

Letter From Street, John Kennedy written Saturday, April 12th, 1862

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Head Quarters Army of the Mips Camp Corinth April 12th 1862 No 14 (fourteen)

My Dear Ninnie, Saturday April 12th – We have had a big fight and gained a glorious victory. We also have news of another victory for the south at Cumberland gap – our loss but slight. We have also received large supplies of ammunition and 65000 Enfield rifles from Europe, by three large steamers which have run the blockade, Many of the arms have been sent here. They are the finest guns I have ever seen – will shoot from three to seven hundred yards – have what is called a saber bayonet – can be used either as a saber or bayonet. We also have news of a glorious victory in New Mexico by Gen Sibley’s Brigade of Texans, over the Federal forces in that victory, which I suppose you have heard before this. Capt Morgan, called the marion of sixty two, (of whom you have doubtless seen accounts) with his little guerilla band, has since the fall of fort Donalson and the entering of the yankees into Tenn, killed and captured 1700 up to last week. He is a terror to the yankees. Enclosed I send you a piece of a letter which I had written to send you before the battle of Shiloh – it is very much soiled. I carried it althro’ the fight and want you to keep it as a sacred relic. I shall now proceed to give you an account of the battle as it occurred under my observation - of course every man has his own tale to tell, but I shall confine my self to facts leaving out exagerated reports – you may have this published as it will save me from writing to many friends who are anxious to hear some account of the battle -

The battle of Shiloh 1st Day

We had for several weeks past been concentrating troops at Corinth Miss, and had fortified that place ready to receive the enemy – who had in the mean time landed a large force on Tenn river near Shiloh Church, 20 miles north of Corinth. I think that Gen Johnson came to the conclusion that the enemy would not attack him in his strongly fortified position and on the third of April he salied forth with a force of I think not more than 65000. On the evening of the 4th a slight skirmish took place between the enemy’s pickets and our advance guard, resulting in the loss of 5 men killed and 14 or 15 wounded on our side and 84 wounded, two killed and 15 prisoners on the side of the enemy. On the fifth we marched up within a mile of the enemies camp and formed a line of battle and slept on our arms all night. All was done silently and without the beating of a drum – and early Sunday morning April 6th at day light the attack was made – which was a complete surprise to the enemy – they had no idea that there was a “rebel” near them, more than a few scouts, as we afterward learned from prisoners. Our Regt was in Gen Andersons brigade and was posted on the extreme left wing of the army near the centre of the brigade. We marched up to the brow of a hill near the enemy’s line and delivered our fire and then retreated to the foot of the hill which covered us from a tremendous shower of ball grape shot and shell from one of the enemies batteries stationed on the opposite hill. After reloading we passed over the hill from which we had retreated and formed in the hollow below, while the enemies cannon were pouring into our ranks the missels of death and distruction. We were then ordered to take the battery at the point of the bayonet. We made three unsuccessful attempts and were forced to retire from the fact that the Regts on our right and left fled – and Tex could not do all by herself. Just at this critical juncture a company of the Washington Artillery came to our relief and soon silenced the enemys battery. We pushed forward, while the enemy fled before us after passing their first encampment – they made a stand at their second and planted two batteries in an open place where they could have fare sweep at is, one in rear of the other and a little to the right. We were ordered to take them at the point of the bayonet - again the New Orleans Confederate guards and another La Regt to our left deserted us – but the 9th Tex here covered herself with glory; for in the face of all this she pushed forward and drove the enemy from their first battery and took and held it. Here it was that Jimmie Long was wounded – he was shot thro’ the foot and thigh – a braver boy I never saw he fell at the head of his company; he had only fired two rounds. I was standing by his side when he fell – he was my file leader. I had the flap of my cartridge box torn off at the same moment that Jimmie was shot. After we drove the enemy from their first battery we charged the second; in this charge Jim Smith had his thigh broke by a grape shot and was shot in the other leg after he fell. Jim Smith acted cooly and bravely – in fact all of our boys fought like tigers. The enemy contested the ground more strongly in this charge. Our Regt held them in check until other Regts came up when we drove then from the second battery. Our Regt now had rest for a hour or two – during the day we were in four or five other charges and did good execution. The battle lasted until late in the evening. We drove the enemy clear beyond their encampment and had it not been for their gun boats, under which they took shelter we could have taken the last man. We took the last battery they had but one by evening. We moved out all the comissary stores cannon and guns that we could that night which we had taken during the day – and occupied the enemy’s camp during the night notwithstanding they shelled us from their gun boat, all night. I got lost from the Regt about dark – and came up to where Capt Morgan the marion of 62 was camped. I went into his tent, and asked him if he was the Marion of ’62 –

