



The Union Eagle

Journal of the U.S Frontier Brigade

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Greetings!

My, hasn't this been an odd year so far! First we heard late last fall that the "national" First Federal Division "Pea Ridge" event at Jonesboro, AR in March was cancelled. Most units had planned their schedules around this and, when that collapsed, it threw a monkey wrench into the entire spring campaign. Several events that were promising "might-have-beens" had been cancelled so as not to conflict with Jonesboro, and there wasn't much left to fill the vacuum. As a result, there is no brigade event for the spring season.

Then, to add insult to injury, Bentonville, AR, on the last weekend of October was also cancelled. This played havoc with the fall schedules of both the Frontier and Trans-Mississippi brigades. Fortunately, the Trans-Mississippi Alliance leaders have agreed on one, or possibly two, smaller efforts that will potentially take up some of the slack, and Colonel Gross is working with General Huckabee and Colonel Sanders of the Trans-Mississippi Brigade to bring this about.

So all is not lost, and steps are being taken to make 2009 a successful reacting season in the Trans-Mississippi. Stay in touch, as more information will be presented in this newsletter, and by direct email, as soon as it becomes available.

Cal Kinzer
Brigade Adjutant

From the Colonel's Headquarters

We certainly finished up last year with a bang! With some help from our friends in the Muddy River Battalion and Holmes Brigade we fielded six companies of infantry. Largest infantry force we've fielded since Franklin '04 where the brigade fielded two, albeit small, battalions. My appreciation to all who showed up and for those who couldn't make it, you missed a good one. We were able to have scenarios, like fighting around the Borden House, which we haven't done for years and years.

At the end of January I attended the annual First Federal Division Meeting. All five brigade commanders

were present, along with the commander and COS. At the meeting we voted to accept the Lightening Brigade for membership. They are based in the Georgia/Tennessee region.

The 2009 FFD event is Conner Prairie. We ended up with this as the only one where at least some of the brigades could commit to when Pea Ridge fell out.

Of much more importance was the discussion on a five year plan. We wanted to balance regions and accommodate or de-conflict with 150th cycle events. As a result we came up with the following wish list:

E = East; MW = Mid West; TM = Trans Mississippi (current geographical regions)

2010

- Wilson's Creek (event already being planned by others?) (MW)
- 2nd Manassas (event already being planned by Chris Anders) (E)

1861/2011

- Spring: Land Between the Lakes – Kentucky (FFD to investigate possibilities) (MW)
- Summer: Dormant
- Fall: Honey Springs, OK (FFD attending an already-established event) (TM)

1862/2012

- Spring: Shiloh (will try to help develop a National event) (MW)
- Summer: Dormant
- Fall: Antietam (presumed 150th event) (E)

1863/2013

- Spring: Dormant
- Summer: Gettysburg (presumed 150th event) (E)
- Fall: Chickamauga (presumed 150th event) (MW)

1864/2014

- Spring/Summer: Vicksburg Campaign (FFD to develop. Out-of-cycle, but decided we need to honor
V-burg and not compete w/ G-burg) (TM)
- Fall: Dormant

1865/2015

- Spring: Pea Ridge (FFD to try to develop) (TM)

To me this looks like a pretty balanced game plan and a fair distribution of events across the country. If we can pull it off, remains to be seen. I'm still not convinced how far west the other units will travel. On the other hand, for all practical purposes Wilson's Creek and Shiloh could be considered TM events. This is a far cry from the old firm 5-year plan we used to operate under (the old timers will remember that) but it is a start and at least at this time other units are willing to look west.

YMOS

Don Gross



From the Desk of the Sergeant Major

Greetings men of the Frontier Brigade. Let me first start by introducing myself. I am Mark Vlahos from the 2d Colorado Volunteer Infantry and it was an honor and a pleasure to serve as your sergeant major at our recent Muster at Fort Washita. After being in this Army for 20+ years in both the Eastern and Western Federal armies, I can tell you that the battalion drill at our recent muster is the best you will see out in the Western Theater of operations. Our commanding officer really knows his stuff and makes it fun. Congrats to all for a great training weekend.

