

the

WAR

that never was

Chapter Eight by Kay Hively

Ethan was so tired from his trip to town that his parents let him sleep late. When he got up the next morning, chores were already done. Everyone was eating breakfast. Ethan was in no hurry to eat. When breakfast was finished he knew he would have to do his school work.

But his father surprised him by asking if Ethan would like to go up to the military camp. Ethan had almost forgotten about the honey war.

After breakfast, the two headed for the camp. They only had one saddle, so Ethan's father rode bareback on one horse. He also carried a sack of oats with him. He said since he didn't have to fight, he would donate feed for the soldiers' horses. He said everyone should always help soldiers.

As soon as Ethan and his father entered the honey woods, three men with guns told them to stop. Ethan was scared until he heard his father greet one of the men by name. After they said their names, Ethan and his father were free to ride on down the bee trace.

As they came close to the camp, Ethan heard men shouting. He could also hear guns being fired. Ethan stayed close to his father.

Soon they came to a big clearing. There Ethan saw many men. None of them were wearing uniforms and they weren't fighting. They seemed to be having a big party. Some of the men were asleep. Some were sitting around little fires, drinking from jugs. A few were having target practice, shooting at things they had hung in trees.

This was not what Ethan thought war would look like.

As he looked around the military camp, Ethan saw both of his uncles running across the clearing. Ethan was very glad to see them.

Uncle Tom and Uncle Albert invited them to sit down on a big log. Ethan's father asked how the war was going.

Uncle Albert said, it really wasn't going at all. About 1,000 Missourians had come to the border to fight he said. The Iowa boys had done the same.

But nobody really wanted to fight each other, Uncle Tom said. Instead of fighting, the soldiers just stayed in camp. They spent their time trying to keep warm.

In fact, Uncle Albert said, after dinner everyone was going to pack up and go home. Uncle Tom said that since no one wanted to fight, the men declared the honey war was over.

While his uncles were telling about the "war," Ethan's father was shaking with laughter. When his father stopped laughing, he told Ethan this was the first time anyone ever declared a war and nobody showed up! Even the kidnapped sheriff had been given a full escort into the Missouri camp and was having as much fun as anyone else.

Ethan and his father ate dinner with the "army," and then headed home. As they rode out of the woods they were followed by all the brave men who had come to fight the honey war – the war that never was.



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Classroom Extensions

Things to Think About and Do –

- Why do you think the family had only one saddle? What does "bareback" mean?
- The "honey war" actually happened in 1839. Do some research and find out how the dispute over the honey woods was settled.