

A JUST AND LASTING PEACE

Lois Tilton

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In the moving and all-too-plausible Alternate History story that follows, she shows us that sometimes the *real* suffering begins only after the war is over...

I remember how my bare feet used to drag in the dust whenever I came up the road to the Ross place, walking slower and slower as I got near to the turn in the road. Let him not be there, I'd be thinking. Just this once. But then the front porch would come into sight, and there he'd be—Nathan's grandpa, Captain Ross—sitting out in his old cane-bottom chair just like always, black hickory stick across his knees, as ancient as Moses and as close to the Lord.

I'd come up those steps onto the porch just like I was about to meet the Final Judgment. And in fact, whenever I thought of the Lord, the image in my mind was the face of Captain Joseph Buckley Ross, right down to the flowing white beard and lowering eyebrows. And I figured the punishments of Hell couldn't be any worse either than the smart of that black hickory stick coming down across the backs of my legs. He kept it by him to beat the daylights out of any Yankee who dared come on his land—or so Nathan said. My ma said it was on account of his arthritis.

So I flinched at the crack of wood when he banged it down on the warped planks of the porch. “Stand up straight, boy! Put your shoulders back! Can’t tolerate a boy who slouches.

“Well, what is it?” he demanded when I’d straightened up. “Don’t just stand there with your mouth open! What’s that there you’ve got?”

“Yes, sir. No, sir.” The empty tin pail I was holding knocked against my shins. “My ma sent me to ask, could she please borrow a pail of molasses?”

He sat back in his chair and kind of sighed. “You just go back to the kitchen and ask Miss Rachel.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you,” I said quickly, but before I could escape, the hickory stick lowered to block my way.

“You know your grandpa served under me in the War, boy. Never a better soldier than Sergeant James Dunbar. A damn shame to see his namesake standing here shuffling and slouching like a mollycoddle. You hear me, boy?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Got to stand up straight, look the damn Yankees right in the eye. Like your grandpa would, if he were still alive.”

“Yes, sir.”

When we were both barely out of shirttails, Nathan used to boast all the time about how he was named for General Forrest. *Nathan Bedford Forrest Ross*, he’d say, drawing out all the names. I was no more than five or six, and a sergeant seemed awfully small to me next to a general, so I’d bragged myself how I’d been named for the James brothers, the ones who shot Old Abe. Only, the next time I came up to the house, Captain Ross laid into me with his stick for denying my own grandpa’s name. Trouble was, I never knew him, nor my pa, neither, not really. Nathan was always as close to a brother as I ever had.

“Oh, go on, then,” the captain said. “Back to the kitchen.” The stick moved aside to let me pass, and I ran down the stairs, the tin pail racketing.

Miss Rachel, Nathan’s ma, was alone in the kitchen around the back of the house, putting up butter beans. It sure looked like hot, steamy work, standing over those boiling kettles. Her dress had a dark, damp splotch all the way down the back. I said, “Miss Rachel,” and when she turned around, I could see how her hair, going gray, was plastered against her forehead with sweat. She straightened with a hand in the small of her back, brushed her hair back, then wiped her hands on her threadbare,

stained apron.

“Afternoon, Jamie,” she said, her eyes resting on the pail. “Your ma send you?”

“Yes, ma’am. She said to ask, could you please spare a pail of molasses?” Nervously glancing behind me to make sure no one was spying, I reached into my overall pocket and took out a single tattered greenback, folded small so you couldn’t see President Charles Sumner’s Yankee face on the bill. Looking as guilty as me, she took the money, tucked it away into an inside pocket of her apron.

“Come on,” she said then. “I’ll get your ma her molasses.”

I followed with the pail, trying not to look back behind me. Old Captain Ross hated the sight of the occupation currency, swore he wouldn’t have a greenback on his place. Which was just one more burden on Miss Rachel and Mr. Jeff, the ones who had to do all the work around the place. Like my ma told me, “You can’t eat pride, Jamie, no matter what men like Captain Ross will tell you. All you can do is choke on it.”

So I stood uncomfortably shifting from one foot to the other till Miss Rachel handed back my pail, heavy now. “Careful,” she warned me. “That lid doesn’t fit quite tight.” There was something defiant in her face that reminded me of my own ma, and so I just ducked my head and said, “Yes, ma’am,” and lit out of there careful not to spill the molasses. I went around the back, to keep out of the captain’s eye, and find Nathan if I could.

