

Birch Bark Express

The newsletter of Butler's Rangers

Editor: *Corporal Michael D. Trout UE*

December 2005

Commander's notes

Lieutenant David Solek

We've finished the 2005 campaign season. The autumn events are always the most enjoyable to me, with the cool, crisp air and beautiful foliage. Add the aroma of a hot meal cooking over a wood fire and you're enjoying a little bit of heaven.

One of our goals this year was to start cooking camp meals in one "army issue" kettle. We did, and enjoyed ration stews, hasty pudding, and pease porridge, which the average Ranger and refugee would have been grateful to have on the trail. We also foraged from nature's bounty by adding blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and mulberries.

What a great learning experience for us, and for the viewing public--who, by the way, we were asked to do a program for at Putnam Memorial Park in August. We were paid \$300, which will pay most of

our insurance for next year. My sincere thanks to VivianLea Stevens, Kristen Negrycz, and Mickey Wind. The public and Park would like to see us back again.

Just a quick glance at next year's reenactment schedule shows that there will be a full slate of activities. Besides the Washington and Rochambeau Revolutionary Route 225th events, there will be reenactments of the 225th anniversary of the raids on Wawarsing and West Canada Creek, N.Y., in which the original Rangers played a very prominent part. Finally, no one will want to miss the "March to Victory" celebration at Yorktown, Virginia, in October 2006.

I'll be glad to answer your questions over a hot bowl of soup or stew. You bring the beverage. See you at sundown, Ranger!

Annual meeting New Windsor Cantonment, N.Y. 23 April 2005

Called to order at 12:10 P.M. Attending were Don Cox, Dale Dennis, Michael and Philip Malvagno, Jon Maney, Kristen Negrycz, Donald and Diane Paukett, David Solek, VivianLea Stevens, Michael Trout, and Mickey Wind.

Our treasury balance on 4 April 2005 was \$1,271.10. The interest rate on our account is .25% (or 1/4 of 1%). A motion was made to move funds to a bank paying a better interest rate; M&T Bank was suggested. This passed unanimously. Don Paukett was asked to manage the cash movement in the best interest of the group.

Dave Solek has 200 large and 100 small Butler's Rangers buttons. Don Cox has 60-inch-wide tow cloth, good for camp beds and haversacks (it must be washed and machine-dried twice). We have white wool for waistcoats and coattail linings. We also want to purchase green wool for coats, approved at last year's meeting and reaffirmed this year. We are still seeking a source for gaitered trousers (overalls).

Our unit safety rules will be the same as those for the BAR. We ask all members to become familiar with them

Thanks for paying your dues on time. This helps the whole organization.

Our military goal is to practice the Manual of Arms and light infantry tactics at each event.

Our goal for the mess is to cook and eat as a group. The plan is to use the same utensils and cook the same types of meals that would have been eaten by the original Rangers and other members of the British Army in the American Revolution. VivianLea Stevens has reproduction tinned kettles (based on originals) that she has offered for our mess. We **thank** her for her gracious offer and look forward to eating many delicious meals from them.

The Butler's Rangers Web site created by Sean Otis is still open and only he can deactivate it. VivianLea will try again to have him close it.

Suggestions: (1.) We need a list for new recruits to purchase Ranger equipment. (2.) All members must make a good

impression at events. This is our best advertising. (3.) We need to do some paid events to help defray the cost of our insurance.

Proposed 2005 events our unit will try to make a good showing at:

- Charleston, S.C. 225th BAR, 12-16 May; or Mabee Farm, Rotterdam Jct., N.Y., BVMA, 14-15 May.
- Springfield, N.J., 225th, or Johnson Hall Market Fair, Johnstown, N.Y., BVMA, 11-12 June.
- Crysler's Farm, Ont., NB, 9-10 July.
- Newtown, Elmira, N.Y., 27-28 Aug.
- Eastfield Village, N.Y., 3-5 Sept.
- Stone Arabia, N.Y. 225th, 24-25 Sept.
- Schoharie, N.Y. 225th, 8-9 Oct.
- Brookhaven, N.Y. 225th, 29-30 Oct.
- Fort Lee, N.J., BAR, 19-20 Nov.

We adjourned at 1:10 P.M.

-- *Pvt. Donald J. Paukett*

After action reports

Mabee Farm, Rotterdam Junction, N.Y.

14-15 May 2005

Soon after Kristin and I arrived at Mabee Farm, the top of one of our upright tent poles broke. We are indebted to Jim Stevens for hitting a nail into the other side, allowing the tent to stand.

