



ARMY OF THE DEEP SOUTH

## Headquarters Field and Staff Biographies

### Major General Matthew Hunter Poythress, Commanding.

Major General Poythress has been involved in reenacting since 1991. An Air Force veteran he, in his words, “folded one uniform and started wearing another” and joined the 16th Georgia Infantry.

For thirty years, he has been highly involved in Civil War living history and has risen from the ranks to become a long-serving Battalion Commander for the Georgia Volunteer Battalion, and has served as the overall commander for both Confederate and Union armies at major regional Deep South events for many years. He currently serves as commander of the 1st Infantry Brigade, Department of the Gulf.

General Poythress has deep ties to many aspects of the Civil War reenacting community, including “mainstream”, “progressive”, and “hardcore”, which makes him an asset to the overall credibility of the hobby. He is a “die hard” military professional in the field and brings a wealth of knowledge of drill, military structure, and a desire for professionalism and credibility that many in the hobby find refreshing.

General Poythress is a 17-year Project Manager for a national environmental laboratory. He and his wife, Stacy, enjoy hiking, going to the gym, spur of the moment “adventures”, regular beach trips and spending time with their family and friends when they are not “in the field”.



## **Lieutenant Colonel Mathew “J” (“Joshua”) Sterman, Chief of Staff.**

Lieutenant Colonel Sterman is the “Son of a Sailor”. He was born at the Naval Hospital, Key West, Florida, and raised in Florida, Alabama, Virginia, and South Carolina. He entered the United States Navy after graduating high-school, and retired from active duty in 2004 with the rank of CWO4 (EOD).

He has been married to his high-school sweetheart, Sandra, for 46 years; an amazing accomplishment considering that in both of their professions (hers as an R.N., his as Navy EOD), divorce is a very real (and often, frequent) “occupational hazard”. They are blessed with three children, and four grandchildren.

Having spent most of his military service in (and more often than not, “under”) water, he shifted colors from “squid” to “grunt infantry”, enlisting with Company K (“Key West Avengers”), 7th Florida Infantry in November, 2004. He progressed through the ranks from Private to Corporal to 2d Sergeant. In March 2009, he accepted a brevet promotion to 1st Lieutenant and appointment as Aide-de-Camp to Brigadier General M. Hunter Poythress, then commanding the 1st Brigade (Infantry) of Cleburne’s Division. In September of that year, he was promoted to Captain and appointed as Brigadier General Poythress’ Military Secretary, 1st Infantry Brigade, Department of the Gulf.

He established Company H (“Union Rebels”), 6th Florida Infantry in June 2012. The “Union Rebels” is primarily a “living history” organization, but does perform “active service in the field” with Company K, 7th Florida Infantry as its “2d section, 2d platoon” – in that capacity, he serves as 1st Lieutenant (and “training officer”), and occasionally “takes command of the company” as required.

On January 26th, 2021, he was honored to accept a commission by Major General Mtw. Hunter Poythress, commanding 1st Division, Army of the Deep South, as a Lieutenant Colonel and appointment as his Chief of Staff.

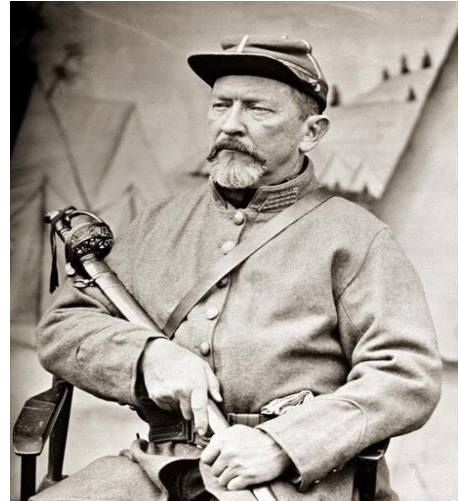
He has been many times asked why he has accepted staff assignments. If humor is called for, he’ll usually answer along the lines of, “Because I’m getting too old to be a musket-toting, sleep-in-the-dirt, bug-eating grunt.” In truth, and due to his “modern” military service, he has not a little experience with staff work, and the transition from “modern” to “period” military was not at all difficult. Although retired from modern military service, his mind set remains “souther-raised” and “professional military”, both on and off the field.

It is his conviction that staff officers serve the rank and file, not the other way around. The organization, effectiveness, and support of the fighting forces at an event is, in some part, a reflection of the quality of staff work accomplished before the event. Staff work is a series of often demanding (and, occasionally frustrating) tasks; the only reward for doing it well is more of it. The rank and file deserve our very best effort; our best measure of success is demonstrated by their satisfaction with, and continued support of, events in which we will have a part.



## **Major Harry E. (“Hannibal”) Keenan, Assistant Inspector General.**

Born in Mobile Alabama, Major Keenan has always had a soft spot in his heart for the Deep South. At the age of 11, his family was forced to relocate to the vast northern wilderness of Ohio, where he spent the next 7 agonizing years of his life in that cold inhospitable place. After an extended “bout” with the college life, he joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 21. He spent the next 20 years as an aviation structural mechanic, most of it in and around Jacksonville, Florida.



