

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" July 2019

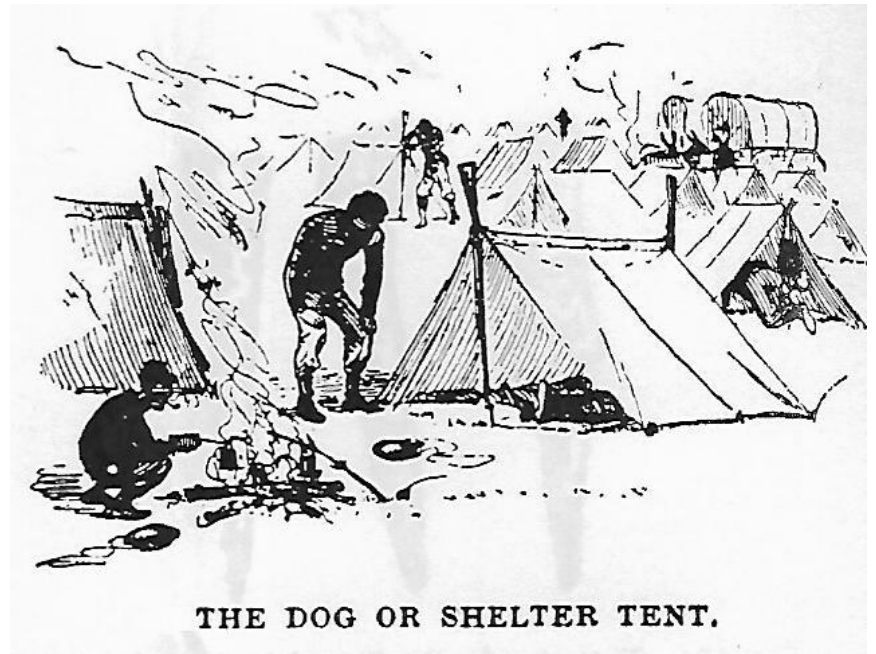
Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

This Month:

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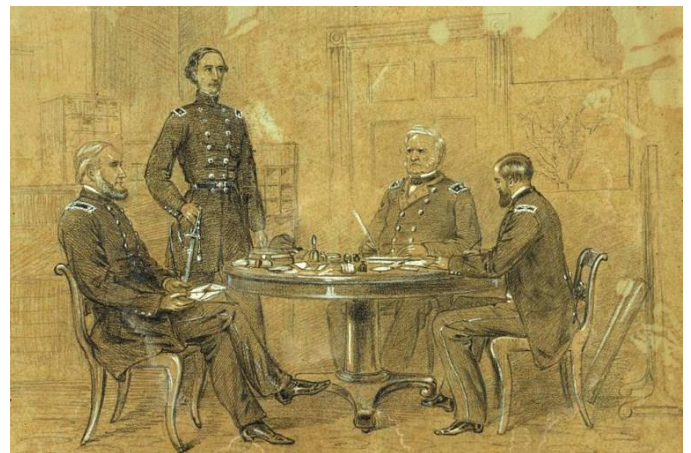


I am always looking for newsletter content, so please forward your articles, book reviews, photos, stories, etc. and your "Get To Know Your Pard" profile (if you have not done so already) to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". – Matthew Steger, editor

HOW TO PREPARE AND GIVE ORDERS

by [The Jersey Gallinipper](#) (reprinted with permission)

No, not "Forward, MARCH!" I think we pretty much have that nailed down. But when it gets beyond the immediate, we suffer from the same shortcomings as the officer corps in 1861: We're just not that good at it. Which is why scenarios get broken, battalions camp in the wrong place, nobody can find the water buffalo, enormous woodpiles are randomly plundered, fire pits are put where the colonel's tent is supposed to go, troops advance in the wrong direction, and dinner is ready while everyone is in a firefight a half-mile away.



Retired *Real World* Lt. Col. Tim O'Neill took an interest in those of us attempting to recreate the look and feel of the Civil War a few years back, running several schools and "recons" where hundreds of us tried to up our game. Today's blog is based largely on what he tried to convey.

