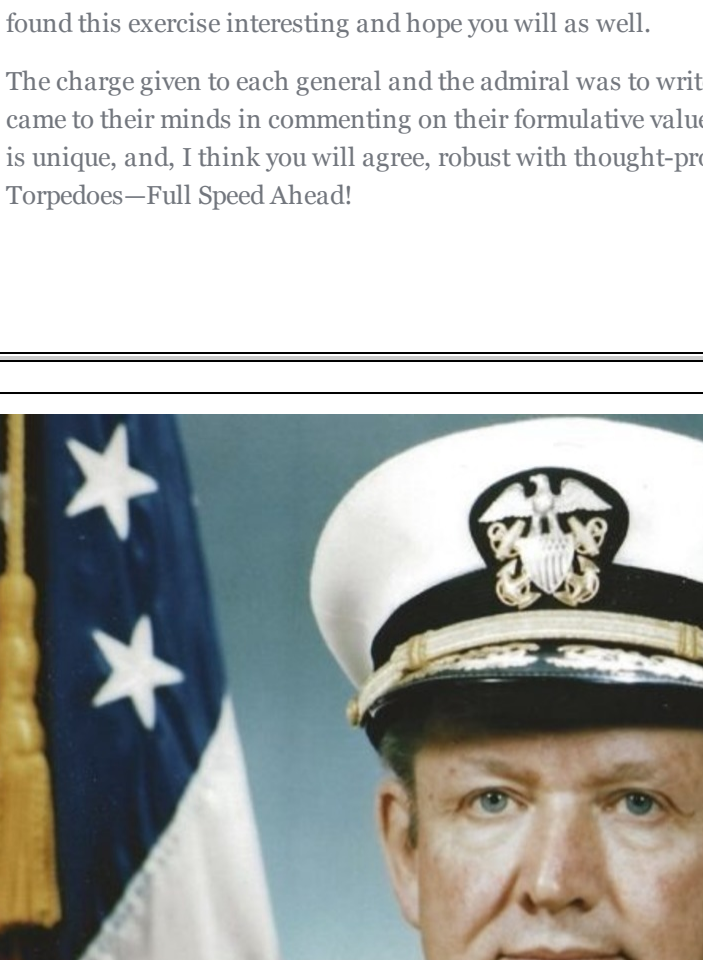


In Camp Along the Monocacy



From Blue and Gray Education Society Headquarters in Chatham, Virginia
Vol. 4 Issue 5 October-November 2020 Editor: Len Riedel



Editor and BGES Executive Director Len Riedel

Welcome to my third newsletter entitled "Generally Speaking." BGES is an education organization blessed with a wide range of leaders with diverse experiences. I thought you might enjoy what I have enjoyed for some time, and that is the thoughts of some learned and successful leaders. I have asked five retired flag/general officers who are BGES members to opine on life as a general or admiral, paying particular attention to core values that guided and enriched their experience in leadership. We have provided you with a Naval Academy graduate and retired Vice Admiral (3 Stars) who commanded the U.S. 4th Fleet and Naval Training Command; an Army Major General (2 Stars) from the Army Corps of Engineers; a Major General from the U.S. Army Reserves who commanded at Fort Drum; an Army Brigadier General who was the head of the U.S. Military History Center; and a National Guard Brigadier General who founded the Regional Counter Drug Academy and held command responsibilities during his active duty career in artillery.

My academic training helped formulate my methodology for structuring the BGES—with a master's in history with an emphasis in policy and strategy and as a 20-plus-year member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, whose mentor was former Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger, I have long been interested in the interrelationship between military and civilian leadership and the impact it had on military operations and success. While I have discussed this one-on-one and in forums with several of these leaders and with BGES members on study tours, I found this exercise interesting and hope you will as well.

The charge given to each general and the admiral was to write without notes on the first items that came to their minds in commenting on their formative values and where they came from. Each is unique, and, I think you will agree, robust with thought-provoking insights. So let us Damn the Torpedoes—Full Speed Ahead!

