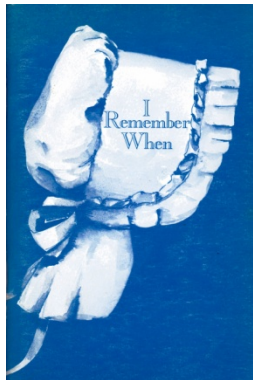


I Remember When: Reminiscences of Fifty Years Ago

“Grand-Pa's Stories”

By Mrs. Mary M. Satterfield



Grandpa sat on the front porch with one of his old war buddies, talking about their war years, smoking little Cuban cigars. In those days, children were to be seen and not heard, so I sat on the edge of the porch and listened, absorbing their conversations as well as the aroma of those cigars.

Most of the stories that I remember are humorous although some of them are tragic. One of the sad stories made a great impression on me. They talked of the Battle of Gettysburg and their eyes would stare blankly as they told of the brother of one of them who did not make it home. During the thick of the battle, suffering was so great and fighting so intense, this man standing next to Grandpa said, "I hope the next bullet gets me." In less time than it takes to tell it, the man fell, mortally wounded. Grandpa lost a brother in that same battle.

A short time later, Grandpa was wounded in the leg. A part of the small bone was torn out of his leg and a minie ball was lodged behind his knee. He fell, of course, and was taken prisoner. When he reached the Yankee prison at David's Island, in New York Harbor, the Army surgeon told him the leg would have to be amputated. Grandpa had heard the screams of the wounded men during similar operations and seen the suffering and dying of the results of such. He told the doctor that he would rather die than to lose his leg. The doctor told him that he would die if he did not give up his leg. Grandpa asked if he could have a pan of hot water each day to care



for his own wounds. His wish was granted, I suppose because the doctor probably thought he would die, either way. Grandpa took care of his leg and saved it. He rejoined his command and was paroled at Greensboro in April, 1865. He often said he brought a Yankee souvenir home with him. Needless to say, he carried it to his grave, the minie ball in his knee.

One story he told was about another neighbor boy, not as gallant and brave as the friend who was killed. After a hard day's march, cold, hungry, scared and homesick, this young soldier was caught, crying bitterly. One of his friends said to him: "Aren't you ashamed, crying like a baby?" He replied, between sobs: "I wish I was a baby, and a gal baby at that!" This man must have had some wit even in the midst of all the hardships. He was disgusted as well as discouraged. On one occasion he boasted about cussing the Captain. His companions teased him, saying: "Now, Jack, you know you did no such thing. You surely didn't cuss the Captain." Jack grinned and said: "I sho' did but I cussed him so low he couldn't hear me!" I have heard this tale many times and it became a saying at home. When anyone did too much bragging, one of us would say: "Yeah! I know you did just like Jack cussed the Captain!"

Grandpa told yet another story about this same Jack. Jack grew so desperate that he figured a way to be sent home without being a deserter. He found and broke a rotten egg in his ear. Then he went to the Company doctor and complained that his ear was troubling him, "somethin' awful." The doctor had no way of detecting a fraud. From all appearances the man had some dire trouble. He sent Jack home with the discharge papers in his pocket.

Grandpa was a member of the Milton Blues, which later became Company C, Thirteenth Regiment, North Carolina Troops. When his Company left North Carolina, they camped for a time at a historic Church near Smithfield, Virginia. While there, he sketched a picture of the church and sent it to his sweetheart (later, my grandmother). He wrote beside the picture: "This is the church where the Third Regiment Volunteers are camped. Old Lord Cornwallis camped here one night in the Revolution and now we are here. It is the oldest church in America. It is about two hundred and twenty-nine years old." The date on the front of the church was sixteen hundred thirty-two. A few years ago, I found a picture of this same church in a book on Architecture. Grandpa's picture was remarkably accurate.

Whenever I catch a whiff of the smoke from Cuban cigars a flood of memories crowd my mind. I agree thoroughly with General MacArthur that "Old soldiers never die." I can add: "They just fade away like the smoke from little Cuban cigars."

Satterfield, Mary M., "Grand-Pa's Stories." *I Remember When*. Ed. Hazel Valentine. Raleigh: North Carolina Extension Homemakers Association, Inc., 1978. Print. Pages 6-7.

The author is Mary Yarbrough McAden Satterfield (1911-2003), wife of Lynn Banks Satterfield (1907-1993). The grandfather telling the stores is John B. Yarbrough (1841-1922). At the time of the 1920 U.S. Census, John B. Yarbrough, age 79, was living with his daughter, Ella Temperance Yarbrough who had married John Henry McAden. John B. Yarbrough was head of his own household when the earlier 1910 census was enumerated, but his wife died in 1915, and it may

have been around that time that he moved to his daughter's household. This would have provided ample opportunity for young granddaughter Mary Yarbrough McAden to hear many of his stories.

John B. Yarbrough married Mary Louisa Harrison (1842-1915), and the couple had at least six children: Ella Temperance Yarbrough; Mary John Yarbrough; Daniel Harrison Yarbrough; Edgar Calvin Yarbrough; Jesse Walton Yarbrough; and Louise Thomas Yarbrough.

Whether John B. Yarbrough was imprisoned at Davids Island in New York or Johnson Island in Ohio remains uncertain. However, his name is not found on the list of Johnson Island prisoners, and many Confederate casualties from the Battle of Gettysburg were taken to Davids Island in New York. His brother, Joseph T. Yarbrough (1837-1863) died at the Battle of Gettysburg.

"Grand-Pa's Stories" is part of a collection of reminiscences published in 1978. Here is the Preface to the little book:

"I Remember When is a collection of stories written by Extension Homemakers of North Carolina, who are sixty-five years old or older, about things that happened fifty or more years ago. They were written in response to (a) the request of the Education Chairman, made at the meeting of the Program of Work Chairmen, and their advisors, at McKimmon Center, in Raleigh, North Carolina in January, 1978, and (b) to two letters to the seven District Education Chairmen, sent out to the State Education Chairman, through the Nash County office, Mrs. Agnes Safy, Home Economics Extension Agent; one letter in February and one letter in June."

The collection was edited by Hazel Valentine (Mrs. Itimous T. Sr.), Education Charman, 1978, North Carolina Extension Homemakers Association, Inc.
