

# The Tyrants' Foe

The Newsletter Of The Texas Rifles

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## **Captain's Dispatch**

Here it is, the first newsletter of the new year. We have a REALLY promising year ahead of us and I am extremely honored to have been elected as the Captain of The Texas Rifles. I hope to see us continue to grow and evolve over the next year and I will dedicate myself to making that happen.

This has been a long journey for me from my days in 1994 and 1995 as a green recruit. I often think about how lucky I am to have found this unit and how many friendships have been the product of my pursuit of this "hobby" that we all know is so much more than just that. For most of us, this has become something closer to "obsession" than "interest", but despite a wonderful family, good health and the gift of living in this great country of ours, I have to say my personal life would not be as fulfilled without this unit, this hobby and the friendships I have with you folks. In a unique and rewarding hobby in its own right, we all find ourselves serving with a premier, dedicated Organization that has a wonderful history and that makes it all the more rewarding.

Before we go into what lies before us, I wanted to mention our improved turnout at Dickens on the Strand in December. If nothing else, continuing to grow in our support of this event behooves us, as recruiting was our focus and there are lots of folks that came through our area.

Winedale was a big success and a lot of fun, despite the weather that moved in on us Saturday. We had some really great sessions, John amazed us once more with his historical presentation, this time on the War of 1812, and the slideshow, as usual, did not disappoint. We had our first Auction, which was fun and generated over 300.00 dollars to our quartermaster and recruiting funds for the year. Thank you to all who donated and participated. We did not take care of ALL the usual business as the firing competition is still outstanding, but that will be taken care of shortly at the Jessie Jones event and then I will be happy to announce all the winners. We still need to get our books up to date for the new year as well. Several of you have Company and Brigade dues outstanding, so please get those mailed to Bill as soon as you can.

As for what is next, Jessie Jones is right around the corner. The event will begin Saturday, February 15th at 8:00 a.m. We will meet in the main parking lot and then move into the park to the event site to make camp. John already sent out the directions, but once again they are:

Jessie Jones Park is located at 20634 Kenswick Drive. Phone number is 281-446-8588. Kenswick is disguised as the entrance to a sub-division. Kenswick is off FM 1960 (A.K.A. Humble-Huffman Road, A.K.A. Jackrabbit Road) about one mile west of Highway 59. Turn north on Kenswick and follow it to the end. The historical area is located in the woods to the right of the parking lot. There is gravel road access to the historical area for drop-off. As John said in his e-mail, there is a main parking lot right at the entrance to the site and another one down the road to the left. Once everyone arrives, we will collect in the main parking lot and make the short walk through the woods to the site.

Our plan is to make our camp of impression, with cooking, drilling and regular army life impression, then do the Battle/Skirmish sometime after lunch. We will be spending the night, so once the park closes and the spectators leave, we will make use of the hay, firewood and period structures (depending on the weather), take care of our business and settle in for a lot of fun that night.

Sunday morning we will, of course, take care of breakfast and drill and then take care of the firing competition before breaking camp and heading home, sometime before lunch.

Since our time there is a bit shorter than most events (Early Saturday morning to late Sunday morning), I urge all of you to do your best to be there for the duration, as we have many things to take care of in getting ready for the year. If you live outside the Houston area, get to sleep early on Friday night and then get up early on Saturday morning and be there as quick as you can.

Beaumont Ranch will follow at the end of March and is shaping up to be outstanding. This event is garnering lots of support, as a void has existed for a large reenactment in North Texas for a few years now. The event will take place in Grandview, Texas, 30 minutes South of DFW. The use of a period 19th Century town will give us a chance to do something new, with lots of Civilian participation planned as well as having the town as a focal point for the military objectives.

Port Gibson will be next, occurring May 2nd - 4th and is maybe the most anticipated event of the year, in close competition with the 140 anniversary of Gettysburg, over the July 4th weekend.

