



## PATRIOTIC RECOLLECTIONS



### Just a Little Bit of History:

Interview with Colonel Weddle, 1st West Virginia, USA<sup>(a)</sup>

*Here, Col. Weddle, I've caught you at last. Said the REGISTER man when he met the Colonel pulling away at a cigar in front of Winter's drug store.*

*What's the matter? What have I done?* returned the Colonel with a laugh.

*Why, haven't you read the "Narrow Escapes in the REGISTER, and don't you see you have kept out of them?"* the reporter replied.

*Yes, I read them, and I like to read what the other boys have done, but please excuse me. "Not at all—we let no guilty man escape. Come now; the 1st West VA. Was a fighting regiment and you were one of them. Think up a "Narrow Escape" right quick, now.*

*Well, said the Colonel, putting on his thinking cap, Port Republic was about as hot a time as I ever saw, but you want some personal reminiscences where a fellow got in a peculiar tight pinch himself? I guess that was down at Berryville. Let's see—now I don't know that I will get the dates precisely right—but it was when Early was retreating out of Maryland. He had gone into Virginia and was striking toward Winchester, and we were following him up cautiously. We had started from Sandy Hook and intended to reach Leetown and demonstrate on his flank, but he had passed down the pike. We then went to Snicker's ford, where we encountered the enemy and had a severe fight.*

*I must tell you of a funny incident here, and a rather narrow too. Our regiment had charged across the ford and had been driven back, where we had a steep, slippery clay bank to climb, to get out of the way of the enemy's fire. My adjutant and I had clasped hands to aid each other up the bank. The rebels were across the river, only a short distance, just peppering us lively. Now, as fast as my adjutant and myself got near the top of that bank, we slipped back, and the more we hurried the worse we would slip, and the faster the rebels fired the more we hurried. It was a scaly time, and many of our boys were shot there. My Adjutant, whose hand I held till we got up the bank, was shot twice in the cap, a shoulder strap carried off, a button shot away and a ball pierced his clothing in left side—five close misses in getting up that bank; but I escaped—that's a close call. Well a couple of days after that, we moved to Berryville, and my regiment and the 2nd Maryland were sent up Winchester Pike on picket. The rest of the division was below Berryville. We had three companies out, from each regiment, on each side of the road, on picket, and the main part of the two regiments was on the pike, a short distance back. I was sitting in the*

*regimental ambulance, and my cook had just announced that coffee and bacon were ready, when 'bang' went a musket out the road, and 'bang, bang' went others. I mounted my horse and galloped in the direction of our advanced picket line, which, in the meantime, had got itself in good position, and using my glass saw a large rebel force advancing in line of battle. I was commanding my regiment, but Col. Rogers, of the 2nd Maryland, was my senior. I gave orders to pickets to fall back stubbornly, and then reported t Col. Rogers, who had ordered his own regiment to do the dame thing. The two regiments then kept on falling back slowly and fighting all the time, till they got to Berryville. Here were some old earthworks, badly washed by the rain, and we got over into them. The rebels kept coming and confident of success charged the earthworks. This was about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The form of the earthworks was a right angle, and the rebel line came up in sort of a semi-circle, enveloping the corner of the angle. We would have been most delightfully wiped out then, had it not been for Gen. Duval, who lay with the rest of his brigade in the neighborhood of Berryville, and who formed in line when the firing was first heard. His forces reached the fort soon after we got behind it, but the works being very small, a part of his brigade was thrown out to he left to prevent the enemy coming in that direction and getting the works.*

*The attempt of the enemy to carry the works by storm was a very exciting combat, at least where I stood, about midway of the front of the angle and just where the narrow escape which you demand took place. I was standing there sword in hand, directing the firing against the advancing line of the enemy. The rebs came nearer and nearer, and the fire got hotter and hotter, and soon the rebs were right on us. Now mind, the earthworks were hardly dignified by that name, not being over two or three feet high and affording very little protection at anything like close quarters. While I was standing, as I remarked, a great, tall reb right in front of the attacking line made a jump at me and sought to reach me with a lunge of his bayonet, and it was close work, I tell you. He had the longest arms and made the biggest lunge and he was going for me. The point of the bayonet gave me a prod in the lower part of the breastbone and drew blood, but not enough to hurt much. He was about to step forward to be sure the next time, when one of the boys near me jumped up and placing his musket near the fellow's head blew it pretty nearly off. That was a narrow as I wanted it.*

*Yes, said the reporter, that was very close, but how did the fight end?*

*Oh we repulsed them, but they kept up an artillery fire until 10 o'clock. The next morning, however we left, and formed a new line near the Potomac. That fight was on the 3rd of September. A few days after, Sheridan came in with two corps and drove Early out of the valley.*

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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 December 16, 1886.

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December 2000