Day 1 of The Civil War â€“ 1861 and Other History

Description

The tensions finally rose to the point of exchanging cannon shot on this day in 1861, when artillery batteries on Morris Island (which is not much more than a sandbar, manned by Cadets from The Citadel, led by Cadets Hainesworth and Pickens, fired on a supply ship, the Star of the West, that was entering Charleston Harbor to bring supplies to the Union troops at Ft Sumter.

The troops had all consolidated into Ft Sumter, having abandoned both Ft Johnson (on the SW entrance of the harbor) and Ft Moultrie (on the NE side). More info on this â€œopening dayâ€• is posted at Eagle Speak.

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Star of the West Monument

Star of the West Monument at The Citadel

There is plenty of history in the epic struggle our country faced so many years ago, yet as I checked the Citadelâ€™s for some history, one of the first links came up as the Star of the West Monument, and a listing of the cadets who have won the Star of the West award for the Corps best drilled cadet each academic year.The competition an elimination of hundreds who try out and the winners are truly excellent at drilling with a weapon, in those days, it was the M-14 rifle that was the standard issue weapon for us. To see the concentration and precision of these men was remarkable.Besides my classmate being there, the 1972 award went to â€œA.D. Griffin.â€• Who was this man? â€œDaveâ€• Griffin, â€™74, graduated with a commission as an Ensign in the US Navy. He left Charleston and headed to Basic Underwater Demolition School (BUDS), he became a SEAL, later commanding the East Coast Parachute Demonstration Team, the â€œChuting Stars,â€• before transferring to Naval Aviation and becoming an F-14 Tomcat pilot. Dave is no longer with us, as he died in a crash while returning from a night exercise over North Carolina. I understand they thought it was a case of vertigo, and the plane crashed in Back Bay, Virginia Beach, making recovery of the airframe from the boggy area exceptionally difficult.While at The Citadel, Dave was a larger than life character, tough as nails, with an air of terminal seriousness about him. He had been a member of the Junior Sword Drill, the Summerall Guards, and ran from the campus out to the Citadel beach house on Isle of Palms when he was bored (about 20 miles). I heard he was also the first person to max out the score on the pre-BUDS test for any colleges in the South East part of the country.
The Junior Sword Drill team was one that you didnâ€™t get on without 14 nights of running, push ups, sweating out most of the liquid in your body, but having to keep showing you were learning the drill routine and ignoring the sore muscles and sheer exhaustion. That process of qualifying is now long gone, due to a few who took advantage of the trying out the following year by some serious hazing incidents. Like so many other things, the few ruined it for the many. Summerall Guards tryouts were tough, but didnâ€™t approach the level of those who were on the Sword Drill team.

He was on Regimental Staff his senior year and had the reputation of never striking anyone, but if you needed some correction, he PTed you to exhaustion, with him doing it with you most of the time. I

donâ€™t recall which company he had come up from, but I believe it was one from 3rd Battalion, which had a reputation for being very military minded companies. 1st and 4th Battalions is where many of the athletes ended up, so there was a distinct difference in philosophies at times on how to do things, but thatâ€™s a another long discussion.

So, I thought Iâ€™d take a moment and document some history of Dave Griffin, who had a reputation that he could back up. Iâ€™ll also say I was disappointed when he got command of the Chuting Stars, with 7 jumps (all static line military) behind him to run a freefall exhibition team. I had over 200 freefalls at the time, but he had a qualification I could not achieve: Special Warfare. He broke his leg on his first jump with his new team, trying out his â€œsquareâ€• canopy, and had a cast on for four months of his 12 month assignment

Citadel Cadets have had the history of the opening battle of the Civil War drilled deep within them by using the threat of not getting anything to eat if you didnâ€™t know your â€œmess facts.â€• Maybe thatâ€™s why it has stuck with me all these years, but I will say I missed few meals for a Cadet dating my sister gave me a few bits of wisdom to chew on the summer before my arrival at the North Sally Port of Padgett-Thomas Barracks.

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As far as my knowledge of Dave the upperclassman: I knew to stay out of his field of view, and obviously, he was well known on Campus.

Tracked back @: Eagle Speak

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