Port Gibson will be a campaign/immersion event and we will go as Federals. The scenario will be unforgettable (that is all I am allowed to say) and the experience will be unique as these campaign events always are. I can't urge you enough to make the necessary arrangements to get to this event. The authenticity standards are higher than most events, but we will work together to make sure that any man who wants to go, regardless of his current Federal impression, will get the right gear for this event. We are still under our needed level of support for this event. I hate to think of anyone missing this, let alone think about HALF of you missing this. If you have any desire to go and have not contacted me, please do so ASAP. Everyone needs to go to the following

website and follow the registration instructions. Please indicate that you are serving with Captain Rob Williamson when you register. The address is:

[www.westernindependentgrays.org/port\\_gibson/port\\_gibson.htm](http://www.westernindependentgrays.org/port_gibson/port_gibson.htm)

The donation is due when you arrive, so all you need to send in now is the 12.00 ration fee.

More will follow on the rest of the events we have this year in later newsletters, but the schedule can be viewed by clicking [HERE](#)

Well, that is all for now. Please contact me with any questions you have and enjoy the rest of the newsletter.

**Trust and Go Forward!**

**Rob Williamson**  
**Captain, Texas Rifles**

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## **Lieutenant's Inkwell**

In the first place, this very old, but newly minted Lieutenant, would like to thank the Texas Rifles membership for the honor of being elected as a commissioned officer. As a NCO who routinely cursed all officers for years (or is it that for years I cursed at all officers) it will take some mental adjustment. At the very least I will have to learn how to spell Lieutenant.

I think everyone enjoyed Winedale who attended. If you couldn't make it, you were missed. If you did make it and somehow didn't experience the learning, laughter and comradeship; you must have been at a different Winedale then I was.

### **Candle Snuffing**

Being an old dog, I occasionally have the pleasure of trotting out an old trick as something new for the amazement and edification of the younger members. There is nothing new about snuffing a candle with a musket cap as a method of target practice. It is listed as a training technique in the Civil War era publications. The US Army liked it as a technique because it was cheaper than firing a fully loaded musket: a factor to consider in the chronically under-funded pre war army, or when training two million soldiers in the Civil War army. The soldiers liked it because there was less of a cleaning job afterwards. It is a fun thing to do. The 1st Texas was actually challenged to a candle snuffing (sounds vaguely illegal, doesn't it?) contest at Fort Towson by some Company M renegades, but nobody had a dry candle, matches, or a place out of the rain and wind at that event. To try this, set-up a candle in a place protected from the wind. Due to modern smoke alarms, this is best done outdoors. Back far enough away so that the muzzle of

your musket is three or four feet away from the candle in the firing position. Aim for the base of the flame. The puff of wind forced down the barrel from the exploding cap will snuff a candle flame at this distance, BUT you will have to seriously aim your weapon. If you are not aiming exactly at the base of the flame when the cap discharges, the flame will not be snuffed. It will simply waver. This is a great way to learn proper aiming, breath control and trigger squeezing. This is something you can try at home kids without having to be a professional. Since we have limited opportunities to fire live rounds, this may be an excellent way to test who can actually hit a target with their weapon. As the teachers among us often say as a warning, “pay attention class; you may see this again.”

**John Keahey**  
**Lieutenant, Texas Rifles**

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## **BECAUSE THE SERGEANT SAYS SO!**

### **First Person Impressions**

“First Person” is the act of portraying a person from the past. We all do that to an extent every time we don our uniforms and take to the field, but like authenticity, there are levels that we can take to make our impressions better. To do first person right takes a lot of knowledge. You have to forget most modern mannerisms and learn mannerisms from the past. Certain words and phrases that we use today would not have been used in the 1860’s. You should be able to tell a story and make it seem flawless. Without studying the culture, mannerisms and occupations of the past, your first person impression will look more like a Disney movie than a documentary. So let’s take baby steps.

