

Birch Bark Express

The newsletter of Butler's Rangers

Editor: *Corporal Michael D. Trout UE*

March 2005

Commander's notes

Lieutenant Dave Solek

Simplicity, efficiency, and consistency! These are the goals I have aimed for within the company. I feel confident they were the same benchmarks that Col. Butler strived for and Gen. Haldimand wished for within the original Corps of Rangers. All the documentation that has been found so far indicates this. Our BAR membership charges us to continue to do more research and to finely hone our impression of the original Rangers and their families. Just like in a mystery novel, one day one of us may find a tidbit of information that will bring us closer to the point of stepping out of a history book or time warp.

This year is the 225th anniversary of 1780, when parties of Rangers and Indians carried out destructive raids into the rich Mohawk Valley and turned it into smoking ruins. Watch for further information on these important 225th events: Stone Arabia/ Fort Klock on Sept. 23-24, and the Old Stone Fort at Schoharie on Oct. 8-9. The Rangers were very prominent in these two original actions.

On July 9-10, Chrysler Farm at Upper Canada Village is shaping up to be a "must do" event. The Canadian Butler's Rangers and Royal Yorkers are pushing for "all up" attendance at this show. I'll send further information out to you when I receive it.

All of us should plan to attend the BAR School on April 23-24. Our own Vivian Lea Stevens is coordinating it and has worked hard to put together a curriculum of basic 18th century skills and knowledge. Of course, this will be a benefit to all of us on our interpretations. Show up and show your support!

This year, for a change, Butler's Rangers will have our annual meeting at the BAR School on Saturday. We will establish our 2005 schedule and hold a discussion about civilian refugees. We'll also talk about the future direction of our unit. Again, I've been asked to lead a Sunday morning trek at the School, so make sure your firelock is as clean as a whistle, your cartridge pouch is full of ammunition, and you're ready to hit the trail. I'll see you on the trail!

Those who wish to participate at Burning of the Valleys Military Association's (BVMA) events for 2005 need to send their dues in. The BVMA is sponsoring events where the original Butler's Rangers were present (and burned the valleys too--hence their name), such as Stone Arabia/Ft Klock, N.Y., and the Old Stone Fort in Schoharie, N.Y. Dues are \$10 per person age 16 years or older. You can

make out a check to the BVMA or me, and send to my address: David Solek, 580 Wheeler Rd, Monroe CT 06468. Please get them to me no later than 31 March 2005. I will fill out the paperwork and mail the whole amount to them ASAP. Note that your dues pay for the BVMA newsletters, insurance, and other items such as event mailers.

After action reports

Battle of Stony Point 225th anniv. July 2004

Kristin and I arrived on Saturday morning and immediately found Katie Caddell and other CCM members at the BAR goods table. I bought the newly-released CD reissue of the excellent BAR fife and drum cassette. At the camp, I was happy to see the regulars were there in some strength, considering how few attended the first two BAR events this year. I counted at least six different regiments, plus some New Jersey Volunteers, and a couple of Delancey's as well.

I was the only Butler's Ranger present, not including Dale Dennis who confessed he was going over to the enemy today. Despite my sadness over my pard's treason, we went to see the "People of the Brigade." The host was our own Katie. Several different regulars, loyalists, and rebels, as well as civilians, were described in detail. The stories and descriptions were very colorful and really do bring the people of the 18th century to life. In fact, I felt that the presentation could give a layperson a better understanding of these people and their beliefs than any battle could. Becky Fifield modeled her silk gown, showing off the upper crust of 18th century society. Great job, Katie! I hope to see you do this again.

With Becky dressed so elegantly, I feared she too had gone over to the enemy. I was much relieved to learn that she was with our camp--and demonstrating getting dressed 18th century style. "Dress a Beck," as the presentation is informally called, was excellent. Most of the audience was from the CCM corps rather than just civilians, so many got a chance to hear something they can use. Based on the number of questions, it was obvious Becky had the audience's attention. I congratulate her on a job well done. It's great to see that our camp followers do

Stony Point, N.Y. 16-18

more for the hobby than most. Butler's is very lucky to be such a well-rounded unit. Lieutenant Dave, as well as John Ward, showed up right before dinner. This was not too surprising; our men would never miss a good meal. The roast beef, mashed potatoes, fresh vegetables, and salad were provided by the organizers and were very good.

