there and a couple of tents had been pitched--canvas tents, mind you. I hadn't seen either Marshall or Austin since Fort Stevens and they both looked like they had grown half a foot. They seemed genuinely happy to see me, and after a round of handshakes and a groaner from Donny, they helped me get my tent set up.

It didn't seem like much time had passed before the rest of the crew began arriving and within a couple of hours our company street began to take form. Mikey and I decided to get a jump

on things and load our pistols while we waited for Kyle and Joe to arrive. While we were loading, I realized I'd forgotten my 30 grain powder spout and was using a 60 grain instead, which made me a little apprehensive at the thought of firing it the next day.

When I finished with my pistol, I helped Matt set up the bayonet station that had gotten so much use at Port Gamble and after we finished, it was dinner time. Mikey, Marshall and I piled into my truck and followed Kyle, Joe, Matt, Travis and Austin into Keizer and ate at a Mexican restaurant (a splendid, splendid choice). Mikey and I were in uniform (sporting our NY state jackets which are a little more bells-and-whistles than a standard four button sack coat) and it goes without saying we were getting more than a few strange looks, especially from the Hispanic customers who were already in there. When we were done eating, we stopped at a Walgreen's to pick up charcoal for Donny and a picture frame for Captain Bishop's birthday present.

When we got back to the park, we settled in for the evening and gathered around Donny's brazier for fireside chatting. The boys in the 79th were getting riled up (as usual) and I overheard one of them say "I'll drink to that!" I immediately said "What won't you drink to?" which sparked a chuckle from Mikey, who repeated it for the Sergeant Major who got a good laugh out of it. I finally got the Sergeant Major to laugh, though it was in a roundabout way.

Our fireside chats cover many, many topics, most of which (interestingly enough) don't always center on the civil war. This particular evening Travis told us about a show he'd seen that highlights the worst possible ways to die, one of which was an elephant in Germany who was constipated and ended having its bowel movement while the trainer of said elephant was behind it. The force of the "movement" caused the trainer to fall back and hit his head on a rock, knocking him unconscious. He ended up drowning in the subsequent excretion, and none of us could disagree that that was indeed a horrible way to die. (I have a sneaking suspicion this story will live in company lore for many moons to come. It surfaced many more times throughout the weekend.) I don't recall the rest of the topics that emerged in that evening's chat, but I'm certain there were many bad jokes passed around as there always is.

I went to bed shortly after taps and crawled into my sleeping bag, eager to sleep. The boys in the 79th had been singing for a while (no supplies) but the last three songs they sang sounded absolutely delightful (BIG supplies.) It sounded nothing like their typical off-key, slight screeching performances and I remember thinking how pleasant it sounded as I lay on my cot, counting the stitches on the inside of my tent. I mentioned something about it to Bill the next morning and he had also thought they sounded nice.

Saturday dawned without a cloud in the sky, promising a scorcher later in the day. I went about my morning ritual then burrowed into my chair until the coffee was ready in civilian land. Breakfast that morning was some type of hash and fruit. During breakfast Kyle told me to get with Howie to form a mess duty roster (I refuse to call it KP, KP isn't a correct term for the period! The farb police in me rearing it's ugly head...) which had been something we'd discussed at the company meeting at Mt. Pisgah.

Before parade that morning, Kyle had me lead the company through drill, which went smoothly except for a boneheaded misunderstanding with "parade rest" on my part. Drill was drill, we did a lot of the usual wheeling and closing "en masse". Drill gets boring quickly and it's mind numbingly repetitive, but I still don't mind it. I remember thinking how big of an adjustment it would be coming from the confederate battalion (they who do not drill) but it hasn't been bad. It's a little more aggravating sometimes than others, but I know I can always use the practice so I try to keep that in mind while we're doing it. I think this was the day that Sgt. Who (our battalion color sergeant) handed out bloody bandages to everyone, which I thought was pretty cool. One can never have too many bloody bandages, just ask the Union battalion assistant surgeon in Washington. (At least one reader should get that reference.)



As usual there isn't much I remember about the first battle of the event, but there was a great company hit about halfway through when the Johnnies volley fired. Most of us went down, and I know it had to look good for the crowd, and we were complimented for it by the cornfeds afterwards, so I know they appreciated it. We ended up facing down a mix of cav and artillery units, whom for whatever reason decided not to shoot at us. It felt very dumb to be pouring volley after volley into them and getting no hits (no supplies) or at least some return fire. Moments like this on the field are so frustrating for us because we want to be doing something. Even if the yahoos across from us aren't going to take hits, they can at least shoot back so WE can take hits and not look like a bunch of dopes standing around picking our noses.

I'm glad to report that when I fired my pistol, I didn't end up with any fingers missing, much to my relief.

Following the battle we stopped near the gazebo and were counted by the sergeant major to ensure that each company got its proper share of powder. The council had decided to help alleviate an excess of funds by providing each company with a powder distribution at this event, and each person had to be present in order to get their pound. (It seemed coincidental that the 116th just happened to have an extra twelve or fifteen college students falling in with them this particular event....) Lunch was kielbasa, beans and fried corn and when I was done eating, I staid in camp, talking with passersby and loading my pistol.

Before I knew it, it was time to fall in for the next battle and away we went, sweating and stinking in the sun. I remember this battle well because I decided to take a fatal hit early on and ended up roasting in the sun for a good twenty minutes or so before recall was sounded. (I have found I have tendency to die early on the hottest days of reenactments for some reason. It also seems that the hottest battles happen to be the longest ones.) I had already taken a couple of wounds earlier, and at some point a line of cornfed infantry appeared on our right. I took another hit as our wing was falling back (fully anticipating to recycle) when I saw Lt. Dan step around the end of the line and pull his pistol. I knew what had to be done. Mikey had come back for me right when Lt. Dan fired and I slumped to the ground. As soon as I went down, I heard Mikey say "He's dead", and thus I began baking.

While I was down I noticed the stark difference between what a battle sounds like as a casualty and an able bodied soldier. The thing I find most intriguing is the lack of noise when I'm down. I mean sure, I still hear the cannon and muskets (the muskets always sound louder to me for some reason) but the absence of noise generated by my comrades in arms is very distinct. I almost get a lonely sensation, which slowly turns to apprehension when I hear units closing in on my position and I began hoping they don't mistake me for a Yankee speed bump. This is just one of those things I've noticed over the couple of seasons I've been doing this and thought it was worth sharing here. I think this was also the battle where I half-chucked my musket on one hit and hit Austin in the lower body with it. Again, my sincerest apologies...one must control their musket at all times.

Dinner that evening was venison stew, of which Kyle provided the venison. After chow, everyone gathered round for the Captain's birthday party, which he knew nothing about. There was quite a crowd gathered around the fly, and Scott Ingalls even stopped by to pay his respects and give him a bottle of firewater. It was fun to watch all of the people who showed up and how they interacted with the good Captain and it made me hope that I am able to have at least half of the impact on people in the reenacting community that he has. There is no other person quite like Captain Bishop, and I've been honored to serve under him and to help celebrate his \_\_\_th birthday. After the party broke up, a group of us headed back to camp to fall in around Donny and his brazier. I don't recall the majority of the conversation, but I know the German elephant story was brought up and I vaguely recall a disturbing story about baby diapers and mushrooms. I think it was this evening that I coined the phrase "Irregulars, by God!" as a good natured mocking of the 4th U.S.'s

slogan, and in connection with the German elephant.

Later in the evening, the Captain moseyed over and it was apparent that he was well-fortified. I don't remember how it came about but at some point (I think in response to a story Cpl. Cleman had told the previous evening about an unfortunate incident in a port a john), he quoted a line from the movie "The Bucket List": "Never pass up a bathroom, never waste an erection and don't trust a fart." Having never seen the movie, I laughed my ass off and I think the good lieutenant was right behind me. I have had many a good laugh in my days with the 69th, but I think this was one of the best.

The last thing I remember about Saturday night was probably more like early Sunday morning when I awoke to a horrid, screeching howl which made me think Sasquatch was about to tear through the back of my tent. After a couple of disorienting moments, I realized it was only the guy in the 79th who was sleeping behind my tent snoring and I fell back to sleep.

Sunday began with me fighting what seemed to be a losing battle against the buttons that were popping off every garment of clothing I had. As much as I love my NY state jacket, I'm far from thrilled with the 13 buttons it has. I'm sure things will be a little more tolerable once I get them all reinforced (though I think the sutler should have done that) but in the mean time I think I'll break out my old sack coat instead.

