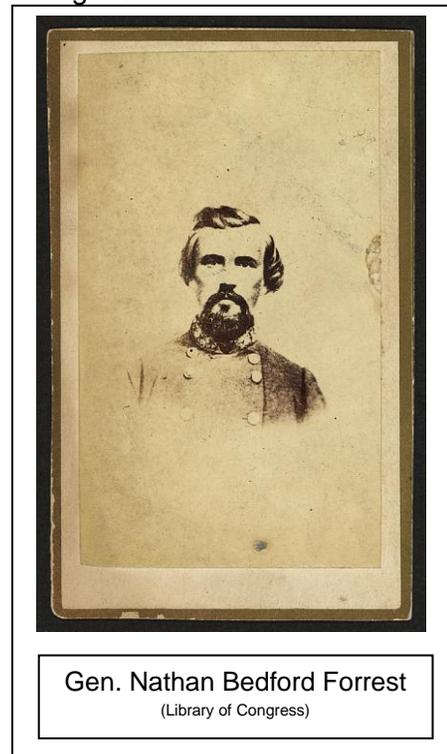


[The following is taken from *Uncle Seth Fought the Yankees* by James Ronald Kennedy. The narrator, Uncle Seth, is fictitious, but the information he tells came directly from accounts written by Southerners who were actual witnesses and published in journals in the late 1800s.]

General Forrest Fights Yankee Jack Ass Raiders

by James R. “Ron” Kennedy

Uncle Seth sat in a comfortable chair in the hotel lobby. He had made the trip from Hazlehurst, Mississippi to Little Rock, Arkansas for what he thought would be his last reunion of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV). He was still active for a man of 85 years, but he knew he could not make many more extensive trips. Billie Jean, the old Confederate veteran’s constant companion—he called her his overseer—had been sent to find Captain James Dinkins of New Orleans, who had promised to meet with Uncle Seth during the reunion. Captain Dinkins had been a member of General Nathan Bedford Forrest’s command and Uncle Seth wanted to get a full account of General Forrest’s capture of Yankee General Streight. Eventually Billie Jean returned with Captain Dinkins.



“Captain Dinkins,” Uncle Seth stood and extended his hand, “I have been looking forward to meeting you. I understand that you are one of the last surviving officers of General Forrest’s command.”

“Yes, Seth, I sometimes feel like the last leaf on a mighty oak tree in late fall with a strong cold wind blowing,” Captain Dinkins said as he and Uncle Seth sat down.

“Captain,” Uncle Seth began, “I have always been impressed with the action against Yankee General Streight. Why don’t you tell me and Billie Jean about that action?”

“That action was a prolonged running battle in which we were, as usual, greatly outnumbered by the Yankee invaders. At the end of the battle all we had were around 500 men, and the Yankees had over 1,500 men. Colonel Streight was at Tusculumbia, Alabama and had orders to march toward Rome, Georgia destroying everything in between, capturing Rome and destroying all railroads.”

“The Yankees outnumbered us, but this time the Yankees were short on horses, so they stole all the mules from the surrounding countryside and mounted many of their men on mules. Now, this was the origin of what we called the Yankee Jack Ass raid. We could always tell where the Yankees were because every morning the mules would begin braying—as mules tend to do when they expect to be fed. You should have been there—it was something to hear—over a thousand mules braying for their breakfast each morning.” Captain Dinkins could not restrain the humor and began laughing loudly while slapping his knee with his right hand.

“Now Billie Jean,” Uncle Seth interrupted the jovial moment, “you need to understand what it means when an invader steals all the plow mules—it means starvation for the civilians who are left with very limited means to grow food. Mules are essential for an agricultural people and without them there is no way to grow enough food to keep the people alive—and don’t ever doubt the fact that the starvation of the Southern people was just what the Yankee invader had in mind.”

After catching his breath, Captain Dinkins began again. “We began our efforts against them in the rugged mountains of northern Alabama and it ended just outside of Rome, Georgia, a distance of around 125 to 150 miles. By the time we got to Rome, we had ridden close to one hundred and fifty miles almost without stopping. Some of our men were going to sleep while still in the saddle and falling to the ground. We had almost no food, but we had put the fear of God in the Yankees, and we were determined to keep the fear of God in them until they surrendered.”

