

# FIRST BATTLE AT RICHMOND, KENTUCKY

## DURING THE CIVIL WAR

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Company "D" of the 69th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers was organized about August 9, 1862 and went into camp near Richmond, Indiana. where we remained for a few days, then we were ordered to Indianopolis and were mustered into the United States Service by General Carrington, then armed and equipped. William A. Bickel being appointed our Colonel, Stout our Lieu, Colonel, Walterhouse, Major, and Oren Perry Adjutant. We were sent via Louisville, Ky to Lexington, Ky, where we remained but a few days when we were ordered to Richmond, Ky, some 25 miles further south. Just as we were leaving Lexington a Cincinnati man named Korff who claimed he was in the service, but who had really resigned from the 2nd Ohio under pressure, was assigned by General Reymonds to the command of the 69th. Colonel Bickel being detained at home to organize the 86th. Because of Lieu Colonel Stout then in command. On arriving at Richmond, Ky, we went into camp and on August 28th the Company "D" was sent out on picket duty for the first time at about 9:00 A:M, relieving another company who was there on the picket. About noon Metcalf's cavalry brought in two prisoners and delivered them to Captain Ross to take care of and reported Kirby Smith advancing in force some miles in distant. The prisoners were an old man and his son, a big stout looking fellow. They complained of being very hungry and ask to be sent to a house about one-half mile in the rear to rest and get some thing to eat. Captain Ross detailed comrade Jerry Bly and myself to take the prisoners to the house and guard them untill further orders.

When we arrived at the house the old man made his wants known and while the Negroes were getting dinner the man of the house brought from the cellar some Peach Cordial which comrade Bly pronounced the best he had ever tasted. Soon after the prisoners had eaten and we were all resting on the porch in front of the house comrade <sup>Bly said</sup> if I would guard the prisoners he would go to the orchard and get some

peaches. Soon after he had gone the youngest prisoner became restless, saying he was tired of sitting. He got up and began to walk back and forth past me. I noticed he was casting sly glances at my gun as though he could use it if he had it, and for fear he would get my gun I invited him to take a seat, which he did very reluctantly. About this time Comrade Bly came in with a haversack of peaches and a large warm corn pone which he said he had bought of the negroes, but I always thought Jerry found it. We were soon relieved of our prisoners and returned to our post. During the night Sergeant J.N. Cropper came to our post under some excitement and reported Rebel cavalry in our immediate front, but upon careful examination they were reported to be a drove of mules in a woodland pasture. Nothing more of interest occurred during the night and we were relieved about 9:00 A:M, and returning to camp. About 2:00 P:M we noticed a carrier ride hurriedly into camp and going directly to our Colonel's headquarters he delivered his orders and disappeared as quickly as he came. All now was excitement, the long roll was beat on drums, the Regimental Officers were quickly in the saddle, the men were called into line hurriedly and two days rations and 80 rounds of cartridges issued to each man. General Hanson now rode along our lines, he told us he had never lost a battle yet, and boasted more of his generalship than we did afterward. All now being in readiness the order was given to march and we passed quickly from our camping grounds onto the Pike, and turned south on the double, quick and marched south but, a short distance when the booming of cannon in our front made us believe that it was cavalry and not mules that comrade Cropper had seen the night before. We pushed rapidly on driving the enemy before us, we passed a little town called Rogerville about dark and filed off to the left of the Pike and layed down on our arms to rest untill morning. The next morning we were up before day light trying to make coffee for breakfast and after a scanty meal we were called into line again and had hardly reached the Pike and the head of the column turned south when the boom of cannon and the bursting of a shell over our heads informed us we had not far to go to find the enemy, but we pressed forward when the Rebels opened out on us in earnest and we turned to the right and formed in line of battle just south of a

little brick church. The firing had become very hot, when our brave Colonel called Adjuant Perry to him and told Perry that General Manson had sent for him for consultation and he wanted the Adjuant to look after the Regiment untill his return ( I will here say that Perry was all the Regimental Officer we had that had ever seen any service, he having served about one year in the Army of the Potomas). Korff put spurs to his horse and galloped to the rear, which was the last we saw of him during the fight. Perry immediately informed Lieu, Colonel Stout of Korff's action, then Colonel Stout and Major Waterhouse turned the command over to Perry as neither of them had any experience in military affairs and they cheerfully and loyally received orders from Perry and tried to make up in splendid courage what they lacked in military tactics. Both of them were severely wounded in less than half an hour.

The battle was now raging terribly on both sides, the cannon firing from the enemy being particularly severe. I will use Perry's own words for he says " I had an order to march by the left and take a new position and then began the movement under a terrific fire that made us famous for the time and set the papers to voicing our praise all over the country. It took a splendid exhibition of nerves on the part of raw recruits and I have never ceased to be proud of it ) !! He further says " only a couple of months ago I picked up a Saturday Evening Post published at Philadelphia and under the head of what raw troops can do was an account of this change of position under fire by the 69th. Indiana claiming that it was never excelled by any veteran troops in the world". Perry further says, "when we had gained this new position the Rebels seemed to come up out of the earth by the thousands. I had orders from General Manson to hold the place at all hazzards. We did so for some time when by flank movement of my own accord because we had no support of any kind on our left this change of front and reforming the lines was something that has always given me special pleasure for I really can't see how the 69th men could have done it better on an open field and no body shooting at us" . During this movement Adjuant Perry was severly wounded and his horse was killed. In a short time the promised re-inforcements arrived of three or four

