



◆ THE MESSENGER ◆



The Newsletter of the Fifth Missouri Infantry (CSA), Inc.

Vol. 7, No. 6

JUNE 1996

EVENT REPORT: THE WILDERNESS

By Brevet Corporal Dennis Faught

I learned a couple of things about reenacting in Virginia. The first thing is that Virginia rebs tend to engage in unscripted hand-to-hand combat at the drop of a hat. The second thing I learned I already knew, but was reinforced by this latest experience: If something can go wrong with the battle scenario -- it will.

I arrived on site Friday morning in the wake of two days of flood-inducing rains to be greeted by an organizer who told me "this rain has kind of messed us up .. we're working on plan B." I could only mumble to myself that Plan B should have been worked out well in advance of this late hour. I found that several of the company had arrived ahead of me, and was directed to the fixed camp of the 7th Wisconsin -- well-placed on top of a hill next to the gravel road. (The campaign camp plan had been scrapped due to a property dispute and the fact that it was ankle-deep in water.) The initial blessing of having the camp so easily accessible turned into a curse later in the event as parking lots formed on either side of the hill and the road became a highway of 20th Century vehicles for the balance of the weekend. There would be no "magic moment" of seeing thousands of soldiers encamped in a period setting.

Disorganization was not the sole province of the event organizers, however. While Smart's Brigade had made extensive command structure plans for this event, little of that seemed evident as the companies came together. Col. Beck -- tapped to be a staff Major -- was not coming. Lt. Col. Huckabee -- who was to command our 4th Battalion consolidated company -- was not on site yet. When he did arrive he was elevated to a staff position, and Capt. Backs of TMR placed in command of the Company. Major Koffman was given the rank of Lieutenant. We had no clue who the 1st Sergeant was to be. That decision wasn't made until dawn Saturday. Sgt. Dietzel and myself were appointed to two of the corporal positions, but since there was little military structure to the weekend, we had little to do except occupy our appointed places in line of battle. Eventually, our company -- composed of elements of the 5th MO, 9th TX, TMR, and 62nd TN -- was named Company C and designated Color Company. The dream of replicating the 7th Wisc. with 10 companies and over 500 men did not materialize, although we did field nearly 400 muskets -- an impressive sight nonetheless.

The drenching rains abated, and after a brief shower Friday night, would no longer be a factor. The heat would. Heat indexes over 100 both days sent a constant stream of reenactors to the hospital. Indeed, illness seemed to dog the event, as several members of the Fifth were temporarily struck down with a variety of maladies including severe headaches, intestinal disorders, skin reactions and near heat exhaustion.

The Saturday morning tactical in the woods began as one of those "magic moments." The disorder and confusion of fighting in densely tangled woods became immediately evident. Fog hung thick and powder smoke obscured vision beyond a few yards. The enemy seemed to be everywhere. Units were cut off, flanked, surrounded, scattered and regrouped. Then things went sour. Company C was marched -- by the left flank -- from one point of the fighting to plug a gap in another. But rather than properly getting us into line from an inverted formation, we were left inverted and the front rank forced to fire over the rear rank. At least that's what we did where we weren't stacked 3 or 4 ranks deep. This continued for some time until the Confederates -- by now low on ammunition -- launched the first of what would be several hand-to-hand encounters this weekend. As with all such incidents at this event, this melee was characterized by musket muzzles jabbed into ribs, and a lot of rough pushing and shoving -- often with loaded muskets.

Battalion drill provided the next opportunity for a "magic moment". Those who weren't there may never have another opportunity to hear a battalion volley of 400 muskets. These were a sound to behold, and among the most crisp volleys you'll hear on any field -- accomplished no fewer than five times without a single premature or tardy report. Brevet Lt. Koffman graphically noted a particular sensation the experience provoked. We had the opportunity to repeat the performance -- with equally satisfactory results -- during the Saturday afternoon battle.

When one reads the historical accounts of the Saunders Field action during the Battle of the Wilderness, he comes to the conclusion that any similarities between those accounts and Saturday's scenario are purely coincidental. Things began promisingly enough -- with regiments of brightly-colored zouaves advancing into the field. Things deteriorated from there. The Iron Brigade deployed and advanced as planned -- but oddly found ourselves unopposed. Two batteries of Confederate guns sat before us, completely unsupported by infantry. We were halted in the middle of the field -- within spitting distance of the abandoned guns -- and waited. And waited. Finally the Confederate infantry arrived at it's appointed spot in the woods, and advanced into the clearing to meet us. We pushed them back into the wood line, but it wasn't long before un-scripted hand-to-hand fighting erupted again.

WILDERNESS REVIEW CONTINEUD.

