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MESS AT CAMP CHASE¹

EDNA WHITE

When the Civil War began April 12, 1861, Robert J. (Joseph) Brailsford was a young merchant in Jasper, Texas.² On August 29th he was enlisted as a private in Company D, Whitfield's Cavalry Battalion, Texas Volunteers, by Captain Ben H. Norsworthy. Transferred to Company E, 1st Texas Legion (27th Cavalry Regiment) March 29, 1862, he was promoted to second lieutenant, and on June 14th, 1862, he became first lieutenant and adjutant of his regiment.³

Captain Brailsford participated in the battles of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, March 7-8, and Iuka, Mississippi, September 19, 1862. After the disastrous Confederate defeat at Corinth, Mississippi, on October 3-4, it was the Texas Legion that helped guard the Confederate supply train and the route of retreat at the bridge over the Hatchie River southwest of the city. It was here on October 5 that Captain Brailsford's horse (his personal property) was killed in action;⁴ and, because of the defeat around Corinth, Major General Earl Van Dorn was relieved of his command of the Army of the West, CSA. Van Dorn and others (Brailsford was now adjutant of the Legion) then hatched the plan for a Special Cavalry Corps to raid and harass the Federals wherever and whenever feasible. Grant, collecting supplies for the assault on Vicksburg, had made Holly Springs in northern Mississippi the intermediate depot for vast stores of ammunition and other material, and it was this accumulation that Van Dorn sought to destroy. The Texas Brigade, composed of the 3rd, 6th, and 27th Cavalry Regiments, was part of the Corps.⁵

The raid on Holly Springs came off splendidly on December 21, 1862, and afterwards Van Dorn led his men into Tennessee. At Middleburg and Thompson's Station near Springhill, the brigade met the enemy with success though sustaining heavy losses, and continued to operate in the area south of Franklin on April 27, 1863, on the Carter Creek road between Springhill and Franklin, Brailsford was captured. He was sent immediately to Nashville, and was then forwarded on May 2 to Louisville and on May 8 to Fort Delaware.⁶

Meanwhile, on the very day that Brailsford was sent to Fort Delaware, Van Dorn had been murdered at headquarters in Springhill, Tennessee, by a jealous husband, and this meant the end of the Special Cavalry Corps.⁷ The Texas Brigade was sent back to Mississippi where Vicksburg was under siege. The duty of the Legion was to guard the railroad bringing supplies into Vicksburg; thus they were stationed on the Big Black River about seven miles east of the city and escaped the ignominy of surrender to Grant on July 4, 1863. The brigade continued operations around Vicksburg, guarding the country as best it could by harassing the enemy.⁸

Captain Brailsford's military records show that on August 1, 1863, he was a paroled prisoner. After his visit home, he was apparently trying to rejoin his comrades in Mississippi when the Federals captured him a second time.

The following quotations were taken verbatim from the short diary of Captain R. J. Brailsford:

"Route from Texas"⁹

"Started from *Home* in Newton County Oct. 22, 1863. Went to Gilberts where I met Merrill and Mills waiting. Staid the 23rd to rig a saddle. Started the 24th and came after night to Colburns. Went on the 25th to Nachitoches and started that night. Met an ex-officer of the 28th Cav. and a Texan who had crossed the River at St. Joseph and advised us to go that way directing us to a Maj. L. B. Morris . . . After some consultation concluded to go through Arkansas for fear of being detained by Taylors Cavalry there being an order from Gen. E. K. Smith to the effect that all troops be detained on that side of the river.¹⁰ Crossed Red River at Grand Ecore and came on to Walkers near salt works. Proceeded on the 27th to Vernon. Proceeded on the 28th to Farmersville.¹¹

"Left Camden, Ark., 29th Nov., 1863. Was captured 17th Dec., 1863 at St. Joseph, La.¹² (A page was missing from the diary) . . . let loose others retained amongst them an Ex Captain Campbell of Miss. who was let loose. A Mr. Bass formerly of the 9th Ark. who was afterwards liberated at Vicksburg also two fellows Barber and Rufe with a cart machine, Mr. Hardy who lives across the Boggy and many others.¹³

"Col. C. after a few days returned my saddlebags but minus a great many little articles, which he said on my asking him that he had seen nothing of them and that I must be mistaken. There I first became acquainted with the immortal Lt. Dunn of Washington County, Miss. and of Chicot County, Ark. noterity who afforded us throughout our captivity considerable variety by his endless gibes and evirvescent nature, he being captured about that time from Greenville. We staid on the fleet until Nov. 21st when we were put on (the) Autocrat with other prisoners and sent to Vicksburg 20th Dec. Left 22nd Dec. Got to Camp Martin, Ind. 29th Dec. Officers to be removed and put up temporarily for a few days when five of their number who were of Morgan's Command (Gen. John H. Morgan),¹⁴ and had been in jail and prison for 13 months, were sent off on exchange. They were Quinn, Gavin, Clay, Powell and Charley Wood.

