

# Gettysburg Battlefield Workday Rally

## Carnage, coffee, bacon and beans... and Beemers

By Joe Tatulli #111835

*So much has been written about Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and the great battle that took place there in mid-summer of 1863. This small addition ranks very low on the totem of all those remarks. It is one man's reflection on his very short experience on the battlefield itself this past May.*

**THE RIDE DOWN FROM RHODE** Island was wonderful. My riding buddy Bill Kenney and I left about 5:30 a.m. on Friday morning, May 15. The plan was to leave together from our designated rendezvous at 5 a.m., but I was a bit late. When I pulled off the exit ramp at 5:12 a.m., I looked at my phone and saw a text message from Bill, "See you in PA." Bill is military in his scheduling. Disappointed and with a very compelling story to tell about my tardiness, I proceeded

toward the on ramp to RT95S at RI Exit 5. I figured we would meet at our first stop in Port Jervis, N.Y., at Muller's Diner.

I love to listen to music while I ride, so the helmet speakers were on and connected to my iPhone via Bluetooth. Right in the middle of Steely Dan's "Aja", the phone rang. I pulled over. It was Bill. "I'm at Exit 3," he said.

"Okay...I'm on the ramp...will see you in five minutes...ciao!"

I often ride alone and sometimes venture out with small groups of three to five guys from my local club (The Ocean State BMW Riders). Riding with one or two other riders works just fine for me, and Bill and I have done a few rides together over the past year. Day trips only, but we share leading, and I was looking forward to riding down to Gettysburg with my road-experienced friend. He had worked out a nice route with some highway portions and some more scenic sections, too. It was all new to me so I was looking forward to new roads and new scenic adventures...and of course, like all good

BMW riders, breakfast... at Muller's.

When I got to Exit 3 Bill was patiently waiting. He gave me the pistol shot "gotcha" sign, and off we went.

We ended up at another diner since Muller's didn't seem to exist any longer. I told Bill about my hydration (wardrobe) malfunction that had pushed me back about 20 minutes. "When I strapped the hydration pack on and put my jacket over it the water started squirting out. When I got to the gas station near my house to top off I was soaked. I decided to head back home and dump the water bag." I don't like to disappoint my friends, but like most guys I am not a great communicator. I should have texted my riding partner and let him know I was running late. Next time.

The ride down was why we ride. Lots of nice curvy country roads, no traffic (to speak of) and just enough highway to air things out at ten over. We arrived at 3 p.m., ready for a quiet evening and a day of work on the Gettysburg Battlefield on Saturday morning.





After we got our gear stored in the cabin, we decided it was time for supper and headed in to town to grab some food. Victoria, in full period costume, was our delightful waitress. A couple of steaks quenched our appetite, and we polished off some tasty ice cream for dessert. It was still early when we headed back to camp. As we approached the entrance to the park complex, I decided to pull in. It was still an hour before sunset.

Entering the battlefield proper was an emotional experience for me. To think that 150,000 Americans fought here to the death for principles they believed in is difficult to fully comprehend. We rolled in from Taneytown Rd., directly into the Cemetery Ridge area, the stronghold of the main and central Union position. After parking the bikes, we walked around the area. The fields to the south (and the entire battlefield area) are maintained to remain as they were in the 1860's. Every step you take is on hallowed ground. As President Abraham Lincoln said in his famous speech at the dedication of the battlefield cemetery, "But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate – we can not hallow – this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract."

Looking to the left you see the Round Tops and Devil's Den where the battle raged on days two and three. Straight ahead are the Wheat Field, the Peach Orchard and the Trostle Farm, also fully charged with continual engagements on days two and three.

I tried to get my head around what happened here, and my heart and mind still fail to fully grasp the carnage that must have met the eyes of the men who fought here. Thousands of dead and dying men lay under my path, yet just like this early evening in May, the sun would soon set, and all would go quiet as two massive armies rested, cared for their wounded, ate their

evening meal, talked to each other around the camp fire, prepared their armories, and maybe slept a few hours, only to awaken the following day to engage again in violent acts of war against an enemy who may have lived in the next town over or across the street. In some cases men from the same household fought against each other, some

*The Gettysburg National Military Park protects and the landscape of the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War. Located in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the park is managed by the National Park Service. (Wikipedia)*



20th Massachusetts Monument

dying for what they believed was right. The fact remains; some were not right.

