

Dear Terry,

Now that the dust has settled and its time to look forward to Shiloh, I thought I would take a few moments and offer some observations on Wilson's Creek and suggestions for future events. My purpose is not to complain about Wilson's Creek – that serves no point now, but rather to give food for thought on how we might improve future FFD events. These observations are from my troops (quoted passages) as well as my point of view.

Of all people, I can appreciate the problems that were caused by the sponsor's failure to really listen to you throughout the planning process. I had a bad feeling at the final site visit we did and my worst fears became a reality at the event.

Let me emphasize again, I think many of the issues we had at Wilson's Creek will be solved simply by the different structure at Shiloh. However, it is important that we fix these issues at an event where we have full control. Otherwise, it will be harder to generate enthusiasm and larger participation at future FFD events.

"Three major things detracted from the weekend. The first was the lack of sufficient land for drill, the second the obnoxious light in the parking lot, and the third was the Union artillery that parked their cars in camp most of the weekend."

"Most event sponsors - and cavalry and artillery - seem to pay little attention to camp life. They always seem to find ways to bring modern anachronisms into or near the camps - whether it be four-wheelers running through camp, large silver water trucks parking right in camp, or porta-johns situated in plain sight."

"For the infantry, the time spent around the campfire is golden, and one of the best parts of the weekend. We literally spend thousands of dollars on our tents and camping equipment, and devote a lot of time and energy to creating an authentic environment in which our boys can "travel back in time" during the evening hours. This was destroyed at Wilson's Creek by the totally inconsiderate placing of a light tower in the parking lot that shone right into our eyes and completely illuminated our camp with artificial light. In spite of repeatedly asking to have it turned off, it was turned on again and again every night until almost bedtime - too late to salvage our camp life time."

Camp life is important to my brigade. One of our goals is to give the men the opportunity to portray part of an army in the field. This includes not only the camp environment but all the other things that allows us to give an accurate portrayal of a civil war regiment or brigade. More land will obviously enable us to fix some of these issues just by spreading out more but, no gators, ice sellers etc anywhere near camp!

"The ridiculous water situation was not solved until the General called the event coordinators directly and threatened to cancel the 5:30 battle if it was not fixed. The water then showed up all but immediately. The staff worked hard but was frankly virtually ineffective on major issues."

Mike Daily worked hard as quartermaster. Unfortunately, he wasn't very successful – sponsors were crap in terms of wood, water, and to a lesser extent port-a-potties. I couldn't ask more of a staff officer. Since

we control our own fate at Shiloh, I expect him to be more effective – I presume he will have the authority as well as responsibility to act. We don't need much.....water, wood, and port-a-potties.

“The cars in camp was a BGA leadership issue - it was even worse in the CS camp.”

I'm a little disappointed in the Provost. One of the duties of the Provost is the modern control of the camps. They should be the ones that control the cars, women, and kids in camp. They were invisible in this regard and it was left to the battalion commanders to try to enforce this. Easy to do for your own troops but very difficult when dealing with other organizations. A few men with provost badges posted at the entrances to the camp on set up days would work wonders. I'm sure there are men out there that would love to have the prestige of being part of the provost guard who can no longer take the role of an active soldier. Camp guard were posted between the camp and the sinks – at least on our end of the camp – which resulted in guys being hassled coming back from their “call of nature”. The kids serving as guards were only doing what they had been taught but they need to be taught better. Guys shouldn't have to tell the guards to “fuck off”.

There was way too much “cowboy and indians” in the camps throughout the weekend. This is something that we have direct control of and should not occur. I broke up a running gunfight through my camp area on Thursday afternoon – while guys were setting up. I had to walk out between their lines to get them to stop shooting. They had the gall to be offended that I wouldn't tolerate them fighting in my camp while my guys were setting up. I shouldn't have to worry about this kind of stuff.

