

# ARMY HISTORY

Summer 2010

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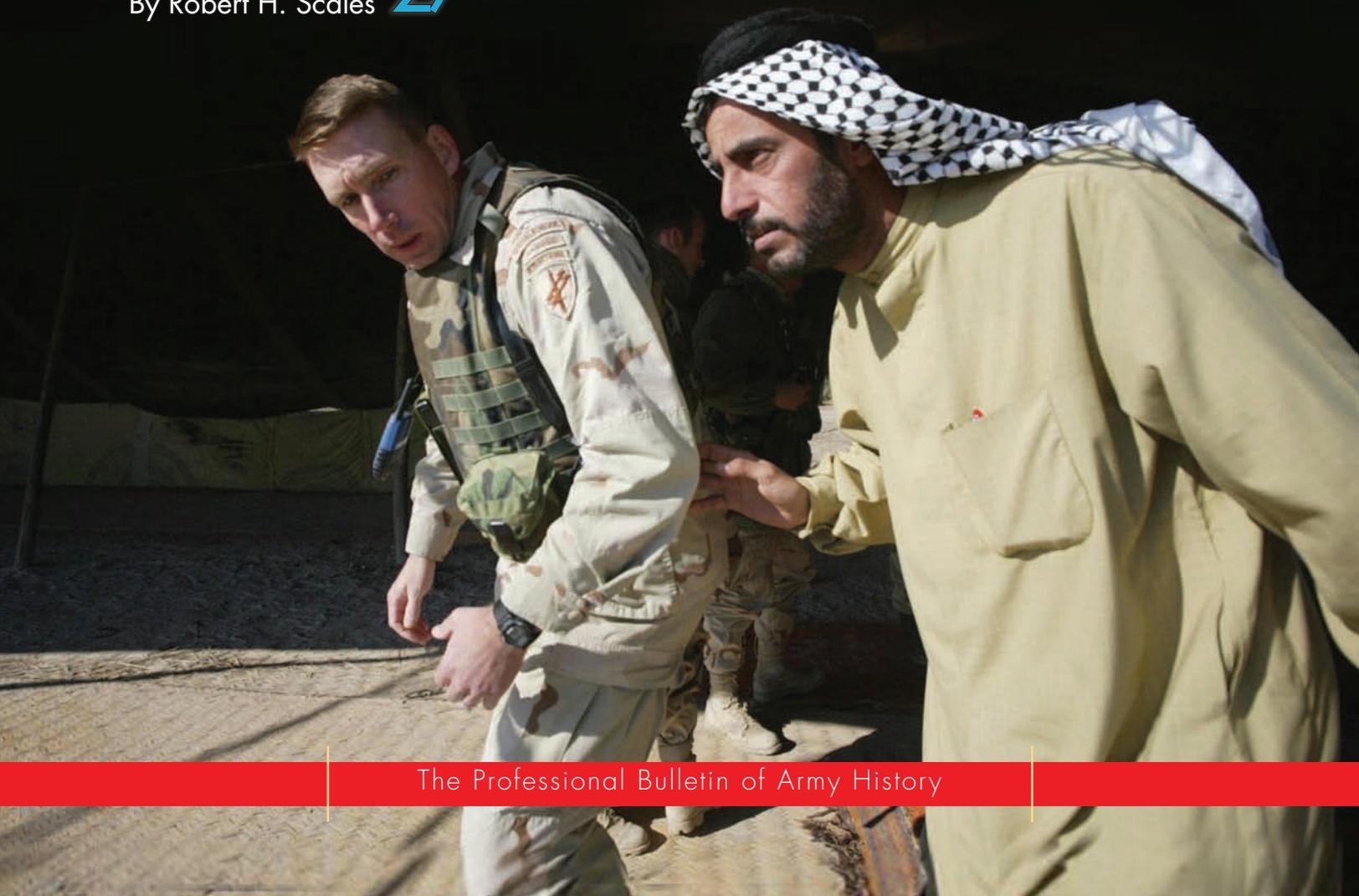
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# ARMY HISTORY

The Professional Bulletin of Army History

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Cover Image: Army Lt. Col. Jeff Bryant of the 486th Civil Affairs Battalion attempts to assist an Iraqi man with complaints about a land seizure carried out by the regime of Saddam Hussein near An Nasiriyah after U.S. troops vanquished forces loyal to that regime there at the start of the Iraq War, 13 December 2003./Getty Images

Page 4, center: Four members of General McClellan's staff, May 1862, photo by James F. Gibson/Library of Congress

Page 7: Four photos of Maj. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys/Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Page 33: Marines with Company C, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, occupy a defensive position along Route 7, their main supply route, near An Nasiriyah, 25 March 2003./Department of Defense

## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

Active U.S. Army officers have generally recognized the risks involved in becoming closely identified with any one political party. In the first article in this issue, Army engineer historian Matthew T. Percy explores how the political views and personal associations of Andrew A. Humphreys, an officer who demonstrated noteworthy talent both as an antebellum topographical engineer captain and a Civil War general, thwarted the rapid rise to high command positions Humphreys' battlefield heroics might otherwise have garnered him. Percy shows, however, that Humphreys ultimately overcame the obstacles he faced and posted a very creditable Civil War record.

The second article in this issue is a commentary entitled "Too Busy to Learn." In this essay, retired Army Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales argues that, much like the nineteenth-century British Army that was heavily engaged with the challenges of maintaining an empire, today's U.S. Army has induced too many of its best officers to invest their time and energies nearly exclusively in operations, leaving inadequate opportunity for professional study and reflection. Scales points to several programs that have mitigated this problem, and he proposes specific reforms, some requiring action by Congress, that, he believes, would lead Army officers to make valuable new investments in personal intellectual enhancement.

In this issue's third article, Capt. Mark K. Snakenberg, who participated in some of the events he describes, examines the fighting during the opening days of the Iraq War in March 2003 in the context of more than two centuries of U.S. military history. Snakenberg compares the nature and extent of the difficulties the U.S. military experienced at and around An Nasiriyah in southern Iraq with the types of misfortunes the U.S. Army encountered in its first battles in other wars. He finds some noteworthy similarities.

Each of these contributions addresses historical issues that remain significant to the Army today.

Charles Hendricks  
Managing Editor



# THE CHIEF'S CORNER

DR. JEFF CLARKE

## History on the Cutting Edge

In so many ways, we in the Army's history and museum community are on the leading edge of the historical profession. With other federal historians, we have been the first to grapple with electronic records, collecting them as they are generated or soon after; storing, analyzing, and organizing them, even before they have been touched by trained archivists; and then using them as the basis for many of the most current historical products to reach our Army customers and the public. In the realm of oral history, what academic historian regularly interviews subjects at both the apex and base of the world's current events while those events are still in motion? And in the classroom, our products and instructors can be found not only throughout the Army's school system—and that of the Marine Corps as well—but also across the wider academic community via the Army's ROTC and JROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps and Junior ROTC) programs and many university-level history courses. Indeed, the Army's many historical publications reach a wide audience. Defense Department customers alone draw more than 4,000 Center products from the Army's publication depot monthly and the Government Printing Office's sales to the general public are always high. Bookstore owners and history department heads alike know that military history titles sell and that the subject is popular with both students and the general public. Similarly, the Army's museum curators recognize that the public's fascination with military artifacts is enduring, and they are often the first to select the contemporary military materiel meriting preservation for posterity, doing so well before such items become truly historical.

More unique is the focused historical support that our community gives to federal decision makers. The practice is especially prevalent in the Army, yet this "public history" function has no counterpart in academia and is often given little recognition by our professional organizations, which are generally organized around traditional historical sub-disciplines. Yet such work forms the core of our institutional service. The Center alone annually produces about one hundred carefully researched historical information papers for key Army leaders, an accomplishment that is replicated by command historical offices and deployed historians throughout the

force. These papers provide to Army leaders at all levels valuable historical perspective on the current issues challenging them on a daily basis. Dr. Diane Putney, who is retiring this year as deputy chief historian in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, aptly captured our role in this regard, stating "How fortunate we all are to see history being made and be right there to record it and then to share our work with leaders and staff who seek and need knowledge and understanding—and, at times, giving them a centuries-long perspective on current issues."

Much has also been said about the "official" character of federal historical programs, and I would like to address that often misunderstood moniker. Certainly, the historical offices of the Army—and I suspect those of the other federal agencies as well—do not produce any true official histories, that is, historical presentations or interpretations that are sanctioned by the agencies in which these offices reside. For Army historians, authorship credit is accompanied by authorship responsibility, a relationship made clear in the preface of most of our publications. Our historical products go through a vetting process that is equally, and in a great many cases more, rigorous than those of the academic or commercial world. These products meet high professional standards in the areas of evidence, balance, logic of presentation, and mastery of narrative prose, and the positive reviews they receive underline our success. The hard work of our museum and art curators is judged by similarly high historical standards, although their efforts also involve the application of the fine arts (exhibit presentation) and scientific skills (artifact preservation). But, again, there is no official component to their work. That said, in the realm of unit history and heritage, the Center is charged with responsibility for determining the designations of Army units, active and reserve alike, and their official lineages and honors. These and a few related organizational tasks are probably the only truly official historical functions that the Center has.

There is yet another cutting-edge function that Army historians have begun to perform, albeit one that needs further development, and that is the creation of new presentation media. Although the Army's use of the

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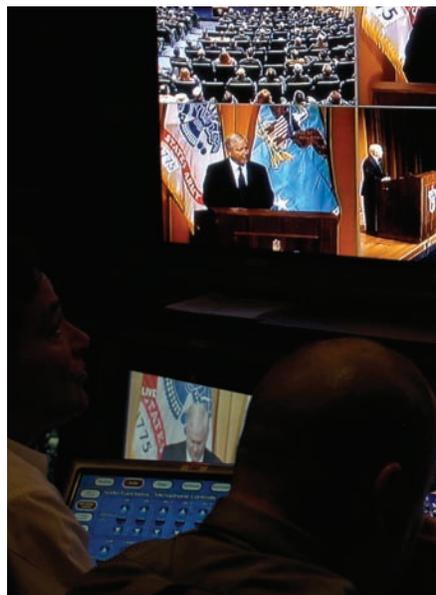
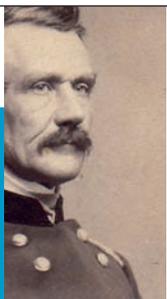
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ANTIETAM AND FREDERICKSBURG**

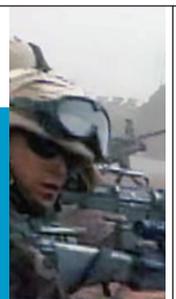
By MATTHEW T. PEARCY



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**AN NASIRIYAH:  
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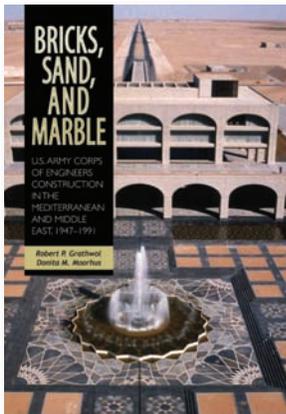
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# NEWSNOTES

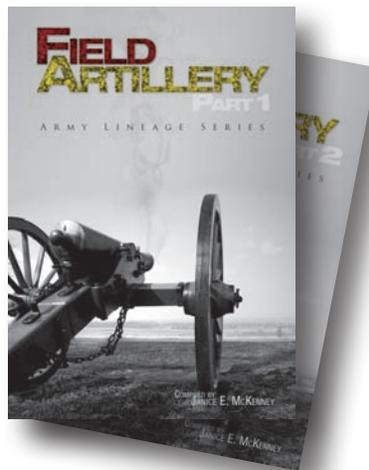
## CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY ISSUES NEW PUBLICATIONS

The U.S. Army Center of Military History has jointly published with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers a history of the construction work undertaken by the Corps in the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East between the end of World War II and the Persian Gulf War. The Center has also published a new two-volume compilation of the lineages and honors of U.S. Army field artillery units.



*Bricks, Sand, and Marble: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Construction in the Mediterranean and Middle East, 1947-1991*, by Robert P. Grathwol and Donita M. Moorhus, describes the evolution of the Corps of Engineers' extensive Cold War building program in southern Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East, a program that focused primarily on military preparedness vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Although the program began in 1947 with assistance to Greece in restoring infrastructure destroyed during World War II, it shifted quickly to the building of air bases and roads

first in North Africa and then in the Middle East. Included in the program were projects administered by the engineers' Mediterranean Division in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The largest effort made by the Corps of Engineers was in Saudi Arabia, where the military construction work was largely locally funded. This 672-page book, which forms part of a series on the U.S. Army in the Cold War, has been issued in a cloth cover as CMH Pub 45-2 and in paperback as CMH Pub 45-2-1. The authors have written several earlier books on the Cold War and on the Corps of Engineers, including *Building for Peace: U.S. Army Engineers in Europe, 1945-1991* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History and Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, 2005).



The new two-volume *Field Artillery* by Janice E. McKenney in the Army Lineage Series updates the organizational history outlines and the lists of campaign participation credits and decorations of Regular Army field artillery regiments and their elements that were printed in the single-volume first edition of this title, issued in 1985. Beyond that, the new edition provides this information for higher-level field

artillery headquarters and for field artillery units in the National Guard. As did the earlier edition, these volumes also include unit bibliographies and color illustrations of the units' heraldic items. The volumes, which have a total of 1,431 pages, have been published as CMH Pub 60-11 in cloth and 60-11-1 in paperback. The compiler served from 1977 to 1999 alternately as chief of the Organizational History Branch and deputy chief of the Historical Services Division of the Center. She is the author of *The Organizational History of Field Artillery, 1775-2003* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2007).

Army publication account holders may obtain these items from the Directorate of Logistics-Washington, Media Distribution Division, ATTN: JDHQVSPAS, 1655 Woodson Road, St. Louis, MO 63114-6128. Account holders may also place their orders at <http://www.apd.army.mil>. Individuals may order the materials from the U.S. Government Printing Office via its Web site at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov>. *Bricks, Sand, and Marble: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Construction in the Mediterranean and Middle East, 1947-1991*, may be purchased in cloth for \$73 and in paperback for \$61. The new two-volume edition of *Field Artillery* may be purchased in paperback for \$93. The Government Printing Office should announced the price of the cloth volumes in May 2010.

## MILITARY HISTORY DETACHMENT WINS AWARD

The 305th Military History Detachment has been awarded the Reserve Officers Association's 2009 Army Reserve Outstanding Small Unit Award. The detachment was selected for this honor by General Charles C. Campbell, commanding general, U.S. Army

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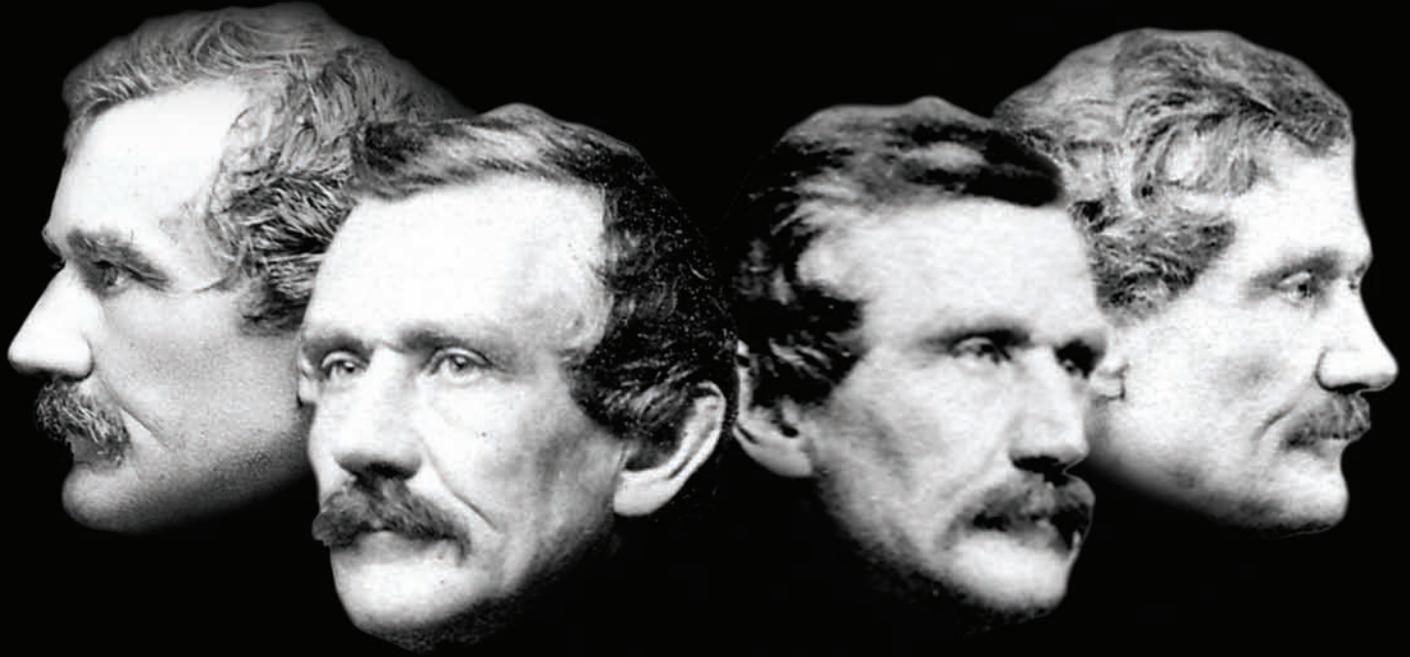
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dr. Matthew T. Percy** has been a historian with the Office of History of Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in Alexandria, Virginia, since 2006. He worked from 2001 to 2006 as the historian of the St. Paul District of the Corps of Engineers in St. Paul, Minnesota. While there, he joined with Charles A. Camillo to co-author *Upon Their Shoulders: A History of the Mississippi River Commission* (Vicksburg, Miss.: Mississippi River Commission, 2004). He has published articles in *Louisiana History*, *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, and *Military History of the West*. He holds a doctorate in history from the University of North Texas. He is currently working on a book-length biography of Andrew A. Humphreys (1810–1883), and he would like to thank his colleagues, and especially the chief of the Office of History, Dr. John C. Lonquest, for supporting this project.



Charge of General Tyler's Brigade at Fredericksburg by Alan H. Archambault

Alan H. Archambault



# “NO HEROISM CAN AVAIL”

## Andrew A. Humphreys and His Pennsylvania Division at Antietam and Fredericksburg

BY MATTHEW T. PEARCY

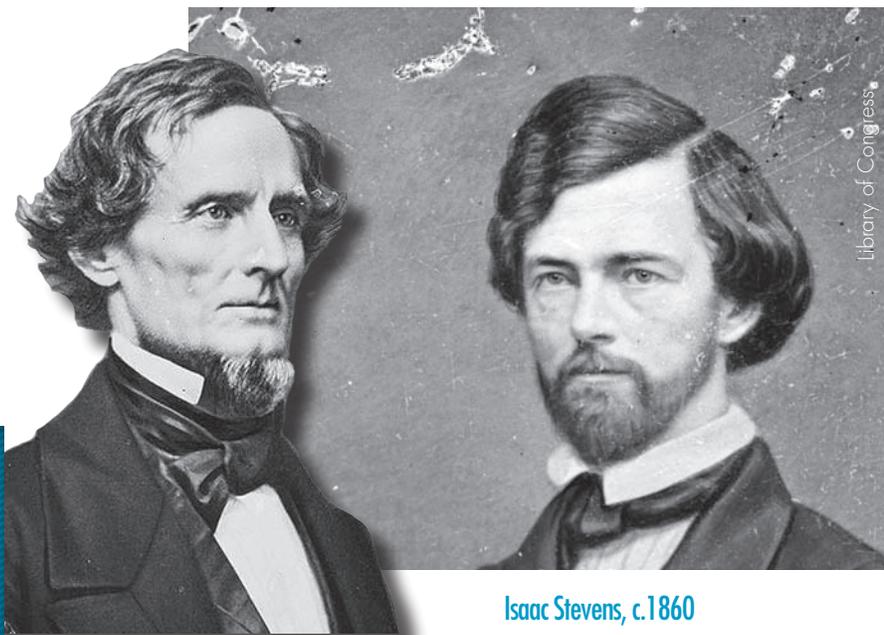
**I**n the harried days after his inauguration on 18 February 1861, the new Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, made “quiet overtures” to “some of the best officers in the U.S. service.”<sup>1</sup> Among these was a senior captain in the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, Andrew A. Humphreys, a fifty-year-old Pennsylvanian and leading scientist and engineer. He and Davis enjoyed a long association going back to their cadet years at West Point and had worked together substantially in the previous decade. As secretary of war in 1854, Davis pulled Humphreys from important duties for the Topographical Bureau to work closely with him as chief of the Office of Pacific Railroad Explorations and Surveys, a grand Army-led effort to study the American West and make it more accessible. Their “warm personal and official friendship” continued after

Davis returned to the Senate in 1857, and they served together as late as December 1860 on a six-member commission headed by Davis reviewing the curriculum, disciplinary system, and organizational structure of the U.S. Military Academy.<sup>2</sup> Two months later, with seven states already in secession and war on the horizon, Davis secreted a list of names to an abettor in Washington, D.C. He was Louis T. Wigfall, a U.S. senator from Texas and leading fire-eater who remained for a time in the “capital as a self-appointed ‘rear guard’” to spy on federal activities and work his mischief.<sup>3</sup> He moved quickly to make the necessary contacts in the War Department and saw Humphreys on 24 February. Following what could only have been an uncomfortable encounter, Wigfall had his answer. He reported back to Davis the next day, “Capt. Humphreys can not under any circumstances join us.”<sup>4</sup>

After quietly turning his back on untold opportunities in a new Southern confederacy, Humphreys found few immediate prospects in his own army. He closed his Western exploration and survey office in July 1861, just days before the Union disaster at Bull Run, but serious illness made it impossible for him to take the field.<sup>5</sup> He resorted to a system of physical training to make himself fit for active service and first sought field duty in October, but without success. Though highly regarded in the old Army, he had built his reputation as a scientist and, after many years in Washington, was regarded as something of a desk soldier, a perception only reinforced by his long history of frail health and his lack of recent combat experience. Baseless but persistent rumors that Humphreys was “lukewarm in his loyalty” were buttressed when his only surviving brother, Joshua, threw in his

# HE WANTED A DIVISION, AND PORTER APPARENTLY TOOK THE HINT.

Library of Congress



Jefferson Davis, c. 1859

Isaac Stevens, c. 1860

lot with the rebel navy.<sup>6</sup> All of these factors, combined with the hurried and sometimes haphazard method of selecting the first Civil War generals, condemned Humphreys to watch from behind while less worthy men moved to the front rank.

Amid heightened security concerns in 1861, the Army assigned a number of officers to the protection of public buildings in Washington, D.C., and Humphreys, probably at the request of his good friend, the eminent scientist Joseph Henry, took charge of the turreted Smithsonian castle.<sup>7</sup> He remained at that post late into the year but continued to seek field duty, even requesting affidavits of support from well-connected friends. Among these was the dashing Brig. Gen. Isaac I. Stevens, a fellow West Pointer and engineer, who had served as governor of Washington Territory and then as

its delegate to Congress and was now a brigade commander in the Army of the Potomac. While territorial governor, Stevens had commanded one of a handful of expeditions for the Pacific railroad surveys, and in 1860 he had served as campaign manager for one of Abraham Lincoln's electoral opponents, Vice President John C. Breckenridge.<sup>8</sup> The well-regarded Stevens was only too happy to help. "I have dropped a line to the President [Abraham Lincoln] in your behalf," he wrote to Humphreys in October 1861, "speaking of you in the way a friend speaks of a friend of whose abilities . . . he has the high appreciation I have of yours."<sup>9</sup>

Reaching across the aisle, Humphreys also tapped West Point classmate Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis (class of 1831), a former Republican congressman from Iowa with presumably

better ties to the White House. Curtis wrote directly to the War Department, also in October, recommending Humphreys for service in the field.<sup>10</sup> While undoubtedly helpful, these overtures from volunteer generals failed to dispel the belief "universally held here in Washington," as Humphreys wrote many years later, "that I would join the South, an expectation that the newcomers into power were duly informed of and acted on, [which] excluded me from everything and caused me to be looked on with distrust."<sup>11</sup>

Opportunity came in March 1862 when Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, commanding the Army of the Potomac, appointed Humphreys to his personal staff as additional aide de camp with the rank of colonel and as the chief topographical engineer of his army. It was an act of good faith and solid judgment on McClellan's part, and Humphreys did not disappoint. In his new capacity, he accompanied the general on the Peninsula Campaign from April through July 1862 and served ably, conducting careful field reconnaissances and working with both the Topographical Bureau in Washington and the Coast Survey to supply maps and other intelligence for the advancing Union army. It was difficult and at times dangerous work but also mostly thankless. By July, Humphreys had wearied of staff duty. From Harrison's Landing on the James River, he wrote to the new secretary of war, Edwin M. Stanton, to again solicit a command of troops, but the political climate back in Washington was volatile. McClellan's stock was down after the failed campaign, and his political enemies were moving against him. Lincoln placed his hopes briefly in Maj. Gen. John Pope, and McClellan found himself in eclipse.<sup>12</sup>

After returning to the capital in mid-August, Humphreys met with Stanton to press his case. Always on the lookout for Army officers of dubious loyalty to the administration, Stanton accused Humphreys of being a “McClellan man.” Humphreys responded firmly (if inelegantly), “Mr. Secretary, I am no man’s man.”<sup>13</sup> The meeting adjourned, apparently in his favor, and he then promptly escaped the city, having secured, as he later wrote to a friend, “four or five days of perfect quiet with my family at our old place near Philadelphia [Pont Reading].” There he enjoyed the company of his wife, Rebecca, and his two young daughters, Letitia and Becky, and was struck by the “luxury and ease of [civilian] life” compared to that in the field. Humphreys hurried back to the capital but arrived ill. He lay in a Washington sickbed on Saturday, 30 August, “without hearing a sound or echo of the many shots that were being fired at [the Battle of Second] Bull Run.”<sup>14</sup> That bloody exchange went to the Confederates as a capstone to a brilliant six-week campaign in which General Robert E. Lee followed his successful defense of Richmond by moving north toward Washington, D.C., and crushing Pope and his short-lived Army of Virginia. The gallant General Stevens was among the dead, shot through the temple while leading a charge at Chantilly. Lee’s next move into Maryland set the stage for the great clash at Antietam.

