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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

of an ex-Confederate Soldier

JIM BARNES

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Jim Barnes

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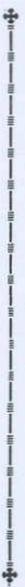


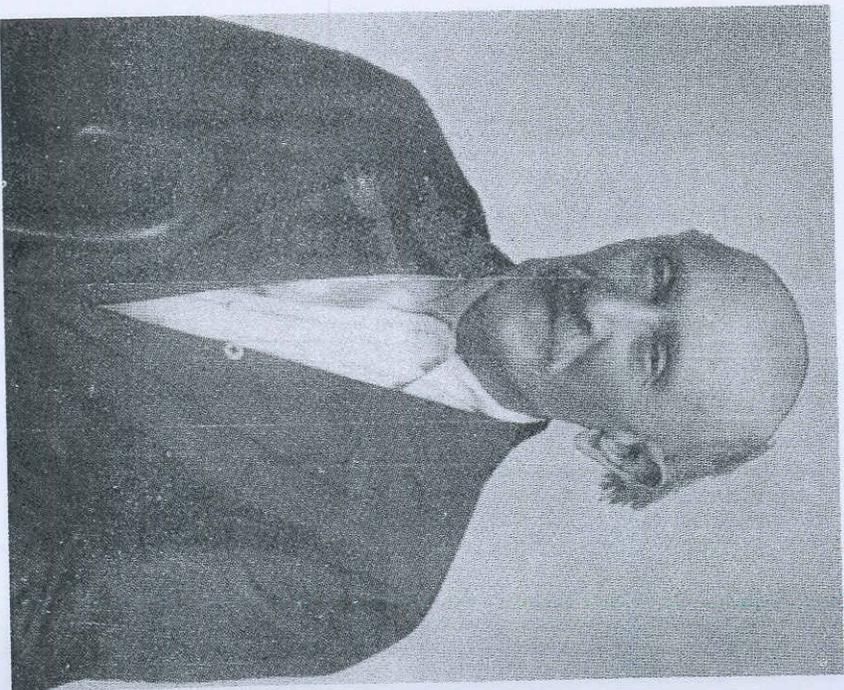
Autobiography

of an ex-Confederate Soldier

JIM BARNES

who now (1941) almost a centennarian (98 years of age), presents in simple, but graphic language a brief and wholesome example of a life lived simply, yet giving evidence of Christian work and righteousness worthy of being imitated by the most exalted





JIM BARNES

I, J. W. Barnes, was born on June 16, 1843, in Burke Hollow, Williamson County, Tennessee. My parents were of Scotch-Irish descent and migrated from Brunswick County, Virginia, to Williamson County, Tennessee.

When I was a small boy, my parents moved from Burke Hollow to the Split-Log community, and I went to school at the old Split-Log schoolhouse, the "blue-back speller" being my only book, and I went to school for quite a short time, reaching the word "baker" in my book and here my "book learning" ended. The school was taught by Pink Read.

At this time my parents were living on the farm of Esquire Mack Winstead, and he hired me to carry brick, made by Jeff Thompson and Andrew McMahon, to build the Esquire Winstead home which still stands, a splendid home, and a sample of good work.

When a small boy I "dropped corn" for neighbor farmers for 10 cents per day, and as I got to be a "big boy" I plowed for them at 25 cents per day.

I recall going to Nashville with my father, on a wagon and walking part of way "to keep warm", and we crossed Cumberland River at the foot of Broad Street. It was ice, "frozen over." The streets of the city were lighted by oil lamps swinging from a post, and wagons were drawn through the streets of Nashville by mules and oxen.

From Winstead's farm we moved to the farm of Jesse Morris, where I lived for five years, and from there I moved to Nolensville pike on the Everett Patterson farm.

At this time I was 17 years old and the war was going on; this was in June 1862, and in July I volunteered, joining the army; 55th Tennessee Regiment, under Captain Smith, who was soon promoted to colonel, and John Overton became my captain. About this time I was stricken down with measles, and came near dying, and was sent home, so know nothing of happenings of war until after battle of Shiloh.

THE LIEUTENANT

I was riding with Dr. Patterson for protection until I could get back to my company.

Dr. Patterson's Company captured four Yankees. Two at Major Harding's place and two at General Graham's place near Franklin. Dr. Patterson ordered me to take the prisoners to Triune, Tennessee. I was given a note to a man, near Franklin, ordering him to let me have two horses to carry the prisoners, and a boy to bring the horses back. He couldn't furnish us but one horse so two Yankees rode one horse and a Yankee each rode behind the two boys who were going to help me. The boy rode behind me. We got to Triune about sundown. I walked until nearly dark trying to find a place to keep the prisoners but no one would have them. After a while I met a man I hardly knew, whose name was Carter. He said he would help me out. After going several places he finally got us sheltered at Hutton's Tailor Shop and we were provided with a good meal. Carter stayed until it was pretty late.