Start with camp life. The easiest thing to do when we are not drilling is to just sit around talking. It is also the dullest. We should try to occupy our time with activity. An active camp is an interesting camp to both spectators and our selves. A few activities to keep busy with include:

**Gambling:** This was a common vice among young men away from home for the first time. Learn to play a period card game and teach your pards. Matches or twigs can substitute for money. Get a good game going and you may soon find others wanting to join in.

**Read:** Whether it is your pocket testament or a period newspaper, reading aloud to others makes for an excellent activity. This will also give you subjects for period conversations. You may also want to read mail. Writing letters to your loved ones back home makes for an interesting time. Ask your friends if they have a message that they would like to ad.

**Sew:** Buy a housewife and learn to use it. A soldier on campaign was constantly fixing his uniform. Whether it is a small rip or a lost button it keeps you busy and ads to the impression of the company.

A few other things to do are to play marbles or mumblety peg, clean your weapon, carve something with your pocket knife, cook or learn to play an instrument. Small instruments such as a jews harp, harmonica, a small fife or even the spoons are easy to carry and quite appropriate to a Civil War camp.

Keeping an active camp contributes to the over all impression of the company. It interests the spectators as well as other re-enactors, but is only a part of what we can do. We also need to keep in mind that we are representing a more formal time than our own. Get into the habit of calling our officers by their rank and not their first name. Letting a “Rob” or “John” slip out every once in while is not a problem. Especially considering that the company that we are representing probably signed up from the same town or county, but they are our officers now and the military is our home.

Corporals are not that far removed from the privates, so calling them by rank is not as important to the men. Try to keep your conversations to period topics. This takes a little more work but really helps with the over all feel at an event. Reading diaries or memoirs from the pre-war years will help with this. Once again, this will help with the over all impression of the company. If you took part in the Texian Market Days this past year, you know what an impact this makes. Spectators were drawn into our camp and got a glimpse of what a soldiers life might have been like. Men were gambling, smoking pipes, boiling coffee and sewing. They also got a lecturing to by our commanding officer. For a while, these spectators saw soldiers and not re-enactors. This should be our goal. A fine uniform goes so far, and then attitude takes over. We used to call it a decorum lamp. When it was lit, everyone stayed in character as much as he could. If you have to break character, do it discreetly. But try to fire up that attitude, do a little role playing and we may find our good times getting even better.

Let me close by directing you to some articles that can tell you more about doing a first person impression than I can hope to:

[www.authentic-campaigner.com](http://www.authentic-campaigner.com)

This is a site that we should all check out periodically. Click onto the “articles” page and you will find articles from everything from period cooking to first person impressions. The discussion boards are just as interesting and have lots of information passing through. Check it out. Why?

**BECAUSE THE SERGEANT SAYS SO!**

**FJMarek**  
**1st Sgt. of Texas Rifles**

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## **Regional Reports**

## **Houston Regional Report**

Houston was well represented at the Rifles' annual meeting in January. Following Sergeant competition which was clearly won by the Houston representative, Sgt Marek and his band of candle snuffers, John Keahey provided the gang with a demonstration of the American soldier of 1812. As usual, John kept the attention of the entire crowd; Brian Porter was not there.

Competition held on Sunday again demonstrated the superiority of the Houston boys where Private Strzelecki faced all challengers to be awarded the best drilled soldier. Eddie Von Capps and Daniel Lofton were close seconds. Speaking of which, Daniel Lofton was elected to the Rifles as a full member and will be awarded his star at the next event. Congratulations Daniel. Back to Eddie....he carried a rifle much of the event and looks like he is shaping up to be a strong contender as a rifle totting soldier in coming months. I forgot to give special mention in both the stacking and drilling competition to Rodney.....close but no cigar. Maybe next year!

Not only does Houston kick ass on the competitions, but we also control the money. Bill Bates as treasure requests all members who have not paid their dues to do so ASAP. We need to by powder for upcoming cartridge rolling parties. It was decided that attendees at these parties will need to chip in dollars for the powder and caps, while those that do not contribute will need to pay \$4 per cartridge pack at events.