Breakfast was French toast and sausages (somewhere Brian is squealing in a most, masculine, first sergeant kind of way) and it was delicious as always. During battalion drill, Major Baker asked Mikey if he had a soldier who could properly demonstrate "inspection arms" for the battalion and he chose me. I have to say I was a little surprised that nothing went wrong during my demonstration (it just seemed like it should have) but I'm not complaining about it. Later during drill I felt something pull on my left brogan and thought nothing more of it until a couple of minutes later when I felt something thumping against the bottom of my foot. I looked down and discovered that the rear quarter of my sole had become detached and walked around with a floppy sole for the rest of the day, to the amusement of my comrades.

The first battle had all the promises of being something spectacular, but our role called for us to be off the field at the beginning so we didn't see what took place. We heard a cannon fire and then a huge reaction from the crowd (which is rare) so we knew something big had happened. (It ended up that the Confederate chaplain was conducting a church service on the field with some civilian followers and our artillery opened up on them, wounding him grievously.) Shortly after the ooh and ahh we headed onto the field and began engaging the confederate battalion who looked as if they'd grown overnight (the 20th Maine had galvanized for this battle). We'd been on the field for a couple of minutes when Captain Bishop gave the dreaded "front rank kneel" command, and I ended up kneeling right on top of Marshall's already injured toe. He squealed as only he can, and I laughed and apologized at the same time. I will give Private O'Chang a lot of credit because he was in a good deal of pain throughout most of the event but he never sat out during any drill, marching or battles. He sucked it up and never even mentioned it unless someone asked him how his toe was holding up.

I think it was during this battle that Donny had taken what I'm presuming was supposed to be a fatal hit, but he ended up having to move back to us because the cornfeds were moving artillery almost right on top of him. We wanted to engage the artillery but at the same time we didn't want to fire with one of our own downrange (he was well within the safety range, I think we just didn't like the idea of shooting towards a comrade). We began yelling at him to move, which turned into more of a cheer as he got up and skedaddled back to our lines and he made it back in one piece. This particular story has no real bearing on the outcome of the battle, but it was something that stuck out in my mind about it.

The second battle of the day began exactly as the first had except the roles were reversed.

Kyle told us that Colonel Eackman had asked for volunteers to be “the heathens” at the church service and when Captain Bishop raised his hand, the colonel asked “Why am I not surprised?”

We marched onto the field and stacked arms (the most smoothly I’ve ever done it, seriously I stacked in about twenty seconds and almost gave myself a heart attack) and meandered over to the fence rails that were towards the middle of the field. While the chaplain was spreading the word to his followers, we heathens were gambling and making a huge ruckus (or shall I say doing our impression of the 79th?) much to the chagrin of Kyle who kept shushing us. Cpl. Cleman issued an open challenge for arm wrestling and I started throwing greenbacks down for a bet, earning a most disapproving look from the lieutenant. Captain Bishop wandered over at some point oblivious to our misdeeds, and Captain Strand even got involved and asked him if he could keep his men in control. Right after he asked this, I walked up to the Captain and handed him a wad of cash, saying “Here’s your cut, sir” and the look of horror on Captain Strand’s face was priceless. This was some of the best fun I’ve ever had on the field, and I recall many boys in the unit saying the same thing when it was all said and done. Eventually, a cornfed cannon fired and infantry stormed out of the tree line, throwing us all into a fit of confusion (or bad vapors perhaps) and the battle raged from there.

I remember a few things about this battle, one being at how greedy the dismounted Cav in the confederate battalion proved themselves to be yet again. These boys refuse to take hits, and it drives me crazy. Towards the end of the battle, we were pushing the battalion off the field and they should have either been dying or running, NOT standing there with their superman capes on. They did the same thing at Pisgah, and the next time I hear a cornfed complaining about Yanks not taking hits I will gladly point out these boys. A ground charge went off towards the end of the battle, and it just so happened that almost every officer in the confederate battalion was standing near it, so they all went down and the rout was really on. Mikey and I went to the aid of a wounded confederate (Kelly Brown of the 4th VA) and we went through a most entertaining exchange with him. I wish I could remember everything that was said, but I don’t. The important thing is that he played along with us and did a good job of it, and had one of the best “bad” deaths I’ve witnessed.

At the very end of the battle, the confederate Sergeant Major (Bob) had to come back on the field to surrender to Colonel Eackman. As soon as I saw him approaching with his pistol turned upside down, I brought my rifle up. I was hoping to start some kind of exchange with him since we were so close to the crowd, but he didn’t see me. I continued to brace my rifle in a menacing way all I could hear behind me was Kyle saying “Easy, Corporal, easy.” Bob went into a spontaneous emotional breakdown as only he can do (he’s a talented actor, no doubt) and that is how the battle ended. I also believe this was the battle that Cpl. Cleman was killed and the first sergeant yelled “Corporal...whatever your name is, you’re first corporal now!” This was in response to Mikey and I coming up with “impressions” (meaning we play a character from 1863) and asking that we be referred to as our character name during the day. My impression is Corporal Benjamin Henry Morgan, son of a storekeeper from Buffalo, and Mikey is Sergeant James Carlin, from...well, somewhere in New York I assume.

When we got back to camp I came up with the brilliant idea of pouring ice water over my head to help cool off (with the help of the magic blue box in my tent) and since I was already feeling my sunburn it felt fantastic. The good lieutenant happened to walk by and see this and I offered to do the same for him. He agreed and I refilled my cup and asked him if he was ready. He was bent at the waist and already making noises, anticipating the cold and when I raised the cup, a drop of water hit him behind the ear and he gasped in a most lieutenant like manner. I laughed and told him it was only a drop, then began pouring without warning, eliciting a chorus of whoops and ooh-ooh-oohs from him.

Following dinner, we had a company meeting, most of which centered around whether or not the club should buy a musket to use as a loaner weapon. I suggested that the military members give the cooks a night off at Fort Stevens by pitching in for pizza which was met with laughter from

the cooks and some civilians. I'm not going to lie, I was a little put off that a suggestion to help give them a break (and to show appreciation) got this kind of response just because they didn't want pizza, but I'm sure they appreciated the gesture. The good captain made the suggestion that the military members would figure out another option before the event, which was agreed upon by everyone.

After the meeting, I headed back to camp and bumped into Bob who was strolling through Union camp for some reason. We ended up talking with Mikey and Bill for awhile about his latest project before heading for the night fire. Bob ended up getting stranded in civilian town by our battalion staff, and I stuck around for three or four volleys at the night fire before I headed back to camp. When I got back, I made a trip to answer the call of nature and discovered that one can feel the concussion of cannon firing even at that distance from the battlefield. There is nothing quite like the feeling of sitting in a Honey Bucket feeling a slight vibration and hearing the plastic rattle...it's unique.

Monday morning broke clear and cool and would prove to be just as warm as it'd been Saturday. Breakfast that morning was biscuits and gravy, and they were hands-down the best I'd ever had in reenacting.

At parade, Colonel Eackman told us that someone (more likely a group) had switched the staff on the battalion colors overnight, and touching flags is a big no-no in our club. He was upset but seem satisfied with the culprits being told they'd done something incredibly stupid as opposed to being drummed out of the club, which is what Captain Bishop and others want to see happen. I tend to go agree with them on this; we have rules for a reason and if you don't punish someone for breaking them then the message is sent that no one has to take them seriously. I have no idea who was responsible for this. I have my theories but they are best kept to myself since they are not based on fact.

Battalion drill was actually enjoyable this day as well, because we practiced skirmishing, and more specifically the "guard against cavalry" command. Upon hearing this command, the group of four skirmishers form back-to-back (two facing the flanks, the other two facing front and rear) with bayonets fixed, ready to fend off evil horseys. This time we actually had cavalry ride through our formation and some troopers were even brazen enough to slash at our bayonets with their sabers. One especially motivated trooper smacked my bayonet twice, and on the third attempt, I pulled it back causing her to miss, which must of spooked her horse because it ended up galloping off through some low hanging tree branches, causing her to lose her kepi. It goes without saying I got quite a laugh from that.

