

## A.W.O.L.

The Capt. promise the men they could have the privilege of electing all of the officers, excepted the ones above the Capt., of course. The election was put off till we got to Pine Bluff, so when we got thar he detailed the men, brought on the election, but a selected few was not called in fur it.

He sent me and John Auther and Isom to go after some mules at General Ashby's. He lived some twenty milds below on the river. When we got thar, it was late and a very bad looking cloud was coming up. I presented my order to General Ashby fur the mules. He had sent them over to White River another one of his farms and he would have to give me a order to give to his over-see'er before I could take them.

I then sayd, "General, it is night and the cloud is closer. We are not fixt to camp out. We would like to stay all night."

At this he replied, "My dear sir, I am so crowded, I can't possible take you boys in. However, I will do the best that I can fur you. Put your horses in the barn. You can occupy that tool shed fur the present."

We put our horses in the barn and went into the tool shed. It was so full of hoes, harrow's and plows that we could hardly set down. Thar was no light what-so-ever. Bey this time it was raining vary hard.

Jest to think that he owned over a hundred slaves with us soldiers fighting fur them made me sick at my stomach. He didn't even have the curtesy to give us a place to stay out of the storm, except a crowded tool shed. While waiting far it to quit raining, I confess thar was some bad thoughts past

through my top. He had a perfect manchen to live in. His oald residents he was using as a kitchen. It was some forty yards from the new one.

After the storm, we sean them go to supper. Thar was some twenty five of them Ladys and Gents. It put me in mind of peacocks strutting and showing off their beautiful colors. It was hard to beleave they showed any concern about the war or how many boys was dieing far a no-good cause.

They walked back from supper, feeling spry and well fed. A little nigger boy come down and sayd, "Master sayd come to supper."

I sayd to myself, "Its about time Master sayd that!"

We went as we were in need of food. We open the door and went in and I couldn't beleave my eyes. Thar was nothing spred far us to eat except hot cakes and tea. Thar was no syrup, no butter. All that was before us was hot cakes and tea. I asked the cook if that was all they had to eat. She sayd that was all Master had toald her to cook. I then ask her if they had some ham and eggs in the house. She sayd they did, so I toald her to cook it. She seys Master hadn't toald her.

I then sayd, "I have toald you, and if you don't I will hang a chair over your head. I have had a belly full of your big man Master!"

She soon had ham & eggs on the table. Jest as we set down and commence to eat, the General Ashby come in. I sean he looked at the ham and eggs. I spoke first, saying I had ordered it as the cold hot cakes and left over tea did not sute us. We had a hankering far ham and eggs. We had dun without dinner. It was a long ride and supper was late.

"Allright Gents. Did I understande you had no bedding?"

“You did.”

The General was scratching his head, saying, “Well, I don’t know how I am to fix far you.” He then called to a couple of slaves, toald them to go and bring that mattress from the cotton gin. They come dragging it in the house. Thar was not less than 150 pounds of lint cotton in it. It stood up waist high. I then toald the boys we would have to stand gard. They didn’t understand what we was to gard. I replayed if a-man slep on that thing, someone would have to hold him on it.

At this the General says, “Good night, Gents.” We were off before daylight the next morning, so I had the cook fix us up a lunch. (I have bin a little tedious in telling this, far it may have had something to do with my future.)

So we got the mules and was four days getting back. When we got thar, the devil was to pay, and no pitch hot. Capt. Hanson met me before I got down and commence telling how the company had disgrace them-selvs. 44 men had gone home in one bunch.

I wanted to know the cause. He sayd it was damd cowardness. “I don’t understand,” I sayd. “When I left, the company was all right. Thar is something that has come up that has caused all this.”

The boys was not satisfide with the election. I asked if they were presant. Some of them were. If they was not pleased, why didn’t he have a new election and have them all thar? He then sayd that was his business. I then toald him I guessed it was the boys’ business to go home then.

At this he commence to curse them far being darn cowards. I remarked he was mistaken. “The bravest men you have are gone and the rest liked the nerve or they would have gone.”