On a community note, Chris S. and I gave a civil war presentation to the Boy Scouts of Kingwood in January after Winedale. Fifty junior high boys.....what a treat. Several kids appeared to have some future interest in the Rifles.

### **Upcoming Events:**

We need to roll cartridges. It appears that February is a rough month to have one since I am having difficulty getting a good response to attend. Please make plans to attend a northern or southern party in March in order to stay ahead of our needs. The Captain has ordered powder which should be available in the next few weeks.

Make plans to attend Jesse Jones Park on February 15 with a stay-over until Sunday morning. The firing competition will be held at the event with Houston favored to kick some out of town ass again as well as a few Federals.

As you know, Gods and Generals comes out to most major theaters on February 21. Please check your local theaters and see if you can set up a table inside to answer questions, promote the movie and look for recruits. I am going to check with the Woodlands theater.

See you in the field,

**THE WOLF**

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## **Recruiting Report October, 2002**

### Recruiting Report

Well folks, we have been hard at work as usual. A few weeks ago several of us worked at the Houston Gun Show. We came away with three names. These folks have been contacted by me about coming out for an event. I have also gotten an email or two from an old Texas Rifle, Harold Johnson. He is considering falling back into the Rifles, and expects to join us at one of our events in the near future! Welcome back Harold!

The recent death of my brother – in – law has prevented me from spending some of the time needed to recruit. I appreciate the memberships understanding during this hectic and stressful time. My sister is back at work and I am back here in Humble. I plan to get back in the swing of things. The number one priority will be to be very visible from Feb. 11th on. That is the national release date of Gods and Generals. I am working on the movie theater displays, but haven't spent the time needed. I apologize. Until I see you all in the field, never yield to the tyrant called time!

**Chris Strzelecki**

### **Recruiting Coordinator**

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## **The Care of Leather**

All of us are into leather, at least as far as living history is concerned. Yet, how many of us take care of our shoes, leather belts, scabbards, cartridge and cap boxes? A quick glance around the ranks shows that, while most of us know how to maintain a musket, very few members know how or are willing to put time in on their leather equipment. We all should. First, because your shoes and accoutrements are an expensive investment. If you do not maintain them, they will deteriorate and will have to be replaced. Second, good soldiers are distinguished by well-maintained equipment. Third, the campaign style of living history is harder on you and your leather gear. Finally, why ruin something neat!

Most leather is dead cow skin, which has been chemically treated so that it will not rot. This treatment process is called tanning. Leather has two sides, the rough side and the smooth side. The rough side used to be attached to the deceased animal. The rough side was used on the exterior of working class boots and shoes because it is more porous, oils and polishes can penetrate it easily. The smooth side was the outside of the cow, now minus the hair, which is usually removed during the tanning process. The smooth side was used for the exterior of cartridge boxes, belts, etc. because it is less porous and will shed water better. Unlike living skin, leather cannot moisturize, or heal itself; if it is not moisturized it will become brittle. Eventually it will break at flex points. All leather



equipment arrives from its maker dry. The dryness only becomes worse as the leather is exposed to sun, heat, sweat, and rain. The stuff imported from India and Pakistan is made of particularly poor leather and their leather dye tends to be water soluble.

There are a number of leather care products on the market. They can be purchased at hardware and food stores. Each has its uses. For shoes you can't beat paste shoe polish rubbed in thoroughly with a brush and buffed. Once or twice a year should do it. And remember, the worse thing you can do to your shoes is to place them near a campfire to dry or warm them.

