



July 28, 2010 – Grand Rapids, MI

18 Inches

Every time I visit Valley Forge, I always come away amazed at how our first troops lived. This time I entered one of the barracks of Muhlenberg's Brigade. Made of logs, there were 12 men to a barracks with four racks of three bunks. What struck me was the vertical distance between the bunks: 18 inches. That's not counting hay or blankets they may have used to make for a softer surface. There would be many people today who could never fit in those bunks. That's not even considering body weight. While the top bunk is sturdy, I don't know if many people would be entrusted with it.

Lie on your back on the floor. Have someone measure the distance from the floor to the top of your chest or belly. If your depth is greater than 18 inches, you couldn't sleep there on your back. I could—I measured 11 inches. Roll over on your side like many of us sleep, including yours truly. Measure the distance from the floor to the top of your shoulders or hips, whichever is taller. I'm toast—20 inches wide at the shoulder. Luckily, most of us don't sleep flat on our shoulder—the bottom arm is up. I could just barely sleep on my side or turn over.

How about you? We're taller and better nourished than our Revolutionary ancestors and we're not starving on a battlefield in winter, but there's no need for us to have a larger girth. I don't think they suffered and died to give us the freedom to eat stupid and be fat. Honor those troops and the freedom they helped win for us by getting closer to their size. And here's the bonus: the freedom to participate in more of the activities you enjoy and to have more choices in what you wear.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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