

The Tyrants' Foe

The Newsletter Of The Texas Rifles

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Captain's Dispatch

Well, the summer was (and still is) hot, but the fall campaign is upon us. It feels like it has been forever since we were in the field, doesn't it? Well, we have always been a well drilled company, but there is no doubt some rust issues with this machine as it has not been oiled in a while. Hopefully, this will all be taken care of at the battalion muster in 3 weeks at Fort Parker in Groesbeck, TX. I hope everyone makes every effort to be there. This is our warm up event for Franklin and we have to take advantage of it. If any civilians are interested in attending, let me know and I am sure something can be arranged. This should be a great chance to socialize, catch up with one another, test our Franklin kits and polish our company and battalion drill.

As I said a few weeks ago, we do not want to show up at Franklin with half a company who have not drilled since April. It will really detract from the event. We have always focused on historical accuracy for both our military and civilian members and we have made great strides in the last few years on the aesthetic side of things with our research into uniforms and equipment. We have raised the bar, so to speak, within our own unit and within the reenacting community. It is difficult, though, to make constant strides through dedicated focus on something like uniform authenticity, without slipping a little bit in other areas. I think we have slipped just a little bit on our company drill and overall consistency. We are still very well drilled, but we need to focus on it a little more going into the fall events.

One thing we used to do more of is get together for drills locally. I am not sure how many there have been, if any, in Houston, but I bet putting 2 or 3 a year on the schedule would help keep everyone polished, and provide a good opportunity for new recruits to learn. We have not done any in Austin, and it would be a good idea, even if just getting together in someone's backyard, to go through polishing our arms positions and working on company evolutions (mainly spacing, which is at the core of most problems).

Another challenge that we are overcoming is the fairly rapid advancement of our NCO corps. We have had some accelerated growth in the NCO pool in the last 2 or 3 years due to movement in the elected spots coupled with some of our experienced Sgt's and Corporals moving out of leadership positions or out of the hobby all together. This is about to happen again in 5 months with a new Captain, Lt. and 1st. Sgt being elected for the company. Our NCO's need to continue to work extra hard to gain the knowledge and

experience required to fill those spots. We are doing a good job of it, don't get me wrong, but we need to keep at it.

We have a great opportunity to really excel at accuracy in drill and manual of arms with the men we have ready to fill our elected positions and our NCO pools. I would wager that Lt. Keahey alone has probably forgotten more about this subject than most of us have learned.

As I type this, I am thinking about the fact the this may be the second to last time that I contribute to a Texas Rifles newsletter with a dedicated column for a long time. For the last 7 or 8 years I have contributed either a Houston region coordinators report, a "Drill Bits" or "Because the Sgt Said So!" column, a "Lt.'s Inkwell" column or a "Commander's Dispatch" or "Captain's Column". It makes me a little bit sad to think about that, but the nice thing about this is that I have the time and the luxury to be nostalgic and a little bit sad, since I don't have to worry for a second about the future of the Texas Rifles or where we are headed. If you have never been exposed to the political side of this hobby, trust me when I say that it is a rare occurrence in the reenacting world and one we should be very grateful for. We have such a storied history and at the same time such a great future in front of us. It makes this all the more worthwhile and all the more enjoyable.

I look forward to a safe, challenging, exciting and rewarding fall. Let's go make it happen!

To Tyrants Never Yield!

Rob Williamson
Captain, Texas Rifles

Lieutenant's Inkwell

Franklin and the Four Year Cycle: The Civil War lasted four years and the major commemorative national events designed to recreate the Civil War experience are set on a four year cycle. The year 2004 corresponds with the year 1864 in the cycle. Next year, 2005, will be 1865 and 2006 will begin the cycle again with the year 1861.

As you may recall from your history studies, things were not going well for the Southern Confederacy in late 1864 and 1865. Hood's Tennessee Campaign, which we are about to reenact in October, was a southern disaster resulting in the destruction of the Army of Tennessee. Atlanta had fallen to Union forces earlier in the year and no southerner I ever talked to wants to recreate any part of Sherman's March to the Sea. There were some rear guard type battles fought by Confederate forces in 1865 such as Saylor's Creek in Virginia and Bentonville in North Carolina, but the year is chiefly noted for the surrender of CS forces and the end of the war.

