

28 Jun 01

8th Wisconsin Artillery

Dear Mr. Lewis

Received a letter from
you dated Feb 19, 2001.

In response to your request
I am sending you a copy
of the story E.R. Calkins
wrote using memory and diary.

I had a young lady many years
ago copy from the original.

I know initials, rank and
spelling errors have taken place.

You are welcome to use as
you see fit.

Charles Reynolds

113 Laker Dr

Shell Lake, WI 54871

Sincerely

Charles Reynolds

THREE AND ONE-HALF YEARS IN THE CIVIL WAR.

In the year 1862, on Feb. 15, a lad of 19, living in Northern Wisconsin among the pines, in common with other young men of the country caught the war spirit, put my name down as a member of Captain S. of Carpenters' Company, the 8th Wisconsin Battery of light Artillery, and immediately started for Racine, the rendezvous of the Company. It was 75 miles to the nearest railroad station (Berlin) which we made in a sleigh. Getting aboard the cars, we reached camp, and on the 18th day of Feb., I was passed upon by the mustering officer, as I stood under the measuring rod to have my height taken, being quite small for my age, the Officer requested me to stand up a little straighter. I took the hint, and raised my heels off the floor about an inch and passed the muster. I was then given a new uniform and was a full-fledged soldier for 3 years, or during the war.

The ground was covered with snow and water, and I had gotten my feet wet, which I heard from the next morning, for as I undertook to answer to my name at roll call, I was unable to utter a loud noise. I was ordered to report at Sick Call, which would be at nine o'clock. I obeyed like a good soldier and was ordered to the hospital, which proved to be a large square wall tent, with some immense box stove in the center and it was kept very warm, day and night. The steward in charge assigned me to a cot, the foot of which came next to the stove. I crawled into the cot with my head burning up and my feet likely to, from the heat of the stove. I soon received the attention of the Surgeon, Dr., all day I rooted and tossed. As night came on, it did seem that my head would burst. About 3 o'clock in the morning, my feet got warm and the fever left my head, and I fell into a sweet and restful sleep. I awoke before noon, feeling like a new man, or boy. My throat was clear as a whistle, in a couple of days I was pronounced fit for duty and ordered to my quarters.

Our camp was on the shore of Lake Michigan, and while it was very windy at times it was pleasant when the weather was good. We enjoyed it while we were there, which was however not to be very long.

The fife and drum, the bugle and brass bands made plenty of music and the troops drilling, (for there had been troops camped there some time before us) was a great and new experience to me, but I took to soldiering like a duck to water. We had no arms except one six-pound piece of artillery. We put in our time drilling on foot and firing at a target (out in the lake, with our one piece of artillery.) We were getting used to soldiering fast, and in a few days felt that we were ready to put the Rebellion down. Early in March, the bugle sounded the assembly about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We hurried into line expecting it was orders to march, which proved to be true. Tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. Then we broke loose such cheering and waving of caps, all was excitement and wondering where we were to go. Nine o'clock found us all ready to go, but it was some time before we finally got off, and it proved to be our first ride in freight cars, but not our last. We reached Chicago in the early evening and was marched to the Transfer Barracks, a large frame building, capable of accomodating several thousand men and it seemed to be full. We ate our supper for we had our rations with us, and about 11 o'clock, rolled up in our blanket on the soft side of a pine board, with our knapsack for a pillow. There was not much chance to sleep, for troops were coming and going all night, but tired nature asserted itself and we fell asleep.

Revilee at 6 o' clock brought us onto our feet again, rather sore and stiff from contact with the pine board, yet we soon straightened the kinks out and was as good as new again.

We were destined to learn a lesson in patience here for instead of getting away for the front at an early hour, we were doomed to remain here for another day, for transportation could not be secured.

