**Melvin Grigsby's book, part 2:**

On the following pages is the continuation of Melvin Grigsby's *The Smoked Yank*. The proper citation for this book, and chapters 3 through 6 being reprinted for this issue, is:

Melvin Grigsby, *The Smoked Yank* (No place: privately printed, 1888), pp. 25 - 55.

There have been many positive comments about the reprinting of this book in our newsletter. My hope is that everyone will get something out of the book and the analysis of it.

Matt Beard

# The Smoked Yank

## Chapter III.

### Camp Washburn – I get my name in print – Privates eat sandwiches in the rain, while Officers have champagne under shelter – Benton Barracks – On the march – I make a rash promise.

At the time I enlisted, the company was quartered at Patch Grove, in Grant county. There we were drilled until about January 1st, 1862. when we joined the remainder of the regiment at Camp Washburn, in Milwaukee.

That was a hard, cold winter, often referred to as the winter of the deep snow. The barracks were large board shanties, filled with two-story bunks for the men to sleep on; there was an adjoining room to eat in. These shanties were so open that a laconic English boy was not far wrong when he said: "The crocks in the domed old barracks are so big that you could fling a robbit through them anywhere."

The cold quarters, the drills in the snow, and the coarse food were the cause of much grumbling. Few of the privates went through those months at Camp Washburn without having their patriotic ardor considerably cooled. Some wrote complaining letters for publication in the Grant County Herald. The contrast between those hardships and the comforts and enjoyments of home was probably as great in my case as in that of any one in the company, but I did not suffer my ardor to cool. Had I done so, my father could have said: "I told you so."

I made a good many enemies by writing a letter to the Herald, in which I claimed that we were faring sumptuously for soldiers, and that those who grumbled most did not live so well when at home. That was my first effort of getting into print, and I came so near being thrashed for it, that I have never since felt a longing to whack anybody through the columns of a newspaper.

One day we were marched to the city through a driving storm for review. When we had splashed around through slush and mud, and falling rain, and snow, until we had been reviewed and reviewed by some fellows who stood on a covered porch dressed in broadcloth and brass buttons, silk scarfs and plumed hats, we were formed in columns of fours in front of the Newhall House, and there we stood in the snow and rain while the fellows who wore the shoulder straps partook of champagne and like luxuries, within. A sandwich and a cup of coffee had been provided for each of us.

Had the officers fared as the men did, all would have been well. Had there been no storm, it wouldn't have been so bad. My ideas about all men being created free and equal, were badly demoralized on that occasion. For once, I had nothing to say when others grumbled.

Not one of that crowd of officers became distinguished. Hundreds of the privates who stood there in line, are now, in everything that goes to make up manhood, head and shoulders above a large majority of those who then wore the shoulder straps. The officers who succeeded best in commanding volunteer American soldiers, were those who roughed it with the men. Who ever heard of Sheridan, or Sherman, or Grant keeping men in line in a storm, while he feasted in a hotel?

My file leader in the company was Horace C. Carr. He was a man of medium height, black hair and eyes, and was knock-kneed. Carr could not learn to keep step. One day we were drilling, I kicked his heel to remind him that he was out of step. He got mad and threatened to box my ears. I expressed an earnest desire to have him commence at once. Hadn't the least doubt in the world that I could beat him in a fight. He looked me over in his peculiar, sneering way, and then said:

"Sonny, did you come away to get weaned?"

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I afterward found out that there were few, if any, men in the company who could handle Carr, and, notwithstanding this stormy beginning of our acquaintance, Carr afterward became as warm a friend to me as any man ever had.

In March we were transferred to Benton Barracks, near St. Louis. There we drilled two months more, waiting for arms and horses. In June, having received arms and horses, we were transported on boats to Jefferson City, and from there began our first march, which brought us to Springfield, Mo. Resting there a few days, we started on what, up to that time, was the longest march or raid of the war. This was the march of General Curtis from Springfield to Helena, Arkansas.

At that time the policy of the Government was to whip the rebels without hurting their feelings. Nothing in the way of forage was to be taken without paying for it. We must pass through the country and leave the growing crops uninjured, leaves the slaves there to do the work, leave cattle, hogs, horses and mules; nothing was to be touched or injured unless absolutely required for the subsistence of the army, and even then, vouchers were given. Before starting out on this march, orders were read to the troops in accordance with this government policy. It is needless to say that the private soldiers had more sense. Whenever they heard of a farm that belonged to a rebel in arms, they paid it a visit if they could and took whatever they wanted in the line of forage and provision. Some of the officers tried hard at first to enforce the orders against this foraging. We were commanded to keep in ranks while marching, formed in line and roll called before camping, and then a chain guard was placed around the camp to keep us from getting out. My recollection is that I did not during that march let a day go by without making a raid on my own hook upon the resources of the enemy. I used to slip out of the ranks, get what forage I wanted, then keep the regiment in sight until I saw them halting for camp, when I would slip back as they were forming for roll-call, as that was always a time of confusion.

About a third night out I got back from my raid too late. The regiment was in camp and guards stationed. I tried to slip in through the brush, but a guard saw and captured me. I tried to divide with him and get off, but he wasn't that kind. He took me to Col. Washburn's tent. I had honey, two hams, some chickens, and some bundles of oats for my horse. These things were all unloaded into the tent, and then the colonel read the riot act. I told him I didn't believe in going hungry or starving my horse while the rebels, whose country we were in, had plenty. The colonel admitted that he wasn't in love with the government policy himself, but he said that he was under orders, and he would obey whether he liked them or not, and he put it to me whether that wasn't the right thing for every soldier to do. I had to admit that it was. Then he said that if I would promise to ride in the ranks and obey orders thereafter, he would excuse me this time. I promised and I was them permitted to go to my company.

That night when I began to think it over, I regretted having made such a promise. I would just as soon plough corn as ride in the ranks in hot weather over dusty roads. That was one of the hardships of war that I had not counted on. The next morning I told Captain Woods and Lieutenant Riley what had occurred, and that I didn't believe I wanted to be bound by any such agreement. I asked them whether it would do to go to the colonel and take it back. They thought that was the best thing for me to do if I didn't mean to keep the promise; so to the colonel I went. I told him that after thinking it over, I concluded to take back the promise I had made. He was at breakfast, and ham, and chicken, and honey were on his bill of fare. He looked at me a moment, and I could see that his frown had to struggle with a smile, but he managed to look angry as he thundered out: "Go to your company, sir, I will make an example of you. Your impudence is worse than your disobedience." A moment after our pickets were fired on and we formed in line of battle where we remained all day expecting attack, and I suppose the colonel forgot to fulfill his promise to make an example of me, for I never heard anything more about it.