Out by the barn, I ran into Jefferson Ross bringing the mule in from the field. The mule’s head was hanging low, and I wondered how much longer it would hold out. “Afternoon, Mr. Jeff,” I called out to him, but, like always, he never said a word. Dawn to dusk he worked that farm, Mr. Jeff did, but you might not hear a word out of him from one Sunday to the next, no more than Captain Ross would ever say to him, on account of he thought his son was a coward. They were a peculiar bunch, the Rosses, that was for sure, and it made me glad sometimes that it was just Ma and me at home.

I found Nathan like I thought I would, out in the field picking beans. He was eighteen months older than me, Nathan was, though he liked to raise it to two years, and he was starting to stretch out to the height of a grown man, all arms and legs and bones. He straightened up when I called out to him, pulled off his hat to wipe the sweat out of his face. He was a redhead, with freckles the size of dimes all over his face and arms.

“Sure is hot!”

“Sure is,” I agreed, and when his eyes went to the pail, I explained, “Came to borrow some ‘lasses.”

He nodded, letting me know he knew about the greenbacks, but that he’d keep it to himself, since I was really only a go-between, anyway. “Listen, Jamie—” I could see he was all excited about something and bursting to tell it to somebody. The handle of the molasses pail was cutting into my fingers, and I set it down, right next to his half-full sack of beans. “If I show you something, you got to swear to keep it a secret.”

“What’s the matter, don’t you trust me?”

“All right, then, come on.” He glanced around to make sure nobody was watching us, and we lit out, going through the cornfield, the ears all swelling in the summer heat, and down into the belt of woods by the creek. It was cool in the woods, and I thought we might go down to the creek and splash around some in the water, but instead, Nathan led me upstream a ways, to a place where the bank had been worn away to expose a shelf of limestone.

“We’re off our property here,” he said, with the low bitterness in his voice there to remind me, in case I could forget that all this land had once belonged to Captain Ross, hundreds of acres on both sides of the creek and upstream for more than a mile. But these days, what it meant was that whatever Nathan had hidden here, the Yankees couldn’t prove who it belonged to.

Carefully, he knelt down and lifted up a slab of the stone, revealing a narrow opening as deep as a man’s arm and maybe twice as long. There was a bundle inside, done up in oilcloth, and Nathan pulled it out, started to undo the wrappings. There was only one thing it could be, that size and shape, and it made my heart hammer, knowing I was so close to it.

“Look at her!” Nathan pulled aside the last wrapping.

I caught my breath. “A Sharps repeater!”

“Grandpa gave her to me last week on my birthday. He says next spring after the planting, I can go down to Texas.” He stood there holding the rifle, glowing with pride, and I felt, like I was expected to feel, no more than a little kid next to him. He was all of thirteen and with a gun of his own, just about nearly a man and joined up with the Raiders, or at least he would be come next spring. He sighted down the barrel. “My brother Jeb says there’s a place for me in his company. My pa’s old company,” he added in a lower tone of voice.

I nodded solemnly. This was the bond between us, that both of our

fathers had been killed fighting for the Cause—mine before I was even born, his just six years ago, hanged after the raid on Shreveport. It was worse for Nathan, I think, because he could remember his pa, and his Uncle Andy, too, who was in the Yankee prison at Lexington. Of all Captain Ross's sons, only Jeff had stayed home to work the farm, and on account of that, the captain hadn't spoken a civil word to him since the day Nathan's pa was hanged. "Though he'll eat the food on his table," my ma had said sharply once, defending Mr. Jeff.

The trouble with Ma was, she made too much sense. But next to an almost-new Sharps repeating carbine, her words might as well have been in some foreign tongue. "Can I hold it?" I dared to ask Nathan. "Is it loaded?"

He put it into my hands, and I held it briefly, tasting the bittersweet pangs of jealousy.

"Come on," Nathan said suddenly, retaking possession, and I followed him up the bank, moving Indian style like hunters through the trees and brush. The thrill of danger raced through my veins, knowing it meant prison if the Yankees ever caught us with the gun—that is, if we weren't shot on sight. But I suppose Nathan's father and uncles must have hunted these woods when they were boys, back before the Surrender. My own pa hadn't even been born yet then, not until after my Grandpa James had come back from the Yankee prison camp at Fort Douglas, already half-dead with consumption, so that he died before my pa was one year old.

