

Washington Mackey Ives Letters

Enlisted 4th Florida Regiment April 23, 1862 (at war's end was Sergeant-Major Ives)

Born September 29, 1843

Died February 1925

Tullahoma, Tenn. Jany 14th, 1863

Dear Sisters F & F,

I received a letter from each of you this evening. I am glad that you can all enjoy yourselves at home, but it is far different with me. I could not get a furlough if my life depended on it for Gen. Bragg has issued an order prohibiting the granting of furloughs until the emergency is over, which will be about 100 years from now unless things are better managed than they have been of late. I did not have anything unusual Christmas except Col. Bowen gave me a small ginger punch. On 26th our brigade had to shoot 3 men and hang one condemned by the general court martial. It was a very rainy day and I did not want to see the poor fellows shot so I staid [sic] in camp. [next 6 lines illegible.] We marched out a mile and a half to the Lebanon Pike and lay in line of battle all day. At night the 3rd & 1st Fla., 20th TENN, and 60th No. Ca. men brigaded with us under Gen. Preston and we were marched into the woods and camped. We slept very cold but had large fires of rails. The next day we drew rations of flour & bacon. The flour we had to cook on rocks, boards, etc. On that evening the General marched us out in an open field and we stacked arms and built small fires of rails and at dark we had to take arms and put out lights. I slept but very little as a heavy sprinkle of rain came up and wet my blanket. The boys hovered around the coals until 2 a.m. Dark as pitch when attention was whispered and we were marched into a small wood on our left. At daylight the Yankees began shelling as usual and threw some shells in a few yards of our line of battle (the battle had continued from 12 M Christmas day). The enemy steadily advancing until today and every day from daylight until dark. The cannons kept up an almost ceaseless roar and then sometimes the crashing small arms would deafen your senses to every kind of feeling of humanity and [you would long to be] engaged. A courier brought us news that the small arms and cheering which we had heard was the Yankees charging three times on the Confed's who were hid behind the stone fence on the Franklin Pike, about a mile and half west of where we are. The Yankees were slain by the hundreds and repulsed each time. A Yankee picket shot a horse from under one of Gen. Adam's staff last night and he was so close to us that the crack of his gun awoke me. Our brigade was marched out of the road into the old field just before dark and we had not stacked arms but a few minutes before the Yankees threw several shells and some shot at us which barely passed over our heads. The boys are in good humor but think we will be in it to-morrow. I slept about 4 hours to-night and was awakened about 1 o'clock by heavy firing of small arms and drums beating at the Yankee camp 1 1/4 miles N.W. of our brigade. The Y camp fires were in plain sight of us. It seems a small body of our cavalry charged on some Y's this p.m. in an old field and then retreated before the Y's knew what was the matter. I heard the bugle calling