Discipline was not very strict, as yet, and some of the company started out to take in the sights of Chicago in the evening. They got so jolly that there was danger that they would keep the good people awake when they should be asleep and so the police invited them to stop at their house till morning, which they very reluctantly consented to do. The morning brought us word that our transportation was ready, and about 10 o'clock we were ready to move. There were about five thousand of us in the Barrack and just before falling in line, the Matron, one of those loyal, good mothers of those times said, "Boys, I want you to sing Rally Around The Flag, before you go to the front." And we did sing it. It seemed as though we would raise the roof off of the building. Then we sang John Brown. While we were yet singing, Orders came to fall in and we were soon marching through the streets of Chicago. We reached the depot and was soon loaded into the Palace Box cars and bounded along over the rails toward St. Louis, which was to be our first permanent stopping place on Southern soil. At Bloomington, Illinois we were unloaded and marched up into the city, it was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon of a very pleasant day. There the ladies of the city met us with hot coffee and a splendid dinner to which I assure you we did ample justice. This was a very pleasant experience in our soldier life and many times during the next three years we looked back to it with gratitude. We had a few minutes to visit with the good people of Bloomington and then thanking them for their kindness and hospitality, we again got aboard the cars and were whirled away, landing at East St. Louis some time in the night, but we had taken lodging in the boxcars and had our beds made and in fact were asleep when we pulled into the yards and nothing short of a battle with heavy artillery could have got us out. We slept the sleep of the just until morning but roll call brought us into line and after answering to our names as the 1st Sergeant called them, found that we were all there, were ordered to make coffee and get breakfast. We gathered wood wherever we could find it and made fires, and made our coffee, our first regular meal in camp life. About 10 o' clock, we were marched aboard a ferry boat and taken across the river. Marched through the streets and out to the beautiful camping ground, Jefferson Barracks.

CHAPTER II

Jefferson Barracks is situated north of the city of St. Louis, and a beautiful piece of land overlooking the two mighty rivers, the Mississippi and Missouri. It is a vast government workshop for the making of soldiers from the raw material, (Boys from the farm, the bench, the counter, the desk and the schoolroom) and transform them in an incredibly short time, into polished and refined soldiers, composing the Army, the like of which the world had never seen. There were troops, the raw material, coming and the finished soldier, going all the time. I thought as I watched the older troops at drill, that surely they were perfect. Such precision in their every movement and I thought, "will we ever be as perfect as they?" and the answer volunteeredly came, "yes; we are all of the same raw material that they were, and it is in us to be as perfect as they." I resolved that I would do my best to be worthy of the state that sent me. There were quarters to accomodate many thousand men and there was great activity at every point. We were assigned quarters near the South end on the west side of the parole ground. Immense

ranges for cooking and splendid quarters for sleeping made it an ideal place to learn the art of war, but as time proved, our stay was to be short. We drew our horses, twelve for each gun and some extra ones and mules for our mess wagons. Then came our harness which we soon fitted to the horses and we were ready for our guns which we soon got in the shape of four six-pound brass pieces and two twelve-pound pieces but this was not all. We were to be armed to the teeth. Each man was furnished a five-inch colts revolver and a twenty-four inch sabre bayonet. Surely the enemy would flee at the sight of us. We had scarcely got our full outfit (arms and camp equipment) until orders came to be ready to march and at ten o' clock the next morning we left Jefferson Barracks and our fine quarters for the field, where for the next three and one half years the white tent and the blue sky were to be our only shelter. We marched through the streets of the city with 150 strong, with a full equipment of arms and transportation to the levee on the river where we had landed, only a few days before with nothing but uniforms to denote that we were Uncle Sam's Boys off for the war.

At the levee lay a fine river steamer with huge volumes of black smoke rolling out of its funnels as if eager to be on its way to the point where duty calls. On board we went which was no small job, and just before the sun sank behind the western hills, the gangplank was drawn in. The line was cast off, the bow of the mighty boat swung out into the current of the mighty Mississippi, which way would she go? Would she keep her head up stream or would she turn it down? A rumor was current that we were to go up the Missouri to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and join Gen'l Mitchell who had organized an expedition with a force of 10 or 12 thousand men whose destiny was New Mexico.

Our suspense was brief. Soon came the command to the engineer to move forward and as the grand old boat responded to the powerful engines and moved forward. Cheer after cheer went up from the boys on-board and was acknowledged by the vast throng on shore with hugs and the waving of handkerchiefs and hats. The staunch old boat turned her nose into the muddy waters of the Missouri. Darkness settled down as we shed our blankets on the vessel's deck and we lay down and slept as only tired men can sleep, utterly unconscious of the throbbing of the mighty engines that were forcing the boat against the current of the mighty river. It was nearly noon when Fort Leavenworth came in view. Soon the boat drew up to the wharf and made her line fast. The gangplanks were thrown out and soon we were busy unloading. The horses were glad to get on land once more. As soon as we could get everything ready to move, the command was given to forward march. We went about two miles and hitched our tents on a beautiful, rolling piece of ground, with just enough trees to furnish shade. With a fine drill and parole ground only a short distance away, our regular work now began. It was drill every forenoon and afternoon. /I will relate a bit of my personal experience. First I will say I met my father there. He was a member of the 12th Wisconsin Infantry and had went out in August of 61. The regiment was camped here and was a part of Gen'l. Mitchell's Command. You may imagine I was quite glad to see father and he perhaps none the less so to see me. / It was my fortune to be swing driver on the Caisson, that is the wagon that carried the ammunition. There is one for each gun so the reader will understand that a six gun battery consists of six guns, with six horses and three riders or drivers to each gun or piece and one Caisson with six horses and three drivers to each piece. The drivers always rode the near horse of his two. Mine was the swing or the middle team. Any team were a beautiful span of grey but beauty is not always utility. We soon found, when we hitched them up for drill, that we had one of the worst kind of balky horses to contend with that was ever put in harness. At the command forward, the lead horses would