During this march I got into a quarrel with a big six-footer, and was in a fair way to be well pummeled when Horace Carr interfered. He said to the big fellow: "I aint very large myself, but I am full grown and used to being licked; if you are dying for a fight, let the boy alone and amuse yourself with me." There was no fight, but from that time on Carr and myself were friends.

During the march all of the soldiers supposed the objective point to be Little Rock, and we expected a hard battle there, for we learned from the negroes as we approached that place, that great preparations were being made to receive us. We reached Clarendon, east of Little Rock, without any fighting, except now and then a skirmish with guerrillas. There we turned to the east, marched rapidly all night, and went into Helena on the Mississippi. I was one of the advance guard as we charged into the town. Had we been a few minutes earlier, we could have captured the rebel gen-

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eral, Pillow. He was crossing the river on an old flat-boat, and was some distance from the farther shore when we rode up to the bank of the river.

*Escape of Gen. Pillow.*

## Chapter IV.

### Helena – A slave-owner in a bad fix – "Forninst the government" – Plantation records – Memphis prohibition in the army – Helping a friend to beat the Quartermaster.

We remained at Helena from early in July until late in January. The country back of the town to the North is high and perhaps healthy. South, East, and West are the low bottom lands full of swamps and bayous. The town is on low ground protected by a levee from overflow. It is, or was then, a sickly hole. Fever and argue and other diseases which make short work of a northern man who goes there in July, carried off at least ten per cent of our regiment.

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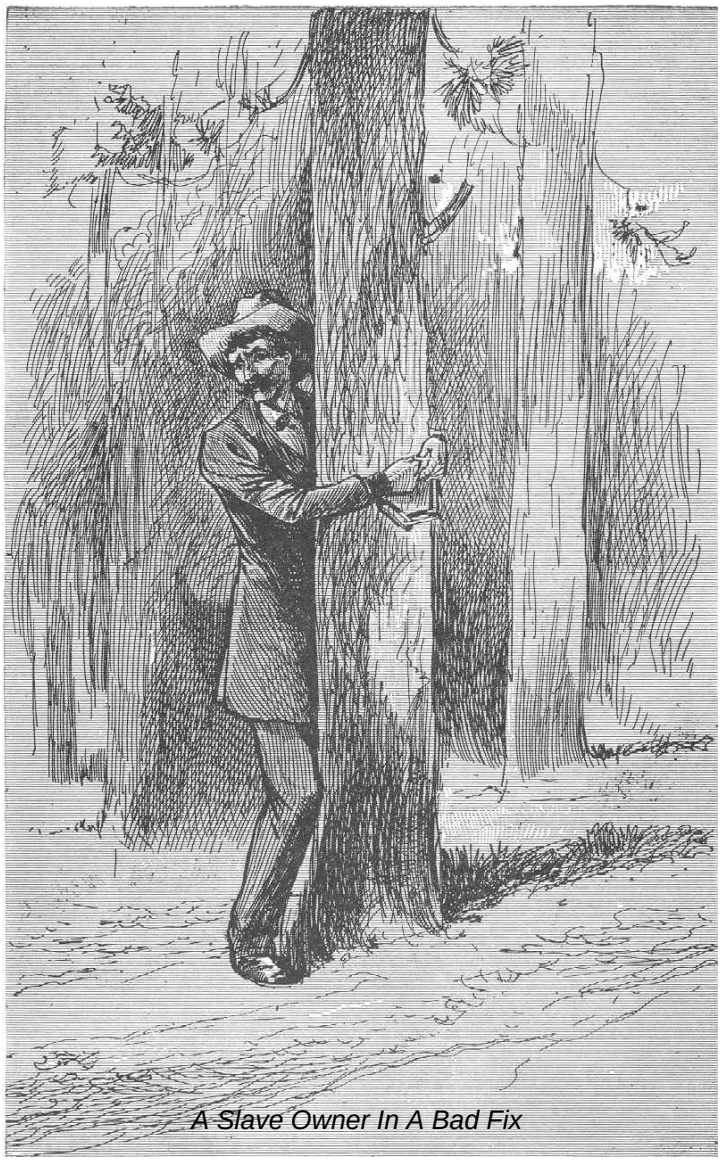
Helena is in the cotton belt. There were thousands of negroes on the cotton plantations. The government was at that time trying to save the Union and slavery too. The negroes came into Helena by hundreds. Their masters would follow them in and get permits to take them back. The privates, many of us, were not in accord with the Government on the negro question. We used to follow the masters when they started away with their slaves, release the slaves and convince the masters that it would be best to keep away from camp.



*A Slave Owner In A Bad Fix*

On one occasion Carr and I saw a man leave town with a lot of his negroes who had run away. We followed him out about ten miles and then stopped him. We sent the negroes back to town, took the master's horse, and told him to stay out of Helena. Carr asked me to ride back with the negroes, as they were afraid other slave-owners would arrest them, while he would conceal himself and see if the enraged master would attempt to follow us to camp.

Before I got back to town Carr overtook me leading another captured horse. He absolutely refused to answer any questions, and, fearing that the man had started to follow us back, and that Carr had killed him, I was willing that silence should be maintained. A few weeks after I saw this slave-owner in town. He wasn't trying to take out negroes any more. I pointed him out to Carr, who then told me what had happened before. He saw the man coming on a horse, waylaid him, took him into the woods and handcuffed his hands around a tall tree and left him there. Carr had found the handcuffs on a plantation where they had been used in disciplining negroes, and he carried them in his saddle-bags as a curiosity; said he left the man near the traveled road so that there would be no question about his being released.

All that summer we carried on a warfare of that kind against what we believed to be the mistaken policy of the government. It had a bad effect on the soldiers. They got to be like Irishmen when they land in New York, "forninst the government." The government tried to protect rebels in their property. The soldier said, "a rebel's property belongs to the government, but if the government won't have it, I will," especially a soldier who was kept where there was no fighting to do.

After a while the boys ceased to make any distinction between captured and other government property. I remember that a boat load of Irish potatoes was unloaded on the wharf at Helena; they were scarce down there, and in great demand. An infantry soldier was on guard over them. We wanted some of those potatoes. That night we borrowed some muskets from infantry men, obtained the countersign, and when the guard at the pile of potatoes had been on duty until his two hours were nearly up, we marched up with a pretended relief guard and relieved him. He went to camp and we carried off potatoes.