back the troops as when [crossed out] as we used to hear the stage horn. At 1st light Gen. Preston marched us back into the woods and we built fires for it's cold as blazes and drizzles rain nearly every night and has for the last week. We barely had got our fingers warm when Attention! brought us back in line of battle. We marched northward across the old field and formed a line of battle. The fighting is as hot as it generally every gets to be and you can hear the cheering on both sides and [see] the smoke. The fighting is a mile W. of us. The cannons seem as if they never will stop for since Christmas as we've heard them all the time except at dark. At 11 a.m. we were marched back to the wood we came from but were not allowed to break ranks. A portion of Breckinridge's division in our rear are ordered into the fight. They load their guns and unsling blankets about 40 yds. from us and start off at double quick. I think the brigade that left for the scene of action was Palmer's. At 1 1/2 p.m. the firing is sublime if such it may be termed, for the roar of musketry is as regular and quick as touching the two lowest keys on the piano, and the cannon are firing as fast as you can think. We stood about 1/2 an hour listening when our aide rode up to Gen. Preston and I supposed ordered us into action, for we were marched about 100 yds. nearer the fight at quick time when another aide halted us. We were ordered to load, when Col. Bowen gave us all directions about how to aim, etc. In a minute or two after loading we about-faced and marched across the old field the same as we had done in the morning. Gen. Hardee & staff were over there and we halted a minute (2 1/2 p.m.), and then about-faced, viz, left in front and double quicked [sic] back through the field and waded Stone River, wetting us up to our knees, and formed in line of battle just on the west side of the creek, or river. We had thrown off our blankets & before crossing. Our line of battle extended E. & W., the brigade (Preston's) composed of 60th No. Ca., 20th Tenn, & 1st, 3rd, & 4th Fla. Regts. [sic] At the creek ambulances were crossing with the wounded; one man walking with his arm shot off enquired what Regt. as our beautiful flag passed him, and being told 4th Fla. said, you'll do it up right, pay them for my arm. A little soldier about the size of Albert was in one of the ambulances and appeared to be hit in four or five places. His back I think was broken, but he bore it like a man, except as the wagon would jolt he'd groan. As we formed in line of battle there was a Confederate, the first dead man I had yet seen, lying on his back with a cannon ball hole through his breast. I could stick my head in (I thought then how soon I may be uncared for like him, but I uttered a short prayer, leaving my safety with him who can save) and again brought my mind to its common temperature, for my feelings don't change scarcely any under fire. As soon as we were formed we marched straight forward and then the Yankees began to play their battery upon us. The 4th had to pass through a picket fence and in doing so we got our ranks broken and in forming, the 60th No. Ca. crowded us so that we were all crowded out of place. And then 9 Co's of the 60th turned and ran like sheep, leaving us under the hottest kind of fire from sharp-shooters in front and 20 or 30 pieces of cannon about a 1/2 mile distant on our right. We were halted under this fire and ordered to fire into the cedar thicket in front, and while we were driving the Yankee sharpshooters out of the wood the Y batteries got our range and then the men began to [drop and ?] so John Hacker falls about a file to my left and John McKinney (the only man killed in Co. C that day) had his throat cut at my right side; he fell on my feet and blood splattered in a stream as large a my two fore fingers. Poor fellow, he could not speak, though he grabbed at the wounded and tried to raise

up. Phil Coates got shot through the right thigh. Elijah Linch got his head skinned by a ball, Little Billy Hinson got shot under the shoulders, sideways. We were then ordered into the thicket and in we went. Gen. Preston took our flag but the Color Sgt. got it away from him again. The trees and limbs were falling thick, but on we went. The dead Yankees lay thick in the woods. We kept in the cedars and went on until we got to the edge or about 250 yds. from where we entered and then we could see the Y line of Battle 1000 N. of us. The Confederate batteries now began to fire on the Yankees' batteries, which drew their fire from us and thus things continued til [sic] dark when we were ordered back about 50 yds and broke ranks to sleep on arms but it was very little sleeping that any of us did for I like to have died of the cold; my teeth chattered all night we did not have our blankets and the ground was hard and frozen. At daylight heavy firing began on our left. Gen. Preston marched us deeper into the cedars so we could build small fires and be warm. We are in good spirits. The Yankees threw a great many shells at us, one cut Lt. Harris' (Co. I) haversack and went through his coat; it wounded two men in Miot's Co (D). We lay in this thicket all day among the dead and dying Yankees. I slept at night a little, for Col. Bowen got our blankets for us. 2nd Jany [sic] lay in the cedars until 3 p.m. when we were marched out and back the same route we came. Heaps of unburied dead lay in the cornfields. We kept on through fields and woods until we came to the east of the Yankees (having been on the southwest of them). We formed line of battle in an old field and then made the brilliant charge you've read of before. But the Y's were too strong, being about 5 to 1. Billy Ross can describe it to you. I am too sick to do it now.

Jany 20th, 1863.