move up, and he would move back, no amount of coaxing or petting would move him. He was as though his foundation was upon a rock. I would put the spurs into his flank and he would go up in the air and fall over backward. He came near catching me under him several times. Sometimes we would get him started in half an hour and sometimes it would be an hour and a half. He finally beat us out and we turned him over to one of the Staff Officers to ride where he did good service as long as we had him, which was not long. I will have more to say of him later on.

Many amusing incidents happened with our horses. Some of which were quite serious. One of the drivers was going to water his horses one day. He wanted I should jump on and ride one down. He was already mounted. I said alright. I stepped up and threw myself onto his bare back. Hardly had I made the landing till his back formed a rainbow. His hind feet went up in the air at the same time that his head went between his knees and I landed about 15 feet ahead of the horse, on my hands and face with my feet at right angles to my neck. Everybody laughed but one and I carried my hand in a sling for several days. Another incident or two and I will proceed with my narrative.

Our bugler selected for his saddle horse, a very fine animal to look at, and just about perfect under the saddle. But he would get excited on drill and run away with his rider in spite of all he could do. After a few days the bugler thought he was getting him very well under control. So one afternoon he took him out to show the boys how fine he was coming on with his horse. He mounted, took a circle down along the parole ground, and then turned him toward the camp. No sooner had he done so than the horse threw his chin down on his breast and away he came. No amount of pulling at the bit could turn him to the right or left. Straight toward camp he came and passing under an oak tree with branches low he scooped his rider, saddle and all off his back. He put up many other pranks and was never entirely safe under the excitement of drill or fire.

We put in our best licks drilling while camped there and finally we re-received marching orders. While we were there, others and I got leave of absence to visit an only sister of my father, who lived at Osowotane. We had good accounts and after traveling nearly all day we found the rebel scouts so plenty that we decided it best to go back to our command as soon as darkness came, we started. We met several persons that looked suspiciously at us, as we did also at them. We arrived at camp the next forenoon, thankful that we were not taken in, as the country was full of gorrilles.

CHAPTER III

A long march out and then back again. Morning found us ready to march at an early hour, for we were always ready for a change, especially after laying in camp for awhile. We struck west over the plains of Kansas in the direction of Fort Riley, past a few miles north of Topeka, where we camped for one day and then pressed forward again. The march was without special interest except in the monster snakes we found. Blue racers which some of the boys declared were twelve feet long and could run as fast as the best horse and water snakes by the hundreds. Fully six and eight feet in length. Some of us had become quite experts with our revolvers and the day we camped near Topeka, amused ourselves shooting snakes. If we could get within fifty feet of one, he was pretty sure to be a dead snake.

In due time we reached Fort Riley (one hundred and fifty miles from Fort Leavenworth) and after halting there one day, we started on our back track. The Battle of Shilo had been fought and the expedition to New Mexico had been abandoned, and we were ordered to report to St. Louis.

Our return march to Fort Leavenworth was uneventful. We immediately went on board a boat waiting there for us, in fact there were several of them. We were soon loaded and pulled out down the river. We had gone but a short distance before some of the boys hollered that Frank was loose. And sure enough, he was. The balky horse had jumped overboard before anyone could catch him. That was the last we saw of Frank.

