

53rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

Company C

"The Sentinel" June 2018

Newsletter of The James Creek Guards



"Clubs Are Trump!"

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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

Proper Saluting Protocols

by [The Jersey Gallinipper](#)

(borrowed from "Explicitly Clear")

Sources: **Revised Regulations of 1861, Article 29, Sections 237-257; Kautz "Customs of Service"**

This saluting thing – wow. Like a lot of you, I took one look at the mind-numbing list of who gets saluted in the 1861 Army Regulations, starting with the President and going through adjutants-general, members of the cabinet, the chief justice, foreign envoys, etc. ad infinitum, detail after tedious detail, and I said, to myself, "No. Just, No."

Then I started writing this blog and realized I had to find a way to explain it. So: "immersion after reduction," jettisoning stuff we'll never need. For instance, when did you see the Dutch ambassador at an event? So we'll leave out the details on saluting foreign dignitaries.

This week we're just going to cover saluting in public, in camp, and on the field, including formations and drill.

Salute superiors upon meeting them, in camp or in town. The lower rank initiates the salute, the upper rank returns it.

1. If carrying a long arm, use the shoulder arms position for the weapon and the hand-across-the-chest for the salute.
2. If not carrying a long arm, use the hand salute: right hand to the right edge of the hat or cap, palm out, elbow as high as the shoulder.
3. In both cases, look the officer in the eye when saluting.
4. Don't salute noncommissioned officers, even regimental staff (one exception, covered in a future blog on guard mount).
5. It is apparently not necessary to hold the salute until it is returned. That doesn't seem to be addressed anywhere. If anyone finds anything in regulations or practice showing salutes were held until returned, please give a yell and we'll spread the word.
6. It is, in a camp situation, only necessary to salute a superior once each day.
7. It is not necessary to salute officers if you are engaged in a work detail. If you are in charge of the detail and wish to speak to the officer about the work, by all means salute. Salute again when the communication is finished.
8. If a group of enlisted is at leisure and an officer approaches, the approach is noted by whoever sees him coming and all stand and salute.
9. If you are under arms and in formation, the individual in charge of your group will do the saluting. This includes saluting while marching. In various situations it may be appropriate or desirable for the entire unit to present arms or otherwise "salute;" that will be **by command of the officer in charge**.
10. Requirements for saluting are different if you are on guard duty and will be covered in a separate session.
11. Officers of lesser rank do salute officers of higher rank. Officers of equal rank are not required to salute upon meeting. HOWEVER, if a captain is officer of the day or acting in some other position of regimental responsibility, it is not inappropriate for others of equal rank to salute upon meeting him while he is in the conduct of such regimental duties. (It is merely an acknowledgement of his "temporary" superiority by virtue of his role.)

Officers who do NOT wish to be saluted for whatever reason have a couple of options. First, leave the rank in the tent. That would be the coat and hat. This is a reenactor thing. Second, pass to the rear of any formations. That would be an 1861 thing.

Related obliquely: A tent is "inside," and it is appropriate to remove your hat. The exception is anyone who is on duty; on duty means you are "under arms," in full uniform and with a weapon, a sword if an officer and a musket if a noncom. Men under arms are not required to remove their hats when inside, no matter how many people who have not read the regulations tell them to take off their hat.

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 Regt. P.V.
Camp California, Va.
Saturday, Jan. 11th, 1862.

Messrs Editors:--Indisposition was the cause of my not writing you for last week's issue. Very little of importance is transpiring in camp and one must endeavor to keep his best eye wide open to gather items enough for a respectable and readable weekly (perhaps weekly) epistle. Every morning you have the usual message flashed along the telegraphic lines--the wonderful fact that "all is quiet along the lines," just as if the people didn't know by this time that this immense "Army of the Potomac" was made to keep perfectly quiet. I am afraid when the all important "advance" is made, that a great many of our brave and willing soldiers, now in the prime of sturdy manhood, will be too old, too superannuated, to participate in it. We shouldn't grumble, however; we must wait patiently, trusting in the wisdom of the leaders, and things will come right in due course of time. While we ardently hope that this may be the case, and that this slow, tantalizing policy is the correct one, yet the fact cannot be suppressed that it is the intense desire of the whole army about the Capital that something of an important and decisive nature may be speedily and effectively done. Men prefer dying on the field of battle gallantly fighting for the flag of the Union, than to be sickened in unhealthy camps and dying, apparently, ingloriously in canvass hospitals. These remarks may be uncalled for and in bad taste, but it is nothing more than the opinion of many, very many, who strongly doubt the present inactive policy. It may be a question whether it is proper or improper to give publicity to these dissatisfactions--we shall not discuss it.

