



The Tyrants' Foe



Volume XXXV

Newsletter of the Texas Rifles
Celebrating 30 Years of Excellence

July 2017



When every person is accepted as a member of the Texas Rifles they have an obligation. Besides the rules and regulations of the bylaws of our group, we all have an obligation to each other. We support each other by attending events, rolling cartridges, helping with impressions etc. We all need to accept the fact that despite this being a hobby, we need to support the organization to make it an organization and not a disjointed group of individuals. Otherwise we are just a bunch of individuals paying dues and for what? This being said, these individuals within the group make the major decisions on how the group will be run and what it shall do, now and in the future. Social media platforms have now made this easier in many cases to accomplish these goals.

Some individuals have in the past thrown their hats into the ring to accept further positions of responsibility. Whether they have succeeded or failed is up to debate, but these individuals did see something, which they felt, they could contribute to the greater good of our group and I applaud them one and all for their contributions and efforts. For over 30 years the Texas Rifles have been led by some of the finest men in the hobby, and I am confident this trend will continue, for years to come.

As your commander I have two events left before it's the end of my watch, not counting the annual meeting. We have the Civilian event at George Ranch and Liendo Plantation. Both were voted upon as you as members as max effort events. As your Commander I would like to see and expect to see as many of you to attend as possible to support the organization.

Lets take a second to discuss them both a bit more. First George Ranch. It will be the last weekend in September. After consulting with our Civilian Coordinator, we agreed upon the

year 1860 for the time line, for this event. We can give speeches for and against leaving the Union. I would like to have a couple of individuals share some knowledge on this subject to the attending public. The George Ranch itself would like us to have some living history demos as well. There are numerous things we could do as civilian men. For example, period card or board games, marbles, cooking, sewing, children games, teach children to write with nib pens to name a few. Maybe Unkle Jimmy could bring his bowling alley, and Boz could start up the Barber Shop once more? Of course yours truly will be selling his fine mule flesh. The possibilities for you are almost endless. There is very limited firewood, so we may have to bring our own. Food and lodging can be discussed as we get closer to the actual event.

If you do not have civilian clothing do not let this discourage you from attending. We have quite a few loaner clothes available. 1860 Texas had quite a wide-open variety of clothing. I also posted on the Battalion message board for anyone else who would care to attend this event, with us. I would also like to have people available to recruit at this event, both military and civilian.

Next we have Liendo Plantation. I like quite a few of you have attended this event for years. I know we say "It Is Just Liendo". But with the shrinking of the hobby, we find ourselves with fewer and fewer events to attend regardless of the quality and/or quantity of the events, not to mention the recent political correctness, trying to derail our hobby. We shall be Federals of the 13th Volunteer Maine Militia once more. Lets get those uniforms out and check them over now. Of course I would love to have a stand-alone company for this event. We have all had some really great memories of Liendo and would love to make some more with you. I know the weather can be fickle, but we have only been rained out once. Lets all plan on attending both of these events.

Finally a few personal notes, I may be out of pocket and touch for the next month or so. My new bride and I are FINALLY moving to Galveston. However you can rest assured we will be at our events

I Remain Your Humble and Obedient Servant - Captain Dusty Lind





First Sergeant Says So

We are mid way through the summer lull in our schedule. Unfortunately, we were unable to muster for the Seven Days event in Virginia. This is a missed opportunity that is much to be regretted. It is uncertain as to how long it will be until we have the opportunity to go to a well organized major event were the Texas Brigade fought and earned its reputation.

The declining number of living history participants is not unique to the time period of 1961 - 1865. This is true of the entire scope of the hobby. Many possible causes have been tendered, from the expense of the hobby, the dearth of new experiences to keep the interest of seasoned participants, lack of interesting events, too much effort for a generation that prefers virtual reality, and others. Perhaps there is a growing lack of interest in general by our society. History has to some extent become a curiosity, an exercise in the amusement of the mind of the quaint practices of the past, and not a bridge to our past, which explains who we as a people are today.

Indeed, why do we participate in this hobby? Because virtual reality is not reality. Because to read about how something was done in the past is not doing it yourself and gaining the experience. Living history appeals to all of the senses. The feel of natural fabric. The taste of a meal cooked over a fire, the smell of that wood as it burns. Trying to read or work by candlelight. The sound of cannon are experiences that connect us to other times and places.

