

Families Relieve Stress By Living In The Past

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— It was a hot day in July... July 4th to be exact. Eleven thousand troops representing the Confederate (south) and Federal (north) armies went to battle at one of the most important sites of the Civil War — Gettysburg.

Among the muskets and cannon fire were thousands of men engaged in combat, confused by the noise, unable to hear the signals shouted out by their commanding officers, or by the bugle and drum corps. Bodies of young and old men in both blue and gray uniforms littered the battlefield.

"After the battle, men were filthy were powder, sweat, and grime. There was complete silence. The only sound was that of flags flapping in the breeze."

When the dust settled, the "fatalities" rose to their feet. There was no blood, no dead.

This was an account of the 125th anniversary of the battle at Gettysburg in 1988, given by

Charles Underwood and Rick Barber, just two of the estimated 26,000 Civil War re-enactors in the United States.

Charles Underwood of Union Bridge, Maryland, and Rick Barber of New Windsor, Maryland, are members of the 19th Georgia Regiment of the Infantry of the Confederate States of America (C.S.A.), re-enactment group. They participate in approximately 18 re-enactment events every year and give 3 to 4 living history presentations.

"We live history," said Rick Barber. "When you put your clothes on, 128 years later, the line still divides," he said of the separation of north and south. "It doesn't take much for your eyes to well up."

Civil War re-enacting is a popular hobby, particularly in the areas near former battlefields. Re-enactors, like Charles and Rick and their families, spend much time and money in an effort to make all aspects of their pastime authentic.



Cecilia and Charles Underwood, Brenda and Rick Barber with son Kyle find that when they dress in Civil War uniforms, history becomes so real that the separation between north and south still divides.



Cecilia Underwood with derringer strapped to her leg.

All of their equipment, right down to the food they eat, is either original or an authentic-looking replica. "I have a 3 bander," said Rick, describing his 58 caliber musket with a long barrel. The guns that are used are functional. "It shoots one ounce of lead, and weighs 9 1/2 pounds" he added. The musket will "kill a man at 300 yards or further and knock a man off a horse at 500 yards," explained Charles Underwood, who is captain of the 19th Regiment.

Safety is an important factor in re-enactments. All participants are required to take a black powder safety course which Mr. Underwood teaches at Fort Frederick. He noted that with "one million rounds fired at the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, there was not one accident."

Guns are filled with powder and discharged during battles, but not loaded with ammunition. "There is a 4-foot flame that can be seen at night coming out of the end of the barrel when the gun is discharged, according to their accounts. Re-enactors are supposed to aim up when someone is within 100 feet of the gun. "With a yardage distance, you can aim," said Mr. Underwood.

When it's time to pack up the tent to go to an event, many items are assembled and packed. The Barbars - Rick, his wife Brenda, and sons, Justin, Matthew, and



Rick Barber wears his Confederate uniform which represents the mid to late war era. The clothes are tattered and patched due to battles and harsh conditions. He eats hard tack that Brenda makes from an original recipe. His plate is half of a broken water canteen.

Kyle, take two tents, coolers disguised in wooden boxes, quilts, homemade camp chairs, rifles, leather gear, homemade checker boards, grates for cooking, cast iron pots and pans, water, bacon, hot cakes, eggs, dried foods, and more. "We take anything to make the camp look as authentic as possible," explained Rick.

Brenda Barber is seamstress for many, and makes period clothes

for her whole family from original patterns. "I can sew a plain dress in a day," she said. Brenda made a replica of the Confederate battle flag. "It took about half an hour to stitch around each of the thirteen stars," she reported. The Stars and Bars battle flag has an odor of black powder from waving over the battlefields. "I'll shoot the first man who puts a hole in it," she

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An estimated 26,000 Civil War re-enactors participate in living history presentations.

Homestead Notes