We were joined by Dave Solek and many BVMA Rangers on Saturday. During the morning training I got to play team leader, leading Dave, Joe (a BVMA Ranger), and a turncoat militiaman. Drilling and inspecting can be a little awkward at first, but I became more comfortable and feel I did a good job.

After lunch, all units had to train in how to work safely with artillery. We learned many different signals and how to eye safe distances. The power of the guns was demonstrated by destroying some paper soldiers. It would be wise for everyone to be aware of their power, and learn how to play with them safely.

The afternoon battle saw a force of loyalists (almost all Butler's) taking on the few militia companies. We went back and forth across a very sunny field. I talked Dave into drinking water, and I am proud of my role in his physical well-being. Finally we were pulled from the field, leaving Clint (another BVMA ranger) to the mercy of the rebel doctors. They put on a great demonstration for the crowd, who enjoyed Clint losing his arm despite begging the doctor to leave it on.

Dave left in the evening, but Kristin and I enjoyed the barn dance, which was much better called than at Kingston last year.

It rained overnight and the forecast was not good. Many folks left, but the weather cleared late in the morning and we enjoyed another sunny day. But only a few soldiers remained, and the field was deemed "wet" (this of course does not

bother Rangers), so the battle was canceled. In its place some infantry exchanged fire with a bateau crew. It was amusing, but a little dangerous as much of the public was too close.

Kristin and I both had a wonderful time and recommend Mabee Farm.

-- *Pvt. Mickey Wind*

German Flatts 2005

Herkimer, New York

18-19 June

I am very pleased to announce that on the 18th and 19th instant there was an excellent event in the town of German Flatts, New York. Held on the grounds of the historic Fort Herkimer Church, this was a prime example of an event done right. On a scale of 1 to 5, it rated a 4.

First off, we knew we were in the right place, as at a major intersection there was a big, professionally-done sign promoting the event. I feel this had a lot to do with the big public turnout. What's the point of having an event if there's no way of getting the public interested?

For the Crown, the 84th Foot (in green jackets) were joined by Butler's Rangers (BVMA along with Kristin and me), some natives, a couple of former Dochstader's, and a half-dozen from the 62nd Foot. This event has not had many redcoats in the past. The 62nd stayed in character most of the weekend, keeping in full regular discipline. The rebels had the usual Albany and Tryon Militia, but were joined by Mitch Lee and the 1st New York.

This turnout allowed the fight to go on a bit longer than in the past. Throughout the day the camps were filled with hundreds of spectators asking serious questions. It was a pleasure to see so many people with a real interest in history.

During an impromptu drill and two inspection formations, we were joined by a paid fife and drum corps from Delaware. They played wonderfully and professionally, providing an atmosphere that most events lack.

Sunday was just as good and to the disbelief of all, the Crown forces were allowed to carry the field.

The food was excellent, the security was nice, the parking was close, the spectators were all around us. If this event is held next year, it's a "can't miss." As an aside, those who know Dave Scott of the 84th will be sad to learn he has sold his commission and will no longer be an officer. He commanded all Crown troops at this event, making for a fine send-off.

-- *Pvt. Mickey Wind*

Battle of Springfield 225th anniv. Springfield, N.J. 25-26 June 2005

Mickey and I arrived Friday night and were pleased to see floodlights providing ample light for setting up our tent. Then the lights went off! To make things worse, one of the tent poles snapped in half. Fortunately, one of our fellow reenactors repaired it.

Saturday morning found us up rather early due to a chill in the air and an alarming

number of beetles in the tent. We joined Katie Cadell, and she and I helped dress our new friend Jen, whose husband is in the 23rd Foot. After breakfast we visited the sutlers. Jen got a striped linen jacket, matching petticoat, and a pair of stays. No one would believe she was at her first event just by looking at her, and she seems entirely cut out for the reenacting life.

Ingrid asked me to participate in the BAR's *People of the Brigade*, as a "Charlotte Newcomb." I eagerly said yes, as I'd never been asked before and wanted to portray a downtrodden Loyalist woman. With great timing, my mom arrived to take photos.

By now the heat was so overwhelming that simply standing in the sun seemed to drain all the energy right out of you. We encouraged each other to drink water; even the unflappable Fife Major of the Brigade was visibly sweating. I was looking forward to the CCM tea party in the shade, when along comes Katie to tell me that we are on water detail. YES! We invited Jen, so we three "water angels" stuffed water bottles into our aprons. Katie dropped several bottles into a bucket with ice, and I filled another bucket with cold water.