For the battle, we joined our fellow green-coated Delancey and NJV friends as a combined company. We arrived in our position and received our orders to be obliterated. The rebel attack was fast, to say the least. I got off only two shots before Dave and I ran for the hills. Somehow we lost John and the others in our haste to escape. But our escape was cut off, and Dave developed a death wish. Rather than surrender, he coaxed some rebels into attacking us. We were bayoneted (with muzzles rather than bayonets), and were quickly helped up by our foes with a handshake. Finally everyone got together to fire off a last couple of volleys and parade past the crowd.

On our way back to camp one of the Guards collapsed. It turned out that he was diabetic. It looked bad at first, but quick reactions by those around him and by qualified personnel brought him back to consciousness. I was quite horrified and worried for the chap, and was much relieved to find out later that he was doing well.

This ended the event for Kristin and myself. Being as there was no battle Sunday, and with Dave and John leaving early, we skipped the rest of the event to save our gear for Quebec.

Pvt. Mickey J. Wind

Plains of Abraham Québec City, Qué. 31 July-1 Aug. 2004

After a pleasant drive along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River, we arrive Friday in the magnificent city of Québec. We make our way to the Plains of Abraham—a huge park on the city's south side, where Wolfe's 1759 victory over Montcalm eliminated France from North America. When I see a British regimental flag over some tents we head in that direction. Suddenly I realize we're walking into the rebel camp! The flag is actually a French regimental flag; this particular French flag looks much like British flags at a distance. This is a mistake I hope to never make on the battlefield. We skedaddle away and spot the Crown camp to the southeast. We soon find the tents of Butler's Rangers and settle in.

As expected, we have a great turnout. Nearly two dozen Rangers from Frey's, MacDonnell's, and Ten Broeck's Companies, plus their associated civilians, fill rows of tents and a couple of dining flies. Captain Scott Peterson greets everyone with his usual enthusiasm.

Saturday starts with a parade through the old city. A light drizzle falls as we march along the narrow streets. We appreciate the crowd standing in the drizzle to cheer us. There is no feeling quite like marching, in full kit, through historic streets that actually saw our counterparts centuries ago. Fortunately, the weather stays as light drizzle until we arrive back at camp, when a downpour begins.

We talk and eat, huddling under the canvas in the heavy rain, which seems to get worse. Word arrives that the Saturday battle is canceled, and then the camp area begins to flood. Most of our tents, on well-drained ground, are okay, but the area around the dining flies becomes ankle deep. We move one of the flies, but eventually everything and everybody is wet anyway. Soon a small river develops, and we witness our campfire floating away, still in flames. But we Rangers always make the best of a bad situation, and we

soon organize miniature boat races using pots and bowls. There is much concern for the battlefield's condition for tomorrow. However, a couple of folks with Québec experience insist that once the rain stops, the water will drain off and the ground will dry out in an amazingly short time. There is considerable skepticism of this theory.

As on the previous night, many of us head into the old city for supper. The rain has finally stopped. There is an admirable selection of eating places in Québec, and we thoroughly enjoy the fine food and camaraderie. Afterward Luann, Deborah, and I take a long, leisurely walk through the old city's streets, which we have always loved to do. Now, in full 18th century attire to match the buildings, it's even more fun, as dozens of people stop us to ask questions and take photos. I wish we could do this every year.

Sunday morning dawns with a drying wind as bright sunshine takes over eastern Canada. Sure enough, the river of rainwater has disappeared, puddles are evaporating, and mud is quickly drying. Yesterday's grim outlook is replaced with optimism for the coming battle.