I've been sick ever since the 4th but marched on the retreat after laying all day in rain and mud up to our knees as Gen. Smith will tell you. He brought me an orange and a pair of socks on the 3rd. While in line of battle he lost the valise. I got a letter containing \$10 by him. I last saw him at Absonia on the 9th, where we left him. On the night of the 9th we arrived here and I got wet as it rained all night and we had lost our tents. My liver and kidneys were affected by my being worn out and cold. I've now got Jaundice, and my kidneys are so sore I can't set up scarcely any while and I suffer terribly. Gen. Smith lent me \$10 and I took it. If he had staid [sic] until now he could have got me a furlough easy. Cols. Bowen & Badger are both absent, sick. Maj. Leslie promoted me Qr. Mr. Sergt. on the 11th, Sergt. McLauchlin having died on 31st Dec. I've got a nice little sword now in the place of my musket. I now have plenty of clothes. Capt. Mck. got here Sunday; everything sent by him came safely to hand. I am so glad you all remember me at home and am thankful to you for the sausage & cakes, gloves, socks, etc. I'll write again on the first day I feel able. Let Norman read this letter. I want to tell you a great many things but I am unable to do so at present. The Yankees never hurt me or the army half as bad as the retreat Gen. Preston is the very image of Mrs. Bethume. A Kentuckian by birth, but a strong believer of Fla. Troops. The nearest the Y's came to getting me was shooting a hole in my pants and cutting hair off my right temple. I know a peck of balls passed in less than a yard of me on the 2nd. And the man in front of me got slightly wounded & the one on my right mortally and the one on my left killed. I did not feel any different while under fire than I do at any kind of work. I

took 20 deliberate shots, picking my man every time, and one time I saw the man fall, but the others I could not see on account of my smoke. My gun kept choking, but my front rank man says I can load and shoot the fastest and as coolly as any man as he ever saw. I wish you could come to see me. Gen. S came at the worst time he could. The regiment is moving out; give my respects to all my friends. I am, your afft. brother,
WASH

Jany. [sic] 20th

Dear Pa,

Lt. Parramore starts for Florida in a day or two. I will write as often as I can. I have to lay down to write. I began this letter on 14th and was too sick to write until now. It is raining and as 25 of our company has to sleep out we let some of them put their things under an old cloth which we've got spread and they've just upset my ink. I am Qtr. Mstr. Sgt., now rank with Sgt. Major and draw \$21.00 per month. I bought me a splendid [cutlass?], a trophy of the battle from Sgt. Maj. Kilpatrick. I've got as many friends, I expect, in this regt. as any man in it, and I don't know an officer who would not do me a favor, but I want to see home once more, and if I could only have some influential man outside of the Regt. to make application for me. I want you to write a piece urging the people of Florida to plant gardens and raise poultry. I would give \$5.00 for a head of cabbage; eggs sell at \$1.50 per dozen, but the generals get them all. Tennessee is completely eaten out, and 20 years from now she won't be in as good a condition as before the war—and I have no idea the war will end [in] under 20 years, for I've seen a thing or two myself. I am, your afft. son,
WASH

[image-Coat of Arms Eagle]

[missing text] their picket guard last winter and spring from our bushwackers [sic], there are about two of these forts to every 7 miles from here to Stevenson in Jackson County, Alabama. Bridgeport is in the same county, and is 66 miles from Huntsville... at Bridgeport I saw a Mr. Gunter brother of William Gunter the noted Southern Bushwacker [sic]. Do you recollect reading how the Yankees suffered in Jackson Co., Ala., from Rebel Bushwackers [sic] one regiment of 1,000 men lost over 600 in about 3 months... If I should happen to get killed some of the boys will write to Pa, as I've made a bargain with them, but I hope the Yankees are not so strong as it is said, for 4,000 of us have got to whip about 10,000 of them out of their entrenchments...

Your aff't [sic] brother, Wash M. Ives... I must beg you all to excuse me about the ambrotype, but my face was so disfigured by the fever that I would not have it taken the day I left Chattanooga, but I'll promise to have it taken as soon as an opportunity offers...