I'm big on principles informing specifics, like why the guide is to the outside of a turn. Here's your principles, courtesy of Tim:

1. *"The ability of humans to misunderstand an order is almost limitless and this weakness is not limited to the stupid or the ignorant."*
2. There was no period equivalent of the thought-out system and standardization of order writing now used in the modern military, but since it's pretty much a logical progression that history suggests was followed ad hoc by some of the better thinkers 1861-1865, here it is and nobody has to know you used it.

I'm not going to go into the detail Tim did; I'm going to go right to really basic examples applicable to us as reenactors and living history geeks

Company commander



Giving Orders, English Civil War – note the drumhead used as a desktop.

Situation: Bivouac area is selected, but there's no plan for company streets and there is no fire pit and no firewood. Men are still arriving.

Mission: Get the camp set up in the proper manner and dig a fire pit for the company kitchen; bring wood.

Execution: Give the first sergeant the location of the fire pit and the orientation of the company street and the location of the captain's tent. This is the general concept. The first sergeant should know how many tents are expected, how much alteration to the site can be done (Can brush be cut? Fences used as part of shelter construction? Tree limbs removed? Firepit dug or built with rocks? Site restrictions?). Bring firewood into the camp and stack near the fire pit. Do you want a regulation camp, with all the tents neatly aligned and exactly two paces apart, as per the regulations, or can he adjust to the terrain within the footprint you have laid out as the boundaries of your company's area?

Administration and logistics: A map showing the desired camp layout and location of the firepit could be available for the first sergeant or the captain could show the first sergeant exactly where each element will be, marking with sticks or other means. The first sergeant needs to be told where the firewood is located, if there is a

supply, or whether he will have to send men to rummage and pick up and modify deadwood in the vicinity.

Command and signal: When do you want reports? As each phase is finished, or sooner, progress reports? Make it clear to the sergeant and make it clear that in the event of problems, what the limits of his authority and expected autonomous action might be. That is, if he learns the firewood supply is being claimed as the property of another regiment, do you want him to report that to you or work it out on his own with the event organizers? If you are leaving camp, you must tell your sergeant where to find you in case he needs your leadership, knowledge, or whisky bottle.

Finally, when the work is done, review all of it, order corrections if necessary and levy praise as appropriate.

Sergeant: You have the immediate supervision of the company. You will assign corporals or other sergeants to the various tasks, for instance:

Corporal 1: Camp layout. Explain the plan, give the conditions, and charge him with overseeing each soldier's arrival and position on the company street, assisting as appropriate with setup and then, when the soldier is unloaded and the car removed, ordering the soldier to report to you for further assignment. Tell the corporal to report to you when it is done.

Corporal 2: Firepit. Show the corporal where the firepit is to go and provide exact dimensions and an explanation whether the site requires "cut sod and replace sod" or not, etc. Tell him where to find shovels and how many men he can recruit for the task, and the deadline. Tell him to report to you when it is done.



The product of vague orders. The corporal on the far left is wearing a dress with his bowler hat, plus they are roasting apples and pears instead of potatoes. And clearly the sergeant built this in the civilian camp.

Corporal 3: Firewood. Tell the corporal where the wood is located and how much should be brought, specifically the size of the pile you want. Mention the location of an ax; if the corporal takes the initiative to have someone split kindling, good. Otherwise mention it to him. Tell him how many men he can recruit for the task. Tell him to report to you when it is done.

The first sergeant supervises these tasks, but working through the corporals. Remember, leadership isn't bullying and talking down to the corporals weakens them in the eyes of the men and makes getting things done that much harder. (Especially if they decide they've had enough of your bullshit and quit. The army in 1861 had pretty much the same problem, but they knew it and cautioned officers, especially, to treat the soldiers with respect. Reports on that date back to the post-War of 1812 era. If you recall, we didn't do so well in that war.) In reenactor world, you need to be keeping an eye out for safety – is the guy splitting kindling getting ready to chop off his thumb? – and signs of physical distress from guys who are struggling to carry wood, for instance, but are too proud to mention they had open heart surgery the

week before and are popping their stitches. It is easier to prevent these things than to get them to a hospital.

