

# SIXTY-THIRD TENNESSEE VOLUNTEER INFANTRY C.S.A.

## Information Sheet

The Sixty-Third Tennessee is one of many War Between the States Living History groups from all over the U.S. who gather together to research, study and interpret *The War* and its numerous campaigns. The current Sixty-Third was mustered into service in April of 1981 with the official swearing of the unit in April of 1982 by Claiborne County Judge Bill Hurst, a close parallel to the original unit's mustering in April of 1862. The current Sixty-Third varies somewhat from the original in that the ages of our members are more wide-ranging and that our members, naturally, do this as a hobby, not as a way of life.

Like the original Sixty-Third, our members come from all walks of life: students and teachers, farmers and journalists; the one common bond being an abiding interest in the history and accurate representation of The War Between the States. The Sixty-Third uses drill manuals of the period, in addition to equipment as identical as possible to that of the original troops; even the food eaten by the unit in the field is indicative of the area and the season of the campaign we are attempting to portray. While in the field, safety rules are adhered to at all times under the supervision of trained officers. The Sixty-Third is available for various historical and commemorative activities, parades, living history demonstrations, and Civil War encampments; individuals of the unit are available for classroom lectures. The goals of the unit are to accurately represent the Confederate soldier in the field and to preserve his memory.

### **The 10 Most Asked Questions:**

1. *(Upon seeing a reenactor dressed in long sleeved, 100% wool uniform in mid-July): Aren't you hot?*

Yes, but not as much as it might seem. The shirt underneath the tunic is light cotton muslin, so once you've sweated enough to get it wet, a tiny breeze through the fairly porous wool will keep you moderately comfortable.

2. *Where do you get the uniform and equipment? Do you have to make it?*

Some people do make their own uniforms, but most people buy all their uniform and equipment from one of the numerous vendors ("sutlers" was the 1861 terminology), who either sell their wares at the actual events or by mail order.

3. *That's a lot of stuff you've got there with all the uniform, equipment and camping supplies. Isn't that expensive?*

Well, it's not cheap. If you sat down now and called in a phone order to one of the major Civil War supply houses you could get everything you need, complete and of excellent quality for as much as \$1,300. Musket prices have soared in the past few years with new reproduction muskets prices just over \$800. You can acquire articles

that are used, share a tent with someone else (or not use one), and get on the battlefield for hundreds less, the basics being a uniform, leather, musket and shoes. You do not have to buy everything at once. The Sixty-Third also has some company-owned gear available for loan at events, muskets, uniforms, leathers, etc., on a first-come, first-served basis.

4. *The officers sure look good all dressed up. So how do you get to be an officer?*

Officers are elected, just like they were at the beginning of the war. Most people are sure they'd like to be an officer until they see how much work it is and how much the officers have to know just to do a simple thing like get a group of 30 guys together and march them from the camp to the field. That alone requires over a dozen commands. The officers are also the ones in charge of seeing that a reenacted battle goes smoothly, correctly and safely. All of that tends to take a little of the fun out of it for them. But they do look pretty, don't they?

5. *Speaking of reenactments, what do you guys shoot in those rifles?*

It is just raw gunpowder, poured down the rifle barrel. We roll paper cartridges, just like the originals except that we don't put in a bullet. When you're ready to fire, you tear the end off the cartridge, dump the powder down the barrel; tap the butt of the rifle on the ground to "seat" the powder; place a percussion cap under the hammer; then "ready, aim, fire." You'll notice that at some reenacted battles, the combatants don't have the ramrods with their rifles. That's because they aren't allowed on the field. There's always the concern that someone might forget to remove their rammer from the barrel and they would send it sailing down the field like an arrow. Safety is of paramount importance at all reenactments. If it ain't safe, it ain't done.

6. *In a reenactment, how do you know when to die?*

Sometimes it is up to the individual, although some units, the Sixty-Third being one, have systems for who has to take casualties. You'll find that at most battles there are a lot of people who have more fun "taking hits" than they do marching and firing. At the 150<sup>th</sup> Manassas reenactment in 2011, with temperatures hovering around 105 degrees, the volleys of fire seemed to be most accurate when the people being shot at were near shade trees.

7. *With all these Rebel flags hanging around, are you guys in the Klan or something?*

Aarggh! No!!!! If you really want to get a Confederate reenactor started off on a tirade just ask this question. Most Confederate reenactors will explain to you, sometimes patiently, sometimes not, that the use of the Confederate Battle Flag by any racist or neo-fascist organization is not only a crime against nature, the South, motherhood, apple pie and any number of other things, it is also besmirches in a very profound way the very memory of the Confederate soldier and what he stood for. In short, the answer is NO!

8. *So you just leave your wife and kids at home while you go do this?*

To each his own. Some wives stay at home; some come along just to watch; others come and actually participate, hoop skirts and all. Most reenactments have a dance on Saturday night with the ladies in period formals and the men in dress uniforms; sometimes there's even an authentic 1860's band. We generally try to make it a family affair as much as possible in a primitive, military camping situation. Kids can also participate to some extent. They can come as "kids of the 1860's," or maybe become functional musicians (fife or drum, usually), the only real restriction is that no one under 18 years may carry a weapon, unless their father is also present as a uniformed member of the unit (and even with their father there, minimum age for carrying a weapon is 16). Most reenactments also have a modern camping area out of sight of the authentic military camp, in case someone isn't inclined to sleep on the ground.

9. *What made all of you decide to get into reenacting?*

There are as many reasons as there are people. Some are professional or amateur historians who feel, justifiably, that participating in a living history event will give them a better and deeper understanding of the period. Many have ancestors who were in the war and want to get an idea of what they went through. Some are just fascinated with the period, or the South in general and reenacting provides a creative outlet for their interests. For some the first-hand participation in antique military tactics and maneuvers is justification for joining.

10. *Okay, I'm sold, how do I sign up?*

Reach out to a member of the command group. Phone numbers, addresses, and email addresses are on the website. Download an application from the website, fill it out, and bring it to an event on the schedule of events on the website.

[http://www.63rdtennessee.org/command\\_group\\_contact.htm](http://www.63rdtennessee.org/command_group_contact.htm)

[http://www.63rdtennessee.org/Calendar\\_of\\_Events.htm](http://www.63rdtennessee.org/Calendar_of_Events.htm)

<http://www.63rdtennessee.org/downloads.htm>

Dues are \$15 a year, which is used to maintain equipment, pre-register the unit for events, and acquire gun powder, etc.

**Hope to see you soon .....in line with the men of the 63d!**

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