

## **The Alabama 26 of the Immortal 600**

*By Marjorie Ann Reeves*

There are many horrors in wars perpetrated by the opponents both unintentional and intentional. The Union soldiers made many false excuses for their cruelty to the Confederate soldiers they captured and imprisoned. Captain John Ogden Murray of the 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry, one of the 600 who did survive the cruelty wrote about his experience in, *The Immortal Six-Hundred*, in 1905. Even though it was published 40 years after the fact, one can read the pain he carried all those years later. Mauriel Phillips Joslyn published a book in 1996, *Immortal Captives*, providing much more detail on the evilness. 1<sup>st</sup> LT Edmund I. Mastin of Huntsville was counted among the Immortal 600.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton along with Ulysses Grant chose to forbid prisoner exchange because Southerners would go back to their companies to fight where Northerners rarely did. Plus, there were more men to spend for war in the North's 23 states than the South's 13 states. Additionally, they believed the exchange of prisoners would show recognition of the South's status as a nation and that was not acceptable to the Northern politicians. Their decision caused all prisons, North and South, to become inundated. The South was struggling to feed itself and found the added population of the prisoners caused an even greater burden. The Confederate government requested prisoner exchange on humanitarian grounds many times but the North turned a deaf ear to the pleas. The Confederacy sent six Union prisoners to Washington. They were there for three days yet President Lincoln refused to meet with them. Edward Wellington Boate, 42<sup>nd</sup> NY Inf., Andersonville prisoner, wrote "I cannot help stating that the lives of some ten or twelve thousand men might have been spared had an exchange justly, I will not add generously, taken place at this period."

The North expressed outrage over the South putting Northern prisoners in houses in Charleston, SC, where the Yankees were firing cannons at the city. Some of the prisoners wrote that they were very well treated and had plenty of what was needed to sustain themselves. The rumors of the horror of Andersonville added to the hate of Southerners. Northern prisons withheld blankets, food, medicine, and supplies implementing a policy of "retaliation" even though the North had plenty to spare. Union General John Foster acknowledged the Charleston prisoners were not in the area that was under fire yet requested 600 Confederate officers from Northern prisons to be used for retaliation. August 12th, 1864, the prisoners were given the idea that they would be sent to Charleston Harbor, S.C. to be exchanged yet the 600 men from Fort Delaware were transported to Morris Island, between Wagner and Gregg, to be used as hostages, serve as shields, and living breastworks for the Union troops.

The prisoners from Alabama:

2<sup>nd</sup> LT William A. Allen, Co E 49<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Port Hudson, LA, on July, 9, 1863.

1<sup>st</sup> LT James J. Andrews, Co F, 4<sup>th</sup> AL Cav, captured in Florence, AL, on November 30, 1863. Andrews was born and raised on "Forks of Cypress" Plantation.

1<sup>st</sup> LT Andrew J. Armstrong, Co I, 46<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Champion Hill, MS, on May 16, 1863.

2<sup>nd</sup> LT Washington P. Bass, Co A, 15<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured in the Wilderness, VA, on May 6, 1864.

1<sup>st</sup> LT Dwight E. Bates, Jeff Davis AL Artillery, captured at Spotsylvania, VA, on May 12, 1864. Born in Springfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts.

2<sup>nd</sup> LT William H. Bedell, Co E, 1<sup>st</sup> AL Cav, Capture at McMinnville, TN, on October 23, 1863.

1<sup>st</sup> LT William T. Bishop, Co G, 16<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Baxter, AL, on June 20, 1863.

1<sup>st</sup> LT Julien D. Bond, Co G, 59<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Petersburg, VA, on June 17, 1864.

1<sup>st</sup> LT John P. Breedlove, Co B, 4<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Gettysburg, PA, on July 4, 1863.

Capt John W. Burton, Co D, 6<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Gettysburg, PA, on July 4, 1863.