Regiments led by General Manson in person. To use Perry's own words, "Manson was drunk as a lord and crazy as a loon" !! He came charging our rear and Perry ran forward and did all he could to turn him from his course and make him understand the situation. It only resulted in his nearly riding our Adjutant Perry down and breaking up our Regiment which had been up to this time under good discipline and ready to obey orders no matter what they were, but with a terrible foe in front and misguided frauds led by a howling drunkard with fixed bayonets charging our rear there was nothing left to do, but to break and run and Adjutant Perry says, "away we went every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost". Perry being wounded turned and fled to the west being joined by Lieu Lacey and several others when they ran into the 48th Tennessee, and were captured with about 40 or 50 others who were trying to make their escape in that direction. The other part of the Regiment came back towards Richmond in bad order for about two miles when our officers succeeded in calling us to a halt and reformed us in line of battle again. We now found our loss had been very heavy in killed and wounded. Major Waterhouse was badly wounded in the thigh and was bleeding badly, but he took charge of the Regiment and stayed with us to the last. The enemy were now seen advancing in double column and a Battalion of Metcalf's Cavalry was thrown forward as skirmishers, but they fired but one volley then wheeled about face and dashed back through our lines throwing us in some disorder, but we soon rallied and poured volley into the enemy which had the effect of bringing them to a halt and they seemed to advance with more caution, but seeing our selves badly out flanked our Major ordered us to retreat which we now did in good order, falling back slowly at every step. General Manson now rode up and ordered us to fall in behind the only gun we had left of a Michigan Battery which we did and were retreating in good order and nearing the town of Richmond when we were met by General Nelson and an aid who rode quickly up to Manson and ask what Regiment that was( I will remark that the 69th was all of the Regiment or part of the Regiment that was retreating in any kind of order ). Manson replied "the 69th Indiana. Nelson said, Bully for the 69th Indiana !! " Boys, I have twenty thousand men in 15 minutes

to march if you will hold your ground, and the day will be ours ". The boys cheered him and he ordered us to turn to the left and form in the line of battle just south of the cemetery. As he galloped forward to select the ground for us to form on, one of the staff officers rode up to Major Waterhouse and asked him "whey the H--- don't you keep up with the General". The Major replied, "I'am wounded Sir". Some of the boys called to him, if he did not let the Major alone they would shoot the Pumkin blossoms off his shoulders. We were now formed in line of battle and Company D was not thrown forward as skirmishers to meet the over powering enemy, but we held our ground as lond as possible, falling back slowly and contesting every inch of ground and fighting only as soldiers can fight, who are driven to desperation. We had now been driven back to our Regiment and the boys opened on the enemy all along the line. Our Michigan gun here fired her last shot and was out of amunition, she limbered up and left us to fight it out. I now found I had fired my last cartridge and tried to borrow some of the boys, but they told me there was plenty in a wagon just in the rear. I ran back to the opposite side of the wagon and filled my cartridge box, where I found several of the boys doing the same and I quickly resumed my place in line. But, I thought Nelson's 15 minutes was surely there by this time. The Rebels were now pressing us sorely on every side and the boys were fighting for all that was in their power, but at last we were forced to give way, which we did with more speed than grace and we went into the town of Richmond, every fellow for himself and to add to our discomfort the citizens set into firing at us from upper windows and open doors, even women throwing iron skillets and stove wood to help us along a little, but we continued to retreat for about a mile north of town, when we found our selves directly in front of a battery of 6 mountain howitzers supported by Scott's Rebel cavalry which opened on us in a lively manner. The battery was on a hill on the west side of the Pike. On the east was a pond of water, into which General Nelson and Manson rode to water their horses, when the firing commenced both put spures to their horses and dashed down the Pike toward the enemy. When in about 100 yards of their line they shot Manson's horse from under him, he making a long running fall throwing the General heavily on the ground,

but Nelson ran straight through their lines where they were four deep across the Pike and they made no attempt to hinder him, though they were standing close enough to have cut his head off. The firing now became general on both sides at close range, when the boys on our side made a simultaneous rush for the battery and drove the Rebels back some distance and capturing the entire battery. This charge was made by all men of the Regiment with out any attempt at organization and was but the rush of a mob who were in a tight place and wanted out badly. By this time, it had begun to get dark and firing had ceased and I thought we had nothing to do but to walk out. I had thrown away my coat and haversack and lost my hat during the fight, but retaining my gun, cartridge box and canteen. And as I pressed forward slowly, being very tired I saw Jonnies old hat in the road, I picked it up and tried it on, but it was too big for me. I now picked up a blue cap, but discovered it was covered with blood, I picked some weeds and wiped it off, but discarded both hat and cap. Just then, some one ordered me to halt and surrender. I did as I was ordered !

At this point, the men of the 69th had been captured, and were now prisoners of the Rebels for the next three months. About the first part of November word came that all the men and wounded of the 69th would be released and sent back to Indianopolis, Indiana. No words can tell you how happy we were to be back home, again !!

By the latter part of November of 1862, Company D, of the 69th was being reorganized, armed and equipped. This time heading towards the south-west to Cairo, Illinois, where they would go aboard an old rotten Packett, and went down the Mississippi River to Memphis, Tenn. They would be fighting the Rebels again, this time in Arkansaw. They engaged in two battles the , Chickasaw Byou and Fort Arkansaw where the 69th won their first victorious battle !! After a few days of rest we, again went aboard the boat and went down the river to Youngs point. Our company had become badly reduced in number and many were wounded and sick. I was among the sick. We were sent up the river to various hospitals. I was discharged on April 20, 1863 at Indianopolis, Indiana.

( Read, Richard Manifee Hunt's second story on the battles of Fort Arkansaw and Chicasaw Byou ).