

## 2019 Mill Springs, KY AAR

I apologize for the length of this post...it is my last AAR so hey... don't read it if you don't want to. We planned for over a year with multiple site visits, too many to count emails, discussions on battle plans, Facebook posts, conference calls and phone calls. It is fair to say we gave it our 'all' and tried to 'leave it all on the field' with this event, my last command.

On Saturday I shared with you, and you agreed to, three goals for the weekend;

- 1) **Safety.** I wanted no one injured over the weekend. We accomplished this, we had zero injuries.
- 2) **Honor and Respect.** We were going to be the last re-enactors on that sacred ground to re-enact the battle and we were going to do it in a way that was respectful and appropriate. There were 10,300 souls who fought and bled on that dirt, and you can be damn sure they were going to watch what we did. There is no doubt to me we exceeded their expectations.
- 3) **Successful Event.** We needed the event to be successful. Using my three legged stool analogy, this would be for the Atlanta Campaign, for the sutlers, and for the spectators. Every indication from crowd count and word of mouth feedback from the [Atlanta Campaign, Inc.](#), spectators, Blue Gray Town members, and sutlers indicate we did this as well.

To start off, you can't possibly have any kind of successful event without a knowledgeable organizer. When it comes to event organizing and logistics, you simply won't find any better than Earl 'Pops' Zeckman, [Terri Cooney Zeckman](#), [John Nash Jr](#) and the [Atlanta Campaign, Inc.](#) We had everything we needed and everything we asked for. Most folks have never truly organized an event, and certainly not a national event. Add on top of that the challenge of trying to do it from another state and it becomes a labor of love. The amount of effort and the countless hours of organizing was just amazing to witness.

On the other side of the field we had [Brian Mercke](#). Brian was the best of partners, great to work with and a real professional. I've been across the field from self-centered Confederate commanders who's ego would not fit on the battlefield. Brian was the complete opposite, selfless and willing to do whatever it takes, leading by example, genuinely interested in producing a quality event. By Sunday's battle we could look across the field and know know what each was thinking. Good luck to him as he takes the lead as General of the [Southern Guard Brigade](#).

It was certainly not promising when I arrived on Wednesday. The temperature was dropping quickly and the rain was coming down in sheets. One of the event workers had their truck stuck in the mud (who in the world would do something like that...??) Some of the battalion staff were already there and began to get things organized for the event. Speaking of staff, I didn't get a chance to thank them in front of the battalion, so I'd like to do that now. These are the folks that made the event a success;

· [Chuck Munson](#) served as AAG and Chief of Staff. Not sure we could have done any better and I also have made a life long friend in the Florida's 4th Brigade. Thanks Chuck for keeping everything running so smoothly, sending out all my dispatches, and managing the Parade. Coffee will always be 'Star Chucks' to me now.

· [John Vohlken](#) was asked at the last minute to step up and serve as Sgt. Major, and he knocked the cover off the ball. Thanks for working with all the First Sergeant's and keeping the paperwork flowing!

· [Tom Berlucchi](#) was so dedicated to making this event a success he not only helped organize all of the planning meetings on GoTo Meeting, but he came down from Michigan on Wednesday, drove back home and back to the event AGAIN on Thursday / Friday to catch his son's ([TJ Berlucchi](#)'s) football game. A great dad and a great friend, thanks Tom for all the planning help.

· [Steven Lundberg](#) put on an amazing presentation with the Provost Guard and an impressive sense of realism as we came in and out of camp. Also some special recognition to Ben Richardson of the 8th Tennessee for his hard work and congratulations on his promotion to Corporal.

· [R Scott House](#) did a significant amount of work before the event ever started with mapping out the site and helping with the company street layout. Thank you Scott, I appreciate all the work you did.

· [Trevor T Steinbach](#) was our Chief of Medical and was constantly looking out for the health and well being of the troops. Trevor was not only a big part of no one being injured, but also had plans in place in case someone was hurt. He organized all the modern real world first responders and whether you knew it or not, he had them trained and ready via signal whistles within your ranks.

· Our bugler [RJ Samp](#) was under the weather for a good part of the weekend, but I attribute his understudy [Craig Flick](#) for allowing me to have some of my voice still intact on Monday morning.

