

## Sixteen Hours and Whadda You Get?

### The Philadelphia Campaign After Action Report from 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Joel Anderson

From the Crawley farm to Brandywine Creek State Park it took sixteen hours of driving. Ed Harrelson, Ron Crawley and myself started out of the driveway at 12:12 am on Friday. After having prepared for countless days, the trip had begun. The rations of beef, sausage, rice, split peas, apples, cheese, biscuit, and alcohol were all packed away in the thoroughly cleaned horse trailer with the stacks of gear and clothing. All three horses loaded nicely and we were settling ourselves in for a long journey. We made it about thirty minutes down the road when Cpt. Harrelson asked where his coggins were. Trooper Crawley and I looked at each other with an uncertain glance and we turned the truck around to retrieve the necessary paperwork. Ron's very gracious and accommodating better half met us half way with the papers. Once again we were off, this time about an hour behind. Al Underwood was expecting us around 6:00 am, so we pushed on through North Carolina. Ed attempted to sleep in the back while Ron and I listened to some stand up comedy about deer and how useless they are. We switched drivers occasionally when we would stop to get gas and carried on conversations on this or that. We were in Virginia and running behind when we talked to Al Underwood who informed us that his party was going to plan on arriving later than expected and advised us to press on without stopping by his place. We stopped and ate breakfast at White's truck stop in Raphine, VA and gave the horses a rest. We traveled down I-66 to Hwy 15 and this proved to be a set back as it was stop and go traffic most of the way along 15. Finally, we hit I-70 and started toward Baltimore. Skirting to the North of Baltimore on I-695, we blew the tread on one of the truck tires. It was around lunch time on the outskirts of Baltimore and lots of traffic flew past us as we inspected the pieces of rubber lodged in the trailer and shredded truck fenders. We limped into a Korean tire store a few miles from the blow out and bartered with them to get a spare put on. For some reason, they didn't seem to want to trust the tired-eyed men with their jacks, but Ed put me up as collateral and Ron and I proceeded to pull the tire and get it changed. This seemed like a good time for a cigar and Ed obliged. Once the new tire was installed, Ron and I went to putting the wheel back on as the owner of the Chinese restaurant that we parked behind smoked a cigarette and chattered in what seemed to be angry Chinese behind us. We loaded back up and wet-napped our hands into an acceptable cleanliness. At this point, Stuart Lilie and I spoke about arrival times and he was getting stalled coming through New Jersey. I explained the tire incident and we planned to arrive sometime around 3:00pm. Getting out of Maryland seemed to take forever as the traffic piled up behind tolls. We kept occupied by playing a car game that may not be suitable for all viewers. (Explanations available upon request). We cursed the drivers along the way and after a heated argument with the Tom-Tom, arrived at registration around 4:00 pm. We had planned on going on a march out of our campsite along with the Augusta County Militia towards the Southern most point of the actual Brandywine Battlefield. We arrived too late to march out with them, but Stuart had gone ahead and offered to ride back to escort us to the campsite. After conferring with the other troopers, I told him that we would stay where we were and make our campsite and await the arrival of the rest of the Third Dragoons. Bert Puckett and Bob Hoskins had driven up earlier and were on site when Ron, Ed, and myself arrived. We all introduced ourselves to the ladies and gentlemen of the Fourth Dragoons who were the greatest of hosts for the weekend. We met the overall commander, Bob Healey, and to our surprise and great appreciation, he presented us with a fine bottle of Madeira (A Carolinian's favorite). They had also rigged a barrel up with taps of root bear and beer, which we would enjoy later. We set our camp across the road and down an embankment from the Fourth's camp. The site we chose was right next to a small creek and in a grove of trees with interspersed open spaces seemingly ideal for bedding down and stashing horses. After getting dressed out and stashing gear and horses in camp, Ed and I built a fire. The rest of the troopers tossed straw down and made beds. Once