The Crown forces assemble and we are treated to a rousing speech from Colonel Christian Cameron, our division commander today. He tells us we are going to see heavy action, and to be prepared for lots of running. We are.

By the time we get to the battlefield, you'd think it hadn't rained in days. Just behind the Select Marksmen, we are sent toward the enemy's right flank, up a steep hill. Unfortunately, the rebels had the same idea, and they outnumber us badly. We retreat off the hill, in some confusion. Not a very good start for us; we vow to not let that happen again. To the left of the hill, a weak spot in the enemy's lines presents a good opportunity. We charge into a thinly-wooded area, scattering the

rebel scouts with our Ranger war whoops. Advancing, we get around their flank a bit. Although the rebels outnumber us, our presence forces them to adjust their lines.

We continue this maneuvering until the increasing numbers of troops on both sides somewhat stabilizes the battle lines. As at Saratoga two years ago, the visual image of large armies maneuvering and firing is magnificent. The noise of muskets, artillery, drums, and shouted commands merge into pandemonium. On the hills to the north is the crowd of spectators, later estimated at 50,000. Serving in the line, we are frequently ordered to charge the enemy where weak spots appear. In this way, we keep the rebels busy while the main Crown force prepares to attack.

In continuous action, under increasing heat and humidity, we begin to feel the fatigue. The Royal Yorkers appear on our right, slamming into the rebels with good effect. This gives us some breathing room and Capt. Paterson orders us to the rear for five minutes of watering and rest. Rejuvenated, we return with enthusiasm.

So where are the Redcoats, anyway? We provincials, natives, and Germans have been holding off the entire rebel army for

nearly an hour. There is grumbling in the ranks: "Wouldn't it be nice if the regulars decide to show up?" Eventually they do, although the provincials have lost some numbers due to exhaustion and musket breakdowns. The rebels suffer when the horde of redcoats crashes into them. Now we can put real pressure on the enemy, who begins to show signs of disorder.

Col. Cameron puts us back to work, with rapid assaults upon the enemy. In our over-enthusiasm some of our ranks advance too far and our lines become ragged. In a memorable scene, Col. Cameron faces us and bellows "**No one . . . goes past . . . me!**" He spins around and leads us in a brisk but steady advance (with perfectly-formed lines) that crumbles part of the rebel lines.

Not long afterward, parleys are called and the battle ends. Although the enemy had first gained the upper hand, the Crown forces retook the lost ground, and now the rebel lines seemed to be near collapse. It was a day to remember, with spectacular views of maneuvering armies, for the biggest audience we will see for quite a while. There is talk that the city of Québec is planning a repeat in 2009. I wouldn't miss it for anything.

-- *Cpl. Michael D. Trout UE*

Battle of Newtown 225th Anniv. Elmira, N.Y. 27-29 Aug. 2004

Kristin Negrycz and I arrived shortly after 4 P.M. on Friday. We found the Loyalist Ranger units were being kept with Indians in the "Indian Village." The forested village was not that big and several units camped without ordered rows, but merely in a way that each unit was separate. After setting up camp we met Dave Solek and Katie Caddell. The park served dinner but it was hardly a meal with little chicken, biscuits, and corn. **Where the hell was the chicken!!!?**

Saturday dawn typified the entire weekend: mixed sun and clouds, hot and humid . . . yet no rain fell, but for a brief

shower Friday night. A good amount of other Butler's arrived: our commander Scott Paterson with his Canadian group from MacDonnell's Company (Chase, Gary, Pat, and Rick); one lone BVMA Ranger (Jason); and five from our company (Steve Blakeslee, Dale Dennis, Mike Trout, and John Ward and his son Alec).

