

# THE INCIDENT IN THE WOODS



**The following story is a story related to me by my grandfather; told to him directly from Sam's mouth, and the accounts of others who claimed "to know". The Story is allegedly true, however something extra can be expected in any story passed down from a Grandfather to his Grandson to his Grandson. Additionally the story relates to Sam's own exploits during the Civil War.**

The story goes that PVT Samuel G. Eaves, CSA and his step brother PVT William T. Flake, CSA, both of Company D. 11th Mississippi Cavalry, were on picket duty in a heavily forested area. Sam gave no location in the story, however from the information known concerning the duties of the 11th Mississippi Cavalry it would have been in Georgia. The encounter would likely have occurred during Sherman's march to the Sea.

They were silently standing behind a large oak tree along a wagon road. The wagon road had a typical patch of grass running between the two beaten paths taken by the wheels. Every once in a while you could hear the murmurs of other soldiers in the distance. They were not wise to make noise in the woods on picket duty. The Yankees were not to be taken lightly on this march.

The sun had just passed beneath the trees at the edge of the forest, but it was not yet pitch black. Vegetation in the forest was green, though it would be turning brown and yellow soon. The men could see each others breath, and the relief from the late summer heat was the slight cold they now cursed. The disease subsided greatly in the winter. Neither of them caught Malaria, but they were some of the only ones. South Georgia was full of it in the summer. Many had died.

William heard a rustle coming up the road in the twilight. It was a lone Yankee soldier, obviously disoriented on pickets. Many of the soldiers in the 11th were known to talk to and trade goods with Yankees on picket duty, however this unlucky Yankee had met two that did not. It was different for some of the Men in the 11th. They no longer looked at the Yankees in Georgia as former countrymen. They looked at them as persons who were burning the houses of old women, and killing their livestock and crops, sealing starvation this winter. Sherman, and his men should be hanged.

Being aware of why the Yankee was not overly worried that he was stumbling around in the dusk near Confederate and Union lines, Sam and Bill began discussing what they should do. It would not be right to shoot him from behind the tree, which would be easy enough to do. That would be near murderous, due to the fact the Yankee wasn't likely looking for a fight.

In the spirit of his upbringing and a twisted bravado, still very present in the area where Sam and Bill grew up, he grasped his rifle and walked out into the road. The Yankee still did not see him.

Sam spoke up and said, "Hey Yank, take your best shot". He then turned his left shoulder towards the Yank. Startled, the Yankee fired a wild shot into the trees overhead, and turned and ran down the road back towards his own lines. Nearly simultaneously Sam and Bill fired their muskets, dropping the Yank in the middle of the road. It was then they realized this Yank was not really alone. The darkness of the forest lit up with 15 to 20 muskets, all firing in their direction.

Bill and Sam sneaked through the night to the 1st Sergeants location where they reported the large concentration of Union Troops in the woods. Of course, by the time they reached the location everyone knew that there had been musket fire in that direction. The 1st Sergeant pulled all the pickets back one hundred yards for the night. No need getting the boys killed in the night uselessly.

Sam and Bill are buried next to each other under Confederate Headstones in Eaves Cemetery near Louisville, MS.

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