

Ghosts at Fort Bragg



by Scott Bitner

When you are out in the great outdoors, stop and listen to the sounds around you. You may be surprised!

The year was 1978 early March; I was with Bravo Company, 2nd Recon Battalion in the United States Marine Corps on a field exercise with the famed 82nd Airborne Division. Fort Bragg is in Fayetteville, N.C. and is one of the largest military training bases around. It occupies 161,000 acres of desolate sand, hills and pine trees; so there is plenty of room to hold very large and realistic war games.

I had been here before doing the same thing, but this time was really different. It was 0430 or 4:30 a.m., the ground was damp with morning dew and a bit murky. Lance Corporal Holt and I were in the forward listening post foxhole and we were to report any sounds or movements back to Headquarters. After doing the required radio checks and checking in with the Sergeant of the Guard, we both settled in for a quiet watch. Billy was catching a few winks and I was looking through my misty surroundings for any sign of the enemy. For the most part, it was an uneventful, boring watch, like most are. Or, so I thought. As time crept by, I heard low voices conversing and smelled hot coffee brewing. I peered through the murk, trying to make out just who was out there. I listened and watched for about fifteen minutes and the voices grew somewhat louder. I saw men in blue uniforms; the guys we're supposed to see should have green United States Army uniforms on. I rubbed my eyes and looked again - these were Union Soldiers, that's right, Civil War Union Soldiers in blue uniforms. I could almost touch these men; they were that close to Billy and me.

I put my hand over his mouth and woke him up. He didn't say anything, he just sat there watching, with his mouth open. We sat quietly, watching these men going about their morning duties. But, we were not prepared for what happened next - we heard gun shots, men yelling, and saw Confederate soldiers in worn and tattered gray uniforms attacking the encampment! This really got the hairs on our necks to stand up and the cold settled in around us. We were not sure how long this lasted, but as the battle worn on, the Union troops beat them back into the woods and they all seemed to fade into the disappearing mist. We sat there for what seemed like a long time, before we spoke to each other. Billy said, "Did you see what I saw?" I asked, "What did you see?" We both laughed quietly and looked around the perimeter to see if anyone else was out there. We didn't know how to report this, so we never did, we never told anyone.

I'm a history nut, so I went to the County Court House when we got back to Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, N.C. and did a little research on the Civil War. You guessed it, I found some information about that area. You won't believe it, but here it goes. On March 10, 1865, there was a battle fought near the very spot where we were. Two Confederate brigades engaged a Union Division at a place called Monroe's Cross or Blue's Farm.

So, when you are out in the great outdoors camping, hiking and having fun, stop and listen to the sounds around you. Who knows, one late night or one very early morning, you too may see something that seems so real, with sounds, smells and movements, that you are not really sure what you just encountered.