

The Tyrants' Foe

The Newsletter Of The Texas Rifles

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COMMANDERS DISPATCH

The reality of my captaincy has begun to set in as I sit down to compose this dispatch. I am looking forward to a great tenure as your captain. The only reason I continue to participate in this hobby is because of the great people who have grown to become my friends over the past twelve years. You folks are the best! The biggest change this year will be the creation of a web newsletter. From now on you can expect an e-mail to announce the posting of our newsletter on the web site. It will be up to you to visit the web site and download and print the document. It will be my responsibility to make sure our plan works. If you experience any problems please contact me by e-mail or phone so the problem can be fixed.

As we look down the road to our first battle event, Ft. Towson, we can expect another season of campaigning. Pre-registration is a must for this event. Our January newsletter contained a lot of information about that event. Please send me your \$10 ASAP. In addition if you didn't attend Winedale or send your dues, you need to send them to me. Company Dues are \$12, and Brigade dues remain \$25. There is one difference in Brigade membership than last year. Because of insurance liabilities you must either join the brigade after attending two brigade events or you may not attend future brigade events. This decision was made by the executive board of the NCLHA. Simply put , if you want the benefits of the brigade you need to join and pay your fair share. The benefits include: wagons to haul water, tools, and ammunition at events. Supplemental insurance coverage is also a benefit that hopefully none of us have to claim. I hope you rally to our motto "Trust and Go Forward". This motto is especially appropriate after Winedale. Another old friend attended Winedale. Scott Swenson has accepted General King's request to begin forming the 4th Texas to add to the creation of the historic Texas Brigade. As of yesterday I requested transfer of our company to the command of Scott Swenson. After a journey of many years, we are coming home.

Chris Strzelecki
Captain , Texas Rifles

DUES UPDATE

Pay dues or you lose ! Yes , it is time to pay up those dues. Many of you attended Winedale and paid your company and brigade dues. However a number of folks didn't pay. Here is the information you need to complete the task. Dues for membership in the Texas Rifles will be \$12. A family membership will be \$18. In addition military dues for the brigade are \$25. Of that \$25 the company will retain \$8 in our treasury. This will allow us easier access to our portion of the brigade dues. (previously we had to request funds from the brigade and then wait for it to be sent to our treasury) Of the \$25 paid to brigade, \$11 is used to pay for insurance, \$3 goes to battalion and brigade expenses respectively, and \$8 to the company treasury. Please attend to this as soon as possible. Keeping your voting status in the company requires that you keep your dues current.

DRILL BITS

Well, This is my first "Drill Bits" as 1st Sergeant so for your sake and mine, I will keep it simple. As you old timers know, Company G will most likely find themselves doing skirmish drill at every event we attend. This is because we practice it and most of the other companies do not. We practiced skirmish drill several times at Winedale and I want to go over a few basic things that we can do to improve.

On Intervals

When the command "As skirmishers, on the (right, center or left) file, take intervals, MARCH!" is given and the fours begin to march, you need to be immediately aware of not only which direction you are marching, but of the

interval you are creating between you and the surrounding fours. If you are the four that the company is taking intervals off of, be careful not to quicken your step. March straight ahead and do not speed up. If you quicken your step, you make it harder for the other fours to get their intervals. Usually, there is no cadence or music to set your step to, so you have to make an effort to keep a steady, even pace. If you are one of the fours that is taking intervals, you will, of course, be marching obliquely to the left or to the right but you need to lengthen your step to keep the line straight. Look at the Sgt's on the far left and right and visualize where you need to be to keep the line straight. The farther away you are from the four that is marching forward, the longer your steps will need to be.

Deploying

The fours will break into a single line at the command "Halt" (at which time they deploy and take obstacles) or "Deploy" (at which time they deploy, but continue to move forward). Remembering how to deploy is difficult sometimes so let's go through it.

