

2011 (150th) 1st Manassas/Bull Run After Action Report

Gentlemen of the Guard;

The 150th Anniversary of 1st Manassas/Bull Run is now a memory. The single most common foe everyone had to fight was the all-consuming heat. The actual temperature on Saturday was 104 but the Heat Index was 126. Despite those conditions, our Brigade had few heat casualties and none that were of a serious nature. That is a testament to the abilities of the officers and NCO's since they were determined to care for their men as best as they could.

The preparation of the site was amazing. They had running water piped throughout the area, a massive police (not security guards, police force to keep traffic flowing, a huge medical tent they kept at 50 degrees and an EMT staff that seemed to be everywhere. Their emergency plans were activated Saturday when FEMA took over the event and declared it a National Emergency because of the heat. Their command and control helicopters were 24/7 but high enough not to be intrusive. I saw an average of 14 ambulances waiting on site if needed. The number of bottles of water they gave out must have numbered in the hundreds of thousands. (That is not a typo) and the bottles of Gatorade they handed out easily numbered in the tens of thousands.

Several organizations joined us to show what a Brigade of westerners can do. The Black Hats, the 2nd Wisconsin, the Military Department of the Mississippi and the Indiana Brigade and the 1st Illinois Brigade combined with us to put a great Brigade in the field. Commanded by Will Eichler and Craig DeCrane, the two battalions looked like they had been drilled for hours when, in truth, the only pre-battle drill was firing a volley in camp before the Saturday morning battle. Otherwise, you would have never known how they were amalgamated for the first time when they formed up for battle. That is another testament to the NCO's, the Officers but, perhaps, especially for the men in the ranks. All of the brilliant commands in the world would not have made up for the determination and spirit of the men that composed that Brigade.

From my viewpoint, the staff work done by Keith Harrison (who arrived Wednesday and set up the camp) cannot be praised enough. He consistently demonstrates the honor and devotion one man can have to serve the men.

The other staff officers were vital and performed their tasks better than anyone could ask. Actually, the Brigade staff had a higher percentage of heat casualties than any of the battalions. We lost 3 of the 7 staff members.

The battles were very good and it was fun to see the 8700 troops on the field on Saturday. There were moments of confusion and the portrayal of the actual battle was better on Sunday than on Saturday. It was great to see the specialty impressions such as our 1st Battalion under Will was the 1st Minnesota with their red shirts and the color company with their blue shirts. Craig's men portrayed the 5th Massachusetts but also filled the role of the 11th Mass. They wore battle shirts and all of the Wisconsin guys had on their gray battle shirts.

The largest negative to the event was parking and getting out of the event site. It was not a pleasant task and led to many guys leaving on Saturday night to avoid the Sunday exodus. The

entire National Regiment left, except for 6 guys who fell in with us.

Enough cannot be said regarding the hospitality we received from the Eastern command staff. Now that you have awakened from passing out, let me say that again. The commanding General, Tony Daniels and his immediate staff of Jon Sirlin and David Childs were as cooperative and supportive as anyone could have been. I will march under General Daniels any day of the week.

The civilians who camped with us, due to the event rules, were generally very quiet and an asset. The only incident or confrontation of the event involved a civilian group that wanted to pack up and leave but the volume of what they brought caused them to have their vehicles in camp after the stated deadline. Many thanks to the Civilian Coordinator who took on the thankless job but did exceptionally well.

Thanks especially go to all of the privates, corporals and sargents who traveled a long way, knowing it would be hot, and presented an excellent representation of an early war Union soldier. Everyone pitched in and got every job done and demonstrated the true spirit of the Cumberland Guard.

Thanks to all

Colonel (although I was a General at the event and will be at Jackson)

Dave

Colonel Dave Shackelford