



Rival Reaction

I Civil war buffs
replay battle
If there is one thing
timeless, it is history.

Sunday afternoon, history revisited Nebraska City as Civil War enthusiasts came to Arbor Lodge to reenact Chalk's Bluff Battle.

Soldiers hailing from North Dakota to Kansas, from Minnesota to Colorado, fight each other in the battle originally staged in Missouri. The enthusiasts, portraying Confederate and Union soldiers, face each other and wait for their commands. With a thunderous roar, cannons let fly a volley of munitions into enemy lines, while several soldiers fall to the ground.

Fighting in columns and with guerrilla warfare, 300 actors battle.

Doug Helgeson, a modern-day painter and printer turned Civil War doctor, helps haul off several wounded comrades.

"The hand is broken, it has to come off," he says, grabbing the saw and amputating on the war field. Nearby, a nurse attempts to help a wounded soldier.

Young and old men alike fight over a few small acres of land. This is how it was back then, Dianne Helgeson says, after telling a spectator why the actors did not have a wastebasket at their camp. Her husband, Doug Helgeson, and daughter play at cutting off the girl's hand because of a shrapnel wound.

Doug Helgeson enjoys the outings, even if they are 8½ hours from his Minnesota home. He explains to a gathered group the medical procedures used in the war while he pulls out a plastic leach.

The costumes and props for this display of living history do not come cheap, unless cheap is \$700 for the outfit, not including weaponry.

After fighting for an hour, soldiers from the two armies decide they have had enough of the hot sun. The Confederates surrender, moving to the shade of nearby trees. The soldiers wipe blood off their faces and hands, share a smoke or make a joke.

The war is over, now all that is left is to pack the muskets and canvas tents and hop into cars to drive home.



ABOVE: NURSE HOLLY HOFFMAN tends to wounded soldier Jason Bolton.
LEFT: DOUG HELGESON (left), a Civil War-era doctor, helps carry a fallen soldier from the reenacted Chalk's Bluff Battle.
BOTTOM: LIMBS ARE SCATTERED across the ground as a young boy portrayed by Dawn Helgeson eyes the battlefield.
TOP: A CANNON BLARES across the normally quiet meadows near Arbor Lodge.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAN LUEDERT