Picture a group of four as a square that you are looking down at from above. The top right corner of the square is the front rank #1 man. The top left corner of the square is the front rank #2 man. The bottom right corner of the square is the rear rank #1 man and the bottom left corner of the square is the rear rank #2 man. For this example we will assume that the command given is "HALT!" When you deploy, the front rank #2 man does not move. The front rank #1 man goes 10 paces to the right creating a gap for the rear rank #1 man. The rear rank #1 man will align himself between the front rank #2 man and the front rank #1 man with equal distances between himself and these men. The rear rank #2 man will align himself 5 paces to the left of the front rank #2 man. For you rear rank guys, just remember, you will be to the LEFT of the man in front of you.

Assemble vs. Rally

The command to Assemble is given when there is no danger of cavalry attack. The possible commands are:

1) Assemble on the Reserve. 2) Assemble on the Center. 3) Assemble on the Left File. 4) Assemble on the Right File.

5) Assemble at the Halt. 6) Assemble in Retreat.

We won't go through all of these, but let's go through some general rules. Assemble is always done at the quick step unless otherwise ordered and you should always FACE TO THE REAR before assembling into your fours. This is one thing we have not been doing. Remember, when you face to the rear and form your fours, the front rank men should be BEHIND the rear rank men because you are facing to the rear. Once you march back to your place in line, you then do an about face to bring you back to the front.

The command to RALLY! is only given when the skirmish line is under a cavalry attack. The possible commands are:

1) Rally by Fours. 2) Rally by Sections. 3) Rally by Platoon. 4) Rally on the Reserve.

Rally is done in silence and at a run. Its culmination is a protective barrier of men in a circle surrounding the officers, facing outward, at the "Guard Against Cavalry" position. This is one of the only things we ever do at a run. This combined with the fact that you have to fix bayonets before you get to the rally point make it a dangerous maneuver. It is always OK to ignore the "Historical Model" for safety's sake. If you don't feel comfortable doing it at a run, then do it at the double quick. If you don't feel comfortable doing it at the double quick, then do it at common time. And please, do not run towards your pard's at full speed with your eyes firmly fixed on the socket of your bayonet as you try to stab it. You may stab something else!

Your Obedient Servant,

Rob Williamson

FT. TOWSON REGISTRATION

Send your \$10 for this event right away. The number of reenactors is limited to 1000. You must prepay to be registered. There are no on site registrations. Mail your check to the captain.

RAY SIGMUND

Ray has served as our treasurer since that office was official created and separated from the lieutenant's responsibilities. He has done a fantastic job and served the company very well. Many of you already know that Ray's child has had some health problems since his recent birth. Please pray for the child and family and keep the Sigmund's in your thoughts. Thanks Ray !

ROBERT STRIPAY WINS CUP!

Although Jon French didn't attend Winedale to defend his 1999 title, the participants were fired up about the chance to win. The two heats produced two Houston finalists, Robert and Steve Wolford. The usual things seem to slow down one of the combatants and this year the boys were cursed with the "flying ramrod" The cup will be engraved for Robert and he takes his place as " the fastest musket in town" Way to go Robert!

STACKING COMPETITION WON BY FANTASTIC FOUR!

These four fearless stackers won the competition 2 - 0. In the post stacking interview the winning comrades all cited cooperation and years of experience in determining the win. Photographic evidence taken during the competition reveals that all members were deep in concentration. Their feet were planted and did not move. When Pvt. Jones laid his musket on the stack he knew it was a winner. "Wolfie the Stack King" believed his years of tennis competition gave his wrists the flexibility to compete and win. The Slavic duo of Marek and Kozarsky nailed the crucial first two motions to lay the foundation for the "super stack" as it was later referred to by the ESPN color commentator.

Both of the men agreed that having Russian and Czech heritage was crucial. The slavic champs were later overheard to be discussing free agency. It is rumored that a Slavic comrade of Marek, Kozarsky, Sozansky are looking for that fourth slav. Captain Strzelecki denied the rumor that he will come into the ranks just to be a part of this team. A recruiting visit to Chapel Hill may bring in that fourth man. Only time will tell. The victors were rewarded with a brass "G" to adorn their uniform. Nice job boys!

ASK JOHN

The Civil War is known to historians as the first of the "modern" wars. It was considered modern in that for the first time metal covered warships fought one-another, railroads were used extensively, and weapons such as machine guns, submarines, repeating rifles, and land mines were employed. It was also the first American war in which the rifle was the predominate infantry weapon. All our wars before this were fought primarily with smoothbore muskets. In those conflicts rifles were considered a specialty weapon used by only a small number of soldiers.