On the Monday following his return to Washington, Humphreys received orders issued more than a week earlier to report to Brig. Gen. Silas Casey, commander of the Provisional Brigade in Washington and the officer responsible for organizing, disciplining, and training new recruits. Humphreys found the old headquarters “dull enough and dispirited” as word spread of the disastrous defeat at Manassas, but there was opportunity in that news as well. Casey had been tasked with organizing several new divisions for immediate dispatch to the front, and Lee’s invasion of the North gave the assignment greater urgency. One of those divisions was meant for the Fifth Corps, Army of the

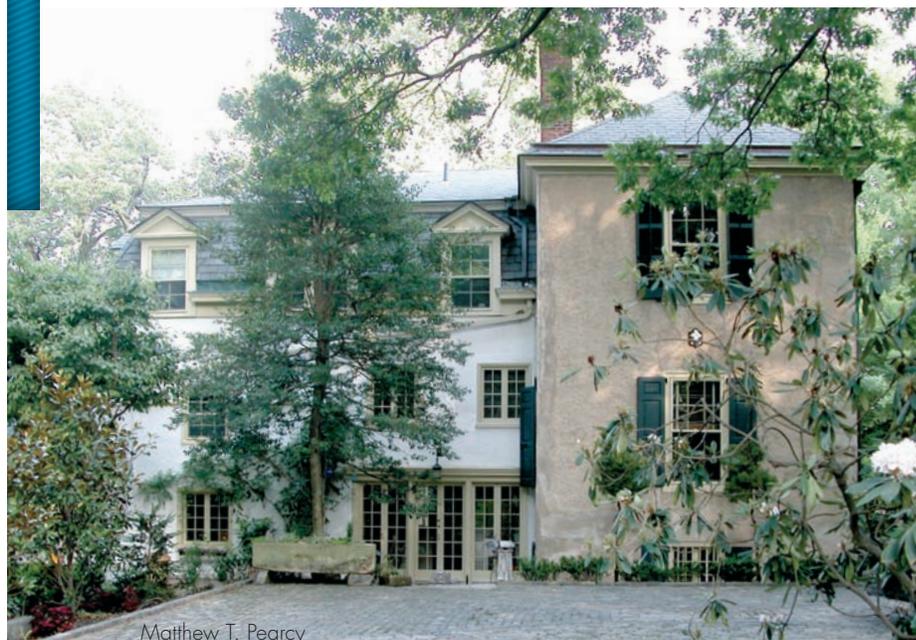
Potomac, commanded by Maj. Gen. Fitz-John Porter, and Humphreys had met with him in Washington that first week of September. The two men were acquainted from the Peninsula Campaign and friendly, and Porter asked him to assume command of a new brigade of volunteers. Humphreys balked with an explanation that he was “ready for anything in an emergency” but that a “brigade command was a small affair.” He wanted a division, and Porter apparently took the hint. Several days later on Friday afternoon, 12 September, Casey “suddenly asked” Humphreys if he would “take command of a division of Pennsylvania troops” already en route to Washington and under orders to “march immediately to join General McClellan,” who had momentarily regained favor with the administration and was pursuing Lee and the Confederate Army into Maryland. The new command was the Third Division, Fifth Corps, under Porter. Humphreys accepted on the spot.<sup>15</sup>

The rest of that day and the next passed in a flurry of activity. The new regiments were scheduled to arrive that afternoon, and Humphreys had orders to “join them and continue the march.” Instead, several were delayed by as much as twelve hours

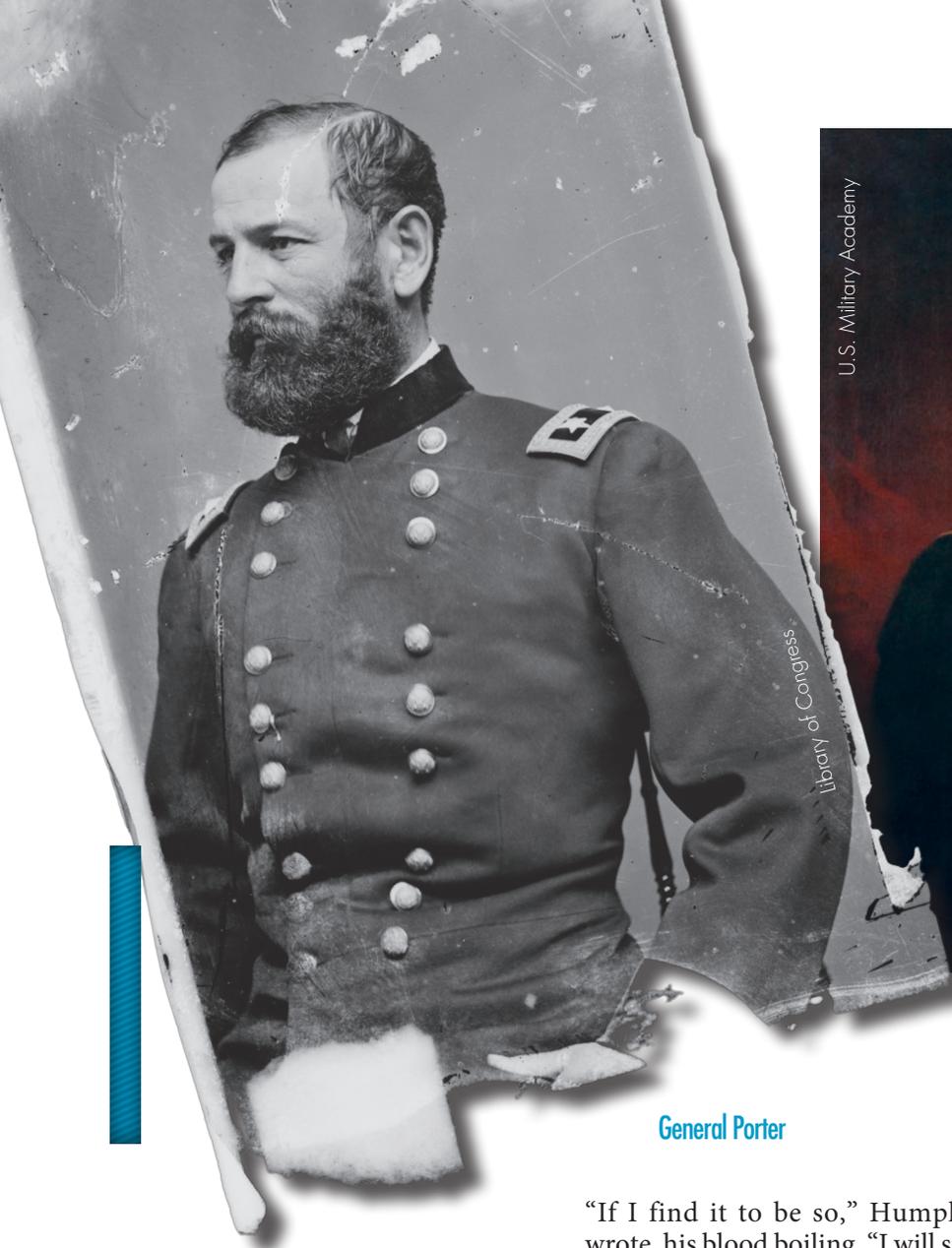
with the last arriving well after midnight. The regiments congregated at the foot of Meridian Hill, then dominated by Columbian College (later George Washington University), where Humphreys—still without a staff—conducted a quick inspection. He was exasperated by what he saw. They were without rations, overloaded with personal property, some without ammunition, and five of the regiments “with such defective arms that the men had no confidence in them whatever.” The division was, as Humphreys noted, “miserably deficient in everything and exhausted with want of rest.” Thus he found it “utterly impossible to move on Saturday morning” and turned his immediate attention to enlisting a staff, securing provisions, and exchanging thousands of unserviceable Austrian muskets for Springfield rifles.<sup>16</sup>

Porter left the city early that morning with the older divisions of his Fifth Corps, but Humphreys kept him advised throughout the day and secured “cordial approval” for the necessary delays. He also sent an update to Army headquarters through Brig. Gen. George W. Cullum, a West Point engineer and chief of staff to Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, the Army’s

The Humphreys family home, Pont Reading, in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, June 2006



Matthew T. Percy

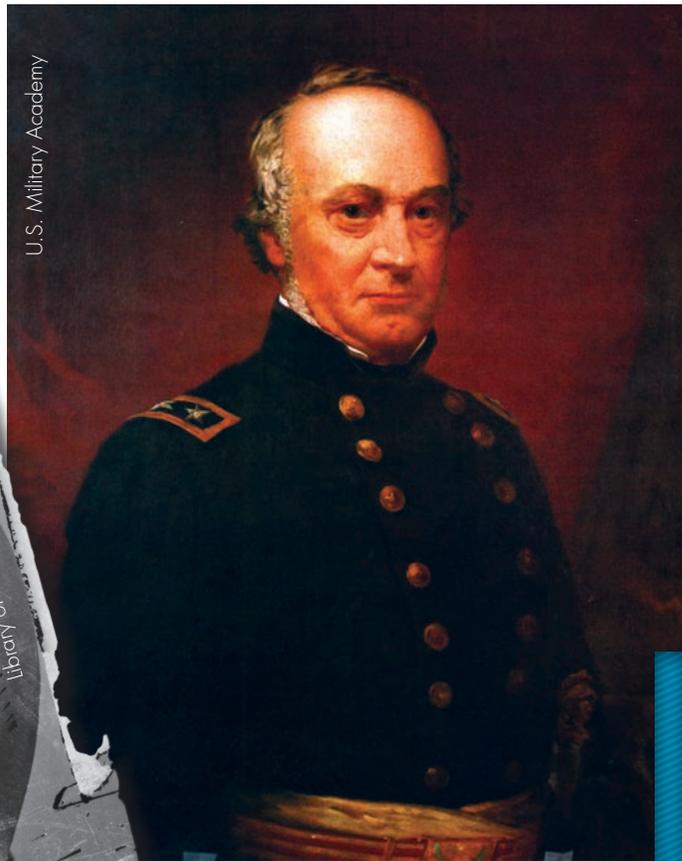


General Porter

commanding general. As the day grew long, Humphreys resigned himself to an additional night in the capital. He sent a second note to Cullum explaining the circumstances and indicating that his division “would march at daylight the next morning.” This communication prompted an astonishing response from Halleck—who seems to have been deeply suspicious of Humphreys—threatening the new division commander with arrest for “disobedience of orders” unless he “immediately leaves to take command of his division in the field.”<sup>17</sup> Humphreys was furious. Though he had no confidence in Halleck and shared in a popular distain for the general in chief, Humphreys turned the brunt of his anger on fellow engineer Cullum, a potential rival whom he suspected of double-dealing.

“If I find it to be so,” Humphreys wrote, his blood boiling, “I will smash that miserable bald skull of his for the dastardly attempt to injure one who he may think stands something in his way in Corps [of Engineers] matters.” He made one last review of his troops late Saturday afternoon to see if it might be possible to march that night but “found it would be folly.”<sup>18</sup>

Freshly outfitted and rested, the green division set out for Frederick, Maryland, on the morning of Sunday, 14 September, as the main body of the Army of the Potomac clashed with Confederate forces in the rugged passes of South Mountain. News of the fight reached Humphreys as he pushed his troops north under difficult conditions, with “part of the way exceedingly dusty and the sun very hot,” but he kept his men “well together and pretty fresh.” Marching fourteen miles a day, the division reached the Monocacy River



U.S. Military Academy

General Halleck, portrait  
by Jacob H. Lazarus

just shy of Frederick on Wednesday morning, where it received orders from Washington to halt and await further instructions. In the previous days, Lee had retired from the mountain passes toward Sharpsburg and secured the rolling hills west of Antietam Creek while McClellan and practically the whole Army of the Potomac had positioned itself along the opposite bank. Humphreys chafed at the delay amid the distant sound of cannonading emanating from the clash of the two armies that had now begun. As the blood spilled at Antietam on what would be the bloodiest day of the war, Humphreys, still without instructions, scouted the area around Frederick and prepared his men for a long march. The first orders arrived from Washington late in the afternoon instructing Humphreys to rejoin the main army. He and his men advanced five miles before sunset and were about to make camp when a second dispatch arrived, this

# THOUGHT IT “HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT I SHOULD BE KILLED.”

one from Porter urging Humphreys to “hurry up with all haste . . . force your march.”<sup>19</sup> The much-maligned Army of the Potomac had checked the Confederate invasion and blunted the threat to Washington, D.C., but McClellan believed that a decisive victory might still be had. He planned a morning assault and wanted Humphreys’ 7,000 troops on the field.<sup>20</sup>

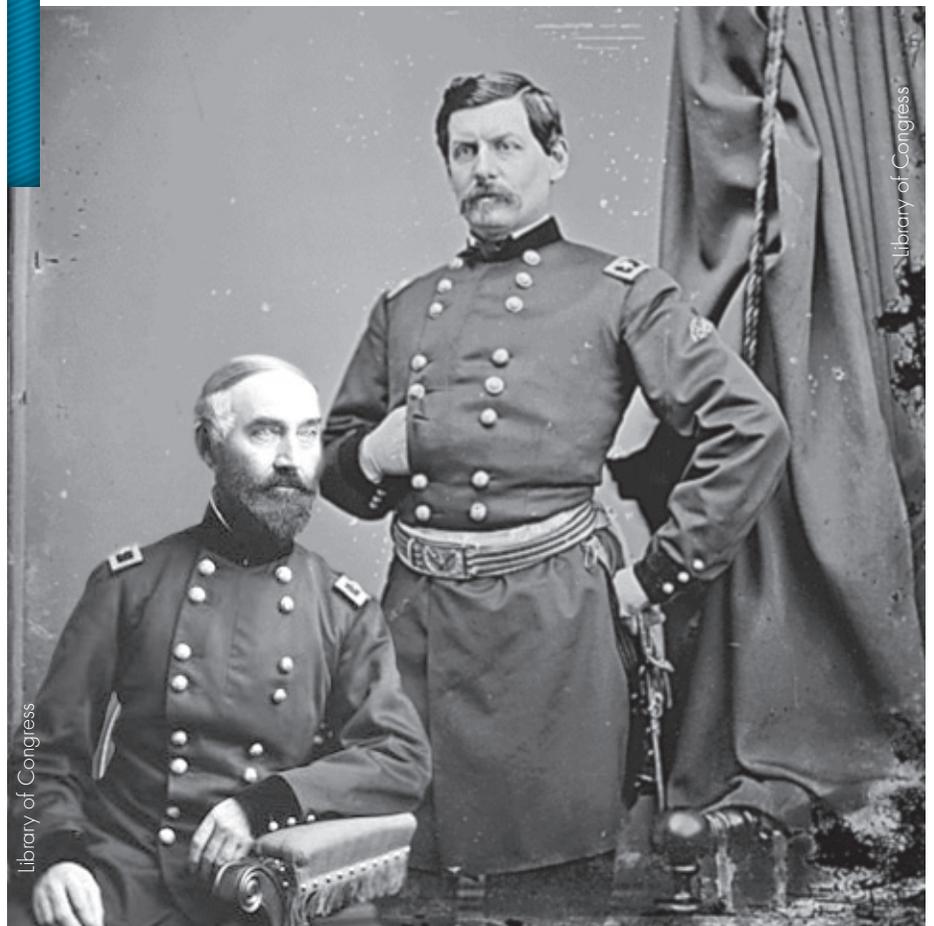
Restless for a fight, Humphreys and his men pushed through the night in long sinewy lines of dust and humanity. The road they took carried them west from Frederick across the misty battlefields of South Mountain and through the hushed villages of Boonsboro and Keedysville, all congested with the dead and wounded of both armies. The sky was overcast and the night “pitch black,” and the men stumbled along in their exhaustion through a choking dust several inches deep. Humphreys was conspicuous, riding up and down the column on his thoroughbred (named after a favorite uncle, “Charley”) and pressing his heavy-lidded men forward at a killing pace. Nearly a thousand fell out along the way while others pushed on at the price of injury. Amid the sounds of the great column, of harness and hoof and shuffling feet, his thoughts turned to the coming battle. His men had only just been mustered into service and would be skittish in battle. They might break under fire. He would lead from the front but thought it “highly probable,” as he wrote many years later, “that I should be killed.” Even so, he promised himself that he would “stick to the [battle] ground if all the others did leave it. . . . Nothing should make me quit the field.”<sup>21</sup>

As the division approached Sharpsburg just before dawn, Humphreys “thought the firing would begin” and stopped the column for an hour’s rest.

In an instant, his men were “on the ground covered with their blankets.” Humphreys slept with his back against a rock, his son Harry by his side, and awoke at first light. He rose stiffly to his feet, quickly roused his men, and recommenced the march. The division crossed the Antietam at 0730 and fell in with the rest of the Fifth Corps along the center of the Union lines. None of the men who participated in that hurried march would ever forget it. Struggling against fatigue, they

drew up in rank, loaded their weapons, and stood at arms, “supposing themselves about to pass their first ordeal of battle.” But the excessively cautious McClellan tarried, and two hours later the men stood down and stacked their rifles. Preparations for an assault consumed the whole day, but it was all for nothing. That night under cover of darkness, Lee and his grey ranks fell back across the Potomac into Virginia. McClellan declined to pursue. The battle was over.<sup>22</sup>

General Cullum (seated), c. 1862, and General McClellan, 1861



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# THEY WERE OFTEN, HOWEVER, AN UNWIELDY BUNCH—“PERFECTLY GREEN”

Bloody Antietam saw two great armies badly mauled on the deadliest day in American military history. Lee staggered from the battlefield, signaling his defeat, but, for McClellan, Antietam was no triumph. A complete victory ending in the destruction of the Rebel army had slipped from his grasp and, with it, any prospect of ending the war on generous terms. The lost opportunity promised months if not years of continued fighting and played directly into the hands of his political foes in Washington. As powerful Radical Republicans railed against “Little Mac,” President Lincoln issued his preliminary emancipation proclamation. That humble edict of 22 September 1862, remade the war into a moral crusade to abolish slavery, a transformation heartily opposed by McClellan and many of his fellow West Pointers, including Porter and Humphreys. Theirs was no radical tradition. Most regular officers were solid Democrats and conservative on issues of race and slavery, and many, like Humphreys, had quietly opposed Lincoln in 1860.<sup>23</sup> They fought for union, not slavery, but had been outmaneuvered. A wave of abolitionist sentiment, soon to break, would wash away both McClellan and Porter and strip Humphreys of his most powerful allies in the Army of the Potomac. Merit alone would see him through.

Humphreys and his men spent the next six weeks in camp near Sharpsburg where he began the arduous duty of training and indoctrinating his raw recruits. Volunteer soldiers constituted the great mass of the Union army, and their services were indispensable to the struggle.<sup>24</sup> They were often, however, an unwieldy bunch—“perfectly green,” as Hum-

phreys described his own division, “and scarcely able to do anything.”<sup>25</sup> A grim determination had carried his men to Sharpsburg, but it fell to the division commander to make soldiers out of this ragtag bunch of Pennsylvania farm boys, store clerks, coal miners, and assorted ruffians. And it would have to be done quickly as six of the eight regiments were short-timers, nine-month volunteers recruited in late summer 1862. They hailed from across the Keystone State and most passed through Camp Curtin (named for the popular Pennsylvania Governor Andrew G. Curtin) near Harrisburg where they were outfitted and organized into regiments. For the vast majority, that constituted the extent of their military experience, and they would not be easily tamed. Citizen-soldiers considered it degrading to give immediate and unquestioned obedience to orders, and the whole concept of taut impersonal discipline was foreign to them.<sup>26</sup>

Volunteer officers shared many of the strengths and deficiencies of the enlisted men. They could be brash, idealistic, and imperfectly disciplined. Company and regimental officers were generally elected by the soldiers or appointed by the state governor for political reasons, and most either were or wanted to be personally liked by the men they commanded. Fraternization was a common problem.<sup>27</sup> Brig. Gen. Erastus B. Tyler, a fur businessman from Ohio, commanded the first of two brigades (encompassing the 91st, 126th, 129th, and 134th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiments). A strong-willed, competent officer, he joined the war at its outset and

secured election to the colonelcy of the 7th Ohio Infantry Regiment, felling a future president, James A. Garfield, in the regimental contest. Tyler fought in the Shenandoah Valley campaign but without distinction. He was an avowed teetotaler and so something of an outsider at division headquarters.<sup>28</sup> Col. Peter H. Allabach, a burly Mexican War veteran and a congenial fellow, commanded the second brigade (123d, 131st, 133d, 155th Regiments). Humphreys liked him. Other notables were Col. Jacob G. Frick, also a veteran of Mexico and a loud man of real courage; and Lt. Col. William H. Armstrong, a talented young lawyer and stalwart Republican. The latter two served in the 129th under Tyler.

For his personal staff, Humphreys retained two from the Peninsula Campaign—his twenty-two-year-old eldest son, Henry “Harry” Humphreys, and Lt. Col. Carswell McClellan, an engineer graduate of Williams College and, notably, first cousin of the commanding general (though Humphreys was unaware of the fact when he brought him on). Of middling height, dark hair, and haunting eyes, McClellan served Humphreys with pluck and fidelity and, like his brigadier, saw a younger brother join the rebellion.<sup>29</sup> Harry was eager and smart, an inch or two taller than his father and fiercely loyal to him. He attended high school at the elite Phillips Academy at Andover, a traditional feeder school for Yale College, but he looked instead to West Point. With his father’s help, Harry secured an at-large appointment in 1857 that would have placed him in the undistinguished class of 1861



General Humphreys and his staff, September 1863, photo by Timothy O'Sullivan

alongside George Armstrong Custer; but for reasons unknown, he accepted the appointment but did not attend, enrolling instead at the Yale Scientific School (later the Sheffield Scientific School) for instruction in science and engineering. The Civil War interrupted his education, and he joined his father at Yorktown as a civilian assistant in the Topographical Engineers Department. Now in a combat role, Brig. Gen. Humphreys wanted a commission for his son and successfully lobbied Governor Curtin, who in the days after Antietam appointed Harry a first lieutenant in the 112th Pennsylvania Volunteers. The young Humphreys immediately left the regiment to serve with his father, rarely leaving his side.<sup>30</sup>

The weeks ahead were dedicated to training. The division had a loose-jointed quality about it, but Humphreys was nevertheless impressed with his volunteers. He wrote a friend that “the material is excellent, some of it splendid, much of it loutish, but all are, apparently, desirous of learning.” He pushed his men as he pushed himself and carried the entire enterprise on his sturdy shoulders. As he wrote a friend, “The labor is immense. Everything has to be taught and must all emanate from one person—every little detail even to the manner in which non-commissioned officers teach and make their squads keep themselves, clean their arms, accoutrements, etc. It keeps me so closely occupied that I have time for nothing else.”

Training included daily recitations by the officers in tactics and drill and four hours each day of squad or company and battalion drill. By the end of September, Humphreys reported that the men of his division could “go through the most important battalion drills pretty well, not with precision or elegance, but without confusion.”<sup>31</sup> The first test of their martial bearing came at the beginning of October 1862, when the president paid an unexpected visit to the Army of the Potomac at Sharpsburg.

Lincoln wanted the army to move and came to prod it along. He spent four days in camp, quietly assessing its condition and meeting with commanders. He reviewed the Fifth Corps on 3 October 1862, and Hum-

President Lincoln, in top hat, meets with General McClellan, sixth from left, and a group of officers at Antietam, 3 October 1862; also present are Generals Humphreys and Porter, second and fifth from right, respectively; photo by Alexander Gardner.



phreys recognized in his own ordered ranks the “good effects” of rigorous training. That same day, McClellan and fifteen members of his staff were photographed with the president, who towered over all others. His famous stovepipe hat only added to the perception. Behind and a couple of feet to his left stood the bearded Porter and to his left and a step back, Humphreys, sword at his side and immaculately dressed but small and nearly lost in the shadows—not yet a recognizable figure in the war effort.