—Len



Vice Admiral James A. Sagerholm, USN (Ret.) | courtesy of the author

Stars

By Vice Admiral James A. Sagerholm, USN (Ret.)

A question often heard from cadets and midshipmen is "How does one make flag rank?" The next question heard frequently is "What defines a leader?" From my perspective, the second question should be the only question, for reasons that will be apparent from the discourse that follows.

Every person in the armed services should aspire to eventually be a leader. If that can be accomplished, and all else being equal, promotions will follow. Of course, there is always the element of fate, or luck, or whatever one wishes to call intervening events over which one has no control. However, one mark of a leader is the ability to adapt to such events and make the best of a situation.

An officer who meets the criteria of what I believe mark a true leader was David Glasgow Farragut. His service in the Navy began at age nine with his appointment as a midshipman and ended with his death in 1870 in the rank of admiral, a total of 60 years of active duty. Throughout those years, Farragut focused his skills and efforts on doing his very best in any task assigned, regardless of how menial it might appear. His personal integrity was never questioned; his only ambition was to be a faithful and loyal naval officer. When faced with adversity, he met each challenge with a positive attitude, persevering until he succeeded in attaining the objective. In combat, Farragut displayed a brave disregard of the danger from shot and shell and clearly evinced the confident attitude of a leader who held no doubts about attaining victory.

A crew quickly assesses a commanding officer and will discern whether an officer can be trusted to lead them. An officer with the characteristics of Farragut who also clearly is concerned for the welfare of his crew, who visits the various corners of his command with sufficient frequency to make himself known to his crew and to be conversant with their work, who is competent and knowledgeable, and who is genuinely willing to listen to their suggestions and act upon them, that officer will have no problem in motivating his crew to follow him, because they will trust and respect him as their leader.

The foregoing notwithstanding, I am convinced that, while leadership techniques can be taught, they do not transform an individual into something he is not. We are each born with certain talents that define us and that largely determine what we do in life. In that sense, no one is born equal to everyone else. Some are born with abilities that others may aspire to but cannot attain simply due to a lack of talent. In my own life (and I hope this is not seen as boasting, because I had no hand in determining the gifts I received at birth), I have always been a leader of any group in which I was integral, be it a childhood game or an adult entity. When I was in the eighth grade in a small parochial school in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, I was entered by my school in the local American Legion contest for the boy who best represented American principles; after a series of interviews, I was chosen as best prospect for a leader. At the time, I did not really understand the significance of it.

My family moved to Baltimore in 1942, and I enrolled as a freshman in the Advanced College Prep Course at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (BPI), an all-boys engineering high school deemed among the top three in the U.S., the others being in Brooklyn and Boston. The Student Advisory Board (SAB) was the student governing body and consisted of three elected representatives of the senior and junior classes and an appointed member from the sophomore class. The president was a senior elected separately. I was appointed to be the sophomore representative based on the recommendations from the faculty. My senior year, I was elected president of the SAB.

During my senior year at BPI, the city of Baltimore instituted a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) to advise the mayor on problems giving rise to juvenile petty crimes, etc. Each public and private high school was asked to provide a senior to serve on the YAB. I was BPI's choice. Once assembled at City Hall, we were asked to elect officers, and I was nominated for and elected President of the YAB.

