

## From the Archives of “The Light” Newsletter of the 5<sup>th</sup> MI, Co. K

### Musket Care Will Eichler

**Musket** – The number one tool of the infantryman is also your biggest expense when purchasing your kit. TAKE CARE OF IT! The more I read accounts of soldiers in camp, the more I see them writing about taking care of their weapons. There is no excuse for a dirty weapon, inside or out. That means you must care for it. Field-clean it after firing at events. Do a better job if it when you get home. Here is my recommended list of musket supplies (if you own a musket, I believe you should have ALL of the items in these two lists to care for your investment):

Field cleaning (in your cartridge box) – combination tool, worm, rags, oil or bacon grease to lubricate and protect. You’ll also need our ramrod, belt and cup plus the nipple pick from your cap box.

*To field clean:* Heat water in your cup on the fire. Be careful not to burn yourself! Remove any fired cap from the cone of your musket and stick your belt between the hammer and cone. This will keep water from coming out. When the water is heated, pour some of it down your barrel. You are using hot water because the water left over in the barrel will evaporate faster so there is less chance of rust. Plug the muzzle either with a tompion or hold your thumb over it. Turn the weapon end over end to slosh the water around. Dump the water out. Do this over and over until the water runs out clean. Next, screw the worm on the ramrod. It looks like a corkscrew. Catch a patch with the corkscrew end and scrub the barrel dry with this. If you own an Enfield, you could use the hole in the end of the ramrod to do the same thing. It may take two or three patches to get the barrel dry. Then run a greased patch down the barrel and work it around to protect the metal. Finally, remove the cone. BE CAREFUL NOT TO LOSE IT! (Yes – that has happened.) Use the nipple pick to clean it out. Also clean out the area it screws into. That is the vent and is usually the place where fowling builds up and makes your weapon not fire. Put a LITTLE bit of the oil or grease on the threads before you screw it back in. This will maintain these threads (believe me if you don’t they will rust – I just bought a used musket and that was one of the biggest problems with it). However, don’t use too much or the oil will build up there and stop the spark from getting from the cap to the powder.

Home cleaning – cleaning rod with jag, rags, lube oil such as Hoppes, cleaning patches, optional bore cleaning brush, hydrogen peroxide.

*To home clean:* At home, the first thing I do is to run a bore brush up and down several times. This brass brush on the end of my cleaning rod scrapes lots of the fowling from the inside of the barrel and speed the cleaning process up tons. When the brush comes out, I turn the musket over and tap it several times. This dumps out the fowling the brush just broke free. Then I take several patches (or part of an old t-shirt folded in 4) and

place it between the hammer and the cone. Fill the barrel almost full with hydrogen peroxide. Be careful to get as little as possible on the outside of the barrel. The HP will cause you musket to rust so don't let it get on the outside. However, it is an excellent cleanser of fowling. You will hear the inside of your barrel bubbling. Let the musket stand against a wall or other place and hang out for about 10 minutes. When the HP stops bubbling, dump it out. Repeat a 2<sup>nd</sup> time. Most likely, the 2<sup>nd</sup> round will be almost clear. If not, go a third time. When it runs clear, dump very hot water in the barrel. Slosh it around. The Peroxide cleaned out the fowling. The hot water will wash away any remaining peroxide so it doesn't corrode your barrel. Run two or three rounds of hot water. Then use a cleaning rod with a jag and dry the barrel with a few clean patches. Next, wet a patch with lube oil and oil your barrel.

Now that the barrel is clean, you can address the vent and cone. Remove the cone (and the vent screw if you have an 1861 Springfield). Place them either a little Hydrogen Peroxide or hot water to loosen the fowling. While that soaks, take your nipple pick and do a super job cleaning out the vent of all the fowling you can pick away. The barrel cleaning should have loosened this stuff all up and it will come out easily. Then remove turn to the cone. If you soaked it in HP, rinse it thoroughly and then remove all the fowling from the inside and out. Oil slightly the threads of both this and the vent screw before replacing.

Finally, if you have a Springfield or Enfield with the bluing removed, take a green scotch bright pad to the outside of the barrel and all metal surfaces to remove any rust. I often use a little lube oil on the barrel when I'm scrubbing. Finish up by adding a light coat of oil to the metal to protect it.

You should clean your musket as soon as you can after you get home. My top two priorities for care when I get back from an event are my canteen and my musket. With good, immediate care, they will serve you well for many campaign seasons of great experiences with your comrades in arms.