More incidents would take place as the rebs pushed the black hats back across the field. I have one good thing to say about all of this. Nobody died.

Sunday's Widow Tapp Farm scenerio was a repeat performance of everything that went wrong on Saturday. Company C -- still over 40 strong -- was now commanded by Capt. Koffman, due to desertions in the officer corps. We formed in the cool shade of the woods as planned, but instead of repeating history and allowing the Texas Brigade to cross the field and collide with us at the wood line, the Iron Brigade exited the woods and advanced on the Texans before they had crossed half of the clearing. And we didn't stop. As we approached closer and closer with loaded muskets at the shoulder -- overrunning our own skirmish line -- cries of "too close!" began to be heard. The orders? "Press 'em!" "Keep going!". Again the two sides clashed. Again we amazingly escaped without actually killing someone. Finally, to add insult to injury, the Battalion was right-faced under fire and marched off the field before the action ended, ostensibly in protest because the Confederates wouldn't budge when pushed, but this was never actually explained by the officers.

I'm not sure who bears more blame. The rebs couldn't go anywhere. The crowd was at their backs. I could be wrong, but I don't believe we were supposed to press them back onto their artillery in the first place. Maybe it's a "Reb Thing." We had two Confederate organizations with strong-willed field commanders -- the ANV and 2nd Brigade -- and when push came to shove neither would give. In any case I have come to have a lot more respect for what "real" Yanks sometimes have to put up with on the field.

Potentially the brightest spot in an otherwise disappointing weekend? Western Confederates set a sterling example of what can be accomplished in galvanizing for an event. We created, in my opinion, a splendid impression of the 7th Wisconsin. Our cooperation and selfless investment in acquiring black hats, displaying corps badges, and carrying top-notch reproduction colors should send a message to other organizations. In order to be done right, galvanizing involves more than just throwing a blue coat on over your reb impression. I think we proved it can be done right. The reenactors, the spectators, education, the hobby -- everyone -- gains from this.

EVENT REPORT: CRESTON, IOWA

Creston was a casualty of the rain. Another good turnout of the company (16 officers & men and six civilians for a non-max, out-of-state event) made us the largest unit on the field, but it went mostly for naught as the rains scrambled plans and washed out activities. The bulk of the company arrived Friday night & early Saturday morning to be greeted by a 20 degree temperature drop from Mid Missouri and the threat of approaching storms. The storms did not materialize, but steady rain set in shortly before noon, delaying the start of the battle by "bout'n'our" and chasing away all but about a dozen spectators.

The battle -- ostensibly a scenerio of the Battle of Jonesboro, Georgia -- was a comical affair involving piecemeal tactics and little real action. Midway through the scrap, the Confederate commander decided the Yanks were too outnumbered, and sent the 2nd MO over to their lines enmasse as deserters to fight for them. Go figure.

Another conspicuous absurdity involved Iowa's answer to our own dysfunctional cavalry woes. A group calling itself the 8th Texas -- composed of more officers and nco's than privates, most sporting copious amounts of bright yellow trim -- featured as their color bearer a lad of not more than 10 years old. We dubbed the flag he was bearing "The Colors That Run". It was -- I kid you not -- a slightly-altered, SCREEN-PRINTED Confederate Naval Jack made of cotton. It bled profusely in the steady rain. An artillery battery also proudly displayed two such banners in camp -- although I believe they were made of nylon, not cotton. The federal troops, on the other hand (39th, 7th & 4th Iowa) -- in spite of having at least one woman in ranks -- looked very good, and displayed a nice set of authentic colors. There were, unfortunately, not many of them. This came as quite a surprise to us, being in Yankeedom and all.

While many of the anticipated activities and scenerios such as mail call and pay call succumbed to the rain, the moonlight tour did take place as planned -- sans moonlight, of course. It was well-planned and nicely done, with several interesting stops and lots of good first-person acting. The field hospital in a 19th-century barn was exceptionally well-done and rivals such efforts at Lexington. Maybe we should consider providing such an attraction at next year's Columbi a event.

Sunday morning dawned foggy and cold with leaden skies, which opened immediately after breakfast and showed no promise of abating. Having reached our 'saturation' point after a string of wet events, we called the company together and voted unanimously to exit the event early. I don't believe the 5th Missouri has ever bugged out enmasse from an event before, and this isn't a precedent I like to set. However, there didn't seem to be much at this particular event to hold us. Creston held a great deal of promise, but unfortunately did not deliver.

Submitted respectfully by 1st Serg't Dennis Faught

PRESERVATION NOTES

In accordance with a vote of the membership, the 5th Missouri Infantry has donated \$200 toward matching funds needed to expand and improve the visitor center at Kennesaw Mountain. The Friends of Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park have gratefully acknowledged the gift, which was made in honor of Cockrell's Missouri Brigade.

