

TALES OF THE OLD WEST

AIRSOFT IS FLOURISHING ALL OVER THE WORLD AGAIN AT LAST, AND THIS IS WHERE THE MEMBERS OF THE AA LEGION ARE REALLY COMING INTO THEIR OWN! WITH NEW MEMBERS COMING ONLINE THE INTERNATIONAL EVENT AND GAME REPORTS ARE FLOWING IN NOW, SO WHO BETTER THAN DAN IN THE USA TO REPORT IN ON A "WILD WEST" GAME WITH A DIFFERENCE!

"The year is 1913. The Wild West is rapidly disappearing. The days of the gunslingers and outlaw gangs riding the range are coming to a close. The six-gun is feeling its age against the rise of a self-loading pistol designed by John Browning just two years ago.

"Horse trails have given way to railroads and paved roads have been laid down in some cities for the horseless carriages growing in popularity back east in New York, Chicago and Detroit. The Pony Express is being replaced by the telegraph and the telephone.

"The frontier is fading rapidly here in the small town of Mesquite along the Mexican-American border, but there still might be time for another score."

Thus sets the scene for our themed event hosted by Pegasus MilSim, "Mesquite", an escape to the early 20th century a year before the Great War would reshape the map of the world.

As an active airsofter who has been playing for many years now, I have found the routine MilSim and generic pickup games started to lose their lustre over time. You start craving for that first-game hit, or something unique and interesting that represents a fun diversion from the humdrum of the norm... which is why every now and then a unique themed event can be just the ticket needed to get the creativity and passion for airsoft flowing again!

Mesquite was not so regimented in the minutiae of impressionism as to be too restrictive on what one could use and wear. It was largely restricted to items and weapons used in the late 19th to early 20th century: chiefly bolt-action rifles, lever guns, revolvers and early semi-auto pistol designs. This would naturally change the pace of battle from the usual high-volume full-auto firefights to more measured and precise engagements. With limited capacity and however fast you were at running a bolt or lever gun, you had to make your shots count.

For myself, I equipped with an S&T Kar98k spring rifle outfitted with a full TNT upgrade kit and a modified real steel walnut stock. My sidearm was a KWC Luger P08, with a 1912 marked German leather holster and belt, Kar98 cartridge pouches, canvas trousers, suspenders, and a 19th century work shirt and bowler hat. This was a

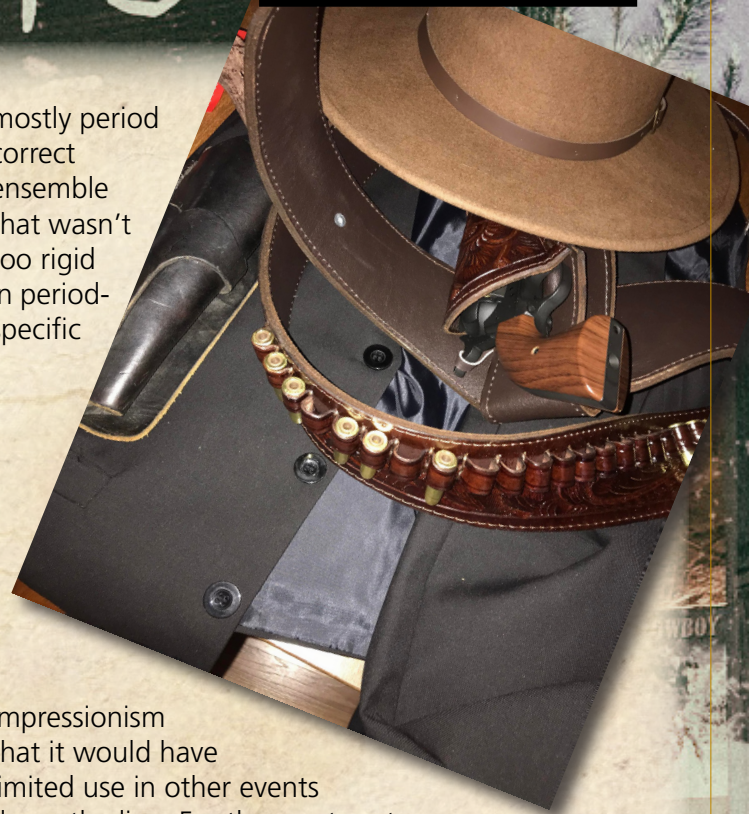
mostly period correct ensemble that wasn't too rigid in period-specific