We came out of the woods into a strip of hayfield, full of heat and sunshine, with grasshoppers whirring and flying up into my face. I knew where we were, and I whispered to Nathan, "Careful," but he just shook his head for me to be quiet and follow him, and we crawled through the hay on our bellies, up to the edge of the cotton field. Down at the other end of the row, there was the figure of a black man with a hoe in his hand, chopping up and down, up and down under the hot sun.

This was land where the Rosses had planted cotton before the War, but the captain wouldn't grow it now—most of the white farmers wouldn't, called it nigger's work, even though they could have gotten a pretty good price, a lot higher than corn, anyway. Yankees had taken the land after the Surrender, parceled it out to the Rosses' slaves, but it had long since been lost to Yankee tax speculators who hired it out on shares to grow cotton. Truth to tell, I don't think those sharecroppers were all that much better off than we were, but that didn't mean anything to Nathan. All he could see was the nigger on his grandpa's land.

Ahead of me, he was bringing up the rifle, sighting down the barrel at the man at the end of the row...

Oh God! The metal taste of real fear came into my mouth, and I jerked hard on Nathan's leg, anything to stop him. Shooting a nigger, that was almost as bad as shooting a Yankee. If Nathan pulled that trigger, there'd be bluecoat soldiers everywhere like the locust plague in the Bible—beatings, jailings, and the rest of it. They'd tear the whole neighborhood apart looking for the gun, and the Ross place first of all—it being closest, and the Yankees knowing how many of the Rosses had gone off to ride with the Raiders. Nathan's brothers both had a price on their heads, a bounty on them dead or alive. The least the bluecoats would do was burn down the barn, and most likely the house, too, even if they didn't find anything.

Nathan just couldn't do it. And of course he knew it, too, and he finally lowered the gun and turned back to face me, and if I'd seen his face before, I'd have been even more scared. "It's our land," he whispered, almost like a hiss. "Our land!"

My ma told me once it was the worst thing the Yankees had done, taking the land. Worse even than the vote—but then she had to explain to me about voting, how the Yankees pick who's going to be president. But with the land gone, it was like the men had no choice but to keep on fighting, even after the Surrender. And her eyes had got that look in them that I knew she was thinking of my pa.

But Nathan lowered the gun and followed me when I started to crawl away into the woods, and I could see when he caught up that he was looking kind of pale and scared himself. "Best get this put back away," he said. "My ma'll whip the hide off me if I don't get those beans picked."

And then of course I recalled the pail of molasses that I'd left sitting out there in the field, and we hurried to cache the gun again and get back before we could get into even more trouble.

On the way home, I waved to Captain Ross, but he never saw me. He was facing off into the distance beyond the creek, and I knew he was staring at the dead black chimney stacks of the big house on the land he'd owned before the War. That was another story I knew, how he came back home after eight years in the prison camp along with my grandpa, and found the Yankees had burned it down to the ground. After that, there was no forgiving for the captain, not ever, so long as he drew breath.

It was about a week or so later when I asked my ma if I could ride into Covington with Nathan the next Saturday, it being the big market day

there.

She was at her sewing machine. “You’ll do all your chores here around the house before you go.”

I nodded, because it was only me and Ma there in the house, and she worked too hard already—ten hours a day at the Yankee cotton mill and sewing half the night besides, mostly fancywork for rich Yankee ladies, to get a few dollars extra.

“All right, then,” she said, keeping her eyes on her work. I glanced over at the machine, saw the white stars on blue, the red field. It was prison if she was caught making that flag, and yet never once had she hesitated to do her part, as she called it.

“Ma?” I asked after a few minutes.

“Jamie?”

“Ma, in a year or so, when I’m grown... well, do you suppose I’ll go off to fight with the Raiders?”

The treadle-driven machine never slowed as she said, “Oh, you’ll go, all right. Just like your pa did before you.”

Somehow that answer raised more misgivings than it put to rest. “But Ma, what I mean is... would that be right?”

This time she did look up. There were frown lines between her eyes. She was shortsighted from all her years of close work, though now that I come to think of it, she’d married my pa when she was sixteen, had me at seventeen, and so she wasn’t even thirty years old.

“Leaving you here all alone.” I didn’t say, *like Pa did*. “Isn’t that what you say, that some men have to stay home? Like Mr. Jeff Ross?”

The sound of the treadle slowed. She hesitated, looking down at the flag she was sewing and up at me. “Jefferson Ross,” she said finally, “is an exceptional man. Enduring what he does...”

“But Ma, don’t folks call Mr. Jeff a yellow coward for not going off to fight?”