The division continued to improve into October, but many of the rank and file and not a few of the officers bristled under the harsh discipline. Humphreys was the lone West Pointer in the division. He was a stickler for detail and stubborn as a mule. He was also a firm disciplinarian. While charming on a personal level, he cared little as yet for the affection of his

troops and understood to his very core that morale depended on control, discipline, and punishment. This precept informed his leadership, and from it he would not bend; he would not deviate; he would not excuse. When his men fell short of expectations, as they inevitably would, Humphreys relied on the court-martial as the most visible instrument at his disposal for enforcing order and maintaining the rank structure.<sup>32</sup> One early case stood out. It involved seventeen-year-old Pvt. Robert Stevens of the 155th Pennsylvania who fell asleep on guard duty on the night of 23 September. It was a capital offense. The volunteer officer who discovered the boy took pity on him and determined not to prefer serious charges, but word got back to Humphreys who was “greatly incensed.” He ordered a court-martial. A conviction seemed beyond all doubt when Colonel Armstrong interceded on the boy’s behalf and put up a suitable and ultimately successful defense based on an imperfect identification of the accused. That officer probably saved the boy’s life, but the episode soured relations between Humphreys and several of his key men and presaged a later and very serious falling out.<sup>33</sup>

Half of the division saw its first action in mid-October. Following the retreat from Antietam, Lee needed time to refit and reinforce his battered army, and he sought refuge in the familiar Shenandoah Valley. From there, the Rebels recovered strength and spirit, and the flamboyant Confederate cavalryman Maj. Gen. James E. B. Stuart started anew with his exploits. Tasked with gathering intelligence and collecting supplies, he set out with 1,800 cavalymen on 10 October 1862, and splashed across the Potomac near Williamsport on a raid that carried him as far north as Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and fully around the encamped Union army.<sup>34</sup> Stuart returned two days later with food, clothing, and 1,200 horses liberated from angry Pennsylvania farmers. It was a humiliating episode that left McClellan looking foolish and touched a nerve among the men of Humphreys’ division, particularly those of the 126th Pennsylvania who

hailed mostly from the Chambersburg area. One private from the regiment wrote home that the men “are all out of humor and are discouraged that we have to be here and let the Rebels plunder our homes.”<sup>35</sup> Lincoln, already sorely disappointed with McClellan, challenged him to engage the Rebel army. The recalcitrant general answered with incursions of his own into Virginia and tapped for the job two of his newest division commanders—General Humphreys and Brig. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, a fellow West Pointer and Pennsylvanian and a rising star in the Army of the Potomac.<sup>36</sup>

The two led separate but coordinated reconnaissances. Hancock took his First Division of the Second Corps and 1,500 additional men across the Potomac River at Harpers Ferry and followed the Shenandoah Valley as far as Charles Town. He met little resistance and carefully reconnoitered the area. Humphreys took command of a larger body that included 500 cavalry; six pieces of artillery under Lt. Charles E. Hazlett, 5th U.S. Artillery; and 6,000 infantry drawn from each division of the Fifth Corps and a regular U.S. Army infantry brigade. The whole column crossed the Potomac at Shepherdstown under the watchful eye of Confederate pickets and soon clashed with lead elements of Stuart’s cavalry brigade. A series of skirmishes saw the Rebels driven “from position to position” towards Kearneysville, six miles to the south, and the long blue line halted for the night just short of town. The next day, the bulk of the force moved through Kearneysville where it engaged a large Confederate cavalry force on its front. Humphreys advanced with both regulars and volunteers, forced the Rebels back, and pushed on four more miles to Leetown. With the scouting mission accomplished by early evening, he and his men returned to Shepherdstown under scattered musket and artillery fire. As they approached the river, two Confederate cavalry regiments charged the rear of the column and were neatly repulsed by a single volley fired at forty yards, “emptying many saddles.”<sup>37</sup> The river crossing occurred without incident. Back in camp before

General Hancock, c. 1863



Library of Congress

# OFFICERS EMBRACED, AND TEARS FLOWED. ALCOHOL Poured FREELY

midnight on 17 October, Humphreys reported that Confederate cavalry occupied Martinsburg and that the left wing of the Confederate army rested on Bunker Hill, several miles west of Kearneysville. This, his first combat command in a quarter-century, went off without a hitch, and Porter was effusive in praise of his new division commander.<sup>38</sup> The episode also fostered a close friendship between Humphreys and Hancock that “grew stronger and stronger throughout the war” and after.<sup>39</sup>

News that Lee and his army were still in striking distance only fed the mounting frustration in Washington, and Lincoln again pressed for action. McClellan relented in the last days of October, pulling up stakes and nudging his army across the Potomac towards Richmond. Lee responded by dispatching Lt. Gen. James Longstreet, and his single wing easily outpaced the lumbering Union army and positioned itself across McClellan’s line of advance at Culpeper, Virginia, shielding the northern army from its objective—the Confederate capital. News of the setback reached Washington on 4 November 1862, and Lincoln fired McClellan the next day.<sup>40</sup> His replacement was the reluctant Maj. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside, commander of the Ninth Corps and a favorite of the Republican Congress. Better known for his muttonchop whiskers than his

martial abilities, he was a man of action but perhaps too eager to please. With the transition under way, the opposing armies settled on either side of the Rappahannock—the Army of the Potomac near Warrenton and the Confederates across the river at Culpeper.<sup>41</sup>

The sacking of McClellan staggered the Army of the Potomac, and the days that followed saw an outpouring of raw emotion for the man who had fashioned the army and shared in its many trials. The general bid farewell to his staff on the evening of Sunday, 9 November, greeting the men personally and sharing in their expressed dismay and frustration. Officers embraced, and tears flowed. Alcohol poured freely, and “in their cups men spoke their minds.” A few uttered serious indiscretions, and Humphreys—probably drunk at the time—was chief among the transgressors. “By God,” he proclaimed to a not

General Burnside



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General McClellan, accompanied by General Burnside, taking leave of the Army of the Potomac, 10 November 1862, drawing by Alfred R. Waud



Library of Congress

altogether friendly audience, “I wish someone would ask the Army to follow [General McClellan] to Washington and hurl the whole damned pack into the Potomac, and place General McClellan at the head of affairs.”<sup>42</sup> These “harmless” expressions of regret were, according to his son, “enlarged upon by his enemies in the division,” particularly Frick and Tyler, and later “made to militate against him in his promotion to higher rank” after Fredericksburg.<sup>43</sup> Humphreys conceded many years later that “my greatest misfortune was my association with McClellan.”<sup>44</sup>

Amid the uproar, Burnside first set about consolidating his command and devising a plan of action. Having already conferred with McClellan about his plans, the new commander determined to advance on Richmond, “the taking of which . . . should be the great object of the campaign.” The army would march southeast along the Rappahannock River to Fredericksburg, a small town

General Butterfield



of some five thousand people near the head of navigation that would serve as a staging ground for the advance south. In a fateful move, Burnside ordered the army to keep to the north bank of the Rappahannock and cross en masse at Fredericksburg. For that he would need pontoon boats and lots of them. Halleck would make the necessary arrangements. Burnside also reorganized the army. Distrustful of his own abilities to command so unwieldy a force, he grouped the six Union corps into three “grand divisions” and promoted several of his senior commanders. The Left Grand Division, consisting of the First and Sixth Corps, went to the highly regarded Maj. Gen. William B. Franklin, a fellow topographical engineer captain before the war and someone Humphreys knew and liked. The Second and Ninth Corps constituted the Right Grand Division, which fell under the sixty-five-year-old Maj. Gen. Edwin V. Sumner. During the reorganization, Halleck ordered the arrest and court-martial of General Porter, accused of disobedience at Second Bull Run. Maj. Gen. Joseph “Fighting Joe” Hooker took his place but just days later ascended to the head of the Center Grand Division, composed of the Third Corps as well as the Fifth, including Humphreys’ raw division. Command of the Fifth Corps devolved to senior division commander Maj. Gen. Daniel Butterfield, a duplicitous figure Humphreys would later characterize as “false, treacherous, and cowardly.”<sup>45</sup>

The pace of things picked up considerably under Burnside. Within days, the massive Army of the Potomac with more than 120,000 men began moving out of Warrenton, pushing Lee’s army back toward Culpeper, and then making quickly for Fredericksburg. Lead elements covered the nearly forty miles in two days and began situating themselves opposite the city before Lee could reinforce it. The Fifth Corps was the last to leave Warrenton, breaking camp in the predawn hours of 17 November. Heavily burdened as they marched through the nearly deserted town, the blue ranks drew the attention of “two indignant females well up in years, who scolded . . . the ‘Yankee troops’ . . . as they passed.”<sup>46</sup> Late the next day, a cold

winter rain soaked all to the bone and transformed the country roads into quagmires. The mud was knee deep in places. Humphreys and his division trudged along with stops at Spotted Tavern and Hartwood Church before reporting to camp near Potomac Creek. The army under Burnside had exceeded all expectations, placed itself ahead of Lee on a strategic location en route to Richmond, and found Fredericksburg exposed and vulnerable. But there was a problem. As a result of some bureaucratic bungling in Washington (with Halleck mostly at fault), the pontoons had not arrived, and the narrow but now swollen Rappahannock separated Burnside from his objective. He could only wait, his progress arrested, and watch as Lee gathered together his scattered forces and occupied the high ground beyond the city. Soon, lonely pickets of blue and grey stretched for four miles on opposite banks of the river.<sup>47</sup> The element of surprise was lost, and Burnside abandoned any pretext of it. He waited several days for the pontoons and surrendered another two weeks to planning, establishing reliable supply bases on a nearby bend of the Potomac River, and rebuilding fractured railroad lines.

During this period of inaction, Humphreys and his men settled into “thick pine woods” so dense they could scarcely find room to stack arms. Spirits were high, but the men felt the weight of the coming battle and turned their nervous energy to transforming the grounds into a “fine camp and a good parade ground.” As a winter chill moved into Virginia, they hid away in their “dog tents,” and a few of the more industrious threw up pine huts with fireplaces, though, as one officer later explained, “many hapless fellows had their ‘homes’ destroyed by fire.” The days passed in rest and routine. The men wrote long letters home and crawled from their shelters for drill and occasional picket duty. On Thanksgiving Day, the division heard an “eloquent discourse” from Col. John B. Clark, a former chaplain and commander of the 123d Pennsylvania.<sup>48</sup> Four inches of snow fell on 6 and 7 December, and the men suffered accordingly. At least two froze to death.

Humphreys used this time to outfit his division, fill out his staff, and rid

# ONE OF THE LOUDEST SWEARERS THAT I EVER KNEW

himself of incompetent officers. He removed one for “mental dullness and physical ineptness.”<sup>49</sup> He also picked up on his correspondence. He had letters from old friends and new, those seeking favors, and those with advice. A note from one of his brigade commanders, General Tyler, counseled headquarters to “procure at once a supply of onions . . . which are said to be an excellent remedy for the prevailing diseases in the brigade.”<sup>50</sup> Another—written, apparently, by the mother of a soldier in the division—admonished Humphreys for his salty tongue.

Hon. Sir, you must excuse the liberty I have taken in address you these few lines. You are a stranger to me but I heard you spoken of as a gentleman but a profane swarmer. Now, I

am going to give you a lecture, and you must bare with me. God is just and will not let the guilty go free. It's not your own Damnation but you're example to others. Pause and think to Curse the god that made you to whome you are indeted for every breath you draw. I must say no man is fit to command that can't command his own tounge.<sup>51</sup>

The thrashing continued for several pages. Humphreys' meek response came in the third person: “General Humphreys it is true swears at his fellow men—never at the Almighty—such an act of impiety is as abhorrent to his soul as to that of the most pious Christian, even when carried away by an irresistible burst of passion.” He never did forswear the colorful

habit, and his reputation only grew. Many years later a gifted chronicler of the war, Charles A. Dana, called Humphreys “one of the loudest swearers that I ever knew” and put him in rarified air: “The men of distinguished and brilliant profanity in the war were General Sherman and General Humphreys—I could not mention any others that could be classed with them.”<sup>52</sup>

The great movement began on Thursday, 11 December 1862, when just after 0300 the dangerous task of throwing the pontoon bridges was initiated. Confederate sharpshooters across the river harassed the engineers, dropping a dozen or more before a massive Union cannonade hurled shot and shell into the historic city. The bombardment continued for several hours to sweep the rifle-pits along the

Union troops cross the Rappahannock River to assault Fredericksburg, 11 December 1862, print by L. Prang & Company





Library of Congress

Union Army engineers build a pontoon bridge across the Rappahannock River into Fredericksburg, 11 December 1862, drawing by Alfred R. Waud

river and drive the Confederate rifles from riverfront homes and buildings. The effect was more general. The explosions kindled fires throughout the city, and these burned furiously. Dense clouds of smoke hung in the air, but the sharpshooters persisted with their deadly work. To the sound of artillery and occasional musket fire, the Fifth Corps broke camp and, moving in three separate columns, advanced towards the river. The march was irksome, and the crisp morning air stringent with the smell of gunpowder and burnt pine. Early in the afternoon, the bridges still incomplete, Burnside sent out infantry—placed on boats and ferried across the river—to drive the enemy from its bunkers. That bravely done, the frustrated engineers made short work of the bridges.<sup>53</sup> All that day and the next two, long blue columns marched across gently rocking pontoons into the city.

Humphreys' division, held in reserve with the center wing, would be among the last to cross, and it closed on the river as troops in advance entered the city. On the eve of battle, the division bivouacked in uncomfortable circumstances near the Phillips House,

where Burnside would establish his headquarters. The weather was "exquisite," according to Humphreys; but the melting snow "left six inches of mud in its place," and the men were in it "all day and lay down in it all night."<sup>54</sup> They were not permitted fires and subsisted on the food in their haversacks. A few men took ill. The following morning, Saturday, 13 December 1862, was cold and frosty, and a dense fog obscured everything but the opening salvos of a great battle. It had begun.

The Battle of Fredericksburg unfolded in a natural amphitheater bounded on the east by the Rappahannock River and on the west by a string of hills heavily fortified by Lee. The Union plan called for a flanking movement against the Confederate right and a demonstration against Marye's Heights, the anchor of the Rebel left and the heart of its defenses. For the luckless Army of the Potomac, things went badly from the start. Confusing and evasive orders from headquarters left Franklin perplexed as to who was leading the main attack, and his efforts that morning were tentative and uncertain. He began the assault

against the Rebel flank on Prospect Hill at 0830 in piecemeal fashion. His top subordinate, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade, led a single division through a seam in the woods and achieved temporary success, threatening to roll up the defenders, but the movement was not reinforced. A devastating counterattack by Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson swept the field. Meade was driven back with heavy casualties, and the opportunity lost. Franklin did not renew the assault despite orders to do so. Fully half of his 60,000 men were never engaged in the battle.<sup>55</sup>

The attack on Marye's Heights began about noon. Lee was strongest there and his troops enjoyed a splendid field of fire. His artillery occupied the high ground, and his legions were burrowed into the hillside and sheltered behind a heavy stone wall that extended a half mile along the base of the ridge, "as perfect a defensive work as any engineer could have planned, or any engineer troops could have constructed."<sup>56</sup> Six hundred yards of narrow plain stretched from this position to the town below and fun-

neled the attackers against the heart of the Confederate defenses. It was a killing field, and Burnside hurled his doomed army onto it. The veteran Second Corps under Maj. Gen. Darius N. Couch led the way. One by one, the brigades debouched from the town, crossed a canal, traversed the narrow level, and formed under cover of a rise of ground below a large brick house less than 150 yards from the Confederate line. At a word, they ascended the bank and pressed forward up the hill for the stone wall and oblivion. In the boldest of the early assaults, Hancock led his three brigades to within twenty-five yards of the defenders before each in turn staggered back, crushed and bleeding. Hundreds of dead and dying littered the battlefield. Remnants of the shattered Second Corps, slightly sheltered by a small rise in the ground, formed a ragged line of battle across the field and held the position late into the afternoon—but to no advantage.<sup>57</sup>

As the battle raged across the river at 1430, Humphreys stepped from the Phillips House with orders in hand and a look of grim determination on his face. He mounted his horse, galloped to the head of the forming column, and addressed his division, “Gentlemen, the Fifth Corps is in the reserve of the Army, and it is expected to carry the day.” He turned and led his men hastily down the ravine to the banks of the icy Rappahannock and traversed one of the three new bridges leading into the burning city. The fog had dissipated, and the Confederate artillery improved its range, splashing ordnance in the river as the men tread warily across the pontoons. Safely on the other side, Humphreys climbed atop his horse and directed his division up a steep bank and south along

the riverfront before winding his men up narrow avenues toward the western edge of town. While the division was passing through an intersection, a rebel shell exploded overhead, throwing brick, slate, and a large tree branch on the lead brigade, killing several horses. Moments later, a second shell ripped one of the men nearly in two. He died with a gasp, “Oh, my God! [T]ake me,” the first of more than a thousand division casualties that day.<sup>58</sup>

As he neared the staging area, Humphreys met Hancock just off the field. The two were talking when met by a highly agitated General Couch who had watched the slaughter of his own corps from the cupola of the

Fredericksburg Court House. Despite horrific losses, his men had “gained the heights” but were out of ammunition and needed support. Humphreys already had instructions from Burnside and indicated as much to Couch. “But you are the ranking officer,” Humphreys continued, “and if you will give me an order to do so I will support you at once.” Couch recalled many years later “the grim determination which settled on the face of that gallant hero when he received the words, ‘Now is the time for you to go in!’”<sup>59</sup> Humphreys rode ahead, his division in tow. Once free of the city, the two rookie brigades took up positions on either side of George Street, which

Confederate riflemen fire on advancing Union troops from behind the stone wall on Marye's Heights, drawing by Allen C. Redwood



MOMENTS LATER, A SECOND SHELL RIPPED ONE OF THE MEN NEARLY IN TWO.



Fredericksburg Court House, May 1862, drawing by Edwin Forbes

merged up ahead with Telegraph Road leading directly into the Confederate lines. Soon after, Hooker confirmed the new orders. Humphreys and his four thousand men would lead the final attack on Marye's Heights as the "forlorn hope" of the Army of the Potomac.

Humphreys had not yet seen the Confederate position and had received little intelligence.<sup>60</sup> He rode forward with his son and the rest of his staff to survey the field, approaching the high ground, as he later wrote, "above, on which, some 200 yards in advance, were the troops I was to support, slightly sheltered by a small rise in the ground." These were the men of Couch's Second Corps.<sup>61</sup> One hundred fifty yards in front of them was the heavy stone wall, "the existence of which I knew nothing of until I got there." While exposed, the small contingent drew fire from Rebel sharpshooters, and, according to Harry, the "balls flew in a perfect shower like one of the severest hailstorms . . . ever witnessed." One struck General Humphreys' horse in the neck. As the general

reeled around, Harry's horse, Tom Cat, took a ball in the left foreleg but "did not seem to mind at all."<sup>62</sup> Humphreys and his staff withdrew to the shelter of lower ground and began preparations for the assault.

The Second Brigade under Colonel Allabach would go first. His men threw off everything that might impede their progress—coats, knapsacks, canteens—all but their guns and ammunition, and formed under the shelter of a rise. As the bugle sounded, Humphreys turned to his staff, took off his hat, and quietly addressed them, "Gentlemen, I shall lead this charge; of course you wish to ride with me." The officers moved twelve paces to the front, and Allabach gave the command, "Forward, guide center, march!"<sup>63</sup>

Elbow to elbow, the men advanced with colors flying, ranks dressed as if on parade, out of the depression and into the fire. The balls came "thick and fast," creating a din, one soldier recalled, "as I never wish to hear again." Men fell in groups. The dead and wounded lay all around, but the advance continued with Humphreys still mounted and in front. As the

line reached the massed troops of the Second Corps, a galling fire of musketry and of grape and canister from a rebel battery on the right shattered the formation, and the advance was "thrown into confusion" by a throng of bluecoats lying several ranks deep and muddy behind a little fold in the ground. Some of the prostrate cried out, "Don't go there, 'tis certain death." Others reached out to the advancing brigade, grabbing at the skirts of their overcoats and deliberately tripped them. Allabach's men lay down with the men of the Second Corps and generally joined them in firing at the wall.<sup>64</sup>

Humphreys knew what was ahead and wanted a rapid movement to the wall. Little could be gained by firing into the fortified Confederate position, and the time lost to reloading would slow and ultimately stymie the assault. "There was nothing to be done," Humphreys concluded, "but to try the bayonet." He ordered all muskets emptied. Through force of will, Humphreys and Allabach extricated the latter's brigade from the mass of bluecoats and in loose formation advanced on the stone wall. Deep gaps opened in the ragged lines as the deadly storm of leaden hail rent clothing, tore flesh, and splintered bone. Amid mounting confusion, the general's horse took another minié ball, this in the leg, and tumbled over. Humphreys jumped to his feet, "let off sulphurous anathemas at the rebels," and mounted a second horse, soon killed, and then a third. His staff, excepting only his son, was all dismounted and most of them were wounded, "a strange scene," as the elder Humphreys later recalled, "for father and son to pass through." Perhaps as close as twelve paces from the stone wall, the column reached its zenith and began to melt away with men scattered about the field and in retreat. Some few brave souls held forward positions—flat on their bellies amid the mud and gore—as Humphreys stepped away to prepare for a second run.<sup>65</sup>

His adjutant, Captain McClellan, had gone back to ready the First Brigade and returned to find Humphreys "sitting quietly and alone viewing the

# HE REPEATEDLY EXPOSED HIMSELF TO THE MOST GALLING FIRE

ground in his front” and whistling a cheerful tune. It was “Gay and Happy,” a prewar favorite that inspired several parodies. One popular version included the lines:

We are the boys so gay and happy,  
Wherever we chance to be,  
If at home or on camp duty,  
‘Tis the same, we’re always free.  
So let the war guns roar as they will,  
We’ll be gay and happy still.<sup>66</sup>

McClellan delivered a hurried status report, and Humphreys, “without the slightest show of excitement of any kind,” directed that “the formation and movement of the First Brigade should be hastened.” He returned to his study of the ground, and McClellan rode off to Telegraph Road where the troops had just arrived. There he met Butterfield and Hooker, and both offered their compliments to General Humphreys—“tell him he is doing nobly—nobly.” Butterfield sent McClellan and a personal aide back to Humphreys with final orders. En route, the aide took a bullet, and McClellan lost his horse but not his orders. They were hand delivered and unambiguous—“the heights must be carried before dark.”<sup>67</sup>

Tyler’s men had formed a double line of battle behind the rise as shadows stretched across the field under a setting sun. The First Brigade would lead the final charge of the day. Humphreys rode among them trying to restore confidence as shells fell all around. Many of the men ducked and dodged. “Don’t juke, boys!” hollered Humphreys. When the general shied from another shot, the boys laughed. “Juke the big ones, boys,” the general said, smiling, “but don’t mind the little ones!” Humphreys moved to the front, turned his face to the heights, and

lifted his hat as the signal to attack. The brigade lurched ahead, running and hurrahing.<sup>68</sup>

Immediately, the batteries began to play upon them from every side, and there was a continuous line of fire from the top of the stone wall into the advancing column, shredding the regimental flags and sowing confusion in the ranks. Humphreys later described the scene:

