

Colonel,

I have the honor to report on the activities of a portion of the Army of Ohio in and around McDowell, Va. May 6-8, 1862. 18 members of the AoO assembled in camp along the banks of the Bullpasture River just outside the town of McDowell on Friday the 6th and into the early morning of Saturday the 7th. Camp was in a pleasant wooded area along the fast moving river with a large mountain commanding our rear. Water was provided from a nearby mountain spring which proved to be cool and fresh as long as you didn't get your cup too deep and stir up the mud. Ample down wood was easily had.

Upon arrival we were provided with a voucher to go to the commissary and draw rations for Saturday breakfast. This proved to be a hunk of bacon which was edible and 2 pieces of the worst hardtack perhaps I have ever seen. Undercooked, chewy and very unsatisfactory. Still, the men made do and after 6 a.m. reveille and roll call we set to cooking breakfast.

The morning was somewhat laid back as more reinforcements poured into the area. Corporal Biederman, along with Privates Dymarkowski, Harms and Fuschetto were detailed for guard from 9 a.m. to noon. Pvt. Lahti was detailed on special duty in town for a ceremony at the local graveyard for a Medal of Honor winner. Much to the dismay of the men, losing these men to detached duty kept us from being able to drill in the manner which I had hoped. We crossed the river and performed a brief instruction on skirmish drill which was ably led by Lt. Sharp. Upon our return to camp, orders had come to provide a detail to obtain rations for the duration. These rations were attended with some confusion. Our men thought the food was to last only that day, when in truth they were to last the weekend. Rations consisted of fatty beef-about a 50-50 mix of fat and beef, soft bread, turnips, potatoes, coffee and brown sugar. These rations, in combination with some skillful foraging from the local civilians managed to get us through Saturday and Sunday.

Realizing that additional food needed to be procured, we were given orders from Gen. Watson to take a foraging party out and see if we could find and seize additional supplies. I formed the entire company and proceeded as ordered. Privates Lahti and Porter were in the lead, with Corporal Wright just behind them. After a fairly short march, we came upon a house and in the distance a refugee area. At this point, Private Porter is to be commended for his vision as he spotted a Rebel bushwacker in the pines taking aim at us. Pvt. Porter fired first and the skirmish was on. The Rebs were in the woods on the hill, but appeared to be few in number. While our men in front kept them pinned down, men were sent to the right and left to extend the line and cut off their retreat. After a bit of a fight, we managed to capture 5 bushwackers, with our loss being only Pvt. Molitoris who was wounded. Special mention in this fight goes to Pvt. Porter as mentioned above along with Privates A. Sharp and Jahns who captured 2 men by themselves, one of which was the man who shot Pvt. Molitoris. We returned to the general with no food, but he was pleased with the prisoners. Lt. Sharp, who had witnessed the shooting of Pvt. Molitoris was detailed as a witness and Privates Adam and Kyle Sharp were left as guards. These men were told to keep a Sharp eye out...Trial was held after a short time and 4 of the 5 Rebs were executed as they were found to be irregulars, with no actual regiment.

With but little rest upon our return to camp, it was discovered that no less a personage than Stonewall Jackson was in the area with his Rebel army. We crossed the river to give him battle. Our battalion was commanded by Major Scot Buffington who performed very well. After thwarting a Rebel attempt to get by our left flank, we went on the advance, driving the Rebs admirably for a bit. It appeared the day would be ours, but alas, it was not to be. I suffered a minor wound in the advance which kept me out of the remainder of the battle. Lt. Sharp had returned and performed well in my absence by all accounts. We were driven back, but not routed and after the days action we were still ready to fight again on the morrow.

The men rested and cleaned rifles on Sat. evening, knowing that battle was imminent on Sunday. Indeed, we were awakened before 6 a.m. and told to get in line quick. The men responded quickly, our company being the first in line thanks in large part to the efforts of Orderly Sgt. Minton who got the men moving.

After a brief wait for the rest of the troops to form, we were marched out, going past the scene of our skirmish from the day before with the bushwackers. We continued to march for some time, uphill most of the way. It was a beautiful morning, sun filtering through the trees and giving a very martial air to the march. Knowing that Stonewall was ahead, the march was attended with little straggling. After a couple brief rests and a chance to fill canteens at a spring, we heard gunfire ahead. Our skirmishers had met the enemy. We were moved to extend the line to the left. The road bank was very steep and provided some cover for the Rebs shooting down from above. The men performed very coolly under fire and stopped the Rebs cold as they again tried to flank us. It was an impressive sight, seeing the Rebs sky lined against the sun, with colors flying on the hilltop. The men more than held their own, but with additional reinforcements coming in for the Rebs, the order to retreat was given. We had fought well, but given the numbers of enemy we were facing we had no choice.

After the battle, both forces marched to the top of Sittlington's Hill where the original battle occurred. We paid mutual respects to each other in the form of 3 Cheers and were addressed by both commanders. Each spoke of being very pleased with how the scenarios were carried out and the respect by the troops for each other. We were given a bit of time to stack arms and walk the area, reading the markers and visiting.

Finally, the order is given to form up and back down the hill we marched. Back to camp, we broke camp and began the long trek home.

The NCO's and men of the AoO performed admirably in all they were asked to do. It was my pleasure, along with that of Lt. Sharp to command this force in your absence. Details were handled cheerily and with dispatch. Orders were obeyed without question and the men exhibited coolness under fire.

Roster-Captain Minton, 1st Lt. S. Sharp, Orderly Sgt. J. Minton, 2nd Sgt. Hart, Corporals Biederman and Wright, Privates Dymarkowski, Fuschetto, Harms, Jahns, Lahti, Lewis, Lingeman, Molitoris, Nienberg, Porter, A. Sharp, K. Sharp

Your obedient servant,  
Bob Minton