

OFFICIAL REPORT OF CAPT. ROBERT HEENAN FOR ACTION NEAR HORNY SEED RANCH, COLTON

October 7, 1863

Colonel Kevin Burton

Headquarters Army of the Willamette

I have the honor to submit the following report of the 69<sup>th</sup> New York from September 22-23<sup>rd</sup> inclusive.

Sir, I must apologize for the late arrival of our company as I was given poor instruction by a staff officer and sent on a most roundabout route. My men sprang into action as soon as we arrived, and you undoubtedly noted the crisp, military precision in which our camp was set.

I estimate my company was near full strength at this station, despite the absence of Fighting Chaplain Cameron who is still recovering from his face wound suffered at Sherman Tavern. I am pleased to report that Private Kinane returned to the ranks late Friday evening. Unfortunately, upon inspection of his gear, my Little War Pony and I were mortified at the discovery of several dozen enemy accouterments along with enough enemy uniforms to outfit a comrade of fours. Private Kinane insisted all were war trophies and after a thorough investigation (in excess of two minutes) we decided he would be brought up on charges.

We skirmished with the enemy briefly on the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Our company took part in a glorious pincer maneuver against a Maryland regiment only to see it bungled by the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota, whom I feel would have been better leaving more on the field at Gettysburg, especially their quartermaster sergeant who chops wood at 5 o'clock every morning. My men valiantly held their position but were forced to surrender the field when a consolidated enemy regiment appeared on our left.

We encountered the same group of enemy later in the afternoon. My company was posted to watch a ridgeline and through use of my field glasses I was able to discern at least a brigade of infantry in our front, supported by a squadron of cavalry and several batteries of artillery. My boys were itching for a fight and begged me to attack. So, I asked the major, "Sir, permission to advance? He did not respond.

So, I said to him, "Major ~~Baker~~ Leaton, we have got to clear that ridge," and he said nothing. I said, "Sir, release my company and we will clear that ridge", and he said nothing. He stood there and stared at me.

I said to him, "My Little War Pony could clear the ridge by himself, and he said nothing. He put his arms behind his back and blinked.

I was preparing mount a swift offensive of my own against the Major-I was becoming disturbed, Sir-when dismounted cavalry took us from behind (which was not at all like the gentle caress of my first sergeant). We despatched them quickly, and I was finally ordered to attack the artillery on the ridge. The major ordered us forward and it soon became apparent to me he was directing us in a frontal assault against the cannon. I pleaded with him to allow us to flank but he merely growled and I feared he was letting his black ROSE bloom. As soon as he halted my boys, I realized the position was untenable. I commenced briskly to the rear to find the major and place him under arrest, but alas, he had disappeared. I heard the cannon roar, and when I turned, the men I had so courageously led were mostly dead. There were only but a few survivors, one of whom told me that

even in facing death, my Little War Pony's last thoughts were of his brave and valiant leader: his final words were, "Don't worry men, the Captain is fine."

I could have taken those guns, God in his wisdom knows we should have! General Hancock saw it, he was with us!

On Sunday morning, Private Kinane was brought to justice. The hearing commenced with a reading from the Book of DaBallo (paragraph 42), charges were read, and the offender found guilty on all counts. First Sergeant Napier (who turned out not being dead at all) received a dispatch from Washington City, signed by the President himself, which read: "Woe unto that man by whom offenses cometh. You may execute Mike Kinane, if practicable. A. Lincoln" As I walked the Private out of our camp and towards a camp of civilian followers-where I planned to sit and give him a stern talking to-he suddenly broke into a run. I had no choice but to shoot him, five times. When he finally fell, I approached his prostrated form and fired a final round to the groin, just because. Surgeon Wetter pronounced the private dead, and he was promptly stripped and looted in accordance with battalion regulation.

We encountered a group of Texans Sunday morning and I was wounded heinously in the shoulder, from the most peculiar Texan who spoke with a distinctly northeastern accent. I do not recall details of this battle, but I believe this was the occasion in which you found yourself captured and very nearly executed. I believe sir, you may have been slightly touched as this was the same battle you ordered your entire battalion to deploy as skirmishers while having no reserve. It is I hope the first and last time we see that maneuver on the field.

I do not recall much of the final engagement at this station as we were curiously held on the flank, guarding against a threat that never materialized while the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota and 79<sup>th</sup> NY did all the fighting. I am not bitter, sir. Not in the slightest.

Sir, as usual I would like to commend the actions of my men who were sacrificed so gloriously for the cause. One may think I would tire of singing the praises and abilities of myself, but I find the strength to do so. You will note sir, the actions of my company on Saturday afternoon were not the fault of myself nor my men (though you may undoubtedly hear differently) but the result of your executive officer's poor handling. His apparent drunkenness led my men to disaster and forced the appearance of me fleeing the field in disgrace. I expect an investigation will follow, and if additional blame needs to be cast, I offer Private Kinane.

I have the honor to be your very courageous servant,

*Robert "OK" Heenan*

Capt, 69<sup>th</sup> New York