“I recall our first attack against the Yankee Jack-Asses—as we impolitely called them. It was night and General Forrest ordered us to dismount; the Yankees did not know we were close. We detached the horses from our artillery and pushed the cannons by hand. We got within a hundred and fifty yards of the invading United States forces before we said ‘hello.’ We opened with cannon and rifle fire as fast as we could fire and reload. The United States Army broke and fled the field in wild disarray. They left many of their dead and wounded behind and never even returned fire. We had put the ‘scare’ in them, and General Forrest knew that, once you did that, all you need to do was to keep the pressure on and the ‘scare’ will make their superior numbers meaningless.”

“General Forrest ordered us to mount and pursue the enemy. Their trail was littered with discarded supplies, broken equipment, wounded and dead Yankees. That was the way ole Abe Lincoln supplied us with our food and much need military supplies. It was around three o’clock in the morning and the civilians nearby were terror stricken by the sound of the battle. Many fled their homes and sought safety in the heavy underbrush and thick forest of the mountains. The civilians knew that if the Yankee invaders came close to their homes, the Yankees would burn them out and kill as many as they desired. General Forrest halted us and told us to grab a quick nap before we renewed the pursuit. While we were getting some much need rest, the General had ammunition brought up to us so we would be ready to begin the work again as soon as dawn began to break in the eastern sky. When daylight dawned, we had been without food for more than two days, but we began the pursuit with renewed vigor.”

“General Forrest took his escort and one squadron of the 4th Tennessee Regiment and, moving rapidly, reached Blountsville around eleven that morning. Imagine our surprise when we found Yankee Jack Ass raiders who had halted to rest thinking that they were safe. We drove the Yankee pickets in and as the Yankees fled, they set fire to their supply wagons. The Yankees headed off toward Gadsden, without offering to put up a fight and with General Streight at the head of the column—he wasn’t running—no, he was leading a parade toward Gadsden!” Once again, Captain Dinkins was enjoying the humor of his enemy’s humiliation.

“Now, never one to waste an opportunity to resupply at Lincoln’s expense, General Forrest ordered a group of his men to put the fire out and save the supplies in the wagons the Yankees had so thoughtfully left for us. When General Forrest saw that the Yankees were not intending to make a stand, he returned to see about ‘his’ supplies. A number of men were working feverishly to extinguish the fires and remove the supplies to safety—all except for their lieutenant who was sitting on his horse observing his men at work. General Forrest rode up to the lieutenant and inquired why he was not helping the men to save ‘my supplies’ to which the lieutenant replied, ‘Because I am an officer.’ General Forrest’s face turned bright red as he drew his sword and loudly declared with numerous oaths, unspeakable in polite company, that he would show him what he thought of a man who was more concerned about his status than ‘my supplies.’ To avoid the General’s sword, the lieutenant leaped from his horse and ran to help extinguish the fire and save the General’s supplies.”

“After resupplying, with the loss of very little time, General Forrest renewed the pursuit. We were relentless in our pursuit—every time we passed a burned home or civilians who had been robbed by the army of the United States, we were even more determined to deliver justice to our country’s invaders. We overhauled the Yankees before they reached the Black Warrior River; about ten miles from Blountsville, and a running fight began. The ford at the Black Warrior River was rocky, steep and rather dangerous even when time was of no matter—but with us at their rear and closing fast—time was of essence for the Yankees. Before all had crossed the river, we were upon them and captured a number of them, causing many of their pack mules to drown in the river. Poor creatures it was a shame. I’m a-talking about the mules of course.”

“Oh, I forgot to tell you about the teenage girls who captured several Yankees and brought them to us. We were about a mile from the Black Warrior River, pushing the Yankees hard, when we noticed three or four blue-clad soldiers, unarmed and walking toward us. Behind them were two young girls riding two of the Yankee’s horses and leading the other horses, Yankee rifles slung over their young shoulders and each with a loaded Springfield caped, cocked and ready to fire. All pointed directly at the Yankees—who were marching meekly

toward us. The very sight caused us all to halt and burst out in loud laughter—no doubt adding even more humiliation to the heretofore proud and arrogant Yankee invaders. It seems that the Yankees came to the young girls and told them that they could not continue fighting night and day and would prefer to surrender to any Southerner who would accept their surrender—‘we just want to rest’ was their reasoning. These brave little girls wore homespun dresses and were barefoot, but clean, neat and well mannered. General Forrest relieved them of their prisoners and told them to keep the horses they were riding—which looked as if they could hardly hold the weight of young girls. The horses were probably as glad to surrender as the Yankees.”