A follow on to this is the evening action around the camps. This type of stuff practically never occurred in the CW, and proportionally should not take place at a reenactment. If you look at what happened at Shiloh, there was some interaction/skirmishes between pickets leading on the two days up to the battle. These encounters took place at least two miles from the federal camps – one as the result of a regiment going out to drill. This would be a nice little scenario to recreate at Shiloh instead of the yahoo dismounted doing BS attacks because they have too much adrenaline left at the end of the day.

“It was not a matter of not having enough real estate. It was Crowder camping with his boys and having no problem with it. The lights adjacent to our camp could have been stopped permanently on the first night. Instead, we had to request it each night and wait in unbearable intrusion. It simply was not an issue for them. On Saturday night, they could not be found because they were all at that historically accurate and well documented CS/US dance and ego fest. The light beamed directly on us until 11 pm our last night in the field.”

Camp set up was pretty poor at WC. I know we were pressed for space but we did not have a well thought out plan of where to put guys. The camp just kind of evolved. I think that because the cav was on site

first they just kind of took over the encampment. On Thursday, we tried to put my guys between the FFD HQ and the cav. Not nearly enough space! This is an ideal job for Mike Zimmer as COS. Physically its hard for Mike to get around but being the central control point for is perfect for him. Again – he has to have the authority to control things.

I'm not a fan of meetings but at WC there wasn't enough. We had one meeting the first night then that was it. Correct me if I'm wrong but I got the impression that by the time it came to meet you were too tired from putting up with all the BS and lack of support from the sponsors. I understand but I would still like to have a formal meeting once a day.

"If we don't go along with the bullshit scenarios pushed by the organizers, they will lose a huge chunk of Federal infantry." "It was a shame that the Cornfield was stunted, yes – but why was the johnny artillery on the wrong side of the field and why was their infantry stuck in a tree line?" "Why did we have a 1-hour stand-up fight for Sigel's rout instead of an artillery barrage that broke up the MSG cav camp followed by deployment of the Union forces and then the rout?" "I'm not sure what the spectators took home from the battles other than what a generic Civil War battle may have looked and sounded like, but it sure wasn't much to do with what happened at Wilson's Creek."

The scenarios need some work. I understand the ramifications of the loss of land but from the men's perspective, this isn't always apparent. Historically accurate scenarios are important to my men – especially those in command positions and those who are more aware of the historical details of any given battle – and there are quite a few of them. You would be surprised at how much of the men's free time is spent in serious discussions of the Civil War.

"While I am appreciative of all the hard work that Terry does in preparation for these events, I am less than impressed with the results I have seen so far. I wonder if perhaps too much focus is being spent on having 4-5 day events, with lots of battles and powder burning, and too little on more mundane things like parking, getting people in and out, camp life, drill, etc. I would much prefer to see 2-3 day events with such things being given more emphasis."

I know how easy it is to fall into the trap of doing everything yourself – I'm often guilty of it at my level and I'm sure the pressure is greater at your level. However, you have a staff that for the most part is pretty good. If someone wants to be on division staff then they should do the work – not only of period nature but the corresponding modern requirements. Save yourself to step in when everything else fails – bringing in the big guns so to speak.

On a personal note, I am a bit disappointed where we ended up camping. Muddy River got the prime camping spot. After my efforts walking the site with you and discussing options, I thought the FB might have ended up with a better spot.

Also, I thought it was FFD policy to have detached units attached to one of the member brigades during the event. I thought the 2ndCo (in their mis-guided attempt to go independent) was supposed to be assigned to Muddy River. It was embarrassing to see them on Sunday, with their little group of less than 20 clustered around their flag, fighting independently. You would be surprised at the number of men in the ranks who noticed this. In a larger context what are we do about this in the future. Where does the WIG fit in at Shiloh? Its great that they are coming but as a primarily confederate unite they are an unreliable resource for the FFD. I think we need to think carefully about how much freedom we allow them to “dictate what they want to do”. This won’t set well with the men.

You know the stormy relationship the FB has had with the FFD in the past. I believe the division is on the right track. We just have to keep working on these issues. I intend to do my part.

Don