The trip to St. Louis was made in good time. We disembarked and went direct to Jefferson Barracks. Home again, after about 2 months of absence. But our stay was to be short, for in a very few days orders came to march with three days rations in our haversack. Again we marched through the streets and down to the boat landing and immediately went aboard a boat lying there, all being in readiness to move. The lines were cast off, the vessel swung out into the current and turned her nose down stream, destination unknown to the rank and file. Down and down we went past the mouth of the Ohio and when we came in sight of Columbus Kentucky, there were evidence that this was to be our landing place. The rebel fort here was situated on a high bluff and commanded the river for some distance up. Here were quite a number large seige guns that the enemy had been obliged to leave when they were driven out by our gun boats. There was one large piece, fully sixteen feet long that was split clear into and it was said that when it burst, it killed sixteen men. We disembarked here and went into camp up on the bluff, a short distance from the river. We were here when Fort Pillow was blown up and heard and felt the shock quite distinct, although 40 miles distance. After laying in camp here a few days we took up our line of march through Western Kentucky and Tennessee, and made our first permanent stopping place. At Corinth Mississippi, where later on a severe engagement was fought. It was the forepart of July when we reached here and the weather was very warm. The water was splendid and the campground fine, and we were very glad to rest here. There had been a good many desertions from the army from the time we reached St. Louis. On our return from Kansas, the military authorities saw that it must be checked and that heroic measures were necessary to deter others from taking the same leave. A number had been caught and courtmartialed and as the penalty for the officers in time of war was death. Two young men were selected as the exemple about 10 o'clock one fine morning. The entire division was assembled and without arms were marched a short distance from camp and formed three sides of a hollow square. Two rough pine coffins were placed at the open side and then two men were brought in and seated, one on each coffin, facing the troops. Then two squads of soldiers with arms were marched in taking position a few paces in front of the condemned men. The findings of the courtmartial was read, the black caps were drawn over their faces, an officer gave the command attention, ready, aim, fire. The report of twelve rifles sang out. The two men fell over dead, and thus was enacted the most severe discipline known in war.

CHAPTER IV

On the afternoon of August first, orders came to our brigade to be ready to march the next morning at 4 o'clock, with three days cooked rations. We knew this meant a forced march. Promptly at 4 we were ready and moved out taking a southeast course. The day was very hot. I don't think we saw it equal while we were in the service. The dust thick and stifling, there being no wind to carry it away. It soon began to be rumored that we were going to break up a rebel recruiting camp about 40 miles down the country. Our march continued steadily on, stopping at noon only long enough for the horses to eat. At nightfall approached we were cautioned to be very quiet. The advance had been skirmishing for some time with rebel scouts. The march continued until 3 o'clock in the

morning, when we were halted and ordered to rest on our arins, which meant to just sit down just where we were. Noise was absolutely forbidden. We had scarcely got quieted down and some of us had fallen directly asleep when we were suddenly awakened by a terrible commotion near the head of the command. Every man was on his feet in an instant. The noise sounded like a lot of hogs grunting and with an oof, oof as they ran and at every jump a dozen men would holler at the top of their voices, when woof, woof, and away the swine came. For such they were and had been suddenly disturbed in their slumber in the corner of the fence. The command were thoroughly awake and order of silence had been disobeyed. There was nothing to do now but move ahead. It was getting daylight now, and skeraishing commenced immediately. One of the enemy was killed. About 9 o'clock we reached the place where the recruiting station had been. But the bird had flown.

We had done so fair as we could what we set out for and about 10 o'clock, turned our steps to the rear. (All day long we toiled amid heat and dust which almost unbearable, stopping only to eat and feed our horses.) As dark drew and we left the main road and took a more northeasterly course. About 1 o'clock in the afternoon we came in sight of Iuka Springs, Mississippi and immediately went into camp having marched ninety miles. It proved to be very disesterous to the men. 35 of our company were taken to the hospital before the next night and many of them never came back. Iuka Springs was quite a noted summer resort before the war, and is situated in northern Mississippi, near the Tennessee River. We lay in camp here a few days and then moved across the Tennessee River and went into camp on the north bank. We were short of forage for our horses and details were frequently sent out into the country to forage for the horses and the boys would frequently bring in something extra (chickens and such like for themselves). It was my privilege to go with the detail one day, when our captain was in command. There were eight mule teams and for convenience of bringing in what the captain might get for headquarters, he rode to the ambulance. In place of riding his horse as usual, he rode beside the driver in the ambulance. We went about 6 miles, found plenty of forage, loaded our wagons, and had secured quite a lot of good things and put in the ambulance for the officers. About 3 in the afternoon we started for camp and as us privates had nothing to show for the part we took in the expedition, we began to look about for something that would tempt the appetite. As we found such things quite plenty, we were soon supplied, but as it was quite difficult to carry all we had, we slipped up behind the ambulance as it was moving along and quietly put our most bulky things in the back of the ambulance, intending to take them out just before reaching camp. All went merry and we had a little time to make excursions out a little way from the road in search of other delicacies. Another comrad and myself ran across a spring house over a beautiful spring water nestled away among the brush, many rods from the house and on looking therein we spied a 3-gallon jar nearly filled with nice sweet cream. Well, we were in luck, but how in the world were we to carry it. We could only solve the problem in part. We emptied the water out of our canteens and filled them. Then each of us drank a quart and in sorrow left the balance. Just before nearing camp, we quietly approached the rear of the ambulance to lift out our 12 chickens, 2 ducks and one goose. As we raised the curtain, the captain turned and with a smile said, "boys, you may leave them there." Crest-fallen and mad we went to our quarters and vowing we would get even with the old captain if it took all summer.