For accoutrements I recommend a combination of saddle soap and neatsfoot oil (real neatsfoot oil, not the imitation product). They compliment each other nicely; saddle soap cleans and moisturizes the smooth surfaces while neatsfoot oil thoroughly penetrates the rough side. Using an one inch wide paintbrush, brush the neatsfoot oil onto all the rough leather surfaces. Don't soak the leather in it, but make sure the neatsfoot oil penetrates the leather thoroughly. Extremely dry or thick leather will need more oil. Saddle soap is best applied with a piece of sponge. Don't use the kitchen sponge because saddle soap is toxic. Rub the saddle soap with a sponge dampened with water, creating a lather. Rub the lather into the smooth side of the leather. After all the smooth surfaces have been done, wipe off the excess saddle soap with a damp cloth. You will already see how much more soft and flexible the leather is. It is stronger now as well.

Do this once or twice a year and your leather gear will last longer than you. Someone asked me at an event if I had a new cartridge box. The box he thought was new is actually 17 years old! Although it has seen long service, that cartridge box is in better than new condition. Will our gear last 130 years like original Civil War equipment? No. Unlike 19th century organic tanning, the chemicals used in the modern process eventually break down and destroy leather.

**John Keahey**  
**Lieutenant, Texas Rifles**

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## **State of the Website**

Hey folks, wanted to give you some updates on the website, which will heavily updated over the next week or so.

Hopefully, most of you have seen some of the new button additions on the site. We now have our bylaws online (which will updated to the last change made in 1999), we have a Book Review section (please send me reviews of any relevant Civil War books you have read), a membership roster (will be updated this week) and an article index full of great stuff from the past.

Also, if you have any items for sale, send me the info and I can put it in our "Classified" section. I need to update our "Links to other Civil War Sites" as well. I will remove outdated links, and post new ones. If you have any you think would be useful, send them on.

Don Tucker has volunteered to help manage the site moving forward, so I will slowly be transitioning the day-to-day management over to him. Thank you Don! I appreciate the continued support of all of our members and recruits in keeping the site fresh, informative, and recruiting friendly.

Rob Williamson  
Captain, Texas Rifles

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## **What to Tote?**

The campaign season is rapidly approaching and with it comes the usual question of what to carry, or not carry, on your person? As with most of life, this is a "trade-off" situation with few right, or wrong, answers. You have to balance what you can physically carry on the march versus what you need versus what would be nice to have under certain circumstances. Here is my suggested load.

### **Absolute Minimum**

- Wool Blanket (get a good thick wool blanket large enough to fold over you)
- Poncho/Gum/Painted Blanket
- Shelter Half with Guy Rope
- Medicine (including prescriptions, allergy and blister pads, insect repellent, etc.)
- Spare pair of Socks
- Food
- Plate, Cup, Knife, Spoon, Fork
- Cooking Gear (Boiler or Frying Pan)
- Weapon Maintenance Tools and Oil
- Rag (all purpose rag for wiping cooking/eating gear and handling hot pots/pans, an old havelock or sock works well)
- Matches (in something that will keep them dry)

### **Good to Bring**

- Shelter Tent Pegs
- Pocket/Food Knife
- Sewing Kit
- Rain Cover for Forage Caps and Kepis
- Sleeping/Smoking Cap
- Small Towel

- Soap
- Thick String (for rigging shelter)
- Candle

### **Extras**

- Great Coat (for intense, persistent cold weather events, these things are heavy so don't bring it unless you anticipate really needing it)
- Spare Shirt
- Vest (not an item of issue, but nice in cold weather and a must for any proper Victorian man with his coat/jacket unbuttoned)
- Writing materials for letters or diaries
- Second Gum/Painted Blanket (handy for very wet or very cold camping conditions)

Well, that is my list. Everyone has a different set of wants and needs, but the idea is to keep weight and bulk to a minimum.

**John Keahey**  
**Lieutenant, Texas Rifles**

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### **Newsletter Deadlines**

The April 2003 newsletter deadline is Wednesday, April 2nd.

Thanks,

Rob

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### **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](mailto:frazer@frazerbrothers.com)

[www.frazerbrothers.com](http://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

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