



# *The* BRIGADE **Courier** *The Newsletter of the Brigade of the American Revolution*

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## **Rags and Glitches**

Some of us remember Bill Mauldin's cartoons from the Second World War U.S. Army newspaper Stars and Stripes. Bill went to the front lines to be sure his images told an accurate story. His characters, Willy and Joe, were always exhausted, hungry, cold, uniformly ragged, stressed-out, and often ill. In short, their appearances told an awful story. But war is always like that.

In telling its story of the Revolution the Brigade presents impressions of soldiers as being essentially those of neat and tidy garrison troops or cleanly-dressed soldiers awaiting inspection. The question is then what purpose does it serve to present this misleading historical picture to the public?

In 1875, our forerunner, and to some extent our pattern for the Brigade, was the Centennial Legion of Historic Commands. The Legion's role was simply to portray a return of victorious federal troops in parades followed up by food. Marching and feasting was a winning formula for participation.

When the Brigade was formed in 1962 we had no idea of what our responsibilities to the public would be. We did our parades, adding battle reenactments until it became clear that we could not really reenact any battle with accuracy. As a fix we substituted the concept of tactical weapons demonstrations which involved wearing 'Class A' uniforms/clothing in what amounted to 'Class Z' situations.

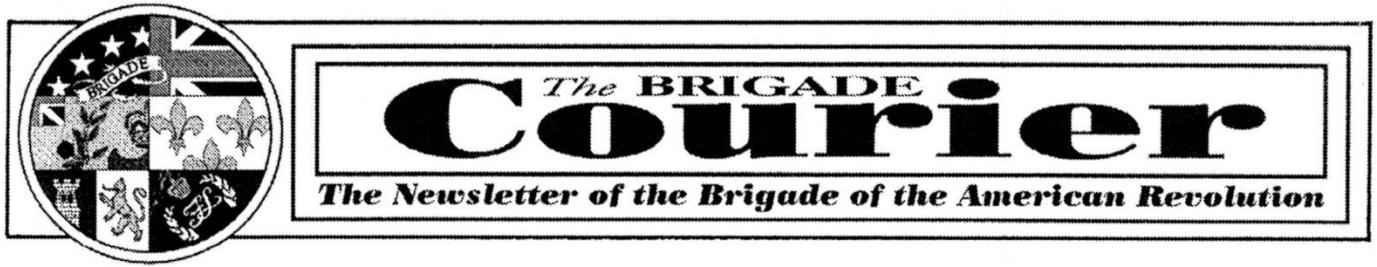
Roy Najecki and others often appeared in clothing well-worn, distressed, and repaired thus telling our story in a much more powerful way: war is not parades and parties after all.

Henry Cooke has perfected ways to distress clothing to reflect what we would expect to see up at the front. By carefully repairing the rips and tears followed up by Henry's guidance we can advance our mission far beyond the early genesis of the Brigade. This would make our organization truly 'Class A.'

Finally, our campaign images can be enhanced by not shaving for a couple of days ahead of an event.

Food for thought. It is time to get the Brigade back on a more realistic campaign...

— William Wigham,  
*Peters' Corps, the Queen's Loyal Rangers*



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## Letters to the Editor

Dear editor,

Although I appreciate the comments of former BAR Inspector, Bill Wigham, ("Rags and Glitches") published in the recent edition of *The Brigade Courier*, it does and should not apply to all units in the BAR.

Unit diversity has been one of the strengths of the Brigade since it was founded. If a unit is presenting a field impression, I totally agree with Bill. However, it would not apply to one doing a garrison impression.

I was introduced to the concept of clothing periods by Don Hagist (as I remember it) at a class presented at a Brigade School in the early 1980s. There he explained how his unit was originally wearing different clothing in Rhode Island than when they were at Philadelphia later in the war. This difference could be separated into definable clothing periods and therefore different impressions.

The Continental Army was separated into a number of different establishments during the war. Some units continued en masse through some or all of the establishments, where others, like the New York regiments, were reorganized every time. In the case of the 1st Establishment of the 2nd New York, which we recreate in the BAR, it was only around from May 1775 until spring 1776. So, one would think that would mean one clothing period, but by drilling deeper, we found there were actually three periods within that 12-month span.

The recreated 2nd New York does the second clothing period within those twelve months. More specifically, we recreate late August of 1775, where nine of the regiment's ten companies were at Fort Ticonderoga. This was the start of the Canadian campaign (not the middle) and was when the unit was at its greatest strength and was the best equipped. They wore issued new-made regimental coats, blankets, and knapsacks (or tumplines), all of which were part of the men's enlistment bounty, plus shoes, weapons and new-made accoutrements. (They apparently never received any issued small clothes.)

At this time, all their issued equipment was new, and as their small clothes were their own property, they were obviously in varied condition, but if worn-out or damaged, they would be kept in good repair.

(This basic look is not unlike Peter's Corps impression at the time the recreated 2nd New York changed to the blue coats way back in the mid-1980s. It was an inspiration to us.)

The good news for us, and one reason we picked this period, was that recreated regimental coats and accoutrements can look in new or very good condition for a number of years. Small clothes wear out faster, but as the condition can vary, so our basic impression remains the same and is easy to maintain.

Since 1972, the 2nd New York is constantly looking at research and tweaking our impression. Occasionally we vary our impression by changing our clothing period, but we stay in that aforementioned 12-month window. Some units go broader and do different clothing periods throughout the war. More power to them. We have found it difficult enough just doing what we do.

— *Phil Weaver*  
*2nd New York*