On the 21st inst., we struck our tents and removed from the low field along the railroad, to a hill near by, between the camps of the 8th Illinois Cavalry and the redoubtable 63d N.Y. The position is a much pleasanter and healthier one--the water, however, is not so handy as it was in our old situation. The boys were kept pretty busy during the day getting their tent floors, furniture, &c., moved. Many of the tents had been raised by means of logs, which was all torn apart, the logs carried to our new camp and built up again. Many of the tents that were elevated by boards were not struck at all, but the whole gorgeous super structure moved bodily. The boys who had enlarged their tents by digging cellars in them, were compelled to leave the cellars behind, they, after seriously pondering the matter, coming to the sage conclusion that it was an impossibility to move a hole in the ground. We are now, I presume, finally fixed in what may be termed winter-quarters.

A few nights ago the marquee occupied by one of the field officers caught fire from a celebrated California stove within. There was no one in the tent at the time. The fire was, however, timely observed by persons near by, who succeeded in putting it out before it did anything more serious than partially destroying a corner of the marquee. One of the band members, in his tent near by, was playing on the violin at the time the marquee was in a blaze, and I had thought of making an allusion to Nero fiddling while Rome burned, but on second thought I have feared to perpetrate any such horrible comparison. In this connection it may be proper to remark that stoves in tents need constant watching, while a blazing wood fire is burning in them. The pipes run through the canvass, and although protected by tin at the aperture, yet it often becomes so heated as to burn the canvass and endanger the tent.

A serious accident occurred on New Year's day. A member of Company F, Capt. Moody, was

carelessly fingering a loaded pistol when it accidentally discharged, the ball entering the abdomen of a member of the same company, standing near by. Although the wound is a dangerous one, yet it is hoped will not result fatally. All persons, whether soldier "or any other man," should be exceedingly careful how they handle firearms.

Major Yeager has gone home sick. During his absence, Capt. Bull, being the senior Captain of the regiment, is the Acting Major. Her performs the duty of his temporary position in a manner that wins the esteem of the regiment, and highly creditable to himself. We hope the time is not far distant when he will be promoted to this position. During the short time he has been in the service, by hard study and strict attention to military business, as well as by kind and honorable association with the men, his name stands high in the regiment. Although Colonel Brooke is among the youngest officers of the grade in the army, yet the date of his commission makes him the senior Colonel of the Brigade, and on several occasions during the absence of Gen. French, he has acted as Brigadier General.

Last Monday and Tuesday it was very cold. It snowed considerable, and the whitened hills and the cold air, made it look and feel like winter as we are accustomed to see it at home. The Potomac was nearly closed and would have been quite so if the ice boats had not been kept constantly running to keep the steamboat channel open. During the last few days it has changed, and the gloomiest kind of falling weather has set in. A dense fog day and night prevails; the worst kind of mud makes travelling through camp or anywhere else disagreeable in the broadest sense of the word. Rainy weather is abominated in camp. As a necessity all drills and parades must be dispensed with and the soldiers who are not on duty, have nothing to do the live-long day but pass the time tiresomely in their tents. The tents get mudded and damp and everything seems--or rather is--gloomy and disagreeable.

A sad affair occurred yesterday. Lieut. M. O. Crosby, of Company G, Capt. A. F. Jones, was for several weeks passed, lying sick with typhoid fever, in a private house in Alexandria. Yesterday afternoon, during the temporary absence of his attendants, and while raving with delirium, he sprang out of the window (second story) and died immediately from the injuries received. Lieut. Potter is a native of Potter county, Pa. He was a Professor of Languages in an educational institute in that county. When Capt. Jones commenced raising his company he enlisted as a private and was afterwards elected to a Second Lieutenancy. He was respected by all his associates for his talents and goodheartedness, and his unfortunate and untimely demise is regretted by all.

L. J. F.

"Don't be that guy"

by [The Jersey Gallinipper](#)

(borrowed from "[Explicitly Clear](#)")

Let's talk about first sergeants, then and now. How many of us know units where the first sergeant basically does all the work, from prepping the fire to hauling the wood to filling canteens?

How many of us think that's what the first sergeant did during the Civil War?

It's not. Put in its simplest terms, the first sergeant oversaw everything, including assigning work details with others put in charge of them. He did none of that himself, but if it didn't get done, he'd be answerable.

(Now, as with everything else, there are exceptions, but in this case the exception would be that the first sergeant was a dickhead generally, or, that he put on airs, that he bullied, or that he did none of the actual work he was supposed to do, which was paperwork plus making sure the men in the company were prepared to do whatever was required of them as soldiers.)