The point of this mini history lesson is that the hobby is heading into a sort of dead time in terms of large scale national events. Franklin promises to be the last one for a while, until the cycle begins again with the early war battles such as Manassas and Wilson's Creek in 2006 (1861). This means that our members should make an extra effort to attend the Franklin Event in October. There is still plenty of time to register and sign-up for rations. The organizers have stipulated that there will be no onsite registration, so your attendance needs to be planned in advance. This will be the last large scale national reenactment for two years. It is time for our members who feel that they can not attend to dig a little deeper. Workers need to find those couple of vacation days and students need to take on the make-up work from teachers in advance. Yes, there will certainly be events next year and the Texas Rifles will attend them. There will always be annual events such as TMD, Pleasant Hill and Liendo. There will be semi-annual events such as Port Gibson, Beaumont Ranch and Mansfield. But Franklin will be our last opportunity for two years to participate in a well-planned national commemorative event of large scale. The Texas Rifles will be working at Franklin within full scale military organizations; a company within a battalion within a Brigade within a division. Make the extra effort... be there!

John Keahey
Lieutenant, Texas Rifles

BECAUSE THE SERGEANT SAYS SO!

It has been a long uneventful summer for the Rifles. If you were not at the Outpost you might not have been in the field since Mansfield. That is quite a long furlough. Now there are War clouds on the horizon of our peaceful summer sky. A storm is coming and it is called FRANKLIN! For the first time in over five years the Texas Rifles will be portraying Western Confederates and it is about time! Specifically, we will be Company C & H of the 15th Tx Cavalry, dismounted of Granbury's Brigade.

Like Mansfield, this is a different impression than what the TR guidelines call for. Unlike Mansfield, it is an impression that we might be able to do a little easier. Most of our equipment will work just fine. When in doubt, the plainer the better. You can't go wrong with square buckles and unmarked accoutrements. An AoT jacket is a must. Some of us have purchased new Columbus depot jackets, but it is not necessary to do this. The old TR jacket is also an appropriate jacket to wear. There are still quite a few of these within the company. These can be worn or loaned out to the needy. If you need a jacket for this event, don't hesitate to ask!

These old TR jackets are commonly known as a Mystery Jacket because the provenance is unknown. It might be from Mobile Alabama, but the jacket that is known as the "Alabama" jacket has a dark blue collar and fewer buttons than the "Mystery."

Back to the event. There is a lot to cover before we get to Tennessee. Here is a short list:

Oil your shoes. There shouldn't be any long marches but we will be on our feet quite a bit.

Make sure that your canteen is clean on the inside. Wooden canteens should be stored with water in them. Otherwise, you will find leaks until the wood swells back up.

Arrive with a CLEAN and servicable weapon. (the Sgt. says so!)

Pack light.

NO PLASTIC!!!

Check with the new fellows and help them prepare.

New fellers, don't be embarrassed to ask questions. All TR members are willing to help.

Get your messes together. decide who will carry what and plan on bringing your own rations to last until Saturday morning.

ATTITUDE. With the right mindset we can beat most anything, bad weather, army rations, crazy officers, farbs, long marches, whiskey shortages and Tennesseans!

Lastly, watch the message board. As the event gets closer there will be many updates about rations, travel, impressions, etc.

This promises to be a good event and your presence will make it especially so. Let's get ready to take the field and show what Texans can do!

FJMarek
1st Sgt, Texas Rifles

Quartermaster Report

The TR QM has been active and making progress due to the support of the Texas Rifles membership. The current balance in the TR QM fund is \$181.68. This does not count the generous donation to the TR QM by Kip Othold of \$50.00, which has yet to be received back from HQ. So our total balance is actually \$231.68.

There are no outstanding expenditures; all the new items paid for have been received. Added to the inventory so far this year have been a fourth Federal haversack, a second Federal Knapsack, three early war/Trans-Miss Overshirts, and a Federal Canteen recovered in grey wool jeans and stenciled with "G" and a company number reserved to the loaner gear of the TR QM. One of the goals of the TR QM after the Port Gibson

March was to be able to field four fully equipped Federals as well as Confederates. We are well on our way to achieving that goal.

Some items have been lost or damaged; we need to replace a complete set of eating/cooking gear and a capbox. The Pakistani made leather accoutrements are cheap, and even with excellent care they break apart after a few events. The Paki cartridge boxes are holding-up, but the capboxes are decaying rapidly and will have to be replaced with better items.