Of course, that was wrong, but such acts were frequently committed, without conscientious scruples, by honest men, because they had lost respect for the government on account of the policy that was being pursued. It seemed to us that the government gave more thought and care to the protection of the property and rights of rebels than to the safety and comfort of men who had enlisted to fight for the Union.

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While at Helena I was taken with chills and fever. An overseer on one of General Pillow's plantations offered to take me to his house and cure me. I went with him. There had been nearly two hundred negroes on that plantation; not one was left. The government didn't go quite so far as to return runaway negroes to a rebel general and keep them at work. That man and his wife had two sons. They were both in the rebel army. One had been wounded and was taken prisoner. They nursed and doctored me with as much care as they could have bestowed on one of their boys. It gave them a feeling of security to have a Union soldier in their house.

On that plantation I used to read the records kept by the overseer. It seems that every overseer of a large plantation kept a daily record. That record showed that there were negroes whipped, bucked and gagged, and otherwise punished every day. Every negro who came from the field with less than his stint of cotton, received so many lashes. I saw there the same kind of instruments of torture that I afterward saw in Andersonville. One machine was rigged for stretching negroes over a large roller, so that the lash could be applied to the bare skin. If anyone believes that the cruelties practiced on the slaves were exaggerated in Uncle Tom's Cabin, let him hunt up and read one of those plantation records.

Except a few unimportant raids and a little scouting, we might as well have been infantry men during all those months at Helena. About February 1st we were transported on boats up to Memphis. I rode from the steamboat out to the camp ground in a storm of sleet and snow, and before tents were pitched for shelter, was wet and nearly frozen, caught a bad cold, which terminated in pneumonia and was taken to the hospital. The doctors said my health had been so badly broken by fever and ague that it would be impossible for me to survive this attack of pneumonia. Their conclusion was telegraphed to my parents.

Carr helped to carry me to the hospital and never left me until I was out of danger. One night when I had been unconscious for twenty-four hours, it seemed that I was awakened by some one rubbing my feet. I could see and hear, but could not move or speak. The doctor, the steward, and Carr were close to me, and the doctor said to the others that I would be gone before morning. When the others went away I managed to make Carr understand that I was conscious and hungry. He fed me; I told him I was going to fool that doctor, and then went to sleep. In the morning I woke up out of danger; was able to walk when my mother got there. She took me to a private boarding-house and staid with me until I was entirely well.

Soldier life at Memphis was very nearly a repetition of that at Helena. Our camp was surrounded by a chain of guards and we were not permitted to go away from camp without a pass.

Our adventures were chiefly of the disorderly kind. How to get out of camp, take in the city, and then get back without being arrested, was the question. I went to the city three times as often as I would have gone had there been no camp guard to prevent. The selling of liquor to soldiers at the saloons, or by anyone, was forbidden. Before that order was issued, I seldom thought of drinking anything. After the order was issued, I never went into the city without finding a place where the order could be evaded. Such rules and orders have that effect on most young men. When we were at Helena, rations of whiskey were issued to us, and half of the soldiers wouldn't touch it. Most all of them who refused whiskey at Helena, drank every time they could get anything to drink at Memphis.

The regiment went out on one raid before I was able to ride. Carr brought back a captured horse. He bought it from another man who captured it. The men who captured horses and mules always sold them if they could. The regimental quartermaster always confiscated all such property if he could. Between him and the soldiers there was continual strife. Carr expected to get out of the ranks with his purchase before getting back to camp, but he was so closely watched that he could not. Early the next morning the quartermaster was around taking a list of captured property, and of course he put down Carr's horse. He had a particular grudge against myself and Carr because we had so often outwitted him.

I was at that time permitted to ride where I pleased, because I had not yet been reported fit for duty. The horses were all taken every morning and evening through the city to the river to water. Each man rode one horse and led another. An officer went in charge of each company, and he had to bring back as many men and horses as he took out. The officer of the guard counted them out and in. Carr led his purchase out at watering call. I desired to help him if possible, so I rode out afterward and overtook the watering party. I told Carr to get in the rear coming back from the river. I took the saddle off my horse and left it at a stable and got on bareback. Watching for a chance when the column return-

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ing from the river turned a corner in the city, and the officer in charge could not see the rear of his company, I rode my horse quickly in between the one Carr rode and the one he led, slipped from my horse on to the other, and Carr took my horse back to camp. That made the count all correct. I left Carr's horse at a stable, got into a hack and was driven to the camp, and was in Captain Wood's tent when the men and horses returned.

The quartermaster soon came in swearing mad, and required Captain Woods to produce the captured horse. The captain was not friendly to Carr, and he entered with great zeal into the search for the missing horse. The officer that had been to the river declared that Carr brought back the horse he took to water. Some of the boys knew better, but they wouldn't give us away. That let Carr out. Then the quartermaster accused me on general principles. The captain declared that I was writing in his tent when the men came back with the horses, and he knew I didn't have anything to do with it. Then he said to the quartermaster: "That horse was hitched to the picket-rope this morning when you listed him, and if you have let some one take him away in broad daylight, don't you blame me for it."

I always made out the pay-rolls for the company, and had been at work on them that morning in the captain's tent. I went back to work; the captain came in. He looked at me awhile, and then said: "Melvin, how did you manage to get that horse out of camp?" I told him all about it – never attempted to conceal anything from either Captain Woods or Lieutenant Riley, and neither of them would catch me doing anything wrong if he could possibly avoid it. Carr sold his horse so as to clear $40.

# Chapter V.

## Vicksburg – Another Case of Beating U. S. – A Runaway Horse Carries Me Into Close Quarters – Jackson and Canton – Have Trouble With Uncle Tommy and Leave the Regiment.

In May we were transported in boats down to Vicksburg and up the Yazoo river to Hains' Bluff. There we went into camp to help watch Johnson who was waiting for a chance to raise the siege. We had something to do there; raiding, and scouting parties out every day. Once we crossed the Yazoo, and made a raid into the Running Water country. We captured a large herd of cattle and some prisoners and horses. I captured a fine young mare. An officer of the 7th Kansas cavalry offered to give me $60 if I would bring the mare to his camp without letter her get branded. When the quartermaster once got his U.S. brand on a horse's shoulder, no one would buy.