[margin-Written by Washington Mackey Ives, 4th Florida Infantry]

Camp 1 mile north of Murfreesboro Nov. 29th 1862

Dear Father,

...I wish you would bring me the following articles, a pair of pants and a pocket knife, if there is one about the house, and I want a blanket or a piece of carpet. I have just returned on 27th from the Hospital at Chattanooga where I spent all the money I had for necessaries which I could get at the Hospital. My disease was "Bileous [sic] Pneumonia" and I was at the point of death for several days. I left the hospital as soon as I could walk... on the 27th Gen. Wheeler attacked the Yankees at Lavergne and fought them all day... The boys are all needing socks and pocket knives [sic] you can't get a pocket knife (Barlow) for less than \$2.00 and jeans pants sell readily for from \$15 to \$30... Congress has passed an act prohibiting the payment of any troops until next March... Our brigade is composed of 18th Tenn [sic] and 32nd Ala., and 4th Fla. Col. Palmer 18th Tenn. commanding. My [illegible] fever is so bad and I am so weak that I can't write much at a time... If the ladies of Florida make up clothing for any troops I think the 4th ought to be remembered, for we nearly freeze, and do as much as any regiment now out. I would like a comforter for the neck and a pair of gloves... Col. Bowen has been very sick.

I remain you aff't [sic] son, Wash

[margin-Helen Ives, Rt. 2 Box 798, Branford, FL 32008 has original letters]

Tullahoma, Tenn. Jan. 14th 1863

Dear Sisters Florence and Fannie,

...I could not get a furlough if my life depended on it. Gen. Bragg has issued an order prohibiting the granting of furloughs until the emergency is over which will be about 100 years from now unless things are better managed than they have been of late. I didn't have anything unusual Christmas except Col. Bowen gave me a small ginger punch. On the 26th our brigade had to shoot 3 men and hang one, condemned by the General Court Martial, it was a very rainy day and I did not want to see the poor fellows shot... Since we were marched in line of battle to meet the enemy who were advancing on us and had cup up a small force of our cavalry in Stewarts Creek 8 miles north of Murfreesboro and shelled the infantry camp at Eaglesville 18 miles N.W. of Murfreesboro, we marched out a mile and a half on the Lebanon and lay in the line of battle all day. At night the 3rd and 1st Fla., and 20th Tenn. and 60th N.C. men were brigaded with us under Gen. Preston and we were marched into the woods and camped, we slept very cold but had large fires of rails, the next day we drew rations of flour and bacon... at daybreak the yankees began shelling us as usual threw some

shells in a few yards of our line of battle (the battle had continued from 12 M Christmas Day) the enemy steadily advancing until today and every day from daylight until dark the cannons kept up and almost ceaseless roar and then sometimes the crashing small arms would deafen your senses to every kind of feeling of humanity and long to be engaged. A courier brought us news that the small arms and cheering which we had heard was the Yankees charging three times on the Confederates who were hid behind the stone fence on the Franklin Pike at, about a mile and a half west of where we are. The Yankees were slain by the hundreds, and repulsed each time, a Yankee picket shot a horse from under one of Gen. Adams staff last night and he was so close to us that the crack of his gun awoke me. Our brigade was marched out of the wood into the old field just before dark and we had not stacked arms but a few minutes before the Yankees threw several shells and some shot at us which barely passed over our heads... I slept about 4 hours tonight and was awakened about 1 o'clock by heavy firing of small arms and drums beating at the Yankees camp 1 1/4 miles N.W. of our brigade, the Yankee camp fires were in plain sight of us. It seems a small body of our cavalry charged on some Yankees camped in an old field and then retreated before the Yankees knew what was the matter. I heard the bugle calling back the troopers. First light Gen. Preston marched us back into the wood and we built fires for it is as cold as blazes and drizzles rain nearly every night... and barely got our fingers warm when, ATTENTION! brought us back in line of battle, the fighting is as hot as it generally ever gets to be and you can hear the cheering on both sides and the smoke. The fighting is a mile west of us. The cannons seem as if they never will stop, for since Christmas Day we've heard them all the time except at dark. At 11 a.m. we were marched back to the wood we came from, but were not allowed to break ranks. A portion of Breckenridges' [sic] division in our rear are ordered into the fight. They load their guns and unslung blankets about 40 yards from us and start off at double quick, I think the brigade that left for the scene of action was Palmers. At 1 1/2 p.m. the firing is sublime if such it may be termed for the roar of musketry is as regular and quick as touching the two lowest keys on a piano, and the cannons are firing as fast as you can think. We stood about 1/2 hour listening when our aide rode up to Gen. Preston and I suppose ordered us into action, for we were marched about 100 yards nearer the fight at quick time when another aide halted us. We were ordered to load, when Col. Bowen gave us all directions about how to aim etc. In a minute or two after loading we about faced and marched across the old field the same as we had done in the morning. General Hardee and staff were over there and we halted a minute (2 1/2 p.m.) and then about faced [illegible insert here] left in front and double quicked [sic] back through the field and waded Stone River wetting us to the knees and formed in line of battle just on the westside of the creek or river. We had thrown off our blankets etc... before crossing our line of battle extended East and West. The brigade (Preston's) composed of 60th N.C., 20th Tenn. and 1st, 3rd and 4th Fla. Reg't [sic]. At the creek ambulances were crossing