Everyone understood the advantages of using a rifle. Most rifles of the late 1700's and early 1800's had about the same capability... range of approximately 500 yards and able to hit a man-size target at that distance. Smoothbore muskets were generally loaded with a bullet 4 or 5 calibers undersized. For example, the bullets for a .69 caliber musket would actually be .65 caliber. This practice certainly prevented powder fouling from jamming a musket during loading, but it did not help accuracy or range. A smoothbore musket had a maximum range of only 200 yards and was only expected to hit a target the size of a man on a horse (14' x 14') at that distance.

The problem with rifles was time and money. Rifles were more expensive to manufacture, due to the process of cutting rifling grooves in the barrel and the greater demand for precision. Rifling grooves imparted spin to the bullet when the gun was fired. Because the bullet was spinning as it flew through the air it was aerodynamically stabilized and went straighter. But, rifles cost about 1/3 more than a smoothbore musket to make.

The time factor had to do with loading. In order to take advantage of the rifling grooves in the barrel the bullet had to tightly fit the barrel. Fit tightly enough that ramming the bullet down the barrel was impossible. The German solution to the tight bullet problem was to load with a thick iron ramrod and a mallet. The bullet was hammered into a tight fit. Obviously a time consuming process and it deformed the bullet. The American solution was to load a slightly loose bullet wrapped in a cloth patch. The cloth crushed enough to allow the bullet to be rammed down the barrel, but was still a tight enough fit to spin the bullet on the way out. However, to measure and load powder into the barrel, place cloth on the muzzle, press a bullet into the cloth, cut away excess cloth, put the cloth away, put the patchknife away, ram the charge down, replace the ramrod and prime, meant that the rifle loading process took time; typically a minute to a minute and a half. A smoothbore musket took 20 seconds.

In addition, the rifle barrel had to be relatively clean. Powder fouling could stop the rifle loading process after a few as ten shots. Then the rifle barrel would have to be cleaned.

Prior to 1850 almost all bullets were round balls. The word "ball" was synonymous with the word bullet. That is why our ammo boxes are stenciled with labels such as "Ball cartridge." There were various attempts to improve the military value of the rifle by speeding up the loading process. The system that worked best for muzzle-loaded weapons was the Minie Ball, invented by French Captain Claude Minie (pronounced min-nay) in 1850. The minie ball was pointed and had a hollow base. It was made several thousandths of an inch smaller than the barrel caliber so

that it could be loaded as fast as a smoothbore musket. Upon firing, the explosion of the powder jammed the hollow base of the minie ball into the rifling grooves. In effect, it made the bullet a tight fit. The rifling spun the bullet and rifle accuracy was achieved with the same loading time as a smoothbore. The rifle was finally a practical military weapon. The U.S. M1842 Rifled Conversion Musket, M1855 Rifle, and the M1855, M1861, M1863 and M1864 pattern Rifled-muskets used the new minie ball ammunition.

The cleaning of the rifling problem was addressed by an American improvement to the minie ball, the Williams Cleaner Round. A Williams minie ball had a thin nail head shaped extension out of the hollow base. Firing jammed the thin lead into the rifling and theoretically scraped the barrel clean of powder fowling. You may have noticed the divisions in the tops of cartridge box tins. Typically each tin top is divided into two sections holding six and four cartridges. The larger section is for six normal rounds. Four Williams Cleaner Rounds fit into the smaller section.

So, Civil War ammunition intended for muzzle loaded weapons can be divided into two types; minie ball ammunition for rifles and round ball ammunition for smoothbore muskets. Soldiers definitely preferred the rifle-muskets. This weapon gave them man-stopping accuracy out to 500 yards. Yet, the smoothbore muskets could be more deadly than rifles at short range. Smoothbore musket ammunition was issued in two varieties; ball, and buck-and-ball cartridges. Ball cartridge contained one .65 caliber round ball. Buck-and-ball contained the .65 ball topped by three .28 caliber buckshot. At ranges less than 100 yards this load gave you four chances to hit someone per shot. The 1st Texas Infantry started the war with 8 out of ten of its soldiers using smoothbore muskets. They were known for their aggressive behavior on the battlefield. When they charged into short range and opened fire with those buck-and-ball loaded muskets, the military situation for the Yankees opposed to them must have become decidedly unpleasant. This could go both ways, of course. Some of the Pennsylvania Reserves Brigade troops that received Pickett's Charge were equipped with smoothbore muskets. They are on record as having broken their buck-and-ball cartridges open before the charge and combined the buckshot into pure buckshot charges. When Pickett's men got really close to that stone wall, they were charging into a virtual cloud of buckshot.