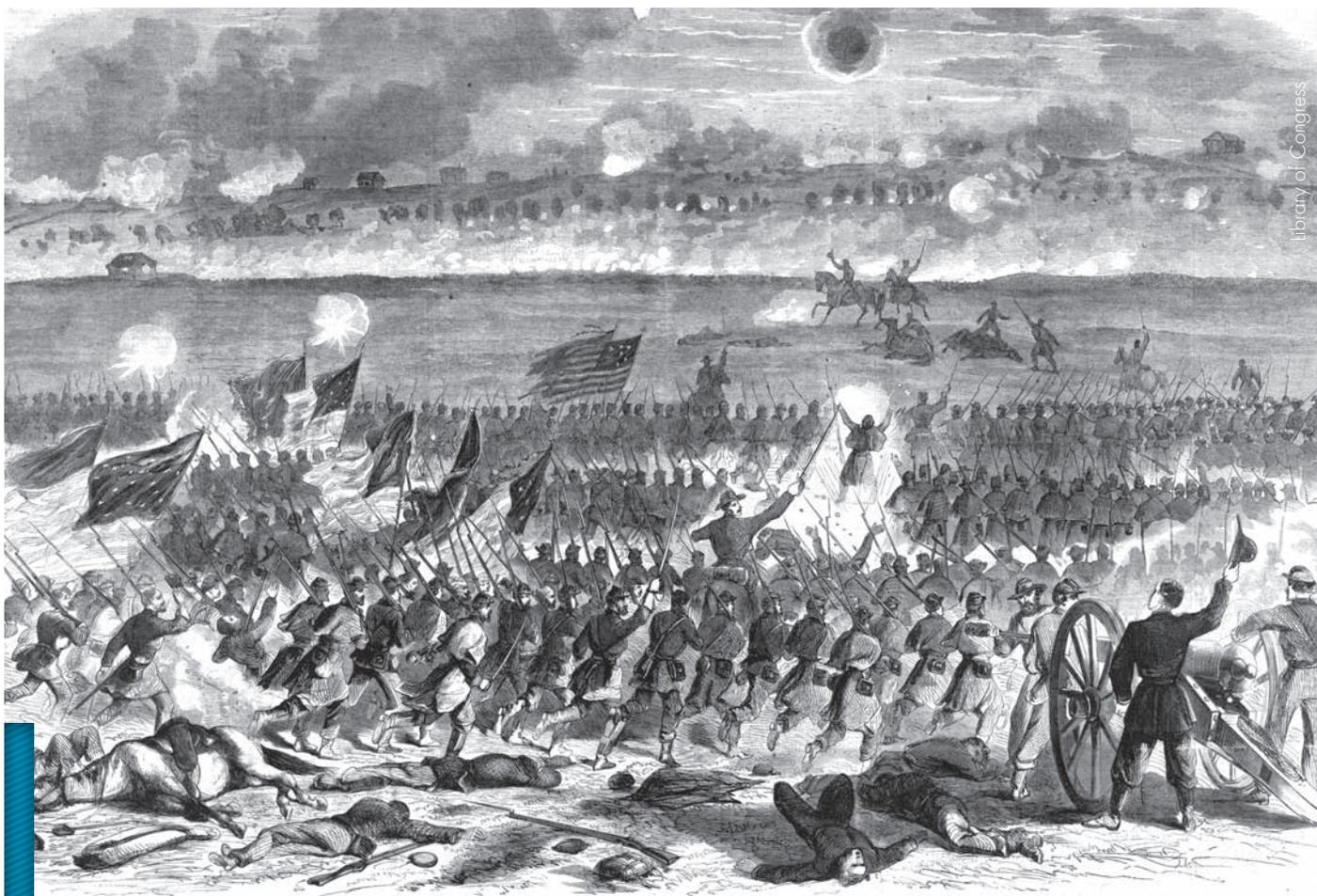
The stone wall was a sheet of flame that enveloped the head and flanks of the column. Officers and men were falling rapidly, and the head of the column was at length brought to a stand when close up to the wall. Up to this time not a shot had been fired by the column, but now some firing began. It lasted but a minute, when, in spite of all our efforts, the column turned and began to retire slowly. I attempted to rally the brigade behind the natural embankment so often mentioned, but the united efforts of General Tyler, myself, our staffs, and other officers could not arrest the retiring mass.<sup>69</sup>

As Humphreys led the remnants of his shattered division from the field—“in order and singing and hurrahing”—the skies over Fredericksburg fell dark and put a merciful end to it all.<sup>70</sup>

The survivors of the bloodied Third Division, Fifth Corps, gathered in a ravine near the mill race and began forming around regimental colors. Humphreys initiated roll calls, but nearly half failed to answer. “Sarvey, Stahl, Stonecypher . . .” And so it went. Humphreys dispatched search parties to gather the missing and wounded and to collect the dead where it was safe to do so. Two lost regiments were located. In absence of new orders, the

123d and 155th had held their positions on the field. Their returning numbers swelled the ranks, and the corrected report returned 1,030 casualties—one man out of four. Miraculously, Humphreys was uninjured. Two horses were shot out from under him and another badly wounded, and he repeatedly exposed himself to the most galling fire, to the point of criticism even. “I do like to see a brave man,” wrote one young Union officer of Humphreys, “but when a man goes out for the express purpose of getting shot at, he seems to me in the way of a maniac.” Only one of his staff, his son Harry, remained in the saddle, but he suffered a painful contusion to his foot. At about 0900, the division pulled back and bivouacked for several hours near the unfinished Mary Washington monument before retreating further into the streets of the ruined city. There it passed a fitful night’s sleep on cold cobblestone.<sup>71</sup>

Back at his headquarters, a rattled Burnside made plans to lead a grand bayonet assault at dawn, but his generals were all against it. Butterfield, Meade, Humphreys, and several others met late in the evening, and all agreed that another such attack would be disastrous. Couch thought it suicidal. When confronted, Burnside dumped the plan and determined for the time being to secure the city and wait. Humphreys and his division spent most of Sunday holding a line in the northern part of town between Fauquier and Amelia Streets just east of the old cemetery.<sup>72</sup> The men threw up barricades and established an array of batteries to resist any counterattack. The sense of risk was visceral. One postwar unit history reported that Lee had plans to send Jackson smashing into the demoralized Yankee army occupying the city streets but that



Library of Congress

*Gallant charge of Humphrey's division at the battle of Fredericksburg, drawing by Alfred R. Waud*

rumors of another Union assault on Marye's Heights had stayed his hand. Late on Monday, 15 December, Burnside dictated orders to abandon the city. Well after dark, the army began a sober withdrawal. It was conducted rapidly but in secret. Talking above a whisper was prohibited, and the engineers placed straw and sod on the pontoons to muffle the sound.<sup>73</sup>

Humphreys and his division drew a short straw and were tasked with covering the retreat. Before nightfall, they deployed all along the mill race to the west. Their orders were stark—hold the position “against any attack and at any cost.”<sup>74</sup> The men were uneasy for to their immediate front stood the bulk of the Confederate Army, a lone division against several hostile corps. A bleak wind howled and sent black clouds scudding across the sky. Torn awnings and broken window shutters

flapped and banged about, unsettling nerves and stoking fear among men already haunted by dreams of “death and horrid murder.” Sheets of rain began to buffet the city at 0300 on 16 December and continued for three hours. Humphreys’ men nevertheless kept their wits and maintained an almost constant musket fire as the city emptied behind them. The job was completed just before dawn. Following one last search for stragglers, Humphreys ordered the whole line back to the pontoons, and word spread excitedly through the ranks to hurry or risk capture.<sup>75</sup>

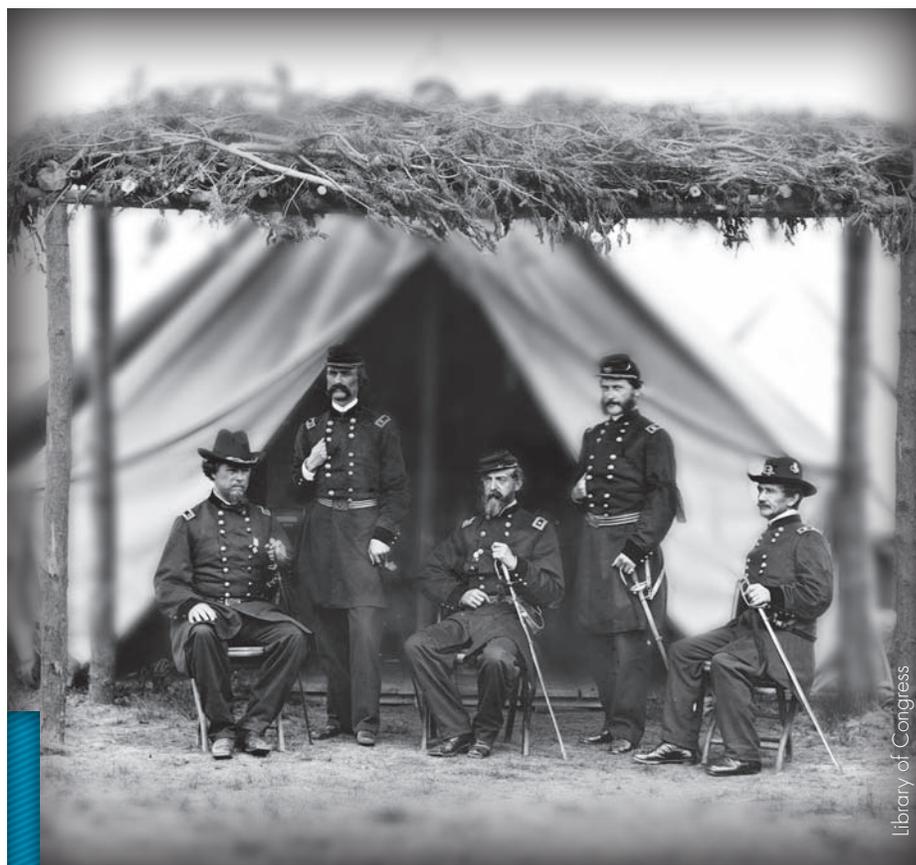
The withdrawal began in an orderly fashion, but one company of the 91st Pennsylvania, one of Tyler’s regiments and the only veteran unit in the division, remained too long in its isolated position on the far left. At sunrise the Confederates recognized the dramatic

turn of events and began advancing on the city. The last Pennsylvanians then beat a hasty retreat, but it was a close affair and some members of the 91st were captured. At the end, the lines broke, and it was a race for the bridges—every man for himself. The last crossed just two hundred yards ahead of pursuers.<sup>76</sup> Safely on the far side of the river, the division crept back to its “old camping place” and braced itself for a cold winter.<sup>77</sup>

Humphreys had, by all accounts, performed magnificently at Fredericksburg, and the aftermath brought accolades thick and fast. Letters home captured the excitement as he revealed in the esteem of his fellow officers and men. “From every side,” he wrote Rebecca on 15 December, “we meet with commendation. It is pleasant to be greeted by everyone as I am and to have it said that the best disciplined

troops could not have done better in the charges we made.” Days later his son wrote that “hundreds of officers of all ranks speak of the charge as being the most brilliant and gallant that has ever been made,” and, he added, “I think father will get his other \*” [star; that is, a promotion to major general].<sup>78</sup> Burnside, too, heaped praise on his division commander who was “conspicuous for his gallantry throughout the action,” and Col. Regis de Trobriand, a colorful immigrant of French aristocratic origin who commanded the 55th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, went further still. He called Humphreys “probably the best officer in the Army of the Potomac that day.”<sup>79</sup> Two weeks after the battle, the popular magazine *Harper’s Weekly* ran a flattering account of the charge, observing that “before that awful hurricane of bullets no heroism can avail.” The issue included a handsome two-page sketch by Alfred R. Waud of the division’s already famous assault on Marye’s Heights, entitled *Gallant charge of Humphrey’s division at the battle of Fredericksburg*.<sup>80</sup>

While the severe loss at Fredericksburg shuffled the deck and gave boost to a number of careers (Hooker’s and Meade’s, most notably), Humphreys saw his own aspirations for higher command go unrealized. In this Burnside was blameless. He sought a promotion for Humphreys and pressed Lincoln on the issue, successfully it seemed at first, but nothing came of it. Congress was angry, and its radical elements began a highly charged investigation into the battle that further politicized an already partisan process for selecting top commanders. The results mostly cleared Burnside, a Republican, but pinned responsibility on General Franklin—a Democrat, a confirmed McClellanite, and a West Pointer. Humphreys shared all of those attributes, and despite his heroics on the battlefield, probably suffered from the same animus.<sup>81</sup> His own actions in the weeks after the battle did not help. Tense relations with leading men of the 129th Pennsylvania Infantry led to untimely and politically harmful courts-martial in mid-January. Two of



General Meade, center, commander of the Army of the Potomac, and Union corps commanders, from left Maj. Gens. Horatio G. Wright, John A. Logan, John G. Parke, and Andrew A. Humphreys, June 1865, photo by William M. Smith

his best volunteer officers, Frick and Armstrong, had refused to support a requisition for winter frock coats that they saw as an unnecessary and extravagant expense for their men, most of whom had only several months remaining in their short enlistments. Humphreys dug in his heels, testified against both men, and saw them promptly cashiered from the army for “conduct subversive of good order and military discipline, tending to mutiny.” Neither went quietly, and their howls of protests reached the Capitol with some effect. Several months later, both were restored to their positions by Secretary of War Stanton.<sup>82</sup>

Humphreys, meanwhile, fumed in frustration at his circumstances, writing Rebecca on 17 January, “President L. had not done as he had promised General Burnside.” She offered to speak to Stanton, but Humphreys initially refused—“I would not have you or anyone say one word to the

Secretary of War or anyone else. If I cannot command the position I know that I am entitled to by my acts, I will not have it by imperfanity or interception . . . so let it pass.”<sup>83</sup> Within days, though, his resolve weakened, and he determined “not to remain silent any longer.” The ensuing weeks saw a flurry of activity intended to expose “those fellows at Washington, prompted by hostility and self-interest, secretly working against me.”<sup>84</sup> A short visit to Washington in late January evidenced the extent of the damage done to him, and he left the capital with “the depression consequent upon the chilling reception I met at the Presidents’ and at the War Department.” That Halleck harbored old grudges was no surprise, but Humphreys was disheartened to learn that Lincoln had “no recollection of my recommendation for promotion, nor of his assurance it should be made, and knows nothing of my service at Fredericksburg.”<sup>85</sup>

As was mostly the case throughout the war, his relationships within the upper echelon of the army were strong. “You must not fancy that I am out with General Hooker at all,” he reassured his wife. “On the contrary we are on the best of terms. And with General Burnside there is the greatest warmth and cordiality.” Humphreys took comfort in the camaraderie of camp life and turned his attention to the immediate needs of his battered division, but he could not shake a feeling of disappointment. In a telling line to his wife, he confessed, “Recognizing no man in this army as my superior, it wounds me to see men above me in rank and command.”<sup>86</sup>

For the cause of union, Fredericksburg ranks among the most humiliating defeats of the war, but for Humphreys it was a proving ground, a test of his mettle and an opportunity for the scientist-soldier to dispel any questions about his martial abilities. “It has cost me great labor,” he later contemplated, “but I take it that it has established my reputation in arms as the same earnestness did before in Science & art & administration.”<sup>87</sup> He followed up Fredericksburg with a heroic effort at Gettysburg, a defensive struggle where he and a new division fought doggedly in retreat, resisting a slashing Confederate attack along Emmitsburg Road in some of the fiercest fighting of the war. He finally received his second star (but not yet a corps command) as chief of staff of the Army of the Potomac under friend and fellow engineer, General Meade, and played a prominent role in the tragic encounters at the Wilderness and Cold Harbor as well as the early siege of Petersburg. Late in the war, in November 1864, Humphreys took command of the celebrated Second Corps, Army of the Potomac, and earned additional accolades at Sailor’s Creek, contributing in dramatic fashion to Lee’s final surrender at Appomattox Court House. At war’s end, Charles Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, called Humphreys “the great soldier of the Army of the Potomac.” It was a brilliant Civil War record, but not what it could have been had he advanced more rapidly to high command.

In 1866, General Ulysses S. Grant selected Humphreys as the new chief of Corps of Engineers, into which the

Corps of Topographical Engineers had been consolidated in 1863, and he held that position for thirteen years. During his long tenure, he administered a dramatic postwar expansion of internal improvements and oversaw important surveys and explorations of the American West as well as a complete overhaul of the nation’s coastal fortifications. He also established the Army’s first engineer school at Willets Point, New York, and served on a number of important boards and commissions, including the Washington Monument Commission, the Lighthouse Board, and a commission to examine possible canal routes across Central America. He retired at the age of sixty-eight as the next longest serving chief of engineers, second only to Brig. Gen. Joseph G. Totten. Humphreys’ last years were devoted to penning two important and highly reputable histories of the Virginia campaigns. He died in Washington, D.C., on 27 December 1883, still harboring, as he wrote a friend in July of that year, “many regrets concerning my own career during the war.”<sup>88</sup>



## NOTES

1. *Charleston Mercury*, 9 March 1861.
2. James H. Wilson, “Major-General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys,” in Theodore F. Dwight, ed., *Critical Sketches of Some of the Federal and Confederate Commanders* (Boston: Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, 1895), p. 78, quote; James L. Morrison Jr., *“The Best School in the World”: West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833–1866* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986), pp. 124–25. For further evidence of the friendship between the two men, see Andrew Humphreys to Jefferson Davis, 22 Feb 1872, printed in *Jefferson Davis: Constitutionalist, His Letters, Papers, and Speeches*, ed. Dunbar Rowland, 10 vols. (Jackson, Miss.: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1923), 7: 305–06.
3. Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), pp. 187–88, quote, p. 188.
4. Ltr, Wigfall to Davis, 25 Feb 1861, in *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, 12 vols. to date (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,

1971–), 7: 60–61.

5. Henry H. Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1924), p. 155.

6. Wilson, “Major-General Humphreys,” p. 78, quote; John Watts De Peyster, “Andrew Atkinson Humphreys,” *Magazine of American History* 16 (October 1886): 349; Henry Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, p. 147.

7. Henry Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, p. 156. Joseph Henry was secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

8. Matthew T. Pearcy, “Science, Politics, and Bureaucracy: Andrew A. Humphreys and the Office of Pacific Railroad Explorations and Surveys,” *Military History of the West* 38 (2008): 89–90; Kent D. Richards, “Isaac Ingalls Stevens,” *American National Biography*, 24 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 20: 700.

9. Ltr, Isaac Stevens to Andrew Humphreys, 19 Oct 1861, Andrew A. Humphreys Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereinafter cited as AAHP, HSP), 5/91.

10. Ltr, Samuel R. Curtis to Secretary of War Simon Cameron, 10 Oct 1861, AAHP, HSP, 5/90.

11. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to John Watts De Peyster, 18 Jul 1883, AAHP, HSP, 31/9.

12. Henry Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, pp. 156–66.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

14. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Archibald Campbell, 4 Oct 1862, AAHP, HSP, 8/103.

15. Henry Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, p. 166, quotes; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereinafter cited as OR), 128 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1880–1901), ser. 1, vol. 12, pt. 3, p. 640.

16. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Campbell, 4 Oct 1862.

17. *Ibid.*, first two quotations; *Under the Maltese Cross: Antietam to Appomattox, The Loyal Uprising in Western Pennsylvania, 1861–1865, Campaigns, 155th Pennsylvania Regiment, Narrated by the Rank and File* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: 155th Regimental Association, 1910), p. 67, printing Halleck’s order, third and fourth quotations.

18. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Campbell, 4 Oct 1862.

19. *Ibid.*, first and second quotes; *Under the Maltese Cross*, pp. 68–72, last quote, p. 72; Henry Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, p. 170.

20. *Autobiography of Major General William F. Smith, 1861–1864*, ed. Herbert M. Schiller (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, 1990), p. 55.
21. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 20 Sep 1862, HSP, 33/17, first quote; Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Campbell, 4 Oct 1862; *Under the Maltese Cross*, pp. 72–73; Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to De Peyster, 19 Apr 1881, AAHP, HSP, 29/9, remaining quotes.
22. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 20 Sep 1862; Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Campbell, 4 Oct 1862, quotes; Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (New Haven: Ticknor and Fields, 1983), pp. 298–307; William H. Armstrong and Frederick B. Arner, *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals: Andrew A. Humphreys in the Army of the Potomac* (Charlottesville, Va.: Rockbridge Pub., 1999), pp. 14–15, 19.
23. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to De Peyster, 18 Jul 1883; Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies: An Account of the Final Campaign of the Army of the Potomac, Based upon Personal Reminiscences of the Fifth Army Corps* (1915, reprint ed., New York: Bantam Books, 1993), p. xiv.
24. Volunteers comprised 94 percent of the Union army and 80 percent of the Confederate. See Herman Hattaway, *Shades of Blue and Gray: An Introductory Military History of the Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), pp. 31, 33.
25. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Campbell, 4 Oct 1862.
26. Bruce Catton, *The Civil War* (1960, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), p. 144; William J. Miller, *The Training of an Army: Camp Curtin and the North's Civil War* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing Company, 1990), pp. 106–09, 260–63, 265.
27. Catton, *Civil War*, pp. 144–45.
28. Allan Peskin, *Garfield: A Biography* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1978), p. 90; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), p. 515; for the reputation for drinking at the Humphreys headquarters, see Ltr, Capt Francis Adams Donaldson to Jacob Donaldson, 15 May 1863, printed in *Inside the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Experience of Captain Francis Adams Donaldson*, ed. J. Gregory Acken (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1998), p. 267.
29. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 22 Oct 1862, AAHP, HSP, 33/20; Benson J. Lossing, *Harper's Encyclopædia of United States History from 458 A.D. to 1905*, 10 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1905), 6: 8, 10. Also a graduate of Williams College, Carswell's brother, Henry Brainerd McClellan, taught in Virginia for several years before the war and attained some notoriety during its course as chief of staff to Confederate Maj. Gen. James E. B. "Jeb" Stuart.
30. For notice of Henry Humphreys' appointment to West Point, see *New York Times*, 25 February 1857; also see *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, 6: 529; Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Curtin, 18 Sep 1862, AAHP, HSP, 9/46.
31. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Campbell, 4 Oct 1862.
32. *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand*, ed. James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper Jr. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), p. 89.
33. Joseph R. Orwig, *History of the 131st Penna. Volunteers: War of 1861–5* (Williamsport, Pa.: Sun Book and Job Printing House, 1902), pp. 55–58, quoted words, p. 56; Armstrong and Arner, *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals*, pp. 49–53, 303–05; Reid Mitchell, "Not the General but the Soldier": The Study of Civil War Soldiers," in *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand*, ed. James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper Jr. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), p. 89.
34. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, pp. 327–28.
35. Ralph S. Geiman, "Letters of Samuel W. North, 126th Regiment," *Papers Read before the Kittochtinny Historical Society*, 18: 215–24.
36. Many years later, Humphreys indicated that General Porter had selected him to head the reconnaissance. See Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to De Peyster, 18 Jun 1882, AAHP, HSP, 29/63.
37. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Lt. Col. Frederick T. Locke, assistant adjutant general, Fifth Corps, 19 Oct 1862, printed in OR, ser. 1, vol. 19, pt. 2, pp. 85–88, quotes, pp. 86, 88. A manuscript copy of the letter is in AAHP, HSP, 9/16.
38. As a young lieutenant in 1836, Humphreys fought in the Second Seminole War. See Matthew T. Pearcy, "'The Ruthless Hand of War': Andrew A. Humphreys in the Second Seminole War," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 85 (Fall 2006): 123–53.
39. De Peyster, "Andrew Atkinson Humphreys," p. 350.
40. Stephen W. Sears, *George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1988), pp. 336–40.
41. Francis A. O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), p. 13.
42. Sears, *George B. McClellan*, pp. 340–41; David S. Sparks, ed., *Inside Lincoln's Army: The Diary of Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Provost Marshal General, Army of the Potomac* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1964), p. 174; Bruce Catton, *Mr. Lincoln's Army* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1951), pp. 328–30; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 16–19; Armstrong and Arner, *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals*, pp. 317–18. Captain Francis Adams Donaldson of the 118th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment wrote to his brother shortly after the event that he had heard General Humphreys say, while riding through a farewell throng, "that he wished to God Genl. McClellan would put himself at the head of the army and throw the infernal scoundrels at Washington into the Potomac." See Ltr, Capt Francis Adams Donaldson to Jacob Donaldson, 11 Nov 1862, printed in Acken, *Inside the Army*, p. 164.
43. Henry Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, p. 173; also see, Theodore Lyman, *With Grant and Meade from the Wilderness to Appomattox*, ed. George R. Agassiz (1922, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), p. 78.
44. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 17 Jan 1863, AAHP, HSP, 33/27.
45. O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 21–24, 30, first quote, p. 21; Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 1 Sep 1864, AAHP, HSP, 33/88, second quote.
46. Ltr, H. W. Ryder to Andrew Humphreys, 16 Nov 1862, AAHP, HSP, 9/96; *Under the Maltese Cross*, p. 91, quote.
47. Edward J. Stackpole, *The Battle of Fredericksburg* (Gettysburg, Pa.: Civil War Times Illustrated, 1965), p. 43.
48. Orwig, *History of the 131st Penna. Volunteers*, p. 85, first four quotes; *Under the Maltese Cross*, p. 93, final quote.
49. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Daniel Butterfield, 29 Nov 1862, AAHP, HSP, 9/114.
50. Ltr, Erastus B. Tyler to Carswell McClellan, 9 Dec 1862, AAHP, HSP, 10/24.
51. Ltr, "Mother J. D." to Andrew Humphreys, 19 Nov 1862, AAHP, HSP, 9/98.
52. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to "Mother J. D.," 1 Jan 1863, AAHP, HSP, 9/99, first quote; Charles A. Dana, *Recollections of the Civil War: With the Leaders at Washington and in the Field in the Sixties* (1898, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 192, second quote.