Capt. Paterson and Lt. Solek had their hands full with us this weekend. We had four (yes, **four**) tactical demonstrations on Saturday, each lasting an hour. That's one every two hours! First, the Crown regulars camp was attacked, then came a

tactical in the woods, then the native camp was attacked, and finally we hit the rebel camp. The rebels had the advantage of numbers because most of the redcoats participated only in the first tactical. Each battle was fought with a fury. The men in one Continental unit had big mouths and were shouting many non-period and immature insults. Despite this we had a great time. Our “water angels” (Katie and my love) followed us everywhere, keeping us and our friends (and some foes) watered. The uncivilized rabble we fought against kept referring to our “water angels” as “water wenches.”

That evening, most of the Rangers attended a special supper at a fine restaurant overlooking the Susquehanna Valley. The occasion was the 40th anniversary (to the day) of the recreated Butler’s Rangers. A celebratory cake appeared, many tales were told, and all had a wonderful time. We even got the restaurant’s keyboardist to lead us in *God Save the King*. It was a time for some sadness as well. Ron Roff led us in a remembrance of his wife Peg, who had passed away on 20 May. Peg was the last original member of the recreated Butler’s Rangers. She will always be missed.

There had been no time to visit the sutlers on Saturday, a problem made worse by their tents being quite far from our camps. I know the 20+ sutlers were not happy. Sunday had but one action scheduled, for the afternoon. So people were able to shop, leaving the sutlers feeling a tad better. I bought a scalping knife with an Indian neck sheath (Rangers normally traded with the natives so it looks good to have some Indian stuff on your person).

The afternoon event was the public reenactment of the 1779 Battle of Newtown. About 60 assorted Loyalists and natives elected to participate in a 20-minute woodland trek to the battlefield, led by one of Brandt’s Volunteers. (The remaining 190 Crown troops enjoyed a 10-minute bus ride.) Navigational errors turned our trek into an epic 60-minute hike through woods, deep gullies, and mud up to our calves, followed by a long uphill slog in deep grass, all during brutal heat and humidity with no shade. One man broke his ankle; another passed out and had to be carted off. I took a break, as I was feeling faint toward the end. However, I made it to the field under my own power.

The battle started about 30 minutes later. We were pushed back, but in good order. The left was able to extricate itself and we fought very hard despite the lack of shade. As the rebels could no longer push the Crown troops from their united positions, the battle was stopped to at least keep the appearance of our retreat. Not quite accurate, eh? At any rate, Gavin Watt did a great job in command of the Crown forces, and his subordinates performed excellent service as well.

Following this, Gavin asked for volunteers to march to a nearby cemetery where were buried some Butler’s Rangers and Indians killed during the 1779 battle. Despite our exhaustion and the heat, several of us went along, and we were pleased to participate in a moving ceremony and firelock salute for the fallen, whose ultimate sacrifice led us to where we are in 2004.

-- *Pvt. Mickey Wind*

Each event brings wonderful new memories and fun stories to tell, and the 225th anniversary of Newtown was no different. Friday afternoon I arrived at the site right after Dave, and we drove to our camp in the Indian Village with Brandt’s Volunteers, the Company of Select

Marksman, and of course the Indian Department. We completed our setup in rather humid weather, had supper provided by the site, and then settled in for a bit of sutler shopping and visiting with friends. We turned in somewhat

early, knowing that tomorrow would be a very long day with four rolling tacticals.

Saturday began as hot and humid as the day before. I'd had the foresight to pack both my tin kettles and an extra mug, so Kristin Negrcyz and I volunteered to do water detail. Alec Ward also pitched in and was a great helper throughout the day. At the first formation, Capt. Paterson asked if we wanted to fall in right behind. . . Kristin and I looked at each other, looked at him, and said, "Yes, **please!**" So away we went, keeping a respectful distance behind, to keep ourselves out of sight and out of trouble.

The first tactical was in the woods near our camp, the second was an attack on the Crown camp, the third on the Indian village, and the final attack was on the Continental camp at the bottom of the hill. Throughout this very humid day, Kristin, Alec, and I filled and lugged countless buckets of water, much appreciated by Rangers and savages alike. (Darn savages just don't seem to carry any sort of water vessel!?) After the second tactical, the appreciative Canadian Rangers christened Kristin and me "Water Angels." This name would provide the best story of the day. . . .

