

PATRIOTIC PALS TAILS OF THE CIVIL WAR

By Chris Stuckenschneider

CHAPTER 5: Brutus, A Newfoundland Tried and True

Whee doggies. Obedience class does me in—happy I'm back home, a book open at my paws. It's all about research when it comes to this Civil War stuff, kind of like playing detective, uncovering bits of information like a sleuth. No not "sloth"—a "sleuth." Look it up!

As you'll recall we left off with Stonewall, a Jack Russell with plenty of pluck. This week, I'll tell you about a giant dog, a Newfoundland and the contribution he made at the Battle of Antietam, which is a bit tricky to pronounce. Sound it out like this: an-tee-tum. That's right.

Reading up on Antietam, which is in Maryland, I uncovered the story of Brutus, a Newfoundland as tough as Gen.

Robert E. Lee, the Confederate leader believed to be one of the greatest generals of all time and the commander of the rebel army at Antietam and a whole lot of other locales.

Ol' Lee was an interesting character, a brilliant wearer of the gray, buttoned-up, every stripe in place, a native Virginian who loved his home state. Up until the war, Lee was an officer in the Union army. But when Virginia seceded, Lee resigned to fight with the Confederacy. It's a sure bet Lee was conflicted, but it didn't hamper his vision as a wise and strategic leader.

At the opposite end of the spectrum was the Union leader at Antietam, who

wasn't near as quick thinking. Gen. George McClellan was just plain pokey. In fact, after Antietam President Lincoln played his "trump card" and told the general, "You're fired."

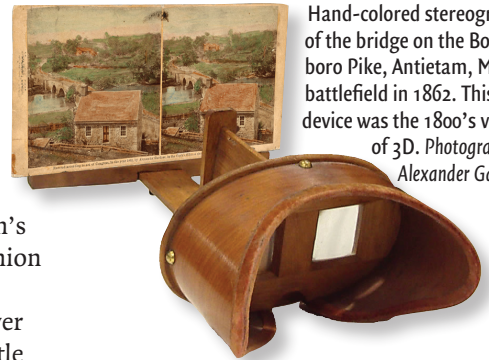
At Antietam, even though McClellan's army far outnumbered Lee's, the Union officer twiddled his thumbs and let Lee light off across the Potomac River back to Virginia. In the end, the battle was still considered a Union victory. It stopped Lee's invasion of the north, but both sides suffered in this bloody battle, the deadliest single day in the military history of the United States.

One who died there was Union Capt. Werner von Bachelles, whose name sounds a bit foreign. Bachelles, a former French officer, belonged to a Wisconsin brigade with a sterling reputation—the Iron Brigade, volunteers from that state combined with others from Indiana and Michigan. These guys

were tough. Alongside the tidal wave of the brigade, 400-men plus, sailed giant Brutus, the beloved sidekick of Bachelles.

Newfoundlands are big, and Brutus tipped the scales at more than 130 pounds. He had the strength and stamina to march long distances and not chicken out when musket ammunition called minie balls headed his way. Brutus had a skewed idea when it came to retrieval. Legend has it he'd try to catch the minie balls in his mouth—not a fetching idea since the cone-shaped chunks of lead would spread out on impact.

That's why there were so many awful injuries during the Civil War. The minie



Hand-colored stereograph of the bridge on the Boonsboro Pike, Antietam, Md., battlefield in 1862. This device was the 1800's version of 3D. Photograph by Alexander Gardner

balls would shatter bones, resulting in the amputation of arms and legs.

The Captain had to train that "catch and release" habit right out of Brutus' repertoire and teach him other tricks, like saluting. Now I've got shaking hands down pat, but I can't imagine the contortions required to heft my paw up to my head—much less lift a webbed paw, like Newfoundlands have.

Once Brutus pulled off the military salute, his Captain had other tricks to teach him. The pair was inseparable, like many war dog mascots, trusty companions that accompanied their masters to war, but reminded them of home sweet home.

Sadly, too many of these bonds ended tragically. At Antietam, Bachelles gave his life for the Union. Brutus was found dead atop his master's body, a friend to the very end.

PAPER TRAINING

Brutus made contributions at Antietam. Many people make contributions to others, giving their gifts of time and/or money. These contributions are recognized in newspaper photos and stories. Find two photos noting others' contributions to community.



Photo showing what Brutus might have looked like.

