



THE COLLECTION

The Ring From Gettysburg

A wedding ring pulled from the ground at Gettysburg, with no name attached.

CHRIS VALLETTA

Wedding ring
Dug at Gettysburg

MOST OF WHAT I COLLECT COMES WITH A STORY. This one came with almost nothing.

It is a wedding ring, dug out of the ground at the site of the Battle of Gettysburg. That is the whole of what I know. No name, no record, no way to trace whose hand it was on. It was pulled from a field still full of buried bullets and the broken metal of the worst three days on American soil.

I hold it and the questions will not stop. Who was he? Who did he marry? Did she know where he was that week? Did he come home, or did the ring stay in the ground because he did not?

I will never have the answers, and I have decided the not knowing is the point. Behind every name we do know from that field are thousands we never will. Each one was a whole life. A marriage. A person at home counting on him. He carried all of that onto the field and did not set it down.

We talk about service like it is a line on a résumé. For the man who wore this ring, service was everything he was responsible for, carried into a place he might not walk out of.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

JOHN 15:13

I do not know his name. But I know what he carried, and I know he did not let go of it when it got heavy. That is a rope-holder. That is the whole of what I mean when I say leadership is service.

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CHRIS VALLETTA

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