we were at a place where we could relax, we ventured over to the Fourth Dragoon camp. We joined in conversation and drink. Details about expectations and structure were discussed and we began to relax by the aforementioned barrel of fun. One of the horses belonging to the members of the First Dragoons who were falling in with us had come undone from his stake and I walked up to deal with him. I was looking for his stake when I heard Trooper Hoskins call my name. At some point, a light had emerged from the forest in the direction of our camp and was illuminating the way a couple of bales of straw would if they were on fire. Bob spotted it and along with Bert ran over to take control of the flames. I quickly tied the horse off to a nearby tree and ran over. Fortunately, nothing had been damaged but we had certainly found a way to make smoke. Once recovered we uncorked the Madiera and toasted each other. My horse, Sugar, demanded a taste from Bert and forcefully stole some from me. With the hour growing late and the number of drinks mounting, the troop was ordered to bed, but not before Trooper Puckett fell off a box and split his breeches. We were off to a good start. We all staggered to our beds and easily fell asleep. I awoke around 5:00 am and stoked the fire a bit. I noticed I had a voicemail on my phone from Stuart explaining that Iago, his horse, had left the picket line where he was camped and was headed back towards us and if we saw him, to grab him. I noticed that the message was left around 12:00 midnight. I watered horses and used the bathroom as I tried to push my headache away. Around 6:30 I woke the troop up and called Stuart back. It seems that at the campsite where the ACM had camped, there were inferior trees for tying a horse and Iago was going to have to be staked down. Stuart decided to go and cut a stake out of the woods nearby and had enlisted an infantryman to "watch" after Iago. A few moments after Stuart had started looking for a stake, the "watcher" asked Stuart if it was "okay if he crosses the river?" Stuart replied in the negative and arrived in time to see his horse hauling ass down the road on the opposite side of the river with his link line dragging behind. Stuart followed after him, but could not catch him. For hours, Stu searched up and down paths and roads and through fields for Iago with no luck. Eventually, around 5:30 am, he stopped to rest in his truck. After explaining all this to me, I told him that we would do whatever we could to help him find his horse. I view Stuart as a close friend and an important member of our unit and I informed the rest of the troopers where everyone seemed in agreement to do whatever it took to find the horse. We decided we would saddle up and form a mounted search party. We opted out of 8:00 inspection and 9:00 drill, allowing the visitors from the 1<sup>st</sup> Dragoons and Al Underwood and Pat Kelly to fall in with the other units to get some drill in. Trooper Puckett awoke with a groan and spouted off a good joke that escapes me now and soon after came down with an intense Irish flu. Around this time, I had been handed morning returns to fill out and set about to finish them and inform the rest of our party of our plan. Stuart arrived with his truck and trailer and saddled my horse. I instructed the men to fill their canteens and pack some provisions for the march. We loaded our horses into Stuart and Bob's trailers and headed out to the vicinity of the Augusta's campsite. We rode down onto dirt and gravel cart paths that run along the Brandywine Creek. We split into three groups with Bob and Bert taking the first fork in the road and myself the second while Stuart went to talk to some men working on a fence. Ron and Ed continued down the path along the Brandywine and hooked up with me in the field along the creek. We scared up some deer and crossed over some railroad tracks searching but found nothing. We met back up with Stuart and crossed the Brandywine at the ford. We then split up again with Ed and Stuart going right along the road and Ron and myself following the road left. As per Stuarts instructions, Ron and I came to a fallowed field with several pathways and rode up through it. At the end of the field was another road that ran perpendicular through some trees. We followed this until it opened up into several acres of pasture with fencing at the end. We rode across the ground and up another hill along a gravel road that intersected those fields and at the top of the hill, found more open fields and forest and a farm to our right. We rode toward the farm and a man came out to meet us on a Gator. He was a very pleasant Australian and we informed him of the missing horse and he told us he hadn't seen it but that he would keep his eye out. He told us about the property we were riding on and that it was over 2,000