"After they left we concluded to make a merrit of necessity and kept to our quarters at that place. The bal of the occupants of T. Callahan of Missouri, F. Nead of Ala., John Woolfork of Ky., and Andy Routh of La. With them we staid until Jan'y 27th, 1864 when we were sent to Camp Chase, Ohio. (See note one), arriving on the 28th and confined in Prison No. 1. The privates who had been confined in that prison were removed and preparations made to accomodate only officers in that prison. We found Genl Vance also a prisoner. Officers kept coming on and we were finally removed to Prison No. 2. Found on the first day of our arrival at Camp Chase Lt. Boone of 1st Texas Inf. who informed me that John D. Ford was captured with him and had died in that camp on — of — (John D. Ford was, like Captain Brailsford, from Newton County, Texas).¹⁵ From a Capt. Lowe of a Missouri Battery I learned that Lt. J. W. Middlebrook was captured and would be on in a few days and

accordingly about the 13th of March that specimen of humanity made his appearance in company with three other officers.

"A short time after my arrival at Camp Chase I was attacked with an eruption of the skin breaking out on the arms and legs and chest which annoyed me greatly for a long time.

"Organized a debating club in our mess and had some enlivening debates recruiting afterwards members from other messes.

"Mess at Camp Chase"

1 Capt. W. F. Tucker	11 Capt. W. R. White
2 Adj. V. Thomas	12 Lt. J. W. Halliburton
3 Capt. J. W. Coughran	13 Lt. Ed Vizaas
4 Capt. H. W. Bonner	14 Lt. Todd
5 Lt. Frank Noble	15 Lt. J. Hardin
6 Lt. S. R. Dunn	16 Lt. P. J. (or I) White
7 Lt. R. J. Brailsford	17 Capt. Martin
8 Lt. J. C. Voorhees	18 Lt. Morton
9 Lt. Boone	19 Lt. W. Allen
10 Maj. Henry	20 Lt. Welsh

"On the 25th March startin from Camp Chase 272 of us went to Columbus but failed to get transportation so we went back startin again on the 26th. Was joined at Columbus by about 60 officers of Morgans Command from the penitentiary and proceeded to Fort Delaware where we arrived on the night of the 28th. Capt. Price and Lt. Voorhees stayed at Camp Chase to take the oath of allegiance, Capt. Martin said on account of sickness. Col. Hawkins was returned for trying to escape. A few days after arriving at Fort Delaware having learned that Garret Igo and Ralph Arnold were in the pen with the privates, myself and Lt. Middlebrook got a pass to go out to see them.

"About the last of May the officers captured in the Battle of the Wilderness were sent to our Barracks and on the 20th of Jun 600 and upwards were sent from Point Lookout¹⁴ amongst them Lt. Coffee and Lt. John Burrus.

"On the 28th June myself and three others vis Lt. Bailey of Alabama Capt. Brown of Tenn. and Lt. Dosier of So. Ca. were carried to the fort and put in close confinement by the order of the Sect. of War as a retaliatory measure for 4 of the officers said to be confined in the Libby prison at Richmond.¹⁷

"Transferred to another cell in company with Maj. Mills of Gen Andersons Staff on the 30th. On Sept. 6th released from the Fort and sent down to the Barracks in compliance with an agreement between Col. Ould & Maj. Mulford to release all prisoners in close confinement on each side for retaliation.¹⁸ On arriving on the inside again found all my friends, who had not been sent off, in good health and found Lt. Mulford . . . of Geo. Inf. captured near Petersburg, Va.

"On the 17th I was taken back to the fort & placed in the cell we had left. On the 18th Maj. Mills was released and sent back to the Barracks. Lt. Lockhart of Ala. was added to our number.

"Sept. 24th

100 guns fired by the Fort in honor I suppose of Sheridans victory over Early."¹⁹

Captain Brailsford did not receive his last parole from prison until May 13, 1865, after the war had ended.²⁰ The promotion to Captain must have occurred while he was in prison, for his "Patrol of Honor" was the first official document in his military record on which he was given this title.

