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REMINISCENCES OF THE WAR:
The Last Day at Corinth

by Tom Hogg
Edited by Robert C. Cotner

In the two day battle, April 6-7, 1862, at Pittsburg Landing (Shiloh) on the Tennessee River, the Confederates lost General Albert Sidney Johnston and suffered about 10,000 casualties. General Pierre G. T. Beauregard took charge and fell back to Corinth, Mississippi, where he hoped to hold a line north of the Memphis-Charleston railroad. Although Grant’s forces had sustained about 13,000 casualties, there were replacements and Corinth was soon facing a siege by Union forces which numbered possibly twice those of the Confederates. The water was bad, so bad that horses knew better than to drink it, but hundreds of Union and Confederate soldiers did not and became ill. On May 16, Brigadier General Joseph L. Hogg of Rusk, Texas, died from dysentery. His oldest son, Thomas, later wrote about his regiment’s activities on the last day of the evacuation which took place on May 29, 1862. The following account was found in the Hogg Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. Unfortunately, the copy is from an undated newspaper clipping in the scrapbook kept by Mrs. Hermilla Hogg Kelso.

On the morning preceding the evacuation of Corinth by the Confederates under [General] Beauregard, in May, 1862, we made a considerable demonstration on the front of our lines, in order to hoodwink the enemy, while the materiel and main bulk of the troops were withdrawn. Among the forces ordered out was the 3rd Texas cavalry dismounted, under command of Col. W. P. Lane. At about sunrise on the 28th day of May, the regiment was ordered to double-quick, to reinforce the skirmishers, who were being heavily pressed, by a force of the enemy of vast numerical superiority. After passing through an immense abattis, formed by felled trees with their branches sharpened and pointing towards us, we came up with our line of vedettes, and in full view of the enemy’s position which was in a valley about three hundred yards distant, covered with a jungle of black jack underbrush that completely veiled them from our view, while our position offered no cover except large oaks, and as yet we were denied their protection, where it interfered with our alignment. As soon as we were discovered by the enemy, a galling fire was opened on our line, and from the volumes of smoke that boiled up from the copse, and the deafening

Robert C. Cotner, distinguished scholar at the University of Texas in Austin and past president of the ETHA, submitted this article prior to his death on September 23, 1980.
roar of the musketry, we were apprised that we were initiating no trifling encounter. The battle opened in earnest now, and the fire became terrific. There were only two hundred and forty-six of our Regiment well enough to be in the engagement, and owing to the enemy's heavy overbalance of numbers and their vastly advantageous position, it behooved every man to avail himself of such protection as the trees afforded. Each man took his tree, and after discharging his firelock and reloading in that position, would advance to the next obstruction and go through with the same routine. Colonel Walter P. Lane, Major James J. A. Barker, and Adjutant Orlando Hollinsworth, were the only mounted officers on the field, and thus exposed, were excellent targets for the enemy's sharpshooters. We had advanced but a short distance in the aforesaid manner when Lane's favorite command "Charge" was ordered, to dislodge the enemy from his stronghold. At the simple word "charge," each Texan quit his cover and dashed with wonted impetuosity upon the opposing ranks. The forests resounded with their dreadful shout, which sent a chill of terror to the hearts of the invaders. In full run, the Texans with the fury of madmen, close on the lurking enemy, whose skill and power are spent in vain to check them. Over three thousand muskets are belching forth their deathfractioned charges into the slim ranks of the brave 246—still they come! Their wake is crimsoned with the best blood of the nation—yet on they rush. They attain the fire-breathing thicket, and without a halt they plunge into its thorny bosom, when in one chaotic stampede the "gallant Brigade of Indianians," that Uncle Sam had entrusted with honor's post, made their shameful exit, leaving about forty of their dead and a like number of wounded in the hands of the gallant 246, who pursued them hotly for a short distance, but the impolicy of pushing too far from our base, was evident from the countless "Long Rolls," heard in the enemy's line and the knowledge of the fact that the three thousand we were pursuing were only the vanguard of one of Uncle Sam's grand armies. The chase ceased and the troops were thrown into order and countermarched to the original position.