Bigger Bugs

There is no reason why brigade commanders can't use this format for battle, especially when trying to duplicate historic battles. Approaching a battle with this outline ensures you've given proper thought to all the elements necessary to make it come out right.

Situation (context)

Mission (goal)

Execution (how we do it; maneuver plan, timetable, details and a map; order of march; action to be taken on arrival at objective;)

Administration and Logistics (assembly point, assembly time, step-off time (s), number of rounds to be carried, pre-battle inspection by whom? Etc.

Command and Signal (who is in charge; the chain of command; special bugle calls; signals for critical actions like starting an attack, changing the attack into retreat, etc. Bugle, flags, whatever; yellow flag for real-world serious injuries, stopping the battle until aid is rendered.)

"It is generally better to brief the plan in person rather than through dispatches." Tim O'Neill

Footnote: If you are the person receiving an order and you don't understand it, keep asking questions until you pin it down. Otherwise, you are going to have to ask the men to dig a second firepit. And your shoes will be missing in the morning....



At the end of all this, you don't have to write out every order in the form shown here. But if you keep the list handy and consult it when it's time to get things done, at its heart it makes sure you take everything into consideration that needs to be factored in -- everything you need to make sure your intentions are understood.

The Civil War Letters of Levi J. Fritz

(thank you to Rich Sauers for providing this series)

[Note – any grammatical and typographical errors were kept intact as they are original to the letter - editor]

Levi J. Fritz served in Company A, 53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. He enlisted in 1861 and was mustered out with the regiment in July 1865. During the course of the first three years of the conflict, Fritz wrote a number of lengthy missives to the *Montgomery Ledger*, a Pottstown newspaper.

Headquarters 53d Regiment, P. V.
Camp at Yorktown, Va.,
Saturday, May 10th, 1862.

Messrs. Editors:—Since last writing you events of momentous importance have transpired on the Peninsula. McClellan, by a display of engineering strategy that for correctness of conception, expeditious, almost magical, execution, and glorious result, is unrivalled by any military chief d’armee recorded in the war history of the Western Continent, has, with the loss of scarce a dozen men, compelled the enemy to fly, in hasty confusion, from his strong entrenchments on the historic heights of Yorktown.

For a few days previous to the evacuation, the enemy kept up a continual firing along his line; shells of almost every size were thrown at us indiscriminately, some bursting just inside our lines, others flying over our camps a mile inside, while many exploded ere they reached our outer entrenchments. On Sunday, the 4th, we were on duty in the trenches on the right, which rests on York River at a point not more than a quarter of a mile from what was known as the one gun battery of the enemy. The 62d Pa. Regiment (Col. Black’s) was at the time working in the parallels and on one of the batteries. Some of the men while working were in range of the battery, which was shelling them at the rate of a shell every five minutes. None of the firing, however, did any execution. One soldier was constantly watching the rebel gunners, and as soon as the flash was seen, would cry “down,” when shovels and picks would be dropped instantly and shelter sought in the trenches. The shell would pass over, or sometimes explode in the air immediately above them. (A shell thrown from a cannon would not injure you if exploding only five or six feet immediately above the head, as the same impetus which carries the whole shell forward will also carry the pieces forward. The shell from a mortar striking the earth in a line varies so little from the perpendicular that when it bursts the fragments fly on every side.) A rifled cannon shell not too large size in piercing the air, makes a noise not unlike the steam escapement of an engine—a little sharper and more musical. We were present at one of our batteries when, with one hundred pound Parrot guns, they were exchanging shots with the rebels at the Yorktown and Gloucester Point batteries. When one of these immense pieces were discharged, the earth seemed to jolt backwards. The first part of its course the shell appeared to go by jerks—sounding like the confined puffs of a dozen locomotives going under a full head of steam, and ending in a terrific fizz. Five second fuses were used. It seemed providential that while thousands of our men were on fatigue duty in the trenches and batteries, and were almost constantly under the fire from the rebel works that there were not more casualties. Out of six shells thrown in quick succession from a rebel gun at one of our working parties, the four first passed over their heads and exploded, the two last fell among them, but fortunately did not burst.

