



Books in Print

Tales of Travis Hawkins McCleod A Texan in the War Between the States

Author Dale Roberts, who lives in Crockett, Texas, is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and has long been involved in reenacting and living history.

Dale Roberts states that he is fascinated by the War Between the States and tells in the Introduction of finding a “musty-smelling folio” in his grandmother’s attic. He writes “It was such an odd story. Was it fact or fiction? ... but you can draw your own conclusions.”

With that disclaimer, Roberts begins his novel: “My name is Travis Hawkins McCleod ... I began this narrative in January of 1865 while sitting in a plantation house in Corinth, Mississippi.” Two paragraphs later, McCleod designating himself as Hawk writes: “I was actually born in the year of 1979 near the town of San Angelo, Texas. I grew up and attended Texas A & M University.” Mugged by two hitchhikers he picked up, he “woke up to find myself lying in a patch of mesquite brush” and learns the year is 1847. As time passes, Hawk ceases to wish he could call for help on his cell phone and accepts what he cannot understand.

The reader is immediately swept along in Hawk’s adventures that must be enjoyed with the same gusto as McCleod lived his life. He does not appear

to age chronologically as the years accumulate. He spends time as a Texas Ranger, a trooper in the US Cavalry, and finally a major in the Confederate Cavalry.

Hawk’s War experiences in the cavalry ultimately take him under the command of General Nathan Bedford Forrest. He expresses the utmost admiration for Forrest and wishes more than once that President Davis possessed a sense of fairness in promoting officers and an understanding of what made a successful Confederate commander. He has the usual disastrous clashes with Braxton Bragg and General Hood during those times when he temporarily serves under them. Readers familiar with Forrest’s battles will enjoy Hawk’s perspective of these engagements and Forrest’s genius as he fought with the “Wizard of the Saddle.”

During the War years in Missouri, Kansas, and Kentucky, Hawk meets Confederate and Union families and forms lasting friendships. Travis Hawkins McCleod is a Southern gentleman with all the honor, integrity, and bravery associated with that noble breed of man.

This readable novel is a page-turner. Roberts is an excellent writer with a grasp of Confederate and Southern history and a fertile imagination. The author has his hero Hawk echo Southern beliefs about the War, States’ rights, politics, and tariffs. His observations as the War years go on are poignant reminders to all of us with Confederate ancestors and family memories of this terrible grief suffered by the South. He minces no words when he speaks of Sherman and the unspeakable crimes committed by the Union forces.

Tales of Travis Hawkins McCleod ends around 1867. In the wee hours of one night, he woke for a second time to find his hotel room flooded with light and an apparition who said: “Do not be afraid ... This will be your final time

of choice. You may be transported back to your time of origin if you wish or you may remain in this present time.” Hawk asked why he was there in the nineteenth century. The ghostly figure replied: “I am only a messenger from the One who holds time in his hands and controls all. I have not the answers you seek.”

After spending the rest of that night wrestling with his decision, Hawk writes “As I end this narrative in a quandary, I pose the question to the reader. What would you do?”

Having this novel sitting unopened on your bookshelves is a waste. Southern readers who love Confederate history must read the tales of Travis Hawkins McCleod.

Author: Dale Roberts
Publisher: Outskirts Press
www.outskirtspress.com
Paperback: \$17.95

Reviewed by Ann Rives Zappa

Lee’s Last Casualty The Life and Letters of Sgt. Robert W. Parker Second Virginia Cavalry

Robert William Parker was born in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, on August 31, 1838, son of Ammon and Frances Parker. The family was prosperous, owning land and slaves. Parker represented the wealthy Virginians of that era, a Southern gentleman raised with manners, morals, and honor. He did not attend college and lived at home until his marriage to Rebecca Walker in December of 1860.

Descendants of Robert W. Parker donated these approximately 350 documents to the Southern Historical Collection in the Wilson Library at the

Continued on page 46

September/October 2009 — 25