impressionism that it would have limited use in other events down the line. For the most part, I elected to only lightly age and weather some of my kit rather than give it the overall appearance of being something over 100 years old. The rifle would show normal signs of use and wear consistent with routine carry and exposure to the elements, but other items would have a more new appearance, which would be realistic for things more recently purchased by our fictional character.

On a related note, the process of researching and acquiring new gear is an adventure all its own. It was fascinating to read of the evolution in clothing and styles of the period, and anyone who enjoys military and small arms development history will note this is a very rich period indeed when invention and ingenuity were being pushed forward with a full head of steam.

THE MIGHTY DOLLAR!

While this was by most definitions a themed skirmish, it was not all strictly war games, as our little western-themed town featured a general store, saloon, bank and a sheriff's office. Players started out in the little town of Mesquite and were expected to engage in some commerce, trading and seeking out bounties that were placed on players who "offended" the law. There was also plenty of gambling, gentleman's duels and gun-games to partake in too. Like any good western, temptation awaited the actors of this film, with the bank housing a safe and a pile of gold. In order to



crack this safe, one had to use at least four sticks of dynamite, which could be purchased (or stolen!) from the general store.

The game was based around having a currency-based economy, with each



player at the outset rolling a 12-sided dice to determine how much starting cash they would begin with. In concept, this actually worked out pretty well and ensured a realistic disparity in available cash reserves amongst the players. For myself, I came away with a whopping \$2, which admittedly couldn't buy much in our fictional economy. The respective owners of the saloon and general store set prices, and the currency could be used to buy real world food items, beverages, and even that dynamite, the latter being initially priced exorbitantly high to limit its proliferation on the field.

Naturally, the high price



of dynamite lent itself perfectly to the quick formation of

criminal elements that were bent on stealing it and using it to crack the bank safe. Before long, a plan was hatched that involved multiple conspirators, one of whom would secret away into the tree-line to snipe the owner of the general store. At the precise moment the owner was incapacitated, I was tasked with pilfering the crate of dynamite for as many sticks as my hands could hold and ideally get away before the Sheriff could react!

The plan MOSTLY worked, but during my escape from town I took a "bullet" in the back from an unseen assailant; presumably it was a noble townsman who couldn't let such thievery happen on their watch! My co-conspirator was hot on my heels, and I was swooped in and retrieved most of the dynamite I had scored. He left two

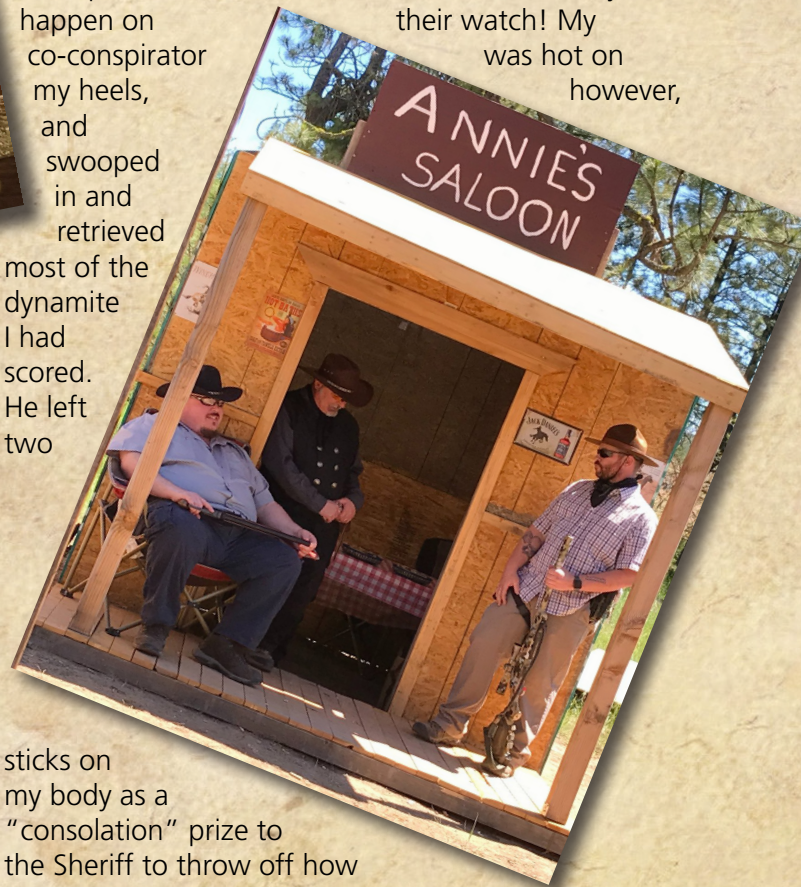
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WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE!