We followed the Crown forces through the woods, and heard the battle begin. Probably the funniest part of this little march was when we had to climb a small but incredibly steep hill. The Germans with their stiff gaiters and heavy equipment had a tough time scrambling up the slippery grass. We faired little better, with worn-out high-heeled shoes (me), hob-nailed heels (Jen and Katie), and those dratted petticoats. We would never have made it except for the New Jersey Volunteers, who let us grab onto their muskets and hauled us up the slope.

We finally caught up with the Rangers and "light bobs," skirmishing in the trees and firing at the traitorous rebel swine. Roy Najecki ordered the troops to ford a stream. Katie and I looked at each other, knowing that we would follow them right through it, but would Jen? You bet she did, and loved every minute of it. Splashing through the streambed, feeling the cold water soothe my hot and aching feet--and of course, watching our boys climb up the slopes to fire at the rebels--was the highlight of my weekend.

I was amazed to see the number of

spectators packed into the bleachers. I think the public truly appreciated this first-class battle, and I think the soldiers appreciated us hauling cold water for them even more. At least they had better appreciate it!

It was so hot that my shoes were dry in less than three hours. But our tent held even more beetles than last night, so we slept in our car.

Sunday was even hotter, even in the early morning. There were fewer spectators, but still an audience for the artillery demo and the second edition of *People of the Brigade*, in which I again portrayed "Charlotte Newcomb." My photo must have been taken dozens of times.

Sunday's battle was much earlier than Saturday's. We were joined in our water duties by young Master Alec, whose father, John Ward, is a member of Walter Butler's Company.

The narrator did some serious George Washington worship, which I continually derided (much to the amusement of Jen and Alec). Katie was called away for much-needed crowd control, leaving me in charge of the water angels.

Unfortunately, there were some rather egregious safety violations by what I can only assume were Continental militia. They were firing **within the Continental camp**, among the camp followers, and even underneath the flies! I was extremely angry, as I **knew** they were endangering all of us and they had us in a corner--if we took a step backwards, we would be in the stream. It was the first time I was actually frightened at an event, because these men were oblivious to the harm they could have caused.

Finally, when I judged a safe distance had opened, I sent Jen to offer water to the "dead." I told Alec to follow me and to make sure the Continentals drank, although many stayed "dead."

Authenticity be damned! It was over 90 degrees--don't try to be a hero, just drink! Luckily, quite a few did. And once the battle ended, nearly all of them were happy to accept. I didn't think we would have enough water, until Sarah Hurwitz and her friends arrived with more bottles.

When the troops marched in review, we

walked along behind them--another fine photo opportunity, but even better was the heartfelt applause by the public.

Despite the soaring temperatures, Mickey and I had a wonderful time. Springfield was a great event.

-- *Kristen Negrycz*

Battle of Crysler's Farm, Morrisburg, Ontario 9-10 July 2005

I am back from that wonderful place we call Canada. I have to confess that I feel a bit at home spiritually when I go there, especially the areas the Loyalists settled. The event was a study in excellent planning and execution, along with fellowship and excitement.

We arrived at the site during a lull in the rain. Captain Paterson of the Canadian Butler's quickly recognized us and told us where to set our tent up. Michael Trout arrived with Luann and Deborah, then Dave and Katie a short time later. To our surprise, that was all of Frey's Company to attend. There were ten Butler's men-at-arms with about six refugees. Friday's dinner was at a nearby restaurant that was overwhelmed by the number of reenactors.

Friday night's rain, and Saturday's spotty light rain, did not interfere with the event. Rick of McDonell's Company led Saturday's drill for the Ranger Division. Trying to get Butler's, King's, and Claus's Rangers to work together was tough, as even in Butler's there are differences in our commands and execution. However, all was worked out and our performance in battle was excellent.

Saturday afternoon we started and ended the battle, but mostly did a long march behind the lines. However, we did cover the withdrawal of the unit that originally came to support us! For the night fight, the Rangers were asked to portray rebels. Kristin and I decided to instead go out

and eat in Morrisburg. We usually don't get time alone at these events and it was nice to just take a break to be ourselves.

Sunday was sunny and warm. Most Rangers went to the living history town of Upper Canada Village and enjoyed the buildings and horse-drawn tour. Then in the afternoon, in a long and hard-fought battle, we finally drove the rebels back, but were unable to rout them. They were stubborn and their artillery was well-used, though often fired way too close to us.

We enjoyed ourselves a lot at this event. It was nice to see my Canadian Ranger friends Scotty, Patty, Leigh, Chase, Rick, and their families. It's always nice to see our friends in our own company also. I wish more American Rangers attended.

