



## *PATRIOTIC RECOLLECTIONS*



### Just a Little Bit of History:

Interview with E. P. Steed, Company F, 1st Virginia Cavalry, USA<sup>(a)</sup>

The REGISTER reporter encountered E. P. Steed in town the other day and made him fork over a Narrow Escape. He was a member of Company F, 1st Virginia Cavalry. It seems the Virginia cavalry service had a wonderful fascination for our boys, as many of them went into that arm of the service from this county. We have told several Narrow Escapes of the 2nd Virginia boys and now one from the 1st Virginia is in order.

*Well sir, said Mr. Steed, what I am to tell you about, happened the 14th day of December 1862, when our army was lying near Centerville, and our company was doing picket duty at Bull Run bridge. There were sixteen of us sent out from the regiment, and we were posted a short distance from the bridge, on the left side of the road, in a pine thicket. In the fore part of the night, six of us patrolled the pike, crossing the bridge and going towards Gainesville five miles off. We had returned about midnight, and turned in with the boys, thinking everything was all right. Of course we had out sentries-one near the bridge, one back of s on the road, between us and the regiment.*

*About 2 o'clock in the morning, I heard some horses hoofs coming slowly toward us, and pretty soon I heard the sentry between and the camp, call out" "Halt, who comes there."*

*"Friends with countersign," replied a voice.*

*"Advance, friends, and give the countersign," returned the sentry.*

*They did advance and in doing so gobbled the sentry, and the next instant fired a volley right into our post. Oh, I tell you there was a hustling and a scampering in every direction. With the volley came the rebels with a yell, right down on us. It seemed to me that everyone of us was good for good; there was no possible chance of a single one of us getting out of there. But I dodged about among them the best I could, right between them, almost touching them, and by freely using my legs, got out of the scrimmage, and ran about 75 yards till I came to a gulley, into which I dropped and laid down in it close as possible for three-quarters of an hour. In the meantime, the rebs were scouring about, trying to get as many of our boys as possible. I lay there thinking every minute my time had come, but as good luck would have it, they missed me, and in a short time, I saw they were getting away from there, expecting, of course, our regiment would soon be there.*

*Well I laid there until about 3 o'clock, and then I thought I'd get into a skirt of pine woods about 100 yards distant, and across the open field I ran with all my might. When I got into the woods, I thought to myself, the safest thing to do, was to stay right there, lest in going into camp at that hour, I might have some serious complications with sentries. So I sat at the foot of a white oak tree, and waited and watched for daylight, which seemed never would come. I shivered and nodded and listened and imagined all sorts of things till the first blush of day came, and glancing suspiciously about, I thought I saw the form of a man, under a tree about 30 yards away, and soon I felt sure it was a man. Then I began to wonder who it was, and whether it was an enemy or not. Maybe it was a reb with a gun looking or me! Thus painfully musing in my mind I kept an eye on the indistinct form, at the same time breathing low and holding myself perfectly still lest I would be discovered. That man seemed to be pursuing the same tactics. He was as still as the tree at whose foot he sat. He didn't move a muscle, except I thought I could see him turn his head slowly, but I know he didn't see me. And yet, the suspense was terrible. He we were, right after a fight, and I was trying to get away. There a reb was looking for me. I was two miles from camp, I would be murdered, and the world would never know it.*

*At length, daylight began to grow stronger, and I imagined I saw a bluish cast to the man's clothes, and that was a big consolation. Then I peered more intently, and the closer I looked, the calmer I became-it was blue clothes sure enough, but the figure never moved. This worried me; but the next thought came to me was, that form was familiar, yes I know it; I called out. So bellowed softly: "Ben."*

*The figure turned its head, with a "hello" from its lips, and sure enough, it was he-my old messmate Ben Griffith. Well, now that meeting was a jolly oe, for it ended a dreadful suspense. He, like me, had escaped and started for camp, but he concluded it wasn't safe to venture further till daylight. Thus my Narrow Escape at the picket post terminated with a queer little romance.*

*Indeed it did, said the reporter. And I thank you very much for the story.*

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(a) Having been a camp Patriotic Instructor, I know how hard it is to find interesting topics for camp meetings. Over the past year I have compiled 200 stories/bios of Civil War Veterans from Ohio. The first series is from the 1886 Ironton, Ohio REGISTER and is re-printed with the permission of Martha Kounse and Sharon M. Kouns, webowners of lawrencecountyohio.com website. The REGISTER produced 91 articles under the heading of Narrow Escapes, (one a week for 91 weeks) by interviewing Civil War Veterans from their area. This article appeared January 13, 1887.

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