After drill was done we headed out on our grand march, a tradition at this event. Grand marches mean we march all through civilian town and down sutler row so everyone can see us, and I enjoy participating in them. I know it's just reenacting but I feel very proud of myself, my unit and the entire battalion when we go out on these. I love seeing the civilian reenactors standing by the road, waving and cheering, and I feel a little badass when I see all the spectators running up to snap pictures. It's one of the more rewarding parts of this hobby for me, and I'm glad we only do them once in a while...I better not have jinxed this...

The first battle of the day was just about as entertaining as the second one had been on Sunday. It was a Bull Run scenario (the overconfident Yankees getting whipped by the tenacious Johnnies) and we spent the majority of the fight right next to the crowd. Shortly after we took the field, we were given the command to load and I cut the middle finger on my left hand on my musket. I'm not exactly sure what I cut it on (it could have been the rear sights or one of the flanges from the cap) but I started wiping the blood on my canteen strap to make it look more authentic.

We started off giving the rebs a few volleys, with the Colonel and the Parson standing behind our line telling us how grand we were doing. Within a few minutes more rebs materialized and the officers behind us didn't sound quite as motivating. At one point the rebel line began advancing, and

Bill Coleman broke for the rear, yelling "Run for it boys, we don't have a chance!" We fired a few more rounds before retreat was sounded, and we moved back and fired some more. Private Coleman had regained his composure by this point but as soon as the Confederates advanced again, he broke again, yelling messages of impending doom all the while. I believe we fell back one more time, and he began encouraging us all to flee while we could, to which I responded in my best corporal voice "SHOOT THAT MAN!" I don't know what happened to him after this point because another retreat was sounded and the Johnnies were coming closer and closer. I decided to try to halt their advance with the help of Mr. Marston (yet another fruitless venture) and I had just helped Marshall back towards the rear when I saw Bob swing out from the line of infantry, pistol in hand. He fired once and I almost started jumping up and down to get his attention, but luckily he saw me and fired. I took a wounding hit and stumbled back to our lines which were running off the field. As I made it off the field I saw the Colonel standing, sword in hand, telling us to fall back and I said "Let us fight, sir, let us fight!" I don't remember his exact response but it was something along the lines that Johnny Reb had our number that day.

(Kyle recounted an amusing story about this battle when we got back to camp that is worthy of being mentioned: he and the Parson were standing behind our line, and he asked the chaplain what he was going to do when we got to Richmond. "I'm going to the theater, sir," the chaplain said. "I hear it is magnificent in Richmond. What are your plans?" Kyle being Kyle said "I hear they have mighty nice fancy women in Richmond!" The chaplain gave him a look of sheer horror and exclaimed "Oh, lieutenant! You must go to the theater!")

I don't recall much about the last battle except that we were on-line right next to an artillery piece and it seemed like we were very close to it. I also remember not being thrilled with the way the battle went, which is one of those things that happens from time to time. Most of the battles have one or two memorable moments but every once in a while there's a stinker (in my opinion at least) and this was one of them. It must have been a good stinker if the only highlight I can think of was being so close to that cannon.

When the battle was over and right before we policed the field, the Captain and I stepped off to empty our pistols. I forgot whom we passed on our way but I said "Well boys, it was nice knowing you." The Captain played along perfectly and said "Yep, see ya fellers, the war's over for us" and we commenced with unloading our pistols.

Tear down went pretty smoothly as it usually does and there wasn't a massive traffic jam from everyone trying to get out at the same time which is always a nice thing. After I got done packing everything into my truck I shot the breeze with whoever was present and eventually meandered over to civilian land to help the others who were helping the Captain and his wife get their gear stowed. Mikey and Bill left shortly after everything was packed, and Kyle and I loitered with the Captain and his wife for awhile, talking about random things. During this time, Kyle was talking about the possibility of missing the last two events because of his recent entry into a firefighting program and the thought occurred to me how different an event would be without him there. He has been at every event that I've been at with the 69th and he is always entertaining us with bad jokes or wonderful renditions of Harvey the Wonder Hamster. I'm sure the events will be fun without him around, but they definitely won't be the same.

I got ready to leave around 7 and at right before I got in my truck I looked around and realized how fast the battalion had disappeared. There were maybe one or two A-tents still standing, but the rest were long gone. It was kind of a fitting reminder/analogy of how fast these weekends go. We can't wait to get there and start having fun, then we want it to slow down so we can savor it a little longer, and then just like that 1863 is gone and we're back in the 21st century. It's actually a little depressing, but I know all good things must come to an end.

Mission '11 lived up to the hype I always associate with our 4th of July event, and even

though we roasted most of the weekend (not as bad as '09 though) I still had a great time. It was nice to be back with the 69th and I felt like I was back at home. In a lot of ways this event made me remember what I love about this hobby: the magic of arriving to the site, the camaraderie of people you enjoy being around and the impact that those people have on me and the hobby in general. In short, it was another event that has me convinced that this is truly the greatest hobby in the world.

*Next up: The Battle of Fort Stevens, September 3-5.*

## Fort Stevens '11: Buckshot, Chicken and Crazy Woman



*The good lieutenant and his cannonball.*

The annual Labor Day event at Fort Stevens is one of the most anticipated of the season. I think that that statement applies for the bulk of the members in the Northwest Civil War Council, not just myself and the other members of the Company K. There is something about spending three days at Oregon's only link to the War Between The States that makes the events that much more special. Whether it's crazy monsoon-like weather, Lt. Dan leading the charge of the foot cavalry or after hours pirate attacks, this event has always been one of the highlights of the year.

I set out for the fort around 10 in the morning and arrived somewhere between 12:30 and 1 after breakfast at Camp 18. Upon arriving, I was a little dismayed that our camp had been moved to the other side of the earthworks (I almost started setting up in the 116<sup>th</sup> PA's street until I realized our guidon was across the way) and the streets looked just a tad narrow compared to the year before.

I was the first military member to arrive and decided to set-up right away. I'd managed to

get my tent up when Donny arrived and my task was delayed a few minutes while we engaged in our normal banter. After about another forty five minutes or so, I was completely set up and farted around while Donny finished moving his gear (and boy does he have a lot).

I think Captain Bishop was the next to arrive, followed a bit later by Mikey and Bill, then Kyle. While everyone was getting set up, I changed into my uniform then Mikey, Bill, Kyle and I headed over to get registered. When I was done with that, Mikey and I went to sutler row where I bought a bread box to stow my gear during transport and a new brass 'K' for my forage cap.

Mikey, Kyle and I had agreed to go eat at 5:30 (much to Kyle's chagrin) and when the time finally came around we drove into Astoria to eat at Stephanie's Cabin, the same restaurant we'd ate at the year before. I decided on a cheeseburger, Mikey got a clam chowder cannonball and Kyle got something called a "cannonball" burger. One thing that sticks out about this was the waitress who was fascinated at the fact that most women in the war who died had done so from having their clothes catch on fire. (Apparently another reenactor had stopped in and told her this.) When the food was served, everyone paused to marvel at the size of Kyle's burger. "Cannonball" was not a far stretch from the size of this thing, it was huge. If the artillery had loaded it and fired it at an oncoming company, it surely looked as if it'd take half of it down in one swoop.

After dinner we stopped at Fred Meyer to pick up last minute supplies (no, not that kind of supplies!) and headed back in. The rest of the evening was spent as most set-up nights are, sitting around the company street, catching up with the boys. I don't recall what the conversation centered around this evening, but right around 9pm, the bugler sounded officer's call and we witnessed one of the most spectacular, spontaneous actions ever: no sooner had the call ended did Kyle jump up and down three times, flailing his arms yelling "NO! NO! NO!" An irritated four year old couldn't throw a better tantrum if he tried. It goes without saying that we got quite a laugh out of it, and it will undoubtedly stay a part of company lore for many moons.

After officer's call, the three of us walked over to Confederate camp to visit Matt Cleman who was camping with his home unit, the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama. We visited for about ten or fifteen minutes before Kyle remembered that he and I still had to meet with Howie to set up the mess duty roster (please don't call it KP) so we high-tailed it back to civilian land. On the way over we talked about the upcoming elections and what positions we were running for. I will refrain from announcing my intent here until the next blog, though my intentions have already been made within the company. I don't recall exactly what time I went to bed that evening, but I'm pretty sure it was around midnight.

Saturday morning I awoke with some serious head congestion and I felt loopy for the rest of the day. I'm telling you this now because it affected my desire to make notes, so my details on the battles are going to be quite sparse.