53. Armstrong and Arner, *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals*, pp. 268–69; Orwig, *History of the 131st Penna. Volunteers*, pp. 96–97; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 57–86.
54. Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, printed in Armstrong and Arner, *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals*, p. 269; Henry Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, p. 177.
55. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 572.
56. De Peyster, "Andrew Atkinson Humphreys," p. 352.
57. Charles W. Cowtan, *Services of the Tenth New York Volunteers (National Zouaves) in the War of Rebellion* (New York: Charles H. Ludwig, 1882), pp. 166–67; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 246–75, 293–388.
58. Carswell McClellan, *General Andrew A. Humphreys at Malvern Hill Va., July 1, 1862, and at Fredericksburg Va., December 13, 1862: A Memoir* (St. Paul, Minn.: Press of Wm. L. Banning Jr., 1888), p. 20; Ltr, Henry Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 18 Dec 1862, AAHP, HSP, 33/26, first quote; *Under the Maltese Cross*, p. 96; Orwig, *History of the 131st Penna. Volunteers*, p. 114; Armstrong and Arner, *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals*, p. 270, second quote.
59. Darius N. Couch, "Sumner's 'Right Grand Division,'" in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War: Being for the Most Part Contributions by Union and Confederate Officers*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel, 4 vols. (New York: Century Company, 1887–88), 3: 111–15, final quote, p. 115.
60. Henry H. Humphreys, *Major General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys, United States Volunteers at Fredericksburg, Va., December 13th, 1862, and Farmville, Va., April 7th, 1865* (Chicago: Press of R. R. McCabe and Co., 1896), p. 28.
61. Rpt, Brig Gen Andrew Humphreys to Brig Gen Daniel Butterfield, 16 Dec 1862, printed in OR, ser. 1, vol. 21, p. 431.
62. Ltr, Henry Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 18 Dec 1862.
63. Orwig, *History of the 131st Penna. Volunteers*, p. 117; Henry Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, p. 181, first quote; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, p. 401; Carol Reardon, "The Forlorn Hope: Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys's Pennsylvania Division at Fredericksburg" in *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Decision on the Rappahannock*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 89, second quote.
64. O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, p. 402, first quote; Reardon, "The Forlorn Hope," pp. 89–90, 104, second quote, p. 104.
65. Henry Humphreys, *Major General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys*, pp. 28, 31, first (divided) quote, p. 28; McClellan, *General Humphreys at Fredericksburg*, pp. 14–15; Reardon, "The Forlorn Hope," pp. 90–93; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 405–06, second quote, p. 405; Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys: A Biography*, p. 179.
66. McClellan, *General Humphreys at Fredericksburg*, p. 16.
67. *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.
68. The sentences on Humphreys' efforts to dodge shells are taken verbatim from O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, p. 406; this is a superb history of the battle. See also Armstrong and Arner, *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals*, p. 274.
69. Rpt, Humphreys to Butterfield, 16 Dec 1862, as quoted in William H. Powell, *The Fifth Army Corps (Army of the Potomac): A Record of Operations during the Civil War in the United States of America, 1861–1865* (1896, reprint ed., Dayton Ohio: Morningside Bookshop, 1984), p. 381.
70. Reardon, "The Forlorn Hope," p. 98.
71. Orwig, *History of the 131st Penna. Volunteers*, pp. 119, 126, 132; *Under the Maltese Cross*, p. 103; De Peyster, "Andrew Atkinson Humphreys," pp. 352–53; Theodore Lyman to Elizabeth Lyman, 20 May 1864, in Lyman, *With Grant and Meade*, p. 108, quote.
72. Stackpole, *Battle of Fredericksburg*, pp. 44–45; William Marvel, *Burnside* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 198; Orwig, *History of the 131st Penna. Volunteers*, p. 128.
73. *Under the Maltese Cross*, p. 107; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, pp. 447–49.
74. Ms. memoir by Capt. John H. Weeks, 91st Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, of his experiences at the Battle of Fredericksburg, 19 Jan 1887, AAHP, HSP, 32/11.
75. Reardon, "The Forlorn Hope," pp. 99–101, quote, p. 99; *Under the Maltese Cross*, pp. 107–08; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, p. 450.
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77. Ltr, Henry Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 18 Dec 1862.
78. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 15 Dec 1862, AAHP, HSP, 33/23; for the breakup of the division, see Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 17 May 1863, AAHP, HSP, 33/32; Ltr, Henry Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 18 Dec 1862.
79. Ltr, Ambrose Burnside to Andrew Humphreys, 21 Jan 1863, AAHP, HSP, 14/60; Burnside's official report of the Fredericksburg campaign, submitted 13 November 1865, in OR, ser. 1, vol. 21, pp. 82–97; De Peyster, "Andrew Atkinson Humphreys," p. 352, quoting de Trobriand. Similar comments appear in Francis W. Palfrey, *The Antietam and Fredericksburg, Campaigns of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), p. 170: "Some of the very best fighting that was done at Fredericksburg was done by the Third Division of the Fifth Corps. The division was commanded by General Humphreys, who was probably the best officer in the Army of the Potomac that day."
80. *Harper's Weekly* 7 (10 January 1863): 17, 24–25, quote p. 17.
81. Mark A. Snell, *From First to Last: The Life of Major General William B. Franklin* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. 254–64; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg Campaign*, p. 460; Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 17 Jan 1863; Brooks D. Simpson, "General McClellan's Bodyguard: The Army of the Potomac after Antietam," in *The Antietam Campaign*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 68.
82. Armstrong and Arner, *Red-Tape and Pigeon-Hole Generals*, pp. 307–12, quote, p. 307. Many years later, Frick received a Medal of Honor for valor at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. See Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United State Senate, *Medal of Honor Recipients, 1863–1973* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 93.
83. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 17 Jan 1863. By imperfanity, Humphreys apparently meant impetration.
84. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Professor Hansen, 22 Feb 1863, AAHP, HSP, 12/22.
85. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Burnside, 1 Feb 1863, AAHP, HSP, 14/63, first quote; Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Hooker, 28 Jan 1863, AAHP, HSP, 14/61, second quote.
86. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 17 Jan 1863.
87. Ltr, Andrew Humphreys to Rebecca Humphreys, 17 May 1863.
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# COMMENTARY

## TOO BUSY TO LEARN

BY ROBERT H. SCALES

When I started my Ph.D. dissertation at Duke University in the mid-1970s, Dr. Ted Ropp, my faculty adviser, asked me to do research on how the post-Napoleonic industrial revolution affected the evolution of doctrine in the British Army. Much had been written by that time about the transition from sail to steam in the British Navy. He presupposed that the introduction of smokeless powder, rifled quick-firing artillery, and the machine gun would have had a similar impact on the perceptions of British Army officers during the interval between the heyday of Victorian small wars and the beginning of World War I.

I remember the day I had to tell Professor Ropp that his hypothesis was

wrong. I discovered that the issue was not the ability or inability of the army to embrace the technologies. Actually, I learned that the British Army had become an institution that ignored most everything that characterized modernity because it had become an army *too busy to learn*.

Success, promotion, and public acclaim came with active service in a series of popular and not terribly stressful imperial campaigns against native peoples throughout the empire. Time spent in the staff college was time wasted. Publishing was bad form and was best done under a pseudonym. Talk in the mess was about sports, not the art and science of war. The great names of that era—Field Marshals Wolseley, Roberts, Napier, Robertson, Kitchener, and Haig—all gained public adulation from

a press that worshiped the colorful deeds of these men of action.

The reckoning came at the battles of Mons and Le Cateau in 1914, when this army disappeared under the guns of a force that had spent the last half-century studying war rather than practicing it. The cultural bias toward action rather than reflection so permeated the British Army in World War I that the deaths of more than a million failed to erase it. Some scholars contend that this tragic obsession still left its dulling mark until well after World War II.

My great fear is that we are suffering a similar fate for a similar reason.

### CIRCLING THE X

Units whose operational tempo causes a backlog in maintenance routinely



Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates addresses students at the Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 16 April 2009.

“circle X,” or overlook, minor faults to keep their equipment moving. All of us know that deferring maintenance too long eventually leads to catastrophic materiel failure. My sense is that the military has begun to circle X its officer seed corn. A bias toward active service in our protracted small wars is making our military an institution too busy to learn.

The evidence is disturbing. Throughout the services, officers are avoiding attendance in schools, and school lengths are being shortened. The Army’s full-term staff college is now attended by fewer and fewer officers. The best and brightest are avoiding the war colleges in favor of service in Iraq and Afghanistan. The average age of Army War College students has increased from forty-one to forty-five, making this institution a preparation for retirement rather than a launching platform for strategic leadership.

Most disturbing is the disappearance of experienced officers as instructors. Service schools produce two classes: students and instructors. Students graduate with knowledge, valuable to be sure. But instructors return to the force with the wisdom accumulated from long-term immersion in a subject

and an amplified appreciation of the art and science of war that comes from time to reflect, teach, research, and think. Perhaps that is why thirty-one of the thirty-five most successful corps commanders in World War II served at least one tour as an instructor in a service school. Arguably the most successful, Lt. Gen. Troy Middleton, taught at a series of schools for more than ten years.

Today, the condensed wisdom that comes from teaching and research is increasingly being contracted out to civilians. Ask any upwardly mobile major or lieutenant colonel what he thinks about his career prospects after being assigned as a service school instructor.

### ACTION VERSUS INTELLECT

Equally troubling is the sense that our growing intellectual backlog is not causing much of a stir in the halls of power. Our culture has changed to value and solely reward men and women of action. Just like its British antecedents, the personnel system rewards active service, not demonstrated intellectual merit. Spend too

much time thinking and reflecting and the rewards system denies promotion and opportunities to command. Do not get me wrong. Combat service is important, particularly at the junior grades. War is our profession, and every self-respecting young warrior needs to “pet the elephant” to prove he or she has the right stuff.

This bias toward action has caused our learning system to atrophy and become obsolescent. Thirty years ago the Department of Defense led the world in progressive learning. The case-study method was invented at the Army War College. The services pioneered distance learning and the use of diagnostics, as well as objective means for assessment and measurement. Business schools today slavishly copy our method of war gaming and the use of the after-action review. But sadly, atrophy has gripped the schoolhouse, and what was once the shining light of progressivism has become an intellectual backwater, lagging far behind the corporate world and civilian institutions of higher learning.

Virtually all attempts to reform professional military education (PME)



Army technicians record the speech delivered by Secretary Gates at the Army War College, 16 April 2009.



Getty Images

U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry, left, accompanied by General Stanley McChrystal, testifies before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, 10 December 2009.

have failed principally because these efforts have been driven by academics who focus reform on curricula and hiring faculty. The truth is, PME reform is not a pedagogical problem. It is a personnel problem that can be addressed only by changing the military's reward system to favor those with the intellectual right stuff.

All is not lost. Sandwiched inside past failures are some real demonstrable successes. Perhaps we can build on them. So far I have found five. It is instructive to note that all five at their inception were strenuously resisted by service personnel bureaucracies, in part because of their success.

## FIVE SUCCESSSES

The first PME success is the "Petraeus model" of strategic preparation for higher command. This includes attendance at a top-tier civilian graduate school to study history or social and behavioral science followed by a teaching assignment at a service academy. Petraeus is joined by a remarkably successful cadre of leaders



White House

Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, left, and General McChrystal, center, confer with President Barack Obama in the White House, 7 December 2009.

who have demonstrated exceptional talent in the chaotic environments of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Some names are familiar because they reached three or four stars: Generals Peter Chiarelli, Martin Dempsey, and William Ward; Admiral James Stavridis; and Lt. Gen. James Dubik. All of these leaders (along with fellow intellectual travelers such as Admiral Mike Mullen, Marine General James Mattis, and Army General Stanley McChrystal) share a lifelong obsession with reading history and studying the art of war. At some time in their careers, they ignored the caution of personnel officers about spending too much time in school while under scrutiny for command selection.

The second successful innovation is the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Program. The services' personnel reward systems liked this idea even less than the Petraeus model. With the exception of a few survivors like Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, the system has habitually ground off even the most successful and well-regarded FAOs at the colonel level with few if any opportunities for command. Yet the very four-stars who routinely advised subordinates not to

become FAOs (and, sadly, routinely ranked them below their operational brethren in fitness reports) discover once in command that officers who understand alien cultures and speak their languages fluently are essential multipliers when fighting irregular wars at the strategic level.

The third reform was so sweeping and threatening that only the legislative hammer could have driven it though the service personnel systems. In the mid-1980s, Democratic Congressman Ike Skelton of Missouri, as part of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation, forced the services to learn how to operate efficiently—the essence of "jointness." Skelton's effort gained traction because of the services' failure to fight together as a team during the invasion of Grenada in 1983. Skelton leveraged the law to hold hostage the services' reward systems for promotion and command unless they made a meaningful commitment to jointness. To ensure that his reforms would last, Skelton legislated that staff and war colleges bring together student officers from all services to study joint as well as service-specific subjects.

The fourth reform was born during the Cold War and only survived



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen speaks at an Army War College graduation ceremony at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 7 June 2008.

the personnel specialist's ax by the fortuitous arrival of war. Prior to Operation DESERT STORM, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf created a small cell of four majors and a colonel to act as his intimate brain trust to plan his campaign. The group became known as the Jedi Knights. All were graduates of the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), essentially the Army staff college's second-year honors program. SAMS sought to create true operational artists by a strenuous yearlong immersion in military history using the proven case-study approach to learning. The school's success spawned parallel programs within all service staff colleges.

In 1998 the Army War College created the fifth pedagogical reform with the Advanced Strategic Art Program, basically a strategic-level SAMS that uses the same history-based case-study methodology to produce world-class strategists at the lieutenant colonel level.

### START BY BUILDING A BENCH

Any holistic effort at reform must start by rewarding and selecting those with the greatest intellectual

gifts at commissioning. Experience in today's wars has proved the value of the human component in war. We have learned, often painfully, that war is not a science project. Officers like Petraeus who are successful in the chaos and uncertainty of small wars tend to be innovative, creative, empathetic, and nonlinear thinkers. Unfortunately, the services still tend to favor a technical rather than a humanist preparation for commissioning. All services, to include the Navy and Air Force, should readjust the ratio of officers educated in the physical and the social sciences to favor the latter.

Again following the Petraeus model, once young officers have proved their ability to command at the tactical level, they should be offered a "soldier's sabbatical," a fully funded two-year hiatus to study military art, behavioral science, and alien culture and language at a top-tier civilian graduate school. Their spouses should also be supported as long as they are able to meet admission requirements. This time away should be "free," in that it would be a reward for successful command and incur no additional service ob-

ligation. If students are able to pass the preliminary requirements for a Ph.D., they should be fast-tracked through statutory requirements for joint qualification.

Personnel specialists will object to such a sweeping dedication of the force to learning by arguing that so many junior officers away from units will harm readiness. To counter their objections, Congress should legislate the program and increase officer strength to cover academic absences.

The services begin to find their flag officers at the grades of major and lieutenant commander. Therefore, any officer selected early for that grade who does not hold a graduate degree in the social and human sciences should be sent immediately to a first-tier graduate school before returning to the operational force. Every graduate program must require the study of a foreign language, and no officer should be promoted beyond the grade of lieutenant colonel or commander without demonstrating proficiency in a foreign language.

It took the legislative hammer of the Skelton reforms to break the

back of individual service parochialism twenty years ago. The same hammer must be invoked again to drive the services to reward intellectual merit. To that end, the law must be revised to reflect the requirement that no officer can be selected for flag rank without first serving a two-year tour as an instructor at a service school.

## OFFICERS SHOULD TEACH

The insidious creep of the civilian contractor must be reversed by requiring that virtually all ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps), service academy, and staff and war college faculty positions be filled by uniformed officers. Those positions at service PME institutions better suited to civilian instructors should be filled with long-service professionals drawn from government agencies such as the State, Commerce, and Homeland Security Departments; the Agency for International Development; and the Office of Management and Budget, as well as a liberal infusion of professional staffers from congressional committees.

Not every officer loves to learn. But those who do are a special breed often ground off at the tactical level only to be sorely missed at the strategic level when their skills are needed most. Strategic genius can best be preserved by expanding service honors programs at the staff and war colleges. Successful completion of a second-year staff college program would qualify majors to compete through examination for selection for service on joint and coalition staffs, in addition to selection for tactical commands at the lieutenant colonel or commander level.

Those who succeed at both staff and command would then be eligible to compete (again by examination) for selection to the National War College, an institution reserved in this scheme solely for those officers (and selected government civilians) who have shown unique intellectual merit. A certain proportion of all key joint, combatant command, coalition, and interagency billets at the flag level would be reserved by statute for these gifted cohorts of the Jedis.

## INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Today, professional military education has no real champion. Learning policy is set by the under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness. The title of this position really highlights the problem. However well meaning this person may be, his or her first priority is to man the force rather than to educate it. And we have learned that these two imperatives are not intrinsically compatible.

Thus, we need reform that would create a "chief learning officer" at the assistant secretary level within the Department of Defense. This person would be charged with the intellectual health of the force and would report both to the secretary of defense and the chairs of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. To be complete, the learning function needs a military champion as well, preferably at the four-star level.

The most likely candidate for this job would be the commander of Joint Forces Command, who would be held responsible for joint learning by all services. The person in this position would set standards for learning and would pass on all service command and promotion lists to ensure that those selected meet the intellectual requirements for positions of higher responsibility.

Today, the efficiency, or fitness, report is an officer's scorecard for rating "manner of performance" on the job. Officers do receive academic fitness reports after completing a program of study, but these have no real impact on career prospects. This must change. Intellectual achievement must be graded and assessed with the same rigor and objectivity as manner of performance.

An officer's learning record should reflect class standing in all PME and civilian institutions. It should contain confidential evaluations of an officer's ability to think critically, innovate, write, speak, and act with intellectual agility. The record would list the officer's publications and research and include a separate evaluation by a joint academic selection board of an officer's fitness as an instructor. Promotion and

command selection boards would be required by statute to report the collective intellectual achievements of selected officers to Congress and the various service secretariats.

## A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

History suggests that the greatest opportunity for reform occurs as wars wind down and the institution has time to reflect and reset itself for future conflicts. The demand for excellence in coalition warfare came out of the painful experience with the British in World War II. Radical changes in how the services educated their officers and enlisted personnel emerged from the painful lessons of Vietnam.

We will be fighting in Afghanistan and elsewhere for some time, to be sure. But soon we will begin to find some breathing room to close the learning gap that has grown so wide and insidious since 11 September 2001. Unfortunately, the gap will never close as long as the learning function is held hostage to the services' systems of reward. We could rely on the tender mercies of individual service personnel systems to fuel intellectual reform. But the fight to inculcate jointness within the services warns that real PME reform can only happen through the blunt instrument of legislative action.



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Members of the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, guard suspected *Saddam Fedayeen* soldiers captured after a firefight north of An Nasiriyah, 25 March 2003.



# AN NASIRIYAH

America's First Battle in

## OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

By MARK K. SNAKENBERG



On the night of 20–21 March 2003, U.S. ground forces breached the berms marking the Kuwait-Iraq border and began Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Within twenty-four hours, U.S. soldiers and marines were engaged in the first battle of this conflict—the battle for An Nasiriyah. Belying the oft-asserted “blitzkrieg” nature of combat operations in March and April 2003, this battle, which lasted over a week and cost thirty-three U.S. lives, included the bloodiest single day of the war. Like America’s other first battles, An Nasiriyah offers important clues into U.S. ground forces’ preparation for, and execution of, ground combat in 2003.

This article evaluates the Battle of An Nasiriyah in the context of American first battle theory.<sup>1</sup> Detailed study of the battle using this construct reveals that U.S. ground forces performed well when contrasted with America’s other first battles but also displayed some of the same longstanding deficiencies identified in earlier conflicts.

### AMERICAN FIRST BATTLES: THE THEORY

In 1986, two officers who had served together at the Combat Studies In-

stitute of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College arranged the publication of the seminal work *America’s First Battles*. This book contained essays by eleven historians—ten of whom were selected for their expertise in a particular period of U.S. military history—that examined the first battle of every major U.S. military conflict from the Revolutionary War to Vietnam to glean historical themes involving the U.S. Army’s preparation for and initial execution of combat operations. The assumption underlying the entire work, reflecting the preoccupations of the late-Cold War environment in which it was written, was that “it makes a great deal of difference how the U.S. Army prepares in peacetime, mobilizes for war, fights its first battle, and subsequently adapts to the exigencies of conflict”; for “with little prior warning, the Army must be capable of fighting in a variety of geographic locales against any one aggressor or a coalition of potential aggressors in joint and combined formations.” These assertions, made by the book’s editors, Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, remain valid more than twenty years later during the ongoing “era of persistent conflict.”<sup>2</sup>

The historians’ analyses of each battle consider “the strategic and political background” of the conflict in which they occurred and address “the circumstances in which the U.S. Army found itself when the war began, strengths and weaknesses of the opponent, organizational and tactical procedures, weaponry, creation of a plan of operations, combat performance and leadership in the battle itself, and lessons learned (or not learned) from the experience of this first battle.”<sup>3</sup> This article pursues the same methodology in analyzing the Battle of An Nasiriyah.

In the final analysis contained in *America’s First Battles*, contributing author John Shy identified four major themes permeating two centuries of American first battles: command and control problems, the role of doctrine, the pervasiveness of political factors, and preparedness.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, these themes are clearly present in the Battle of An Nasiriyah.

### THE INTERWAR YEARS

Following its stunning victory in Operation DESERT STORM, the United States accelerated its ongoing drawdown of military power in



Personnel with the Battalion Aid Station, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, provide medical attention to an injured Iraqi civilian during the fighting in An Nasiriyah, 26 March 2003.

## The use of remote sensors such as satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles to gain situational awareness and assist with target acquisition

the aftermath of the Cold War. The resulting lower endstrengths and reduced military budgets joined with emerging technologies and increased operational tempo to produce tremendous change in U.S. ground forces—particularly in the U.S. Army. Senior military leaders' overriding concern in the new strategic environment became accomplishing more with less. Technology seemed to offer a method of resolving this apparently oxymoronic challenge.

Operation DESERT STORM provided a glimpse of future possibilities, which some found impressive. The

use of remote sensors such as satellites and unmanned aerial vehicles to gain situational awareness and assist with target acquisition and the application of joint fires of increasing range and accuracy led a number of military theorists to speculate that they were viewing a revolution in military affairs unparalleled since the Industrial Revolution.<sup>5</sup> These thinkers argued that in modern, Information Age warfare, the historical friction of battle observed by Carl von Clausewitz could be minimized through instantaneous information-sharing.<sup>6</sup> Further, by exploiting the emerging

long-range sensor-to-shooter linkage, combat could be conducted remotely, resulting in far fewer casualties (U.S., enemy, and civilian).<sup>7</sup>

Within the U.S. Army, the prospect of Information Age technologies produced a number of initiatives. In 1994, the Army began exploring the impact of emerging technologies on force structure, leading to the Force XXI concept that would ultimately define the structure of its heavy divisions in 2003.<sup>8</sup> The concept sought to link units from the combat vehicle crew through the brigade combat team to a common information-sharing platform, facili-

# By December 2001, most Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters had been forced to flee Afghanistan for safe havens in Pakistan.

tating real-time situational awareness. This common operating picture would reduce the uncertainty of combat by showing all battlefield actors where friendly units were located, what they were doing, and the location of any identified enemy formations. By leveraging information, the force could act more intelligently and quickly. Combining the Force XXI concept and lessons learned from Operation DESERT STORM, the Army reorganized its heavy divisions—eliminating the fourth company from their infantry and armor battalions, establishing robust brigade combat team headquarters tailored for task-organization, increasing engineer support, adding an organic reconnaissance troop to each brigade combat team, and centralizing logistics in the division support command.<sup>9</sup>

While the Force XXI concept underwent testing and validation, the Army faced a competing requirement. Operations in Somalia in 1993 demonstrated the vulnerability of light forces even in peacekeeping operations. These forces were rapidly deployable but lacked the armored strength to resist determined adversaries without sustaining substantial casualties. Heavy forces, with the requisite armored strength, on the other hand, took far too long to deploy. With the United States increasingly engaged in emergency operations around the world, the Army required a force that could rapidly deploy and sustain itself until heavy forces arrived (if required). This requirement led to the establish-

ment of the interim brigade combat team in 1999. This interim formation would exploit commercial, off-the-shelf technologies to approximate the information capabilities of the Force XXI formations while minimizing deployment time. Ultimately endowed with a newly developed, lightly armored wheeled vehicle, the Stryker, the brigade combat teams were designed to be robust, combined-arms organizations that could operate independently of any division headquarters.<sup>10</sup>

These changes in force structure, combined with other lessons derived from U.S. experiences with contingency operations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, were reflected in pre-Iraq War U.S. doctrine. U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, 14 June 2001, introduced the concept of *full-spectrum operations*, recognizing that the Army could be called upon to conduct a variety of missions from traditional offensive and defensive combat to stability and support operations other than war.<sup>11</sup> Full-spectrum operations captured the Army's operational experience in the 1990s of pursuing missions other than traditional combat while retaining the requirement to conduct defensive and decisive offensive operations when necessary. Further, the 2001 doctrine stressed the Army's requirement to respond promptly to a crisis—rather than following the Cold War model of alert, mobilize, train, deploy.<sup>12</sup> Regarding traditional war-fighting missions, the 2001 doctrine stressed the impor-

tance of combined-arms formations task-organized to the requirements of a specific mission. It stressed the primacy of the offensive form of warfare, stating that only the offensive resulted in decisive results.<sup>13</sup> These doctrinal imperatives were firmly engrained by the time the United States initiated ground combat operations in Iraq in March 2003.