When we got to the river on our return, the brigade quartermaster was there to take charge of all the captured property. He stood on the stream ferry-boat as the horses were loaded for crossing, and permitted no horse to go on board without the U.S. brand. I took in the situation while another regiment was being ferried. The I chewed the end of a stick into a brush, got some tar from the hub of an old-fashioned wagon, and made U.S. with tar on my captured horse; worked the tar well into the hair, then rubbed it off with sand until I had a fine brand. I had to tell my captain what I was up to, as each captain was required to stand at the gang-plank to assist the quartermaster as his company went on board. I took my horse on first, and then went back and brought up the rear with my captured mare. The captain managed to move away as I led the mare up the plank, and the "U.S." was so plain that no questions were asked.

When our regiment was alone or at the head of a column during a raid, my company was in advance of the regiment. A boy name Lynn Cook, and myself, nearly always rode as videttes or scouts, in advance of the advanced guard. I don't remember how it came about, but this place was always accorded to Cook and myself, probably because we had keen eyes and good horses, and never failed to discover the enemy.

We had skirmished with Johnson's cavalry almost every day. One day the patrol guard went out under Lieutenant Showalter – twelve or fifteen men, Cook and myself being advance guards. We saw three rebels coming toward us. We supposed them to be the advance, as they were, of a larger party. Without having been seen, we rode back and reported, and asked the lieutenant to let us hide in a fence corner and capture the Johnnies. He would not, but formed

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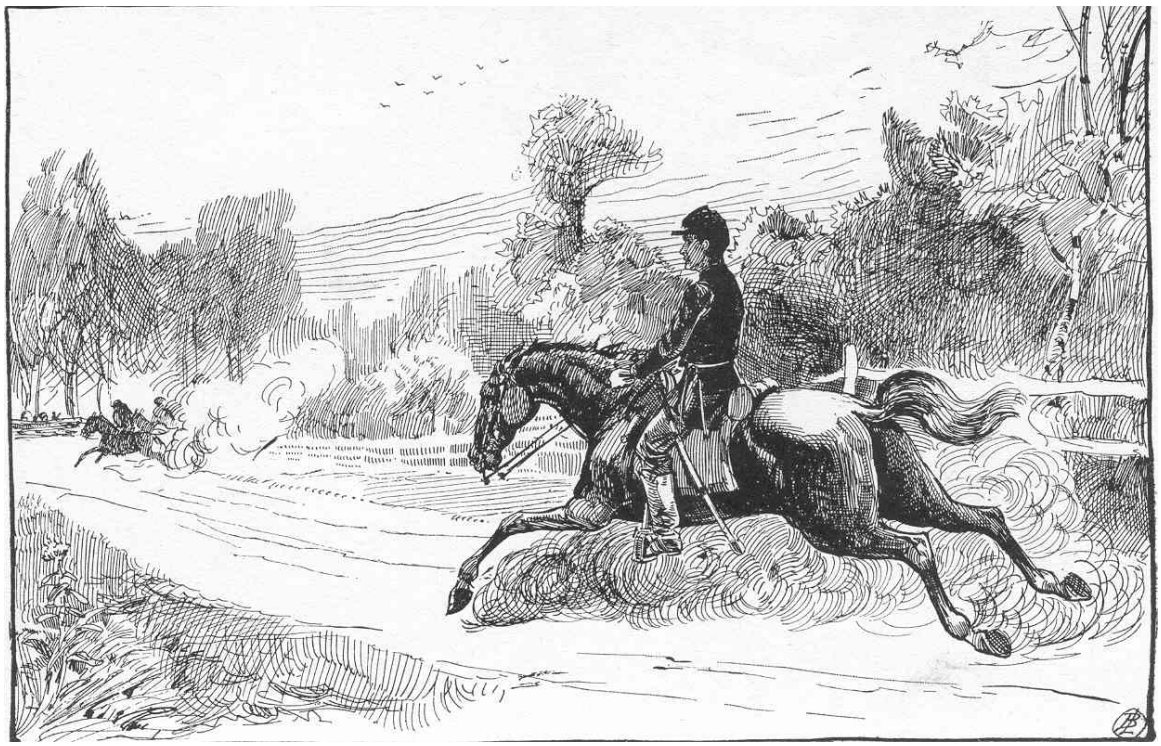

*The Charge Of A Runaway Horse.*

us in line on the side of the road where the rebels couldn't possibly get nearer than one hundred yards without seeing us.

They came riding carelessly along, one of them sitting sideways on his horse. We were all ready, and when they caught sight of us the lieutenant said, "fire." Not a man was touched, but as they wheeled to run, the one sitting sideways was knocked off and captured.

I was riding a little race horse that had been captured at Fort Pillow. He had both speed and endurance, but he wouldn't stand fire. On this occasion, as soon as the volley was fired, he bolted with me and dashed after the two rebels that were running away. They had a hundred yards the start, but in less than a quarter of a mile I was within a few rods of them. I had been trying all the time to stop my horse, and only managed to pull him up when about to run into a whole company of rebels that came dashing up the road to support their advance. Had the two Johnnies who supposed I was chasing them, not been in the way, I should certainly have been shot by the others. My horse once turned, carried me swiftly back, nor did I try to hold him.

Immediately after the surrender of Vicksburg we crossed the Big Black river, and started in pursuit of Johnson's army. I never could understand why Sherman did not crush Johnson at Jackson. I was detailed as an orderly for General Parkes, who commanded the 9th corps. The 9th corps was on our left. There was some fighting. I rode back and forth along our lines every day carrying messages, and could see that the rebels were withdrawing, leaving only a skirmish line behind their breast-works. In company with a man from the signal corps, I went on top of the insane asylum with Gen. Parkes' field glass, and reported to him what was going on. The rebels saw us and fired at us with cannon, regardless of consequences to the insane. Then I climbed a tall tree from which I could see the movements of the enemy. They were evacuating the city all day, and I never could understand why, when one half had crossed the river, the other was not gobbled up.

The day after Jackson was taken, our regiment went on a raid to Canton. Some rebels came out to meet us. They formed in line in the edge of some woods, and we formed in a field just out of reach of them, and there we waited until they moved away. Why we didn't have a fight there, I never could see.

We camped that night at a little place called Vernon. In an abandoned house I found a trunk addressed to Captain ----- of a rebel regiment; broke it open, and among other things that were evidently intended for a soldier in camp, there was a pair of fine woolen blankets and a little bag of silver. These I took. I presented the blankets to our colonel, Stevens, and kept the silver, four or five dollars.