Bill and I were on mess duty for breakfast that morning so we were spared participation in parade and drill. It took us, perhaps fifteen minutes to finish our duties in the kitchen before we headed back to camp and sat around for the next forty five minutes. I used this time to load my pistol and get my gear ready for the impending battle. As far as the battle goes, I remember Matt's buddy Danny (whom I'd met at Port Gamble and who was falling in with us for the morning battle) taking some high quality hits. He took two or three, and each time he did he screamed loudly enough to startle me each time, a commendable feat on the battlefield considering all the noise. The other thing I remember well was the futility of facing Confederate dismounted cav. If there is a more selfish group of turds on the field, I have yet to found them. If you wear gray and yellow, I'm talking about you. Take some hits every once in a while.

I recall even less about the second battle than I do the first. We were advancing at some point and I saw Bill laying on his back in what looked to be a peculiar manner. I remember thinking that it didn't look like a planned hit, and I found out later he had slipped (as many had on



the horribly dry and unforgiving Ft. Stevens) grass and ended up on his back. Luckily he was ok. It's quite possible I also scored my first pistol kill in this battle as well, but I don't know for sure because the rebs we were engaging were in last stand mode and all of us were shooting like crazy. Someone fired their musket at the same time I fired my pistol and the Johnny went down. I guess I'll say I assisted on it, but Mr. Marston is not satisfied with lowly assists. Towards the end of the battle, Cpl. Cleman and I almost had simultaneous heart attacks when Dominick (a Swiss foreign exchange student who was falling in with us for the day) started to run towards a reb to shoot him. Shortly after this, a few Johnnies made a last ditch charge, and I dropped one (huzzah for the old man hit by the way) and Cpl. Cleman dropped another by pointing his musket and yelling "BANG!" It was one of the more amusing things I saw on the field.

Following the battle, we returned to camp and set out to begin cleaning our muskets. The majority of the company ended up on the berm, though Cpl. Cleman and I somehow ended up at the end of the street with his brother in law. As we went about our business, the good corporal told his brother in law (I want to say his name was Daryl) the port-a-john story he'd told back at Willamette that had disturbed most of us. An equally disturbing moment came for me when the cleaning brush on my rod got stuck in my barrel and refused to budge. Anyone who has ever had this happen to them knows the sheer terror this causes, and for about five minutes I thought I was going to need the pirate captain's infamous brown pants. Luckily, Donny's fancy bone-handled cleaning rod saved the day, and I was able to use it to retrieve the brush.

When we were done cleaning, I think most of us headed over to civilian land to get ready for dinner. In addition to dinner, David (father of our newest member John, a 10 year old) was throwing us a party as a way of saying thanks for the hospitality we had shown them at Willamette. I was not the only one tickled at the thought of two meals at dinner, and needless to say, no one was disappointed. The dinner our fantastic cooking crew served was ham and beans, and David served a plethora of dishes including salmon, oysters and Caesar salad. At some point Scott Ingalls happened by and the good captain told him about the party, to which Scott invited John to join the artillery and promised him a promotion to general if he threw a party like that for them, which got a good chuckle from us all. After dinner, Kyle and I smoked some cigars that David had graciously offered and I passed around my scotch-filled flask for the grownups to enjoy. Kyle took a healthy swig, and coughed and said "You know what I like?" I just shook my head and said "You better not say wine coolers", and the look on his face implied, it was indeed wine coolers he enjoyed.

Another form of entertainment that evening came from John (who had been dubbed "Buckshot" earlier in the day) who was telling different people their futures. Obviously I don't remember everyone's story but the recurring themes were: getting lots of money, a nice car, getting married, then divorced, dying, coming back to life and getting married again. I remember Buckshot telling Kyle he'd marry a woman named Lulu something or other and I instantly pictured a humungous 300 pound Samoan lady for some reason and got a fantastic laugh at the thought. All I recall specifically about my future was that I made my millions through drug dealing while Jack (who did a marvelous job of sandbagging on mess duty and left Bill with the bag) made his fortune by illegally smuggling cheese balls.

I went back to camp when the party started to die down and began shooting the breeze with Bill who began telling me about an especially obnoxious officer from whom he thought was from the 4<sup>th</sup> U.S.. I was surprised because I knew of only one officer in the 4<sup>th</sup>-my manly hero-Captain Strand, and he was far from obnoxious in my book. Furthermore, I had never heard anyone else say anything remotely bad about him. Apparently this officer had decided to correct Bill multiple times on things he was doing "wrong" during guard mount and at one point asked Bill for his musket so he could show him the "correct way" of doing things. Bill, being a trusting type as most of us are, handed it over and the officer told him "Oh you lost your musket, now you have to call for the officer of the guard." Bill (who was growing more and more angry as things progressed) simply told him he wasn't calling for the officer of the guard and the captain returned his musket and went on

his way. I asked Bill to describe the officer and he said he was tall, and thin with white hair and I instantly knew he was talking about: good old Silas, grand pooba of drill and legend in his own mind. I think I have mentioned Silas in other entries before (I definitely mentioned him in my first Fort Stevens entry for doing the same kind of stuff then) and he's exactly what I called him before: legend in his own mind. I could sit here and probably give a good page or so about what I think of him, but he's not worth my time and effort. What I will say is the man has written his own drill manual, so that kind of shows how seriously he takes himself. Each time I have heard about him, it has been a very negative light and the one time I met him he came off as a pompous arse. Simply said, he believes his way is the only way and if you don't agree with him, you're wrong. The thing that irritates me the most about this particular situation is that he was in our camp with the Washington company of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, so he was there as a guest and he took it upon himself to correct wrongs only he could see. We heard stories from other people that he had done the same thing to other people standing guard, so it wasn't as isolated incident, and even if it had been, it still was a douche bag thing to do. It would be like getting invited on a trip and spending the whole time criticizing the accommodations.

I told Bill he should tell Earl about it, but he didn't want to cause any trouble, but Donny ended up talking to him about it anyway the next day after Mikey saw him hassling another sentry. I hope something is done about it, because really, someone like Silas ruins it for those of us who are out there to have a good time. I'm not saying we are all completely authentic and do things exactly as they did in 1863 but we are far from a bunch of knuckleheads as Silas seems to think we are. Just because you think your way is the right way doesn't mean we want to hear about it. If it pains you so much to see it being done "wrong", by all means go home.

After I got done talking with Bill, I went into my tent to change clothes and get ready to settle down for the evening. While I was changing, someone (I think it was Mikey) invited me to go up to the berm and sit with everyone else to watch the river, and while I had every intention of doing so, I made the fatal mistake of laying down "just for a minute." I'm sure the combination of fatigue and the decongestant I had just taken didn't help, but before I knew it I was sleeping soundly. The next thing I remember was Mikey knocking on my tent pole and asking if I was going to be able to stand night guard with him for an hour.

Night guard, as usual was uneventful. We spent the majority of the time in our chairs, on the berm so we could see the entire camp and outside of the occasional soldier making a late night pee-pee patrol, nothing happened. That's not to say there wasn't any entertainment though. Mikey must have been starving or close to it because his stomach did not stop growling from start to finish. Normally I would have just ran to my tent and brought back some kind of food, but for some reason I hadn't thought to buy any of my usual foodstuffs (jerky, peanuts, pistachios, chocolate etc...) for this event so Scott grumbled away in protest. One o'clock eventually rolled around and I decided I may as well stay up for the next shift since I was already awake. At some point during this hour, I pointed out a frog that had been croaking for quite a while and we somehow managed to think up a scenario where Mikey would wake up the next morning with seven or eight frogs on his sleeping bag, all of whom would have the head and face of Captain Bishop, and would be talking to him in the captain's high pitched dorky tone that he uses from time to time. I don't remember how it all came about, but we got a good laugh from it indeed. Ah, the powers of hunger and sleep deprivation coming together as one...

Reveille came entirely too soon Sunday morning but I managed to stumble out of my cot, feeling a bit better than I had the day before. Breakfast that morning was French toast and ham (sorry Brian) and no sooner were we done eating it than we had to be back in camp to get ready for parade.