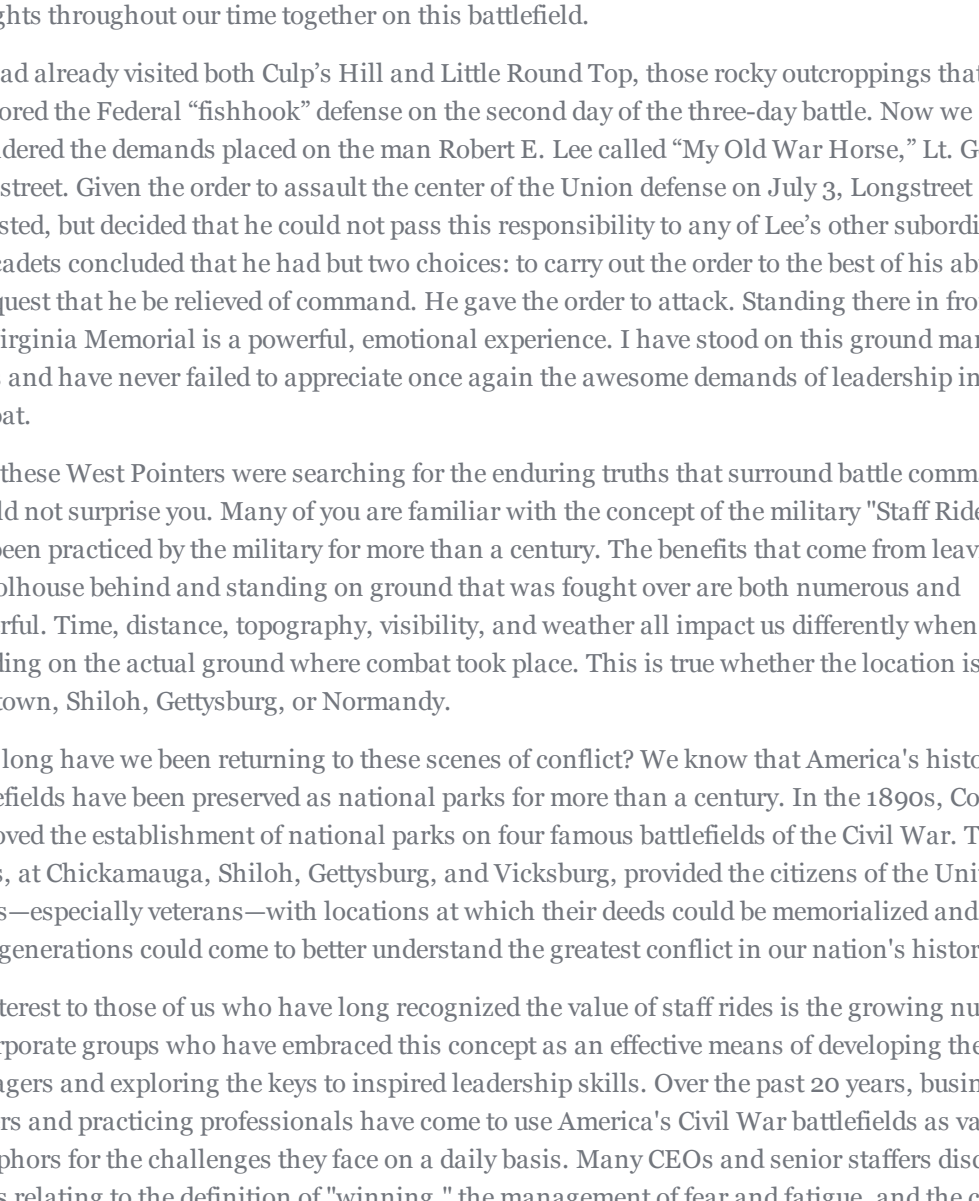
I had set my sights on the naval service after a trip to the Naval Academy, but when I applied for a nomination, both senators as well as the Congressman for my district had no appointments available for 1948. Rather than wait, I enlisted and was sent to the recruit training center at Bainbridge, Maryland. At our boot camp training graduation, I was named the Honor Man for Company 4638.

In 1948, I received an appointment to the Naval Academy from the Secretary of the Navy for the class of 1952. I became class president and Brigade Commander.

I have cited these as examples of a gift which I had from birth, a gift of which I had no hand in developing, a gift that continued to manifest itself throughout my naval service. I am also aware that fate, for whatever reasons, has been very kind to me. For example, during my three years in command of a ballistic missile submarine, I held not one single disciplinary hearing, called "Captain's Mast" in the Navy, bearing witness to the excellence of the crew that I was privileged to command.

