

September 16, 2007

Central Park (Huntington Beach) After Actions Report for Hart's Engineers

Saturday marked one of the largest turnouts for our unit this year. Hart's Engineers fielded 39 officers and men on the first day of this event. Right away, we took advantage of the excellent terrain and weather and started our training. Several signal parties were deployed to the field for training. Near the conclusion of training the Federal forces also sent a signal party out for training of their own. They sent a message requesting us to approach for an "impromptu" and informal meeting on our lines. Soldiers exchanged pleasantries and the Federal signal party was gracious by providing our forces with coffee beans. The meeting concluded on a somber note, soldiers from both sides knowing they would meet again on the field of battle. Immediately after signal drill, Hart's Engineers engaged in the normal Saturday morning company drill.

For this event, we had six engineers detached from the company fulfilling various duties during the weekend. The positions we filled included the Division Commander, Division Provost Marshal, Infantry Brigade Commander, Infantry Brigade Adjutant, Infantry Battalion Commander, and Infantry Brigade Adjutant. In addition to filling many positions in the chain of command outside of the company, we were able to put one of our unique engineering skills into operation during the battles--signaling.

The first engagement started with the Federal forces pursuing the dismounted cavalry from the west. The cavalry were able to find favorable cover and stop the pursuit. The Confederate infantry and Hart's Engineers approached from the east and assisted in driving back the Federal forces. The second engagement started with Federal forces engaging the dismounted cavalry west of the battlefield and our infantry covered their retreat to the east. Simultaneously, the artillery was moved into position and awaited orders to fire. Colonel Settle dispatched a signal party to the artillery positions and had one posted near him at the front lines. Colonel Settle gave the order for the artillery to open fire and the signalers immediately started relaying the message to the rear. As soon as the message was followed by the signature code, I saw Pvt Saunders run toward the artillery commander, and knew within seconds there would be the thunderous report of cannon fire...and there was. This was a great step for our unit in demonstrating a unique capability of our unit; actually passing operational orders to forces on the field. While this force multiplier worked in our favor, ultimately CS forces had to withdraw to mount another assault the following day.

On the second day of the engagement at Talbot Lake, scouts expected enemy forces to arrive in the area in the late morning. This left plenty of time for some drill and to position forces for the ambush of the enemy's flank.

Co E and the 1st TX infantry accomplished approximately one hour of battalion drill before the engagement. Maneuvers covered were, On the Right into Line, By Companies into Line, Battalion Forward into Line, and wheeling maneuvers.

In anticipation of the arrival of the Federal division, Co E and the infantry brigade was positioned under cover to attack the enemy's left flank. Once the Federal forces were drawn out of cover by the cavalry and the artillery, we slammed the Federal left flank caving it in immediately. While the enemy was in full retreat, Co E wheeled into action and drove the enemy off of their field works. We continued with our forward momentum and captured their

artillery gun line and their division commander. There were still Federal forces who escaped the field so we expected another attack within hours.

In an effort to stay a step ahead of the Federal forces, our commander took the initiative and attacked. He sent the cavalry as advanced scouts supported by the infantry brigade. Signal parties were attached to each separated unit which increased the commander's span of control over the forces. The Federal forces were pushed across the field and our artillery positions were quickly manned and employed. We were attacked by sharpshooters on our right flank but that attack was quickly thwarted by a reserve company of infantry held in the rear. As the battle continued, scouts noticed Federal forces marching to the rear of our lines. The artillery commander immediately turned his guns to the anticipated avenue of approach and stopped their attack cold. Our signalers were relieved of their current duties and deployed as skirmishers on our artillery line. Eventually Federal reinforcements arrived forcing a Confederate withdrawal from the field. Thus the battle of Talbot Lake was concluded.

In summary, this was a very successful event for Co E. We had seven new recruits fall in which included two walk-ons. Four members led the charge on getting their mapmaking certification, and four more got certified in signals. Of course, we were able to demonstrate an awesome capability with our signalers which is unique for west coast events. For details on the signal portion of the event, please review the excellent after actions report prepared by Cpl Kosak, Pvt Franchak and Pvt Thacker. Co E also got to experience some battalion drill and have six of its members detached and fulfilling various roles all the way up the chain of command. With Moorpark right around the corner, we look forward to the fourth presentation in our engineer certification program--field fortifications. Keep your powder dry and see you in November.

Lt. Ryan Settle
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CSAEB

Detached, serving as:
Maj. Ryan Settle
Western Division ANV
Provost Marshal