## PRELUDE TO BATTLE

The United States fundamentally altered its strategic thinking in the aftermath of al-Qaeda's 11 September 2001 attacks on this country. A month after the attacks, the United States initiated operations in Afghanistan to eliminate al-Qaeda's main sanctuary. This campaign seemed to reinforce the views about modern warfare offered by the Information Age warfare school. Small groups of U.S. special operations forces augmented by conventional ground forces employed responsive joint fires using the sensor-shooter linkage to eliminate large Taliban and al-Qaeda formations and key supporting infrastructure. Aided by this dramatic technological advantage, U.S. military and intelligence agencies relied on the existing anti-Taliban movement in Afghanistan to provide the bulk of the ground forces in this campaign. By December 2001, most Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters had been forced to flee Afghanistan for safe havens in Pakistan. The campaign was extolled as the example par excellence for modern warfare.<sup>14</sup>

As U.S. forces prepared to invade Iraq a year later, the experience of Afghanistan was fresh in the minds of American strategic leaders, who assumed that the success in Afghanistan could be replicated using similar means.<sup>15</sup> Much like the Taliban political leadership in Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein and his regime were deemed the Iraqi center of gravity in a potential conflict.<sup>16</sup> American leaders reasoned that once this regime was eliminated, resistance would crumble; an invasion of southern Iraq would result in a revolt by the Shi'a population, and with the coercive threat of the Ba'athists removed, the Iraqi Army could be

neutralized or induced to surrender without having to be destroyed outright. Because the strategic objective of the conflict was regime change, planners assumed that damage to Iraqi infrastructure and military strength would be limited and that a major postwar reconstruction effort would not be required.<sup>17</sup>

Militarily, these political assumptions had a direct bearing on the conduct of the war. In contrast to the twenty-one brigade combat teams engaged in Operation DESERT STORM, the U.S. would commit only eight brigade combat teams to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This deci-

sion was based on the theory that Information Age formations could achieve decisive results with fewer ground forces, an argument seemingly supported by the experience of Afghanistan, and on the view that the strategic focus on a small leadership coterie in a seriously divided nation would cause the conflict to be short. To achieve the political objective of regime change, the U.S. military selected the seizure of Baghdad as its objective and constructed an operational plan designed to apply maximum ground force against the Iraqi capital in a minimum amount of time. This plan would place a premium on

- 1 City of An Nasiriyah
- 2 Objective Clay
- 3 Iraqi Army barracks (Objective Liberty)
- 4 Tallil Air Base (Objective Firebird)





Bridge across the Euphrates River from the southeastern edge of An Nasiriyah, looking upstream, 1 April 2003

aggressive offensive action, causing spearheading ground units to bypass urban centers in order to maintain momentum toward the capital.<sup>18</sup>

The first operational objective of the war would be the seizure of bridges and military sites near the city of An Nasiriyah on the Euphrates River in southern Iraq. Control of these bridges would allow follow-on U.S. ground forces to conduct a feint toward Baghdad along the most direct route from Kuwait, deceiving the Iraqi military about the true direction of the main drive, which would proceed through the Karbala Gap. Further, by seizing nearby Tallil Air Base, U.S. forces would estab-

lish a forward airfield for Coalition aircraft and potentially eliminate the Iraqi *11th Division* stationed in barracks nearby.

The intentions of the Iraqi forces were unclear. U.S. planners did not expect stiff resistance from the Iraqi Army—indeed, some Army units were informed that “the Iraqi *III Corps* (Regular Army) [*11th Division’s* higher headquarters would] not [be] fighting [us] when we invade.”<sup>19</sup> The state of the Iraqi Army in 2003, however, was evident. A decade of economic sanctions, combined with a declining priority for recruits and equipment vis-à-vis Iraq’s other security organizations,

had rendered the Iraqi Army a shell. The quality of its front-line soldiers was dubious, and its machines were generally old and lacked spare parts. Further, the equipment that was operational was dispersed to protect it from U.S. air strikes.<sup>20</sup> The greatest strength of the Iraqi Army was its artillery, and its anticipated capability to use that artillery to deliver chemical weapons, but the Iraqis could not conduct large-scale maneuver against U.S. ground forces. It would be most effective in defense to delay and attrit U.S. ground forces, especially in built-up areas where the U.S. maneuver and air advantages could be limited.

**The greatest strength of the Iraqi Army was its artillery, and its anticipated capability to use that artillery to deliver chemical weapons**



Marines with the 2d Battalion, 8th Marines, patrol a compound that had been used as a staging area for Iraqi paramilitary forces in An Nasiriyah, 25 March 2003.

## Fought mostly in the darkness of 21–22 March 2003, the initial phase of the battle was a complete success

### THE ENGAGEMENT

On the night of 20–21 March 2003, the 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, crossed into Iraq and conducted a 117-kilometer approach march toward An Nasiriyah. The brigade's mission was to contain the *11th Army Division*, allowing the rest of the U.S. 3d Infantry Division to maneuver northwest along and across the Euphrates. In accomplishing this mission, the brigade was charged with three key tasks. First, a battalion task force formed around the 2d Battalion, 69th Armor, would secure the bridge over the Euphrates

located west of the city (Objective Clay). A second battalion task force formed around the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, would secure the Iraqi *11th Infantry Division's* barracks (Objective Liberty). A third battalion task force formed around the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, would then seize Tallil Air Base (Objective Firebird).<sup>21</sup>

Fought mostly in the darkness of 21–22 March 2003, the initial phase of the battle was a complete success, despite unexpectedly fierce Iraqi resistance. Despite Iraqi artillery strikes against the 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, Task Force 2d Battalion, 69th

Armor, supported by Army aviation, destroyed Iraqi vehicles and personnel south of the bridge and secured Objective Clay despite conflicting CIA intelligence reports regarding enemy strength and intentions at the bridge.<sup>22</sup>

Simultaneously, Task Force 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, attacked toward the Iraqi Army barracks at Objective Liberty. Again, conflicting intelligence reports placed 35 to 50 T55 tanks at this objective, and these tanks were at different times reported as counterattacking U.S. ground forces in varying strengths. Clearly, the *11th Infantry Division* in An Nasiriyah was not

capitulating. As Task Force 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, occupied positions interdicting the *11th Infantry Division's* line of communication toward Baghdad, the supporting artillery of the 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, began a sustained bombardment of Objectives Liberty and Firebird. Once the Iraqi artillery had been neutralized, Task Force 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, contacted Iraqi armor dug into prepared positions and destroyed numerous armored fighting vehicles. Iraqi infantry then counterattacked supported by heavy weapons. The fight for the barracks would last all night and into the morning. As the sun rose, Iraqi Army counterattacks were replaced by attacks by the *Saddam Fedayeen*, a paramilitary force generally overlooked in prewar planning. Their commitment at Liberty portended a wider Iraqi military strategy of utilizing irregular combat to resist U.S. ground forces. The *Saddam Fedayeen* proved to be dedicated fighters, and

the thirty-foot berms that protected the base and, by the morning of 22 March, was clearing the base uncontested.<sup>24</sup> All of the 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division's initial objectives had been met, and the brigade passed other elements of the 3d Infantry Division north toward Am Samawah and Karbala as planned. Over the next twenty-four hours, elements of the 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, were relieved of their responsibilities near An Nasiriyah and freed to continue driving north. The 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade officially relieved the 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, on 23 March, ending the first phase of the Battle of An Nasiriyah.<sup>25</sup>

The events that unfolded on 23 March 2003, however, proved to be a major shock to U.S. ground forces. Instead of advancing north across the Euphrates using the now-congested route to and across the bridge seized by Task Force 2d Battalion, 69th Armor, at Objective Clay, the marines, under

into An Nasiriyah, and in a series of ambushes suffered 11 soldiers killed, 7 captured, and 9 wounded (including some of those captured). Armored elements of Company A, 8th Tank Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps, rushed to the embattled convoy's aid.<sup>26</sup>

Marine units subsequently seized the bridge over the Euphrates that the 507th had mistakenly crossed into An Nasiriyah and advanced north under heavy fire. Iraqi fighters in civilian clothes exploited urban terrain, including protected sites such as hospitals, and conducted hit-and-run attacks against U.S. forces using rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire. Obstacles to disrupt U.S. movement were easy to construct in the city and left marines vulnerable in preestablished engagement areas. In all, 18 marines from Company C, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, died on 23 March, some from misdirected friendly air attack. When combined with the 9 members of the 507th Maintenance

## The *Saddam Fedayeen* proved to be dedicated fighters, and they were harder to distinguish because they wore civilian clothes.

they were harder to distinguish because they wore civilian clothes. U.S. Air Force A-10 strikes along with direct-fire superiority eventually defeated the counterattacks and brought about the surrender of the remaining enemy forces at the barracks. Numerous prisoners were taken, including an Iraqi brigadier general.<sup>23</sup>

Tallil Air Base proved a much easier task, partly because enemy formations that had been at that objective moved north to support the fight at Liberty. Task Force 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, supported again by Army aviation and artillery, breached

a plan formulated by the I Marine Expeditionary Force early the previous month, crossed the river using one of the bridges into An Nasiriyah in an effort to open another major supply route for the attacking forces. This triggered the second phase of the battle and closely followed an Army disaster. Seventeen vehicles operated by thirty-one soldiers of the 507th Maintenance Company, accompanied by one vehicle operated by two soldiers of the 3d Forward Support Battalion, all of which were headed north in support of the 3d Infantry Division, failed to follow their assigned route, crossed

Company and the 2 soldiers of the 3d Forward Support Battalion who were killed, the total of 29 fatalities would make 23 March the deadliest day of the Iraq War.<sup>27</sup>

Fighting in An Nasiriyah would continue for a week following the pattern of 23 March. Iraqi fighters sought out soft targets such as command posts, supply columns, and low-flying aircraft. They employed civilian vehicles, including buses, to reposition. The marines, meanwhile, subjected the enemy in the city to continuous attack. Not surprisingly, civilian casualties rose. Marine forces

# The military objective of seizing Baghdad as rapidly as possible caused military planners to focus combat power on maneuvering toward the Iraqi capital

successfully utilized artillery and aviation support to extricate themselves from ambushes, but fighting was manpower-intensive and U.S. casualties climbed. This was far from the Information Age warfare theorized about in the 1990s—An Nasiriyah for the marines on the ground resembled the man-on-man melees of Hué and Korea half a century earlier more than it resembled the disengaged sensor-shooter wars predicted for the twenty-first century. On 25 March, the Marines' 1st Regimental Combat Team, which had been delayed in advancing on Baghdad from the south

due to the fighting in An Nasiriyah, finally passed through Marine positions in the city and headed north toward Baghdad. By 26 March, Iraqi resistance was contained, although the city was not fully secured until 2 April. In all, the U.S. suffered 33 killed, 66 wounded, and 7 captured. Iraqi casualties are impossible to estimate.<sup>28</sup>

## AFTERMATH

Like all of America's first battles, An Nasiriyah clearly exhibited what was right about prewar preparation as well

as some severe limitations requiring adjustment in contact.

Political considerations affected the conduct of the battle as certainly in this conflict as it had in previous wars. The political objective of regime change affected both the operational design of the ground campaign and the timing of the attack. The military objective of seizing Baghdad as rapidly as possible caused military planners to focus combat power on maneuvering toward the Iraqi capital, leaving urban centers unsecured, at least initially. Further, the political decision to limit the size of the ground contingent coupled with Turkey's refusal to accom-



Cerity Images

Marines search a civilian driver who passed near their position in An Nasiriyah, 24 March 2003.

# An Nasiriyah symbolizes the ultimate rebirth of counterinsurgency as a conventional ground force mission.

moderate attacking U.S. forces stretched available combat power to the limit. On 19 March a failed effort to kill Saddam Hussein via an air strike (thus achieving the primary political objective prior to ground operations) led to the initiation of ground operations twenty-four hours ahead of schedule, causing units to cut short final preparations and occupy attack positions early and in the dark.<sup>29</sup>

Tactically, the performance of American combat units was excellent. The 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division, spent six months in 2002 training in Kuwait for a potential war in Iraq; it was perhaps the best-prepared unit in American history for its first wartime mission. Marine units likewise demonstrated a high degree of tactical skill when one considers that An Nasiriyah was in no way the fight they had trained for or expected.<sup>30</sup> The marines of the I Marine Expeditionary Force, to which the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, belonged, demonstrated a tremendous capacity to react and adapt to emerging enemy tactics, techniques, and procedures in contact. Predictably, however, the price paid in blood was high. Historically, even when U.S. ground forces are well prepared for battle, casualties in the first engagement of a war have been heavy.<sup>31</sup>

Command and control effectiveness, a historical U.S. weakness in first battles, was mixed.<sup>32</sup> Operationally, the concentration of all U.S. ground forces under a single joint force land component commander significantly reduced the command and control complexities associated with joint operations as compared with the situation during Operation DESERT STORM.<sup>33</sup> Army forces had ample time to study and rehearse the operation prior to execution, as well as train higher-echelon staffs, but the marines had been given less time

to prepare.<sup>34</sup> At the tactical level, the synchronization of combat arms among Army and Marine units in contact was first rate, and the ability of both services to employ joint fires proved critical throughout the battle.

The incident involving the 507th Maintenance Company, however, revealed major deficiencies in noncombat units' overall preparedness for combat and capabilities for command and control. An Army after-action review of the incident found numerous breakdowns in command and basic soldier skills. The 507th Maintenance Company's higher headquarters failed to implement a traffic control point briefed as part of the movement order, which could have prevented the convoy from getting lost. The unit commander had failed to properly label graphic control measures on his map, failed to follow his assigned route, and got lost during movement. Further, one of his vehicles ran out of fuel during the action, and numerous weapons failed to fire as a result of improper soldier-level maintenance and cleaning. With the emerging Iraqi trend toward irregular warfare targeting soft (non-combat arms) targets, this had profound implications for the ground forces. These lessons were digested by Army leaders, who subsequently placed greater focus on preparing all units for combat operations, regardless of role. This resulted in increased mission-command training for all leaders, increased weapon and fire distribution and control training such as maneuver live-fires for all units, and a revival of common core task training embodied in the Army's current Warrior Tasks and Drills.

The Army's concept of full-spectrum operations was logical but difficult to put into practice. U.S. ground forces

participating in the Battle of An Nasiriyah trained primarily for major force-on-force battles. While operations against guerrilla forces such as the *Sad-dam Fedayeen* are encompassed under this doctrine, in practice they had been considered of secondary importance. In demonstrating the U.S. military's failure to recognize irregular warfare as a likely enemy approach, the battle illustrated the ground forces' intellectual unpreparedness to fight an unconventional war in Iraq. Long after An Nasiriyah, soldiers and marines were improvising solutions to the challenges of irregular warfare; An Nasiriyah symbolizes the ultimate rebirth of counterinsurgency as a conventional ground force mission.

In all, An Nasiriyah represents a watershed for the ground forces. The 3d Brigade, 3d Infantry Division's performance highlighted the U.S. mastery of maneuver warfare, a mastery ultimately responsible for our enemies' pursuing a strategy of irregular war to neutralize our military advantage. It also represented the U.S. military's most serious urban battle against irregular forces in over thirty years—providing a first glimpse into the near future of American warfare.



## NOTES

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Army, 2008), para. 1-1, used the phrase “era of persistent conflict.”

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

5. Joint fires are defined as “fires delivered during the employment of forces from two or more components in coordinated action to produce desired effects in support of a common objective” in Department of Defense Joint Publication 3-09, *Joint Fire Support* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2006), p. GL-8.

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10. *Ibid.*, pp. 107-11.

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19. Journal, 1st Lt Mark Snakenberg, 3d Platoon, Company B, 2d Battalion, 69th Armor, during the invasion, 15 Mar 2003.

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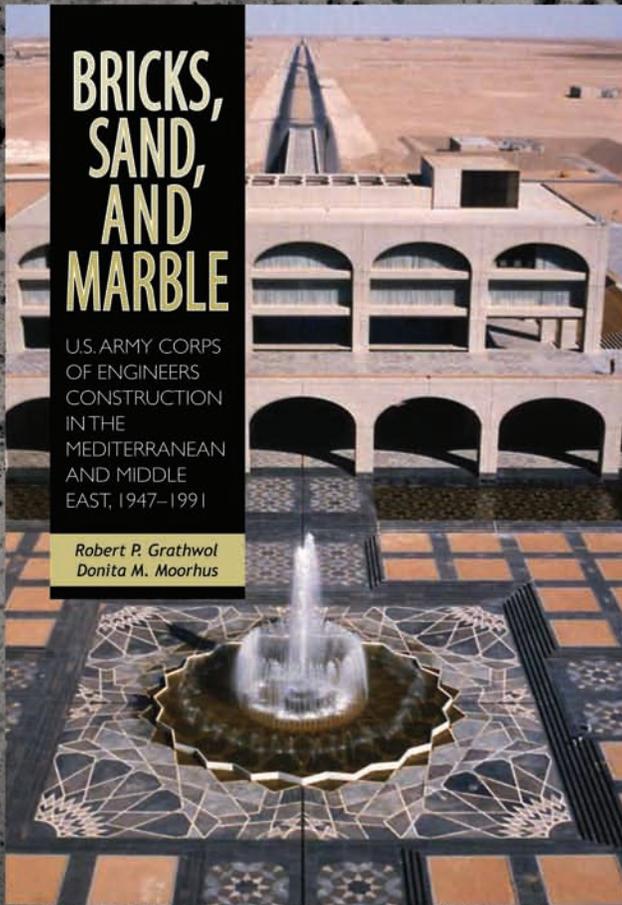
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# New CMH Publications

See page 5 for more information.



# NEWSNOTES

*Continued from page 5*

Forces Command. The detachment came to prominence as a result of its service while deployed to Afghanistan from September 2007 to August 2008. It had then been the first U.S. Army unit assigned to collect historical documents and conduct oral history interviews in that country in more than three years.

During the unit's service in Afghanistan, the 305th's commander, Maj. David Hanselman, served also as theater historian for the U.S. Army. The detachment participated with elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade in Operation ROCK AVALANCHE in the Korangal valley in Kunar Province in northeastern Afghanistan and with elements of the 82d Airborne Division in Operation MAR KARARDAD at Musa Qaleh in Helmand Province in the southern part of the country. In addition to collecting interviews, documents, photographs, and artifacts, the detachment engaged in combat encounters in both operations. On one occasion, Hanselman escorted an enemy prisoner of war to Kandahar Air Base. During its year in Afghanistan, the detachment visited more than a score of military bases, collected over 8,500 photographs and 3,000 documents, and conducted more than 300 interviews; it shared these materials with a wide range of interested Army offices.

When not on active duty, Hanselman is the director of the U.S. Army Transportation Museum at Fort Eustis, Virginia, and Sgt. Julie Wiegand, who served in the detachment in Afghanistan, is a museum technician at the U.S. Army Basic Combat Training Museum at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Maj. Bruce Kish assumed command of the detachment in a reserve status at Coraopolis, Pennsylvania,

in December 2008 and under his leadership the unit continued its record of accomplishment. During 2009 the 305th collected documents and conducted twenty-eight oral history interviews to assist the White House Transportation Agency prepare for its one hundredth anniversary commemoration. Significant interviewees included Leroy Borden Jr., whose late father had served as the first civilian director of the agency, and Michael L. Bromley, author of *William Howard Taft and the First Motoring Presidency*. The detachment also obtained relevant materials from the National Archives, including copies of White House garage records from the Hoover to the Eisenhower administrations. The agency used the information the detachment collected to pinpoint the exact date of its origin, on which it established its organizational day, and to prepare an organizational history Web page and a first draft of a historical publication.

In 2009 the detachment also conducted twenty-four oral history interviews at Fort Eustis, Virginia, with World War II railroaders, gathered at their final Transporters Reunion, and leaders of the 7th Sustainment Brigade, who had arrived there from Afghanistan at the same time. Closer to home, it assisted the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum of Pittsburgh to identify, catalog, and accession artifacts received from Pennsylvania veterans who had served in Afghanistan. In his civilian capacity, Kish handles issues of environmental compliance and cultural resources management for the Pittsburgh District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Congratulations are due to the detachment for its stellar record.

## SIGNAL CORPS TO MARK 150TH ANNIVERSARY

The U.S. Army Signal Corps will celebrate its 150th anniversary on 21 June 2010. The United States Army was the first in the world to have a branch dedicated to providing communications. The Signal Corps traces its beginnings to legislation signed on 21 June 1860 that created the position of signal officer on the Army staff. The first incumbent of that position was Maj. Albert J. Myer. Over the next century and a half, the branch has "gotten the message through" in peace and war from the era of flags and torches to the digital age. The Army is planning a number of special events and other activities throughout the year to commemorate the anniversary.

In partnership with the Signal Center of Excellence at Fort Gordon, Georgia, the Center of Military History will publish a newly updated version of the concise history of the Signal Corps that the Signal Center first issued in 1988. Bringing the branch's history into the twenty-first century, this publication will focus on Signal soldiers in combat and include illustrated sidebars on unique topics. It will also feature information gleaned from the Signal Center's focused effort to document the operations of the Signal Corps since 11 September 2001. The anticipated publication date for the new history is December 2010.

A special issue of the Signal Center's professional bulletin, the *Army Communicator*, to be published in June 2010 will feature articles highlighting the rich history of the Corps. This issue will also be used as a new marketing brochure for recruiting and accessioning soldiers



the Signal Corps will be introduced at the Signal Ball, which Brig. Gen. Jeffrey W. Foley, commander of the Signal Center, will host at Fort Gordon on 25 June 2010. The painting will subsequently be installed in the Signal Museum at Fort Gordon for permanent display.

More information about all the commemorative activities is available at the official anniversary Web site, <http://signal150.army.mil>.

### CENTER EDITOR HONORED

**Diane M. Donovan**, a technical editor at the Center of Military History, received the secretary of the Army's award for editor of the year (departmental) at a ceremony in the Pentagon on 14 April 2010. She was honored for her work editing *Tip of the Spear: U.S. Army Small-Unit Action in Iraq, 2004–2007*, and *Honor and Fidelity: The 65th Infantry in Korea, 1950–1953*, both of which were published by the Center in 2009.



into the branch by showing them the role communications have played throughout the Army's history.

The Center of Military History will mark the anniversary by hosting a special Signal Corps feature on its Web site. It will contain links to sources of information on the Signal Corps, including the Center's publications relating to the Corps' service in World War II and Vietnam. The feature is still a work in progress, but it should be available for viewing by early June. Please check the Center's Web site at <http://www.history.army.mil> for this and other new features that are being added regularly.

The Signal Corps Regimental Association commissioned a painting by the talented historical artist Don Troiani depicting the signal station at Cheves' Mill from which location Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman observed the successful attack that Union forces made on Fort McAllister southwest of Savannah, Georgia, on 13 December 1864. Sherman's signal team enabled him to exercise effective control over the attack, which was led by Brig. Gen. William B. Hazen, a future chief signal officer. The Army's signalmen also communicated with counterparts aboard naval vessels in the tidal Ogeechee River, engaging in an early example of joint communications.

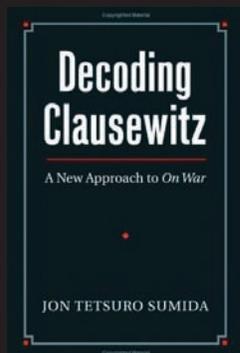
The capture of the fort enabled Sherman to board one of the naval vessels and communicate to the secretary of war the success of his march across Georgia. It also opened to his army a convenient avenue of supply from the sea. The original painting will be on view and a new video about



Left to right, Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh presents his departmental editor of the year award to Diane Donovan as General Peter W. Chiarelli, vice chief of staff of the Army, and Thomas R. Lamont, assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs, observe.

# BOOKREVIEWS

*Decoding Clausewitz: A New Approach to On War*



By Jon Tetsuro Sumida  
University Press of Kansas, 2008  
Pp. xix, 234. \$29.95

## Review by Eugenia C. Kiesling

Almost everything in *On War* is very simple, but the simplest things are so difficult that no previous reader has comprehended Carl von Clausewitz. Or so Jon Sumida would have one believe. The fundamental thesis of *Decoding Clausewitz* is that, a great deal of “intelligent, rigorous, and productive” study notwithstanding, previous interpreters of Carl von Clausewitz’s masterwork have missed the point (p. 1). Or rather, three points: that Clausewitz had virtually completed *On War* by the time of his death, that the superiority of defense to offense is the work’s dominant idea, and that Clausewitz sought to present not a comprehensive theory of war but a scientific method by which each individual can prepare himself to practice war knowledgeably. *On War* is a practical handbook for the peacetime education of wartime commanders, and the essence of that education is “the mental reenactment of historical case studies of command decision” (p. 3).

Sumida is a critic by nature; he devotes a good part of his short book to viewing Clausewitz in the reflection of others’ unsatisfactory reactions to *On War*. In this vein, the preface offers a trenchant discussion of the way what Sumida calls “selective engagement” has vitiated efforts to profit from reading Clausewitz in the institutions of professional military education within the armed forces of the United States (p. xii). There follow brief discussions of Antoine-Henri Jomini’s dismissal of *On War*, Sir Julian Corbett’s implicit borrowing of key ideas, and B. H. Liddell Hart’s excoriation of the ideas he believed responsible for the carnage of the Great War.

After dealing with these three theorists’ treatments of Clausewitz, Sumida turns to the scholarly critiques of *On War* by Raymond Aron, Peter Paret, and W. B. Gallie. For Sumida, Aron’s charge that Clausewitz’s unfinished work lacks a comprehensive theory of war misses the point that *On War* was essentially complete. Clausewitz did not offer a comprehensive theory because that was not his purpose, not because he had not yet gotten around to it.