Drill was exactly like it always is, though I had missed it the previous day because of mess duty (oh shucks). The first battle was pretty memorable in the sheer chaos that seemed to be

reigning on the field. We started on the western edge, looking over the main road that leads onto the field. Captain Bishop deployed us in a single line under the watchful eye of Major Baker (who stayed with us almost the whole battle) and we began the hurry up and wait game. Within a few minutes we could see a large body of troops coming into view and as soon as they came into the open, the captain had us engage them. We spent the majority of this engagement firing by ones and twos. For those of you who are not familiar with the anatomy of a battle line each rank has a "one" man and a "two" man. All of us who had counted off as ones would fire at the same time while the twos loaded and vice versa. Each time we fired, we'd hug the ground and load (we were behind a rise in the terrain) so almost every time the Johnnies would return fire, they had no targets to shoot at. (Kudos to Major Baker for actually taking terrain into consideration in this plan. I could see this plan working in reality if it was used, and it definitely would have helped save lives if it was.) We stayed at this spot for a bit before the bugler sounded retreat and we fell back a few feet.

The next thing I recall was the captain rallying us on a cannon that needed support from some cav and infantry that was harassing it, and we stayed there for a little bit before we were ordered to fall back again. Clearly, the rebs were pushing us hard and even a corporal could figure out who was going to win this battle. At some point, we were split into two platoons (I think second platoon stayed with the cannon, I was actually in the first platoon because I was acting first corporal for the day) and we continued to fire and fallback. As I recall, second platoon got overran and we kept getting pushed and taking losses. Eventually it was a three man battle line with Captain Bishop and Major Baker shouting orders, which usually ended with "fall back and reform here!" I won't say I felt genuine fear because deep down I always know it's reenacting, but I could imagine the fear men must have felt when they saw great lines of gray approaching them unmolested. (When you are in a three man battle line, a group of fifteen men looks very intimidating.) I will say it looked a little cool to watch the rebel line advancing towards us and I was considering paying the ultimate sacrifice when Major Baker grabbed me by the arm and said "Get off the field!" I'm not one to disobey orders, so off the field we fled (including Kyle who seemed to magically reappear out of nowhere) until we were out of sight of the crowd. On our way off the field I passed Lt. Colonel Eackman and said "We'll get them next time sir" to which he replied "They just got lucky today."

After the battle we went back to camp where I had the pleasure of giving Kyle the ice water treatment as I had at Willamette. Lunch was sausage and fried corn (one of my favorites) and I think most of us crowded under the command tent fly to stay out of the sun.

After the battalion had formed for the second battle, Lt. Colonel Eackman called out Lieutenant Seger of the 79<sup>th</sup> NY to address us. Lt. Seger gave a much better rendition of the events leading up to the death of General Stevens than whomever it was who did it last year, even though he looked a little puzzled when he used the phrase "rallied his division to prevent them from getting in Pope's rear." (He was detailing the Battle of Chantilly in which the Union force blocked the Confederate advance as Pope retreated to Washington.)

I don't remember a whole lot about this battle except that I had a prime pistol shot at Lt. Dan only to have the cap fall off. Such is the life of Mr. Marston. I believe this one of three battles during the weekend where someone "found" a "shortcut" which meant much trudging through dense undergrowth to make a complete circle around or behind somebody. I think this was the battle where Capt. McClain of the 79<sup>th</sup> and acting adjutant for the weekend ordered Kyle to have us capture a unmanned gun. Thinking the order dumb (as he later told me) Kyle ordered us to double quick, led us past the gun and right to the edge of the field, forcing the remaining Johnnies further back. As Mikey and I were heading off the field, Sergeant Major Olin stopped me and told me to extend his compliments to the captain for our performance on the field, which now that I think about it, I forgot to do. Ooooh, busted!

Instead of sticking around to clear weapons and the usual hoo-ha, Mikey and I were "detached" on special duty to go pick up the food I had ordered for our Cooks' Night Off that evening. I'm not going to lie, it felt mighty good to climb into my truck and experience a little air

conditioning after baking out in the sun for the last day and a half.

We drove into Warrenton and went to the Fred Meyer, where I got to meet inefficiency at its finest. I had come in person to the same store in August to personally set up the order to ensure no boo-boos occurred. To be safe I used my "portable telegraph" earlier in the day to make sure the order was still standing, only to find out it had been lost. No big deal, the lady said, she would just take it again and make sure it got to the right person. When we walked in and I told the gentleman who helped us I was there to pick up the order he looked like a deer caught in the headlights. They had managed to lose the order yet again, so I told him we'd wait while he cooked it. He told us it would take sixteen minutes to fry a hundred pieces of chicken, which was fine with us (more air conditioning) and then every other person in Warrenton came in and walked up to the deli where only he and another person were working, naturally. Sixteen minutes turned into an hour, but I used this time to pick up some other food to take back so there would be no repeats of the previous evening.

When we got back, we dropped the food off in civilian land, parked and headed back to camp where no one seemed to be alarmed we'd been gone so long. We set about cleaning our muskets on the berm with Donny, and when we were done, headed back to civilian for dinner. The chicken was better than I was expecting, and the trio of cold salads we had with it were a perfect fit for the warm weather.

Shortly after dinner, the Union camp was raided by the crew of the *Topsail's Revenge*, who looked suspiciously like a bunch of Confederate reenactors in pirate garb. We saw them go by, hooting and howling, calling out demands for wenches as they normally do and watched them disappear into the sally port and into military camp. I really didn't think anything of it until I learned a little later that the *Topsail's* captain-one James Flynt (who bears a striking resemblance to Colonel Stanovich)-was shot and killed by a certain bearded captain of the 69<sup>th</sup>.

Shortly after dinner, we had a company meeting which went quickly. I think the only "new" business brought up was to make the ranks of captain and first lieutenant permanent positions within the company, which passed unanimously. The other big news from the meeting was that Earl had been asked to run for vice-chairman of the board, which he agreed to do.

When dinner was done, we headed back to camp and shot the breeze for about an hour before Kyle and I decided to go back up to the berm (it was a very popular spot in the company over the weekend) and smoke a cigar. Mikey was supposed to join us but had disappeared, so we lit up and enjoyed the river traffic and made small talk about a multitude of different things. I seem to recall me giving him a hard time yet again for being so open about his like for wine coolers.

After we'd finished our smokes, we went back to camp and engaged in more banter with Bill and Donny. A couple of minutes later Earl showed up and told us an amusing story about an event that had occurred while we'd been at dinner: apparently someone dressed in a bear costume ran into camp to presumably wreak havoc and terror. The mascot of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, Rocky, a little black terrier with one blue eye and a brown one, did not take kindly to the intruder and ran up to him/it, barking up a storm. The bear was not impressed and bent over with arms outstretched and let out a growl of his own, then began to turn away. As he turned, Rocky jumped up and bit him on the backside, sending him scurrying down the sally port and out of camp for good. I don't know if there's any embellishment to this tale or not, but it was humorous and something that would only happen at a reenactment.

Monday dawned clear and chilly as the last two days had which assured us the last day of the event would be just as warm. As soon as I woke up I decided to take care of the blisters that had taken residence on the bottom of my left foot and got the unique experience of blister water squirting into my eye. I was surprised I had blisters because I'd worn my modern boots the day before, and I couldn't remember the last time I got blisters when I was wearing my brogans. Perhaps my feet have gotten used to them, and I think I'll stick to them from now on.

I don't recall what we had for breakfast but Donny and I stayed behind on mess duty while the rest of the company went to drill and parade. When we finished up in civilian land, we headed back to camp and I spent most of the time breaking my gear down to make tear down go a little faster. I probably should have ran out and joined the boys and in retrospect I wish I would have, but I didn't see the point of joining in when that much time had already passed.

Our march to the battlefield took us around the back of the spectators, and right through part of Confederate camp as it had the year before. There were civilian ladies waiting for us just as there had been last year, brandishing cast iron pans and telling us to go home. The first lady came out and began her routine, and though I don't recall exactly what she said, our good old chaplain bellowed "Crazy woman!" as only he can. (I enjoy hearing our chaplain talk, he has a very commanding and distinct voice. I could listen to him for hours which is a little ironic seeing as I never attend services on Sunday.) As we were passing another tent, the second lady came out, flailing her arms and threatening our beloved lieutenant with her frying pan, which also earned her a crazy woman admonishment from the chaplain.