--*Pvt. Mickey Wind*

For Saturday night's battle, we had a great time portraying "Congress' Own Ranging Detachment" and gave the Crown forces one hell of a fight. We received complements from both sides afterwards for our spirited performance. We all had a laugh when Gavin chased a herd of cattle off the field so the Crown forces could cross safely, only to have the Mohawks burst out of the bushes with war cries, accidentally chasing the cows back into the field. I think I may have heard Gavin swearing under his breath at the "Continental Cows!"

-- *Lt. Dave Solek*

Battle of Newtown, Elmira, New York 27-28 August 2005

Newtown was great. My calves hurt from all the running uphill and jumping over a four-foot high fence (twice). Lots more Crown than rebels showed up. I think we had a two-to-one advantage this year.

Kristin and I bought a set of graces and a hoop. We played with them most of our free time, attracting more attention than the soldiers. These games should be part of our company's interpreting. More kids played with our stuff and more public talked to us than anyone else.

For the battle, a couple of Butler's brigaded with a couple of King's and some Queen's lights. The 64th Grenadiers were there, as was the 62nd, Captain Bull's, Drew Smith's Jägers, and 30 members of Brandt's. To oppose us were Whitcomb's, Selin's, the 4th and 3rd New York, and the 24th Connecticut Militia. There were about 125 total soldiers.

-- Pvt. Mickey J. Wind

Fort Ticonderoga, New York 10-11 September 2005

We arrived Saturday morning to a breakfast with our comrades in our sister Butler's company. I was designated a corporal for the day, and at times led one of the fire teams. We trained in leapfrog advancing, and retreating by section rather than file, and quickly got the feel for it. Thanks for giving me this honour goes to Dave Scott of the 84th Foot, who was acting with Butler's. I hope I did not disappoint him--I felt I did well.

When the well-fought battle began, we pushed the enemy's right while the regulars moved on the left. But we could not get through, as we were outnumbered and the enemy defenses were well-supported with guns. We were pushed back and briefly disorganized by a well-timed bayonet charge. But we recovered and delivered three battalion volleys, stopping the advance against our wing.

During the cold night, someone snuck into the fort and put a petticoat up the tallest flagpole. Some were bothered by

this, but to me it seemed harmless enough, and quite humorous. I managed to take a photo.

Sunday's battle was very hectic. We found ourselves charging one way, then being pushed back in a different direction, only to find ourselves pushing forward in a third. The sides did a very good job keeping their spacing, and made this one of the better and more exciting battles I've been in lately. Kudos to whoever designed this scenario. The artillery moved all over the field, and both sides showed that we can move safely with artillery. In the end the rebels had to quit the field, but it was a hard-won victory.

Back in camp we had a quick surprise birthday party for Nora Smith. This weekend was fun and had none of the safety issues that last year had. I look forward to my next weekend at Ti.

-- Pvt. Mickey J. Wind

Stone Arabia 225th anniv. Ft. Klock, St. Johnsville, N.Y. 24-25 Sept. 2005

Fort Klock is an attractive site consisting of a large fortified house, Dutch barn, and

outbuildings. We were most fortunate this year to see our overall Butler's

Rangers commander Capt. Scott Paterson and McDonell's Company. There was also a large contingent of Ten Broeck's Company under Lt. Jim Stevens.

Saturday morning saw an unusual off-site point-system exercise in which the Tory and Whig forces hunted each other for a few hours (without success). There was confusion at the beginning, and some units elected not to go. Although it was not a full success, I feel this type of exercise could work well with better planning.

Saturday night featured a barn dance attracting several Rangers, but most of us chose to spend the night at Scotty's legendary sing-along. Along with many period songs, we learned Scotty's unofficial anthem to Butler's Rangers "A Visit To You!" As many of us found at Saratoga in 2002 and at Chrysler's Farm this year, a "Scotty and His Canadians" sing-along is not to be missed.

The Sunday afternoon battle was to be a "dog-and-pony show" for the public, and most did not expect much at such a small site. But it turned out to be a terrific action. The Whigs were badly outnumbered, even with Ten Broeck's, but they put up a tremendous fight that gave us a real contest. The site is larger than it seems, and we raced from one position to another, flanking and being flanked. Under Scotty's able command, we gave volleys at a tremendous rate; I didn't know that I was capable of loading a musket so quickly. At times, I think we were approaching the legendary three or four rounds per minute. As the action took place all around the Dutch barn, the public there had a ringside seat. When all was done, we were drenched in sweat, black with powder, out of ammunition, and exhausted but happy.