While our total numbers were a bit lower than expected, most of the key leadership at the company level was present, enabling a good, productive training weekend. Having the opportunity to garrison an original fort is very special in itself. Additionally, hats off to the ladies who manned the kitchen and kept us full of hot meals and coffee all weekend.

On Friday, the NCOs had a good breakout session to chat about our roles as leaders. I appreciate all those who participated; we had some good interactive discussion. If any one would like an electronic copy of the handouts I gave out during this period of instruction, contact me. Sometime in the future, these notes will either be posted on the Brigade Website or incorporated in a brigade notebook.

Remember, NCOs serve at the honor of those who elect us, with the primary purpose of ensuring the men under us are organized, trained, and equipped to serve as infantry in the army. To better help understand the role of the NCO, I encourage each NCO to purchase a copy of Kautz's *Customs of Service for Non-Commissioned Officers and soldiers*. Additionally, NCOs need to be familiar with and be able to instruct the *School of the Soldier* and *Firing Procedures*. First Sergeants need to know the *School of the Company* cold. NCOs should carry a copy of *Casey's Infantry Tactics*, at least through the *School of the Company*.

NCOs, now is the time to stay in contact with the men in your section. Encourage them to acquire items for and work on their kit before the spring campaign season begins in earnest. It is the job of every NCO to help recruit and retain "fresh fish"; our brigade and the hobby in general need us to do this! NCOs, your constant communication with your men is critical; just by showing you care could help sway a new man to stay with the hobby long enough to get hooked. Every one of us can remember who took us under their wing when we were new. NCOs this is where you become a force-multiplier.

Again, it was great to see old pards and make new friends at muster. We are all comrades in arms in a special way. I hope to see many of you again soon. Until then, I remain your obedient servant,

Mark Vlahos
Sgt. Major, Frontier Brigade.

Brigade Events

The following were approved during the winter meeting at Fort Washita.

September 26-27, 2009 – Fort Washita, OK. Public battle on Saturday afternoon, non-spectator tactical situation from Saturday night until noon Sunday. Contact Whit Edwards at: wedwards@okhistory.org.

November 7-8, 2009 – Old Washington, AR. (Tentative at this time.) Living history and battle reenactments in the oldest town in Arkansas, and the site of the Confederate capital after the fall of Little Rock.

Trans-Mississippi Alliance Events

With the cancellation of both Jonesboro, which was originally expected to be our spring event, and Bentonville, which was to be the fall one, we've been left with no formal events for this year. We're still working on sanctioning an event for the fall at the annual meeting this summer.

Other Events of Interest

In most cases, these are being sponsored and/or attended primarily by the unit indicated, at least as far as our battalion is concerned. Members of other Union infantry units are usually welcome to fall in, but officers and NCOs should come as privates unless asked to do otherwise. It's always a good idea to check with the contact person listed before attending in order to make certain that outside individuals or groups are welcome, and to determine what the expectations are concerning uniforms, weapons, equipment, tents and rations.

March 28-29, 2009 - Port Hudson, LA. The Siege of Port Hudson reenactment.

April 4-5, 2009 – Mansfield and Pleasant Hill, LA. Reenactments of the battles of Mansfield (Saturday) and Pleasant Hill (Sunday).

April 4-5, 2009 – Shoal Creek, MO. Battle of Shoal Creek reenactment. MCWRA sponsored.

April 18-19, 2009. St. Joseph, MO. Battle of St. Joseph reenactment. Contact: James Croffutt, Muddy River Battalion, at MIB730%USV@hotmail.com.

April 25-26, 2009 – North of Houston, TX. Battle of New Year's Creek non-spectator tactical.

This will be by invitation only, no dismounted Cav. Contact: Tom Whitesides, 13th U.S. Infantry, at tdwhitesides@comcast.net.

May 2-3, 2009 - Jefferson, TX. Battle of Port Jefferson reenactment.

May 16-17, 2009 - Jefferson City, MO. The Battle of Jefferson City reenactment. Contact: Dick Peerson at dpeerson@wallstreetins.com.

May 16-17, 2009 – Conner Prairie, IN. First Federal Division national event. Contact: Mark Hernbroth at cos@firstfederaldivision.com.