After the last tactical was over, Kristin and I went through the Continental camp to see some friends of mine. As we left, a

spectator said, "Look--water wenches." With a big smile, I wheeled on him and said, "**No**, sir . . . **we** are water angels!" Gesturing towards the Continental camp, he said, "But they call them water wenches." I had started to walk away, so again turned on him and with another big smile stated "**That** sir, is the difference between the forces of law and order, and the traitorous rebellious swine! We are **water angels!**" With a bit of a curtsy, Kristin and I turned and walked away as we heard his friends laughing uproariously at his upbraiding by a "water angel!" Kristin and I had the biggest grins on our faces. When we rejoined the Rangers at camp and the tale was recounted, Capt. Patterson commented, "Katie, I think you're a bit of a spitfire!"

It has been said that reenacting is all about memories and stories of special friends and shared times. I feel extremely fortunate to have found a home within the Rangers where I have been afforded the opportunity to experience the joys of reenacting to the fullest! 2004 was an amazing year for the camp followers of Frey's Company--from the great Butler's Swamp Romp at Minisink to carrying water at Newtown, it was a year full of memories. I am quite confident that the stories from Minisink and Newtown will be ones I will tell with no small amount of pride for many years to come.

-- *Mistress Katie Caddell* "Water Angel"

Fort Ticonderoga Ticonderoga, New York 11-12 Sept. 2004

This was my first time attending the annual reenactment at Fort Ticonderoga. The lovely Kristin went with me to this event and we were the only representatives of Frey's Company. However, unlike at Rhode Island, we were not the "lone" Rangers. Jim Stevens welcomed us to serve with the BVMA's Ten Broeck's Company as part of the "extended Butler's Ranger family" (his words).

We arrived around 6 P.M. on Friday and camp was already going up. While the rain had gone from the area, in prelude to a gorgeous weekend, the ground was still wet and muddy in spots. We found a good location for the tent near the end of the company street. Not all was pleasure though, as Bob Smith went to hospital with high blood pressure and paleness. He turned out to be okay and rejoined us, but not for the battles.

There was a fairly good turnout for the event, probably about 250 Crown troops in 2 battalions and about 300 or so Congressionals. Saturday morning we held informal drill, since only the battles were scheduled. The drill was by company and by four-man teams and was slightly different to that used by Frey's. The "turn" command was not intended to put us all back into battle formations. Despite the difference, I quickly caught on to this and fell in quite well. Following drill Kristin and I went for lunch at the Log House restaurant at the fort and visited the fort itself.

Fort Ti's collection of items and paintings are extremely impressive. Anybody interested in the Revolutionary period would be wise to spend some time examining the displays. Kristin and I spent a good amount of time there, especially with the many types of old firearms and swords.

Saturday afternoon featured the first battle of the weekend. We were sent off leading the Crown forces and were soon ambushed by rebels. Fanning out to the far right we circled through the high grass and battled our way forward to the bottom of a ridge. We continued to hold our ground and extend our line as we did so. The regulars came around us and formed to the extreme right of our position. As the battle developed the rebels had a hard time maneuvering their troops to meet us. A wide gap opened between them and soon the natives joined us from the cover of the tall grass. This sudden surprise made the confused rebels run troops all over the place. It was apparent that they had lost control of the battle. Soon we had King's Rangers, Yorkers, and part of Butler's charge through a giant gap that opened in the rebel lines. A parley was called, mainly because we were supposed to lose. However, the rebels were confused from the beginning and were not handled properly. The provincials, Germans, and Natives left the field, and the battle was resumed so the rebels could beat up the remaining regulars!

We expected that there would be many unhappy people and that we would be chewed out for doing what we did. To our surprise, the opposite happened. Jim went to the officer's meeting and was asked to help plan the next day's battle. The Congressionals admitted to being confused and that they made several errors; they apologized for not being properly prepared. The next day's fight would be much better executed.