The chief historian at Vicksburg National Military Park has responded to our offer to donate \$200 toward repair or maintenance of Missouri markers with two options: The two position markers of the 5th MO (May 19 & May 22) have recently been repaired, but need cyclic cleaning and waxing. Also in need of this regular maintenance is the brass relief portrait of Colonel Cockrell. With our \$200 donation they could do either the portrait marker or both position markers. If you have a preference, let your representatives on the Board know.

THE BATTLE OF COLE CAMP, MO

During the second week of June 1861, A.H.W. Cook, a staunch Benton Co. Unionist who a month earlier had taken part in the capture of Missouri State Guardsmen at Camp Jackson, was busy raising a regiment of Home Guards from among the local German population. On June 12 he marched his assemblage of raw recruits and Camp Jackson veterans to two adjoining farms about threemiles east of Cole Camp, where they camped in two sturdy oak barns and drilled. They wore no uniforms and were ill-armed. Federal uniforms, arms, equipment and ammunition wouldn't be issued them until several days later. The barns were located approximately 300 yards apart on the properties of Harmon Harms and Henry Heisterberg, on either side of the Cole Camp - Duroc road.

On the 16th, the Benton Co. Sheriff -- a southern sympathizer -- served an arrest warrant on Col. Cook, who naturally refused to cooperate under the circumstances. Instead, Cook promised he'd take no aggressive action unless threatened. Meanwhile he gave 3-day furloughs to all but about 400 of his men (primarily the poorly-armed & unequipped new recruits). To the south, in the county seat of Warsaw, Captain O'Kane was preparing to march north with 350 men (about 125-140 of which made up two companies of infantry from the Warsaw area -- the rest being cavalry from Hickory & Henry Counties.) The men were under the impression they were marching to the aid of State Guard troops under Gov Jackson at Boonville. The real plan was to eliminate the now-forming Federal force at Cole Camp, which was blocking the old military road running from Palmyra though Boonville & Cole Camp, then on to Springfield and into Arkansas.

John Tyree -- a county resident with unionist sentiments, observed the secessionists in Warsaw, and carried the news to Cook at Cole Camp. Upon learning of the impending attack, Cook threw out pickets along three approaching roads, and sent word for the furloughed soldiers to return post haste. Not believing the attack would come before morning, the camp went back to sleep. Tyree was later captured by the Warsaw column, tied to a tree, and shot.

At around 3am the column encountered the pickets on the Cole Camp - Duroc road. No alarm was raised apparently because the column carried a Federal flag. The pickets were silenced with bayonets. One, however, was able to escape and sound the alarm at the northern barn, which contained Col. Cook and 170 of his men. As the column approached to within 200 ft of the barn, the aroused Home Guards managed to get off some shots. Six Southerners died as the mass rushed the barn & poured vollies into the open door, killing around 20 of the Home Guards. One version says the door was left wide open by the picket sounding the alarm -- another says Capt. Elbert Feaster used a fence rail to batter it open. About 24 Homeguards lead by Capt. Elsinger rallied behind a fence & corncribs, and delivered several vollies into the southerners.

Meanwhile, the 215 men from the south barn formed & advanced -- but hesitated when they saw the Federal colors being carried by the secessionists. The hesitation allowed the southerners to deliver a deadly volley, which caused the surviving Home Guards to drop their muskets & scatter. Southern cavalry, which had circled around to the rear, rode them down and killed many. The survivors under Cook from the north barn managed to extricate themselves from the fight around the barns, and drove off the cavalry which they encountered in the brush.

The fight probably lasted less than an hour. Estimates of casualties vary wildly, depending upon which side's numbers you believe. Probably around 200 Federals killed & 100 captured. Reports of Southern losses range anywhere from six, to over 100 dead. (A Federal report puts the number of dead Home Guards at 36, with 61 wounded) The Southerners nursed their wounded the next day at the Fairgrounds in Cole Camp, then marched back to Warsaw. They would later see action at Carthage and Oak Hills. The military road having been cleared of the blocking Federal force, Gov. Jackson and his entourage passed through unmolested two days later.

--Submitted by Dennis Faught. Sources: Benton County and Cole Camp Histories.

DRILL FACTS

By the First Sergeant

"At the Double Quick..."

Over the past couple of seasons, we've been hearing this preparatory command more and more often. This, in my opinion, is a good thing -- although it unfailingly elicits a chorus of groans and complaints from the rank and file. The fact is, speed is often of the essence when conducting battlefield maneuvers. As the old adage goes: "There are only two types of men on a battlefield; the quick and the dead." Unfortunately, there seems to be a presumption that a command to "double quick" means "off to the races". Such is not the case.

