

BACKGROUND

The STEWART family in Texas was headed by Araminta COLEMAN and Daniel STEWART of Hopkins County. They had twelve children – seven of these married and had children of their own.

These seven were: Sarah Jane Stewart **MARTIN CLIFTON DRENNAN**, Mary Catharine Stewart **WADSWORTH FLORENCE**, Effa Matilda Stewart **POSEY**, Louisiana Caroline "Lucy" Stewart **RABE**, Daniel Morrison **STEWART**, Joseph Coleman **STEWART**, Araminta Emma Stewart **STOCKTON**, and Louvenia Domer Stewart **FLORENCE**.

Welcome to the July edition of our newsletter.

Three quick entries in this newsletter, as I just returned home last night from our 17-day tour of East Texas and the successful STEWART family reunion. I can't tell you how happy I am to have met you all. I will be putting together a full reunion report for the August newsletter, along with the mailing list and some of the photographs (there are hundreds).

JOHN S. MARTIN | CSA

While I was away I received John S. MARTIN's Civil War record from the National Archives. John S. MARTIN was the first husband of Sarah Jane STEWART, the first child of Araminta D. COLEMAN and Daniel STEWART. He was also the father of Mary Gertrude MARTIN KNIGHT POTTS and John S. MARTIN, JR, who died between 1880 and 1900. We know that Sarah's husband John did not come to Texas with the family when they traveled from Alabama around 1868.

There's not much in the record but it does confirm a few things. First, this is our John S. MARTIN because Sarah Jane is listed as his widow. She filed a claim with the War Department 31 DEC 1863. Second, he died in the Civil War. Third, he served in the same regiment and company with Sarah's brother William STEWART (who was killed at the Battle of Jonesboro), and other relatives and family friends including Luther B. THWEATT, Frederick Seybert POSEY, and Captain Dan MARTIN.

JOHN S. MARTIN, continued

The 1860 Shelby County Alabama Census lists John S. MARTIN living with his wife Sarah, daughter Mary Gertrude, and brother George. They live between the properties of the STEWART and MARTIN families, so it is likely that Sarah was well supported through her loss.

ARAMINTA D. COLEMAN & DANIEL STEWART Warren STOCKTON, a great-grandson of Emma Araminta STEWART and Wilse STOCKTON brought to the reunion a few long-sought bits of information for which we are very grateful. Though we had the dates of birth, marriage, and death for nearly all 12 of Araminta and Daniel's children, we only had a death date for Araminta and approximations for her and Daniel's birthdate, and Daniel's death date. Warren's records list Araminta's birth as 28 AUG 1818. Daniel's birthdate, which corresponds with census records, is listed as 20 SEP 1810. Most amazingly his death date is listed as 22 NOV 1909, which means he was 99 when he died in Dallas County Texas. His age was recently confirmed in a letter from Lado STEWART BRAWNER DAWSON to Maggie STEWART WATSON ALLUMS, written 10 OCT 1947.

I looked through early death records and newspapers at the Dallas County Library, and early newspapers at the Grand Prairie Library and found no mention of Daniel's death. Perhaps there are records at the Mesquite Library that reference his death. If anyone is interested in researching this, please contact me.

Many thanks to Warren STOCKTON for sharing these vital pieces of information with the family.

MARY FOLLIS SELTZ : A NURSE'S EXPERIENCE

Now for a piece of family writing that I've been longing to share with you, "A Nurse's Experience," by Mary FOLLIS SELTZ. Mary is related to the STEWART family by marriage, a cousin in the Joseph STEWART line. Joseph Coleman STEWART married Nancy Louise Elizabeth COMPTON. Mary is the great-granddaughter of Nancy's sister Mary Delane COMPTON FOLLIS. Their family listing is incomplete.

A Nurse's Experience

by Mary Follis Seltz

As I look back over the years I ask myself, as others have asked me, why I chose nursing as a profession. There seems to be no real answer, only that it wasn't a childhood dream but more like a "bolt from the blue" one day in Science class in my hometown of Lubbock, Texas.

By the time I had completed my three years of Nursing School, America was involved in World War II. Nurses were needed and it seemed only right that I do my part as an Army Nurse. The next years proved an experience that has remained with me to this day.

Military training began at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, then more preparatory training at other U.S. Military installations including several weeks at an Internment Camp in Alabama for German prisoners of war. Finally we were off to England, then to Europe where we supported the advancing American Army through five major campaigns from Omaha Beach into Nazi Germany.

Field hospitals, such as ours, were divided into three units, or platoons, and equipped to operate as one, or separately. That is, if one unit was bogged down with patients, another could "leap frog" in order to keep up with the troops.

We lived and worked in tents most of the time and because we moved so often were allowed only a bedroll and whatever belongings we could carry in our musette or duffle bag. During moves when there was no mess tent in operation we ate either K or C rations. Sometimes between moves if we were near a village we could buy delicious bread or trade soap, candy and cigarettes for potatoes, occasional eggs, or whatever vegetable was in season. Once while we were still in a farmer's field waiting for

A Nurse's Experience, continued

orders to move, we bargained with him for a chicken but botched the "neck-wring" bit and the poor thing got up and ran off, never to be seen again. So it wasn't all traumatic.

