

# A Confederate Veteran That I Knew Captain Seymour Anderson Johnson

By MILDRED BEASLEY STEVENS

Nearly a quarter of a century has elapsed since "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew" has passed over the river to be with his beloved comrades of the 23rd Virginia Regiment. To them he was "Sam", just another boy from Albemarle County Virginia, who like themselves had enlisted in Richmond on May 23rd 1861 to fight for the rights of man. -- to the townfolk of his adopted North Carolina town he was "Captain Johnson", -- but to me he was "Grandpa". Not a Confederate Veteran, not an old soldier, but Grandpa, who would gladly pay me a nickel to have me scratch his head.

Never did it occur to me that this quiet, dignified man had suffered and survived the horrors of war, because he was unlike the old soldiers that I knew, who sat around the court house green regaling the

public with fantastic tales of their heroism. But among his notes there were reminiscences that proved to posterity the things that he was too modest to talk about. I find that the "Confederate Veteran That I Knew" saw quite a bit of service during the hostilities of the sixties. A raw recruit, with only sixty days training, he began his travels thru the valley of Virginia that were to continue for the next four years. It is impossible to record the entire valley campaign, but a paragraph written by "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew" will give an excellent insight of his character.

"We moved from Richmond to Staunton by rail, then took up a march of ninety miles across the Alleghenies and Cheat Mountains. The weather was exceedingly warm (June) and the march tested to the full the endurance of the newly made soldiers. Some had been trained to work, but none anticipated the labor necessary to carry a wardrobe, bedding, twelve pound musket and forty rounds of ammunition. Sore feet and blistered backs were the order of the day and the men decided before we reached Laurel Hill in Barbour County, that the place as well as the enemy was on the retreat. We covered the distance in five days. We thought well of the speed at the time, but afterwards we discovered it to be easy."

And then again:

"We marched about eighty miles parallel with Cheat mountain before beginning the ascent, and all the marches of war, this perhaps was made under the greatest difficulty. There was no order in the march, there could be none. The ascent in some places was almost perpendicular where we had to pull up by inches, the men behind would push the men in front up. I think we went over ground that had never been pressed by human foot since the Indians vacated. At no point of the ascent was there a sign of a cabin or evidence that there had ever been one. After eight hours of the hardest climbing I ever did we reached the river. This is perhaps the only mountain in our country that has a river on its top."

Evidently these marches, together with many more, in the snow, and with no food except stolen cattle, butchered and cooked immediately to quell the pangs of hunger, gave the "Confederate Veteran That I Knew" a distaste for walking, for when I knew him he had chosen railroad engineering for a career. One that furnished adequate transportation.

As I read on I find that the "Confederate Veteran That I Knew" enjoyed a sense of humor: "At dusk the order to fall to the woods was given, I failed to hear it -- to my surprise when I looked around I was alone with the captain and a few wounded men. A company of Yankee cavalry that I had been watching for several minutes was advancing and something had to be done very soon. I asked the captain if we should run for the woods, distance about five hundred yards, he replied that he was broke down and could not make the effort. While I lay no claims to gallantry, or to any great achievement in battle, I do contend that on this occasion I made one of the best runs of the war. The cavalry was running parallel with me on the other side of the fence and one man in the lead on a gray horse was intent on stopping me. Every time he called out 'Stop you damned rebel' he would fire his revolver at me. But if he had wished to stop me he should have ceased firing. I thought when I started I was up to my best, but I increased speed at each shot and some of his shots came disagreeably near."

Compassion was another characteristic of "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew". Not something he had developed with age, but something he possessed even as a young soldier.

"In the fight we captured a woman, the first we had ever captured

and I was detailed the next day as officer of the guard, I hoped she would be the last. Her husband, she said was in the army and she had become on that account a camp retainer, and followed where she thought there was no danger. She was Irish of the true blue and told me in no polite language what she thought of me and the South in general for making her march with the command. The first day her feet got sore and she wept copiously over her misfortune but she ceased to be quarrelsome. Her condition touched my sympathy and I began to cast about for an avenue of escape. She was not exactly a prisoner of war so regardless of the consequences I determined not to march her another day and told her that when we went into camp that night I would send her for water without a guard, and she must make her way to the nearest house, remain there until the army had all passed, then make her way as best she could to Washington. The plan worked out all right, she went for water and never returned and nobody in authority ever asked me what became of that woman."

Another thing about "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew" was that I never heard him speak of the men who wore the blue as "damn Yankees". There was no ill will, no bitterness, instead praise for their courage, for instance.

"At Gaus Mill I saw where a division of the enemy fought there as they lay, reflecting credit on them as soldiers; a line half mile long could be traced by the dead men, they lay in almost a perfect line as they stood in ranks. Exposed to raking fire of grape, canister and musketry; they had stood like the heroes that they were, and I don't think there was an average interval of more than five feet between them."

Gallant, yes, and so was "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew". No bitterness for these men he met in open conflict, but for those men in charge of United States Prisons, he had only condemnation. Often as a child I had bragged that my grandpa was a member of the "Immortal Six Hundred." To me only words, but to him hardships and bitter memories.