A few days after that, Uncle Tommy, as the boys called the colonel, got on his ear because so many of us left the ranks to forage. Had he kept us where there was fighting to do, he would have had no trouble, but fighting wasn't in his line, and we all knew it. I had been scouting on my own hook one day, and, on coming to camp, found a camp-guard

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out. Not expecting anything of the kind, I was captured and taken before Colonel Stevens. He was in a great rage. Had my forage, of which I had a load, taken from me, and ordered me to get off my horse and be searched. I told him I had not taken anything but forage, and was not in the habit of taking anything else. Adjutant Scott asked to see what I had in my pockets. As the colonel, who was a rank Englishman, saw the silver, he fairly frothed at the mouth.

"Where di 'e get that?"

"In a house at Vernon," I replied.

"Been a burnin' 'ouses, 'ave 'e? I'll teach 'e to break horders and burn 'ouses, so I will. Hadjutant, send this man to his company under harrest."

I tried to explain but he ordered me off. Lieutenant Riley saw Adjutant Scott next morning, and together they pacified the colonel. Nothing further would have been said or done had I been content to let the matter rest. The colonel called me hard names, had taken money from me that he had no better right to than I had, and, as I did not have much respect for him anyway, the more I thought of it the more I thought I had been mis-used.

Examining the army regulations, I found that valuables taken from the enemy should be turned over to the hospital department. From Adjutant Scott I learned that the colonel had kept my silver and made no report of it. After talking the matter over with Captain Woods, who was then acting as major, I concluded to ask the colonel for the silver. So one day when we had halted for a noon-day rest, I walked up to the colonel, and asked him to return the silver that he had taken from me. He reached for his saber, jumped up and made for me as though he meant to run me through on the spot. Captain Woods and the other officers stopped him and reminded him that he had no right to use his saber on a soldier for asking a question.

A few weeks after this, we were in camp near Vicksburg and orders came from Washington to grant furloughs for meritorious conduct to two soldiers in each company. My conduct had not been in all respects meritorious, but I had, on several occasions, volunteered for hazardous service, and had never been known to shirk when there was dangerous work to do. I was one of the two recommended by the officers of my company for furlough. Had never had or asked for a furlough, and now to get one for meritorious conduct, and visit my home in the North during the hot, sickly weather when the army would be idle, nothing could have pleased me more.

Imagine my feelings when the recommendation came back disapproved by Colonel Stevens. I went with Captain Woods to see him. We had a stormy interview. The colonel said I deserved a court-martial rather than a furlough. The captain then demanded a court-martial.

I was subsequently tried before a court-martial on charges preferred by Colonel Stevens. The trial was in the colonel's tent. I did not hear the evidence submitted against me, but I was called in and asked to explain how and where I obtained the silver, and why I asked the colonel to return it to me. I sat on a cot in the colonel's tent, and was turning up the blankets, noticed the very same white blankets that I took from the trunk in which I found the silver. When I had told where I got the silver, I said:

"Gentlemen, I took a pair of white wool blankets form the same trunk and presented them to Colonel Stevens. He thanked me with great kindness and made no inquiries as to where I got them. I think these are the same blankets."

I uncovered a pair of white blankets on the cot. The officers of the court smiled; the colonel got red in the face and tried to explain, but about all that he could say was that he did not know that I was the boy that gave him the blankets. As I never heard anything more from the court-martial, I suppose that the charges were not sustained.

I liked my companions in the company and never had any trouble with my company officers, but, knowing that the colonel was watching for a chance to get me into trouble, and fearing that he might, I obtained through Captain Woods an order from the division commander, placing me on detached service, and assigning me for duty at the division headquarters in Vicksburg. There I was an orderly for two or three months and was then made chief of orderlies.

The duties of an orderly in an army that is in actual service are about the same as those of a page in Congress.

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The orderlies usually know everything and see everything that is going on. If they please the officers under whom they work they are well treated, if they do not, they are sent to the regiment.

My duties at the division headquarters, especially after I was promoted to chief of orderlies, were light and pleasant. I would in all probability have remained on detached service until the term for which I enlisted expired, had I not me with the misfortune hereafter related.

# Chapter VI.

## I Get Leave Of Absence And Have Some Fun With The Boys – Helping Planters To Market Cotton – "An Atheist's Laugh A Poor Exchange For Diety Offended" – Captured By Guerillas.

In February, 1864, my regiment was in camp at Redbone Church, twelve miles south of Vicksburg, Major Harry Eastman in command. The weather was delightful, the regiment in good health and fine spirits. Dashing Harry, as the major was sometimes called, and nearly all of his officers and men were reported to be coining money in the cotton business. Every man that I saw in the regiment reported "jolly good times in camp."

There was not much to do at division headquarters. General McArthur and most of the men in the division were out on the Meridian campaign. I obtained from the adjutant-general a leave of absence for then days, and went out to camp to have some fun with the boys.

The cotton camp was on the Black River, several miles from the main camp at Redbone. From this camp a raiding party was sent out nearly every day, avowedly for the purpose of hunting Whittaker's scouts, a band of guerrillas that infested the region, but really for the purpose of protecting teams that followed after to bring in cotton. The first morning after I arrived at the cotton camp a raiding party one hundred strong started out under Dashing Harry himself. I went along and, being a visitor and not obliged to stay in the ranks, I soon discovered the object of the raid. At every plantation the major would have a private interview with the planter and then march on. As soon as the command was fairly out of sight that planter would have all the hands on the place hitching up teams and loading on cotton. We started at an early hour; about noon we reached Port Gibson, and went in on a charge, scaring the people out of their wits and causing the few daring rebels that were there to see the girls they had left behind them to leave with short allowance. Here I enlisted four of the boys, whom I considered of good grit, into a scheme to gobble a team and load of cotton. Our plan was to slip out when the command was about ready to start, remain in town until the rest were out of sight, then secure a team, load it with cotton, and follow the command into camp. All went well until the troops began to disappear over the hill, then five of us seemed a small number to hold the town, and before the rear guard had disappeared over the hill three of my boys deserted, leaving two of us in Port Gibson. Night was coming on by the time we were fairly out of town with our four mule team and negro driver. At one of the plantations where I had seen the major interview the planter we halted, and ordered him to load that team with cotton as soon as possible. He asked who I wanted the cotton for. I told him for Major Eastman. He had that team loaded in less than a jiffy. We left the plantation at dark; I rode ahead of our team and my companion brought up the rear. Our road lay over a hilly country, part of the way through timber. It was twenty-five miles to camp; the darkness intense. Reader, try such a ride on such a night in a guerilla region, and if you don't wish for the end of your journey before you find it, your experience will not be what mine was. At daybreak we unloaded four bales among other bales of cotton on the bank of the Black River, reported the fact to an officer, and in a few days afterwards Charley Campbell and I received $90 each for our share of that night's work. I afterward saw the planter in Major Eastman's tent, but how they settled for the four bales of cotton I never inquired. Such incidents were the every-day occurrences of the cotton camp.