Since we had now become part of the scurvy-ridden banditry, bounties were placed on our heads, with myself being hunted for the princely sum of \$200 USD. In quick order, we found ourselves having to evacuate the premises, and as bandits are wont to do, we retreated to the surrounding forest and fended off our pursuers.

These small skirmishes really showcased some of the limitations of the period correct gear and gave you an appreciation for what people of the era had to fight with. I was finding that my cartridge pouches



and Luger holster were sliding all over the place on the belt. The canvas trousers did not come with belt loops, as was correct for that style of pants, so the belt more or less just hung off your hips, with nothing else to really secure it. Being used to the rigidity of MOLLE, where every pouch simply stays where you place it, this was something new to get used to.

The Luger holster was basically an all-encompassing shell of formed leather and wasn't really designed for quick access so much as fully protecting the pistol from the elements. In hindsight, a field harness or leather keepers would have probably lent some more stability to my setup. Similarly, as nearly everything in my modern collection is running a red dot or optic of some sort, going back to running old school iron sights was a unique change of pace too.

After thoroughly exercising the bolt on my Kar98k, I felt it safe enough to try and sneak back into town to see if we could take a stab at the bank safe. But the old axiom "there is no honor among thieves" bore true, and I found myself shot in the back (again!) by my fellow bandit who hauled me before the sheriff and scooped up the \$200 bounty on my head! All's fair in love and war, as



they say!
As enjoyable as this themed event was, it was also a bit dismaying to see the low levels of attendance. Historically speaking, themed events have traditionally always had poor attendance, though. By nature of the events themselves, there is often a barrier to entry in

outfitting oneself with the



appropriate gear. In this case, it wasn't helped that we are still dealing with major supply chain disruptions and material shortages in the present.

In the months leading up to the event, there was a distinct lack of retail inventory available for revolvers, lever guns and even WWI and II era rifles. Even historical clothing suppliers had a dearth of available items and sizes from which to select from. With the younger generations, there also seems to be a general lack of interest in dressing up as anything other than pseudo-Special Forces, and "COD-Fever" still hangs heavy like a wet blanket over their shoulders. This is perhaps the hardest aspect to overcome itself.

In particular, site owners are the ones taking on all the risk breaking away from the usual games to offer something unique, and it doesn't always come out ahead for them; often quite the inverse. They put a lot of heart, blood, sweat and tears into their events. This also doesn't account for the many volunteers who are the 'silent army' that assists the site owner in setting up events and put forth equal toil into building structures, props and more.

As players and attendees, it's on us to support our local fields and ensure they stay afloat and continue to offer quality events. I would argue that this also means supporting the less-popular themed events, even if it is not your usual gaming preference. At the very least, I challenge you to try something different for a change of pace... you may genuinely surprise yourself with how much fun it can be!

For more information on games run by Pegasus MilSim please check out their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/PegasusAirsoftGroup, and thanks to Rob and the team for the game images ... Yeeha! **AA**

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