To create some of these experiences require a number of participants, or the use of artifacts, that we as individuals are unlikely to possess. Attending events where these items are available to us is likely what is the draw that sparks our interest in attending. Some experiences we have the ability to explore on our own or with a small group of friends. That is the appeal of groups like ours – the skills and knowledge of our members.

As we look toward the fall and into next year, let's look at two things – make our own events, and instead of the unusual, portray the ordinary. Instead of the repast we normally prepare, what was a more typical meal? How much work is involved in chopping enough wood for a day? How many buckets of water get hauled in a day?

We have our civilian event approaching. Gonzales, Texian Market Days, and our usual fall event at Liendo are on the schedule. We have also been asked if we could participate in a Veteran's Day parade in Fredericksburg. None of these events require a great deal of travel and are low stress environments where we can have fun. Come on out.

There is now some talk about port Hudson next year. Some of the 5th NY Zouave from back east are thinking about participating with the RRB to build some companies of 165th NY Zouaves for the event. Such opportunities to do something unique are probably the future of the hobby for the next few years.

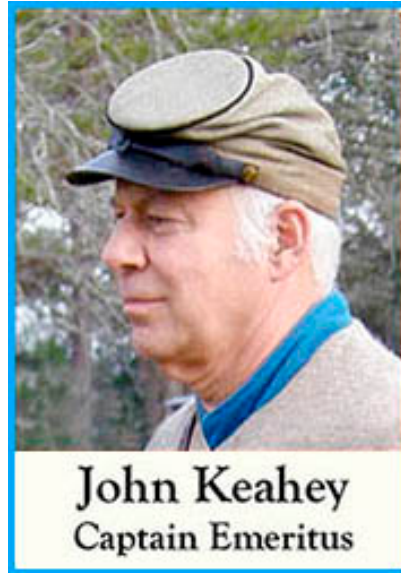
And – we are always welcome at Ft. McKavett. I have put together a scenario of a more typical regular army garrison life event. I think it is past time to put on our own brand of fun. The guest participants enjoyed the event we did many years ago, and we need more of this type of planning looking forward.

Tommy Attaway,
1st SGT



Our Civilians, a wonderful group of people with a fine impression!

Join us at George Ranch, Richmond Texas the weekend of September 22nd to the 24th.
The time will be 1860, prior to Lincoln's election.



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This article was written from the perspective of a not very active member of the Texas Rifles, who believes that we need to examine who we were, where we are now and where we need to go from here. I sense that we have reached a turning point as an organization and a new direction is required. Some of these facts are not very comfortable to read, but that does not change that they are facts, and facts should not be ignored.

Who are the Texas Rifles?

The Texas Rifles was founded as a high quality, authentic War Between the States Confederate infantry unit. Over the years we added a Federal infantry impression, strong 1860's civilian component and 1830's Texian impressions. The men, women and, at times children, of the unit were required and inspired to dress and equip themselves up to very high authenticity standards. That was, and is, time consuming and expensive. Those standards have slipped of late, and many of our members no longer strive to our published standards. We have become a Sutler's Row, off the shelf, sort-of-looks-right, unit.

In the peak of Civil War reenacting in the 1970's to 1990's Confederate reenactors were numerous, motivated and esteemed by the general public. We were the home town heroes to the public south of the Mason-Dixson Line and respected north of it. At its peak the Texas Rifles could field a complete infantry company of 30 to 35 men. We needed a full complement of officers and NCO's. We were respected on local and national levels. Those days are OVER! We are now in the era of political correctness. Speaking as someone familiar with public education, I can say that it has declined and many students today don't know what the Mason-Dixson Line is, nor can they spell it or explain its significance without Googling it. This is in spite of the noble efforts of the many history teachers who have served in our ranks. White Southerners are despised and the cause

their ancestors sacrificed so much for described with such adjectives as traitorous, racist, evil, and solely pro-slavery. The statues of our heroes have become offensive to some and are removed (at night).

There are many reasons why Civil War reenacting is declining: among them are the lack of historical education in schools, computers, reenacting in other periods of history, political correctness, and the general lack of participation of the public in ANY activity which requires them to get up from a comfortable chair, sweat or travel. Take your pick.

Where are we now?

As with the rest of the hobby, our numbers have declined. We no longer can field a company. In addition to our declining numbers, our members have aged and their physical capabilities declined. Yes, we can put loyal members in the field, but many of them cannot march, fight, drill, camp authentically or put-out a consistent physical effort. In short, we have been reduced numerically to what the authentics call a "mess." I do not mean we are sloppy, but we are essentially one Civil War era mess of eight or so men plus associated civilians. Our authenticity standards are frequently ignored and those men and women in our mess no longer set the authenticity standard for other units. Drill is poor, tentage unauthentic, and the food at events is more conventional than period. Eating well and drinking much has its place in the Texas Rifles, but in my opinion that should take place before or after authentic events. Foremost we are a living history organization, not a drinking club. It makes it more difficult to recruit young men or families when the wives/mothers/girlfriends read more about drinking than history on our email site.