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A few days after this Lieutenant D. L. Riley, with a detachment of men, was sent further up the river to guard a ford, and also to keep the guerillas in that vicinity from molesting the planters as they hauled their cotton to market at Vicksburg.

After establishing his camp at the ford, the lieutenant rode into Redbone. He told me that he had learned from a negro that there was a large quantity of C.S.A. cotton (cotton purchased by the confederate government and branded C.S.A.) concealed in a swamp six or seven miles above his camp at the ford. I returned with Riley and found Lieutenant Showalter and the men very much excited. During the night a large band of guerillas had charged up to the opposite bank of the river and fired on them – but as all the boys were sleeping behind bales of cotton, none were hurt. That day we scouted in all directions but could hear nothing of the guerillas, though we saw a number of men that looked as though they might do good service. As each one had a surgeon's certificate exempting him from conscription, and also professed loyalty to the Union, we passed them by. There was one, however, a fine looking man of thirty or thereabouts, that particularly excited the lieutenant's suspicion. He not only showed a surgeon's certificate, but also a pass and a letter from the post commander at Vicksburg. I think his name was Warner.

The next morning in company with Sergeant E. Wiseman, Lynn B. Cook, H. C. Carr, James Shanley, George Cornish, Patrick Woods, and James Johnson, I crossed the river, intending to make a circuit through the country, and come to the river at the swamp above where the C.S.A. cotton was reported to be. It was our intention to make a raft of the cotton and float it down the river to camp. We started before daybreak; I was riding ahead and out of sight of the rest of the party, when I came in sight of the plantation, owned by the fine-looking, suspicious gentleman before mentioned, just in time to see him dismount at his gate and lead his horse toward the house. I put spurs to the mule that I was riding, and when I reached the house the man had unsaddled the horse, a fine looking animal, and was holding him by the bridle. I rode up, revolver in hand, and asked him where he had been so early in the morning. He replied that a lady in the house had been taken sick in the night and he had been to see a physician. I told him that I had been compelled to ride a mule because my horse was sick, and that I would be obliged to take his horse; but that if he would come to camp that night, he might have his horse back if the lieutenant was willing. He made some remonstrances and spoke of a letter of protection from some Union officer. I dismounted with the intention of putting my saddle on the horse, but just then a lady stepped on the porch, and the man gave her the bridle saying:

"If you take this horse, you must take it from the owner."

She said: "You Yankees have taken everything I had in the world except this horse, and if you get this you will have to take it from me by force!"

I supposed the lady to be the wife of the man. Both had an air of gentility and used the language of culture. My ideas of chivalry did not admit of my taking a horse from a lady by force, and so I vented my spleen on the man in threats and insulting language, mounted my mule and rode away. We arrived at Hankinson's ferry, just below the cotton, about nine o'clock. Four of the party went to see if the cotton was all right and four of us remained at the house to have breakfast prepared for all. The inmates of the house were the ferryman, his wife, and an old negress. The house itself was one of the double log houses common in the South, the two parts of the house being separated, the space between, called the "passage," having floor and roof but no side walls. The house fronted the river; the road leading from it, ran up the river.

The old auntie prepared the breakfast and called us in. We sat down to the table. One of our number was a handsome young man, then about 23 years of age. At his country home he had been the pet and pride of the family; a leader among the young folks of his neighborhood. He was active, witty, and clever. In our company he had been, from the first, a kind of clown or fun-maker. Sometimes he would play drunk, get arrested, and carried struggling and kicking before some officer, where, to the chagrin of his captors, he would stand up sober as a judge. His favorite role was that of a camp-meeting preacher. His parents were Methodists, and his store of the words and phrases peculiar to camp-meeting and revival sermons was indeed wonderful. Mounted on a box, barrel, or stump, he would go through an entire camp-meeting service – song, sermon, prayer and all – and so perfectly could he act his part that strangers were often astonished to learn that he was merely in jest.

On this occasion we were no sooner seated around the table than this young man, assuming perfect gravity of manner, bowed his head and pretended to invoke the Divine blessing. The old auntie opened wide her eyes with aston-

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ishment, and, at the conclusion, “Thank God,” she said, “de Yankees am not all sinnas.”

Poor boy! How little he thought he was never again to take a seat at a well-spread table, and that the memory of that blessing, asked in mockery, would haunt him to his grave. It did haunt him to his dying hour and he died of hunger. Often afterward, half-naked, cold and sick and nearly famished for food, as he took his poor ration of bread, the memory of that thoughtless mimicry would come over him and the tears of bitter remorse would chase each other down his bony cheeks. Boys, if you are ever tempted to scoff at sacred things let this poor boy’s fate be a warning. His thoughtless act was not the cause of his early death, but, done as it was, an instant before an unexpected crisis, it made a deep and lasting impression, and none can say what his future might have been but for the influence of that guilty feeling on his mind. No man knows what an hour, even a moment, may bring forth. Remember this from Burns:

The great Creator to revere,
  Must sure become the creature;
But still the preaching cant forbear,
  And ev’n the rigid feature;
Yet ne’er with wits profane to range
  Be complaisance extended;
An atheist’s laugh’s a poor exchange
  For Deity offended.

When ranting round in pleasure’s ring
  Religion may be blinded;
Or if she gie a random sting,
  It may be little minded;
But when a life we’re tempest driv’n,
  A conscience but a canker, --
A correspondence fixed with Heaven
  Is sure a noble anchor.

We had just commenced to eat, when some dogs began barking around the house. Sergeant Wiseman went out and came in directly, saying there was a man on the other side of the river calling for the ferry, and that he would stay out and stand guard until the rest of us had finished our breakfast. I was just rising from the table, when there burst upon our ears the unearthly hip, hip, hip, of the rebel yell. I leaped into the passage to grab a gun, and whiz, whiz, whiz, the bullets flew all around me. I thought of the corn-field, and looked that way; a ling of rebels was within a hundred yards. Turning toward the gate, the muzzles of a half dozen cocked guns were leveled at me. Instantly and almost instinctively my hands went up in token of surrender, and I hastened toward the men in front, to escape being shot by those behind.