May 30-31, 2009 – Wichita, KS. “The Blue and the Gray: Brother Against Brother” reenactment at the Old Cowtown Museum. Camping and fighting in an authentic period town. Contact: Jon Goering, 8th Kansas Infantry, at jngoering@trane.com.

June 6-7, 2009 - Kingston, MO. Battle of Kingston reenactment. Contact: Ken Draper, 2nd Colorado Cavalry, at captdraper@2ndcoloradocavalry.com.

June 13-14, 2009 – Tupelo, MS. Battles of Tupelo and Brice's Crossroads reenactment. Contact Terry Crowder, First Federal Division Cavalry Brigade, at colcav@charter.net.

July 18, 2009 - Reintsville, OK. Battle of Honey Springs commemorative ceremony. Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Contact: Howard McKinnis, 1st Kansas Colored Infantry, at howardmck@okhistory.org.

September 5-6, 2009 - Atlanta, GA. 145th Anniversary Battle of Atlanta reenactment.

September 5-6, 2009 – Lamoni, IA. Battle reenactment, MCWRA sanctioned.

September 19-20, 2009 - Holden, MO. Battle reenactment. MCWRA sanctioned.

October 3-4, 2009 - Perryville, KY. – Battle of Perryville reenactment.

October 10-11, 2009 - O'Fallon, MO. Battle reenactment.

October 24-25, 2009 - Tyler, TX. Battle reenactment.

October 24-25, 2009 – St. Louis, MO. Jefferson Barracks Civil War reenactment. MCWRA maximum effort event. Contact: Charles Hoskins, Holmes Brigade, at choskins1861@yahoo.com.

November 7-8, 2009 – McKinney, TX. The Battle of Myers' Landing. For more information, go to: <http://www.co.collin.tx.us/living/MyersLanding.pdf>.

Preserving the Union

[The following is taken from the book, *Returning to the Civil War: Grand Reenactments of an Anguished Time*, written by reenactor Kent Courtney.]

"Hey, Bob. You made it early," a fellow unit member says as Bob pulls up to the Union camp. "Let's get ya unloaded so you can clear your car out of camp. Rally 'round boys; everybody grab something."

"Glad for the help," Bob responds, "I'll unlock the trunk."

"The company street is along this string they laid out," one of the unit's sergeants says. "We gotta get real tight because they expect a lot of soldiers here. Where's your tent stakes?"

"In the Waterlift Arsenal box, the one labeled 'Enfield.'"

"Get those poles from the roof of Bob's car and let's get this tent up."

Tink, tink, tink, tin, and the stakes are driven into the ground through the tent loops while the canvas is squared. As soon as the tent is staked, one of the privates walks the ridge-pole into the tent and the white canvas begins to dance like a fidgety ghost. A tent pole is passed inside and the other pole is attached. The ghost stops dancing and the wedge tent is rigid and ready. Bob finishes unloading his car and says, "Hey, yuz guys, thanks."

There is more happening here than what meets the eye. It isn't just a tent being pitched, but an individual getting into character and merging with the unit. For some reason, unloading the car, unrolling white canvas tents, pounding stakes and setting up camp is a prerequisite.

"I've come in late to an event before because I had to work late or something. If I arrive Saturday morning instead of Friday night, I feel like I'm out of step, and it doesn't happen right," a veteran reenactor confides. "I don't know exactly why, but I just can't step into a firing line and feel like a soldier."

The authentic camps are simple and are set up in an orderly fashion along company streets. A dog tent - a pair of shelter halves buttoned together - is the Civil War version of the pup tent. It sleeps two and barely keeps them out of the rain. The A-frame, or wedge tent, is the most common and can sleep up to six people. The private's tent requires only three poles to set up: a ridgepole that goes across the top and a pole at both ends to hold up the ridgepole.

The details inside the tent help bring a reenactor's individual scene to life. Hay is scattered across the bottom of the tent, providing a dry, comfortable bed. A ground cloth is laid over the hay, and several

layers of wool blankets are spread out. Food is stored in the forage box. Several ammunition boxes disguise the necessities of life while creating an image of life in the war. More props include a folding stool or two, reproduction Civil War-era newspapers, and uniform accouterments strewn about the tent floor.

