

19th Tenn. A.P. Stewart's Brigade

We remained in position on the north bank of Stones River until about 9:00 A.M. on the 31st (the day of the battle). Then we moved forward with the brigade in support of Walthall's brigade. As we went forward we met many stragglers and wounded headed back to the rear. Our officers tried to turn the stragglers back.

We soon came to a temporary breastwork of loose stone and timber where we halted for half an hour. All that time ^{we} were exposed to the fire of a hidden Yankee battery. One shell struck the wall throwing fragments of shell and rock and killing one man and wounding six. Finally, we went forward to the Wilkinson Pike and could see across a field to a slight hill where the battery had fired from. The front line of Mississippians was being driven back. We moved to their support crossing the field to the hill. In the field beyond we could see dead and wounded Confederates and Yankees lying about with dead horses, and abandoned arms and equipment. Here we began to feel the fire of the Yankee infantry from the cedar woods. We pushed across the field and soon had them on the run. We captured 3 or 4 pieces of the battery that had tormented us and advanced into the cedar wood in spite of their heavy fire. In this attack our color bearer was shot but Corporal Mason of Company K caught them as they fell and held them through the rest of the battle. Major Rufus Jarnigan, a short but brave soldier, fell there. He had served the first year as a private and had been promoted when the unit was reorganized. Our regiment lost more men, 127, in this fight than any other in the brigade.

We soon passed more of the abandoned Yankee artillery which they had left behind due to lack of horses and the thickness of the woods. We fought the enemy in the cedars for almost an hour, returning their murderous fire with our own until they gave way in a rout. We chased them through the cedar woods to the edge of the cotton field where we halted. They took refuge behind the railroad embankment, but many had paid the price for their wicked occupation of our country. From the 50 prisoners we had captured we learned that we had been fighting the regular forces. We also took 300 Yankee guns off the field which they had abandoned. If a battery could have been brought up we might have shelled the bluecoats out of their position but the woods were too thick for the artillery to get through.

Many of the dead lay unburied on the field where the bodies were stripped. I picked up 3 good yankee blankets myself. Some of the men even looted the bodies of our own men. Some of the boys said they saw General Cheatham ride up during the battle and that he appeared to be drunk.

That night it was dark and lonely and there were no fires although the night was damp and chilly. It was hard to sleep in the new year when many of our men lay dead or wounded on the cold ground. Some of the wounded cried out for help as they suffered in the cold but we could do little to help them in the dark.