Capt Richard F. Campbell, Co I, 49<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Port Hudson, LA, July 9, 1863.

1<sup>st</sup> LT Henry A. Chadbourne, Co C, 10<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Gettysburg, PA, on July 2, 1863. Born in Cumberland County, Maine

Capt Charles E. Chambers, Co B, 13<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Gettysburg, PA, on July 3, 1863.

Capt John N. Chisholm, Co I, 9<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Gettysburg, PA, July 2, 1863. Died March 16, 1865.

Capt Lewis S. Chitwood, Co A, 5<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Spotsylvania, VA, on May 12, 1864.

1<sup>st</sup> LT Paul H. Earl, Co G, 28<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Missionary Ridge, TN, on January 23, 1863.

Capt George H. Ellison, Co E, 3<sup>rd</sup> AL Inf, captured at Spotsylvania, VA, on May 12, 1864.

Capt James W. Fannin, Co A, 61<sup>st</sup> AL Inf, captured at Spotsylvania, VA, on May 12, 1864.

Major Lamar Fontaine, F&S 4<sup>th</sup> AL Cav, captured at Ringgold, GA, on November 27, 1863.

2<sup>nd</sup> LT Anthony C. Foster, Co B, 4<sup>th</sup> AL Cav, captured at Florence, AL, on November 30, 1863.

1<sup>st</sup> LT John L. Haynes, Co I, 14<sup>th</sup> AL Inf, captured at Spotsylvania, VA, on May 12, 1864.

1<sup>st</sup> LT Alex J. Kirkman, Co D. 4<sup>th</sup> AL Cav, captured at Florence, AL, on October 30, 1863.

1<sup>st</sup> LT William N. Ledyard, Co A, 3<sup>rd</sup> AL Inf, captured at Gettysburg, PA on July 1, 1863.

1<sup>st</sup> LT Edmund I. Mastin, Staff to Gen Kelly, captured at Charleston, TN, on December 28, 1863. Born in Huntsville, Madison County, AL  
Capt James D. Meadows, Co A, 1<sup>st</sup> AL Inf, captured at Port Hudson, LA, on July 9, 1863.

Exchanged on August 3, 1864: Col William Henry Forney, 10<sup>th</sup> AL Inf.

On August 20th, 1864, when the men were shipped out, several officers purchased their way thinking they were being exchanged. Lt. Mastin, of Huntsville, Alabama gave a gold watch, which cost three hundred dollars in coin before the war. The militia home guards serving as prisoner guards were the 110<sup>th</sup> Ohio under Captain Webster and 157<sup>th</sup> Ohio under Captain James Prentiss. The prisoners were shipped on *The Crescent City* steamship. The bunks on the boat took up every inch of space with four prisoners to a bunk in the hottest month of the year. A guard was heard to say. 'A dog couldn't stand this.' The water provided was sea water condensed in the ships and issued out scalding hot in small amounts. About three/fourths of the prisoners became seasick shortly after getting on the steamship and vomited everywhere making the atmosphere even worst within the ship.

While in Port Royal Harbor, several officers attempted an escape, but most were caught. One of the detriments was sharks. The harbor and all the inlets were full of sharks. Captain George H. Ellison, 3<sup>rd</sup> Alabama Infantry from Mobile swam 11 miles in shark infested water succeeding in escaping and returned to his regiment being paroled with his command in 1865. When the ship's prisoners were unloaded, an old colored woman, a stewardess on the ship, recognized Colonel Woolfolk, Kentucky Cavalry, because he was her young master at one time. She hid him in her room until the ship returned to New York, smuggled him ashore and gave him money to travel on. He made it to Canada, then to England, and then back to the South. Captain Webster imposed crueller treatment with every attempt or escape made.