In our perambulations along our lines we have observed some amusing incidents. At one point our trenches coming together make a right angle. To get from the one ditch to the other, the angle can be cut off by crossing a little space of land exposed to the fire of the rebel sharpshooters. Many preferred running the risk of a shot or two to walking around. A member of a German regiment was double-quicking over this exposed point; when he arrived about the centre of the open space, a minie ball passed in front of him—he halted so quick that he nearly fell backwards, bang, fizz comes another in his rear; the Dutchman gives a big jump forward; bang, fizz—and a ball passes over him; the poor fellow bobs his head. Looking around as if somewhat bewildered, a bright idea seems to strike him, and he gives a jump upward, that would have done credit to an acrobat, and then makes hasty tracks for the trenches. The boys who were greatly amused at Dutchey’s pranks under

fire, asked him what he made such a big jump for. Dutchey answers: "Vell, one he comes on my front, one he comes on my behind, den he comes on my head, so I tinks de next one he comes on my feet, so I jumps up and gives him so much room as he wants, by 'tam!"

Passing through one of the parallels at noon, where a Massachusetts and New York regiment were at work, the enemy was keeping up a pretty lively shelling, the order was given to cease working for grub. Three mess kettles of smoking hot bean soup were being brought up the hill from a ravine near by where it had been cooked. When the boys who had in charge the savory mess were about twenty yards from the trench the lookout bawled out "down," and the boys downed to avoid the coming shell. The fellows with the soup also "downed," and in order to do so more expeditiously, left the mess kettles to take care of themselves, which they accordingly did by rolling down the hill, and—the boys lost their dinner. The shelling of the beans was the making of the soup, and the shelling of the rebels was the losing of the soup.

At one point on the right of our lines, some of the boys of Col. Black's 62d Pa. Regiment, were, on Saturday last engaged in unmasking a heavy battery that had been placed in position behind the breastworks. In order to do so the men had to expose themselves freely and, by doing so, attracted a more than agreeable amount of shells from a rebel battery. By keeping a good lookout, they managed to dodge them. A soldier who was shoveling away on the most exposed part of the works, seeing the flash of the cannon, left himself drop, and the shell passed immediately over him and took away about a foot of the dirt at the place he had been working. His dodge saved his head. The fellow got up, scratched himself a little and then commenced shoveling shut the hole that was made by the shell, just as coolly as you please. His comical stolidity raised a general laugh. The boys considered it a "fine thing," but our readers, perhaps, "can't see it in that light."

One morning Gen. McClellan passed through the entrenchments, and the soldiers working on them came to a "present arms" with their picks and shovels. They paid him a highly proper compliment, for the diligent use of those implements caused the rebel army to "skedaddle" from Yorktown.

In front of Gen. Sedgwick's division, our pickets were within talking distance of the rebel ones, but, by mutual consent, they did not fire upon each other. One day while passing along this part of the line we noticed one of the sentinels concealed behind a large tree, endeavoring to extract a dinner from a tinfull of water and several crackers. On being questioned whether he was afraid of the rebels and got away behind the tree—"No," says he, "but if them cussed secesh," pointing towards the rebel pickets, "see these 'waffles' the whole kink will be rushing over here."

Saturday night previous to the discovery of the evacuation, a heavy and continued firing was kept up from Yorktown. The night was calm, not a cloud appeared in the heavens. Starlight and moonlight illumed the tented field. Until midnight we were up watching the cannonading. First could be seen the flash, appearing like lightning; then, in a few seconds, the thundering sound of the gun would reach us, which would for the space of a minute roll heavily through the night air, until it appeared to drown itself in the bay. The rebels were evidently using their heaviest guns.