By now, it should be clear that I see leaders as the sort who have that extra trait that is the special mark of a true leader, as persons who were born with it. It is that indefinable something that cannot be learned or instilled. It is true that one can learn from one's own mistakes as well as the mistakes of others, but that in and of itself does not make a leader; it makes a good administrator.

Vice Admiral Jim Sagerholm, USN, is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, the Retired Chief of Naval Education and Training, and the former commander of the South Atlantic Force, which is now the U.S. Fourth Fleet.



Major General Merdith W. B. Temple | U.S. Army

General Officers and the Civil War

By Major General Merdith W. B. "Bo" Temple (Ret.)

A General Officer of any era must display a number of characteristics such as leadership, courage, and commitment, while demonstrating an ability to remain calm in a crisis. However, I would like to focus on three characteristics that I believe best predict success as a General Officer. First, vision; Second, commander's intent; Third, ability to visualize and adjust to dynamic situations.

Vision. A General Officer must have the ability to visualize what he intends to do and what he thinks the enemy will do. This will allow him to war-game various scenarios, with his staff and commanders, that may unfold during a campaign or operation. Once his vision is formulated, he must communicate clearly to his subordinates what that vision is and how they fit in that picture. During the Civil War, a general normally was able to personally convey his thoughts to his command face to face. This is important, as body language and verbal emphasis is best received personally.

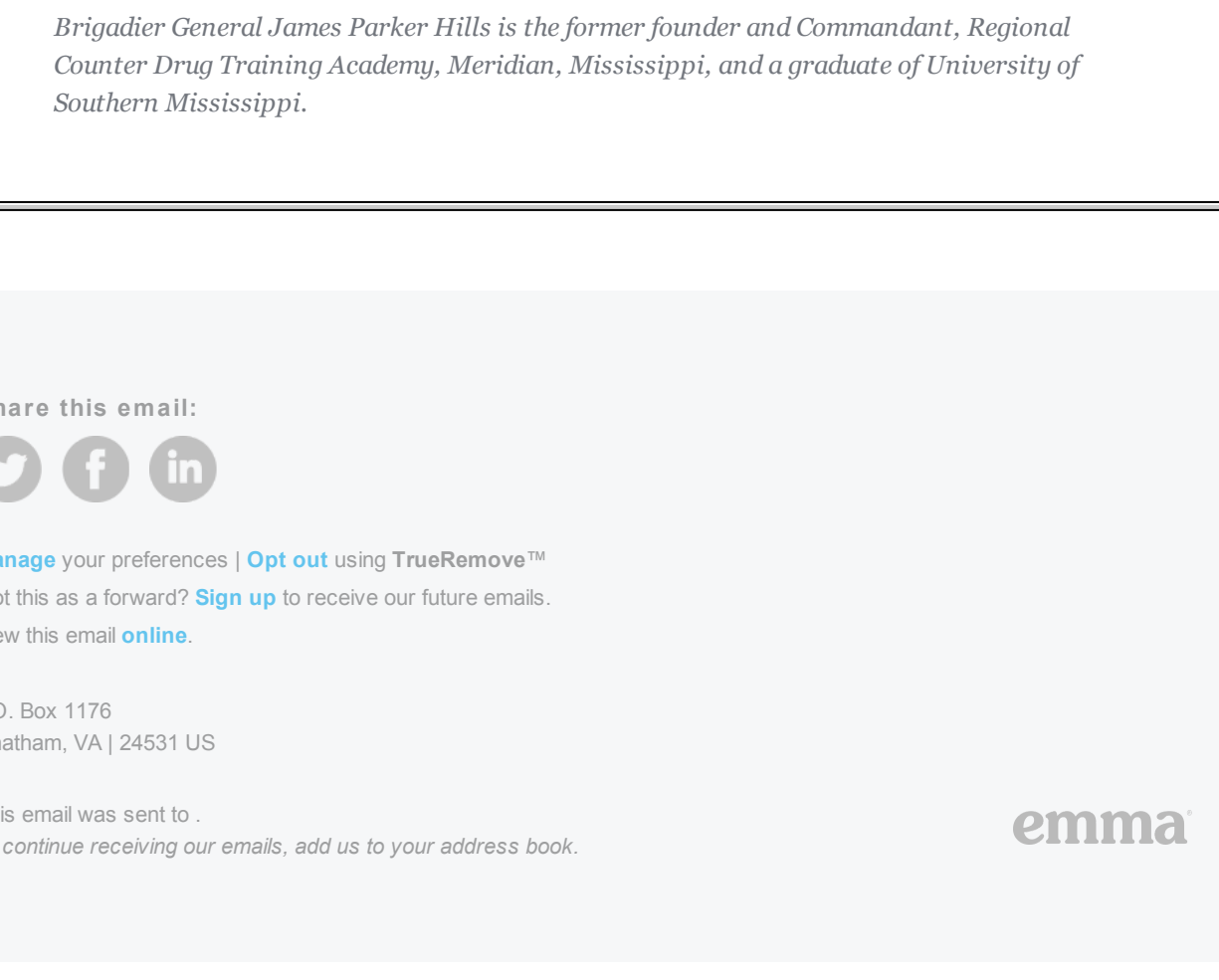
Commander's Intent. Before a General Officer starts to formulate his vision, he must understand his and/or the Commanding General's vision. He has to shape his vision to support that of the CG. To do this, he must spend the time necessary to ask questions and discuss the CG's vision in a way that helps him to shape his. Of course his vision must comport with the CG's, so clarity of understanding and how his unit fits into the overall scheme of operation is key to building a cohesive plan against the enemy. The CG will no doubt lead a discussion of the pros and cons of his plan and war-game possibilities with his subordinate commanders. A General Officer must remain cognizant of the CG's leadership style and whether he keeps a loose or a tight rein on his subordinates. Clear communications are a must to reduce any ambiguity.