Where do we go from here?

Where we go from here is up. As in the past, when the Texas Rifles' membership questioned who we were and what we stood for, we go back to our past, our birth and examine what we were born to be. In short, we need a re-birth, a Texas Rifles Renaissance, to borrow a phrase from the Phantom Captain Phil. Some things are beyond our ability to control, such as the decline of the hobby in general, the age of our members, and the times in which we live. But some things we can and should control, or at least struggle against. So, Texas Rifles, here are your marching orders:

- 1) Members need to rededicate themselves to the Texas Rifles. Knock it up a few places in your personal list of priorities.
- 2) Members need to recognize that we no longer field a company strength unit. To elect every year a list of unit officers whose duties are non-existent smacks of un-reality. Change the Texas Rifles Bylaws to reflect what we are now.
- 3) Members need to rededicate themselves to authenticity. New and old members need to bring their uniforms, clothing, weapons, and equipment up to the unit standards. Stay away from Sutler's Row except for accessories and lemonade. Civilians need to accurately represent their period, and I don't mean Rhett and Scarlett, but the middle to lower class folks who made the sacrifices we all admire so much.
- 4) This path forward does not mean we throw-out members who can no longer do what a 20 something did during the war. It does mean that we do the best we can with what we have. If you cannot march, fine: be a cook or camp guard. If your health will

not allow you to camp authentically; sleep in a static camp and serve with us during the day.

- 5) If you are a civilian, assume a role that would have been present on a battlefield. Since Civil War armies on campaign seldom had camp followers that means local citizens caught-up in the war. There plans at one time to build a small portable period house for events. Is that still possible? The civilian town events are great and deserve support.
- 6) "Build it and they will come." Great and inspiring line from a movie, but it can be true and it certainly is one hell of a motivator. I believe that if we re-dedicate ourselves to the accurate portrayal of the past, we will attract like-minded new members. Right now we are like every other Civil War group out there. We need to show the world in general, and potential recruits in particular, we are something better.
- 7) In the era of political correctness, being a Confederate is politically incorrect and vile to many. The former pastor at my church was horrified to learn that I actually had a Confederate uniform and wore it in public. To him, it was the same as dressing as Hitler's SS. That was his problem, not mine. Many of my son's friends recently marched through downtown Houston to show support for ... (wait for it) SCIENCE. Our society is warped from reality when college students have to take to the streets to show their support for the use of real science in decision making. I jokingly told him that the next march needs to show support for truth. It was meant as irony, but that is what WE do; we exist for truth in history. Sooner or later, the current fad for non-truth, non-facts and the destruction of America's heroic past will go away. I started reenacting and competitive shooting with Civil War weapons in 1964; I have lived through several popular intellectual fads. By demonstrating authenticity, showing and speaking the truth about the American War between the States, we support the truth and the Texas Rifles at the same time.

Jmk, 6/25/2017



Why Authenticity?

Published May 10, 2015

F.J.Marek

I've been a member of the Texas Rifles for 16 years now and I have seen highs and lows of authenticity levels amongst our group. The high started for me during the Texas Rifles Renaissance of 2002. We strove to lift up the authenticity level of the battalion we were in at the time only to be met with a lot of head butting and name-calling. The Renaissance made us turn inward and become the best we could be with the most current research of uniforms and equipment. The work we did rang bells that were heard for a few years. Port

Gibson, Sharpsburg, Franklin, Banks Grand Retreat and the Piney Woods march are all products of us placing a high emphasis on authenticity. We were simply the best.

Unfortunately, we cannot rest on those laurels unless we are done. Our numbers are down, recruiting is minimal and honestly I can see why. History is not the big sell that it once was, there are no movies to motivate the hobby like Gettysburg. Southern history is learned by today's youth by movies like Django and Abe Lincoln, Vampire Killer. Add that to the fact that those few, those glorious few of us that do still come out to events are getting older and have "been there, done that" and we start to see boredom in the hobby. With the boredom comes the question "Why?" Should I sleep in a shelter half, pay more for quality uniforms/equipment, opt out of guard duty and marches, cook my period rations over a campfire, skip drill??