He then dared me to attempt to go. I then told him I would go when the nochen struck me, that he was the cause of the men leaving.

The boys had come into the company with the understanding they were to have the right to elect their officers.

Here he said, "I don't want any more of your damn stuff." He went a few steps to the right then ask me if I didn't believe the South was in the right.

I then told him that I did not. Never had believe they were right, and this trip has confirmed it. I then told him how General Ashby had treated us. He replied perhaps Ashby's guests was the cause of it, would not have bin treating the guests right to have taken us into the house with them.

I said, "Damd his guests. We were their equal. I didn't want any part of thar party. I only wanted something besides a tool shed to stay in. And so far as honor is concern, if a man standing bey the number of wolly-headed, snottey-nose slaves he has, then the whole damd country is whipped.

The next day we started for the Arkansas Post. This was July 3, 1862. The Capt. ask me to ride with him. We fell behind as he seemed to be in a fine humor and wanted to talk with me.

He had a letter from General Wade Hampton asking how it would suit him to go as a independent company as partisan rangers. Hanson wanted my notion about it.

I remarked that he mite have more advantage than if he attached to a regiment, however he may be put in more danger as the object was to make scouts out of the boys.

As we were getting ready to make camp that night, he told me he had been thinking about it all day and had decided to take it. He wanted me to

take ten men and be Captain over them. I toald him I was not the man, as the best men had gone home and that I would want to work with. He replied I had a chance to gain more laurals than any man he knew of. He wanted me to go back and tell the boys that had deserted to come back. As I was the only man that had any influence with them, I could be one of the best recruiting officers in the South.

I remarked, "If I had any such power I was not aware of it and that would depend on the way the war went. I think it is a failure and as far as the boys, they left without my influence and they will come back without it -- if they come a tall."

At this, he wheald off, saying it was plane I was going to do all that was possible against the war.

I yelled after him -- "I jest didn't fall far your cock and bull story, Capt. Hanson."

We got an invitation to a barbeque the next day. The dinner was fine with plenty of good food but the atmosphere was like a fire wanting to go off.

Thar was several speakers. General Ashby was thar and made a short talk, with the main purpose to prove the south was rich in resources and that thar was no danger but what she could feed and cloth her men and have plenty to spair to feed the soldier's wives. "Cotton is King of the south. Why, you all knew that! The North is bound to have to have it to cloth their men." It wouldn't surprise him that the next mail brought the news that the north was ready to acknowledge the independence of the south. Thar would be commity's appointed to carry out these laws.

I give them close attention. It was all to deceive the soldiers. I had a taste of Ashby's hospitality. He spoke the Arkansas Valley could keep all her troops in the field and have plenty left to feed the

soldiers' wives. All of the speakers blue jest about as hard as Ashby did. I jest knew him, and didn't know the others.

The speaking was over, so we got off and talked to see what we all thought about all of this. It was plane to us if the feeding of the soldiers' wives was left to Ashby they would starve to death. We clamed to be democrats and as the majority of the company had gone home, we would follow. So we decided to make the start that night.

The Capt. had the good luck to be presented with a ham of meat and a lot of loaf bread, so when we got our horses and saddled up I thought of the meat and bread, knowing the importance of having a lunch on a forced march. I slipped back and stole it right from his head.

We were two milds east of the Arkansas River. The night was vary dark. It favored us in getting off. When we got to the ferry, we went a-board, put ourselves across then pushed the boat out into the river, mounted our horses and tuck to road far Pine Bluff.

We past through town jest after daylight. We was jest putting on a boald front, with every thing in high glee when we met five men with one of our men as prisoners. The prisoner was riding some fifty yards a-head when we met him. He spoke to us, asked us to make them turn him loose. When we met the men, I spoke to them saying, "See you have one of our men."

They remarked, "We have somebody's man."

I then toald them he belonged to our company, was a good boy and to please treat him kind. "We are on the pursue of two more (discribing them and thar horses) we had trailed them till a few milds back, lost them when they left the road."