Early in the war when we were near Montagne in France, which turned out to be one of our busiest and bloodiest campaigns, we were shelled during the night by Nazi tanks. Casualties had been pouring in for days. It seemed the front was at a standstill - nothing seemed to be moving, so apparently we were not targets. We just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The next morning light was streaming in through shrapnel holes in the hospital tent, some clothing and papers were in shreds, an X-ray table was dented plus a corpsman's helmet while it was still on his head! Luckily no injury to anyone except a nurse who received a minor neck wound.

Before this time I had felt safe and protected, but suddenly I realized this was not fun and games, that it was real war and it was O.K. to be scared. That is certainly the best way to describe me during the Battle of the Bulge.

It happened when we were at Weismes, a village in Belgium near the German border where the hospital was in a large, stone school building, and the nurses were billeted in a small hotel across the street. About noon, a few days before Christmas, some members of our lead platoon came rushing through our unit breathlessly reporting that the Nazi troops had broken through the lines, that they were forced to leave, hanging on to whatever vehicle was nearest, without so much as a toothbrush.

Soon we had orders to evacuate patients to the nearest hospital near Malmedy, after which time nurses left in an ambulance.

A Nurse's Experience, continued

On the road military vehicles were bumper to bumper barely moving along when suddenly, about two miles out, we were cut off by a Nazi Panzer Division firing at the convoy. One vehicle had been overturned and was burning. Since the ambulance was unable to move, we immediately tumbled out the rear exit into a ditch, crawled around a curve and clump of trees where we were able to hitch a ride in the back of a truck loaded with grim-faced G.I.'s. Later we found out that near the spot we abandoned the ambulance was the site of the "Massacre of Malmedy."

Back in Weismes there was an ominous silence the rest of the day. By evening we had resumed hospital operations and were receiving patients during the night. Shelling could be heard in the distance and we later found out, the hard way, that Hitler's Elite Paratroopers were being dropped in a nearby area. Around 0900 hours the following morning, a paratrooper captain with followers entered our area and announced the hospital and all personnel as his prisoners. However, after negotiations with our German-speaking doctor he agreed to leave the nurses, four doctors, five trained technicians for the patients, plus one vehicle. All others would be taken after the ten minutes allowed to pick up personal items. Lucky for them they were rescued in the nick of time by a nearby anti-aircraft unit because an ambulance driver had been able to slip away during the confusion and notify them of the hospital's plight. They arrived in a half-track firing machine guns, but the paratroopers saw them coming and were able to escape. Soon after a U.S. Infantry Company arrived and drove more Germans back that were coming in over the crest of a hill.

A Nurse's Experience, continued

Around 1330 hours all patients and personnel had been evacuated after our commanding officer was advised of an escape route by the Infantry Colonel, a longer way, but safer. Some nurses left by ambulance, I left by jeep. There was still much military traffic, but we had to make only one stop to run for cover in a small forest while Nazi fighter planes were strafing the convoy. By evening we had reached a General Hospital where we stayed a few days to "refresh and regroup" before proceeding to our Headquarters at Spa, Belgium, arriving there two days before Christmas.

Soon we were on the road again, back amid all the pain and suffering, the death and destruction. It was everywhere - no escape - no getting "used" to it.

Once in the dead of winter with snow on the ground and the tents barely warmed by potbellied stoves, a mortally wounded young soldier asked me to lean closer. When I did he whispered, "Can't you hear the birds singing?" Of course there were no birds, but I told him I could hear them. Then he smiled at me and died.

After VE Day I spent several months at a General Hospital near Paris, and two glorious weeks at the French Riviera before boarding a ship to return to the good ole' U.S.A. It was only a three-day trip this time with "Sentimental Journey" being played over the ship's intercom the entire time. Most everyone loved it, but for one distressed Infantry Colonel it would be a sad homecoming. He had lost his entire company, some of the boys were from his own town, in a single battle. He kept wondering how he could face the folks back home.

As for me, when we came into New York

A Nurse's Experience, continued

Harbor and slowly approached the Statue of Liberty, then I felt I could truly hear the birds singing.

I returned to Texas after being discharged, married, and attended college on the G.I. Bill. I held various jobs including Public Health while raising my two children, but retired for several years because of health problems following my husband's death. After my son was transferred to Florida, I decided to join my daughter and her family in Delaware.

My life has been very full and satisfying. There have been many good times along the way and some very bad times, but never any boring times. At the present I'm enjoying my work with the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs. In my spare time I read, write letters and consider myself a crossword puzzle "aficionado." Keeping busy is what I do best, and hopefully can continue to do so for years to come.

Special thanks to Mary FOLLIS SELTZ for sharing this wonderful story with the family.

Until next month,

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"Blood is thicker than water." - Anonymous