Just when the diary was placed in the Bible is not known, but in the chaos which existed in the South at the close of the War it must have seemed of little importance. In the years following Captain Brailsford's return home to Newton County, he was in the mercantile business at Burkeville. During this time he served as treasurer of Newton County from 1876 to 1880, and was nominated at Jasper, Texas, where he had previously lived eight years, to represent the third district in the Nineteenth Legislature of Texas. He was elected by a 1,000 majority.²¹

The 1870 United States Census for Newton County records that Captain Brailsford was born in South Carolina and that he was thirty-four years of age. His aged mother (seventy-eight) and his maiden sisters, Elizabeth, age forty-three, and Annie, forty-one, were living in the same household. The Census for 1850, listed the Brailsford family as follows: father, sixty-two, who was also born in South Carolina, mother, fifty-eight, a brother William who was seven years older than Joseph, and his sisters, Mary and Charlotte. Charlotte was nineteen and Mary was sixteen. Charlotte married James Gilbert and Mary married Dr. A. A. McWhorter. One of the McWhorter sons worked with his uncle in the mercantile business. One of Dr. McWhorter's grandsons worked in the White House store in Beaumont for many years.

Other living nieces and nephews of Uncle Joe, or Captain Rock, as friends called him, are among the Adams, Trotti, McMahon, Francis, and Jackson families. They are among the highly esteemed families of East Texas.²²

NOTES

¹Camp Chase was near Columbus, Ohio. According to Mrs. Charles Martin, a member of the editorial board, *East Texas Historical Journal*, who has firsthand information concerning its location, it was four or five miles out of Columbus, and all that remains is the cemetery, now within the city limits.

²1860 Census, Jasper County, Texas. See Populations Schedules, Microcopy No. T-7, Roll No. 282.

³Photocopy of Confederate military record of R. J. Brailsford supplied by General Services Administration, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

⁴*Ibid.* See also Victor M. Rose, *Ross' Texas Brigade*, a facsimile of the edition (Kennesaw, Georgia, 1960), 61, 64-66, 73, 84-97, 98-102. Rose singles out the Legion and Company E several times for special mention.

⁵*Ibid.* 84.

⁶Fort Delaware was located on Pea Patch Island in the Delaware River. Federal Writers Project, *A Guide to the First State* (New York, 1938) 472-473,

Cochran, *Blockade Runners of the Confederacy* (Indianapolis, 1958) 152, states that Fort Delaware was about sixteen miles out of Wilmington, Delaware.

⁷S. S. Brown, *The Lone Star Defenders*, Reprint of the 1908 edition (Waco, Texas, 1964), chapters XI and XII.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹The diary was found in the summer of 1966 in an old, 1829 edition, much worn leather bound Bible belonging to Edward Smith who had enlisted in Newton County in Captain Wm. S. Wilson's 2nd Brigade, General West commanding. According to family legend he was immediately given scout duty for the Confederacy and his official military record confirms the legend. If this be true, he probably carried messages for Captain Brailsford and may have thus come into possession of Brailsford's diary.

¹⁰Richard Taylor and Kirby Smith were in command of Confederate armies in the Trans-Mississippi region. Clement Eaton, *A History of the Southern Confederacy* (New York, 1954), 208.

¹¹In Union Parish about fifteen miles from the Arkansas-Louisiana line.

¹²About thirty-five miles southwest of Vicksburg, Mississippi.

¹³Over 30,000 Confederates had been captured at the fall of Vicksburg. Oscar Cooper, Harry Estill, Leonard Lemmon, *A History of our Country* (Boston, 1895), 388.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵T. A. Wilson, *Some Early East Texas Families* (Houston, Texas, 1965) 2, 2n.

¹⁶Map of Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Delaware, (Washington, D.C., 1956) Point Lookout is located in the Chesapeake Bay near the mouth of the Potomac River.

¹⁷President Lincoln, urged by reports of brutal treatment to which Federal soldiers were subjected by the Confederates, issued an order for retaliation on July 30, 1863. See Robert James Belford, *A History of the United States* (New York, 1886), 211.

¹⁸Major John E. Mulford was a Federal Commander of Exchange, but was well liked by the Confederates. The most infamous Commander of Exchange was "Beast Butler," (Gen. Benjamin F. Butler) who was in charge of Fortress Monroe, at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. See Henry Kyd Douglas, *I Rode With Stonewall* (New York, 1940), 267-270.

¹⁹On September 22, General Jubal Early had been driven from his defensive position on Fisher's Hill. His next stand was at Cedar Creek, which was the beginning of the end, and for the South the "Valley of Humiliation." *Ibid.*

²⁰See note 3 above.

²¹L. E. Daniell, *Personnel of the Texas State Government* (Austin, Texas 1885) 12.

²²Mr. Harrison Hall, Burkeville, Texas, age ninety when interviewed on October 5, 1966. He remembered Captain Brailsford, also his sisters and brothers.