The one thing I remember about the last battle of the event is that it seemed like one of the most complete routs of the Confederates that I can remember. Our "division" (which comprised the 19<sup>th</sup> ID, 79<sup>th</sup> NY and ourselves) were sent out first to exchange shots with some skirmishers and the main body as it advanced. The bugler sounded retreat and we headed back off the field only to have Captain McClain announce he'd found another shortcut. Once again we tumbled through the brush (which wasn't as bad as the first two times) and eventually came out behind the artillery and waited for our song to be played again. It didn't take long and before we knew it we were heading back on the field at the double quick (to the chagrin of us all.)

The confederates looked like they were kind of in a backwards "L" shape, with the lower part facing us as we closed in. The other two divisions were pushing them hard on our right, and the level of musketry that was being employed was phenomenal. It was like every reenactor on the field knew it was the last battle and were burning as much powder as we could. I think Brian may have even fired his musket more than twice!

We pushed in further and came up against the 15<sup>th</sup> AL who stood their ground for awhile then began to fall back as they took casualties. When they withdrew, they left the gun crews behind them uncovered and it was like shooting fish in a barrel, and these fish actually took some hits for once. By the time the bugler sounded church call (which was sometimes used to call for a truce on the field) most of the Johnnies were either littering the field or scurrying off.

After we got back to camp Mikey and I headed over to civilian land for lunch (chicken, of which there was plenty) then walked out to get our vehicles. Bill had he and Mikey's tent down and packed and all of their gear ready to go (no supplies) by the time we got back, and I set about getting all of my gear ready to go.

Donny had talked to me earlier in the weekend about staying over with he, Howie and Kyle and I told him I'd think about it. At that moment, I was ready to head back to the 21<sup>st</sup> century (believe it or not it happens every once in a while) but Kyle talked me into staying by telling me I could sleep in his tent. Once I decided on staying, my tear down pace decreased markedly and I took my time getting everything out and packed. It was remarkable how fast the camp disappeared. I know I made the same comment in my last entry but it always amazes me that it seems to take so long to get everything set up and it is all taken down so quickly. It's always a little depressing to see everything vanish so quickly and to see your pards heading back to the real world, but there is some comfort in that there is one more event left and that there will be other opportunities to see the boys before the start of the next season.

At some point I had to answer the call of nature and Donny and Kyle both informed me that some of the port-a-johns were lacking in toilet paper. Kyle offered to lend me his roll (not that I would give back anything I used) and ran to his car to get it. He threw it to me and catching it was like catching a pass from Peyton Manning on the goal line. It hit me square in the chest and the

paper wrapping even came off. If the artillery ever runs short on cannons, they can just ask Kyle to throw TP. As I headed through the sally port, I got on my phone to check on my modern trappings and I passed Capt. McClain who was very amused at the sight of me with toilet paper in one hand and a cell phone in the other. I believe he said something like "That's the best example of two way communication I've ever seen" and said "Cell phone and toilet paper, what more does a man need?"

After I got back to camp, Kyle and I started helping Donny get his tents dropped. I was holding the ridge pole on the tent and it either came loose or I just "lost my grip" and it fell squarely on the top of Kyle's head. I'm not saying it didn't amuse me, but it really was an accident and he took it with the grace of an officer.

When we were done helping Donny tear down, we headed over to what was left of civilian town to figure out where we'd set up. Howie suggested we set the tent up near the fire to reap the benefits of its warmth, which seemed like a good idea to us. After we got set up, we headed out to get a bite and despite our best efforts to find a different place, we ended up back at Stephanie's Cabin (not because it isn't good, we just wanted to try something else.) One of the more amusing parts of dinner was watching and hearing us get out of the booth. Three days of reenacting had started to catch up with us and we probably looked like we were twice our age by the way we were moving. After dinner we stopped to pick up some items for Donny, and bumped into an older gentleman in two different parts of the store who asked us if we were elk hunting...it was slightly odd to say the least. Once our groceries were secured we headed back to the fort.

Being at the fort when you are sharing it with hundreds of reenactors is cool, but being there with just a handful of other people is something else entirely. I was struck by how quiet it was and the starlit sky was breathtaking as it'd been every other night we'd been there. It was also pretty amazing how fast wildlife ventured back into the fort after the bulk of us had gone.

Donny, Kyle, Howie and I plopped down in chairs around the fire and were joined by Jim Munson (aka Colonel James Patrick Wallace) who had served as event coordinator. It didn't take long for the alcohol to be dispersed, and the good (former) colonel was kind enough to share some of his Glenlivet with me. The majority of the conversation was based on reenacting, and it was interesting to hear some old pros like Colonel Wallace (he will always be that to me), Donny and Howie had to say about the hobby. Of course, the colonel was full of jokes and good stories too, and I was reminded of the hours Mikey, Donny and I had spent around the fire with him at Port Gamble a year ago.

One of the topics that he really seemed interested in talking about was the younger generation of reenactors really diving into the history and coming up with their personas. This is a part of the hobby that seems pretty underemphasized to me, in our company especially. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it; I think it should be up to the individual if they want to create a persona or not, but I can see where it could get people more in touch with the history. I've just started toying with the idea of a persona-Benjamin Henry Morgan, a storekeeper from New York-but I haven't really gotten anything past that. This was the first time I'd been asked about it and I was able to give a little background, but nothing near the extent he and Donny had come up with. It became very obvious those two boys have dedicated a lot of time learning about the history of their personas, and for as much smack as I've talked about Mr. Munson in the past, I came to view him in a new light after this evening. I had always seen him as the boisterous, jovial Colonel before and this was the first time I'd gotten to hear him talk about reenacting. Our little party finally broke up a little after 12:30 and I climbed onto my cot for a very restful sleep.

I woke up a little after 7 (after waking up at least a dozen times anticipating the reveille call) and stumbled towards the port-a-johns to answer the call. I was still more asleep than awake and probably got to within ten feet of two deer who were giving the business to a couple of bushes before I even realized they were there. They were far from disturbed by my presence, and just looked at me like "hey stupid, we're eating here." Not wanting to spook them on my exit, I made sure to close the door quietly as I stepped out and thought they'd gone until I got about two feet and

saw a pair of ears pop up from behind the bushes.

When I got back to the tent I just lay on the cot for a few minutes and at some point Kyle woke up and commented on how cold it was. I told him it wasn't that cold and a few seconds later he cut a fart that was both long and musical. Right after he was finished, he started flapping his sleeping bag and said "It's warm now!"

I think we got up for good around 8:30 and we loitered around camp until about 11 or so before we decided it was time to leave. Before we left I told Donny and Kyle about a dream I had had where our company had been on a tactical. We were walking down a road and a referee stopped us and made Brian pick a situation card. Whatever was on the card made Brian furious and he grabbed a TV that just happened to be sitting on the porch of a nearby house, and began swinging it around by the cord and let it fly over a ridge. Donny and Kyle got a big kick out of this, and I told them I'd include it in the blog, so there it is. I do love how random dreams can be sometimes.

Kyle and I decided to stop in Seaside for breakfast before the long drive home, and dined at Pig 'N Pancake. We talked about the weekend and spent a little time discussing the future of the company before the time to leave 1863 finally rolled around.

I don't know what it is about Fort Stevens that always seems to make it one of the best events of the year, but there's something about it and this year was no different. I know for me I was very ready for an escape to 1863 by the time it rolled around so I knew I was going to enjoy it regardless.

I can't say specifically what made this event so great. I had a decent time on the field (I was super selfish though, I didn't take nearly as many hits as I should have, something I will rectify at McIver) and the camaraderie was good as well. Perhaps it was just a perfect combination this year that brought it all together. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves, and although that is not uncommon, it was a little odd to see it so clearly. We had smaller numbers than usual at this event, but it certainly didn't detract from our fun. The group of guys who were there are what Mikey and I call the "core group." The same guys who you can almost guarantee will be at every event and it just seemed like everything came together to make it a fantastic time for all. (I'm not the only one who has said this, I have had a few other people in the company tell me the same thing as well as other members in the club.) Whatever it was, it made for an almost magical event, one that makes me feel blessed to be a part of such a kick ass company in the most kick ass hobby in the world.

## McIver '11: Courage Will Fail But Not Today



The event at McIver began with hot weather. The temperature was in the low 80's and it was a touch humid a bad combination when it comes to set up day.

I got to the park around 1 and found I was the second person to set up behind Donny. The heat made things a little more challenging than usual but after several breaks, my little home was ready to go.

