

Sisters witnesses Civil War in Camp Sherman

By Lynn Woodward
Correspondent

It's a comfort to walk into a war camp and see familiar faces. Although everyone at last weekend's Civil War reenactment in Camp Sherman was friendly and eager to share their knowledge of the Civil War, greetings from Janna and Jirka Novotny of Sisters made a stranger from another era walking the path between fires, tents and guns more at ease.

The Novotnys' son, David, as a Boy Scout, helped with parking at a previous Northwest Civil War Council reenactment at House on Metolius, but he wanted in on the action.

The family decided to join the Confederate Zouaves unit from Louisiana. They also participated as musicians. Janna, with her fiddle, and John Feller of Longview, Washington, with his guitar, even crossed the line to play music with a Yankee.

Bo Vigoten, a young man also of Longview, came to this event with Feller. This was Vigoten's first reenactment, and he was finding his first attempts to produce a tune from a bugle amusing.

Joseph Bernhard, who currently resides in Portland, is part of the 4th Virginia unit of the Confederate battalion. He was enthusiastically leading Vigoten through bugle basics.

Bernhard explained that

the bugle is "the voice of command." Obviously louder than the shouts from a man, the commander would tell his orders to the bugler, who then played the melody that matched that order to the unit.

Bernhard said that the bugle orders were very similar amongst all units of both the Union and the Confederacy. However, bugle orders of the Civil War era he's learning now from recordings on his iPod are different from the orders he learned in his bugling while serving in the Mexican Army — a real-life job from his past.

The camps were comprised of dozens of basic white canvas tents. Cots, wool blankets, wood fires, cast iron, oil lanterns and other period-appropriate tools are encouraged. All generations shared in this weekend event, and many youngsters played along, too, running with boundless energy, shooting cap guns and mock-dying in the fields.

Lisa Bloodgood, an experienced reenactor, showed Trisha Rose, a first-timer, her slat bonnet, promising to email her the pattern later in the week. Handmade and manufactured clothing and accessories were available in the tent store for anyone to purchase.

A blacksmith, a tinsmith and other tradesmen showed and explained methods from the era with some antique tools and some replicas. A

doctor and a dentist had their tools and potions on display. There was a multitude of presentations about the armaments, fashion and life at home away from battles. A church service in 19th-century style was well-attended, and real prayers were offered

for the current day's concerns. Of course, the main attraction was the action and noise of the battles. The commanders meet prior to each battle to decide the reenactment's outcome and some general maneuvers. However, those decisions were not shared

with the troops, so the orders and how they might play out were not scripted.

Cavalry charges, pistol and musket fire — with blank black powder charges — ensued. Women may dress as men and fight, too. The cannons thundered mightily.



PHOTO BY LYNN WOODWARD

Confederate troops battled on the meadow at House on Metolius.

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