Early on Saturday morning it was discovered that the enemy had evacuated. At once a new life appeared to pervade the army. All was joyful and cheering. The air was filled with the music of the bands and the loud hurrahs of our soldiers. We received orders to be ready to march at a moment's notice, with two days' rations. Sunday night a rain storm set in. On Monday morning, before day break, we were up and had everything packed; about 7 o'clock the line of march was formed. The rain poured down unceasingly, and the roads were really horrible, yet we got along as best we could. All the time the heavy boom of cannon was heard in our front. The battle of Williamsburg was being fought. At 2 o'clock, we passed through the outer line of entrenchments. Rain was still falling, as it had been doing for the previous twenty-four hours. It was so wet that it was impossible for any one to get off a *dry* joke. We stacked our arms on the plain in front of the red earthworks of Yorktown. The boys were putting up their tents and otherwise preparing for the night's bivouac, when a "solitary horseman" dashed through our camp at break neck speed, and only reined in his fagged and bleeding steed at headquarters. The bugle sounds the assembly. Our troops were falling back from Williamsburg. Our division was the reserve and we were wanted. It still rained. Our overcoats were soaked completely; our tents, which we carry in our knapsacks, also wet. Knapsacks were strapped on,

and our brigade in front, we started forward in quick time. Keeping a sharp lookout for the murderous torpedoes, we marched through the rebel fortifications. We heard the cannon's sullen boom in front, and we pressed on. The darkness was so thick that we could not distinguish objects a yard distant. On, over night black hills, through still darker forests. Arriving within a few miles of the battle field, orders came from Gen. McClellan for us to return—we were not needed. The gallant charge of the gallant Hancock, had forced back the rebel horde, and victory crowned the National banners at Williamsburg. The next day we returned to Yorktown, where we are now in camp. The boys are all well and in the finest of spirits. The weather for the last few days has been very warm.

Sunday morning.—Early tomorrow, we will be shipped up the York river to West Point, which is thirty miles from Richmond. We shall write you from there if we have opportunity.

Yours &c., L.J.F.

[Ledger, May 20, 1862]

Honoring the men of the Original 53rd PVI –

Pvt. William H. Hutton, Co. B - captured and sent to the Florence, SC stockade. He died Nov. 15, 1864. There is no headstone for him in the Florence National Cemetery and it must be assumed that he is one of the 2,500 unknowns interred there in 16 burial trenches.



Sgt. John Heiser - born in Perry Co. on Jan. 2, 1837. He mustered in as a Sergt. of Co. I, 53rd PVI on Oct. 10, 1861. He died of wounds received in action on Aug. 29, 1864. Buried in Alexandria National Cemetery, Alexandria, VA.

Corp. Jabez C. Jackson, Co. F - born in Carverton, PA on March 23, 1839. He enlisted on Oct. 22, 1861 in Co. F. He died on Nov. 10, 1919 and was buried in Carverton Cemetery, Carverton, PA





Pvt. Oscar Furst, Co. C - born in 1845. He was a substitute who mustered into Co. C Jan. 3, 1865. He was wounded at Hatcher's Run in March 1865. He died on Nov. 16, 1890 and is buried in Springdale Cemetery, Peoria, IL.



Pvt. George Zullinger, Co. G - born in Upper Strausburg, PA on Aug. 8, 1846. He was 5'8" with light hair and grey eyes and living as a laborer when he enlisted as a substitute in Co. B, 158th PVI (9 months) on Oct. 16, 1862. He admitted to being 17 at the time (but was actually 16). He was honorably discharged Aug. 16, 1863 at the end of his term. He re-enlisted in Co. D, 182nd PA (21st PA Cavalry) on Aug. 8, 1864 and was transferred to the 148th PVI, Co. F Dec. 21, 1864. On June 1, 1865, he was transferred to Co. G, 53rd PVI and mustered out June 30, 1865.