My Brothers, I am guilty of all the above and for every finger I point I have four more pointing at myself. My point is that without DOING any of the things mentioned above we simply turn into a drinking club who likes to wear funny old timey clothes. That might be fine and dandy but it was a love of HISTORY that brought us all together. What are the chances that I would get to share an interest in history with a federal prosecutor, microbiologist or college professor if not for the Texas Rifles? (Chances are I would be bumped into a Pasadena cop sooner or later...)

So what is the answer? Quite simply, AUTHENTICITY. That means researching and attempting to cook the same things soldiers would have eaten on campaign. That means volunteering for guard duty even if there is no threat coz that's what soldiers had to do. And it means finding new/replacing old uniforms and equipment with quality items so that we do not look like extras in a B-grade movie but more like the men and women we wish to portray.

Mike Lucas told me once, a long time ago, "Re-enacting is escape-ism." We are escaping from the modern era and going back in time. Authenticity is the vehicle that takes us there. Look for the details, read biographies and memoirs. They might not all be perfect but you just may find a little nugget that enriches your impression.

Why authenticity? Because we are LIVING HISTORIANS. Let's motivate each other to LIVE HISTORY!





KEAHEY VERSUS THE SQUIRREL

I was blessed in my youth with loving maternal grandparents who lived in the beautiful northwestern New Jersey countryside. My family and I lived in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. Visits to my grandparent's house were welcome at any time of year, but particularly during the heat of a Virginia summer. The New Jersey home was surrounded with lovely fields, hills and woods ideal for walking. The nearest neighbors were far enough away not to be visible, but close enough to know you. There were apple, pear, crap apple and cherry trees on the property. We kept pet rabbits when we were young and the nearest neighbor allowed us to drop by at any time during the summer to swim in his pool. If the chlorinated water bothered your eyes, a couple of miles away was the village of Cokesbury where all the kids swam in the pond near the only intersection in town.

My grandparents did not farm for a living and so the chores during long summer visits were light. This left plenty of time to enjoy the environment, but being suburban kids my sisters and I generally watched TV to my grandmother's evident disgust. The biggest worries were snakes, poison ivy and boredom in that order. Ten miles away along the curving unpaved country roads was my Cousin George's house. He and I both loved history. We were aged 12 and 14 respectively when the Civil War Centennial broke-out and that drove us into a frenzy of historical activity. Books were read, plans made, battles studied, war game armies collected and in 1964 we both joined shooting teams in the North-South Skirmish Association (N-SSA). N-SSA members did participate in reenactments of Civil War battles,

but mostly they competed as individuals and teams in target shooting with Civil War era muskets, pistols, cannons and carbines. George joined the 15th New Jersey Infantry and I joined the 49th Virginia Infantry near our respective homes. That meant that we needed muskets. George and I did chores for money and worked for a neighbor of George's many long hot minimum-wage summer hours to earn enough money to purchase our first Civil War muskets. Neither of us could afford an original musket, so we contented ourselves with the only reproduction musket available: the Navy Arms M1863 Remington "Zouave" Rifle. We purchased them for below normal price through mail order. Today I know why they cost all of \$55.00; they were "seconds." The barrels were ½" shorter than they should have been (which means that the correct bayonet would not fit); the locks were so off center that the hammer hit the side and not the top of the cone. This made for frequent misfires. And their stocks were finished with a cheap high gloss varnish. But they shot real minie balls. And we loved them!

Today's parents (including myself) might blanch at the thought of allowing two low-end-of-teenagehood males to wander unsupervised over the countryside with lethal weapons, attempting to blow holes in anything that moved and a lot of things that didn't. But this was considered normal behavior for country boys. We were smart enough to realize that ponies, horses, cows, dogs, cats and sheep were not targets of opportunity. Anything that crawled, walked, flew, wasn't domesticated or under state game laws was in danger. The saving grace was that we rarely hit what we aimed at.

Which brings us to the great squirrel hunt. I was at my grandmother's house for the summer with my favorite new toy, the musket. I had progressed beyond inserting large randomly scattered holes in trees. Now I would stack-up empty beer cans (my grandfather preferred Reingold) and then unstack them by shooting the top can off the stack. Even better was to load a bushel basket with crab apples and fire a horizontal shot through the bottom of the basket. The apples would explode into the air from the energy of the big .58 caliber bullet passing through the basket. This practice was hard on the aforementioned baskets and subsequently lead to a shortage of undamaged bushel baskets when the fruit trees were bearing in the fall. The perceptive reader will have discerned by now the (lack of) thought process of a bored teenage male with a gun. The Great Squirrel Hunt began when my normally saintly grandmother temporarily lost all reason and thoughtlessly remarked that the red squirrels were a pest and ought to be eliminated. Apparently they were prone to chew their way through the gable vents and make a mess in the attic. Even more condemning in my grandmother's eyes, the squirrels ate the seed from the bird feeders intended for her beloved birds. For a boy with a gun, this was a MISSION! The hunt was on.