After he had gone I told the prisoners how the

town was wrought up and I believed if they were to go outside the shop they would be immediately shot. One of the prisoners was a lieutenant and was real friendly.

When my time came to watch I went to sleep. I was young and had been very sick. I had no idea a boy could be so tired. When I woke there sat my Yankee lieutenant with my gun between his knees. He said, "surrender", then he laughed and said, "If I had not known the house was being watched and I would have been shot, I would have been gone; but I wouldn't have harmed you, Jim. Then and there a Yankee and a Rebel became friends.

We stayed in Triune two nights. While we were there a lady near there sent me word to bring my prisoners down, and she would make some music for them. We went. She was very polite to them and they to her. She played some of the sweetest music I ever heard. All at once she jumped up and began to abuse the Yankees. As I was the cause of them being there I was ashamed and said, "Let's go". They never said a word until they got to the gate; then they turned and looked at the house, and said, "If we ever come back here we will burn this house.

I turned the prisoners over again to Dr. Patterson at Nolensville, and he sent them on to Clover Bottom Farm for exchange. I did not go on because I wanted to stop at home for some clean clothes and see my family before joining my company at Shelbyville, Tennessee. The prisoners were sent on and exchanged. Later the same lieutenant's company was stationed

on the Dr. Patterson place, near Wrencoee. The lieutenant inquired about me from one of my neighbors. He found out where my home was and went to see my parents. My father was nearly dead and did die a short time after. When he was certain they were my parents and that they had no food, he had meat, flour, rice, sugar, and coffee sent to my home. He stationed a guard near by who would not let a Yankee come near. This was done for my family because I showed kindness to him.

But this wasn't the last of my lieutenant. About a year after the war was over he came back to Dr. Patterson's. He inquired of Miss Ann Patterson where I lived. She told him I lived above Nolensville and would send her boy for me. When the boy came and told me, I flew into a rage, and would not go, because I had learned how badly my people had been treated by other Yankees, and I was full of hate. I sent a note saying I couldn't come.

If my Yankee lieutenant is living today, or if he has passed on, I wish he could know that I am sorry; and today I have no hatred in my heart for any man.

I was then commanded to report at Shelbyville, Tennessee, and rejoined my regiment. I was in several skirmishes up to the time of the battle of Stones River, where Cleburne, and Gen. Bushrod Johnson fought. This battle was fought on Manson Pike near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and is known as battle of Murfreesboro, or Stones River battle. I was in many skirmishes between this battle and battle of Chickamauga near Chattanooga. We then fell back,

overpowered, and fought in battle of Ringgold, Georgia, under Gen. Forrest. Then later I was in battle at Knoxville, and from there I was sent to Virginia, and on April 2nd, 1865, General A. P. Hill was killed at Gettysburg.

NEAR DRURY'S BLUFF

Near Drury's Bluff, Virginia, I was stationed to guard two widow ladies, Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Goode. I had been there a few days when General Shaw came by and wanted to find how many Yankees there were in the valley. He asked me where he could get a high place. I told him if he would give me his glasses I would find a place. When I went up on the house top through the attic and looked down in the valley I almost ran, for the Yankees looked so close I could see the eagles on their coats. The general went up and so many followed him they were soon detected. Then began bombarding the house. The ladies were so frightened they left. That left Uncle Jerry, Aunt Liza and, of course, I stayed with them until I could get further orders. Aunt Liza was afraid and Uncle Jerry sat sharpening his razor on a brick bat. As I was so hungry I told Liza to kill one of the big fat hens and cook it for me. While she was cooking it a shell came over cut a limb off an apple tree.

The apples poured down into the hole where she was cooking, we thought we were killed, but Liza saved the chicken. That was the best chicken I ever tasted.

I fought in the battle of Drury's Bluff, Virginia.

When Ft. Harrison, Virginia, was blown up and taken by the Yankees, I was sitting on the breastworks watching the battle in the valley below. General Robert E. Lee told me to come down, as I might be shot. General Lee was kind to all his boys. He sometimes wore an old straw hat to keep the enemy from knowing him. I've seen him many times riding "Traveler", his treasured horse, and a graceful rider was General Lee. At time of my capture, I was serving in the company of Judge Henry Cook of Franklin, Tennessee. Appomattox followed a few days later. There were 10,000 of our Confederate boys who were so outnumbered by Yanks as to force us to surrender to General Grant on April 9, 1865, and we boys were sent prisoners of war to Point Lookout, Maryland, where we were in prison until July. We were sent down James River in small boats to prison, and I saw a boat coming up James River. President Abraham Lincoln was in that boat. The Yankee guards told us to give the Federal salute to our President. I said, "No, sir, he ain't no President of mine. My words may be forced from me different but my heart is unchanged." President Lincoln stood, hat in hand, smiling at us, like the great gentleman he was, but I, Jim Barnes, with other Southerners gave the Rebel Yell, to the President, a Yankee, but I never heard any unkindness spoken by Southern soldiers of Abe Lincoln, and I am sorry he couldn't live to weld the North and South together in harmony.