· Last...and in no way least, is [Ryan VanMaldegen](#). I teased Ryan a lot for changing times on our formations (we all know it was me...), but Ryan was our speedy messenger and for a million different things he was there every time I needed him. Ryan also ran across the entire field on Sunday to deliver a message to the Artillery that the battle was going to be delayed by 10 minutes, he did it without complaint, and I am not sure what we would have done without him.

From a narrative standpoint, we started off Saturday with a battalion drill, utilizing some of the maneuvers we were going to use coming out of the 'bowl' later in the day. The firings were solid and we did not have the usual drag you see when you have consolidated and combined companies. [Scott Lawalin](#)'s [Army of the Wabash](#) company served admirably as color company (although we had some problems with his color bearers in Logan's Crossroads...more on that later). Saturday's battle was hot and although we had spectator's on one side and the Artillery camp on the other, it was a rough fight that pushed us all the way back into the bowl. As we were pushed we were fortunate enough to have [Kevin Harris](#) and the artillery on our right which just pounded the Reb infantry. [Marty Walker](#) and first company put in some extra footwork going up the hill to keep the flank of the Rebels busy, well done Michigan. The left wing under the skillful command of [Bob A Minton](#) (who is probably more accustomed to being the overall commander), but he did a great job holding on the Rebs right flank, and leapfrogged one of his companies to

extend his left. Bob also served as a sounding board for me throughout the entire planning process and I could not thank him enough.

Thankfully the Rebels withdrew and allowed us to regroup and tend to our casualties. The wounded were taken to Logan's Crossroads to be cared for. Mayor [John Masciale](#) and his townspeople were overrun with our wounded. Special thanks to him, [Terre Hood Biederman](#) and the [Blue Gray Civilian Towns](#) for working with the [Grand Armies of the Republic](#) on the interactions and scenarios.

In camp in the evening we performed what would be my final parade. Later in the evening we had some issues with [Ian Fulford](#), [Nick Leach](#) and [Nathan Malone](#) of 3rd company, as well as Kurt Ohberg and Dale Bartels of 4th company making an unauthorized visit to the town of Logan's Crossroads that was dealt with the next day by a public reading of charges and punishment. It was a pleasure to work with Howard Morgan again (we worked together at Gettysburg). Howard is a class act who knows his stuff. It was also a pleasure to work with 2nd company and their commander Marty Spang. You could tell Marty's company drilled often as they were very sharp within the battalion.

Several soldiers braved the cold and participated in the overnight picket line which I am sure was a great experience. Although I wasn't on the picket line all night I did go out and check on the men a few times and after an initial kerfuffle of shooting, everyone settled down. Those in camp near first company were fortunate enough to see the new commander of the [Cumberland Guard](#) be presented with his new steed (it came with coconut shells as well). In addition to his new mount, newly minted Cumberland Guard commander [Nick Miner](#) was a solid performer in handling the right wing and was everywhere I needed him to be. I walked through each camp to check on the companies and walked in on 5th company's [Irish Mike Sager](#) in the middle of a song. Their company was the one camped towards the end of the gravel road. Thanks Mike for falling in with us, you and your men did great.

As dawn broke on Sunday [Mike Church](#) and a combined cavalry (which included galvanized confederates) pushed the Rebs out of the bowl and across the drill field. We were able to get out in time to deal with two battalions of Rebs but Mike's troopers only left us a few scraps. Mike's troops were incredible effective not only on the Sunday morning tactical but also for the final sweep on Sunday afternoon's battle. 1st company again served as our foot cavalry, now under the skillful command of [Douglas McComas](#), as they pushed up the hill.

The Confederate Army looked magnificent as it made multiple charges to the fence. This piece of the battle was very well coordinate by [Brian Mercke](#), you could see he was giving everyone a chance to charge the fence. If you were not there you missed an incredible site as the Cavalry swept across the field and drove the remaining Confederate troops off the field. 6th company and [Jason Andrew Brunner](#) were basically our rock in the middle of the line and took a majority of the pressure from the seven assaults from the Confederate forces.

That's a wrap for Mill Springs...I'll see you in the ranks next year, I'll be the one in blue carrying a musket.

*Private Van*