(continued)

How do we know? August Kautz

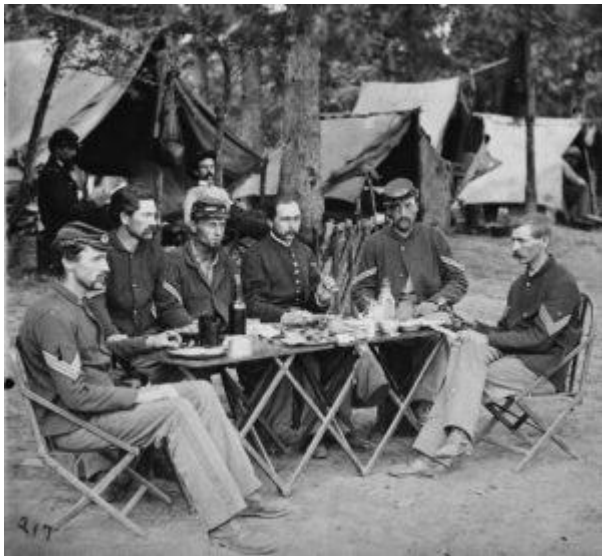
(http://www.64thill.org/drillmanuals/kautzs_customsofservice/enlisted/index.htm) sums it up based on regulations and experience:

- He has the immediate supervision of the company. He gets his orders from the captain or officer commanding the company and sees that they are performed in the company. He is, in fact, the foreman; the men are the artisans. He lays out and superintends the details of the work which the captain has directed to be executed.
- He keeps the rosters. He sees that all the other non-commissioned officers do their duty. He makes all the details from the company and sees that a record is kept on the roster. He parades the details, inspects them, and sees that they are properly equipped for the duty they are to perform, and then turns them over to a non-commissioned officer to be marched to their posts, or marches them there himself. He generally marches on the guard detail himself.



There's much more in Kautz; peruse it at your leisure. (link is included above)

Meanwhile, how did we get to the point where our depiction of history is so far?



Photograph from the main eastern theater of war, Meade in Virginia, August-November 1863. Bealeton, Va.

Noncommissioned officers' mess of Co. D, 93d New York Infantry. Clearly, from the faces, they are discussing the excellence of the dinner menu and the crispness of the company's drill. More seriously, they messed together: A certain level of cohesiveness among the company noncoms can be inferred.

Off the mark? I think it's pretty simple, and understandable, and it's kind of the same reason we tend to be top heavy, in mainstream ranks at least, on noncommissioned officers: the folks who show up consistently and do the work

demonstrate that they know what needs to be done and are awarded rank. Couple that with officers who used to be first sergeants who think it is still their job to bring the firewood, etc., and you have a recipe for a company of de facto workers regardless of rank, with no supervision or prioritizing of tasks.

So to get where we need to be, we need first sergeants who both understand the role their wartime counterparts played, and who are assertive in doing it. And the key is being the person who makes sure the company is ready to do its duty. That includes making sure they know the proper drill, making sure they have

appropriate gear, even stuff like making sure they know how to split wood and use a shovel. (Don't laugh, I've seen folks who really and truly did not know how to use a shovel properly.)

It's a question of perspective. The first sergeant still sees the work that needs to be done -- no officer needs to tell him that the firewood pile is too small. But instead of seeing it and carrying wood, he sees it, checks his roster to see who is up for the next work detail, and assigns a corporal to oversee those men in doing the actual work. He doesn't have to be a jerk, but he does have to be a leader.

And we also need officers who let their first sergeants be first sergeants, in camp and on the field. As we've noted before, the company commander in the field needs to be primarily attuned to the battalion commander; if he's fussing over the crooked front rank, he'll miss the command to advance and the company will look like a cluster of clowns on peyote. Really and truly, again, the men don't like that. Pride is pride, it was a motivator then and it's a motivator now. And the solution is for the first sergeant to get after the corporals to quietly take care of alignment and dress and which side the guide is on, etc., not for the captain to be yelling "dress the line" and drowning out the colonel's command to advance. Or, worse, fall back. There you are, out in the tall grass by yourself, with both armies plus spectators seeing that you clearly are somehow deficient.

2018 USAHEC Event and Photos –

This year's USAHEC event got a late start due to rainy weather Sat. morning, but by noon, the crowd's were turning out. We had a good share of visitors to our CW-era huts to discuss all things Civil War. Below are some photos submitted by Pete Zinkus. In attendance: Matt Steger, Pete Zinkus, Michael Fedorshak, Alec Bohlenblust, Jeff and Joseph Marks, Croce Volpe (ask him about the hotel he stayed at Friday night...), Marc Benedict, and Mark Fasnacht. Due to the cancelled Sat. morning schedule, we did not have our firing demo and otherwise had a very laid-back schedule to see the sites and mingle with the visitors.