said he was – but was not worthy of the name. I remarked to him that I had called to see what kind of looking man he was, that it was Texas curiosity, and he must excuse me – he said “certainly” and invited me to take a seat. He is a fine portly looking man – has a soldier like bearing and from his appearance one would judge that he was a human man.

We took some say 5 and some 6 thousand prisoners Sunday evening. I think I should be safe in saying that we took at least 4000 prisoners. I was so tired that I could scarcely stand on my feet. So I didn't take time to hunt up the Regt, but left Capt Morgans tend and I an Ark soldier took possession of a Dutch Cap's tent – had nice cotts and plenty of blankets. I never slept sounder in my life. We all lived like kings – the yankees had every thing good to eat – English peas put up so to keep fresh, roasting years – chees, crackers, ham, eggs, butter, cakes, coffee, molasses, fine white sugar and a host of other things too numerous to mention – besides fine nice mellow apples. I had eaten nothing since morning and being quite hungry you may depend I did the eatables justice.

Battle of the 2nd Day

On Sunday night the yankees were reinforced with 30,000 and renewed the battle Monday morning at daylight. Our brigade was not engaged until about eight o'clock. We were first drawn up in line of battle in a hollow and ordered not to fire until we saw the enemy rise the brow of the hill some 75 yds in front. We lay in this position about half an hour and during this time two companies of our Regt were deployed as skirmishers, soon after they returned Gen Anderson sent to our Regt for a sargent and two privates to act as scouts to find out the position of the enemy Sargent Lewis O.P. Clack and myself were sent. We went up the ravine in which we were lying and found that the enemy were behind breast works made by trees which they had felled. We were ordered to charge them. Again the Regts on our right and left deserted us. When Col Stanley drew his sword, waved it over his head and cried to the Texas boys to follow him. We gave a long loud demon – like yell and rushed forward to what seemed immediate destruction: for minnie balls, grape shot and shell flew over our heads as thick as hail stones – but we faltered not and soon gained the breast works and drove the enemy from their own position. They had to retreat right thro' an open field and you may depend we gave the subjugations _____ as they fled in utter confusion. At another time we made a charge and drove the enemy before us for some distance when our lines seemed to falter. Gen Anderson rode up to Col Stanley and asked him if he could get the collors borne forward? Col Stanley told him he could and he rushed forward seized the collors himself and galloped up with in 50 yds of the enemy's lines and planted them than rode round and faced the enemy by this time our boys were up with him, it seemed to put new life into the whole brigade, for soon all the Regts were with us and again we drove the enemy before us. Bro L.V. Brown was killed in this charge, was shot thro' the neck. Capt Dickson was also killed. Late in the evening I began to think that I should never see home again the enemy were pressing us on ever side – my gun got so it would not shoot. I stoped to pick powder in it and it fired, I reloaded and again it refused to fire I picked powder in it again, raised up and fired – judge of my surprise when looking round there was not a man to be seen the whole brigade had retreated in double quick time and I was left alone. I commenced to retreat in more than double quick time. I had not gone far however before a wounded soldier called to me to stop and give him water. I could not refuse him – he next asked me to pour some on his head which I did – and placed his knapsack under his head he begged me not to leave him but poor fellow I could do him no more good. I seized a belgian rifle ramed a cartridge down her and by this time the enemy was in 50 yds of me, I laid my gun up between the forcks of a tree and fired. I did not stop to see what harm I did but I left as fast as my heels could carry me. It really seemed to me that I could have thrown up my hand and caught it full of balls. I have given you only a sketch of what I saw and experienced myself. It would be impossible for me to tell you all that I was and realized. The groans and cries of the dieing and wounded – the mutilated bodies of the dead, the scean of death and destruction which every where met your eye – beggars all discription. Suffice it to say we had two of the most desperate days fight that has ever been fought in this confederacy. Inch by inch the enemy contested every foot of ground. We whiped them badly on Sunday. and if we had had them away from their gun boats could have completely routed them. We got the best of the fight on Monday, but the victory was not so complete as on Sunday owing to the fact that we and 30,000 fresh troops to contend with, Our troops were completely exhausted on Monday evening and our Generals thought best return to our camps. We carried 30 pieces of the enemy's artillery off the field and spiked about 50 from the fact that we could not take them off it having rained the night before and was raining when we left the field at 4 o'clock making the road almost impassible – we carried off a large amount of guns blankets clotheing provisions etc. Monday night some who were left behind set fire to their tents. I never saw such destruction of property in my life. I lost everything I had, I lost the cap you made me in a charge but got a yankees in its place. I got my pants torn all to pieces. The battle was fought in a hilly woods country. The battle ground is about 5 miles long and about 3 miles wide. It rained on us all night Monday night. The army came out for about 5 miles in perfect order when ever man took care of himself. I stoped having lost both shoes in a mud whole, built me a fire and set up all night without a coat or a blanket – and it rained all night. I reached camps Tuesday evening having walked all day thro' mud and water up to my knees, barefooted. Strange to say it never even gave me a bad cold. I went back on Thursday to bury the dead. I wrote you a note before I left and told you I would give you particulars when I returned. Our pickets are within two miles of the battle ground besides two brigades of infantry – Generals Breckenridge and Jackson's. We could not pass our pickets under any pretence whatever so we returned without doing anything for our dead – some said that a sufficient force had been left to bury them. I can't tell whether they were buried at all or not. I went in three miles of the battle ground. When I left Thursday morning Gen Breckinridge was anticipating an attack, but I think that their army is so completely disorganized that it will be some time before they will give us another fight. We had no yankees to fight – they were all western men – the flower of their army. Our killed and wounded is variously estimated at from 5 to 10 thousand. I should say judging from our own Regt which is a fair sample – 7000. While that of the enemy is at best three times that number. I am sadisfied that I saw at least three dead yankees to one confederate. We have taken Gen Prentiss prisoner besides a number of Cols. We took I think in all 4000 prisoners. We never lost any prisoners except some straglers- never lost any one Regt. We