CHAPTER V

We were now under the command of General B. C. Buel. The army was scattered along the country from North to Duka and east, General Bragg with his army were farther east along the Tennessee River, and among the Cumberland Mountains watching an opportunity to move north and General

watching him. The cavalry was busy scouring the country to locate the enemy and if possible, divine his intentions. We had not long to wait, Bragg had broken loose from his base and was moving north immediately. Orders were given to march and then came the long hard march north through Tennessee and Kentucky back. Bragg had the lead and it was a life and death struggle which should reach Louisville and the Ohio River. We struck the main turnpike running south from Nashville, Tennessee to Chattanooga, at Murfreesboro, 30 miles south of Nashville, where later the two armies came together in the bloody battle of Stones River. Dec. 30 and 31 and Jan. 1 and 2, 1863, I have a very vivid recollection of the place at this time, for here, as we were going to camp I received an injury to my left leg that laid me up for some time and threatened to deprive me of the pleasure of this march north. But by the kindness of the Dr., I was permitted to ride in the ambulance until I had recovered. We took up the line of march to Nashville where we crossed the river, An amusing incident happened just before we reached Nashville. We went into camp for the night and the boys had observed that there was plenty of honey at some of the farms nearby, and they were all getting hungry for some. They found the honey alright and proceeded to help themselves. The bees put up such a strong fight and got inside of their clothes and made it so uncomfortably sore that they were obliged to take their clothes off and return to camp as they came into the world. They however brought a generous quantity of fine honey with them, which abundantly paid for the loss of their clothes. After crossing the Cumberland River, our way was to be rather hard. Bragg's rear guard would contest our advance during the day and their close up at night, that we were skirmishing daytime and marching nights until we reached Louisville. We were a pretty hard-locking set of men, we hadn't had a change of clothes for nearly a month. We were a dirty lousy set. The day we crossed Green River, Kentucky, our brigade had been in advance and the next would be our turn in the rear, so that we wouldn't be likely to march before daylight. We crossed the river just before sundown and went into camp. I unsaddled my horse and by the way, this was the same little horse that scraped the bugler off his back at Fort Leavenworth. It was one priveledge to ride him. And while he had gotten tazed down a good deal, yet he used to run away with me frequently but to return and threw it onto a pile of stone with my blanket on it. I tied my horse and then got some feed and gave him some. Then I looked down on my saddle, throwing my arm over it to rest easy until coffee should be made where I expected to eat my supper. I dropped into a sleep and imagine my surprise when I awoke to find it was the next day after the sun had risen. It has always seemed to me that was the best night's sleep I ever had, notwithstanding I lost my supper. The enemy had gotten ahead of us and soon after we left Nashville it was skirmish daytimes with the regard of the rebels and march nights, so that it was very hard on the troops.

Some of the way, water was very scarce and at one time all the water we could find was a small pond, the water just the color of the ground, with a dead horse near the middle of the it swelled up to twice its size. But there was no other alternative, we had to have some coffee and it took water to make it and so we used that. As we got up near the Mammoth Cave, water became more plenty and we not unfrequently came to a stream of nice water that came out of the ground, ran along for a short distance and disappeared again. We passed within a few miles of Mammoth Cave. Some of the boys went over to it as I was on duty that day, I could not go. As we neared Louisville, it became evident that the enemy were swinging off east and would not attack the city. Troops had been rushed there for its defense and they probably did not think it wise to stop long enough to give battle as we were close behind and would have liked nothing better than to have them stop long enough for us to get up to them. We reached Louisville and went into camp on the outskirts of the city, but our stay was brief.