Smoothbores were more common in the Civil War than you might think. Early in the war production and importation of rifles had yet to catch-up with demand. The majority of early war troops on both sides carried smoothbores. These obsolete weapons were gradually replaced as the war went on, but were never entirely supplanted. I have seen smoothbore round balls recovered from the 1864 Pleasant Hill Battlefield.

John Keahey

CLASSIFIED SECTION

Brady Williams has contacted me about selling his gear. At Winedale a number of his items were sold. However some things do remain: Enfield Musket: \$300 (missing front sight). Cartridge Box, cap box, bayonet and scabbard, tin cup, pants and shirt pattern: Contact Chris for prices on these items. Also, check out the new CLASSIFIED section of the website and post anything you want to sell to Rob Williamson at rhwillia@sprynet.com.

SUTLER ROW

The following contacts produce or sell goods of the finest quality. They are the recommended source of supply for members of the Texas Rifles.

John Keahey:

2810 West Pebble Beach

Missouri City, TX 77459

281-261-0665

Shell jackets, uniforms, leather gear

Gaye Frazer

5641 Yale Blvd, Ste 125

Dallas, Texas 75206

214-696-1865

fax 214-361-9720

frazer@frazerbrothers.com

www.frazerbrothers.com

Jean Cloth & Period Fabrics

Thistle Hill Weavers

Rd #2, Box 75,
Cherry Valley, NY13320
518-284-2729
Charles Childs
13979 – C Georgetown St. NE
Paris, Ohio 44669
216-862-3307

Ready Made Shell Jackets

Terri Parker
738 Currey Rd.
Nashville, TN 37217
615-361-8765

Ask for Alabama Depot Style in gray brown jean

Hats

Clear Water Hat Company
Bob & Kaye Brewer
Box 202,
Newnata, AR 72680
5017464324

Leather and Paper Goods

Dixie Leather Works
P.O. Box 8221
Paducah, KY 42002-8221
800-888-5183

Custom Made Brogans

Robert Serio
Missouri Boot and Shoe Co.
Rt. 7, Box 207
Neosho, Mo.
417-451-6100

General Merchandise

Fall Creek Sutlery
P.O. Box 539
Freedom , CA
408-728-1888

Musket Tools & Parts

S & S Firearms
74-11 Myrtle Ave.
Glendale, NY 11385-7433
718-497-1100

APPROVED SCHEDULE FROM WINEDALE

(This schedule can also be viewed from the "Schedule" link on the main page.)

Schedule:

- *January 22 – 23 Gun Show - Houston
- *January 29th, Battle & Living History, Jesse Jones Park - Humble, TX
- *February 19, Cartridge Party (Houston) - Robert Stripay's Home
- *February 27, Battalion Drill, Sam Houston Park - Downtown Houston 12:00 – 5:00
- *March 4, Cartridge Party (Houston) - Steve Wolford's Home
- *March 17 – 19, Ft. Towson: The Last Campaign
- *March 31 – April 2, Marrow Bone Springs,
- *May 6, Cartridge Party (Houston) - Phil Sozansky's Home
- *May 19- 21, Bellmead Battle
- *June 3-4 Gun Show - Houston ,Astro Hall
- *June 16 - 18, Wilson' Creek

*July Drill Date TBA

*August 19-20, Gun Show Houston , Astro Hall

*September Drill TBA

*October 21- 22, Texian Market Days

*November 4- 5, Cartridge Party (Houston) - John Keahey's Home

*November 17 – 19, Battle at Liendo - Liendo Plantation Hempstead, TX

*December 2-3, Brigade Muster - Dickens on the Strand