Private Fedorshak posing in his living quarters for the weekend at USAHEC.

2018 Hummelstown Memorial Day Parade



Original 53rd PVI Veteran headstones –

(submitted by Marc Benedict)



Andrew Jackson Zerby, born April 16, 1846 [drafted; Private, Co. A, 148th PA] — Mustered October 20, 1863; wounded at Cold Harbor, Virginia, June 3, 1864; transferred to Company B, 53d Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers June 1, 1865; mustered out June 30, 1865. Died March 21, 1917. Buried in Borlin Cemetery, Carrollton, IL.

"Get To Know Your Pard" –

I have run this segment in the past, but am long out of summited profiles. Many 53rd members have yet to forward their profiles to me for inclusion in a future edition of "The Sentinel". Please take some time to answer the below questions (or some up with some of your own) and forward your info to me. We're not trying to pry into your lives, but simply learn a little more about each 53rd PVI member. This also helps some of the newer members learn about our more seasoned members. If you have not done so yet, please take a few minutes to copy and paste the below questions into a separate email and respond to me with your answers, or if you have your own preferred questions, feel free to use those. The below questions are mere suggestions.

10 Questions:

1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you been re-enacting?
3. What is your favorite part of the hobby?
4. What was the first Civil War-related kit item that you bought?
5. Have you ever taken part of a Civil War movie, TV, or other production?
6. Do you have a favorite or most memorable CW event?
7. Do you have any other non-Civil War hobbies?
8. Do you have a Civil War photo (wet-plate or tin-type image) to share?
9. What do you do (or did you do, if retired) for a living?
10. Favorite Saying?

Upcoming events -

22 July – Gruber Wagon Works (Reading, PA)

1 day event in Reading for some drill, encampment, talking to the public, and maybe even some free ice cream. Many of us will setup after 5pm Saturday. Bring your normal kit, food, etc. Arrive no later than 9AM Sunday.

28 - 29 July – Landis Valley Civil War Days (Lancaster)

2 day event at Landis Valley Museum's "Civil War Days". Bring your normal kit, food, etc. Bring sufficient rounds (approx.. 45) for 3 firing demos each day, although the schedule may change. Plan on company drill, bayonet drill, food issue, etc. Arrive by 8:30 AM Sat. Keep posted to our group Facebook page or any emails from Eric for updates.

2018 Calendar of Events -

- ~~13 January – Holiday Party – Gettysburg~~
- ~~3 February – Winter Drill (Landis Valley) – Lancaster~~
- ~~17 – 18 February – National Regiment "School Of The Soldier" – Gettysburg~~
- ~~3 March – Cartridge Rolling Party – Kleinfeltersville~~
- ~~7 April – Spring Adopt A Position (Monument Cleanup) – Gettysburg NMP~~
- ~~21 – 22 April – Living History – Gettysburg NMP~~
- ~~19 – 20 May – USAHEC – Carlisle, PA (Paid Event)~~
- ~~19 – 20 May – New Market Re-enactment – NR Max Effort~~
- ~~28 May – Memorial Day Parade – Hummelstown~~
- ~~2 – 3 June – Wilson's Wharf – Ft. Pocahontas Charles City, VA (ELF)~~
- ~~5 – 8 July – 155th Gettysburg Re-enactment – Gettysburg NMP~~
- ~~22 July – Gruber Wagon Works – Reading~~
- ~~28 – 29 July – Landis Valley – Lancaster~~
- ~~11 – 12 August – Cedar Mountain LH (1st MN)~~
- ~~7 – 9 September – 155th South Mountain – Burkittsville, MD (NR Max Effort)~~
- ~~6 – 7 October – Living History – Gettysburg NMP~~
- ~~3 November – Fall Adopt-A-Position (Monument Cleanup) – Gettysburg NMP~~
- ~~17 November – Remembrance Day Parade – Gettysburg~~
- ~~1 December – Annual Meeting~~



53rd PVI Contacts

President: Eric Ford (reenactor53@gmail.com)

Vice President: Croce Volpe (vafomedic@aol.com)

Secretary/Treasurer: Pat Rose (p.m.rose@comcast.net)

Newsletter Editor: Matthew Steger (n3ntj@comcast.net)

Webmasters: Steve Dillon (steve@gofoxpro.com) and Matthew Steger (n3ntj@comcast.net)

Website: <http://www.53rdpvi.org>

53rd PVI Member Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/53rdPVI>

National Regiment Phone line: 800-777-1861 (code 61)

National Regiment Website: <http://nationalregiment.com>

Treasurer's Address: Pat Rose, 919 North 26th St., Reading, PA 19606