had 65000 men in the field. I took a prisoner Sunday evening he told me that they had between 150,000 and 180,000 men said he "We had two grand divisions and one smaller one". And then Sunday night they had heavy reinforcements to the amt it is said of 30,000. The road is strewn from here to the battle ground with public property. The roads are so bad we could not haul it. I never saw such roads in my life. It has faired of this evening, Sat even. April 12th – and looks like we might have fair weather for a while I hope we may. Gen Sidney A. Johnson was killed in the fight. I frequently when we would have time to rest give the wounded federals water and do all I could for their wounds. They seemed to be very thankful for it. One man was shot thro' the knee, I asked if I could do any thing for him he said he would like to have his leg bound up to stop the blood – he had no hankerchief. I took my own – then he saw that I was going to give him mine – he said "Don't, don't deprive yourself sir." I told him no, I was only acting out the principles of christianity – "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you," and that I was only displaying the spirit of a true southerner. Many of the wounded confessed that they were deceived in the southerners – said that from what they had been told they expected to be butchered when we came up to them. I told them that I was a Texan, and I believed the Texans had the worst name of all the Confederate troops but that they might expect the same treatment from all Texans that they got from me.

It would be difficult to mention all that acted coolly and bravely; for most of the boys were as deliberate as if they were shooting hogs. Arch Mayo passed thro' unhurt and was always at his post – and I think from the way he fired caused many a yankee to bite the dust. Will Long commanded Co A (Lieut Gains being absent from sickness) and was always at the head of the Co- was struck four times with spent balls but was not hurt. Jim Lyon was not in the fight – was at the Hospital at Iuka waiting on the sick. Three companies were absent on duty and were not in the fight – Hill's, McRunnel's and Dillard's. We only had about 225 men that were in the fight. We had 14 killed, 42 wounded and 11 missing out of the Regt. To sum up all in a few words the battle was a hard fought one – a bold stroke on our part to make the attack under all circumstances – right under the enemies gun boats and against such odds. But thanks to the all Supreme the result was glorious for the cause of the South. We achieved far more than we expected to.

Your affectionate Husband

J.K. Street

P.S. I send you this by Dr Lyon who leaves for Clarksville this evening he will mail it there to Paris