acres of conservancy property from the Dupont Corporation. If there was a place to be lost, this was it. By this time, my horse was tired and we decided to stop and rest awhile. I gave her some grain and Ron and I chowed down on some hard biscuit and apples. It was at this point that I really gained an appreciation for what we were doing. Here we were, riding over pristine countryside, fully kitted out and eating period correct rations, searching and scouting just like the dragoons we were portraying. We were doing "true" dragoon work. It was a nice moment. We mounted back up and started our search again following the direction of a horse whinny. We hit the Brandywine again and followed the cart path alongside it for a good ways. We reached a meadow and turned off the road to check it out when I got a call from Stuart saying that they had found him and to meet back at the ford. We started back and waited while the other horses and riders were trailered back to camp. Once back at camp, Stuart kitted out and saddled up. We rested ourselves and our horses for about thirty minutes before we mounted back up for battle formation at 1:00 pm. The Third Dragoons fielded 10 riders and one (Dennis Farmer) dismounted. The American horse amounted to twenty and the British, three. We formed in two ranks of five and situated our selves on the first line to oppose the British light infantry. We opened up with a charge and carbine fire on the left side of the line and then fell back to cover the right. At this point, some men of the second rank were told to face about and present towards the enemy that was attempting to flank us. We were then doubled upon ourselves which made the next maneuvers sloppy. Cpt. Harrelson ordered us to wheel about and take the ground directly in front of the British left. This made the lines become jumbled a bit and we took a second to reform about thirty yards in front of the British lines. We drew sabers and performed a charge directly into the front of a group of British commanded by Jay Callaham. Our horses stopped about five to ten yards short of the force and made it so we had to file off and around the British to our front. We pretended to hack at them for a moment before regrouping. We were positioned next to dug camp kitchens and tents and in front of us we had several holes to avoid. I offered my opinion of the ground to the Captain and we peeled off to reform some twenty yards to our rear. At this point the British horse moved up across from us. A lone, mounted, British officer offered attack and several of us engaged him and had we been really fighting, the officer would have either been filled with bullets or chopped to bits almost instantly. As we hovered on the British flank, members of the 17<sup>th</sup> Light dragoons opposed us and forced our retreat. At this point, we found ourselves blocking the line of fire of a small naval carriage and were told to clear the area. We formed on the left flank of the American army and along the road that runs through several stone walls. We were ordered to form ranks, six abreast and await the order to charge sabers. Once the dismounted contingent of the Fourth Dragoons had retreated past us, we raced forward into the gaps of the 40<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot. We made several good passes as the infantry took defensive positions against us. This bought time for the rest of the American army to retreat through the defile in the stone wall in our rear. Most likely, this would have proved to be a fatal charge, but possibly necessary. We ranked off through the defile and ranked up on the other side. We then wheeled and dressed ourselves about fifteen yards in front of a tree overlooking the American withdrawal. At this point, Cpt. Harrelson detached the men with carbines to harass the left flank of the British from behind the stone wall. We loaded and proceeded to fire several shots at the approaching British until our muskets began to foul. We retreated and advanced several more times until the whole line of Americans withdrew. We stormed across the field to regroup with the rest of the Third Dragoons. We kept on the right flank of the Americans and continued to withdraw. We found ourselves in the shade for a spell while we watched the Americans fall back. My horse was breathing heavy and very sweaty. We were then pushed from the right flank by British and finally withdrew from the fight. We halted and refilled canteens. After a bit of a rest, we paraded with the British and American Armies through the lines of spectators and formed at the American camp where we were thanked and saluted. We gave three cheers to our hosts and wheeled out to return to camp. We dismissed the troop and saw to our horses and gear. We took our horses in turn to the water hose and washed them down. By this time Stuart's wife Abby