While I was getting my tent set, Major Baker came over and began chatting with Donny. As they were talking, I went into my pile of canvas to get it erected. I had just got my rear upright set and began to grab the ridge pole, which came off the ground with remarkable ease. For a moment I thought I suddenly gained super upper body strength, then I realized the good Major had stepped in behind me and grabbed the other end of the pole. I thanked him for his help, and said "For a second there, I thought I'd gotten *really* good at setting up my tent by myself.: and he let out a laugh I haven't heard since Lewis in "Revenge of the Nerds." I don't mean this as a slight against him, it's just that I had never heard him laugh before and it caught me off guard.

The rest of set-up was pretty uneventful. The one highlight of waiting for everyone else to arrive was when Brian walked over, wearing one of the best t-shirts I've ever seen: it was black, with a picture of Yoda who was pointing, with a caption under it that read "My finger, pull." It was a big hit for a group of Star Wars nerds such as ourselves.

Mikey and I ran into town to grab a bite and got back after nightfall. On our walk back to



camp, I had the experience of carrying a 20 pound bag of ice (I don't mess around when it comes to ice) which had a steady trickle of water coming out of the bottom the whole time. Not a big deal at all, just something that sticks out in my mind.

After we got back to camp, Donny lit a fire in his brazier and our nightly bull session began. Matt Cleman and I had a good chat about stitch counters and farbisms (subjects I hope to do an entry about in the future) and shared a lot of the same opinions about both. When we were done talking, Matt headed over to civilian camp and I took my customary spot around the fire. I think Kyle rolled in around 10:30 or so, and came bearing breadsticks, all of which were consumed with much gusto. I don't remember anything specific about this particular evening, though I'm sure the phrase "crazy woman!" was uttered once or twice.

I woke up Saturday morning feeling a little under the Weather and despite my hopes, it ended up being my second straight event I was sick. I felt a bit better after some coffee and breakfast, and decided to plow through the rest of the day.

Bill and I pulled mess duty after breakfast and I stayed around civilian camp long enough to get the delight of testing one of Paula's fried pies to make sure they were edible...and boy, were they! I'm pretty sure Kyle is still a little upset that I got to test one.

After I got back to camp, Bill and I headed to robber's row (sutler row) and I bought a couple of necessities-new laces for my brogans and candles. When we returned, I decided to load Mr. Marston, who would spend the weekend servicing the good lieutenant. Kyle had lost the wedge pin for his pistol when he was live firing it and didn't have one for the event. He was content to go pistol-less, but I insisted that as an officer, he really should have one. It's also a little more accurate for a lieutenant to be carrying a pistol as opposed to a corporal.

Before we took the field for the first battle, the battalion was formed and ranks opened so our weapons could be inspected. Colonel Eackman began inspecting muskets while Captain Yoakum began checking cartridge boxes. Before the event, I had decided I was going to shoot like I did when I was a Reb and try to empty my cartridge box in every battle, so I had packed my box as full as I could (perhaps a little counterproductive to achieving my goal now that I think about it.) When Captain Yoakum got to me, I felt him lift the flap and upon seeing the contents, he asked in that oh so slightly less than slightly sarcastic tone of his "You plan on doing some shooting today?" I replied in the affirmative, and just about that time, the Colonel stepped in front of me. I briskly presented my piece, he grabbed it, then gave me a perplexed look. About the time he grabbed it, I realized I'd forgotten to spring the rammer (a key step in inspection arms some may say) and I apologized as I took it back from him to correct it. "I understand, Corporal," he said, "you were confused, you had someone poking around in your rear." I was taken a little by surprise by his response, but it was nice to see his sense of humor.

There isn't much I remember about the battle. We shot at them, they shot at us, and it went that way got about half an hour or so. The finish had the remnants of our battalion (which wasn't much) run off the field. Major Woods chased us on horseback and tried to take Captain Bishop back to Colonel Stanovich (the captain had become a wanted man since Fort Stevens for gunning down Captain James Flynt in cold blood. Someone had even gone as far as to have wanted posters printed up and they were plastered everywhere at the event.) Cooler heads prevailed, and Captain Bishop would live to see at least one more day.

The second battle started with our division being held in reserve on the eastern end of the field, behind the artillery. The chaplain (CRAZY WOMAN!) was with us and the Colonel asked him to give us a few words before we headed into battle. I don't remember the whole monologue, but part of it is the title for this entry, and it probably would have been comforting and inspirational had we been going into real battle.

Shortly after the chaplain was done, two young ladies walked past, one of whom was quite crumbly (my senior English teacher would be proud that remembered that word) and wearing a tight, orange shirt. I have to say she didn't look she minded forty guys staring and drooling as she passed either. Before they got halfway by us, Captain Yoakum ordered us to about face and kept us that way until they had passed, to our chagrin. Captain Bishop and Colonel Eackman both gave him a hard time for facing us about, but I think it's safe to say he didn't care. I think Captain Yoakum really enjoys playing the hard-ass role, and I'd venture to say it's probably not much of a stretch from his 21<sup>st</sup> century persona.

One thing I remember well about this battle was how fast everything was happening and things were very chaotic at points (right up my alley). At one point towards the end, we flanked some artillery pieces and began engaging them. Kyle was ordering us to put fire on them, and told me specifically to aim for a certain gunner. Kyle fired Mr. Marston at the gunner with no effect (not a supplies) and when I fired, she took a hit. I think the good lieutenant was a little put off by that, but he took it in good humor.

When we got back to camp, I had scarcely gotten out of my leathers when Corporal Cleman asked me to escort a couple who were interested in joining a unit to civilian camp so they could talk with Howie. Their names were JJ and Scott, and both seemed very interested in getting into the hobby. I talked with for a bit on the walk over and for a few minutes while Howie finished up with his portable telegraph. I didn't try to sell them on the hobby or the unit, I just told them what I feel: the hobby is the best there is in the world, and I have a blast doing it with the 69<sup>th</sup>. Howie and I both encouraged them go around the camps and to talk to the different units and stressed that finding the right unit was the key to getting everything you can out of reenacting. They didn't join right then and there, but I wouldn't be surprised to see them somewhere in camp next season.

After I got back to camp, I cleaned my musket and sat around until dinner. The entrée that evening was the chicken noodle soup/stew that so many of us love, and it was so good that I went back for seconds, which is a rarity for me. After dinner, the majority of us headed back to camp and it didn't take long for the brazier to get fired up. At some point in the evening Howie from Washington stopped by and settled in around the fire. By that point the conversation was more of a groan-a-thon, with Kyle doing the bulk of the damage. I insisted that Donny tell the famous "supplies" joke, something that always tickles me greatly.

I was beginning to feel very blah by this point, but I was determined to enjoy myself. I broke out my flask of Johnnie black and a bag of Kit Kat bars (quite a combo, yes?) and distributed them around the circle. I asked Donny if he wanted any scotch and he asked me to pour some into his hot chocolate, which although was a little odd to me didn't sound bad. Then Kyle asked me to add a little to his Surgeon Pepper which sounded completely gross, but when I tried it, wasn't as bad as I was expecting, though it won't become a new mix of mine.

I didn't make it much later after taps had been sounded, and I was feeling bad enough to forego my traditional cigar. I know I fell asleep almost as soon as my head hit the pillow.

I woke up before 5 Sunday morning with a sore throat and a need to answer the call of nature, and when I got back to my tent I couldn't fall back to sleep. By the time reveille came around, my throat felt better but my head was quite congested. My head actually felt like a balloon that was threatening to blow away at any moment, and for the first time in reenacting, I considered sitting out a battle. A couple of cups of coffee later, I felt a bit better and decided to wait on making the sit-out decision until later.

Drill was fairly entertaining that morning because the Colonel formed the battalion as one company then had the company commanders execute different commands. I think most of the evolutions went well until Captain Bishop was called out and ran us through more left-face commands than most every other company had ever seen. It was amusing to see all of the confusion that ensued with a command that is so basic, and it seemed to me that the boys from the 69<sup>th</sup> were

the only ones who were not completely dumbfounded. (The good captain has always made sure we knew what to do on a left face and made it a point of using it on the field, so we actually did know what we were doing, I'm not just patting ourselves on the back.)