It took only moments for me to gear-up, but the red squirrels, being smarter than I was, had disappeared. I hunted high and low for red squirrels all over the property until late in the day. The sun was low in the sky and grandfather had arrived home from work, changed clothes and was seated at his usual spot near the window in the kitchen with a can of Reingold. That was when the feared New Jersey Kamikaze Red Squirrel flushed me from

cover and attacked! It came out of the setting sun from the top of the tree near the kitchen window. Down the tree trunk it charged to a big branch about ten feet above me. I was so nervous with the enemy finally in sight that I dropped the percussion cap while loading! I maneuvered to bring the sun from behind the squirrel so that I could aim properly. The squirrel maneuvered to a branch even closer to me and attempted to stare me down, but I was not to be intimidated! I aimed dead center for his massive chest. As this was a real hunt and not some wimpy target shoot, I had loaded my .58 caliber musket with a full charge of 60 grains of black powder. This really wasn't necessary because it must have been all of six feet from the muzzle of my musket to the squirrel. Additionally, the squirrel's body had to be about eight inches long. I pulled the trigger and BOOM went the musket.

It was a still evening with no breeze and the battlefield was obscured by smoke. Gradually over second or two the smoke thinned, but the squirrel had disappeared! Had I missed from six feet? I know that the bullet came out of the gun barrel because where the confrontational squirrel had taken his stand; the tree branch was ruptured nearly in two with large ragged splinters arching out of the top. But there was no squirrel, or parts of squirrel anywhere! That is when I heard it. Ever thrown a rock, or a baseball through a bush? It makes a, "tish" sound as the projectile brushes past the leaves and small branches. I heard a "tish, Tish, TISH" sound and it was coming towards me from above. Down through the leafy tree branches came the remains of a very dead red squirrel. It had been launched straight up high into the air by the impact of the bullet. The squirrel plopped on the ground about two feet in front of me. The minie ball had done its work. Not only had it nearly blasted in half the four inch thick tree branch, it had killed and gutted the kamikaze red squirrel from neck to tail. The squirrel now lay spread-eagled on its back; all the internal parts had been neatly removed as if done by a senior class biology student with a lab specimen. My former enemy looked ready to be tanned and made into a ... change purse. There wasn't much size to this very small big game animal.

