



Photos by Erick Bengel

Musket blasts from a line of Union soldiers leave a cloud of smoke on the Fort Stevens battlefield during a re-enactment. The Confederates eventually surrendered during the afternoon battle re-enactment.

# A BLOODY BUSINESS

## Civil War re-enactment gives history lesson through medical demonstrations

By ERICK BENDEL  
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**T**he Union Army had won the latest battle against the Confederates, but within the aid station of the 69th New York Regiment volunteer infantry, less than 200 yards from the action, three Union soldiers faced private life-or-death ordeals.

One soldier, Andrew Phillips, of Independence, had been slammed in the head with a rifle butt. A second, Dallas Dubke, of Monmouth, arrived howling in pain after bullets struck his thigh and forearm. And a third, “Oliver” (portrayed by Victoria Odell, of Salem), had been shot in the belly at close range with a lead musket ball and buckshot pellets.

How the doctors and nurses treated the three patients was the subject of the medical demonstration held earlier this month during the Civil War re-enactment by the Northwest Civil War Council at Fort Stevens State Park.

The full re-enactment — a living history event that also featured battalion dress parades, artillery demonstrations, a Sunday morning church service and a stirring speech by an Abraham Lincoln impersonator — gave Civil War buffs a glimpse of the American lifestyle circa 1863, a time when the bloodiest war in U.S. history raged on between Northern and Southern states, with no clear end in sight.

Using fake gore and limbs but real Civil War knowledge, Bob Wetter, his wife, Linda Wetter — two re-enactors from Portland — and other experts made vivid the grim medical decisions and procedures that occurred behind the historic battle scenes.

### The aid station

Beneath a canvas tent, Bob Wetter, portraying a Civil War assistant surgeon, and Linda Wetter, portraying a nurse, triaged the three patients at the aid station — the first line of medical care that a wounded soldier would see.

But “triage” had a bizarro-world meaning compared to today.



Trevor Steinbach (left), the surgeon in charge of the 17th Corps Field Hospital, recreates Civil War-style brain surgery on a soldier while Bob Wetter, an assistant surgeon, holds the wounded soldier's head. The operation, which involved taking out a small chunk of cranium, was performed to relieve pressure on the soldier's swelling brain.



Three new Confederate recruits — Rose Kulla (left), of La Center, Wash.; Mary Kandoll (center), of Amboy, Wash.; and Moriah Kulla, of Yacolt, Wash. — ready themselves for the afternoon battle re-enactment at Fort Stevens State Park.

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