

Recollections of Colonel John S. Mosby

When my sister and I were quite young, President Theodore Roosevelt was generally accompanied in drawings by a local newspaper cartoonist by the figure of a young bear. My grandfather often entertained us with stories about the President in which he spoke of Mr. Roosevelt as the big teddy bear. Once he took us to the White House on a very informal occasion and presented us to the President as two ardent admirers of the big teddy bear.

It was custom in those days for New Year's Day receptions to be held in some homes of Washington personages. My grandfather enjoyed such gatherings and sometimes took me along. On these occasions he quickly became engaged in heavy conversation, largely on Civil War topics or on the current political situation. I was taken in tow by one of the young ladies who kept me supplied with a generous plate of sweets and, at times, entertained by conversation which I sometimes thought was designed to draw the attention of the young men present.

From time to time members of his Command called upon him. I was always introduced and hoped that I would hear tales of their Civil War activities. However, their conversations and discussions were largely of current politics, a subject in which I was not the least interested, and which was also beyond any comprehension. At one time I toured the field of the First Battle of Manassas with my grandfather and some of the Confederate officers. They and my grandfather discussed what might have been. They felt that if they had pursued the routed Union army in its flight to Washington they might have taken the Capitol.

My grandfather was always deeply interested in my education and felt that the public school was not covering topics he felt were important. To counter this he often brought me books more in the field of the classics which I was enticed to read by the promise of a dollar when each book was completed. While at the time this was a bit of a chore, the seeds fell on fertile soil and my enjoyment of reading has continued. One day my grandfather took me to the Dewey Hotel in Washington and introduced me to the author Mark Twain who was visiting in the nation's Capitol.

In the days when Buffalo Bill's Wild West Circus was the delight of children my age I saw it and was thrilled with the scene in which the Wells Fargo stagecoach was attacked by Indians, one of whom jumped from his galloping horse onto the top of the stagecoach and tried to kill the driver. Then the cavalry came dashing in and saved the day. The next year, I asked my grandfather if he thought Buffalo Bill would let me ride as a passenger in the stagecoach. He took me down to the Willard Hotel, introduced me to Buffalo Bill and informed him of my wish. Whereupon my newfound hero took a sheet of hotel stationery and wrote upon it, "Let the bearer ride in the stagecoach (signed) W. F. Cody" and handed it to me with instructions for getting behind the large stage curtain and into the coach. My wish was fully answered and I cherish today this sheet of paper among my childhood mementos.

One day a distinguished-looking gentleman, James A. Daly, came to our house to call on my grandfather and presented him with a cane bearing a silver plaque. The inscription read. "To Colonel John S. Mosby with profoundest regard of John A. Daly (the Drummer Boy) captured by 'Mosby's Command' near Newtown, Virginia, November 4th, 1864." The drummer was one of 27 men of Custer's command captured by Mosby's men. Custer had executed six of Mosby's men previously and lots were drawn for six of Custer's men to be executed as a warning to Custer. One was a drummer boy, but when the leader explained that he was only 16 years old and had never fired a shot in battle, Mosby spared his life and another drawing was held to replace the drummer boy whose name was James A. Daly. The cane is another treasured memento.

When I was seventeen years old, my grandfather died. Before his death, he was a patient in Garfield Hospital. A young United States Army engineer officer who was visiting the hospital learned of my grandfather's illness and told the staff that if the Colonel needed anything, they should get in touch with him. When my mother inquired about the identity of the officer she was told that it was Ulysses S. Grant, III, grandson of General Ulysses S. Grant with whom my

grandfather had established a close friendship after the war. My grandfather never felt any bitterness toward his former enemies, but worked instead toward the goal of a united country.

By Admiral Beverly Mosby Coleman, grandson of Colonel Mosby and reprinted from the March 1984 edition of *Southern Cavalry Review* when Admiral Coleman was 85 years old. Admiral Coleman was a charter member of the Stuart-Mosby Historical Society.