Now was realized the true pain of the battle. In the fury of excitement, as on we dashed to death or victory, though a brother fell beside us, we gave it no more than a fleeting thought, and seldom stopped a moment to see the nature of the blow; but when the storm had spent its wrath an [d] the consequent calm had lulled our glowing passions, our hearts grew faint at the sight of those who but half an hour before were flushed with hopes, now lay weltering in the gory lap of death—or palely struggling on the dismal brink of eternity. Of the boys from Cherokee, we found the brave young Abner Harris dead with his musket in his hand—Wallace Caldwell—the beloved, the noble Wallace, languishing under a mortal wound, and John Lambert a cripple for
Many were lamented on that day, but none more than that prince of nature's noblemen, the talented, chivalric [Major] Barker, the pride of his regiment. He fell while gallantly cheering his men, as he had done, on to victory on many a well fought field. His gallantry and general superiority was the theme of every tongue who knew him—his name was inseparably combined with our ideas of valor, magnanimity, truth, candor and fidelity. Oh! We thought it hard that such a noble masterpiece could not remain among us as an example. We murmured in the fullness of our sorrow-stricken hearts that our jewel must be blighted in the very spring-tide of his splendor.

His death blow did not take him unawares for he apprehended it the preceding day. 'Tis said, that "coming events cast their shadows before," and how true it was with men in the lllase war whose fate slumbered in the womb of the coming battle. It was truly so in Barker's case. A dreadful premonition hung an ominous pall of gloom over that face which was never known to pale through terrors gloomy as the grave encompassed him; but he was willing to lay down his bright life upon the bloodstained shrine of Liberty, and accepted the result like a hero—he died as he had wished to die, and as he had lived, in the unswerving performance of duty. He saw a skulking soldier take shelter behind a log and refused to follow in the onset; he told the das [sic] to arise and join his comrades, or he would inflect on him the miscreants' penalty, and that was death. When he fell from his horse, pierced by two balls, either of which was mortal, John Myres of Company "C" received him in his arms, and calling to Lem Reed, who was dashing by in the charge, they eased the dying hero to the ground, whereupon, Lem Reed, who supposing that he had merely fainted, while rubbing his hands in the vain hope of resuscitating him and thus passively exposed to a perfect storm of bullets, called to the writer of this sketch, to assist in bearing him from the field, or at least out of danger of the missiles, which were sweeping the ground in a frightful manner. We seized our beloved Major and carried him over a little hill to the rear, during which time he breathed out his noble soul to his God who gave it. Thus was terminated one of the most marvelous achievements on the annals of history.

General Beauregard issued a most eulogistic bulletin, in which he manifested his admiration of the conduct of Lane and his men to the whole army, declaring their demeanor worthy of all praise and imitation. Our losses were pretty heavy, nearly equal that of the enemy, perhaps heavier. Indeed, it is almost a miracle that any escaped the fate of our lamented companions when we contemplate 246 men, in an exposed position, charging a whole Brigade of three thousand men, and they securely posted! It can only be accounted for as one of those mysteries or freaks of fortune, or especial provisions of Providence,
that dot the history of the brave, however small in numbers, or under whatever embarrassments they may labor.

