

PATRIOTIC PALS TAILS OF THE CIVIL WAR

By Chris Stuckenschneider

CHAPTER 4: Stonewall, Pint-Sized Spitfire of a Pup

After the Battle at Shiloh, the South was feeling as low as a bird dog with a head cold. The war wasn't going as expected, and the loss at Shiloh stripped their sails.

The South needed a boost, and they got one. Onto the scene rode a great Southern leader, clear-eyed, purposeful, Major General Thomas Jonathan Jackson, who earned the nickname “Stonewall” at the first battle of Bull Run. He was a general of flawless moral character, respected by all, and held in high esteem by the legendary Robert E. Lee, who would become the Confederacy’s topnotch commanding general.

I learned about Gen. Jackson when we visited his home in Lexington, Va. The hospitable folks there allowed me to accompany Walt on the house tour, a kindness I acknowledged with a cool nose to their palms.

Thanks to Jackson, the Rebels racked up victories in the spring of 1862 when his army won a series of battles in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Union was trying to gain control of Richmond, but Jackson prevented reinforcements from getting to the capital of the Confederacy. The admiration and trust the troops had in their general helped them stand firm and repulse the North.

The story goes that one of the regiments with the Virginia Howitzers got an additional morale booster from a bouncy, shorthaired pup with a black-tipped tail.

The little dog sprinted out of nowhere, straight into the hearts of the battle-weary men.

They named the stray “Stonewall,” even though a gust of wind could have picked him up. The pooch never got very big, but he made a huge impact on the Richmond Howitzers, especially Sgt. John Van Lew McCreery, a kind gent Stonewall adopted as his master.

Now Sgt. John was handy-dandy—he could shoe a horse and craft a clock that chimed. Always in need of a project, the Sarge taught Stonewall a trick or two, an entertaining diversion in the downtime between battles. To everyone’s delight, McCreery fashioned a tiny pipe and taught Stonewall to sit straight up on his haunches and hold it between his teeth during roll call.

Stonewall wasn’t a trickster admired only for his antics. He also was a fierce fighter who wouldn’t back down. When the cannons and rifles roared and the shells whizzed and

exploded with a bang, he wouldn’t

take cover. No, he’d bark his head off and run this way and that as the Howitzers changed positions.

The soldiers had a real soft spot for their bitty Stonewall and worried that he’d get blown away, so this Rebel or that one would scoop him up, carry the pup under his arm or tuck him away in an empty ammunition box during the heat of battle.

Yapping, darting Stonewall’s reputation grew. Soon he became the stuff of legend, and stories about him infiltrated other camps like the dreams of mother’s pie cooling on the windowsill. Alas,



Pocket photograph of an unknown soldier from the Richmond Howitzers. *Library of Congress.*

those tales proved to be Stonewall’s downfall.

Another regiment in the Army of Northern Virginia wanted to claim Stonewall, and the pup became the object of a series of dog-nappings, sneaky crimes that almost led to “friendly fire” confrontations between the Howitzers and the Louisiana Creoles. The Howitzers got their treasured buddy back several times, but the Creoles didn’t give up. Finally they made off with the prized pup, and Stonewall was never heard from again.

There are a lot of tales that end like this from the Civil War—stories shrouded in mystery.

PAPER TRAINING



The Southern General Stonewall Jackson died as a result of an injury he suffered during the Civil War. Using an obituary in the newspaper as a model, write an obituary for Stonewall Jackson using as much factual information as you can gather with research.

Missouri GLEs: CA R1H, W2B, W2D, W2E, W3A; SS 3AI



Photo showing what Stonewall might have looked like.