After the battle we had an enjoyable visit with our good friend Dave Scott of the 84th and his comrades. Dave later dropped by the Butler's dining fly to join in the fun there as well. The Ten Broeck ladies prepared a wonderful meal for us on Saturday night, including dumplings and chicken stew.

The next morning Kristin and I visited the sutlers. We purchased her a hat and some other small items and began checking out muskets for her. She is much excited since she does not have one of her own and would like to use it for future firelock matches. So far it appears she will be the proud owner of a Loyalist Arms musketoon.

For the battle, two 16-year-old boys joined us. They are preparing for service in the next couple of years and were not to fire a weapon. I elected not to lead a four-man team (mainly because this is not my company and I do not feel it proper to do so without my own comrades present), but I did volunteer to mentor one of the boys. Josh was my file partner, following me as I explained what we were doing and why. He later thanked me, and I found it very rewarding to give some of my experience to a new soldier.

The battle itself was well done. We hit the rebels just as they came onto the field. They reacted fairly well and pushed us back down the hill with their superior numbers. However, the regulars soon joined the fighting, forcing the rebels to move troops to contend with them in the flank. During the action, a small group of

rebels tried to gain our rear, but got cut off and surrounded instead. They failed to break out and were forced to surrender to us and the natives. After this we watched from a distance as the rest of the Crown forces caved in the rebel lines. The battle ended with a victory for the friends of rightful government.

We thanked Jim for letting us fall in with his group, and I appreciated the professional respect shown to me. I truly did have a great time at Fort Ti, and looked forward to being home with my company again.

-- Pvt. Mickey J. Wind

From the archives

A couple of years ago your editor had a letter printed in the Albany *Times Union*, in which I pointed out that Virginia has a thriving Civil War tourism industry. I suggested that upstate New York could do the same thing with the Revolutionary War, and that a Rev War tourism industry could be a real economic boon to New York. I pointed out that New York State probably has more Revolutionary sites than any other state. In passing, I also mentioned that I was a member of a Rev War reenactment unit (although I did not say that it was the **best** such unit).

I received a reply to my letter from a Ms. Helen Coughtry of Altamont, N.Y. (west of Albany). She expressed support for my views, mentioned that her grandfather had written a book in 1900 touching on that subject, and would I like a copy for my unit? But of course, I replied.

The book is *The Story of Old Saratoga: The Burgoyne Campaign, to Which is Added New York's Share in the Revolution*. The author is John Henry Brandow, M.A., "sometime pastor of the (Dutch) Reformed Church of Schuylerville, N.Y. and member of the New York State Historical Association." Ms. Coughtry's note inside the book reads: "For Michael Trout—in hopes that this volume, written by my grandfather, may be of interest to you and your friends."

The book's first edition had two parts; the military and the civil history of Saratoga, which was renamed "Schuylerville" in the early 1800s (the area we call "Saratoga" today did not exist in 1777).

However, the second edition (1919) added a third part: "New York's Share in the Revolution." Brandow argues that New York "has never been granted her rightful share in our current histories." He takes a strong anti-New England slant, something I've never encountered before. I found the following table fascinating, although how accurate it is I have no idea:

State	Population in rebel military	Battles in state
New York	30%	92
Massachusetts	21%	14
Connecticut	16%	14
New Hampshire	15%	-
Rhode Island	11%	5
Georgia	10%	22
New Jersey	9%	31
Pennsylvania	9%	5
Delaware	8%	2
Maryland	7%	-
Virginia	6%	16
South Carolina	4%	79
North Carolina	3%	13

Elsewhere in the book, there are decent accounts of Burgoyne's campaign, and of the very early history of Saratoga, which was a lot bloodier than I suspected. Included are two large foldout maps of the 1777 battlefield, hand-drawn by Brandow. I found them very hard to follow, but they contain some information not available on other maps.

I consider this book to belong to Butler's Rangers, and available for borrowing by any member. Let me know if you'd like to check out our "library" book.

--Cpl. Michael D. Trout UE