with the wounded, one man walking with his arm shot off enquired what reg't.[sic], as our beautiful flag passed him being told 4th Fla. he said "y'all do it up right, pay then for my arm. A little soldier about the size of Albert was in one of the ambulances and appeared to be hit in four or five places, his back I think was broken, but he bore it like a man, except as the wagon would jolt he'd groan. As we formed in line of battle there was a Confederate, the first dead man I had yet see, lying on his back with a cannon ball hole through his breast which I could stick my head in. (I thought then how soon I may be uncared for like him, but I uttered a short prayer leaving my safety with Him who can save) and again brought my mind to common temperature, for my feelings don't change scarcely under fire. As soon as we were formed we marched straight forward and then the Yankees began to play their Battery upon us. The 4th had to pass through a picket fence and in doing so we got our ranks broken and in forming the 60th N.C. crowded us so that we were all crowded out of place and then nine companies of the 60th turned and ran like sheep leaving us under the hottest kind of fire from sharpshooters in front and 20 or 30 pieces of cannon about 1/2 mile distant on our right. We were halted under this fire and ordered to fire into the cedar thicket in front and while we were driving the Yankees sharpshooters out of the wood; the Yankee battery got out of our range and there the men began to drop. The only man killed in Co. C that day had his throat cut at my right side, he fell on my feet and the blood splattered in a stream as large as my two forefingers, poor fellow, he could not speak though he grabbed at the wound and tried to raise up. Phil Coates got shot through the right thigh. Elijah Linch got his head skinned by a ball, little Billy Hinson got shot under the shoulders, sideways. We were then ordered into the thicket and in we went, Gen. Preston took our flag but the Color Sgt. got it away from him again. The dead Yankees lay thick in wood, we kept in the cedars and went on until we got to the edge, or about 250 yards from where we entered, and then we could see the Yankee line of battle 1000 yards north of us. The Confederate batteries now began to fire on the Yankee batteries which drew their fire from us. And thus things continued until dark when we were ordered back about 50 yards and broke ranks to sleep on arms, but it was very little sleeping that any of us did for I like to have died of the cold. My teeth chattered all night, we did have our blankets and the ground was hard and frozen. At daylight heavy firing began on our left, General Preston marched us deeper into the cedars so we could build small fires and be warm. We are in good spirits, the Yankees, threw a great many shells at us one cut off Lt. Harris' (Co. I) haversack and went through his coat, heaps of unburied dead lay in the cornfields. We kept on through fields and woods until we came to the east of the Yankees (having been on the southwest of them.) We formed a line of battle in an old field and then made the brilliant charge you've read of before... but the Yankees were too strong being about 5 to 1. Billy Ross can describe it to you for I am too sick to do it now [missing text]...

January 20th 1863

I've been sick ever since the 4th but marched on the retreat after laying all day in the rain and mud... Gen. Smith lent me \$10 and I took it... I am thankful for the sausages and cakes, gloves, socks, etc... the nearest the Yankees came to getting me was shooting a hole in my pants or cutting hair off my right temple. I know a peck of balls passed in less than a yard of me on the 2nd and the man in front of me got slightly wounded and the one on my right mortally and the one on my left killed. I did not feel any different under fire than I did doing any other kind of work and I took 20 deliberate shots picking my man every time and one time I saw the man fall but the others I could not see on account of my smoke. My gun kept choking but my front rank man says I can load and shoot the fastest and as cooly [sic] as any man that he ever saw...

Your aff't [sic] brother, Wash.