As before stated, I had been acting as chief of orderlies at division headquarters, and was, therefore, in better dress than private soldiers usually wear. My only weapon was an elegant silver mounted self-cocking revolver, fastened around me by a morocco belt, such as officers usually wore. I had, being so ordered in no gentle words, unbuckled this belt and was handing it with revolver attached, up to the man nearest me who sat on his horse, when I saw coming toward me, his face pale with rage and shot-gun in hand, the man, Warner, riding the very same horse that his sister had kept me from taking a few hours before. It was well that I saw him and that my presence of mind did not forsake me. I knew from the expression on his face and his actions as well, that he was ready to shoot me, but could not, where I stood, without danger to the man to whom I was handing the belt.

As the man took the belt and revolver, I saw that he was pleased with it. Such weapons were highly prized by the rebels, and I quickly handed up my watch and pocketbook, and said as I did so:

“Am I your prisoner?”

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"Well, I reckon! How big are them boots?" he said.

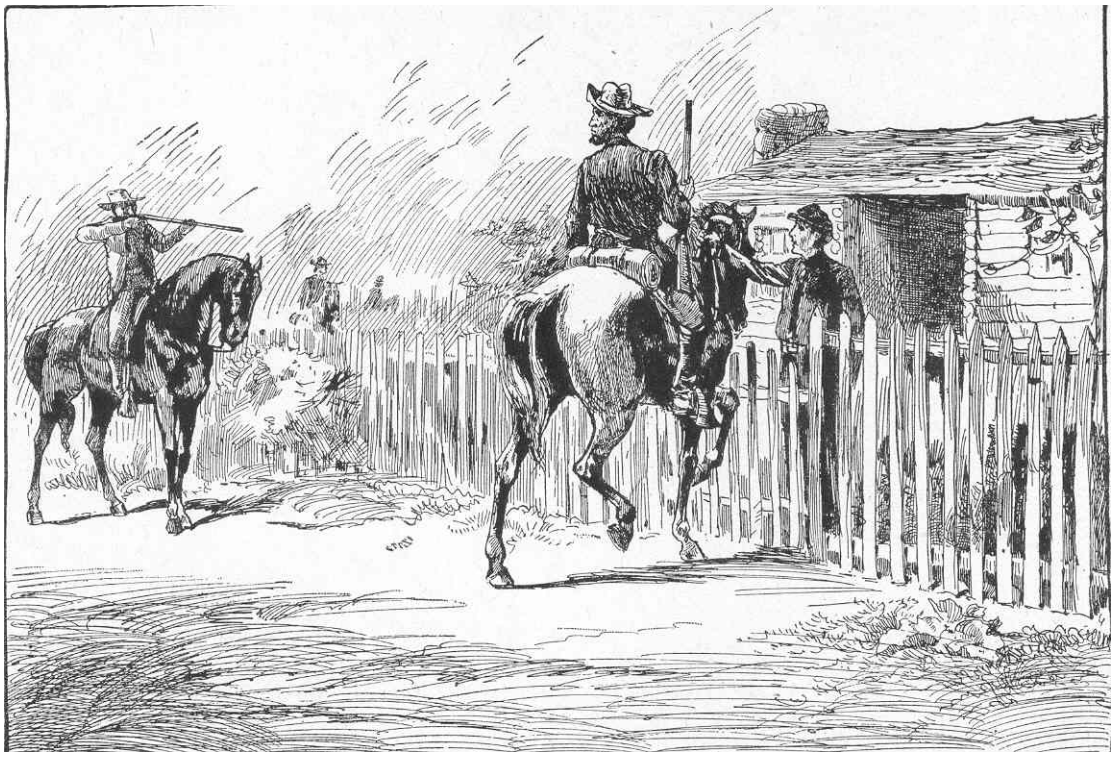
"You can have the boots, but don't let that man shoot me," I quickly responded.

Looking at Warner, Boatwright, for that was my captor's name, said: "What in h—l are you pointing your gun at this Yank, for? He is my prisoner."

"I don't care a d—n whose prisoner he is, I am going to shoot him," said Warner.

It seemed that these men were not personally acquainted, for Boatwright's reply was something like this: "I reckon you don't know me, by -----, I'm Boatwright, the independent scout, that's who I am; and when any man shoots my prisoner, he had better shoot me first."

More words followed back and forth, until finally Boatwright moved his horse away from me, and with cocked revolver in hand, said to Warner: "You are going to kill that unarmed boy, are you? Now you just blaze away!"



*"What In H—l Are You Pointing Your Gun At This Yank For? He's My Prisoner"*

Warner knew what that flashing eye and defiant manner meant, and, completely cowed, he turned his horse and rode away. Is it any wonder that I remember almost every act and word of those two men during those few brief moments, or any wonder that I remember nothing else of what was going on around? I had watched and listened to that quarrel fully realizing that my life was wavering in the balance. Warner, because, perhaps, he was not cool enough in such an emergency to invent a story better suited to his purpose, had related our morning encounter about as it was. I admitted what he said, and claimed that he had not sufficient provocation to justify his shooting me; and so Boatwright thought. Warner's real reason for wanting to put me out of the way was no doubt, because he knew I had seen his surgeon's certificate, and his permit to go an come through the Union lines, and now here he was in arms with rebels, and therefore liable to be shot as a spy should he be caught and tried. But these things came up and were talked over later in the day. No more was said up to the time Warner rode away, than I before stated, and not until he had gone did I feel the terrible strain. Then I weakened, my knees knocked together as though an ague chill was on me, and I had to sit down to keep from falling.

Meantime, while these things that I remember so well were transpiring, the rest of the boys were being cap-

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tured, and the plunder, consisting of horses, guns, revolvers, watches, money, and whatever they had worth taking, was being divided between twenty-five or thirty guerillas, in whose hands we now were. Excepting Boatwright, and one or two others who claimed to be independent scouts, they belonged to Whittaker's scouts.

But all this time where is Sergeant Wiseman, who went out to stand guard? Some of the guerillas said they had fired at a man crawling up the bank on the other side of the river. Those of us who were taken, supposed that he saw the guerillas approaching, and without giving us any alarm, sought his own safety in flight. I have never heard his account of the affair and can, therefore, only hope that we were wrong.