“Folks know how to use their tongues more than their brains, too.” She gave me a sharp look. “I suppose you’ve been talking with Nathan, is that it?”

“Well, yes, I guess so. Nathan’s already thirteen.”

She sighed. “Listen, Son,” she said softly, “I never wanted your pa to go fight, either. Especially once I knew I was—you were on the way. And he

promised me he wouldn't. But we aren't always given a choice in these things. That's why I won't ask you for any promises, one way or the other. One day, if you have to go, then you'll know. And I'll understand."

I swallowed. "All right, Ma."

She turned back to her machine. "As long as you're going to Covington, I could use half a dozen number twelve needles. I'll give you the money come Saturday."

"All right, Ma."

"Good, then."

Come Saturday, I was over at the Ross place by sunup, in time to help Mr. Jeff load up his last few sacks of corn into the wagon. It was sweet corn, the first of the season, picked just the night before, and he looked to get a good price. There were taxes owing on the farm and supplies needed. I had my ma's greenback folded tight in my overall pocket, there with old Captain

Ross out on his chair on the porch, even that early, keeping watch in case any Yankees came down the road.

I climbed up onto the wagon seat next to Nathan, we waved good-bye to Miss Rachel and Nathan's sisters, then Mr. Jeff, without a word, slapped the reins down on the mule's rump, and we were on our way.

It was the middle of the morning before we got to Covington, all the pace the Rosses' broken-winded old mule could manage. I'd only been to the city twice before, and I was staring around at everything: the fancy carriages, all the fine houses, the gaslights in the streets. And the tall brick smokestacks of the cottonseed mill, the big freight wagons with their teams of six, eight horses all harnessed up together. Black men driving them, too, though I knew it was the Yankees who owned the mills, just like at home.

And the Yankees, more Yankees than I'd seen in one place in my whole life—not just the bluecoats, but the other ones with their collars and ties all done up even in the summer. And the women—for the first time in my life, there were women everywhere who weren't wearing black. The thought made me kind of grim, and I sat back down in my seat like Nathan.

What I wanted most to see, more than anything else, was the railroad depot, the big, black-smoking locomotives. That was a secret dream of mine, that I might get to drive one of those engines when I grew up. Of

course, I knew that not even a nigger could get a job like that, though they could work as firemen sometimes, or brakemen. But a Reb, as a train engineer—never.

When we came up near to the depot, Mr. Jeff pulled up the mule and looked worried. There were squads of bluecoats all over the place, on horse and on foot. They were riot troops, with their steel helmets buckled on, and their faces looked hard. Mr. Jeff was trying to turn the wagon around, but the streets were too crowded. I stood up on the wagon seat to look, and I just caught a glimpse of the depot. There was a locomotive, lying on its side like a dead horse, and the rails all torn up around it. “Look!” I whispered to Nathan, all excited, because this was Raiders’ work; I was sure of it. I couldn’t wait to get down from the wagon and go get a closer look.

But Mr. Jeff finally got the wagon turned around to take a different way to the market. That was when the trouble started. There was a squad of bluecoats lounging in the streets—not riot troops, but nigger soldiers wearing soft caps—and their sergeant, with his big gray side-whiskers, came up and took hold of the mule’s head. “They there, Reb! Where do you think you’re going?”

The rest of them laughed and got slowly to their feet. I was scared, and I looked at Mr. Jeff to see what I was supposed to do, but he just sat there on the seat, staring forward, and though I could see a muscle twitch in his jaw, he never said a word as they started to surround the wagon.

“Well, boys,” the sergeant said then, “hows about we just check out this here load for contraband, hey?”

It was strange, hearing a nigger talk like a Yankee. Two of them climbed onto the back of the wagon and started sifting through the sacks of corn.

They were tossing them this way and that, joking how they were going to find guns and ammunition hidden underneath. “How about we check inside some of these sacks?” one of them called out, and then the knives went to work, slitting the sacks, tossing out the corn.

I was so mad and scared I wanted to cry and kill somebody at the same time. I glanced over at Mr. Jeff, sitting there all stiff, with his hands clenched so tight around the reins, the knuckles had gone white. Nathan, too, though he had that same look on his face that I’d seen a couple weeks before in the cotton field, and I knew what he must be thinking inside.