They wanted to know if thar was any foard on the river where they could cross. I toald them the foard was the only place they could cross or go a long ways below. We would be glad to get them across the foard as it was garded every night. "That is the only thing that has bin dun that has stopped the men from deserting." For some reason they did not want our help, which I was glad as I was telling a big lie to them.

We met another man. He sayd they had killed one of our men, Joe Dewilly, at the Salene crossing. They ordered him to surrender. He jumped off his horse and into the river. They shot him as he was swimming. After passing this man the boys seamed to think we had better go back and take our medison with the Capt. I had no intension of turning back, but they could turn back if they wanted too. They did not want to go without me, or wanted to stay with me.

I purposed that we ride off of the road and conceal a while as we was needing rest, having rode all night and till ten o'clock the next day.

The boys seamed to think our chance of getting home prity slim, not that I was so brave but I tried to keep up a good front. Here I wrote out a detail fur us to pursue, and capture two men and bring them back discribing them and thar horses, then sign the Capt. name to it. (We could show this to anyone that question us.)

We decided to keep to the big road and go strait ahead and risk it with our detai; note, as we thought we would be stopped at the Slean river. When we got to the Slean, we road strait across. If thar was a gard, they never halted us. We went ahead, going through Rock Port in broad daylight. From here on we went slow, as Carpenter's horse was prity well

played out and so were we.

It was late when we struck the settlement of home but, oh, how good it looked to us. However, I thought I had better go bey and let the ould man Dedwilley know about Joe's death. Joe had bin married but a little while, his wife was living with the ould man. When I rode up, she was alone at the house. Knowing that I had went off with Joe, she asked where he was and why he wasn't with me. I remarked that I had bad news far her. She had come into the yard bey this time. I then toald her "Joe is dead." She then turn deadly pale and began to choke and stagger.

I jumped down and run to her, taken holt of her, asking where the oald folks was. It was sometime before she could tell me. They were some half a mild at the mill. As soon as I got her into the house, I jumped on my horse and run up thar to hurry them home. But when I toald them, the oald lady was but little better off than Molly, it being her baby boy, so I went back to Molly.

I don't think she had shed a tear, but was a little better and had better control of herself. She finally ask me what was the matter with Joe. I toald her all that I knew about his death. Bey this time the oald folks was thar so I left far home, but till this day the looks of that poor girl is present with me. Often after this, when I would call to mind that lonely, desolant look, I have commenst singing or whistling to wair off the thought.

It was but a little piece home. I was so tired and worn out for the loss of sleep, I could hardly talk. I had rode 150 milds without sleep and but little rest.



## **\$400.00 Dead or Alive**

All was well. The next day I spent talking with my Mother and playing with my babes late in the evening. We were setting in the shade of the house.

Mother wanted to know what I ained to do. I toald her that Brother Joe, Isom and Carpenter and myself was going to the mountains and establish a camp, stay thar till the war was over, let everybody alone that let us alone. She sayd the recruiting officers would get after us. I replyed that I knew that, but would take our chances and it couldn't be worse than the war.

The house was in the field, with corn growing right up to the yard. Thar was a good crop so the corn was high and thick. I looked up to see a little boy running through the corn. He was so excited I could hardly make out what he was saying. He motion far me to come to him. His father had sent him through the field to let me know Hanson's whole company was after me. He did not have more than half the distance to travel as they did coming around the farm.

I went to the house, got my pistol and gun and started out through the corn. Didn't go far till I heard some one jest behind me. On squatting down, looking under the corn, I sean them coming. I dodged to one side and let them pass, then went on, climbed over the fence and went into the woods. After I found a good hiding place, I stopped to rest and to think things over.

Thar was many thought past through my top. I didn't expect them to come after me so soon. Needing sleep so bad the night before, I had not made plans. Getting holt of the right one to help me at this time was a little unhandy. I set here till dark,

then went far my horse. I had put him in a oald field and hung my saddle up in a bush. I was so grateful they hadn't found him. Me or my horse did not stur much that night. He seamed to know something was wrong.