We had no camp equipment except our blankets and cooking utensils, all of our bags having been captured by the enemy and destroyed. We had worn our clothing without a change for 4 weeks and were just about the color of the soil. While in camp, there were a few of us who got permission to go to the city. We wanted something good to eat, hardtack and bacon had become rather stale to the last. We went downtown but not a business place could we find open. No people on the streets except soldiers. After traveling around a couple of hours I told the boys I was going back to camp. They said they would look farther. I started for camp and had gotten outside of the business section, among the fine residence. I was passing by a large brick house. I noticed a lady standing in the doorway as I came opposite the gate she hailed me and asked me if I came up with Gen'l Buell. I told her I did and that I had been to the city to see if I could get anything to eat. She said she had a son in Buell's army, a Kentucky regiment and told me the number (I have forgotten now). She said if I would come in she would give me something to eat. I said I was ashamed to go into a house (I was so dirty) and she said never mind the dirt, she would like to hear about the march up from Nashville. She had hoped her son could come home a little while but didn't know as he could. A daughter and the lady were the only persons about the house. They got me a nice dinner of coffee, apple pie, and other delicious things with homemade bread. I don't know as I ever tasted apple pie that seemed to be just like mother made only there. I ate and ate, and told them about our march for probably an hour. I thanked them for their kindness and started for camp. Nothing to do but I must take a loaf of bread with me which was very acceptable. As I came in sight of camp I discovered the command had moved, so I hustled along and overtook them about 3 miles out. The other boys had reached camp just as they were pulling out and as I did not put in an appearance they began to think I had been run in.

CHAPTER VI

The army had been reinforced here by the addition of a large number of new commands. Some had been from home only a few days. They were undisciplined but eager to show their metal. Gen'l's Buell and Bragg were brothers-in-law and there began to be a good deal of dissatisfaction among the soldiers because Buell didn't force Bragg to give battle. The boys used to declare that they slept together nights. Bragg was moving east. He had a large train of baggage wagons and it was evident that he was up there for the purpose of forage, as this was rich country and the people were mostly loyal to the Union. We saw no reason why we shouldn't overtake and whip him before he could get away with his blunder. We crowded him so hard that he was obliged to stop and give us battle at Perryville or Chaplin Hills, as it was called. On the eighth of Oct., our corps, the 20th with Gen'l McCook came up to Bragg and against orders of Buell opened on him and we had a terrible saucy little fight. We whipped them like the mischief, but as Buell wouldn't let the rest of the army go in, under cover of darkness, Bragg got away. This raised a storm against Gen'l Buell and caused him to be suspended soon afterward by Gen'l W. S. Rosecranz. The night after the battle we passed over the field. The moon was full and I tell you, it was a ghastly sight. Dead men so close that one could walk on them for roads and not touch the ground. It was here that my wife's oldest brother, Elias Thompson and a brother-in-law, W. Chady of the 21st Wisconsin Infantry less than thirty days from home were wounded, just before dark. While we went moving to the left to take a new position, we passed by the surgeons operating tables and I believe there were a wagonload of arms, feet, and legs that they had removed from those shot. I doubt that many a boy lost an arm or a leg that night, have been saved. We followed the retreating rebs a short distance that night and then went into camp. The next morning we got off in good time, following up the retreat the cavalry were in abundance and ad-

vance and on the flank, the infantry of our brigade, for we were in advance that morning, were next and our Battery in the rear. We were on a road that ran along a very narrow valley with quite high hills on either side. We came to where the road forked. The one on the right apparently coming out into open ground the one to the left following the valley. The road was crooked and our company had fallen behind the infantry so that when we came to the forks of the road, they were out of sight and we couldn't tell which road the advance took. We halted and looked the ground over and made up our minds that they had taken the left road. We were ordered to close up on the trot. We had gone about a half mile when we saw a puff of smoke on the side of the hill directly in our front and about a hundred rods away. The next instant a shell came learing down about 10 feet over our heads and struck the road just in our rear. Well we were in a trap. The valley was so narrow we couldn't turn around the rebs in front, my gun was the second from the front. I saw just ahead of me a place on the left that I thought I could put my piece up onto a flat space. There was a fence. I jumped off my horse and threw the fence down, got my piece up there and unlimbered. The rebs saw us getting ready for business limbered up and pulled out but not until I had sent a couple shots after them to hurry them up. One of the boys, in getting around broke the tongue off of his gun so we were detained there quite awhile. But the rebs didn't disturb us and after we got fixed up, we retraced our steps and overtook the command on the other road. No more fighting took place. The Battle of Chaplin Hills was another of history now and the army looking for further work. Bragg had got away with his blunder. Our long, hard march was for naught. We believed then and we believe still that had we some other gen'l than Buell, we would have destroyed Bragg's Army and the Battle of Stone River that was fought later, would have never been fought. We moved as far as Creborehard where we halted. We drew some clothing and camp supplies. We were dirty and lousey, not having a change of clothing for nearly 5 weeks. We washed and boiled our clothes and blankets and so got rid of the vermin. We then moved toward Nashville running into the rebel scouts every day.

