



## PATRIOTIC RECOLLECTIONS



### Just a Little Bit of History:

#### Interview with Charles Shelton, 2nd Virginia Cavalry, Company E, USA<sup>(a)</sup>

*So you were with the 2nd Va. Cavalry? we asked of Charles Shelton. Yes, he replied. Well, the 2nd Va. Cavalry was around some, and got into tight places, did you ever get in any? the reporter asked. A few.*

*Henry Pancake's interesting experience which you published calls to mind a narrow escape for me, on account of my having on rebel pants and an old white hat. Of course we all had narrow escapes. I learned this in my first soldiering in Kanawha valley. One day, our regiment was strung out a mile long and, was fired on by bushwhackers from the opposite side of the river, and every man said that the ball just missed his head and that was all. However, after we marched an hour or so, that ball or some other succeeded in knocking the crown out of Jimmie McGovern's hat. Now as I was going to say of myself; at the battle of Waynesborough I lost my cap and found that white hat. That night after the fight was over, I changed my muddy pants for a rebel pair that was clean and dry. These I had to keep for some weeks as we were on the go all the time. We marched to White House Landing, then to Petersburg, then to Five Forks, then to Sailor's Creek. In the evening after the fight was over, two of Company F, and myself assisted one of my company to the hospital. There we were detained to wait on the wounded that night.*

*Next morning, we started for the command. On reaching the battle ground, which was situated on a ridge, we stopped to consider which way to go as there were roads leading in different direction. Just then a regiment of nice, clean soldiers, headed by several fine looking officers, came in sight. They hated some distance away, and soon one of their officers came dashing toward us, and at once, I thought this must be General Meade, and sure enough it was. Now here, I must further describe my appearance, for I do not wonder at him taking me to be anything else but a confederate soldier. I had on the right kind of cavalry jacket and as I was bugler of course was striped across the breast like a zebra, and a broad brimmed home made hat lopped well down about my ears.*

*The General made right for me. "What command do you belong to?" he asked in a shrill voice that almost lifted me out of my saddle. "2nd Va. Cav. Co. E, Capt. Joe Ankrom, Lieut. J.M. Corns, Lieut. Hicks." This I said and more too in one breath, for I began to see that we were going to get into trouble.*

*"What are you doing here?" I explained all about the matter and told him that we were at a loss to know which road to take to get to our command. "What are you doing with those rebel clothes on?" he asked. I explained how I came by these, and said I, "General, I see you are taking me for a rebel. Why, here," showing him a pin that I wore on my jacket, with name, company and regiment inscribed on it, also a*

*ring with the same. Then I searched my pockets for a letter from home, but he would not look at anything, but gray pants and white hat. Finally, he said, "your command went out that road." He then went back to his staff. We started, but did not proceed far till an officer came up and commanded us to halt. He said that the General wanted us to come back there.*

*On our way back, he asked me the same questions, and I tried to tell the same story. When we reached the General and his staff this officer said: "General, it will be well to see this fellow, for he tells a crooked story." The regiment was then drawn up in line of march and I was placed in the rear under guard. We did not go far, till we came to a halt. An officer came dashing back and ordered me to dismount. My horse was taken away and I was led to one side by two nice looking soldiers, who seemed afraid to get close to me. These soldiers commenced to load their guns, and Oh! That old white hat began to raise and I thought of everything I ever did both good and bad. I could not help but think that I was the best soldier that ever carried a bugle, and had been in every fight the regiment ever had. I had helped Custer capture those thirty-six battle flags with all that artillery, and now the war was about to end and I was going to be shot as a rebel spy. It was too bad; but just then I heard a clatter of horse's hoofs coming back along the line. As they came up, I observed two officers and two men. I knew one of them. I holloed out, "there is a man I know." Said I " You are a Lieut. in the first N.Y. Cav. I belong to Co. E 2nd Va. Cav. Capt. Joe Ankrom. You know him?" "Yes" said the Lieut. "Why?" "These men are going to shoot me for a rebel spy." I was then turned over to the Lieut. and thus rescued, and had the please of seeing Lee surrender at Appomattox a few days later. That indeed is a very romantic experience, observed the reporter. It may be romantic to listen to, but the very recollection of it gives me the cold chills. I don't want to figure in that sort of a romance any more, Mr. Shelton replied. Indeed I hope not, said the reporter, but yet these narrow escapes become very interesting to recall, twenty years after the danger's past.*

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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 lawrencountyohio.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 December 9, 1886.

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