"On the 20th day of August, 1864,

six hundred officers confined at Fort Delaware were drafted from a lot of twenty hundred and singled out as subjects on whom "the best government the world ever saw" was to work its vengeance. Men whose names began with the first twelve letters of the alphabet were taken, five hundred and fifty five and fifty field officers. This was announced in the prison barracks as men wanted for exchange. As our names were called we gladly formed ourselves into a battalion with Dixie in view. So much elated were we at the prospect of exchanging prison life for the field again that we sympathized with the less fortunate that must be left until another exchange could be effected. Men that were left offered large sums of money to be allowed to take some of our places. One man did sell his chance for a gold watch and five hundred Confederate dollars. When we left prison we were given letters and messages for friends in Dixie by those left behind. On the 7th of March, 1865, we that survived met our friends in the same prison after an absence of six of the most fearful months that any of those present had ever experienced, and without seeing Dixie, only as Moses saw the promised land. We saw it from a distance, but were never allowed to go over and possess it."

Space does not permit a record of the indignities suffered on board the Steamer "Crescent City" or on an old condemned schooner that had not been cleaned since it was used to transport live stock for the army, or of the stockade pen on Morris Island in which "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew" had to live and suffer. Always just though in regard to his fellowmen, even though he was of another race.

"In a few days after our being placed in the pen the white guards were removed and their places taken by negroes. These for the most part were fugitives from South Carolina that had been formed into a regiment -- It is a fact that they treated us in most cases as if they were conscious of our superiority. In a few instances they were guarding their former masters, and be it said to their credit they sought to take no advantages of their position or did anything to make our imprisonment more un-

comfortable than it was. These were our custodians for forty-three days. Once each day, about nine A. M., the negro corporals issued rations consisting of three ounces of salt pork and three ounces of army hard tack. This was prescribed not by the U. S. Government, but by Major General Foster."

These are a few scattered incidents of the hardships endured by "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew", but they left no bitterness. Time only enhanced the great qualities he displayed as a young man. And fifty years after the War Between the States, I remember the enthusiasm with which he donned his new gray uniform to travel back to Gettysburg to join once again his comrades of the sixties.

"Hushed is the roll of the rebel drum  
The sabres are sheathed and  
the cannons are dumb  
And Fate, with pitiless hand,  
has hurled  
The Flag that once challenged  
the world."

But the memory of "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew" still abides. An able soldier -- a sincere Christian and an honest man -- such a legacy to bequeath to sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons, who have so recently proved that they too could keep the faith and hold high the torch of liberty entrusted to them by "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew."

The above paper was read by Mrs. Stevens at a meeting of the U. D. C. in Warsaw last week.



Many tributes will be paid newspaper boys on annual Newspaper Boy Day this month. Thousands of newspaper boys are members of their clubs, sponsored by the International Circulation Managers' Association. Perhaps no greater honor will come to these boys than to point them out as school boys who are demonstrating how to go into partnership with their Uncle Sam in building a growing fund for future education. By investing their newspaper boy earnings in U. S. Savings Bonds regularly, they are getting their Uncle Sam to pay part of the expense. Your bond editor or banker will explain how regular bond buyings can provide four years of college education, one year of which will be paid for by your Uncle Sam as interest on your investment. U. S. Treasury Department

## Duplin Theatre Warsaw, N. C.

### WELCOME TO WARSAW



SUNDAY, MONDAY, Nov. 9-10

### Calcutta

With Alan Ladd and William Bendix.

TUESDAY, Nov. 11th. ARMISTICE DAY

### Vigilantes Return

COLOR

With Jon Hall and Margaret Lindsay. Show will open at 12:00 noon on Armistice Day and run continuously. Last Show at night will begin at 8:30 P. M.

WEDNESDAY, Nov. 12 DOUBLE FEATURE

### Gunsmoke Ranch

With Three Mesquiteers.

### The Crimson Key

With Kent Taylor.

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, Nov. 13-14

### Golden Earrings

With Marlene Dietrich and Ray Milland.

SATURDAY, Nov. 15 DOUBLE FEATURE

### West To Glory

With Eddie Dean.

### Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back

With Ron Randell.

**ARMISTICE DAY 1918**

**Welcome To Warsaw**  
**ARMISTICE DAY**  
**Make Our Store Your HEADQUARTERS**  
**Clark's Cut Rate**  
**Your Prescription Druggist**  
**IN WARSAW**

## Danca Theatre

WALLACE, N. C.

SUNDAY & MONDAY, Nov. 9-10

### Welcome Stranger

Starring Bing Crosby, Barry Fitzgerald.

TUESDAY, Nov. 11th. STAGE & SCREEN ATTRACTION

THREE SHOWS, 3:15, 7:15, 9:15.

On Stage - IN PERSON  
**"ESQUIRE VANITIES"**

On Screen  
**Comedy Carnival**

All Star Cast.

WEDNESDAY, Nov. 12

### Bells Of Angelo

With Roy Rogers.

### Son Of Rusty

With, The Wonder Dog.

THURS. & FRI. Nov. 13-14

### Foxes Of Harrow

Starring Maureen O'Hara, Rex Harrison.

SATURDAY, Nov. 15

### Flashing Guns

Starring Johnny Mac Brown.

### Hardboiled Mahoney

With, The East Side Kids.

OWL SHOW:

### Step Child

Starring Brenda Joyce, Donald Woods.

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### SPECIAL NOTE --

A large number of farmers from great distances are taking advantage of our SUPERIOR MARKET and tobacco is being sold in GREENVILLE this year from sections of the state that have never before sold their tobacco in Greenville.

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