They were throwing a lot of the corn out onto the street, and, seeing his crop getting ruined, Mr. Jeff finally turned around to the sergeant and said, “Look, now—”

But it was like that's what they'd been waiting for. The sergeant pulled out his revolver, grinning real nasty, and he stuck it under Mr. Jeff's chin. "What's the matter? Afraid we'll find your contraband? What is it—guns? Explosives? You going to blow up another train? I know how you Rebs operate. Where'd you bring this load in from, anyway, Texas?"

Which proved he wasn't after anything but to bait us, since anyone could see that mule couldn't have made it across Tennessee, let alone to Texas, without falling dead in its traces. Mr. Jeff could see the same thing, and he clamped his mouth shut and didn't say anything more while they finished slashing all his sacks. Then they stood around laughing some more to see us on our hands and knees picking up the corn from off the street. Mr. Jeff's face was all stiff, and I could tell it wasn't the first time something like this had happened to him, and I wondered how he'd stood it all for so many years.

But they finally let us go, and we drove the rest of the way to the market, Nathan cursing infernally all the time that he was going to kill those Yankees, gut the blue-bellied swine, and like that. I didn't have too much to say, I admit. I mean, it was one thing, them searching the wagon for contraband, what with the Raiders blowing up the train and all. But what they'd just done to us had been mainly meanness, and I had to suppose I hated them for that, because what had we done to them?

Anyway, we got to the market, and Nathan and I helped Mr. Jeff unload the corn and sort out what the soldiers hadn't ruined, and stack the damaged sacks back in the wagon so they could be sewn back up again. Then we were free to go while Mr. Jeff went to tend to his business. I really wanted to go back and see that train again, where they'd blown it off the tracks, and so I took off after Nathan down the street. I got to admit, I'd forgot all about my ma's greenback folded into my overalls, and the needles I was supposed to buy for her. Just a block or so from the market, we ran into a couple more boys, who let us know what had been going on in town.

I listened with my ears wide open while they told us all about the train being blown up, and how the Yankees had three men in jail for it, waiting to hang, and the riot—an insurrection, they called it—down at the courthouse yesterday when they'd announced the sentence. The Yankees were afraid that Raiders would be coming into town to try to break the three of them out, just what the rest of us hoped they would.

Now, Nathan was just boiling over with hate for the Yankees after what they'd done to the corn sacks, thinking, now that it was all over, what he would've done if he only had his gun with him, or if he was a grown man,

how he would've shown those Yankee bastards. I could tell he was ashamed of Mr. Jeff, though at the time, he'd just sat there quiet on the wagon seat like Mr. Jeff had done. Which was all anybody could have done, really.

Then, before I knew it, Nathan and the rest of them were all loading up their pockets with rotten turnips and such from the market and heading on down the street. I followed, wondering whether or not this was such a good idea with the Yankees all hair-trigger edgy the way they were. The other boys led the way through the alleys to near the depot, with the soldiers all over the place, standing guard like they were expecting another attack. The boy in the lead hesitated, but Nathan stepped ahead of him and threw first. He caught one of the bluecoats in the back of the neck, under his helmet. Then the rest of us let off a barrage of rotten vegetables, and oh, the way that Yankee cussed! We were all grinning and slapping each other on the back, and I admit I felt better, getting some of my own back after what the bluecoats had done to us.

I was ready to run, like the rest of them already had. But Nathan had got his blood up, and by bad luck there was a pile of loose cobblestones there in the alley. Before I could blink, he'd picked one of them up and let it fly. It hit the soldier on his steel helmet and dropped him to his knees. Then there was a commotion, with the other bluecoats giving the alarm. One of them fired, and I knew I'd had enough for sure. I grabbed onto Nathan's coat to pull him away, but it was too late. A squad of riot troops came charging the alley.

I turned tail to run, but not Nathan. He stood his ground and let fly with another stone, which hit the officer leading the squad. Then there was a roar of gunfire, just like thunder, and I saw Nathan fall, blood bursting out of him everywhere. For a second I couldn't move, seeing him so still, his blood flowing into puddles in the dirt. Then I ran, blindly, because by then I couldn't remember which way the market was, I was so scared.

By the time I found my way back, the whole square was wrecked, wagons and stalls overturned, produce everywhere trodden underfoot. A whole troop of bluecoats had come through, smashed the place, and arrested everybody they could find, including Mr. Jeff. Folks who saw it told me the soldiers had to drag him away, they beat him so bad. They didn't know if he was still alive. I couldn't believe it—Mr. Jeff, resisting?