IN PRISON

When I was in prison I was allowed to fish in the

Chesapeake Bay. My tackle wasn't very good, but I caught some nice fish. I had no way to cook them so I had to throw them back. As I threw them back I cried and thought of Old Mill Creek, and home.

They were very good to us in prison, but they gave us such a little to eat we were hungry all the time.

When we were first carried to Point Lookout, Maryland, the guards just shot a man on any pretense, but as soon as the officers found this out they put on new guards and we were protected.

Every once in a while Major Bradey would scatter small squares of tobacco and let the prisoners scramble for them. One day I was going up to see if my name was on the bulletin board to be released. I met Major Bradey who said, "If you want any tobacco you had better come on back for I am going to scatter some. I said, "No sir, Major, I wasn't raised that way. I have never picked up any of your tobacco." He said, "Come here, my boy." When I went to him he gave me several chews.

HOME AGAIN

After I was paroled in June of 1865 I started home from Maryland. We traveled by boat and train. When I reached Nashville I started out Cherry Street which is now Fourth Avenue, walking. I had walked a good distance when I heard a wagon behind me. I thought, if my being a soldier does not entitle me to a ride I won't ask to ride.

The man was Bob Williams, and he asked me to ride.

As I came out the pike I passed my sister's house. Her husband, George Chism, and her children came out to see me. They wanted me to eat with them, but I wanted to see my mother so bad I couldn't eat. I said, "No, Nancy, I am going home."

When I got in sight of home I could see Lucy, my sister, standing in the doorway and mother shading her eyes to see who was coming. When they saw who it was they both started to the gate. Lucy got all the way, but mother sank to the ground. I took her in my arms as if she had been a baby and carried her in the house.

I found everything gone, my father dead and Lucy and mother trying to take care of my brother who was sick.

In July, after being imprisoned in April, we were paroled and I came back to my home in the old Volunteer State to grand old Tennessee, the home of the free and the land of the brave. Later I farmed for the "other fellow," for wages, until 1872, when I rented a little farm on Nolensville pike at the point known as the old "Rock Well," near the line of Wilkerson and Davidson Counties and with my mother Katy Barnes, and sister Lucy, we kept house and farmed there for four years, my father having gone on to his reward before this. Then I rented the old Buford farm near by, joining the Joe Pettus farm, where I lived 11 years, near enough to each other from our yards, to speak or call, and lived kindly and brotherly toward each other, good friends and neighbors, and could do brotherly kindness to one another

and borrow from a dollar, up to a threshing machine. I recall helping him build a hay shed, and when ready for shingling the roof, I said, "Let's divide the job, you take Lunse, his small son, and I will take Jim, another son, and Joe and Lunse would beat us every time. Another incident I recall: Joe Pettus and I went to Nashville with John Cochran, and carried Jim the boy. We went in a spring wagon, and the mule ran away, from a scare at a negro woman carrying a bundle of clothes on her head. The mule jumped a fence, leaving the wagon on one side and the mule on the other. We looked about for Jim, the boy, and we saw that little tow-head running down the road, as if for life. The Pettus family was so good to us, we could never do enough for them because we were poor, and never able to do what we wanted. We could and did take care of the older children when the parents and smaller ones went to visit relatives at Triune and Woodbury.

I married a good woman, a good wife and mother along these years, Maggie Guy, and she was a real companion and helpmeet all along our journey through life together. We were sorry when it seemed best for us to move away from the Pettus neighbors; for the eleven years, we "each could feel a brother's sigh, and with him bear a part, when sorrow flowed from eye to eye and joy from heart to heart." My mother was aged when we moved away, and Joe Pettus brought his wagon and team and sent a load to our new home and brought his carriage and tenderly lifted my old mother into his carriage and moved her with

my sister comfortably. "Love is the golden chain that binds the happy souls above; And he's an heir of heaven, who finds his bosom glow with love."

The Petrus boys, Jim and Lunse, used to come to my humble little home at night, after supper, in winter, and I would half-sole their shoes, and we would pop corn, and enjoy the evening, as boys, and since our separation, and the changes made by time the boys as well as the girls have not forgotten nor have they forsaken me in my declining and aged years, but come to see me once and again, remembering our love and companionship in years gone by. And my prayer is, "God be with us 'til we meet again."

I must not forget an event of deep importance in my life, happening in 1873, September. I joined Concord Baptist Church, under the preaching of Bro. Billy Whitsett, and in 1876, I was elected deacon of the same church, and have discharged my duty in that office to the best of my ability, and knowledge, through the years until the present time.

In 1915 I bought the old Newt Briley farm on Mill Creek road where I live and will spend the remainder of my life. My only child, Mrs. Nellie King, and family, share my home, and minister to my needs and comforts, and a loving dutiful Christian daughter she is. Our home is also shared by two sisters of my wife (who has passed on to a better home many years ago).

JIM BARNES