## *Analysis of the Smoked Yank*

*By Matthew Beard*

List of genealogical related facts found in these chapters:

Chapter 3:

- Company was initially quartered at Patch Grove in Grant County
- Drilled there until around January 1, 1862
- Moved to the regiment's location at Camp Washburn in Milwaukee
- Letters written by soldiers (including Melvin) to the *Grant County Herald*
- The officers didn't share the burdens of weather as the men did
- None of the officers of that regiment became distinguished
- The officers who succeeded best in command were those who roughed it with the men
- Melvin's file leader in the company was Horace C. Carr who could not keep step
- Carr became a friend after he and Melvin almost fought each other
- In March, moved to Benton Barracks near St. Louis for 2 months
- In June, transported on boats to Jefferson City and then marched to Springfield, MO
- Participated in march of General Curtis from Springfield to Helena, Arkansas
- Claimed march was longest march or raid of the war
- Commanded to keep in ranks and not forage
- Melvin would slip off and forage at times
- Got caught on 3rd night and taken to Col. Washburn where he promised not to do it again
- Melvin went to Captain Woods and Lieutenant Riley and told them what happened
- Went back to Col. Washburn and reversed his promise
- Almost caught General Pillow in Helena as part of an advanced guard

Chapter 4:

- Stayed in Helena from early July until late January
- Disease affected 10% of the regiment
- Melvin and Carr would stop slavers and free their slaves
- Melvin came down with a fever and was taken care of at one of General Pillow's plantations by the overseer
- While at the plantation, saw instruments of torture used on slaves that he later saw in Andersonville
- Makes reference to the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- About February 1st was transported by steamboat to Memphis

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- Came down with pneumonia and not expected to live
- Parents telegraphed
- Carr took care of him until Melvin's mother arrived
- She took him to a private boarding house
- He helped Carr hide a captured horse and sell it
- He would fill out the pay-rolls for the company
- Melvin always told Captain Woods or Lieutenant Riley the truth who would then look the other way

Chapter 5:

- In May, transported by boat to Vicksburg and up the Yazoo River to Hains' Bluff
- Participated in raiding and scouting parties
- Melvin faked a brand on a captured horse to get it by a brigade quartermaster
- Lynn Cook and Melvin would almost always ride as videttes or scouts
- After the surrender of Vicksburg, crossed the Big Black River and pursued Johnson's army
- Detailed as an orderly for General Parkes who commanded the 9th Corps
- Regiment went to Canton and then Vernon
- Colonel was now "Uncle Tommy" Stevens
- Colonel Stevens tried to run him through with a saber for asking about some confiscated silver
- Colonel Stevens then brought him up on charges in front of a court-martial
- After showing up the colonel, Melvin never heard anything else about the court-martial charges
- Went on detached orders, issued by the division commander, to the division headquarters in Vicksburg
- Served as an orderly for 2 or 3 months and then made chief of orderlies
- Duties of orderlies same as a page in Congress

Chapter 6:

- In February, 1984, regiment was in camp at Redbone Church, which was 12 miles south of Vicksburg
- Major Harry Eastman was in command of the regiment
- Took a leave-of-absence from the division headquarters to visit the regiment
- Went on raids with the regiment to cotton camps
- Chivalry prevented him from taking a horse from a lady
- Learned that a man named Warner was a spy for the rebels
- Captured at Hankinson's Ferry by a rebel scout named Boatwright

These pages do not include a lot of personal genealogical information, but it does provide a timeframe and frame of reference of his movements throughout the early part of the war.

In Chapter 3, we see that the company started off in Patch Grove, Grant County Wisconsin. About January 1st, 1862, they moved to where the rest of the regiment was quartered at Camp Washburn, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin. In March 1862, they moved to Benton Barracks, St. Louis County, Missouri. In June 1862, they were transported on boats to Jefferson City, Cole County, Missouri. From there they went to Springfield, Greene County, Missouri and then on to Helena, Phillips County, Arkansas with General Curtis.

Referring to several references on Civil War camps, we find that Camp Washburn was a reception center and trading post located on the old Cold Spring Racetrack situated west of 27th Street outside of Milwaukee ( www.secondwi.com/wisconsin_civil_war_campscamp_ba.htm ). It was used for training volunteer units from that area of the country. Benton Barracks, also called Camp Benton, was Missouri's largest training and deployment camp in the Civil War. It was

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built to accommodate more than 30,000 troops at a time. More information about Benton Barracks can be found at http://www.missouricivilwarmuseum.org/benton.htm .

The additional information from Chapter 3 gives an idea of the state of mind of the young man that Melvin Grigsby was at the time. Throughout the chapters referenced in this issue, he liked to take chances and ignore most authority except the officers of his company. This attitude helped to ensure he got captured instead of just serving his enlistment and getting discharged. He also was forming his own leadership style by watching what he did and did not like in the officers around him.

In Chapter 4, we find that they left Helena in January of 1863 and went by steamboat to Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee. During the trip, he ended up with a case of pneumonia and was not expected to survive. His mother made the trip from their family home to Memphis to take care of him at a private boarding house until he recovered. The medical problems (pneumonia and previous bout of fever) should be found in his military records.

In this chapter, we see a reference to his dislike of slavery and the comparison of Andersonville to the torture given to slaves on a plantation. Since he had not been to Andersonville at the time, we have to wonder what his frame of mind was while he was actually there. We also see a reference to the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which helps to indicate how well-read he was.

In Chapter 5, the regiment is moving in May 1863 by boat from Memphis down to Vicksburg, Warren County, Mississippi and then up the Yazoo River to Hains' Bluff, which is also known as Chickasaw Bluff, Haines' Bluff, and Walnut Hills, and had just been taken by Grant's army that month. On the web site www.publicbookshelf.com/public_html/The_Great_Republic_By_the_Master_Historians_Vol_III/ulyssess_eg.html , it references that Brigadier-General Sooy Smith arrived from Memphis on June 8th and was ordered to Haine's Bluff where Washburne (now a Major-General) was placed in command. This seems to corroborate Melvin Grigsby's story assuming his regiment was part of this force. Haine's Bluff is located to the northeast of Vicksburg on the Yazoo River.

Melvin also was involved in having court-martial charges brought against him. This also should be found in his military records and probably the records for the regiment and division he served in. The orders detaching him to the division headquarters should also be available in his own records and those of the regiment and division.

More information of this time period can be read at www.secondwi.com/second_wisconsin_cavalry.htm .

Chapter 6 sees the regiment in camp at Redbone Church in February 1864 where it remained until April 1864. Redbone Church is located 12 miles south of Vicksburg in Warren County, Mississippi. Also, Melvin is seen taking risks by going out on raids with his old regiment and ended up getting captured by a Rebel scout named Boatwright. This occurred at Hankinson's Ferry which was the main river crossing over the Big Black River, about two miles from Willow Springs, for the Old Port Gibson Road between Port Gibson and Vicksburg.

These chapters dealt mainly with his early experiences in training and moving around as part of a supporting unit that occupied areas after the main battles. The web sites referenced above have very interesting reading for those interested in the experiences of these units. The chapters that follow in the next issue will begin describing Melvin's time in captivity.