Tullahoma, Tenn. Jan 22nd 1863

Dear Parents,

...Dr. Bigelow made me a cup of maizena [sic]... Cols. Bowen and Badger are absent and very sick. Gen. Smith is at Ringold, Ga. very sick... Among the boys killed in Co. C was John McPherson, one of the two who ate supper with me the last night I stayed home... It would have surprised anybody to see how cooly [sic] we all went into the hottest fire and there were only one or two men in the whole regiment who showed any sign of fear... On the 2nd Inst. [sic], I fired exactly 20 rounds and could have fired 30 if my gun had not got so dirty that I had to tear cartridges and wet every load of buck and ball and then I always stopped to take good aim as my officers will bear witness... The 4th was the last on the field and few as it was it kept back about 40 times its number of Yankees until the other Confederate reg't [sic] had got out of the most danger. say 12 to 15 minutes and when it did retreat the Blue coats were in 40 yards of its left and 80 of its center. I did not mind seeing human blood anymore than animals. As I was running through the field a man right ahead of me got his brains shot out... A man named Brown Jones in my mess made me a good ear protector for my cap yesterday... Several furloughs were granted in the 1st Fla. last week, but Gen. Bragg stopped the men as they got on the train to leave. He is undoubtedly as hard a hearted a man as old Blue Beard was. Kirby Smith is looked upon by all the western troops as the kindest General we've got. There is no more use of talking about the Yankees being inferior troops etc. They have everything to eat that a soldier can wish... Old Rosecrantz [sic] is just as good a General as Bragg.

I am as ever, affectionately your son, Wash
Capt. McKay was glad of my appointment as 2nd Q.M. Sergeant...

Tullahoma, Jan. 26th 1863

Dear Pa,

...I have got my knapsack full of good clothes once more. I drew me a coarse pair of shoes and sold them for \$4 and bought me a good pair for \$8... Lt. Dekle paid me \$3 the other day as one year's subscription to the Columbian, he wants it directed to Lt. G.C. Dekle, Thomasville, Ga. so his wife will be able to get it also... I got Bob Bigelow to pull two teeth for me yesterday. The boys say I can stand it the best of anybody they ever saw... I think the war is going to end soon if 1/2 that is published is truth the Yankee prisoners said they were tired of fighting but whether they are tired or not they fight very well... I think the 1st, 3rd and 4th Fla. reg't [sic] will soon be thrown together for all together we don't make a large reg't [sic]... If it should be my lot to fall it never shall be said I fill a coward's grave.

I am your aff't [sic] son, Wash

Camp of the 4th Fla. Reg't [sic] 38 miles S.E. of Jackson and 5 miles S.E. of Morton, Miss.
July 23rd Thursday.

Dear Father,

We marched 9 3/4 miles and got to a camp ground about 12 o'clock and not having any tents, we had to take one of the hardest rains that I've seen fall all this year... The boys speak in glorious terms of the conduct of the 1st, 3rd and 4th Fla. and 47th Ga. and 32nd Ala. At the little fight at Jackson... several of the boys of Co. C have died since I left it of disease... (remainder of letter missing.)

[margin—Note-I have rest of letter. M.N.I.]

Near Morton Miss. July 27th 1863

Dear Mother,

I am now sitting on my knapsack and writing on the head of a bass drum of the band... I am now messing with the band but when we get to a good camp and settled I may change... The boys are proud of the manner in which the reg't [sic] acted at Jackson. The 4th captured 2 colors and a half by itself... The band of the 41st Ala. is practicing a most beautiful piece about 40 yards from where I am sitting, the 60th N.C. is camped about 7 steps to my back the 4th about ten paces to my face etc... Direct letters to Stovalls Brigade Breckenridge Division Morton, Miss.

And believe me your aff't [sic] son Wash

Camp Hurricane 6 miles south of Morton, Miss.

Aug 1st 1863

Dear Father,

(Ink faded most words illegible)... Walkers division of Georgians is reported to be ordered to Charleston or Mobile and their [sic] has been camp rumors that Breckenridge Division will be ordered to Mobile... I forgot to tell you that a [end of letter]