“After the fight at Black Warrior River, General Forrest ordered a short five-hour rest more to allow food to be brought up to the horses. See, General Forrest knew we soldiers would not let exhaustion or lack of food stop us, but our horses needed rest and food—without them we could not keep the pressure on the invaders. The General was everywhere, looking after the provisions of food for horses and ammunition for his men. I don’t believe he slept at all during this entire running fight. Shortly after midnight, he ordered us to begin our pursuit again. The Yankees destroyed every bridge they crossed in an effort to slow us down, but it had little effect. We were in hot pursuit, headed toward Wills Creek, which is about fifteen miles at the far end of Wills Valley. This was where the Yankees were resting and feeding their mules and the few horses they had. They had no food for the men because the blue-clad invaders, in their haste to avoid Confederate justice, had abandoned most of their food, and we were more than glad to receive it. Unfortunately, it was being picked up by the units following behind us—we were too busy pushing Yankees to stop and pick up abandoned Yankee food. When Colonel Streight realized that we were attacking him yet again, he left without ceremony; he and his troops just grabbed what they could and headed in the direction opposite from the sound of that damnable Rebel Yell. We captured twenty-five Yankees and a hundred negroes, some of whom were dressed in Yankee uniforms, an abundance of forage and ten pack mules.”

“By this time, we were all but worn out after three days and nights of constant moving and fighting. We were beginning to show signs of exhaustion and perhaps a desire to stop the

pursuit. General Forrest would not for a moment consider letting his quarry off so easy. But he knew the limits of human endurance—even Southerners fighting to protect their homes and families could reach the limit of human endurance. But the General knew us well and he judged us yet able to go the last mile. Then Providence gave the General the perfect opportunity to encourage us. Several ladies whose husbands and friends had been seized and carried off by the Yankees appeared and filled our camp with their sad wails and appeals to restore their kinsmen. Their appeals had the desired effect on us that the General knew it would, and we were all immediately filled with a burning desire to get at the Yankee enemy and rain down on him the justice he deserved. The General called us together and told us he intended to put an end to this group of Yankee invaders, and he knew we were just the men he needed at this crucial moment to do the job. He called for all who were willing to follow him to come forward, and we all rushed to his side. The women shouted encouragements and thanks to us as we rode in pursuit of our Yankee enemies. We moved off at a gallop, five hundred strong with only two artillery pieces to support our attack against over 1,500 Yankees.”

“We overhauled the Yankees again. It was around ten o’clock when General Forrest called for fifty volunteers of the best mounted men with whom he and his escort charged headlong into the rear of the Yankee column, and facing hot fire we pressed the Yankees. This turned into another running battle for around ten miles. When the Yankees decided to make another stand, I think it was around Black Creek, and after a heavy skirmish, Colonel Streight crossed the creek and burned the bridge. It was a deep, fast-flowing creek and no doubt the Yankees thought they would be safe. It was here that yet another young sixteen-year-old Southern girl came to her country’s defense. Over her mother’s objection, she took General Forrest’s hand as he helped her up on to his horse behind the General and began to guide the Confederate forces to a ford that would allow us to get safely across the creek. The girl’s mother was not concerned about Yankee retribution--everyone faced that threat--but she was concerned about what people would say about her young daughter riding away with strangers. General Forrest calmed the mother’s anxiety and promised to return the young girl safely to her

mother. Yes, she did her country a great favor. Her name is Emma Sanson and the State of Alabama gave her a reward of several acres of public land, several years ago, in recognition of her service to the Confederate cause.”

“After fording Black Creek, we rode hard and soon reached Gadsden, which was about three miles from the ford. General Forrest sent couriers ahead to Rome, Georgia to warn the people there and tell them to call out all available militia, which was mostly old men and young boys, and hold the Yankee invaders in place until he arrived. General Forrest rushed forward with three hundred men, the other two hundred, along with two artillery pieces, were following some distance behind us. The enemy, however, after being checked before Rome, Georgia, knew we had to be coming up behind them. They set up a very well-arranged ambush and had it been sprung on any other commander it might have worked, but not with General Forrest. The General led his escort in a vigorous flanking attack that caused the Yankees to fold and the remaining Yankees fled. They left some fifty wounded and dead on the field. We had six wounded and lost two men.”

“During the engagement, Sergeant William Haynes of the 4th Tennessee was captured and taken before Colonel Streight who demanded to know how many men Forrest had coming against him. The Confederate prisoner, without hesitation, conjured up several phantom brigades that had supposedly been attached to Forrest’s command for the purpose of capturing the Yankee Jack Ass Raiders. When Streight heard the news, he exclaimed ‘Oh my God, he has us now!’ During the night, Sergeant Haynes made his escape and returned to inform General Forrest about his phantom army. By sunrise on May 3rd, the Confederates from Gadsden, 200 men and two artillery pieces, had re-united with the main force—giving General Forrest 500 men and two artillery pieces to face-off against over 1,500 Yankees and a battery of artillery consisting of six pieces. But we had put the ‘scare’ in them, and we had General Forrest leading us.”

