A REMINISCENCE

By

Joe M. Scott

This is a reminiscence by Joe Scott on MARK H. WAGNER, Jr, who was the grandfather of Nita Wagner Dyer. It was written in 1913.

Mark H. Wagner, Jr, was born February 10, 1840, and enlisted in Captain Charles A. Carroll's Company in May, 1861, and entered the service of the State of Arkansas, and this Company being well mounted and well equipped were chosen by General Pierce as his escort guard.

They went into camps in Benton County, Arkansas, near the town of Maysville. Sometime in June they were permitted to see a blue-coat for the first time.

By request of General Price of Missouri, they made their first raid and found the federals at Neosho, Missouri, surprised and captured them. From this time until the 10th of August this Company was very busy scouting and watching the movements of the Federal Army.

Generals Pierce, Price, and McCulloch combined their forces and met the Federal Army at Oak Hill near Springfield, Missouri, Sunday morning, August 10, 1861, where the second great battle of the War was fought and our victory was complete. We routed the enemy after eight hours of constant fighting, with the loss of their chief, Commander General Lyon.

After this victory, the State troops were ordered back to Arkansas and were discharged. Soon after reaching home there was an urgent call for men to enlist in the Army of the Confederate States. A man by the name of Davidson raised a Company of Cavalry and nearly every man that was in Carroll's Company in the State service enlisted in Davidson's Company for the Confederate service, including Mark H. Wagner, Jr. The Company was ordered from Van Buren to Huntsville, Arkansas, in Madison County and about December 1, 1861, the 1st Arkansas Battalion was organized, consisting of about seven hundred well-mounted and picked men.

Ras Stirman was elected their Commander to the end of the War, refusing to be promoted, he said that he had started out with his Battalion and he would stay with them to the end. They went into winter quarters and about February 15th were ordered out to meet the Federals who were pushing General Price out of Missouri. The 6th and 7th of March, 1862, the indecisive battle of Elk Horn was fought where general McIntosh and McCulloch were killed in a very gallant charge on the enemy, to which Stirman's Battalion took an active part. This battle lasted two days. We then took down the White River Valley, having been ordered east of the Mississippi River. On our way East, we were dismounted for six months that we might be of more service to the Army of Tennessee. We landed at Corinth, Mississippi, about the 20th of April, 1862, and were placed under the command of General G. T. Beauregard. The 9th of May we fought the battle of Farmington. The 29th of May we fell back fifty miles, remained at this camp until the 15th of September. During our camp life the summer of 1862, there were many spicy things occurred that perhaps will be of interest.

My Regiment, the 6th Texas, always camped next to Stirman's Battalion and each five hundred men were ordered to dig a well, so we might not suffer for water while in this camp. The party that I was connected with failed to get plenty of water while Mark Wagner's party found plenty of good, cold, clear water but guards were kept over wells and no one was allowed to get water except those directly connected with this well.

But Mark Wagner and I, being close friends, I would carry my empty bucket to his mess and he would go to the well and get the water and I, by help of a good friend, was supplied with plenty of good, cold water. While in this camp, Mark Wagner's mess failed from some unknown cause, to me, one morning to draw their daily rations. Therefore, they refused to go on drill until they had something to eat. Drill hour was from 9 to 11 A.M. and from 2 to 4 P.M. Mark Wagner and all of his mess were ordered to shoulder knapsacks and guns and other camp equipage and do double quick for two hours. I can't remember the names of all but good-hearted Dick Shores, Jack Howell, Bob Wagner, Bud Moore, Jess and John Marrs and I think two others made the party.

They obeyed orders for a little while and then walked up to their Captain whose name was Brantley, and told him in language that he could readily understand what he could depend upon if he ever went into battle in front of his Company. The Captain left the next morning, and they never saw or heard of him again. I was a witness to the whole affair and will say for all concerned, that Mark Wagner led the crowd to Captain Brantley, and I heard him give the Captain the lecture spoken of. His lecture lasted perhaps for thirty minutes. He was not boisterous, but plain. We were then ordered Northwest to Luka, [Mississippi], a distance of fifty miles and the 19th of September another great battle was fought in which we were victorious. (Barnes History to the contrary).

We moved Southwest thirty miles, thence North twenty miles and found Grant's Army entrenched at Corinth. We went at them as though we thought they were few in numbers. Our gallant little "bank" consisted of about twenty five thousand men while they numbered about fifty thousand. After two days of hard and constant fighting, October 4th and 5th, 1862, we were forced to give back—our loss was heavy, but perhaps not as great as the enemy. We fell back forty miles and the Brigade was all remounted except Stirman's Battalion. (Will state that Senator Berry lost his leg in this battle just spoken of.)

This ended my service with Mark Wagner until June, 1863. During the great siege at Vicksburg of forty days at the battle of Baker's Creek near Vicksburg, May 20, 1863, Mark Wagner made his escape with General Loring's Division.

General Grant, having surrounded the entire Southern forces, drove them into Vicksburg. General Loring slipped out with his division under disguise and Mark Wagner slipped out with him. Forty days later, Vicksburg fell and Stirman's Battalion was paroled and returned to the West side of the river and were exchanged and entered the service again, and could not tell about the actual service of Stirman's Battalion from July 1863 to September 1864 but well known all their service during this period was active and subject to great danger. Ras Stirman was considered a brave and courageous man and was always kept far out to the front to keep the Army from surprise. There are a great many things that I could speak of that would be interesting to myself, but perhaps would not interest others. Pardon me for this little narrative.

In January or February, 1865, Mark Wagner and myself were selected by our chief Commander to go up Red River, twenty miles and float down a flat boat of corn for our horses, which were without anything to eat. This was somewhat a dangerous venture. The federals were not far away. However, we found the boat and corn, but was five or six miles from any settlement and it was then getting dark and we had neither matches or fire and no road except a very dim pathway through the tall cane break. Mark said, "Joe, we will get out in the thick cane break and we will not freeze". We found a large log and I crawled under next to the log and Mark next to me. The ground was frozen perhaps a foot deep and Mark said, "Joe, if we don't lie perfectly still we will surely freeze" I took his advice and we lay there until morning and can say we slept on the naked ground with one thin blanket for our cover and our lullaby was the cold, North wind.

We pushed the boat from the bank and Mark took the risk in the boat and I took the risk of taking the horses back. He got the boat in the swift current and kept it there and landed safely about sundown amidst many cheers from the boys.

I will give the battles that Mark Wagner took part in that I can now recall. Neosho, Missouri, June 1861; Oak Hill, August 10, 1861; Elk Horn, March 6 and 7, 1861; Farmington, Mississippi, May 9, 1862; at which we swept them from the field and captured all their baggage. Luka, Mississippi, September 19, 1862; Corinth, Mississippi, October 4 and 5, 1862; and Vicksburg from May 22 to July 1883.

The remainder of battles Mark Wagner took part in, I can't give dates but can name them: Fayetteville, Prairie Dehan, Poison Springs, Marks Mill, and Jenkins Ferry. He took part in scores of what we called picket fights and skirmishes.

In conclusion will say, no better soldier ever put on the gray uniform than Mark Wagner. He was true to his convictions, true to his friends, true to the Southern Cause, and true to God.

written by Joe M. Scott

Mulberry, Arkansas

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