In 1997, another move to that frozen wasteland of Ohio put him in contact with a man from Mississippi that was forming a reenacting company, the 17th Mississippi Infantry, Company D, Marshall County Rough and Readies! The company was a member of the 7th Battalion, Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by Colonel Tim Perry. As with most of reenactors, “shifting colors” was a way of reenacting life, and he readily mustered with the 49th and 76th Ohio Infantry. Some 4½ years later, his military experience and more crazy luck found him at Richmond Army Depot in Richmond, Kentucky, rebuilding MH 60 attack helicopters for the Army’s 160th Aviation Squadron (Night Stalkers). Six months after that, he was back in Jacksonville at NAS Jax, busting his knuckles on P-3 Orions at the Naval Aviation Depot.

He was itching to get back into the dirt, when he came upon Company K of the 7th Florida Infantry in the Tampa area. Captain “Skip” Fletcher made him feel right at home there, and as luck would have it, there was a salty corporal there that went by the name of Joshua M. Sterman.

In his 24-year reenacting life, he began like most, as a “rifle toting, smoke choked, powder eating grunt rifleman”, serving as a corporal, 2nd Sergeant, 1st Sergeant, Brevet 2nd Lieutenant, Captain, and now Major and Assistant Inspector General, of the 1st Infantry Brigade, Department of the Gulf. He loves this hobby...he loves his children and grandchildren, his wife, and his motorcycles, (not necessarily in that order). He is committed to the endeavor to carry on an exemplary example, ever striving for authenticity, to educate and to serve all with the respect each reenactor deserves.

## **Sergeant Christian Harden Bigner, Staff Clerk and Orderly.**

Sergeant Bigner was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and raised amongst the live-oaks, swamps, and pine forests of southeastern Louisiana until his family relocated to Niceville, Florida in 2008.

In 2011, he began American Civil War reenacting by enlisting with Co. D, 1st Florida Infantry (the “Walton Guards”). His first event was the 2011 Battle of Selma reenactment at Selma, AL. While with the Walton Guard, he became acquainted with 1st Sergeant Mathew Sterman – who would become his mentor. He has attended several national-level events including the 150th Battle of 1st Manassas, 150th Battle of Shiloh, 150th Battle of Gettysburg, and 150th Atlanta Campaign.



Breaking with the Walton Guard in 2012, he became a founding member of Co. H, 6th Florida Infantry (the “Union Rebels”). With the 6th Florida, he has served in the ranks from Private to Corporal to 2nd sergeant. He has also briefly served on the headquarters staff of the Florida Battalion of Infantry, under Colonel Donald Bowman, as a clerk and orderly, holding the rank of Corporal.

The 6th Florida Infantry is primarily a living history organization and performs service in the field by augmenting Co. K, 7th Florida Infantry under Captain Keith Van Leuven. When serving in that capacity, he serves as 2nd sergeant, and assists in training new recruits.

On March 7th, 2021, he was offered a position by Major General M. Hunter Poythress, to serve on the headquarters staff of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, Army of the Deep South, with the rank of Sergeant and appointment as clerk and orderly. He received permanent transfer orders on March 23rd, 2021.

After graduating from Niceville High School in 2014, he briefly experimented with college life at Troy University. After returning home to Florida, He began exploring a career in law enforcement. He attended the Florida Basic Recruit Academy at Northwest Florida State College from January 2016 until his graduation in June of the same year. He has served previously with the Shalimar Police Department, the Niceville Police Department, and currently serve with the Walton County Sheriff’s Office. He is certified in speed measurement, breath-alcohol testing, and as a field training officer.

His interests include video games, camping, shooting, and spending time with his wife, Ellis, to whom he was married on May 2nd, 2020. They have a miniature schnauzer named Gracie, and a Russian tortoise named Crouton.

He has found reenacting to be one of the most rewarding experiences in his lifetime, and looks forward to many years of continued service.

## **Sergeant George “Matt” Grubb, Principal Musician.**

Sergeant Grubb has been involved in reenacting in various capacities since 1994. He started as a lowly private and has served in a multitude of roles to include everything from corporal to Company Captain. He is well known among hardcore and mainstream reenactors and has the distinction of being a founder member of such reputable groups as the Salt River Rifles, the Armory Guards, and the Southeastern Coalition of Authentic Reenactors (SCAR).

Born and raised in middle Georgia, Sergeant Grubb graduated from Georgia College and State University with a bachelor’s degree in Public Administration. He enlisted in the United States Air Force Reserve as a C-130 crew chief and served 28 years while eventually attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, serving as a C-17 maintenance squadron commander, and retiring as the 315<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Inspector General.

A passionate musician, Sergeant Grubb spends at least 5 hours a week mastering his principal instrument, the trombone. Sergeant Grubb plays in a mega-church orchestra that produces an annual live Christmas program that is seen by 30+ thousand of the public each year. Sergeant Grubb is a huge fan of Civil War Era music and believes in the magic and quality that is added to each event by the presence of field music. He has a powerful delivery on the bugle and has been heard at events across the southeast to include Shiloh, Pickett’s Mill, Missionary Ridge, Chickamauga, Resaca, and Olustee.

In his civilian capacity, Sergeant Grubb is an aircraft assembly instructor for Qarbon Aerospace in Milledgeville, Ga. In his spare time he enjoys deer hunting on his middle Georgia property and on any given weekend he may be found with his wife Margaret relaxing at a small hidden cottage on Florida’s Choctawhatchie Bay.