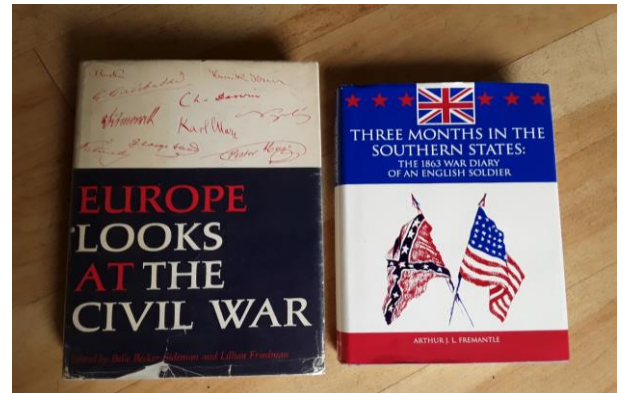
Book Reviews - "European views of our Civil War"

Both reviewed and submitted by Mike Espenshade

I borrowed these two books from a reporter-friend. They have a common thread of containing views from other-than-Americans. I hope my brief opinion of these books is helpful.

Europe Looks at the Civil War

Hardback, 1960, 323 pp. no illustrations - Edited by Belle Becker Sideman and Lillian Friedman. This anthology contains over 100 reflections of our war by kings, queens, warriors, writers, poets, aristocrats, etc. such as King Leopold I of Belgium, Queen Victoria, Garibaldi, Bismark, Karl Marx, Victor Hugo, Charles Darwin, and many others. All pieces authored in the 1860-1865 timeframe. All segments of European opinion are recorded here, those who (in majority) believed in the abolishment of slavery and those who hoped to see us smashed and disunited.



Issues discussed include the economic downturn in Europe due to the shortages of cotton. The South burned (secretly and deliberately) thousands of bales to keep them from market, hoping the European powers would feel the pain and "recognize" - if not support - the Confederacy as a new government. The Federal government sent free aid of food and money to England to help with their unemployment pains.

This work is a valuable read containing a wide range of contemporary opinions and extenuating (however relevant) circumstances not normally discussed in our Living History circles.

The most value I got out of this collection was the predominant feeling that Europe considered us the rising power of the world. It was hoped that our God-given and "profoundly rational constitution represented the ideal of social and political justice which every human society hopes to attain" ... and would prevail to lead the world. How prophetic.

Three Months in the Southern States: *The 1863 War Diary of an English Soldier*

By Lieut. Col. Arthur Fremantle, Coldstream Guards. Hardback, first published in England Nov 1863, 316 pp., 6 engravings.

Entering thru the blockade in southern Texas in March and exiting America via New York City in July 1863, Colonel Fremantle describes in eloquent detail, vividly in most cases, the effects on the southern people of distant war, the transportation systems and populace along the way, actual combat (incl. Gettysburg), and of their leaders as men. Fremantle chronicles, with frank and humorous assessment, the various citizens – especially the outspoken females – he socializes with. He spends congenial hours in the company of the most highly esteemed members of Southern Society including President Davis, key civic leaders, and the principle military generals.

His detailed descriptions of the every-day southern soldier of various units are noteworthy as are his ratings of the military attributes of both the “western troops” and the Army of Northern Virginia.

I enjoyed this enlightening documentary view of the South by an objective outsider who wrote it like he saw it. Fremantle was anti-slavery, but his observations of “the enslaved” surprised both him (and me).

A word from our president.....

Pards,

Before I get into the upcoming schedule I want to take a moment to recognize Michael Fedorshak. Michael will be leaving in a few weeks for the US Navy. The only regret that I have is that Michael didn't find us sooner. He's been a contributor and a positive influence to our unit since day one. His absence in camp and in the ranks will be noticeable. It's my hope that wherever his naval career takes him, he will one day find his way back to the 53rd. We have been blessed for the short few years that we've had him with us and I look forward to his return. I also want to thank his parents for supporting his passion for history and for trusting the 53rd. Michael will have a home with us for as long as we exist. Good luck, Michael!