-- *Cpl Michael Trout U.E.*

Battle of Schoharie 225th anniv. Schoharie, N.Y. 8-10 Oct. 2005

Drenching rains and flood warnings cut badly into attendance, which was a shame since there was no Schoharie event last year—the site wanted to emphasize this year, the 225th anniversary of the 1780 raid. The competing Whitpain event was canceled by the same storm system. Somehow, a small rainy Saturday battle saw muskets actually firing. That night we ate supper at the George Mann Tory Tavern, rallying point for Loyalists in 1777.

Sunday saw no rain, but the damage was done as flood warnings continued and the skies threatened. A small morning exercise went off okay in the morning, so we tried for a full battle that afternoon. Despite the small numbers, this worked quite well. We were to push the Whigs back, then they were to deploy a gun and

force us back. We did so, the gun appeared and fired one round—but just as I was about to give the order to retire, the gun crew limbered up and retreated. What the heck? We decided to keep pushing them. Ten Broeck's artillery deployed as we thoroughly embarrassed the enemy, who showed no signs of the competence they had displayed at Fort Klock. At one point Dave was kneeling in front of me when he fired, and an object flew up over his head. At first I thought it was a bit of paper from a cartridge, but when it landed next to me I saw it was the top half of his hammer (frizzen). This seemed to be a good sign to retreat, so we left the field to the Whigs. We left hoping for better weather next year.

-- *Cpl. Michael Trout U.E.*

Upcoming event

Dinner and show, Albany and Troy, N.Y., Saturday 4 February 2006

Come in optional period dress. We begin at 4:00 P.M. with libations at the Scrimshaw Tavern in the Desmond in Albany. We continue with period music and games (possible debauchery), a stroll down quaint indoor colonial-style streets, and dinner from 5:30 to 7:00 in the Highstreet Room. Raffle tickets will be sold for David McCullough's new book *1776*. We then head to Troy for the New York State Theatre Institute's production of *1776*, which begins at 8:00. Let's get a huge group and have a great time!

Organizers Kyle and Lynn Jenks invite you to join them for this unique and unforgettable experience! The cost for libations, cash bar, and dinner is \$28.03 per person (buffet style with desserts, coffee, and tea; tax and gratuity included). The cost for *1776* is \$15.00 per person (a \$5.00 discount). This non-refundable offer is limited to the first 100 people.

Mail **two separate checks**, one made out to **Kyle Jenks** for dinner at \$28.03 per person, and one made out to **NYSTI** for \$15.00 per person. Kyle will reserve your show tickets. Mail check(s) to Kyle Jenks, 13B Woodcliffe Dr., Clifton Park NY 12065, along with the RSVP form below. For more information and directions, email Kyle at jaktar773@aol.com or call (518) 373-0988. For out-of-towners, Kyle and Lynn invite you to stay overnight before heading home on Sunday. We have beds for seven people, plus floor space. First come first served. The Desmond is offering rooms for \$109 per night (a \$20 discount).

RSVP (*photocopy as needed*)

Names attending: _____

Checks enclosed: \$28.03 per person payable to **Kyle Jenks** for the dinner(s);
\$15.00 per person payable to **NYSTI** for *1776*.

Phone: _____

Dinner and show: _____ Show only: _____

Sorry, cannot attend: _____

From the archives

“It was at this time [early in 1778] that a party of Scots left Harpersfield and Kortright to avoid further service in the Patriot militia, among them Daniel Rose, James Park, Archibald Thomson, and John Chisholm. Their effects were promptly seized by the Harpers as commissioners of sequestration and a detachment of militia from Schoharie descended upon Harpersfield and seized a number of settlers. That these four Highlanders chose to fight with the Indians rather than with the Rangers and that they journeyed as far as Tioga Point to join Joseph Brant could only have been owing to their friendship with Brant or his recruiting ability—probably a combination of both. Early in May he had appeared in the Old England District

accompanied by six Indians and several Rangers described as “green Coat soldiers.” He warned Loyalists of their danger and tried to persuade families he knew to go with him, pointing to his inability to protect them. Unless they sought a place of safety they must “take their own risk.” Continuing northward Brant and his men laid waste Springfield and other settlements, and drove off a large number of cattle. Several families from the Old England District went with him to Unadilla and others soon followed. “I am so happy to find,” wrote Sir John Johnson from Quebec, “the Mohawks have accomplished their errand to the Mohawks Country . . . [and] that Joseph has at length had another Opportunity of

drubbing those wretches who have so
unjustly injured us all. . . .”

-- *Hazel C. Mathews, The Mark of Honour,*
University of Toronto Press, 1965 (page 50)