The speed at which the civil war soldier was drilled to march was 110 steps per minute. This was called "quick time." (Quick time had replaced the "common time" of 90 steps per minute which had been the standard gait for maneuvers prior to this.) The Double Quick Step, by comparison, was to be 165 steps per minute. One hundred sixty-five steps translates to just under 14 steps in five seconds. This is a moderate jog.

The length of stride is also very important. The quick step stride was to be 28 inches (a comfortable full stride for us under-six-footers). By comparison, the Double Quick Step called for a stride of 33 inches. You'll note that there's not that much difference between the two. The real determining factor in covering ground is the cadence. In fact, Hardee's manual specifically allows for increasing the cadence of the double quick step to 180 per minute (from 165) "under urgent circumstances". There's no provision for lengthening the stride.

It makes sense when you think about it. The object of the double quick step is to speed up the movement of a body of troops, while maintaining their alignment. Where most reenactors get in trouble is by stretching out those strides, and forgetting to maintain elbow contact with their pards.

If you find yourself a little over-taxed by the occasional double-quick, you could take Gen. Hardee's advice to "...breathe as much as possible through the nose, keeping the mouth closed. Experience has proved that, by conforming to this principle, a man can pass over a much longer distance, and with less fatigue." (SOC117) Or, you could eat fewer twinkies and hit the Nordictrack.

WESTERN TACTICAL MOVED ... AGAIN

Due to a scheduling conflict with the 82nd Airborne Division, the sponsors of the 1996 Western Tactical have been forced to again move the date of this year's event. Since the modern Federals will be conducting exercises throughout the month of October at the CWO Wilkins Western Kentucky Training Site, the date of the tactical has been moved from October 18-20 to NOVEMBER 1-3. (FYI, the 1994 tactical was also held the first weekend in November, with temps in the 60s near Louisville.) This turns out to be a blessing for the 5th Missouri, since the date no longer conflicts with our living history at Warsaw.

This year's tactical will feature both a Campaign Army and a Garrison Camp. The campaign camp will be wherever the main Infantry force is located at the time on the site. It will be "only take what you can carry" and will be located at different spots on Friday and Saturday night depending on the armies location. It will truly be a "hard-core" experience. Saturday night there will be a complete Mahan's outpost set up around the camp as there will most likely be night fighting at the company level by both sides throughout the night. The Garrison camp at this event will be like none other. It will not be near any "sutler's", but rather deep within the site and will act as a "supply depot" and an objective of the enemy forces throughout the weekend. Those soldiers who do not want to go "campaign style" will be able to set up their A-frames and camp here with all the amenities of a garrison camp. This camp will run a complete Mahan's Outpost throughout both the day and night for probable attacks by enemy cavalry and infantry. The site is in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky, about midway between Owensboro and Bowling Green. There is a registration fee of \$8 per participant, as there are no outside sponsors, no spectators, and no ticket fees to cover costs. This event is totally funded by the participants. Judges will be officers of the U.S. Army Observer Controller Team based at Ft. Knox, KY. Watch for more details in future issues.

Upcoming Events

Jun	JEFFERSON BARRACKS-CANCELED
Jun 22-23	GRAND ISLAND- NE. (Listed FYI, Company not supporting ,Battalion Max)
Jul 13-14	<u>COLE CAMP-</u> (5TH MO MAXIMUM EFFORT, 5th MO Sponsoring)
Jul 20-21	HONEY SPRINGS, OK
Jul 27-28	Lenexa, KS- (Listed FYI only)
Aug 3-4	ATHENS, MO
Sep 7-8	<u>FREDERICKTOWN</u> - (5TH MO MAXIMUM EFFORT) (Battalion Max Effort)
Sep 14-15	St. Charles- (Listed FYI only)
Sep 21-22	Granbury, TX- (Listed FYI only)
Sep 28-29	Pilot Knob Living History.- (Listed FYI only)
Oct 12-13	Shelbina, MO.
Oct 19-20	<u>WARSAW HERITAGE DAYS</u>
NOV 1-3	WESTERN TACTICAL -Bowling Green, KY
Dec 7-8	<u>PRAIRIE GROVE, ARK.</u> (Battalion Max Effort)

NOTICES

Ordinance Cpl. "Canteen" Bowling still has powder rations left. If you attended an event where powder was issued and failed to get it, see Cpl. Bowling at Cole Camp. Also if you are needing a tent for Honey Springs, Ok. you need to pick it up from Cpl Bowling. He will not be pulling the trailer to that event. I will have 5th Mo T-shirts at the Cole Camp so if you want any bring your money! The shirts are \$10.00. We have sizes LARGE, X-LARGE left.