The next day I ventured up to a house and got a whole lot of news. It never made me laugh either. They had Jonathan Isom prisoner, said they would have me dead or alive and if I was caught I would hang.

Hanson had bin busy since I left. At sunup they started on pursuit after us. When he got to the river and found the ferry on the opposite side of the river, he tried to get the ferryman to swim the river after it. He refused. The Capt. knocked him down and swam the river himself. As soon as they got across, they made a force march far Pine Bluff, stopped thar and telegraph the General about the company. General telegraph back to offer \$400.00 reward far me and Jonathan Isom and \$10.00 a peace far the rest. Hanson had telegraph the General that Isom and me was going to head a band of maraied, so that made us worth more. He then went to a printing office and had a lot of hand bills struck describing us, then came on after us with all possible speed.

Jest before sundown, I crossed the big road. I sean a hand bill sticking on a tree. I went to look at it and it was the first time I had ever sean my name in print. The Editor priced me prity high. It seamed I was worth as much dead as alive. I pulled it down, put it in my pocket as I might have need far it in the future.

I hunted up a man that had bin a close friend to Father. He was vary oald and lived in an out of way place. It was dark when I got thar. I put my horse up. Me and the oald man set up late talking. I give

him a full history of how things was going with me. He promised to go and see Joe, if possible arrange so we could get together. He persuaded me to sleep in the house, saying thar never had bin a scout thar.

The moon was on the full. I lay down in a good bed, soon was fast asleep. Along toward morning, I woke up with the house full of soldiers. They had found my horse. They sed they had orders to arrest J. N. Jones dead or alive. The first thought was my pistol. I grabbed it and thought I would make a break far the door but the oald man was thar and I couldn't possibly make it without somebody getting hurt. So I yelled, asking them if they were damd fools a-nuff to do all they were toald to do. They sayd they would try. "When you take me dead, thar will be more than one corpse to care fur," I sayd.

The oald man ask me to submit. They sayd they would take my armes.

I then sayd, "Like hell you will. I'll take them myself."

When we started, they wanted me to go ahead. I refused, telling them some of them could go ahead and someone behind if they thought I was going to try to get away. I thought Hanson was purty hard up, sending men out that didn't even know how to march a prisoner in.

It was daylight when we got to Hanson's. He, seeing me with my arms, asked if they didn't have me under arrest. They replied that they did. He turned to me, asking what I was doing with my arms.

"Captain, as you can see, I'm wearing them."

"John, I don't want any trouble out of you, or any of your back talk. Hand them over."

I answered I would think the matter over a little first, they may have to take them.

Isom spoke and sayd, "John, give them up and

don't argue with the Captain anymore.”

I then give them up, requesting they take good care of them. Isom seemed to be cowed. The loss of his child and being a prisoner had completely cowed him. I knew him from a boy and he had never seemed to be so low in spirit. It was impossible to get him roused up to his usual self.

I heard the Capt. give orders to his Lut. to have me and Isom closely guarded, especially me, as he was going about fifteen miles and to have us march afoot ahead of the command. I said I would not submit.

Isom replied, “John, let's do anything they want. Our day will come.”

We were marched ahead, our horses led just behind us. That did not suite me at all. At twelve o'clock we stopped at a big spring for dinner. Me and Isom were marched off under a shade tree, a guard post over us. The rest got dinner, not giving us a bit.

We were marched on till night, put in an old blacksmith shop with a guard post at the door. I picked up the sledge hammer and commenced hammering on the anvil. The Capt. came out wanting to know what was going on. Before then I had knocked the anvil off the block. I told him I was going to learn my trade. I was so mad that I did not care what happened.

While we were in the shop, I had some good luck, seeing some old friends from Texas. Hop's Regiment from Texas camped here one night. (This place was my post office while I was in Texas.) There were several of the boys that I was acquainted with. One of them rode up and asked if anyone knew J. N. Jones. I heard and recognized his voice. I walked out past the guard and shook hands with him. We talked for some time, him telling me how all the people

were getting along. He asked me to camp with him. I sed I was on duty (aun't that a hell of a note) far him to go back and bring all the boys up.