Captain Bedford, 3<sup>rd</sup> Missouri Cavalry, wrote, "We are guarded by 157<sup>th</sup> Ohio Militia and a company of deserters commanded by Captain Prentiss, an overbearing tyrannical rascal who let his men pillage our baggage and rob us. He talks to men as though they were dogs." The water was undrinkable, and the prisoners were fed old crackers and raw bacon twice a day. They experienced having no water for forty hours. The water closet was in the wheelhouse requiring the prisoners go up a ladder, through the hatch, and over the deck with only one man allowed at a time. Many were not able to stand in line or go that far and relieved themselves where they could. The Union provided no cleaning for the ship, so the smell and filth grew.

The prisoners were in the hold of the boat shut out from light and fresh air in the heat of the summer. They also had to contend with a heated steam boiler. On August 27 the guards were changed and the new regiment, 157<sup>th</sup> New York, treated them like humans. The ship was cleaned, provisions and water were given to the prisoners. These Union soldiers treated the prisoners with respect. Forty of the wounded were transferred to a Federal Military hospital in

Beaufort, S. C. On the new steamer to Beaufort, baggage was rifled, and everything taken by thieving soldiers.

Finally, the *Crescent City* set sail again on its way to Charleston Harbor arriving on September 1st, 1864. Foster had the ship anchored under fire by Battery Gregg and Wagner. Lt Ford, 20<sup>th</sup> VA Cavalry, wrote, "The roaring of artillery and the explosion of shells over the city of Charleston and the walls of Sumter may be heard and seen all day and night." On September 7th the 560 prisoners were transported to Morris Island into a one and half acre stockade formally a battlefield where many had been killed. After 17 days confinement in cramped quarters on the ship, many of the prisoners were weak and had difficulty walking the 3 miles to the new prison camp. They were now being guarded by the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Colored Troop under commander Colonel Hallowell. He had full power over the prisoners and was never monitored by any higher ups. He chose to use psychological tactics to break the prisoners' morale. Hallowell was described by Colonel Shaw as a typical white officer of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, an abolitionist with an obsessive hatred for the South.

Nature provided gnats and mosquitoes, war delivered cannon shots from Batteries Gregg and Wagner, which were answered by Fort Moultrie, Battery Simkins, and the Confederate artillery on James' Island. These affected their sleep. Some shells burst over the camp showering the area; no prisoners were harmed even though they had to survive the agony of possible death at every moment. They were now officially the breastworks for the enemy. They were fed three crackers and one tablespoon of rice in the morning; one half pint of soup with two crackers at noon; supper consisted of two ounces of bacon and two crackers. When the rations were reduced, it resulted in various intestinal disorders and weakness. The prisoners' mail was withheld, and they were continuously harassed to take the oath of loyalty to the Union.

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1864, 275 prisoners were taken to the steamer, *General Hooker*, and transferred to a schooner *Jennie Morton*. They were stuffed in the bowels of the boat with very little air and no room to lie down during the night. The next day they were taken back to Morris Island dashing any hopes they had of exchange. Several that hid on the boat were caught and brought back to the camp. The move had nothing to do with exchange but rather to search their quarters for tools used to escape or articles of contraband. Hallowell treated the prisoners as criminals not soldiers.

The tents sat up were made for two occupants, but four officers were made to share each tent. Straw covered sand inside the tents where the heat was intense but outside was equally intolerable. Rules didn't allow prisoners out of their tents at night no matter what the problem. After forty-one days, on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1864, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt W. P. Callahan, 25<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry, died of starvation caused from chronic diarrhea and several more Confederates followed.

In the third week in October, after 3 months, word had finally gotten to the Yankee Provost Marshal. When it was investigated, the finding was Hallowell had not been issuing what was ordered and the starvation diet was changed. Mail began to be allowed and the Ladies Aid Society of Charleston could deliver

boxes of needed articles to the prisoners. With the change of temperature, there was a need for more clothing and blankets were ordered on September 9<sup>th</sup>, but none were made available to the prisoners.