We remained in our position the remainder of the day. The enemy did not advance in force, but their skirmishers resumed the position in the brush, whence we had driven them in the morning. Shots were exchanged now and then all the remaining part of the day, during which time several rather diverting incidents transpired. Jo. Howell, of Cumby’s Company from Rusk County, whiled away the hours on his post as vidette, in a very pleasant manner apparently to himself, by exposing his posterior on one side of his tree, and peeping from the other side, and when he would descry the smoke boil up from the covert where the enemy were concealed, he would straighten himself and claim protection from the tree. He was an especial target for the Yankee sharp shooters for several hours—-—his tree was barked with balls frequently. But the most amusing incident which occurred was a spirit of State pride, or emulation which sprung up between a young Arkansas greenhorn and a Texas ditto. For the sake of discrimination I will call the one “Greeny,” the other “Gossey”——Greeny, tired of wasting his ammunition at random, conceived that if he were up one of two tall twin whiteoaks which stood hard by, he could do the Confederacy more efficient service, as he thought by ascending the tree he could see beyond the jungle in which the enemy were concealed and perhaps make some important observations and perhaps get a few fair “cracks” at the “tarnal blue jackets.” So taking his gun he mounts to the height of about thirty feet, and seating himself on a branch among the luxuriant foliage, commenced shooting——“Gossey’s” attention was attracted, and addressing “Greeny,” inquired: “Who is that up there?” “ARKANSAW!” said “Greeny.” “Who are you?” “Texas!” replied “Gossey,” “and Arkansaw can’t get ahead of her either,” so springing to the first limb on the other tree, he called on one of his fellows to hand him his gun, when up he climbed with the agility of a squirrel, and seating himself on a limb, within a yard of his companion, inquired: “Where are they? Show ’em to me!” “Greeny” pointed out a squad of live Yankees, who seemed considerably confused from some cause, and fired again. “There, by jingoes! I got one that time!” he exclaimed his agitation. “Gossey,” opened fire on the same squad, and as fast as they could load and discharge their pieces, they blazed away. The foliage of the trees was so dense that the smoke of their guns could not be seen by the enemy, who seemed surprised at balls coming so close, when there was no visible foe. At length, while “Greeny” and “Gossey” were in the heyday of their glory——attracting general admiration from their comrades below——BANG! BANG! BANG! went the guns of a whole Yankee platoon, and ZIP!——ZIP! hissed the balls around our heroes’ heads, pealing the bark and cutting the leaves all around
them. "Gossey's" courage, glory, and fancied security vanished like a fever dream; he locked his hands around the tree and let all holds go, and woe betide the luckless limb that resisted his descent. He was on the ground in half a minute, but "Greeny's" tree had large limbs on it and he was distanced by "Gossey" by about half a second.——- Greeny and Gossey kept out of trees thenceforth.

About 9 o'clock, P.M., Colonel Lane received orders to withdraw. When we arrived at Corinth, we were astonished to find no army there. Everything had been removed. When we had marched about fifteen miles, it was discovered that Captain Sid Johnson's Company was not with the Regiment. The mystery could admit of but one of two solutions; either he had been taken by the enemy, or had not received the order for withdrawal and had been left alone with his company, to face the whole Yankee army. The latter was correct. Through mistake, when the Adjutant was visiting the posts of the different Companies, by reason of the cimmerian darkness which prevailed, Captain Johnson was overlooked. A courier was immediately dispatched for him, and when the messenger arrived, this faithful officer and his gallant Company were found at duty's post. They heard their comrades withdrawing, but his duty was not to desert his post until ordered, and there he remained, faithful to the last.

Oh, that such noble fidelity had characterized men in higher places ——- there might yet have been a proud victorious army marching on to conquer beneath the cherished Stars and Bars."
NOTES


2Walter Page Lane was promoted to second lieutenant for bravery at the Battle of San Jacinto. Later he went on scouting trips with Hays' Rangers. He became a major in the war with Mexico, and entered mercantile business in Marshall, Texas. Lieutenant Colonel Lane, after the battle of Elkhorn, was ordered to reinforce General Beauregard at Corinth. Walter Prescott Webb and H. Bailey Carroll (eds.), *The Handbook of Texas* (Austin, 1952), I, 24.

3Following the death of Captain Frank Taylor, Lieutenant Barker was promoted to Captain, Company C, Third Texas Cavalry. During the reorganization in May 1862 he was elected as Major. S. R. Barron, *The Lone Star Defenders* (New York, 1908), 93-94.


5Barron described the "black jack" fight in *The Lone Star Defenders*, 93.

6For references to these men see *The Lone Star Defenders*, 94. Also see Hattie Joplin Roach, *A History of Cherokee County* (Dallas, 1934), 61ff.

7Quoted in Barron, *The Lone Star Defenders*, 94-95.

8Robert H. Cumby was born in Virginia; moved to Texas in 1849 after some years in Mississippi. He served in the Eighth Texas Legislature and raised Company B for the Third Texas Cavalry. By election he became a colonel in May 1862. After being wounded he became a brigadier general of Texas State Troops in 1864. He later made Dallas his home.

9For information on Captain Sid Johnson see Sid S. Johnson, *Some Biographies of Old Settlers* (Tyler, 1900, 1965), 11, and his *Texans Who Wore the Gray*.

10The feelings of lawyer Thomas Hogg mellowed with time and are expressed best in his book, *The Fate of Marvin* (Houston, 1872) and a Centennial Edition by Miss Ima Hogg in 1973. This work also answers questions about how she received her name.