Gen'l Rosecrans took command while on this march and as he passed along the column, there was great cheering. While on this march I was taken very sick and was obliged to take the ambulance. On the second day our brigade was in advance. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon I heard the boom of a cannon in the front. I knew it was either our guns or else we had run into a rebel battery. I didn't wait for the second shot but piled out of the ambulance and hustled for the front. If there was going to be any fun, I wanted a hand in, but before I reached the company it was all over with. Casualties were one of the enemy killed. I didn't go back to the ambulance, so the little scrap proved to be better for me than a dose of medicine. Along toward the close of Oct., we reached Nashville and went into camp on the north side of the river at edge field, where we stayed something over two weeks and then moved over the river and went into camp southeast of the city. We soon got rested from our long march and were anxious for the fray again.

Gen'l Rosecrans was very popular with the army and everything moved along well in getting the army ready for another move. Gen'l Bragg with his forces were hovering around us at Nashville and we became somewhat impatient to drive them away. We hadn't long to wait. On Dec. 25, we received orders to be ready to march the next morning with our haversacks filled. Everybody was jubilant. We felt we could reach and whip Bragg if he could give us a chance. In the reorganization of the army, we were now in Gen'l McCook's 20th Corps on the right wing. Thomas 14th, center and the 21st Critenden on the left. We moved out on the morning of the 26th and had gone but a few miles until we struck the rebel outposts and

fighting commenced. Our advance was contested at every point but we still pressed forward and drove the enemy before us. The 3rd day out, it became evident that Bragg would make his stand at Murfreesboro which is about 30 miles southeast of Nashville on the main turnpike from Nashville to Chattanooga and also on the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. It commenced to rain and the weather was cool, making it very disagreeable but the troops were cheerful. We had quite severe fighting from the first day out and on the night of the 29th of Dec. our Division, Davis, camped on the south bank of Overalls Creek, not more than 4 miles from where the enemy chose the ground to offer us battle.

The night was very disagreeable (cold and rainy.) The next morning by 10 o'clock we were under way and the skirmishing was very sharp all day. The losses on both sides were considerable, but we steadily drove them before us and dark found us within one and one half miles of the river where the railroad crosses the Stone River and right up against the rebel lines. We had continually to work our lines to the right to meet the position of the enemy and when our lines were formed, they were found to be longer than at first contemplated. Consequently the line was thin and weaker than it should have been or withstood the terrible onslaught it was to receive the next morning, but apparently the best disposition was made that seemed possible. The tired troops lay down on their arms to await the struggle we all knew would come with the dawn of the next day. We had left the turnpike near the Cardin house and moved to the front and right across a field. Night found us in the edge of the timber which lay between the field we crossed and another field on the other side of which the rebel army were hidden among the brush and in the ravines. We stood by our guns all night, getting very little sleep. The next morning, before it was light we moved through the piece of timber and took a position just at the edge of the field, throwing down a fence that we might the better work our guns. It was just a little light and fighting was getting brisk. On the right. Everything was quiet in our front. Our Captain Carpenter, sitting on his horse, thought he could see some movement in the timber on the opposite side of the field and he spoke to Creagen, the gunner of the piece to which I belonged and said, "drop a shot over in the timber there and see what there is there." He sent a solid shot at the point indicated and for a few minutes everything was as still as could be. When all of a sudden a few puffs of smoke and the shot and shell from a battery came crashing through the timber. Limbs from the trees were torn off. Shells bursting in every direction and as some of the boys expressed it the expression seemed very appropriate. Hell had let loose. I want to tell you right now it was the most unearthly noise I had ever heard. Now there was some hard work for us. The rebel aim was high and so we suffered no loss from their artillery. We worked our guns just as fast as we could, using shell and spherical case shot. A shot from one of our enemies guns struck near me, tearing a splinter off which struck me on the side of the face. I thought I was shot and exclaimed to one of the boys next to me, "Billy, I'm shot". I had an armful of shot carrying to the gun. I dropped them and clapped my hand up to my face to see how much of it was gone and to my surprise, found it was all there. I don't know that it would have hurt worse had it been shot away than it did. For a few minutes I picked the ammunition up that I had dropped and hurried to the gun with it. We had fired as fast as we could and our pieces were getting terribly hot. Our sponge buckets were getting empty and water we must have to sponge the gun, so we emptied our canteens into the sponge buckets. It was hot work. The smoke was so thick that at times we could see nothing 10 feet from us. The boys working the gun were as black as burnt powder and perspiration mixed together could make them. When there was the least bit of a lull in our front we could hear the battle raging on our right and it sounded as though our lines were being forced back. All of a sudden, the battery that had been making so interesting for us, ceased