Paret shares Aron’s belief in *On War*’s unfinished condition and the conviction that its deficiencies would have been rectified in the final product. In Paret’s view, the revisions would have emphasized the political nature of war and emphasized the distinction between limited and absolute war. But his interest in Clausewitz’s political development led Paret, believes Sumida, to miss the military arguments at the core of Clausewitz’s work.

W. B. Gallie, though less famous among students of military theory than either Aron or Paret, came closer to grasping the nature of *On War*. A philosopher who published studies

of Charles Sanders Peirce and R. G. Collingwood, and was heavily influenced by the preeminent philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gallie treated Clausewitz as a fellow philosopher, a thinker about war rather than a prescriber. Clausewitz treated war as a social phenomenon. Since war lacks principles and is not amenable to logically complete answers, the ability to make judgments, what Clausewitz referred to as “genius,” is a military commander’s crucial quality.

Gallie treats *On War* as a significant but imperfect work whose truth remains to be revealed “only when the flaws in [Clausewitz’s] conceptual system are exposed and adequately corrected” (p. 77). Sumida believes that Gallie, though he pointed the way to understanding *On War*, mistook his own failures of interpretation for flaws on Clausewitz’s part. In the second half of *Decoding Clausewitz*, Sumida builds on Gallie’s theories by focusing on the Prussian theorist’s notion of historical reenactment.

Since the argument for the value of historical reenactment rests on historical study itself, Sumida briefly and cogently sketches the process by which Clausewitz learned from his historical experience of Prussia’s defeat by Napoleon and Napoleon’s defeat by Russia. From these events, and more generally from the wars he lived through from 1792 to 1815, Clausewitz derived two key ideas: the superiority of the defense, especially when followed by counterattack, and the potential of a people’s war.

Clausewitz’s appreciation of the pedagogical role of history grew during his appointment as tutor to Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia. To guide the prince, Clausewitz sought not only to understand war but also to determine how commanders could be

taught. He concluded that the only way to develop the intellectual and moral faculties necessary for command was through mental reenactment of complex historical events. *On War*, his final presentation of the procedure, taught “how to explore realms of personal thought that included emotional elements in relation to the sorts of difficult problem-solving likely to arise in the course of decision-making in war” (pp. 100–101).

Sumida argues that Clausewitz’s theory of self-education through historical reenactment reflected precocious understandings both of the nature of language and of the scientific method. Even more striking was his anticipation of the historian R. G. Collingwood’s notion of reenactment as a method of understanding history.

Sumida closes this central chapter of *Decoding Clausewitz* with brief discussions of Alan Beyerchen’s argument about Clausewitz’s understanding of war’s nonlinearity and Guy Claxton’s cognitive research into the role of intuition. Both of these studies reinforce the value of the method Sumida imputes to Clausewitz. Historical reenactment prepares the mind to deal with nonlinear events by developing the intuitive capacity that Claxton sees as providing “good judgment in hard cases” (p. 119).

So smoothly has Sumida corralled Aron, Paret, Gallie, Peirce, Collingwood, and Wittgenstein into his analysis that his own exegesis of *On War* in the fourth chapter of the book seems almost redundant. The opening section, “Absolute War and Genius,” begins, however, with jarring dismissal of any apparent contradiction between Clausewitz’s initial treatment of absolute war as an abstraction and Sumida’s later acknowledgment “*that war that involves that unrestrained use of violence can occur and thus presumably is also real*” (p. 123, author’s italics). For the rest of the book, the author refers insouciantly to “(real) absolute war” and “defensive (real) absolute war,” which can also be “limited war” (p. 125). If this were not complicated enough, there is also the contrast between (real) absolute war and “(less than absolute) real war” (p. 136). One can defer the chore of work-

ing out the exact difference between the two forms of war—or the two forms of brackets. As Sumida says in one of the more opaque passages of the book, “because the potential for (real) absolute war is contained within [less than absolute] real war, the two forms are conjoined rather than distinct taxonomic categories until after the conflict has ended, at which time the occurrence or nonoccurrence of escalation in violence has been established as fact” (p. 169, author’s brackets). There has to be a more plausible understanding of Clausewitz’s use of “absolute war.”

Sumida’s discussion of genius—of the intellectual qualities of the true military commander—is as compelling as his notion of “absolute war” is not. Having established that Clausewitz believed in the centrality of genius and that both the conscious and unconscious elements of military intellect could be taught, the author moves naturally to the relationship between history and theory in the process of historical reenactment. History may be the basic arena in which the imagination plays its educational games, but the historical record is full of holes. In the absence of evidence, crucial causal connections are unclear. To produce a useful history requires that gaps be filled—validly, if not with perfect historical accuracy. It is the role of theory, of critical analysis, to provide rigorous solutions to historical questions. As depicted in an appendix, Clausewitz’s critical analysis is the process by which Verifiable Historical Fact combines with Theory-Based Historical Surmise to produce Synthetic Experience, which combines in turn with Reflection on Synthetic Experience to produce Improved Capacity for Judgment (p. 196).

Armed with the intellectual tool of critical analysis, the student of war is now ready to use it in deriving the central lesson of *On War*—that defense is the stronger form of war. The statement itself is hardly exceptional since Clausewitz clearly chose to devote the longest chapter of *On War* to the defense, but Sumida brings out a number of less obvious points. Of particular interest are his observation that Book

7, “The Attack,” contains numerous backhanded references to the defenders’ advantages and Sumida’s discussion of Clausewitz’s attitude toward a people’s war.

The concluding chapter offers a thorough summary of the book’s argument, and many readers will find it a good place to start. For although the writing is clear, the plot’s twists and turns may baffle the uninitiated. Sumida’s argument is more fun if one knows where it is going.

*Decoding Clausewitz* is fun, elegant, thought-provoking, and sometimes convincing. His description of *On War* “as a *set of instructions on how to engage in serious learning of a highly personal nature* rather than an *impersonal representation of the totality of that which is to be learned*” (p. 5, author’s italics) is as intelligent an explanation of the book as one is likely ever to read. Those of us who teach military history in an effort to educate soldiers will find in *Decoding Clausewitz* an inspiring explanation of what we ought to be doing.

Still, one can believe most of what Sumida says and feel that questions, both methodical and substantive, remain unanswered. The author’s discovery that Clausewitz beat Collingwood to the practice of historical reenactment is fascinating but implies that *On War* became comprehensible only after Collingwood reinvented the technique. That argument helps to explain why previous Clausewitz scholars failed to see the central themes of *On War*, but it raises the “tree falling in the forest” question. If Collingwood had not been heard—if Gallie had not heard Collingwood and Sumida had not heard Gallie—would *On War* exist as a book about historical reenactment?

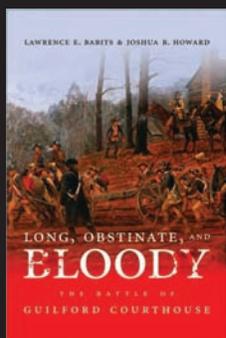
Sumida’s economical reading of *On War* also leaves one wondering about those sections that do not concern the strength of the defensive or critical analysis and, at the least, dilute the message. If his intent was to offer a clear protocol for understanding war, Clausewitz might have done his future readers the favor of using his own method of critical analysis to place himself mentally in their shoes. Surely the exercise of reenacting the reading

of his own book while imagining himself to be of mere mortal intelligence would have shown him that *On War* is a more difficult book than it need be. It might even have spurred him to undertake some revisions.

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*Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse*



By Lawrence E. Babits  
and Joshua B. Howard  
University of North Carolina Press, 2009  
Pp. xix, 300. \$30

### Review by Thomas Rider

The student of military history has no shortage of quality books to peruse in order to gain a better understanding of the American Revolution in the Carolinas. While all of these studies discuss the various battles of the southern theater, most focus on the operational level and treat individual battles as brief episodes within the context of broader campaigns. Consequently, while these works commendably paint the big picture of the southern war, most tend to rely on the same, readily available,

primary sources in their discussions of individual engagements. In short, they do not break much new ground or go into much detail in analyzing events as they occurred on the battlefield. Since 1998, a notable exception to this generalization has been *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998), by Lawrence E. Babits—a book that set a new standard for how to approach the study of Revolutionary War battles. Now, Babits, in collaboration with Joshua B. Howard, has produced *Long, Obstinate, and Bloody: The Battle of Guilford Courthouse*, the first “in-depth scholarly monograph” of this pivotal North Carolina battle between Continental and militia forces under Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene and British forces under Lt. Gen. Charles, Earl Cornwallis (p. xi).

Babits, the 2000 North Carolina Society of the Cincinnati George Washington distinguished professor of history and director of Maritime Studies at East Carolina University, and Howard, a research historian at the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, do nothing short of breathing new life into the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. They effectively place this engagement in its proper context by providing an overview of the critical actions leading up to the battle. They vividly describe the “Race to the Dan” in which Cornwallis unsuccessfully pursued Greene’s army across North Carolina in an attempt to engage the Americans so that he could decisively defeat them. The reader cannot help but sympathize with the soldiers of both armies, who were short of supplies, exhausted, and forced to march day after day across rain-swelled rivers and on mud-choked roads in February 1781. The reader also gains an appreciation for Greene’s efforts to shape the logistical and manpower situation to his advantage in the weeks preceding the battle. Where this book adds immeasurably to our depth of understanding of this particular battle, however, is in its minute-by-minute retelling of the events of 15 March 1781 in the fields and woods west of Guilford Courthouse, North Carolina.

The authors’ methodology in analyzing this battle is the key to their success in creating a coherent story from the

chaos of participant accounts. As noted military historian John Keegan points out in his landmark study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme, *The Face of Battle*, an individual soldier’s “personal angle of vision” dramatically affects that individual’s understanding of the battlefield around him.<sup>1</sup> An officer’s view is often very different from that of a private. Soldiers on various portions of a battlefield witness different actions. Soldiers viewing the same event from varied locations on the field might describe that event differently. This concept should come as no surprise to the professional soldier who has experienced battle and then tried to make sense of that experience after the fact. This phenomenon creates extraordinary challenges for the historian who must create an ordered narrative out of incomplete and seemingly contradictory accounts.

Babits and Howard deal with this problem by precisely positioning participants on the battlefield and confirming these eyewitness accounts with other soldiers who were involved in the same engagements. The authors further attempt to verify this evidence through archeology and their own analysis of the battlefield’s terrain. By using more than one thousand pension applications submitted after the Revolution by Guilford Courthouse veterans of the Continental Army and American militia, Babits and Howard significantly increase the number of potential firsthand accounts of the battle. While pension applications are typically of limited value in giving in-depth accounts of specific battles, they do provide valuable tidbits that when combined with other accounts can shed new light on specific events during the course of the fight. As the authors suggest, more traditional “participant accounts [create] a skeleton that can be fleshed out by the pension documents” (p. 235).

The result is an intricate re-creation of the battle of Guilford Courthouse from the collective perspective of the men who fought there. While no piece of history is omniscient, the authors are quick to acknowledge when there is insufficient evidence to draw hard and fast conclusions. Yet it would be difficult to conceive of a more comprehensive rendering

of this battle. A word of caution, however, is necessary before reading this book. The same level of detail that makes *Long, Obstinate, and Bloody* an essential acquisition for the serious student of military history may quickly overwhelm the casual reader.

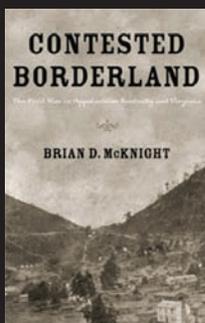
## NOTE

1. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: J. Cape, 1976), pp. 128–33.

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### *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia*



By Brian D. McKnight  
University Press of Kentucky, 2006  
Pp. ix, 312. \$45

## Review by Barton A. Myers

Civil War historians have rarely been at a loss for words about any topic relating to the conflict. But one region that has up until quite recently attracted little scholarly attention is the Appalachian Mountains. During the past decade, historians have rushed to fill the historiographical breach, and Brian D. McKnight's *Contested*

*Borderland* is a fine addition to that growing literature. In this volume, which blends social, military, and political history, the author focuses particular attention on the counties that constituted the contemporary Sixth Kentucky and Thirteenth Virginia U.S. Congressional Districts. This region of eastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia is dominated by rough mountainous terrain and a series of important transportation passes, the most well-known of which is the Cumberland Gap. Having visited archives in twelve states and the District of Columbia to piece together his narrative, McKnight succeeds in offering a thoughtful and well-written history. The author employs historian Stephen V. Ash's notion of a no-man's land, a region where neither the Union nor Confederate Army remained in permanent control, and McKnight ultimately asserts that the citizens of this locale experienced divided loyalties, economic hardship, and terrifying guerrilla conflict over the course of four arduous years.

McKnight contends that slavery exercised only a "minimal influence" in the decision by some mountaineers to support the secessionist cause, which he instead attributes primarily to family, kinship, and local social relationships (p. 17). Citizens of the Sixth District of Kentucky often voted for Opposition-Constitutional Union Party candidates during the antebellum years. These political descendents of the old-line Whig Party remained Unionist or ambivalent toward the secessionist cause during the late 1850s and into the 1860s. While eastern Kentuckians supported conservative Unionists, citizens of the Thirteenth District of Virginia consistently supported the Democratic Party. The Holston Valley of southwestern Virginia—where the rail lines were easily accessible; large-scale, slave-based agricultural cultivation was possible; and a stable political elite ruled—was different than other areas of Appalachia, where the agricultural economy was less profitable due to rugged terrain. As a result, in these areas of the Cumberland Plateau, many Kentuckians and Virginians remained Unionist or undecided in their political sentiments.

In the contested borderland, McKnight reveals a population caught between two armies and largely afraid to reveal its antagonism to either side. According to the author, during the early days of the war, the citizens "preferred to take the safe course—to be loyal to whoever held the region until a change came" (p. 52). After January 1862, the Confederate Army was slowly forced from Kentucky into the southwestern corner of Virginia and assumed a defensive role protecting vital lead, niter, and salt deposits. During an important engagement in late 1862 at Middle Creek in eastern Kentucky, Union Brig. Gen. James A. Garfield, a future U.S. president, defeated Kentucky-born Confederate Brig. Gen. Humphrey Marshall. Although Marshall commanded a poorly trained and equipped army that had been recruited for local service in southwestern Virginia, he had confidently invaded Kentucky to recruit Confederate volunteers and to forage for supplies. Although neither side was well trained, Garfield's smaller force of 1,100 men was better equipped and healthier than Marshall's ragged, starving, and diseased army of 2,500 soldiers. McKnight argues that Garfield's victory was primarily a result of these factors, not his brilliant leadership.

During the Confederate Kentucky campaign in spring 1862, three Confederate forces—one under General Braxton Bragg, a second under Maj. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, and the third under General Marshall—attempted to establish a Confederate government in Kentucky. Desirous of his own independent command, Marshall remained uncooperative with Smith and Bragg, who were his superiors in the Kentucky invasion. During the campaign, Confederates lost and then retook the Cumberland Gap; nevertheless, the Confederate strategic efforts in Kentucky to seize and hold the state for the Confederacy, while securing major reinforcements, were ultimately unsuccessful. The invading Confederate armies were forced to withdraw to Tennessee and Virginia in the late fall of 1862.

McKnight argues that the Union Army operated actively and that both sides committed depredations upon the civilian population during 1862 and 1863. The Confederate Army was especially harsh toward dissident Unionists in the borderland area of Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. The Confederate force was nevertheless incapable of protecting its citizenry from Unionist guerrillas or the Union Army by early 1863. The author demonstrates that Confederate conscription was unpopular in the region especially as the war dragged into its second full year. Bushwhackers and guerrillas consistently threatened both armies, and loyalty to the Confederate cause throughout the counties of the region withered in 1863 under the constant threats. Strategically, by September 1863, a Confederate force had surrendered at Cumberland Gap, leaving east Tennessee open to the Union Army. By Christmas 1863, the Confederate Army had inadequate force in the region to contest it. Most Confederate soldiers had been withdrawn south to Chattanooga to resist Union advances there.

Throughout most of late 1863 and early 1864, the Confederate military policies of conscription and impressment grew increasingly unpopular with local civilians of both Union and Confederate loyalty. Skyrocketing prices, inefficient Confederate civil and military rule, and aggressive disease hampered economic activity in southwestern Virginia and wrought intense hardship. This economic privation was compounded by the Confederate military's inability to deal with Unionist guerrilla activity. Confederate sympathizers also vexed the Union Army in eastern Kentucky, where the Army pulled out due to increased bushwhacking during the same period.

During 1864, McKnight shows a region under extreme duress. Confederate Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge and Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan commanded troops in the vicinity of Saltville, Virginia, charged with securing the Confederacy's most important supply of salt. The flamboyant Morgan, however, launched a Kentucky raid that culminated in a disastrous

defeat for his force. Shortly afterward, he was killed in Greenville, Tennessee. General Breckinridge would witness the racial atrocity in Saltville, where in the wake of a battle between Union and Confederate armies in October, dozens of wounded and captured African American U.S. troops were massacred by Confederate soldiers. As food and military supplies became scarcer in early 1865, the author contends that guerrilla conflict continued to rage unabated in eastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia.

For historians interested in the Appalachian region, McKnight's study is an important work. One criticism of the book is something McKnight himself assesses as problematic in Civil War historiography, a dearth in information on the socioeconomic background of Civil War irregulars in the Appalachian Mountains. While the author does an excellent job of recounting the social impact of guerrilla brutality on the political allegiances of the home front, he does not attempt to accumulate, quantify, and analyze data on the background of these irregular forces. Recent scholarship on western Virginia by Kenneth W. Noe has shown that even a cursory analysis of socioeconomic background can provide a powerful window into the family life, economic hardship, and potential motivation of Civil War irregulars.<sup>1</sup> This minor omission, however, should not take away from McKnight's accomplishment in being the first scholar to offer a coherent narrative history of an often overlooked theater of the Civil War. His work deserves a place on the Appalachian history shelf beside that of John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney's *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2000) on western North Carolina, Jonathan D. Sarris' *A Separate Civil War* (Charlottesville, Va., 2006) on north Georgia, and Margaret M. Storey's *Loyalty and Loss* (Baton Rouge, La., 2004) on north Alabama's Unionists.

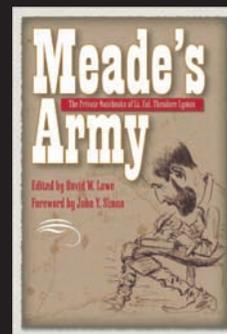
## NOTE

1. Kenneth W. Noe, "Who Were the Bushwhackers? Age, Class, Kin, and Western Virginia's Confederate Guerrillas, 1861-1862" *Civil War History* 49 (March 2003): 5-31.

**Dr. Barton A. Myers** received his bachelor of arts from the College of Wooster in 2003 and his master's degree and Ph.D. in history from the University of Georgia in 2005 and 2009, respectively. He is currently the Jack Miller Center postdoctoral fellow in military history and visiting assistant professor at Cornell University, where he teaches courses in American military history. This fall he will assume the professorship in nineteenth century U.S. military history at Texas Tech University. His first book, *Executing Daniel Bright: Race, Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a Coastal Carolina Community, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), received the Jules and Frances Landry Award for the best LSU Press book on a southern studies topic.



### *Meade's Army: The Private Notebooks of Lt. Col. Theodore Lyman*



Edited by David W. Lowe  
Kent State University Press, 2007  
Pp. xviii, 518. \$45

### Review by Brit Erslev

Among the most valuable contributions to the ever-increasing stock of published Civil War diaries and memoirs, *Meade's Army: The Private Notebooks of Lt. Col. Theodore Lyman*, edited by National Park Service historian David W. Lowe, is actually a hybrid of the two genres. Lyman, one of the better-known volunteer officers on Maj. Gen. George G.

Meade's staff, kept a daily journal of his activities and those of the Army of the Potomac as it resumed its operations against General Robert E. Lee's *Army of Northern Virginia* in late 1863. As the two armies fought each other through the spring and summer of 1864, Lyman quickly wrote down his observations, then edited and expanded on them the following year once he returned home to Massachusetts. As a result, while some of his entries reflected his immediate interpretation of events, others benefited from hindsight.

Many of Lyman's wartime letters to his wife have been available in published form since 1922, and Civil War scholars continue to use them for the insights he provided into the inner workings of an army headquarters, as well as his observations of the increasingly strained relationship between Meade and the commanding general of Union forces, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. The letter collection referenced Lyman's notebooks, but Lowe's work represents the first time that the journals from the Civil War years have been published. Lowe first introduces the reader to Lyman by describing his affluent Boston background and how his training in natural science under Professor Louis Agassiz at Harvard prepared him to observe and methodically document the actions of others. While on a specimen-gathering mission for Agassiz in Florida in 1856, Lyman first met First Lieutenant Meade of the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers. Lyman drew on their friendship in 1862 when he contacted Meade, then a division commander, about becoming a volunteer aide on his staff. Like many of Boston's elite, he hired a substitute for the war; Lowe uses Lyman's own correspondence to indicate that he felt some guilt at being on an extended honeymoon in Europe while many of his Harvard classmates and relatives, including Robert Gould Shaw of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, were paying the ultimate sacrifice. Returning from Europe in May 1863, Lyman settled his family

and prepared to join Meade, formally reporting for duty to Army headquarters that September. Aside from several periods of leave, Lyman remained with the Army of the Potomac until the end of the war, witnessing most of the major campaigns in the eastern theater.

Lyman's education and observational skills are readily apparent in his journal entries, in which he meticulously recorded the names of the people with whom he interacted, his conversations with Meade, with Meade's chief of staff Maj. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys, and with fellow staff officers, as well as troop movements over the course of the Overland campaign and the siege of Petersburg. Among Lyman's first duties was writing a condensed version of Meade's report of the Gettysburg campaign to forward to Edward Everett, scheduled to make the keynote address at the dedication of the national cemetery in November 1863. Touring Army corps camps in late 1863 near Culpeper, Virginia, Lyman observed that "there is much, very much, of detail that is neglected in this army," particularly hygiene and uniformity, but in the same entry he praised "the thorough manliness of the men" (p. 79). As Lowe states in a footnote, Lyman did not see everything, including the scavenging of homes by Union soldiers and Meade's failure to enforce discipline. These tempered comments, however, were representative of Lyman's tendency to present the good and the bad; this extended to his evaluation of Meade. While very supportive of Meade and clearly good friends with the general, Lyman did not hesitate to criticize him quietly, particularly as casualties mounted in the spring of 1864 following repeated frontal assaults by regiments and brigades from Spotsylvania to Cold Harbor.

While Lowe acknowledges that previous scholars and the Massachusetts Historical Society did much to smooth the way for his review of Lyman's papers, his exhaustive background work cannot be ignored. He had the unenviable task of looking up numerous people and places

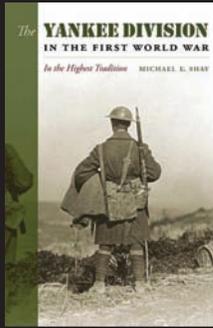
cataloged by Lyman, and the result is a comprehensive endnote section that is perhaps the true measure of the editor's scholarship. Also included are Lyman's daily sketches of the operational movement of the various corps of the Army of the Potomac, which enable the reader to visualize the campaign from the staff officer's perspective as well as appreciate the author's attention to detail. In closing the work, Lowe selected only certain entries from the immediate postwar months that had bearing on Lyman's interaction with other veterans, including his efforts to bring Meade to Boston to speak at Harvard's commencement. This section cements the favorable view that Lyman held of Meade and may encourage readers to look beyond the prickly public persona of the longest serving, and most successful, commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Lyman may not have intended, as he wrote in his notebooks, for his work to be made public, and perhaps his highly methodical nature prompted him to revise and expand certain portions of his notes after the war. However, as a member of an old and well-connected Boston family, he cannot have failed to consider that future generations might read the narrative of his experience in the Civil War. Theodore Lyman observed only a portion of the war and from a privileged position. Thanks to him and Lowe, however, scholars have crucial insight into the officers and soldiers who ultimately defeated the *Army of Northern Virginia*.

**Maj. Brit Erslev** is a military intelligence officer and a student at the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. She received her master's degree in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is working on her dissertation on Confederate Lt. Gen. Daniel Harvey Hill.



*The Yankee Division in the First World War: In the Highest Tradition*



By Michael E. Shay  
Texas A&M University Press, 2008  
Pp. xiii, 294. \$49.95

### Review by Sanders Marble

Since the mid-1990s, there has been a slight increase in the publication of World War I divisional histories; they cover the 35th, 36th, 42d, 82d, and 90th Divisions. *The Yankee Division in the First World War* is the latest and is also Michael E. Shay's second book dealing with elements of the 26th Division or "Yankee Division." His first book, *A Grateful Heart: The History of a World War I Field Hospital* (Westport, Conn., 2002), looks at the 103d Field Hospital and has sections on the division's operations. One unusual element in *The Yankee Division in the First World War* is the plenitude of quotations from medical personnel, which probably stems from the work on his earlier book. This time Shay makes the entire division his focus.

The volume is marvelously researched, from the National Archives and the state National Guard archives to local historical societies and newspapers. As best as can be judged, no meaningful archive has been missed. This provides a great many stories from the doughboys themselves, often enough that Shay can switch from man to man to provide multiple accounts of any action.