I'm going to be brief since the July schedule consists of our two typical annual events. Landis Valley is up next. I sent a detailed email last week regarding the event so I'm not going to repeat everything here. Please reference that email and get back to me ASAP. Gruber Wagon Works is set for July 28. For anyone wishing to set up and stay in camp Saturday night, we can arrive after 5:00pm. If you plan to arrive Sunday, please be in camp, set up and vehicles moved out by 10:00am. The event is open to the public 11:00-5:00.

As always, don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, suggestions or concerns.

See y'all at Landis Valley!

Eric

Upcoming events –

20 – 21 July - Landis Valley Museum “Civil War Days” (Lancaster, PA)

Our annual event at Landis Valley Museum in Lancaster. This is a MAX EFFORT event meaning that all active 53rd PVI members should plan on attending. In return for doing this event, Landis Valley graciously allows us to use the facility for our annual winter drill. Our friends from the ELF Companies and Syke's Regulars will also be joining us for the weekend. Be onsite by 8:30AM Sat. with your normal kit. Sat. dinner and Sunday breakfast is most often provided. Bring food for the other meals and, of course, bring rounds; we will be doing 2 firing demos per day (approx.. 7 rounds fired per demo). Camp life, bayonet drill, food ration, mail call, etc. are normally on the schedule. Stay tuned to the 53rd PVI Facebook page and via email for updates on the actual schedule/program for the weekend.

28 July – Gruber Wagon Works – Reading, PA

1 day encampment event highlighting camp life, drill, firing demos, etc. Be onsite by 10AM. Again, stay tuned to the 53rd PVI Facebook page and email for updates on the schedule/program for the weekend. Several of us normally arrive after 5pm Sat. and start setting up camp, so please feel free to join us starting Sat. evening. The event runs 11AM ~ 5PM.

For Sale –

(if you have something for sale or are looking for something, email me to include it in a future edition)

All items in good shape unless noted otherwise. Listed by Rick Kramer for a friend; contact Rick directly for any inquiries/questions - auction8@comcast.net

Unlined Sack Coat (approx. xlarge)	30.00	CnD Jarnigan Great Coat (approx. Exlarge)	100.00
Keune McDowell Kepi some brim cracking	20.00	Grey Blanket with black stripe	50.00
Rubber Poncho	20.00	Older shelter half with brass grommets	5.00

If you have not submitted your “Get To Know Your Pard” profile yet, please send it to the editor ASAP for inclusion in a future newsletter! We still have quite a few members who have yet to share theirs with their pards. This isn’t meant to pry into your private life, but simply a fun way of letting your pards get to know you more.

2019 Calendar of Events -

- 12 Jan. Annual Holiday Party – Dobbin House (Reservations/Payment due by 31 Dec.)
- 2 Feb. Winter Drill – Landis Valley (weather back up date is 16 Feb)
- 16 Feb. Cartridge Rolling Party – Mark Fasnacht’s home (9 March back up date)
- 2-3 March – NR School of Instruction – Gettysburg Fire Hall
- 5 April – Ephrata Middle School – Civil War Day event with Michael Fedorshak
- 6 April – Spring Adopt A Position
- 13-14 April – NR Camp Of Instruction – Ft. McHenry **NR MAX EFFORT**
- 18-19 May – USAHEC (Carlisle, PA) – PAID Event **53rd MAX EFFORT**
- 27 May – Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade
- 5-7 July – Gettysburg GAC - 2ndary Event
- 20-21 July – Landis Valley Civil War Days - **53rd MAX EFFORT**
- 28 July - Gruber Wagon Works (Reading, PA) **53rd MAX EFFORT**
- 24-25 Aug. – 53rd Gettysburg Living History – Spangler Spring **53rd MAX EFFORT**
- 4-6 Oct. – Shenandoah 1864 (Lovettsville, VA) **NR MAX EFFORT**
- 19-20 Oct. – Cedar Creek (Middletown, VA) - 2ndary Event
- 2 Nov. - Autumn Adopt-A-Position – spring cleanup at the 53rd PVI Monument
- 16 Nov. – Remembrance Day Parade – Gettysburg
- 7 Dec. – 53rd PVI Annual Meeting (Mark Fasnacht’s home)



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