The Yankee Officer, Foster was ordered to quit shelling Charleston and remove to take a defensive position. Now he had no excuse to keep the 555 Confederate Officers for retaliation. October 21st, 1864, the prisoners were put on two schooners with the 157<sup>th</sup> New York as guards and Colonel Brown in charge. The prisoners were glad to be leaving Hallowell and Foster with hopes of better days ahead with Colonel Brown who was fair with the prisoners and they greatly appreciated his kindness.

They were moved to a two acre site at Fort Pulaski and housed in the damp and cold casements. The rations were increased to a good amount. The prisoners received their mail and any packages sent to them. In all, it was a much better environment except for the mundane prison days. Now that winter was on its way, there were not enough covering for the men to stay warm. On November 12th, 1864, LT Burney, 49<sup>th</sup> GA Inf, died at the hospital. Next was LT George E. Fitzgerald of VA. Three-fourths of the men developed scurvy, diarrhea, and rheumatism. November 19th, 1864, 200 men were moved to Hilton Head, S.C. due to overcrowding. It was labeled "a sanitary move". These men were back on the beach in tents with whipping cold winter winds. Finally, they were moved into a stockade.

Under Colonel Brown, some of the very sick were allowed to be exchanged. With the very sick, some officers with connections were added to the list. On December 14th, 1864, thirty soldiers could leave for exchange. Six of the officers wrote a thank you in the Charleston *Daily Courier* to Colonel Brown for his kindness at Fort Pulaski. This caused him to be reprimanded by Major General Foster on Hilton Head Island. General Order No. 11 demanded Brown put the prisoners on half rations again with no mail privileges. Scurvy increased among the prisoners and winter brought on pneumonia, bronchitis, and rheumatism but the surgeon was not allowed to treat the prisoners' illness. They were at the mercy of the best government of the world! Captain Dunkle, 25<sup>th</sup> VA. Inf. wrote "It indeed seemed that we were deserted by God and man, been given over to demons and devils to be tormented." 2LT Gordon, 4<sup>th</sup> SC Cavalry wrote "It is murder of the most terrible kind and I don't think it has any parallel."

All the prisoners were going through the same illnesses and discomforts, but loneliness was the greatest misery of all. The retaliation treatment continued to claim lives. The majority looked after the sick and worked together for survival. The men were not given blankets or wood for fire to keep warm during the winter months. With so little rations, the prisoners caught rats, cats, and dogs to eat. Desperate times bring out the worst in humanity and within the group there were liars, traitors, and thieves. Those that became so weak and resolved to take the oath were considered cowards and traitors and there were ones that told the guards about fellow POW's escape plans. Seven men at Hilton Head took the oath and their comrades were outraged and considered them as the lowest form of humanity.

On March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1865, the *Ashland* picked up the prisoners on Fort Pulaski and sailed to Hilton Head for the rest. The men were told the retaliation was over, they had paid a high price for their loyalty to their comrades and home. Their greetings to their separated comrades were, “ain’t dead yet” and “you are hard to kill.” The ones not expected to survive were left to die. With all the prisoners now on the ship, the captain refused to sail out into the open waters because the ship was too small.

They were transferred to the *Illinois* and sailed into Norfolk Harbor where they sat watching prisoners sailing to Richmond to be exchanged. Doctors came onboard, checked them out and exited. Finally, they heard that the Doctors’ claimed they were in too horrible condition to be exchanged and they were taken on to Fort Delaware. There were only 430 officers remaining of the original 600. The prisoners were also told that there was activity in Petersburg and prisoners could not be exchanged if there were active operations going on. Every day they were brought out for roll call and told to take the oath. Seventeen took the oath before Lee’s surrender. Even after the surrender of all the Southern generals, many of the Immortals stood their ground refusing to take the oath. Though the war was over, Confederate prisoners were still held in Fort Delaware prison. By July 1865, all the prisoners that were still there were released to make their way back home on their own.

*References:*

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- Joslyn, Mauriel P. *Immortal Captives*. White Mane Publishing Company, Inc, 1996