“The invaders had been in full flight all night and by sunrise on May 3rd, they were pretty much spent—their fighting vigor all but gone—worn out by a handful of hungry ill-clad but patriotic Southerners. We had to ford the Coosa River because the Yankees had burned the bridge. We dismounted and hand-carried the ammunition chest across just like we did at Black Creek. When the horses pulling the two artillery pieces across went into the river, the pieces went completely underwater, but our horses pulled them through. Before long, we were once again hot on the trail of our blue-coated enemies. We once again overhauled the Yankees. It was around 9 AM, and they were busy eating their breakfast and drinking their coffee—thinking of course that they were safe because they had burned the bridge across the Coosa River. With shouts of Rebel Yells and well-placed gun fire, we convinced the Yankees to abandon their dining experience and try out their running shoes. They left us hot coffee, a number of mules and horses, saddles and other spoils. Their commander rallied his men on a ridge in an open field, but his men were greatly demoralized. It was at this time that General Forrest demonstrated that a bluff in the hands of an expert can take a straight.” Captain Dinkins again chuckled at his own joke.

“General Forrest sent forward his men as skirmishers on the left and right, while he and his escort threatened an attack on the center of the Yankee line. He ordered a cease fire and sent Captain Henry Pointer forward under a flag of truce offering Colonel Streight an opportunity to surrender and avoid the ‘needless destruction of your command.’ Colonel Streight requested a meeting with General Forrest, and in the meeting the Yankee insisted that he be allowed to see for himself that he was indeed hopelessly outnumbered. General Forrest replied that he would not insult his men, who had bested the Yankee invader at every encounter during this lengthy running engagement, by having them reviewed by a Yankee. During their conversation his men would come up and report the arrival of another phantom unit and ask General Forrest where he wanted them placed. Colonel Streight was also counting the arrival of each new artillery piece, but in reality, they were the same two pieces that would make a wide circle and come back into the Colonel’s view. The artillery maneuver was done so well that Colonel

Streight asked General Forrest how many artillery pieces he had at his disposal to which General Forrest replied 'Enough to destroy you and your command in thirty minutes. It would have been sooner than that, but the rest could not keep up.' While Colonel Streight continued to hesitate, General Forrest ordered his men to prepare for a full assault to commence in fifteen minutes. Hearing this, the Yankee colonel asked to return to his command and consult his officers. On his way back to his line, Colonel Streight was shocked to see several of his officers coming toward him under another flag of truce. They quickly informed him that his men were exhausted and had no desire to continue the struggle. Colonel Streight then surrendered. The Yankees surrendered six artillery pieces, two colonels, one lieutenant colonel, four majors and around 1,500 men with their captains, lieutenants and non-commissioned officers." Captain Dinkins finished his story with the enthusiasm and pride of one who had been there and knew the horrors of war and the dedication of the men who wore the gray in the War for Southern Independence.

§ Deo Vindice §

On the Skirmish Line with Uncle Seth

Yankee General Sherman compliments Southern fighting skills: "War suits them, and the rascals are brave, fine riders, bold to rashness, and dangerous subjects in every sense. They are the most dangerous men which this war has turned loose on the world. When the resources of *their* country are exhausted, we must employ them. They are the best cavalry in the world." [Emphasis added].

Notice how the Yankee, during the War, was already planning to make use of his conquered foe as soon as the War was over. Even before the end of his efforts to incorporate the Southern people into his newly created empire, the arrogant Yankee looks forward to the day when he can use Southern blood in his future conquests. This is the way of empire: They eventually pacify the conquered peoples and use their sons as cannon fodder in future imperialistic wars. The Federal Empire has followed the same path.



James R. Kennedy is the author of many books about the War for Southern Independence and subjects related to it. To order the popular book of short stories about Uncle Seth, type “Uncle Seth Fought the Yankees” into any search engine or visit VictoryFlagsAndMore.com for autographed hard back copies at low prices. Mr. Kennedy is Director of Promotions for the Heritage Operations Committee, Sons of Confederate Veterans. He is a leader of the Southern Victory Campaign and the “supply base” at www.MakeDixieGreatAgain.com.