

## Living in olden days

### Re-enactors show what it was like during the Revolution

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Ed Miano, right, and Mary Ann Stickney talk to a group at the Pownal library about what it's...



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POWNAL — During the week, she is just a regular person living in West Rutland and working as a tax accountant. He lives in Bennington and teaches business to college students.

Weekends, however, frequently find them living and fighting in the late 1700s. Ed Miano and Mary Ann Stickney are Revolutionary War re-enactors. On Sunday, the two explained at Pownal's Solomon Wright Library what it is like to take such an active interest in the American Revolution.

"I devote almost my whole summer to it," said Stickney. "To me, it was seeing if I could live the way they did and the challenges they face. It gives you a whole different perspective."

Dressed in authentic garb and carrying all the tools they would need on a battlefield, Miano and Stickney explained that bringing history to life starts with a curiosity and becomes a passion.

"It's a hobby you become passionate about and do a lot of research," said Stickney.

There are many reasons that people become re-enactors, said Miano. Some do it to re-enact what their ancestors went through, some do it for the acting, some to be educational and some to see the cultural difference. After watching many re-enactments, Miano decided in 1999 to represent the 25th Massachusetts Continental Regiment to fulfill his curiosity. He has not looked back.

"I guess it started off as a curiosity but after nine years of going to events I finally signed up," said Miano. "It's a big commitment. It's not just the fighting, it's the camp life, too."

There are many units and each one provides training and the opportunity to act in up to 24 events a year. Though the re-enactors do not have to attend all of the events, Miano and Stickney both participated in 17 last year. The events usually last an entire weekend, and it is definitely not a vacation.

"It is hard, you have to be committed. It's not like you are staying in a hotel, you are out there," said Stickney.

Sleeping in authentic tents and staying in character in all types of weather reveal what it was really like.

Miano represents an American soldier coming from civilian life to the battlefield. Armed with a replica musket, civilian clothes and a strong knowledge of the history, Miano strives to be as accurate as possible.

"I'm dressed partly in civilian and partly in military because it's early in the war and a lot of us weren't well equipped," said Miano.

Stickney is a camp follower for Warner's Company of Green Mountain Rangers. As a cook, she follows the troops around hoping for work. Her character is a widow or a refugee and cooks English food out of the ingredients available to serve to the troops along with sewing clothes.

"We were raising a family, taking care of the farm and helping the Army when we can," said Stickney. "We pretty much police ourselves and try to be as accurate as possible."

She has done a lot of research on the food and began growing the same herbs in her personal garden. At yard sales, she digs through the clothing to find originals or sews replicas in her spare time. During the week, she is just a regular person living in West Rutland and working as a tax accountant.

The work is volunteer and re-enactors have to pay dues for the unit's insurance, create their own costumes and purchase black powder for their weapons. All members are trained in safety and event is choreographed for months ahead of time.

"Each unit is like a club. There is a chain of command but it's very democratic," said Miano, who teaches business at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, in North Adams, Mass.

The payoff for him is seeing the children smile as they watch the battle unfold.