The book has plenty of maps of where the division was based or in action, down to the town and village level. One shortcoming is the

lack of tactical maps. Shay develops the accounts of battles based on the perspectives of individuals that have strong, interesting voices, but seldom does the author tell us how an attack developed: if and how it was held up, succeeded, or ultimately failed. Other deficiencies are that Shay's footnotes of battle descriptions often direct the reader to an individual's diary or letters, not to a unit's war diaries, and the accounts of battles do not help readers understand the 26th Division's combat effectiveness.

Otherwise, the narrative is chronologically organized and starts at mobilization in small towns across New England; moves on to embarkation at Hoboken, where strings had been pulled to transport the division abroad early, leaving many feathers ruffled at the 26th's apparent political clout; shifts to training areas behind the front, highlighting the American Expeditionary Forces' (AEF's) problematic training; and continues to the unit's seasoning in quiet sectors and an embarrassing German raid that took prisoners and, Shay argues, undermined the division's reputation. The story progresses to battle at Château-Thierry, where the Yankees fought well in a difficult situation while their commanders tried to work under foreign command. It then advances to the first U.S. operation at St. Mihiel, where the division did better than the "Big Red One" and where it remained as the area turned into a quiet sector. Although the unit was being used to deceive and distract the Germans from the Meuse-Argonne offensive, the story eventually continues to show the 26th on the attack in the late stages of the Meuse-Argonne campaign and ends at the trip home and demobilization. Shay concludes with an overview of the division and its problems, emphasizing the Yankee Division's relationship with General John J. Pershing.

The 26th Division was relatively notorious as an early-deploying National Guard division, and the relief of its commander, Maj. Gen. Clarence Edwards, was a low point

in Regular Army–National Guard relations. Shay repeatedly brings out the poor relationship between Edwards and a number of the Regular Army officers in the AEF leadership, starting at the top with Pershing, but also including Col. Malin Craig and Lt. Gen. Hunter Liggett. The author fairly comments that Pershing's own coterie did not always succeed but has trouble going beyond that to show how well or how poorly Edwards performed as the division's commander. Shay does discuss Edwards' using his staff poorly, or having a substandard staff, but he does not successfully present his evidence or develop this argument.

Overall, this is a good book and an entertaining read. Although Army historians will likely not find this a definitive history because it fails to explain the unit's combat experiences, it will likely be the standard history of the 26th Infantry Division until supplanted by some future work and because there are still so many other divisions that require a detailed examination.

**Dr. Sanders Marble** is the command historian for Northern Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He was previously with the Army's Office of Medical History and the Smithsonian Institution. He has published a variety of pieces about World War I and military medical history.



*Stalin's Keys to Victory: The Rebirth of the Red Army*



By Walter S. Dunn Jr.  
Praeger Security International, 2006  
Pp. xii, 179. \$49.95

**Review by Victoria Campbell**

In *Stalin's Keys to Victory: The Rebirth of the Red Army*, Walter S. Dunn Jr. challenges the common perception that the Soviet Red Army defeated the Germans by mobilizing overwhelming numbers of poorly trained and equipped troops against a *Wehrmacht* crippled by the Russian winter of 1941. While Dunn acknowledges the role of the overextension of German supply lines and the impact of the winter of 1941 on German strength, he argues that what David M. Glantz calls “wave after wave of new armies” in *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941–1943* (Lawrence, Kans., 2005) reflected not just the quantity of combat power but also the quality of the men and materiel. Dunn supports his findings with evidence drawn from both Soviet and German sources, presenting table after table documenting the rebirth of the Red Army, its training, and equipment. Dunn’s most interesting application of this data is comparing Soviet commitment of redesignated, reconstituted, and new units with the assumptions of German intelligence about the units they faced, repeatedly demonstrating that the Germans underestimated Soviet strength and equipment and that German intelligence often had difficulty identifying opposing units. Dunn also states that determining where new units were

committed proves the importance of various fronts to the overall Soviet strategy, as presented in several case studies at the end of the book.

According to Dunn, the Red Army rebuilt itself three times in 1941–1942, generating enough manpower and equipment to slow, stop, and eventually turn back the German onslaught. Troop replacement was conducted in an organized fashion to ensure the quality of the individual replacements. The Soviets initially mobilized reservists who had participated in the Soviet Union’s compulsory military training program and later called up young men born in the same year and trained them as “classes” semiannually. These recruits joined units that had rotated to the rear to rest, rearm, and prepare to return to the front. Some recruits also helped form the hundreds of new divisions the Red Army fielded to replace those lost to the Germans. In August and September 1941, 109 new divisions were assigned to the front, and by November and December 1941, an additional 148 new divisions and 48 new brigades deployed to the front. A further 159 divisions were formed in 1942. Not only did the Red Army replace its losses by rebuilding itself three times, but Soviet troop mobilization continued throughout the war to increase the number of trained soldiers serving in the Red Army.

With respect to equipment, Dunn addresses misconceptions that troops were either deployed without adequate equipment or with an abundance of low-quality weapons and munitions. He finds that occasions of troops deploying without adequate materiel were not due to a shortage of weapons and munitions but a shortage of transportation. Further, he sees the criticism of Soviet equipment—great in quantity but poor in quality—to be an overgeneralization. The Red Army never intended to produce materiel that lasted beyond the scope of the war. The Soviets carefully managed production costs by keeping designs simple, limiting updates, planning for realistic equipment life cycles, and designing efficient factories. This allowed them not only

to replace lost equipment by 1942 but also to generate the additional materiel necessary to supply the Red Army as it expanded. The expansion led to new armored formations and more heavy artillery; however, the author notes that this expansion was not at the expense of the infantry. As it shifted more troops to man the increased number of tanks and artillery, the Red Army compensated for the smaller size of rifle divisions by furnishing them with more effective machine pistols instead of rifles. By streamlining production and focusing efforts on the most effective weapons and equipment, the Red Army was able to produce large quantities of materiel that eventually proved capable of pounding the *Wehrmacht* into submission.

Having made these observations in the first four chapters, Dunn reviews the battles of Moscow (1941), Stalingrad (1942), Kursk (1943), and Belarus (1944) as examples of how the Soviets used their mobilization of the population and industrial capabilities to outproduce the Germans. He sees this massing of troops and superior firepower as the main reason for the Red Army’s victory on the Eastern Front. What is particularly interesting, however, is the attention the author gives to both the training of new and reconstituted units, as well as his observations about German intelligence failures. Unfortunately, although Dunn suggests in his preface that he would also address the commitment of new units to these fronts in order to highlight their importance to the overall Soviet strategy, he fails to follow up on this assertion in the body of his case studies.

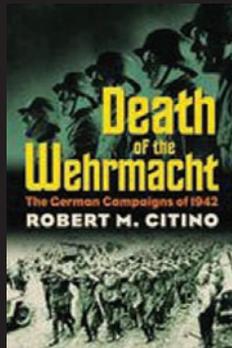
While the author’s work is convincing, it suffers from several weaknesses. First, although he provides an extensive bibliography, the lack of documentation of sources even at the chapter level makes it difficult to evaluate the reliability of his assertions or to use his work as a starting point for further research. Second, Dunn is often repetitive, stating the same points in multiple chapters or even multiple parts of the same chapter. While this does help each chapter to stand alone,

ultimately it can be frustrating to the reader. Third, the author's assertion that Stalin placed commissars in the Red Army is somewhat inaccurate—commissars had been part of the Red Army since the Russian Civil War, and Stalin actually reduced their authority in 1942 when he made them *politruki*, or political leaders, removing the command authority they had previously shared with the military commander. Finally, Dunn's work is apparently the victim of his word-processing software's spell-checking feature, as it is hard to believe such a scholar would have purposely referred to Operation BARBAROSSA as "Operation BARBAROUS." Despite this criticism, the content of *Stalin's Keys to Victory* remains an important contribution to the study of the Soviet Army and the Eastern Front and one this reviewer has frequently recommended to students studying the impact of industrialization on the Red Army in the Second World War. Dunn also includes some intriguing personal experiences in his work, such as his observations as a factory purchasing agent and from his time in the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps and military basic training. His comparison of the rebirth of the Red Army with the failure of German intelligence estimates raises interesting questions about the assumptions under which the *Wehrmacht* operated, and his idea that the commitment of new units has some meaning to the overall Soviet strategy may well be worth further research.

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*Death of the Wehrmacht: The German Campaigns of 1942*



By Robert M. Citino  
University Press of Kansas, 2007  
Pp. xiv, 431. \$34.95

### Review by Mark Olsen

Robert M. Citino has written a masterful operational history of the German campaigns of 1942. *Death of the Wehrmacht* will be a welcome addition to the library of anyone interested in World War II and particularly in how the German Army's understanding of war affected its performance. Arguing that 1942 was the pivotal year in Germany's quest to win World War II, Citino demonstrates how initial operational success led to eventual disaster. A follow-up to the author's previous work, *The German Way of War* (Lawrence, Kans., 2005), *Death of the Wehrmacht* tests the hypothesis that Citino advanced in *The German Way of War* against the critical events of 1942. In *Death of the Wehrmacht*, Citino uses German operations in 1942 to highlight how the German fixation on operational success failed the *Wehrmacht* in a war that demanded a wider range of capabilities.

Citino believes that, over the course of three hundred years, German military thinking developed a particular set of ideas about war. Generally fighting wars against stronger, more numerous enemies, the military culture born in the Prussian electorate developed the concept of *Bewegungskrieg*, or war of movement, as the ideal. *Bewegungskrieg* allowed the commander to employ various methods in pursuit of victory—constant attack, concentric maneuver

by separate forces, and independent action by subordinate commanders—as the solutions to Prussian and, later, German geographic and material weaknesses. Wars, on this model, were to be “short and lively,” rapidly destroying Germany's enemies in decisive battles of encirclement. Logistics, intelligence, and industrial mobilization, among other possible critical aspects of war, were, according to the author, all subordinate and, in fact, almost irrelevant to fighting war on the German model. A maneuver scheme that assailed a vulnerable flank, preferably trapping and destroying a large portion of the enemy army, led inevitably to final victory.

Citino begins *Death of the Wehrmacht* by setting the stage for the dramatic events of his climactic year. He reviews the initial German successes of 1941 and the ultimate German defeat in front of the spires of Moscow. Having effectively set the stage and reminded readers of the challenges that the *Wehrmacht* confronted in early 1942, the author recounts the striking victories that German armies won in the first half of the year. Recovering from the shock of failing to defeat the Soviet Union in 1941 and its near collapse during the winter of 1941–1942, the German Army restored its confidence by a series of dramatic victories during the spring of 1942. The *Wehrmacht* seized the Crimean peninsula and encircled and annihilated Soviet forces with a counterattack that seized Kharkov. Citino clearly shows that, in the right circumstances, the *Wehrmacht* retained the ability to deliver a devastating operational defeat to its enemies.

However, these operations are merely the prelude to the heart of Citino's analytic narrative. For the author, 1942 was crucial because it was the last realistic chance that Germany had to emerge victorious from World War II. The twin German defeats in that year at El Alamein and Stalingrad highlight the limits of the German habit of seeking operational, maneuver-oriented solutions to all military problems. Most of Citino's energy in *Death of the Wehrmacht* is therefore devoted to an operational analysis of Erwin Rommel's campaign against the British in North Africa and Operation *BLUE*, the German attempt to seize both the Caucasus and Stalin-

grad. The sections devoted to Rommel are effective; despite the well-known history, it is still startling to contemplate what Rommel's daring and the *Afrika Korps*' operational excellence were able to achieve against an enemy with such overwhelming material superiority. The analysis of Operation *BLUE*, however, is the best part of the book. The author demonstrates the failure of *BLUE* in nearly all respects.

During *BLUE*, the *Wehrmacht* seized only one of its primary objectives, the city of Maikop in the northern Caucasus. It failed to encircle any significant Soviet forces and changed the main effort of the offensive on the run, without a clear understanding of why seizing Stalingrad was essential. Perhaps most damning for the German grasp of the operational art, the forces involved in *BLUE* moved farther and farther apart from each other as the operation progressed, instead of converging on a common objective. In the end, Citino illustrates how the campaign succeeded in conquering large amounts of territory, inducing momentary panic in Soviet forces, but failed to achieve any decisive result. By autumn 1942, the *Wehrmacht* found itself overextended, logistically starved, and dependent on underequipped allies to secure long, vulnerable flanks. Conscious of the danger of either stopping or retreating, German forces continued to attack with whatever strength they could muster, hoping that the Red Army was as exhausted as they were. That hope proved to be in vain. The disaster at Stalingrad was the inevitable result.

It has frequently been argued that Hitler's meddling deprived German commanders of the operational freedom they were accustomed to and hastened defeat. Citino shows convincingly, however, that by the end of 1942 the traditional German method of war, based on nearly limitless autonomy for subordinate commanders, was no longer feasible. By that point the *Wehrmacht* was fighting a defensive war with limited resources that had to be closely safeguarded. The risk associated with allowing subordinate commanders to exercise the extreme German version of initiative he describes was no longer acceptable. At the same time that the author proves the failure

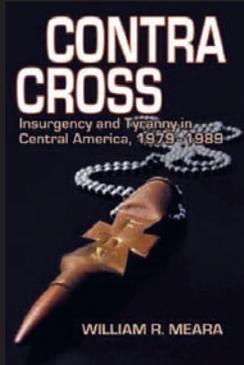
of German methods in 1942, he also suggests that Germany confronted an unexpected problem in the form of Soviet manpower reserves reinforced with massive industrial mobilization. This failing illuminates the strength of cultural preconceptions. World War I had clearly displayed, for those German officers who cared to learn, the potential effects of industrialized war. Yet, blinded by previous victories and convinced that its traditions almost always yielded victory, the *Wehrmacht* followed the illusion of decisive victory by means of operational maneuver to its ultimate destruction.

*Death of the Wehrmacht* is among the best operational histories available. At the same time, the near exclusive focus on operational maneuver occasionally makes Citino's rendering of the war in the East a curiously bloodless affair. The book would have benefited from greater acknowledgment of the ideological or racial nature of the campaigns analyzed. Nevertheless, it is a superb analysis of both the strengths and weaknesses of a unique military culture. It should remind the professional military reader of the dangers of orthodoxy and the necessity of acknowledging cultural preconceptions. Solutions well adapted to a particular set of circumstances will not work everywhere, and a failure to recognize the unique challenges of a new situation frequently leads to defeat.

**Maj. Mark Olsen** is currently serving with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3d Infantry Division. He completed intermediate-level education at the French Joint Staff College in 2009 and previously served as a military history instructor at the United States Military Academy. He is completing a Ph.D. in history at Rice University on the adaptation of European military theory to colonial North America.



*Contra Cross: Insurgency and Tyranny in Central America, 1979–1989*



By William R. Meara  
Naval Institute Press, 2006  
Pp. xiv, 168. \$26.95

Review by John Mini

William R. Meara's *Contra Cross* offers firsthand insight into the controversial decade-long effort to influence the political future of Central America. Unlike many historians, Meara is proud of the Reagan administration's efforts to defeat communism in Central America. His work provides a convincing argument that the administration's efforts were quite effective. On the other hand, the book gives some compelling reasons why the United States remains largely unprepared to combat insurgencies. Given its contention and perspective, *Contra Cross* is particularly relevant to those developing or questioning the Army's current counterinsurgency doctrine.

Despite the encompassing subtitle, *Contra Cross* is not a political history; it is a memoir account of an individual doing his part to implement U.S. policies on the ground in Central America. Meara proves eminently qualified to author such an account. He served as one of the fifty-five U.S. advisers to El Salvador throughout the 1980s. He saw both sides of counterinsurgency warfare—suppressing a Communist insurgency in El Salvador and supporting the Contra insurgency in Nicaragua. He worked as both a Special Forces soldier and a member of the U.S. Foreign Service. Fluent in the local dialect, he struggled and succeeded in becoming an outsider trusted by

his Central American allies—able, in his own words, to “curse like a contra.” The book offers little insight into the high-stakes politics that often surrounded U.S. policy in Central America—Iran-Contra appears only in passing. *Contra Cross* instead offers a unique first-person perspective from one of the most qualified operators executing the Reagan administration’s anti-Communist fight in Central America.

The early chapters of the book set the stage for Meara’s later experiences. The author’s account begins with his 1979 efforts as a volunteer in a missionary school in Guatemala. It was here that Meara first understood the vital importance of immersing oneself in the culture of a foreign land—a point that he reiterates throughout the work. His visit to Nicaragua soon after the installation of the leftist Sandinista government also proved to be a formative experience. Although this takeover was often heralded as a “people’s revolution” in the United States, the author instead provides a more ominous assessment: “In place of the promised respect for free expression, I found people intimidated into silent conformity. . . . Where I looked for nationalist revolution, I found the hallmarks of Soviet manipulation” (p. 10). Through these early experiences, Meara encapsulated his view of Central America—communism was indeed an “evil empire” and to fight it one would have to understand the culture of the region.

The middle chapters of *Contra Cross* recount the author’s service in 1982–1987 as a Special Forces soldier both in training and in El Salvador. Here Meara offers some of his most critical appraisals of the Army. He often points out the differences between Special Forces and the conventional Army, whose leaders he felt were obsessed with fighting an unlikely large-scale battle against the Soviets. One of the most salient and effective examples of this was a Regular Army colonel transposing the familiar “Fulda Gap” of West Germany upon the unfamiliar circumstances of insurgent warfare in Central America by ordering his soldiers to build an antitank ditch

across a small gap in the dense jungle. The author voices contempt for the “Milicrats” and “Army bureaucratic puritanism” that seemed to dominate so many aspects of his advisory role within the country. Despite these complaints, he also goes to great length to explain that the U.S. military forces in El Salvador were not complicit in human rights abuses—and in fact did much to change the attitude of the Salvadorian military in this regard. Thus, while Meara found his time in the military frustrating, he clearly saw value in the American military role in El Salvador.

More than half of *Contra Cross* describes the author’s duty as a Foreign Service officer during 1988 and 1989. His primary assignment was as the assistant to the U.S. ambassador in Honduras, where he served as a liaison officer to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance—the Contras. Meara truly believed in the Contra cause. He paints a portrait of an indigenous people almost religiously dedicated to the struggle against communism, which is symbolized by the crosses made from M16 cartridges that most of the rebels wore around their necks: the Contra Cross. Meara felt most setbacks experienced by the Contras were at the higher levels of politics, specifically with the inability of the U.S. government to shape the group’s often corrupt political leadership. He is especially critical of the first Bush administration’s treatment of the Contras, strongly believing that the administration—more concerned with domestic politics than doing what was right—abandoned these dedicated freedom fighters. Overall, however, Meara assesses U.S. involvement in Central America during this time period as an important Cold War victory.

Supporters and opponents of the current trend toward stressing counterinsurgency doctrine within the Army will each find backing within Meara’s work. The author touts the importance of language fluency, cultural immersion, and regional expertise, all of which are currently emphasized not only in the curriculum for future Army officers at West Point but also in the Army as a whole. His

biting criticism of an army too focused on big, conventional operations will ring true with many. Opponents of the current trends in Army doctrine may likewise find ammunition in Meara’s account. The author clearly felt that, at least in Central America, fighting an insurgency was best left to the natives with the U.S. military playing only a small advisory role. At times it also seems that Meara’s recommendations are a bit parochial—he was a product of Special Forces and the Foreign Service and feels that the military would be best modeled after these groups. Many would argue that the Regular Army cannot and will never reach this end state given its composition and resources. Regardless which side of the argument one takes on the current path of the Army, one can collect much fuel for debate from William Meara’s excellent work on the insurgencies in Central America.

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*Continued from page 3*

outdoor staff ride as an innovative teaching tool, primarily at the tactical level, is well-established and is sometimes emulated in academia—universities recognize that the jam-packed Left Bank neighborhoods between the Boulevard St. Germain and the Seine offer an ideal setting for understanding revolutionary France—the application of electronics to history and museum products is still in its infancy. Here I am talking about more than just digitizing paper products for our growing Web-based personal computer systems or even for portable computers, readers, and audio players. I want to go beyond what is called programmed learning, the increased use of multi-dimensional cartographic aids and other supporting material in the classroom, and the application of electronic or video support to our existing museum exhibits.

Instead, I am looking at ever more sophisticated historical Web sites, increasingly complex exportable historical products, and advanced teaching and exhibit programs that take advantage of the Army's growing electronic communications capabilities to better integrate all elements of historical information and educational media. We are beginning to see such potential realized in the technologically enhanced historic case studies used today at the Army's Command

and General Staff College and other Army schools and in the more advanced personal computer-based and commercially produced historical simulations with which the headquarters of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command is currently experimenting. With this in mind, I would propose that our next conference of Army historians—now scheduled for the summer of 2011—solicit presentations and demonstrations of such new products and uses of electronic and other sophisticated media, both from our own school system and from the academic and commercial worlds as well. I know from attending recent museum symposia that the advanced techniques being developed for historical exhibits are truly amazing, and I expect that the same may soon be true for the rest of the historical profession as well. Our challenge will be to attract the right mix of presenters and then be prepared to analyze and capitalize on what they demonstrate, both necessary outcomes if we expect to remain on that leading edge of history—at its core an interpretative skill rather than a chronographic one—and prosper from its innovative energy.



## ARMY HISTORY

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# THE CHIEF HISTORIAN'S FOOTNOTE

DR. RICHARD W. STEWART



## Commemoration, the Center, and Command Historians

The Histories Division of the Center has recently unveiled and staffed a new entity, a commemoration team. Formed within the division's Contemporary History Branch, this team will fill a need in the Center and the Army for a permanent historical staff dedicated to help in the remembrance of major milestones in the history of our Army and our nation. The team will coordinate the production of historical pamphlets, maps, posters, and other items for future commemorations. It will also provide the Center's representatives at meetings of Department of the Army and Department of Defense (DoD) officials assigned to develop policies in this sphere and to review historical products that other organizations prepare to minimize the possibility of embarrassing historical errors being released in official DoD publications. Commemorations are, by their very nature, exercises in remembering the past—or, more specifically, the “usable past,” the past that people or organizations want to remember—and thus Center and command historians have a vital role to play in such events.

The concept of the commemoration team evolved from the Center's experience responding to Army requests to produce publications such as campaign brochures to mark the 50th anniversaries of World War II and the Korean War. Last-minute decisions by official commemorative bodies resulted in the hurried production of dozens of campaign brochures and other products and seriously disrupted for months the Center's management and planned flow of writing. A more calculated approach to this process occurred in 1999, when the Center was instrumental in forming the Lewis and Clark Executive Council and Advisory Council to oversee efforts to mark the bicentennial of the important events surrounding that expedition. The Center hired additional personnel, coordinated the generation of a number of important historical items, and supported the Army as it assumed the lead in fifteen Lewis and Clark events of national significance and a host of lesser activities. With only limited

resources, a lot of work, and a modicum of foresight, the Center helped the Army achieve its goals on this occasion with little disruption to the Center's ongoing historical writing projects. As a result of that experience, in 2006 the Center wrote a concept plan for a permanent commemorative cell to ensure that the Army and the Center would be prepared for future milestone events.

The need for a permanent capability to provide historical support for commemorative activities continues to be apparent. While the team concept was slowly progressing through the approval process, Center historians noted the appearance in Congress of a number of bills that would require DoD to develop plans to mark the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War (starting in 2014 and lasting until 2025), the 100th anniversary of World War I (2017–2019), the bicentennial of the War of 1812 (2012–2015), and the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War (2011–2015). In addition, the Center has already this year begun work on the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Korean War and the 20th anniversary of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM (2010 and 2011—and yes, it has been 20 years!). All of these occasions will probably have major DoD involvement and require, from our perspective, some measure of advance planning so that we in the Center can produce historical pamphlets, maps, posters, etc., in a timely fashion. Having created a permanent team, we have now begun to draft a long-term plan for generating such products.

How do these commemorative events relate to our command historians in the field? Well, at the least, historians should be aware of these commemorations and of the high-level visibility they often enjoy at DoD. Beyond that, commands will likely ask their historians to produce historical studies for these occasions like those distributed throughout the Army for the 50th anniversary of World War II. So, forewarned is forearmed! These events are coming; prepare for them. I recommend that, rather than look on these

remembrances as a distraction from your “real” work of preparing those annual historical reports or contingency operations studies, you consider these occasions as opportunities. These events could give you the chance to offer a variety of products to your commands and thus show them the broad range of your talents. Through advance planning, command historians can use these events to magnify their visibility within their organizations (which often have to be hit on the head to recognize the importance and relevance of history!). In short, anniversaries should be seen as a chance to improve a command historical program and not as an annoyance. Use this chance.

As the Center’s commemoration team matures and becomes more heavily engaged in the many observances

anticipated over the next ten years, I hope that you will contact team members in the Histories Division. Perhaps they can suggest existing historical products that you can give to your command or tailor to fit your command’s needs. This can provide visibility for your program with little cost. Commemorations can give us the chance to prove the value of historical memory to today’s soldiers and leaders. They are an important part of our heritage function and contribute to unit and individual morale and esprit de corps. I urge you to take advantage of those opportunities.



## ARMY HISTORY

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