When they come, I went out of the shop and shuck hands with all of them, introduced them to all the boys. We commenst telling off on each other with all our sprees in Texas, kep laughing and joking till midnight when the water gave out. It was two or three hundred yards to the spring, so one of the Texas boys and me started far the water. One of the gards got his gun and tuck after us. Ginnes noticed it, him slipping after us, and ask what he ment.

I toald him they had me under gard, went on and toald how it come about.

He seamed to think they were going to treat me ruff, saying, "John N., if you want to be turned loose, I can get boys a-nuff in ten minutes from our regiment to do the job."

I toald him I was not uneasy, that I had a man watching far me and I would be notified in time. I was going down to his regiment the next morning.

About sun-up I toald the gard I was going to where they were camped, that he could go with me if he wanted to. I started, with one of the gards trailing after me

He went a peace then spoke, saying, "I hate to go down thar garding you among your oald friends. John, if you promise to come back, I will go no futher." I sayd I would be back. He turned back and I went on. I stayed till they commenst to saddle up, then I started back. You mite know I would run into the Capt. He wanted to know what I was doing without a gard. I remarked I had sense a-nuff to travel without a gide.

"John, I don't want to treat you in this manner. I know you are good boys. Now go and tell them to turn Isom out."

I spoke and sed, "You have been a good while finding it out Captain. Captain, I want to talk to you."

"John, I can't talk now, am on my way to Colonel Hopkins' to find out jest what is going to happen to you."

I went and toald the gard to let Isom out. They would not, jest with my word, so I sent one of the gards to catch the Capt. to verify it.

I sean the Capt. coming with his hankerchief to his face. When he got to where we was, he addressed me in this manor, "John, it makes my hart ache to think you will be shot so soon."

I then asked what I had dun that deserve death.

He replied, "A plenty." He sayd I broke up the company, had sayd the war was a failure and had run Parson Dennington out of the country, spredding around the quicker the South was whipped the better.

I then spoke, "Captain, you have me acious of what you dun yourself. You are the man that broke up the company. You know I was 100 milds away when they went home, off getting some mules fur you."

He sed he knew that, but it was my influence that had caused the men to go home.

I then pulled out the hand bill and asked him how in the hell he could have the conscious to represent me and Isom in any such a-way as going back to hed a band of Marauders.

At this he ses, "You have but a few days to live Jones."

I yelled, "If they kill me, they will kill a damd sight better man than you, you Yellow Jacket!"

Thar never was man or woman that had more diceptation than Hanson.

Mrs. Carpenter come to see us while we was the high chiefs of the blacksmith shop. Hanson asked her what was the matter with her. She said it was all over that he was going to have us shot. She begged him not to do it, to have mercy on us and his fellow man. (I never did know how much this helped, if any.)

My brother Alford lived thirty miles away at Mount Ida. He heard all about it. He was scared and thought I had disgrace the Jones name by being marched through the country like a convict in prison. Well, I did not think I had conferred any honor on the name, but that wasn't just what was bothering me at this time.

Now the preparation commenced to try J. N. Jones and Jonathan Isom for their lives. The charges was desertion, disbelieve in the Confederacy, saying it was a failure and the South would be whipped.

(Two ex-Justices of the peace and one preacher was the Court.)

Everything that I had ever said in regard to the war was hunted up. It seemed that the whole issue of the war depended on me. If I was suffered to talk, it was a failure; if they could stop my mouth, the South would gain their independance and the Melennimm would come.

Doctor A. J. Biggs made a little talk. He said he had known me from a child, that I was noted to be truthful and honest but for the good of his country my influence was such that he would have to say they ought to resort to extreme means. Now, reader, here is a man that gave me all the praise I could ask for, then turned right around and pret-near had me shot because I did not think as he did!

