

MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



Loyal Legion Vignettes

*EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO AND INCLUDING
BRIGADIER GENERAL T.E.G. RANSOM'S DEATH
AT THE BERRYHILL HOUSE, ROME, GEORGIA, OCTOBER 29, 1864*



Brigadier General T.E.G. Ransom

By
Lieutenant Joseph D. Tredway, Staff of Late Brigadier General Ransom

[Submitted by Sandee Gylanders]
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Dear Mrs. Ransom,

General Ransom was taken sick with the diarrhoea while in command of the 17th Corps at East Point, near Atlanta, Georgia on the 30th of September 1864. The Campaign was then just opening and during the march to Fairburn and afterwards to Marietta he not only retained command but was so constantly on the saddle that he became quite unwell and at the latter place was induced to go to the hospital.

After he had remained there two days the Army was ordered North and, though not recovered the General insisted on accompanying it contrary to the advice of his physician. From this time forward he was obliged to ride in an ambulance and mounted his horse only when an engagement was expected or when he thought his personal attention was necessary. This occurred so frequently that he was sometimes in the saddle during the whole night and he constantly grew worse till at Resaca on the 15th, he had become dangerously sick and was again urged by his physician and friends to turn over the Command and remain behind. But as we were then skirmishing with the enemy he resolutely refused to do so saying that he believed a battle was pending which it was his duty to have a part.

At Ships Gap, Alabama on the 17th being again urged by his staff to return to Chattanooga he replied decisively *I will remain with my command till I leave it in my coffin.*

On the night of the 19th his disease had assumed such a dangerous character that he could no longer retain command, though he did not leave the Corp. As Gaylesville, Ala. during the night of the 20th his condition was so alarming that fears were entertained of his dying before morning. The next day however, he rallied and during the eight days the Army remained at Gaylesville he was apparently improving in health except that he hourly became weaker and was not, after our arrival there, able to leave his bed.

He slept but little and his suffering was almost constant but through out he was cheerful and uncomplaining and confident that he would recover. We all were hopeful of his recovery until the 27th when we were forced to believe his condition critical.

While at Gaylesville General Sherman called on the General and positively forbade his remaining with the Army saying that though a young man General Ransom had rendered very valuable services to the Country and that he must now be content to go North that he would keep a good position for him and gladly welcome him back when fit for duty.

On the 28th the as the Army was about to move it became necessary to take the General to Rome and as it was impossible for him to ride in an ambulance he was carried on a stretcher with Regt. As escort. The march of nine miles which we made that day did not seem to affect the General unfavorably, but on the contrary he, that night seemed to suffer less pain than for several days previously. I am confident that this journey in no way hastened his death. While on the march the next day (29th) his pulse became rapidly more feeble and his respiration quicker till at 11 o'clock A.M. we relinquished all hopes of his living and halted at the house of John Berryhill, 6 1/2 miles from Rome on the Alabama Road. Up to this time the General had expressed the belief that he would live and though I believe the announcement was totally unexpected by him, yet when Dr. Ormsby of the 45th Illinois, informed him at half past one that he was dying, he listened to him without betraying a particle of emotion either of surprise or fear, and replied that he was as well prepared to die then as he should be 40 years hence upon asking how long he would probably live, the Dr. said it might be ten hours and it might be but two or three and advised him if he had any communications to make it would be best to attend to them immediately. The General then called me to his bedside and with the utmost calmness and composure, without any hesitation and without departing from his usual manner of conversing, spoke as follows: *Tredway, tell my mother that my last thought will be of her, that I love her in dying as I have always loved her in health, give my love to my sister Kate, and to Dunbar and Eugene, also to the family of my Uncle Mr. Stancliff and that of Mrs. Gilson. I wish to be remembered to Norman Williams, to the families of Judge Dicky and Col. Wallace, to Mr. Osborne, Mr. Tucker, Mrs. Merrill, Mr. Duncan, Mr. and Mrs. Bridgeman, all my friends at Rene, McAges, to General Grant & Staff, Genl. Rawlins, Genl. Sherman & Staff, Genl. Howard & Staff & Genl. Logan & Staff.* The names of others he mentioned, I do not now remember, but know that he forgot scarcely one of his more intimate friends. He then said he wished his body buried in Chicago.

Here Capt. Doane of his staff endeavoured to revise his hopes of life by saying *General, you must not*

speak of death, you will be with us yet for many years.

The General turned towards him with a smile and said *Why, Dory, I am not afraid of death, I have faced it too many times to let it frighten me now.*

Subsequently, he said to Capt. Doane and myself, who during most of the time were the only persons present, *no, boys, I am not afraid to die, I do not like to die, but I am not afraid of it, I should have preferred to breathe my last on the battle field but as it is, I am dying in the line of duty.*

He thanked Dr. Ormsby for his services, expressing the belief that the Dr. had done everything for him which service and attention could do, and told his personal staff to select something of his as mementoes.

Saying he felt drowsy he asked the Dr. if he went to sleep he would ever wake again.

His efforts to sleep however, were unsuccessful as the spasms of pain which all the near approach of death had left him had now returned. It was after one of these he said, *There is nothing funny about this thing death.* General Carlin came in and he complimented him on his conduct in a recent engagement and told him to write to his brother Dunbar assuring him of his constant love.

After sometime he said *There is one thing of which I have not yet spoken, that is the future, I have often wished to know what there is for us in the here after, now I shall learn, but I have no fears for myself, I am not alarmed. As a soldier, I have always tried to do my duty and serve my Country well.* Sometime before this he had lost to a great extent the control of his features and spoke with difficulty, but his mind never for an instant wandered and up to the last moment he seemed to retain all his faculties.

What I have just written was I believe the last audible sentence he uttered. His words afterwards were apparently on the same subject but were inaudible. He laid for about an hour apparently conscious but unable to speak and drawing his breath with difficulty. At two o'clock and forty-five minutes he ceased to breathe.

There is every reason for believing that the General died a happy death - after he had become unable to speak, his face habitually wore a smile except when the spasms of pain contracted his features.

That the General's death caused the utmost sorrow throughout the Army of the Tennessee I need not say. Since the death of General McPherson no man has so completely possessed the affections of the Army as did General Ransom. When his death was announced to General Sherman he said, *I have lost an officer whose place I can not fill - I had intended General Ransom for a particular service for which he was peculiarly fitted.* He also said that he had recommended him in the highest terms for a Major General Commission.

The staff of the General mourn for him as a brother for they have lost one who was ever to them the kindest of Commanders, the best of friends.

J.D. Tredway
Staff of Late Brigadier General Ransom

Sources:

Undated Original Letter from Lt. Joseph Tredway, 23rd Wisconsin, to Mrs. Ransom. The Norwich Historical Society, Vermont.

Huffstodt, J. 1991. *The Story of W.H.L. Wallace, General T.E.G. Ransom, and their Old Eleventh Illinois Infantry in the American Civil War.* Heritage Books, Inc. (A typed copy of the undated letter was made available to Jim Huffstodt by Gladys Todd, now deceased).

Note, see also:

[Sherman, General W.T. 1884](#). *The Vermont Boy Who Volunteered in 1861, Served Bravely, was Wounded Grievously, and Died for the Union (Eulogy of General T.E.G. Ransom given before Ransom Post No. 131, Grand Army of the Republic, St. Louis, Missouri, June 20, 1884)*. Washington National Tribune, June 1884.