firing and as the smoke lifted, we saw lines of infantry file out of a ravine. In the edge of the timber and over the fence they came and at us with a yell. We poured the canister into them. They had reached the middle of the field but they couldn't stand the racket. Everytime we discharged our gun, it seemed to me that it made a gap 20 feet wide where every man went down. They halted and gave us a volley and fell back. Our captain was shot and fell dead, only a few feet from me. But we had no time to think of the dead as the first lines fell back, they met another line of the enemy with fixed bayonets and in perfect line as though they were on dress parade, sweeping toward us with perfect confidence. We gave them canister and doubled the shot at that. They were determined. They had gotten within 100 yards of us but our fire proved too much for them. They hesitated, turned and fled back but to our honor, we saw another line nearly half way across the field. We were supported on the left by the 21st Wis. Infantry. This was the first fight they had been in. They couldn't stand the pressure, they broke and ran, leaving our left exposed. Jo Warby was shot off of the legal lead team of the limber, of the piece on the left and the team ran away so we lost that piece. The 3rd line of the enemy came at us with a yell. Our infantry support was gone, our left piece abandoned, and it was only a question of a few minutes when the rest of the battery must go or be captured. Our ammunition was all gone. We had fired nearly all 40 rounds to the gun. On the rebels coming, they were determined. We opened great gaps in their ranks at every discharge of our guns, but they closed up and on they came. They were within 20 yards of the muzzle of our guns. The command came. Limber to the rear, quicker than a flash, the team swung round with the limber. We dropped the eye over the rim and stepped back. A volley was peered into us. Tom Bent, the wheel driver fell from his horse, severely wounded. The team swung around against a tree. The rebels were nearly on us and hollering for us to surrender. Must we leave our gun? No, George Marsh mounted the wheel horse. The piece quickly unlimbered and got loose from the tree and as quickly limbered up again and command given to forward. The rebels were not 10 feet from our guns and commanding us to surrender but they were too late. We went to the rear as fast as we could for the timber and as we came to the top of a little rise not more than 60 rods from our line at the front, we ran smack into a battery. They gave us a charge of canister. Four of the horses on our piece fell and one of our men was shot, the ball passing through his spine. Geo. Marsh and I tried to take him off the field but he said, "oh boys, you will have to leave me, I can't stand to be carried." So we laid him up against a tree and left him. After the battle, when we went to bury our dead, he lay as we had left him. He had given his life for his country. We had one wheel horse and one swing horse left. There are 6 horses a piece, or gun and 6 on the caisson that contains 3 chests filled with ammunition. The middle team is called the swing team. We cut the dead horses out, got the swing horse on the tongue and got out. We were continually under fire. The rebels were in our rear and if we get out, it must be on the left flank. Away up on the hill near the Cardin house, we could see our division headquarters flag and Gen'l Davis sitting on his horse surveying the situation. If we get there, we must make a detour to the left. The 8th Michigan Battery are in front of and to the right of where Gen'l Davis is. They have good support. We can see a brigade of rebel infantry moving up on a charge. We put spurs to our horses and hurried to their assistance. It was low work, only two horses and a heavy gun. As we came near where Gen'l Davis is, we could see on the right, a rebel battery coming up on the dead run and unlimber to the front, not 40 rods from the 8th Michigan Battery that was trying to check the advance of the rebel brigade. If we can reach a position near Gen'l Davis, we can help them, but it looks doubtful, only 2 horses on our gun. It is slow work and they are getting about played out, but we are doing the best we can. Off to the right is an awful picture.

I have to stop and look at it and to this day, 38 years after the event, it is just as vivid as at that time. I wish that I could paint it. Pen can't describe it. Blue and the Gray in a hand to hand death struggle. We press forward, we reach a point a little to the left of Gen'l Davis and go into battery. We are too late to be much of any help. The right wing is swept off the field, broken and crushed. We give them a few shots and then limber to the rear. This is the last stand. The right wing can make this day. The 20th Corps that thought themselves almost invincible last night, are broken, bleeding, disorganized in mass and are fleeing to the rear of the 14th corps.