

2014 Cumberland Guard Meeting After Action Report

I'd like to take some time and provide a recap of the Cumberland Guard meeting, both in terms of some specifics as it relates to the 2014 season, and some general thoughts I had in regards to the hobby.

We reviewed the 2013 season, obviously with Gettysburg being a highlight for many, and reflected on the impact Dave Shackelford had (and no doubt, will continue to have) on the hobby. Our thoughts turned to 2014 and we had significant discussion about the lack of clarity for a unifying national event where the Guard could come in force. Two thousand fourteen seems to be a bit of an 'off year'. We had a lot of discussion about Atlanta, but a lot of factors (the continued slow economy, fuel prices, and the commute time for our Michigan pards) all hampered our ability to make a commitment to the event. While we will have many individual units attend, we wish we could provide a more compelling 'full Guard' commitment to our good friend Earl Zeckman.

Having said that, we wanted to focus on some specific regional events to strengthen the bond of the Michigan and Indiana units. To that end, we made specific commitments to attend (as a Guard entity), Conner Prairie, IN (May 16, 17, 18), Hastings, MI (July 18, 19, 20), and Hartford City, IN (October 10, 11, 12). I'll be putting these events into the Facebook page soon, as well as request the CG website (www.cumberlandguard.us/) be updated. It also will be placed onto the Michigan Civil War Sesquicentennial Events website (www.micw150.us/). I have been asked to be overall commander for Hastings, MI.

We also spent some time talking about bringing the Guard closer to its original mission (i.e., an umbrella organization for Midwest Union re-enactors to be able to attend national events in strength and to have a 'seat at the table' that is representative of our size and skill). I have never viewed the Guard, nor do I view me now as Colonel, as needing to be involved in smaller local events. Events in Michigan should be coordinated by Michigan units and the same for Indiana. In an ideal world, I would love to see Union re-enactors create their own 'state based' organizations where they put personal politics aside and have (as an example) one organization for Michigan, one for Illinois, one for Ohio, one for Indiana, etc., such that all these battalions can come together for a national event each year in such a manner that our numbers make us a force to be reckoned with. I pointed to the Army of the Wabash in Indiana as the most recent example of folks putting their politics and egos aside to do this.

Speaking of politics and egos, I also gave my personal views on those subjects. I don't have an ego with regards to re-enacting, and will be the first person to *NOT* command if it is for the best of the hobby. I refuse to carry grudges and I refuse to carry other people's grudges. I have made plenty of mistakes both on and off the field. I hope the people that have been on the receiving end of those mistakes move past it, just as I don't continue to dwell on mistakes I have been on the receiving end of. Everyone make mistakes, but people grow from these mistakes. I am certain that I will make many more. As said at the meeting, (and to Dave), I am *NOT* Dave. For some of that, there is a lot of negative (I don't have his skills, his connections, his presence), but I hope to leverage the positive side of that as well. It is a new day, time to move past the personal agendas and the political nonsense that have pulled this hobby down into sewer at times.

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Colonel Van