It does seam to me that the people was seased with the same spirit that pervaid at Salum when they burnt the witches. It looked to me the only thing they could get on Isom was that he was my friend and went along with the things I sed. Bey rights they should have had the whole company up thar, as no man wanted to fight that war. Some jest woulden talk against it.

They wanted to know what past between me and Parson Dennington.

I made the statement, jest as I have related it. "Gentlemen, I have never failed to give my views in regard to this war, when asked. I beleave the south is responsable far the war. If they had not ceceded from the north, we would be at peace and hundreds of good men would now be living that is dead. If this is treson, make the most of it. You can kill me but you can't make me beleave the war is right when I know it is wrong. It makes darned little difference with me what you do with me. Jest get it over with." At this, I walked out.

In a few minutes they called us back in. We were toald if we would come to thar terms, they would let us off.

I spoke up, saying, "Gentlement, let me be sure I understand your terms, as it is not quite clear. Are you saying we have a choice of going back to war or be shot now?"

Dr. Biggs spoke again, seying, "That's right, Mr. Jones."

I then replied, "I see now. In other words, my children that has no mother will soon have no father, as the south don't have a chance in winning this war."

Dr. Biggs seys, "What is your answer, Jones?"



My answer was I would go back and fight. Isom answered he would fight too.

We were toald to go home and get ready to start in five days. All of the boys that had deserted first had come in on the same dominion.

So me and Isom struck far home. After we got on the road a peace, Isom spoke and sed, "John, I wish you wouldn't give everybody so much back talk. Yur goin to get hurt."

I replied, "I jest have to stand up far our rights, but as you can see they are goin to force us to fight against our will." We started riding in a hard lope to get our minds off the trial.

It's needless to say how my Mother rejoice to see me come home again. I was grateful my babes was too young to know what I had jest bin through. I dun what I could in them few days to provide far mother and my babes before I had to leave far that harble war.

We was soon on the rode far Pine Bluff. We camped at the same place where we camped when the boys left the Capt. I spent the next day in town, as I saw no use in hanging around camp all day.

The next morning, Capt. called the role himself. As our names were called, we were to step two steps a-head. The first name called was J. N. Jones, then Isom. He kep calling till all that had deserted had stept forward. I didn't have to be blind to see what was about to take place. The intentions were to take us all back to town and turn us over to the proper officials far trial.

The Capt. promised all the men if they would come back, they would get a full parden. However thar was \$10.00 a peace far the men, with \$400.00 a peace far Isom and me. In order to collect this, us men had to be turned over to the proper officials.

I then spoke and toald the Capt. I wanted to talk with him. He sed to fire away. I then toald him I wanted a private talk. He sed come a-head.

We walked a peace, set down on a stump. I ask him why he was going against his word again as he had promised the men a full pardon.

He sed, "Jones, I dun every thing I could to prevent it."

I then spoke up, saying, "Thar is one thing that is damd certain, me or Isom an't going back. We have bin tried one time and we are not going to be tried twice fur the same thing, maybe more. We belong to a company on the other side of the Mississippi River. We have reported to you fur duty, but if we demand of you a transfer you are bound to give it to us."

At this, he wanted to know how come I come to know so much.

I remarked, "I was not always a-sleep."

He then sed fur me to play sick, he would go get Isom and bring him back. While he was gone, I lay down and covered up then started to groan. When he and Isom walked up, the Capt. spoke, saying, "John, are you sick?"

I remarked, "I have felt better."

At this he stooped down and felt my pulse, sed stay here and he would bring me some medicine when he come back.

After he left, Isom wanted to know what I was up to now. I toald him not to say a word to anybody, he would soon find out what was going to take place.

The rest of the boys was kept thar in the gard house far two months. I never knew jest who collected the big pay-off.

The next day we started far the Arkansas Post. We stade here a month, then was ordered to White

River. Here we staid till we was attached to a regiment. J. C. Monroe was our Col. Thar was a brigade of Missouri troops here commanded bey General Parsons. The Federal General's name was Curtis. He was jest a-bove on the river. The picet had bin fired on and jest at night they concluded to double the picet force.