had arrived with some of their family to help drive his trailer back to Connecticut that evening. I returned the items Stuart had loaned me and spent a few minutes catching up with friends before seeing them off. After returning to camp, I layed out and rested by my horse while Bert met with Paul Hutchins of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Jersey and Ron and Ed drove out to buy a camp kettle that we had forgotten to bring and buy gas. While waiting for Ed and Ron to return, I visited with the other dragoon regiments and talked clothing with some of my patrons. After a time of catching up with old friends from Charleston, Ed and Ron returned and we set about making dinner plans. They loaded up their arms with food and gear and headed toward camp while I took the long walk up the hill away from our camp to visit with friends and colleagues that I had promised some time to. I visited with the 17<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons and had a good conversation with Ridgley Davis. After saying farewell, I strolled down into the main British campsite and found the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot laying about their campfire. We traded jokes and some stories and talked about upcoming events until I thought it proper to return from whence I came. By this time it was dark. The sunset had been beautiful on the top of the hill. The light had filled the valleys and illuminated the hilltops in the distance creating an orange and purple sunset. The site truly was amazing. I returned to camp to find it overrun with members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> North Carolina who were intermixed with our troop creating lots of laughter around the fire where the new kettle sat heating the beef, rice, and beans that several members had brought. Once thoroughly cooked, the purlow was very tasty. I had three bowls full. I retrieved my squirrel cooker and we began to roast some of the sausages we had brought. These were a big hit. At the same time, a bottle of Irish whiskey that Cpt. Harrelson had brought was sent around the fire. It was an enjoyable and relaxing state of affairs. Eventually, Troopers Puckett, Hoskins, and Crawley followed the 2<sup>nd</sup> North folks out of camp in search of more liquid refreshment. From all accounts, this proved futile. We settled into bed and fell asleep easily. At some point in the night Cpt. Harrelson and myself were awake at the same time. He had gone to check on his horse and had found she had broken her lead line and was pushed towards the end of the picket line with my horse. He decided to check the rest of the horses for good measure and discovered that Trooper Crawley's horse, Calhoun, was absent. He asked me if I knew where he was and I replied that he had been in the spot where the Captain had looked. We then set about searching for yet another lost horse. Cpt. Harrelson began searching through the woods and woke Trooper Crawley with the news. I entered into the neighboring camps looking at the horses to see if I could spot any loose. I walked up the hill to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons' camp and had no luck. Near this time, Trooper Hoskins had entered the Fourth Dragoon camp and was asked by an awake soldier if he was looking for a horse. He replied that he was and the soldier directed him to Calhoun who was tied on a picket. The next morning reports would indicate that the horse had explored most of the Fourth's camp and had surprised one of theirs who had been sleeping in a small dump cart of straw when he awoke with Calhoun's snout in between his legs. Calhoun has a reputation for biting. The young man caught the horse and after several unsuccessful tries, tied him up to the picket line. We stopped the search and fell back asleep. When I awoke the next time, a cool breeze and cloud cover had come up. I decided to stay the wake up call and keep warm under my blanket. Cpt. Harrelson and I eventually organized ourselves out of bed. There was a tactical scheduled for 7:30 am and it seemed no one from our troop was too enthused about participating. We instead began to pack our beds and gear to be loaded into the trailers. Ed, Ron, and I had decided to head off fairly early so that we could get home at a reasonable hour. I filled out our morning report and a few of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoons that were staying, decided to mount up and join the fight. We split some rations among the troop and I dealt with some tailoring business while Ed and Ron got themselves ready for the road. We consolidated gear and loaded the trailer with our horses. Rain had just started to fall as we began our trip home. After saying our goodbyes and thanking our hosts, the Fourth Dragoons, for the great hospitality during the weekend, the three of us were back on

the road at about 11:00 am. We headed back with a lot less traffic and took I-70 from I-695 all the way up to I-81, passing through West Virginia. The trip back was filled with rain as we passed the time listening to more comedy about deer and continuing our car game. We got reports that Bert and Bob had pulled out of the event not long after us on account of rain and were on their way home. We pulled into the Crawley farm around 11:30 pm and saw Ed home. I spent the night with the Crawleys and woke up in the morning to more rain. I waited for a break in the weather and then loaded Ed's truck and trailer as neatly as I could, loaded horses, and headed for my house. I unpacked all my gear from the trailer and put the horse in the pasture and promptly drove to the Harrelson farm. I arrived around 6:00 pm and unloaded Rhapsody and put her in the pasture to graze. About thirty minutes later, Ed arrived home from work and promptly headed out the door for a Boy Scouts meeting and I gave him all the particulars of where things were. I got home about 7:30 pm and crashed. What an event. Later, I would find that Al Underwood had experienced a flat tire as well on the way home. Apart from that the rides home seemed to be uneventful. This was a great event to go to. We were able to mingle and introduce ourselves to some of the northern dragoon units while making the largest horse presence at a Rev War event in a long time or ever. The majority of the American horse was comprised of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dragoons, a fact that makes me proud of all those who chose to attend and fall in with us. We represented our unit well and with distinction and I believe we came away from the event with a feeling of satisfaction. I would like to say a huge thank you to Ed Harrelson who commanded us so well for the event and facilitated so much so that we could enjoy this one. A huge personal thank you to the troopers who fell in with us for the event and were so accommodating with impression guidelines and planning; Bill Buser, Pat Kelly, Al Underwood, Duffie Miller- It was a pleasure riding with you all and I hope to do it again in the future. A huge thank you to Stuart Lilie for helping so much with planning and information regarding appearance and tack. His leadership and zeal on the field did not go unnoticed either and we were pleased to have such a fine horseman and tradesman riding with us. Thank you to Dennis Farmer for his assistance in the horse wrangle and for taking some great pictures for us. An immense thank you goes to Bob Hoskins, a new recruit, who has proved his worth this weekend. He went three for three on all the mishaps for us (fire, Iago, Calhoun). To Bert and Ron, your comradery was significant and meaningful this weekend and it made the event all the better. A thank you as well should go to Ron Vido, Daniel Gidick, and Daniel Murphy for loaning gear and pushing us to attend this event from the get go. Gentlemen, what a fabulous time, and I hope to reminisce on this one for years to come.

Here's to us....

Joel Anderson

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