Sometimes a fly is erected as a sunshade. This is a ten- or twelve-foot-square piece of canvas with grommets along the edges. Six to ten poles and guy ropes are required to keep it up. This can serve as a front porch to a tent. Canvas flies were common in extended encampments during the war, but for campaigning, only the highest-ranking officers would go to the trouble of having them set up.

The intoxicating scent of burning wood permeates the air as the first campfires are lit. The wind gets a little cooler as dusk approaches. The slamming of car doors is replaced by the murmur of a hundred conversations. Strains of music are heard and everyone gets into the feeling of the reenactment by thinking about what an actual Union soldier would have thought about. For the Union man, it's the spirit of '76. Patriots of old are revitalized in the soldier's mind as he recalls the citizens who founded the country and fought the Revolutionary War. Sentiments of loyalty fill the breast of the soldier as pride of country rises to a lump in his throat.

"Lincoln has put over one hundred thousand troops into the field. In this camp, there are boys from all over the Union," a reenactor says as he puts himself into the mind-set of a soldier in the Civil War. "I met soldiers from Maine to Michigan today. How wonderful it is that we can march together for freedom the way our forefathers did in 1776."

"The thought of someone wanting to tear apart the most glorious country on earth is unthinkable," another reenactor responds, as if it were a current issue in his consciousness.

To go beyond the superficial and really reenact requires a mental discipline based on knowledge of history. Libraries and book-stores become the watering holes of learning. The longer a person is a reenactor, the more books he acquires. One time he might search for different types of hats, another time for ways soldiers buttoned their jackets. How tents are set up, what styles of shoes were worn, and whether soldiers rolled up their sleeves are just a few subjects of individual investigative odysseys. Research keeps people motivated all year long so that when the big events come along, the reenactors are eager to incorporate their new knowledge into their accouterments and character roles.

One method used by reenactors to get into and sustain character is meditation or mind experiments. It can start as a simple day-dream. Through this method, some even claim to transcend their experience of life and enter another world of time.

People who achieve this the best are those who practice the method year-round. "When I'm bored at work, I can conjure a day-dream just by looking out over trees where no power lines run through. It looks like a nineteenth-century scene," says a reenactor who drafts for a living.

In confronting a twentieth-century situation in daily life, a reenactor might use a mental exercise to find a resolution. For instance, he imagines how Grant or Sherman would have handled the same situation.

Reenactors' feelings about the great leaders of the Civil War approach hero worship. At night in the camp, looking at the same stars that Lincoln gazed upon, a reenactor feels a kinship with glory. There is a reverence for the accomplishments of men who achieved greatness in a time that demanded greatness. Over time, we have given these men even greater glorification, and reenactors try to emulate the attributes that made their heroes great.



**Barracks at Fort Washita Historic Site
(Oklahoma Historical Society)**

Organization

of the

U.S. Frontier Brigade

Brigade Headquarters

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Lieutenant Colonel
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Mark Vlahos
Sergeant Major

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Chief of Musicians

Doug Kidd
Chief of Cavalry

Pete Stoddard
Chief of Artillery

Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry

Captain Jonathan Goering
Wichita, KS

First Kansas Colored Infantry

Captain Howard McKinnis
Checotah, OK

First United States Regular Infantry

Captain Alan Prendergast
Dallas, TX

One Hundred and Seventy-Third New York Volunteer Infantry

Captain Mike Strange
Austin, TX

Second Colorado Volunteer Infantry

Captain Jim Trent
Stillwater, OK

Seventy-Seventh Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Captain Rex Griffin
Jenks, OK

Tenth Kansas Volunteer Infantry

Captain Mike Kirk
Oklahoma City, OK

Thirteenth United States Regular Infantry

Tom Whitesides
Houston, TX

Thirty-Seventh Illinois Volunteer Infantry

Captain Tom Ezell
North Little Rock, AR

This Newsletter is Written and Edited By

Captain Cal Kinzer

New U.S. Frontier Brigade Website address

www.usfb.org