All I could think of was I had to get back home, back to let the Rosses know what had happened. I'd have to walk, with the wagon wrecked and the mule nowhere in sight, but I knew how the road went, and I figured I

could make it back before morning, even on foot. So I set out, down the road we'd come in on just that morning, never knowing what was going to happen. It seemed to me that it was wrong somehow that things should look just the same, that the sun was going to rise the next day just like it didn't matter that Nathan was dead.

I was about a mile or two out of town, when there was this clattery thunder of horses behind me on the road, and a troop of bluecoats came charging by. I just about froze, I was so scared, too scared to run, but they just kept right on going, and so I figured it wasn't me they were after. And by the time I did realize where they were headed, it was too late, and I couldn't have done anything, anyhow.

Even before I came around the turn in the road to the Ross place, the flames were shooting up so high it looked like hellfire against the night sky. By the time I got there, the bluecoats had gone, and Miss Rachel was standing out in the yard with the little girls and old Mrs. Ross, Nathan's grandma. They were all of them crying, and Miss Rachel's dress was torn.

"Where's the captain?" I asked, gasping because I'd run most of the way since I first saw the glow of the flames.

Miss Rachel didn't say anything, but she just looked hard at where the porch had been. Later she told the story to my ma, how all those years that Captain Ross had sat out on that porch, he'd kept a pistol strapped under his coat, the same sidearm he'd carried through the War, and he'd sworn that if any bluecoat Yankee ever came up that road onto his land, he'd shoot the bastard dead. And so he had, the last deed of his life.

When I told Miss Rachel what had happened in Covington, she didn't seem much surprised, like it was bound to have happened sooner or later.

I took them all home to my ma—it was the only thing I could think of to do, no matter that we didn't really have the room to put them up. I had to move my bed out onto the porch. When my ma asked Miss Rachel whether she'd be keeping the land and working it, she said she didn't hardly see how she could, on her own, with no man on the place and the taxes still owing.

Without thinking, I burst out, "No! You can't do that! Mr. Jeff will be back; he didn't do anything!"

They just looked at me, and I remembered the dead Yankee officer at the Rosses' place. It would be Jefferson Ross who'd pay for that, since the captain was beyond their reach. "But what about Jeb and Bobby?" I asked—Nathan's brothers. "It's their land, too!"

My ma shook her head. “Jeb and Bobby are outlaws, Jamie. They can’t come back to work the land, not with that bounty on them.”

“I’ll do it, then. I’ll come help till Mr. Jeff gets back. You know I’m almost twelve year old!”

But Miss Rachel just gave me a kind of sad smile and said how she appreciated my offer and she’d think about it, and didn’t my ma need me here at home? I couldn’t help thinking, the next few days when everything was upside down with the funerals and all, that my ma likely could manage fairly well without me around, that I’d probably been more of a care and a trouble to her most of my life. It was the same way everywhere, what with the men all dead or in prison or away with the Raiders, bounties on their heads. It was the only thing the Yankees had left us. Now Nathan gone, and Captain Ross, and Mr. Jeff, too—not dead, but in prison for riot and insurrection and conspiracy. All he ever meant to do was stay home and tend his family’s land, but they got him, too, in the end. Only the women left, all in black.

And me. So one day I faced it like I always knew I’d have to—I went down in the woods by the creek, down to the limestone shelf that was off the Ross property, and I lifted up the stone where Nathan had showed me, that one time. There it was, wrapped up the way he left it.

To this day, I’ve never known whether I could call it my own choice or something else. After a while, it didn’t seem like it made much of a difference. I reached into the hiding place and lifted out the gun, and the weight of it was heavier than any burden I’d ever known.

NOTE:

This excerpt from my grandfather’s journal was sent me by my sister Ellen, who has been editing his papers. It was included in a letter he had written to his wife while he was waiting to be executed for sedition during the last European War. Thirty years ago, almost to the day. I suppose, considering my current situation, that the selection is particularly appropriate.

The future of the South was never bleaker than when my grandfather was a young man, before the European conflicts gave us new hope. And yet they never considered abandoning the Cause. The tide is turning now, with our allies behind us, but it could never have come to pass without the courage and determination of those generations. When my own turn comes, I will be proud to be in their company.

I hope someday my own sons and daughters will be able to read this and understand. When it is your time, if our Cause demands that you bear your part of the burden, you may hesitate, but I have confidence that in the end you will know what you have to do.

Oberführer James Ross Dunbar II

58th SS Grenadier Division "Robert E. Lee"

(U.S. Military Prison at Lexington, Ky.,

July 18, 1952)