During parade, Colonel Wallace made an appearance and was awarded the rank "brevet Colonel of engineers", which apparently is a tradition for former commanders. After the colonel's ceremony, Colonel Eackman called Sergeant Major Harper out and gave some heartfelt words about the impact he'd had on himself and how much he appreciated having him on his staff. This was Mr. Harper's last event in the role of sergeant major and he will be replaced by another member of the 69<sup>th</sup>, our own First Sergeant, who was fearsome in that capacity and will undoubtedly be the same as battalion zebra. Tom Harper is well respected by many throughout the club, and though I don't know him well, I sense that that respect is both justified and deserved. He is leaving big shoes to fill in, but I don't think there is anyone more capable of filling those shoes than Brian. And I promise we won't do any Life of Brian bits in your presence.

The march into our first battle took us through Confederate camp, and we halted a short distance from a civilian camp. Almost immediately, a cornfed woman stormed out of a tent, billowing oaths (one of which stopped abruptly at yellow bellied b--- when she saw the chaplain was with us.) She and the chaplain began an exchange, and I was hoping to hear him say that infamous phrase from Ft. Stevens, but alas there were no CRAZY WOMEN(!) in Confederate camp that day.

As we began marching onto the field, I stepped squarely into a pile of horse poop, to the apparent disgust and terror of some in our unit. When I stepped in it I got the usual chorus of "oooh" and "ahhh" (vomiting was sure to follow from the sounds of things), I just shook my head and said "It's only poop." Then I told Howie "I highly doubt the boys in 1863 would shriek in terror at the sight of poop, I don't see why we should." It makes complete sense to me. That is one thing I've never understood in our hobby: the unnatural fear of horse poop. We have horses in this hobby, they poop, we're bound to step in it sooner or later. It's a little funny to see the lengths that some people go through to avoid stepping in (or near it) and I just don't understand why. It's like the line Donny always uses (from a movie I don't immediately recall): "It's only grass and water." I only stepped in it. Now if I picked some up and took a big bite, you'd have reason to be grossed out.

We marched onto the field, taking artillery fire and fire from the ever hit-proof dismounted cavalry. After we halted, we began returning fire, and I think it was on our next advance Mikey took a nice on-the-move hit (rarely seen but always looks good.) When we halted again, Dominick (our native of Sweden and newest member) experienced the dreaded cook-off, that being powder ignited by burning embers that are still in the breach. He had his hand over the muzzle when it happened and he took a nasty burn on a couple of his fingers, but he was otherwise unhurt. This is why we teach proper loading technique so much and perhaps this will be motivation for newer members to pay attention.

We advanced again and halted yet again, and during this halt, Howie and I began discussing the number of musket misfires we'd seen so far. (It had started sprinkling when we came onto the field and we all know how well black powder and water get along.) I think it was Kyle who told us we were going to take a group hit the next time the cannon to our front fired, and everybody acknowledged the order. Howie and I were still talking (loading and firing as we went) and we'd just got done loading when the cannon fired. There were great shouts of pain and distress and I could sense people falling behind me. When I looked around, I saw that Howie and I were the only ones who were still upright. I think it probably looked pretty good from the audience.

I don't remember what happened next (I think the Johnnies broke out of the tree line and hit us from the rear) but I do remember being surprised at how fast things broke down for us. Towards the end of the battle, we were heading off the field, but some troopers from the Maryland cav (guys who actually take hits, mind you) blocked our escape. I fired my musket, and saw a

trooper named John (one of the first reenactors I'd ever met actually) firing his pistol and took a hit for him with pleasure. I don't know John very well, in fact most of my interaction with him has been through Facebook, but I did know he'd recently been deployed to Afghanistan and I was glad to see he'd made it back in time to get on the field at least once.

At the end of the battle, Captain Bishop was finally caught by the cornfeds, shackled and led to their camp to stand trial. It was a little amusing to see because people in the stands were actually cheering when the good captain was being put in irons. I'm sure it was nice for the rebs to hear people cheering them for a change.

When we got back to camp, I ate lunch and began breaking down some of my gear in anticipation of tear-down. About an hour or so later, we heard a shot and figured that had been the end of the Captain's trial. Right after the shot, the bugler blew taps, and the battalion uncovered in a show of respect for their fallen comrade. When Steve was done playing taps, I turned and said "Play recall!" which earned me a sly grin from our good uncle. (This is a running joke through our company because every time taps is played on the field it's always followed by recall, which is our signal to come back from the dead and form up. After a while you get so used to hearing the two played back to back that it sounds unnatural to hear one without the other.)

Shortly after taps, a group of Confederates carrying our fallen captain on a stretcher came into camp under guard to return the body and collect the \$500 reward that had been posted. The Confederates and the officer of the day (a lieutenant from the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine if I remember right) made a big production of returning the body and arguing over the reward. Colonel Eackman (who'd been away from HQ) eventually returned and got into an argument with Colonel Stanovich over whether or not the signature on the wanted poster was Colonel Eackman's (or Colonel Eeeeeckkk as Colonel Stanovich called him) or a forgery. The ordeal ended with the Confederates leaving empty handed, but promising that "this wasn't over."

The last battle of the season was prefaced with the infamous "make sure you bring extra ammo" order, which earned plenty of chuckles. It seems like every time battalion says this, it almost always plays out being the opposite. (McIver seems to be the place for this order to be given. After all, it was here at the Battle of Pepsi Ridge where that order had been given and we ended up firing maybe seven or eight rounds.)

My notes about this battle say there was a particularly bad hit taken by a trooper at the beginning, but I think this may have happened in the last battle on Saturday. Either way, the hit was bad: it took the guy about ten seconds to hit the ground, and he didn't do it with much gusto.

The only thing I remember about this battle was at the very end when we were marching up a slope, driving the rebs off the field when the bugler sounded "cease fire." He had no sooner ended the call when Dominick collapsed to the ground, much to the amusement of Travis and I. It's the only hit I've ever seen taken on a cease fire, and not a shot had been fired when he took it.

After the battle, both battalions reformed, stacked arms and engaged in the traditional "group hug" that we do every year at this event. When that was done, we commenced policing the field and headed back to camp.

Before I started tear down, I went over to the battalion fly to thank Colonel Eackman for a fine season. I really enjoyed having him as our commander and was happy to learn he was running again next season. The biggest difference between he and Colonel Wallace was how open he was with the troops. He strikes me as the kind of guy who wears his heart on his sleeve and he let his emotions show a few times during the year. I think some people see this as a sign of weakness (or unmanliness) but I respect him for showing how he feels. Seeing the emotion makes me understand he loves this hobby as much as the rest of us. Before I headed back, I shared some of my plans with him for next season and he invited me to get together at some point during the off season to discuss tactics or "whatever."

I lollygagged through most of tear-down because as miserable as I felt, I was in no hurry for the season to be over. It was a little strange though because I didn't have my usual end of the season dread. I suspect it's because of my anticipation for next year, which I'll discuss in a little bit.

Eventually the camp cleared out, and only Donny, Kyle and I remained (it's becoming a pattern). We spent most of the time shooting the breeze as we usually do and I ended up leaving a bit after eight that evening.

This season was great, as every other one has been, and it indeed brought about a good deal of change. This year was the last year for Earl as Captain, Kyle as Lieutenant and Brian as First Sergeant. All of these men did their jobs well and have left an impact on everyone in the unit. This year was the last season of the old so to say, and next season will begin a new chapter for the 69<sup>th</sup>: Kyle will be captain, Mikey will be first sergeant and Matt will be moving up to second sergeant. There is a race for the corporal positions so I won't state who will be what in that arena, but it's nice to see people stepping in and letting those who led us for so long step back.

As far as I am concerned, I have thrown my hat in for the position of first lieutenant (to which I am running unopposed, so please don't think I'm an overly confident buffoon) which I announced at Fort Stevens, after discussions with Earl, Kyle and Matt. I did not plan on running for this position when I made it to Fort Stevens, but I realized someone needed to run for it and I will admit that I am eager to take on this role. I'm equally interested to see what being an officer will be like having served as an enlisted man for the entirety of my reenacting career. (I can tell you without doubt, I will not miss cleaning my musket.)

I think it is the anticipation of my new duties that is sparing me the "off-season blues" that I spoke of earlier. There is a lot for me to learn, and I'm looking forward to it. There is also a new uniform to buy along with some new gear, and between the learning and buying, there will be plenty for me to do. I am also looking forward to working with Kyle as captain. I think he and I work well together, and we have undoubtedly become better pards this season, something I believe will serve us well next season. Our entire cadre will be different and I'm excited to be a part of it. I won't ramble about how things will be next year and all that, I will just say I don't think I have looked forward to a season as much as I have this one since McIver 2008.