Slavery in the United States involved "man stealing," where men of different races (both blacks and whites) captured black Africans from the west coast of Africa and by force transported them to the United States to be sold as property to the highest bidder. Those men and women were slaves in the truest and most savage sense of that word. Owned as property to do the will of their "masters," slaves had no rights, but at the same time were recognized by all (both north and south) as human beings; men, women and children of a different race. Many in the North saw the contradiction, opposed slavery as a practice, and wanted to end slavery altogether. Others agreed it could stand where it was already allowed,

but could not expand into the new territories that trailblazers and pioneers were settling as they moved west across this great land mass.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, in her Pulitzer Prize winning biography of Abraham Lincoln, and all that led up to his presidency and the U.S. Civil War, *Team of Rivals*, quotes Salmon P. Chase, himself a Republican candidate for the presidency in 1860, from the debate in the U.S. Senate against Stephen Douglas over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, legis-

lation that would have allowed slavery in the new territories. Douglas waxed eloquent, espousing "popular sovereignty," a concept that espoused letting each territory decide the slavery issue for itself. In his rebuttal Chase said, "What kind of popular sovereignty is that which allows one portion of the people to enslave another portion? Is that a doctrine of equal rights?...No, sir no! There can be no real democracy that does not fully maintain the rights of man, as man."<sup>1</sup> I'd say Chase was right, and Abraham Lincoln must have thought so, too, since he used the Declaration of Independence as the groundwork of his arguments against the expansion of slavery in his run for the Presidency in 1859 and 1860.

*"The doctrine of self-government is right—absolutely and eternally right," Lincoln argued. "No man is good enough to govern another man, without that man's consent. I say this is the leading principle—the sheet anchor of American republicanism." If the Negro was a man, which Lincoln claimed he most assuredly was, then it was "a total destruction of self-government" to propose that he be governed by a master without his consent."*<sup>2</sup>

On April 12, 1861, just a year after Lincoln's inauguration as the sixteenth President of the United States of America, a Confederate force fired upon Fort Sumter, and the American Civil War began.

The sunset was magnificent as we walked



# NEWS

between the many canon and various monuments on Cemetery Ridge. One of the monuments caught our attention. It was made from a piece of Massachusetts' "Roxbury Puddingstone." My riding partner, Bill, grew up in Boston, and he spent his professional career as an explosives expert. He knew what we were looking at. The stone is a conglomerate of larger and smaller stones and other rocks and pebbles pressed together to form a solid boulder. The stone for the monument was carried by train from Roxbury, Mass. (now a part of Boston) to the battlefield site for the 20th Massachusetts memorial. Many of the men of the 20th Massachusetts called Roxbury home, and various sources claim that when they were boys, these soldiers had climbed and played on boulders like this near their homes.

As we walked back to our bikes for the short ride to the campsite, I imagined what it might have been like on this very spot a hundred and fifty-two years ago during the battle. The Union Army encampment all along this ridge bustled in on all three evenings. Day three was Friday, July 3, 1863. As darkness settled over the expanse of farmland, I imagined the dance of thousands of small cooking fires, the smell of brewing coffee, bacon and beans, and musicians here and there playing quietly into the night. The regular soldiers were talking about their experiences of the day, home and family or perhaps through their tears, the loss of a friend in the battle



Battlefield workday begins



that day. History tells us that the weather was hot and the aroma from the battlefield must have been a pungent mixture of burnt powder, horse manure, death, cooking, and tobacco...with a fresh bouquet of farm animals tossed in for good measure.

As we reached our bikes, Sam Booth, our rally coordinator, passed by, leading a group of about 25 riders on a battlefield tour. We waved. Time to get some rest. Tomorrow was to be a work day.

(Note: Saturday morning most of the crew enjoyed breakfast at the Lincoln Diner

(in town) and worked for about three hours in the hot sun taking down and stacking about a mile plus of split rail "worm" fencing on the horse trail along side the Trostle Farm. We were attacked by an invading army of ticks, but got the better of them with massive batteries of DEET and other chemical warfare devices. No ticks were left alive, and no animals were hurt during the filming of this event.) ☺

<sup>1</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, Simon & Schuster, New York, New York, 2005, 162

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 167