We have yet to acquire a single musket for the TR QM and continue to depend upon the generous loan of weapons by members such as Rob and Lee. Thank-you gentlemen.

John Keahey
Quartermaster, Texas Rifles

The Home Front

The TR civilians are gearing up for a busy fall season. Currently, a sewing Saturday in September is being organized so that all the ladies will have well-fitted corsets. More details coming very soon... The pattern library is being expanded and new books are available. New additions to the library include: Skirting the Issue and Dressmakers Guide by Elizabeth Stewart Clark. We have some great opportunities at TMD and Liendo for civilian-military and civilian-spectator interaction. I'd would really like to see our sewing Saturday turn into a semi-regular event (every 2-3 months) giving us the opportunity to work on projects and serve as a forum for topics pertinent to civilians. It will good to see everyone again after the long, hot summer.

Nancy Tucker

Civilian Coordinator, Texas Rifles

Recruiting Report

Well our long summer drought is coming to a close. This is the perfect time to contact friends and other interested folks about reenacting with the Texas Rifles. So keep your eyes open for potential recruits.

Over the past few months, I have been preoccupied with several family matters. I have not given the time necessary to do a good job as recruiting coordinator. I regret my failure in this important job. I have contacted Captain Williamson about this matter, and have informed him that I no longer wish to hurt the company because of my situation. This means there is a great opportunity for one of our members to step up and help out the company by assuming this duty. So if you are interested, please contact Rob.

Committee Reports

Authenticity Committee

The Authenticity Committee consists of Mike Covington, Nancy Tucker, Tommy Attaway, Stephen Johns and Phil Sozansky. After gaining approval of the Federal Infantry Guidelines last year, the next step of the Authenticity Committee is to lay before the membership of the Texas Rifles for their approval Authenticity Guidelines for the Western Theater Confederate Infantry. These Western Theater or Army of the Tennessee (AoT) guidelines have been finalized within the committee, but have not been formally proposed to the membership yet.

The next project of the Authenticity Committee will be to compose and present to the membership Trans-Mississippi Guidelines.

The Texas Rifles membership should remember that the official impression of the Texas Rifles, as contained within our Uniform and Equipment Regulations, remains the Eastern Theater Confederate, or Army of Northern Virginia (ANV) impression. This is the only set of uniform and equipment that we require of our military members. There has been no proposal to change that status. The Authenticity Committee, at this time, is not proposing a uniform change until our needs as an independent unit become clearer. We are and have been, however, busy composing and seeking approval of Federal, Western Theater and Trans-Mississippi uniform and equipment recommendations so our members will have reference information if they chose to assemble one or more of these non-required kits.

Bylaws Committee

The Bylaws Committee was formed at Winedale 2004 by the Captain Williamson and charged with reviewing various questions that impact the Bylaws of the Texas Rifles. The committee consists of John Keahey, Chris Strzelecki and Phil Ulbrich.

It has been difficult to assemble this committee due to the distance between the members' residences and schedule conflicts. The foundation of the committee's work is the Texas Rifles Bylaws, but the only version of the Bylaws available was the one posted on the Texas Rifles website. This version was not thought to be the most up to date, but a long search resulted in finding no more modern versions.

John Keahey has proposed, by email, revisions to the current Bylaws. These proposed revisions are currently being considered by the other members of the committee. Our intended timetable is to agree upon proposed Bylaws revisions within the committee.

These revisions would then be read to the membership at our next meeting, probably the Franklin Event, and posted on the website. This would put the proposed revisions before the membership well before the minimum thirty days notice called for in the Bylaws for proposed Bylaws amendments. The proposed amendments would then be voted on at the Winedale annual meeting

Book Reviews

Battle of Franklin book reviews by Grant Welty

Title: **Embrace An Angry Wind: The Confederacy's Last Hurrah: Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville**