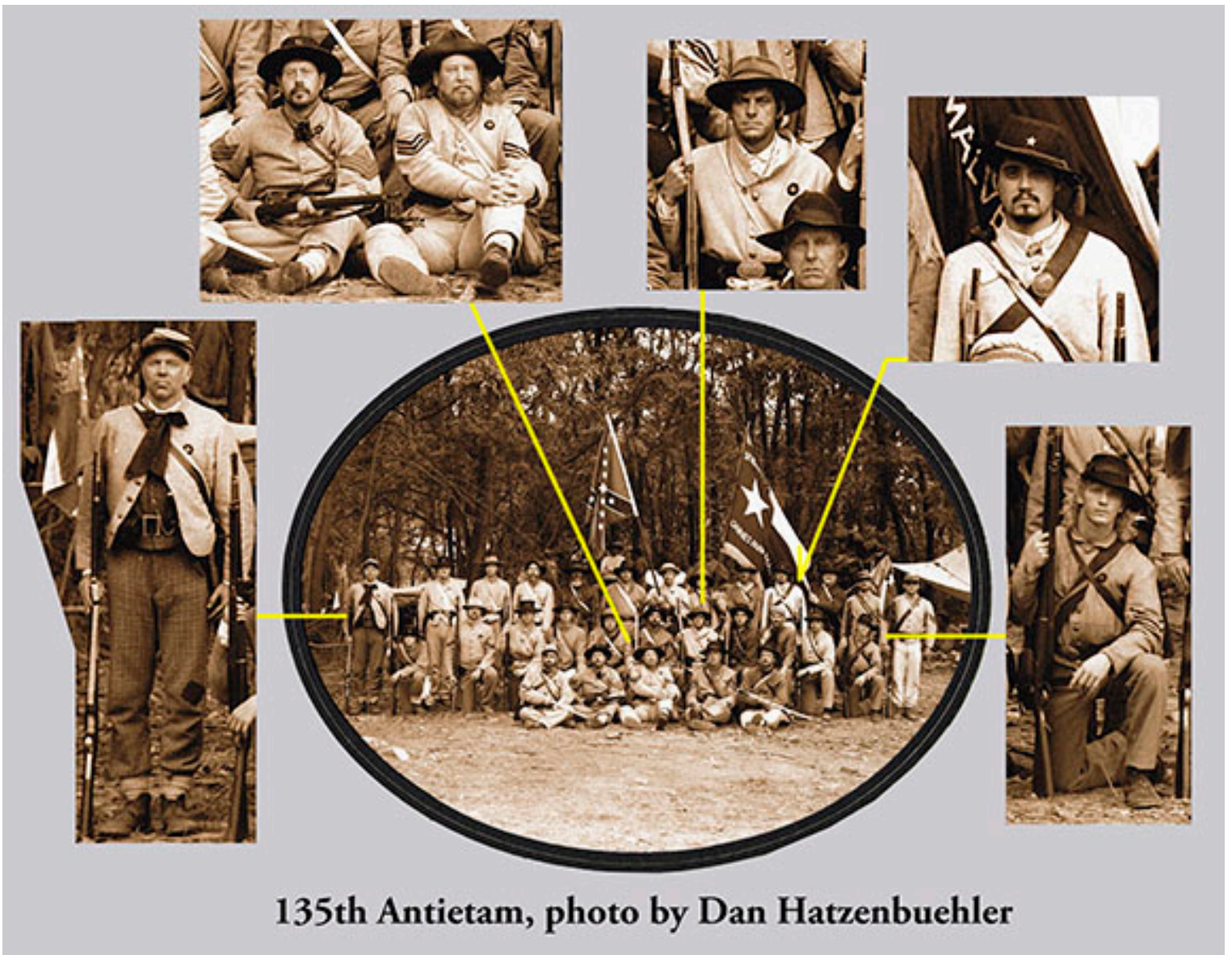
The final benediction on the Great Squirrel Hunt was delivered by my grandfather, still calmly seated in the kitchen window as a silent witness to this unfolding drama of life and death. He asked what had happened and I related to him the key events of the Great Squirrel Hunt, including all the details of the now famous Last Charge of the New Jersey Kamikaze Red Squirrel (Branches to the right of him, Branches to the left of him, Musket in front of him, Onward he charged... Noble Red Squirrel) down the tree trunk with its teeth bared, tail fluttering like a flag and chattering its battle cry. My grandfather was a veteran of combat in the trenches of World War I. He had been a seventeen year old sergeant of Pioneers (combat engineer in today's terms) in France. He had seen death dealt in large quantities and possibly dealt some of it himself. He was the Gas Sergeant for his company; it was his job to be the first man to partially peel-off his gas mask and sniff the air to see if the poison gas had dissipated enough to make it safe to breathe. He and his wife had opened their home during and after World War II to provide an unfunded, unofficial, unaffiliated, unconditional transition home for service men so that they could re-adjust to life. He was the man I came to respect the most in this life and my son is named after him. "I see", said grandfather. "So, the squirrel attacked you; then it was self defense."

With my grandfather's sardonic words ringing in my ears, I haven't hunted an animal since. The squirrel's gallant sacrifice on the behalf of fellow mammals had not been in vain. In the end, through death, the squirrel won.

jmk, 8/29/2006



Reflections



135th Antietam, photo by Dan Hatzenbuehler



The Crow's 1st reenactment. Note Mike Lucas wearing his, as yet un-burnt, great coat in the upper left background. 3/29/2003



Enough to scare any Yankee into surrendering.



2009 Annual Muster at Round Top



From the Editor

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the making of this edition of the Tyrants' Foe Newsletter. Without you it would be nothing. Deadline for submissions for the next newsletter is tentatively scheduled for October 1, 2017.



To Tyrants Never Yield

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 22/24	George Ranch	Richmond, TX	Civ Max	Civ
October 6/8	Gonzales	Gonzales, TX	Individual	Tex Rev
October 20/21	Texian Market Days	Richmond, TX	Company	US
November 17/29	Plantation Liendo	Hempstead, TX	MAX	US
January 20, 2018	Annual Muster	Austin, TX	MAX	CS