

Along The Way

By Emily Killete

Americans think of the Civil War in terms of our country's citizens bearing arms against each other and causing almost total destruction in the South.

Soldiers of the Civil War faced many hardships and Captain Seymour Anderson Johnson of Virginia wrote of his experiences in "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew." Captain Johnson was among the Immortal 600 and marched four years with the 23rd Virginia Regiment through the valleys of that state.

Captain Johnson was the grandfather of Mildred Beasley Stevens and excerpts from "A Confederate Veteran That I Knew" was published in the November 7, 1947 issue of THE DUPLIN TIMES in a speech written by Mrs. Stevens.

"We moved from Richmond to Staunton by rail, then took up a march of 90 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, 12 pounds musket and 40 rounds of ammunition. Sure 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 east..."

Johnson enlisted in the Confederate Army on May 23, 1861, and with only 60 days of training he began marching with the 23rd Regiment.

"We marched about 80 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..."

"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..."

"On the 20th day of August 1864, 600 officers confined at Fort Delaware were drafted from a lot of 2,000 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 12 letters of the alphabet were taken, five hundred and fifty line and fifty field officers. This was announced in the prison barracks as men wanted for exchange. As our names were called

Barbeque Dinner

Calvary Baptist Church of Warsaw will hold a barbeque dinner May 5. Tickets are available in advance or at the door for barbeque pork or chicken plates. Serving will begin at 4:30 p.m. and last through 7:30 p.m.

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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 has 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...

"In a few days after our being placed in the pen the white guards were removed and their places taken by negroes. Those 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 uncomfortable than it was. These were our custodians for 43 days. Once each day, about 9 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..."

And, not often but a few women were among the ranks as soldiers in the Civil War. Captain Johnson wrote of his company's experience

with capturing a woman soldier.

"In 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 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."

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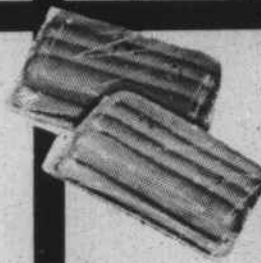
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