Author : Wiley Sword publisher : Harper Collins published: 1992 pages: 443

Wiley Sword is a well known author to readers of Western theater literature. Some of his other books dealing with the west are "Shiloh: Bloody April", which is about the Shiloh battle, obviously, and "Mountains Touched with Fire: Chattanooga Besieged 1863". Both of these are outstanding. "Embrace an Angry Wind" adds to his reputation as a Western theater author. The author describes Hood's attempts to draw Sherman from his March to the Sea back west into Tennessee. Unfortunately, Sherman continued his march and sent General George Thomas in pursuit of Hood. When Hood missed his chance to defeat the Union army at Spring Hill he chose to send his army forward the next day in multiple frontal assaults against a Union army behind breastworks (Pickett's Charge in reverse). The results were predictable, with five key Confederate generals and thousands of Hood's best troops being slaughtered for no gain. Despite the victory, the Union troops retreated to Nashville, where Hood followed and attempted a siege. This ended with the disastrous Battle of Nashville on December 15 & 16, which effectively ended Confederate hopes in the west. Sword mixes eyewitness accounts, official records, diaries, journals, and newspapers into a fascinating narrative which moves cleanly from the private in ranks to the highest ranking generals. Of Particular interest is the telling of the story of Patrick Cleburne. All in all an excellent book which reads as easily as a novel, illustrated with several maps, as well as a section of photographs. The book is amply footnoted and contains an excellent bibliography. If you want a complete and detailed overview of the Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville battles than this is the book for you. I highly recommend it.

Title: **Shrouds of Glory From Atlanta to Nashville The Last Great Campaign of the Civil War**

Author : Winston Groom, author of Forrest Gump publisher : The Atlantic Monthly Press

published: 1995 pages: 298

Winston Groom is perhaps better known to everyone as the author of several novels, of which "Forrest Gump" is easily the most popular. He delves into the War of Northern Aggression with his book "Shrouds of Glory". This is Groom's account of General John Bell Hood's actions in the Western theater of operations during the final months of the Civil War. As commander of the Army of Tennessee, Hood is at the center of the story, and Groom paints a vivid picture of Hood's character, faults, and emotions which help explain why he made some of the command choices he made. As well, Groom contrasts the leadership and character of George Thomas and John Schofield. Groom writes an excellent story, demonstrating his skills as a novelist (no surprise in light of his Forrest Gump book), as well as excellent research. It is truly an interesting read, weaving eyewitness accounts, journals, military communications, and newspaper headlines into an engrossing narrative.

Of particular interest is the story of the Battle of Franklin. 140 years later Hood's poor generalship is hard to accept. His troops deserved better leadership than they received, as the book demonstrates. The loss of competent leaders and so many brave troops had to have contributed to the later and crushing defeat at Nashville. I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to understand what happened to the Army of Tennessee during the closing phases of the war.

I think once you start reading this you will find it hard to put down.

Title: Five Tragic Hours The Battle of Franklin

Authors: James Lee McDonough & Thomas L. Connelly publisher: The University of Tennessee Press

published: 1983 pages: 185

This book does an excellent job of exploring the Battle of Franklin. It is a well told story by two acclaimed Western theater author legends. This is a more high level overview of the Battle of Franklin than Sword's book. It tells the story primarily by employing eyewitness accounts. The book also contains quite a few

pictures, and has a well written narrative. The essential discussion is the generalship of John Bell Hood. Why would he order a frontal assault of a distance of almost two miles against a well defended Union force? And then repeat the assaults, from varying distances, 17 more times? Compare the charges, Pickett's vs. Hoods.

The Battle of Franklin certainly stands as a bloody testimony to the foibles of poor generalship, yet it is virtually forgotten by most students of the war. Why Pickett's Charge has become the more famous charge is only understood from a perspective of the Eastern theater bias and self-promotion. Certainly the bravery and sacrifice of the men in Hood's command deserve to be more highly regarded and remembered than they are today. For example, the spot where General Cleburne fell is today commemorated by a Pizza Hut, the battleground across which Hood's troops charged is now a subdivision. Virtually nothing is left to memorialize on of the most tragic battles in history other than the Carter House and the Confederate cemetery. This book is a good way to remember their sacrifices.

Title: Eyewitnesses at the Battle of Franklin

Authors: David R. Logsdon publisher: Kettle Mills Press published: 1991 pages: 122

This volume is part of Logsdon's other Western theater publications. He has published "eyewitness account" stories of Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Stones River, and this softcover magazine sized book which deals exclusively with snippets of eyewitness testimony weaved together to provide a proper narrative of the Battle of Franklin. These accounts are primarily from the soldiers in the ranks, and are small excerpts from otherwise larger accounts published elsewhere. If you enjoy first person accounts then this is a good choice. If you prefer the nuts and bolts of strategy and tactics than this is not a book for you.

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Newsletter Deadline

Submission deadline for the Fall newsletter is October 25th. Thanks, Don.

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