Ability to Visualize and Adjust to Dynamic Situations. Visualization during battle and an ability to adjust to the situation at hand are key characteristics of a successful General Officer. Once an engagement starts, the plan is often overcome by reality. The General Officer must remain calm under fire and understand what is happening versus what was planned for. He must be able to adjust his plan to include what he might do to exploit a rapid or unexpected success to its fullest extent. For less fortunate circumstances, he must have sufficient reserves to overcome those situations as well. All of this was difficult during the Civil War because the general's span of control, ability to "see the battlefield," and ability to adjust were hampered by the smoke, noise, and overall confusion of close combat.

There are many examples of this kind of thinking during the Civil War, including Lee at Chancellorsville and Grant at Vicksburg. Negative examples include Pickett at the end of the Petersburg campaign and McClellan during the 1862 Richmond campaign (in the latter case failure to adjust was a big fault).

The common threads of generalship are clear communications and remaining cool under fire in order to adjust to the situation at hand. These are characteristics that were common from Alexander the Great's campaigns through the Civil War and into modern times. Thinking carefully, communicating clearly, and acting decisively are a must for a General Officer in any age.

Major General Merdith W. B. "Bo" Temple is a graduate of Virginia Military Institute and former Acting Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the 307th Engineering Battalion.



Robert E. Lee, a typical Type B personality | LOC

Essence of Civil War Leadership

By Major General William Terpeluk (Ret.)

Generalship displays many qualities. Often personality-driven, soft-skill qualities can make the difference between a successful, even brilliant general, and one recorded by posterity as a dismal failure. Except for senior officers attaining their status through some sort of patronage, those who advanced up the officer ranks undoubtedly share many of the same traits and competencies. Nations must select their senior military leadership wisely, and this has certainly been a major focus of the U.S. Armed Forces. So then, it is very appropriate to take an introspective look at those individual factors that produce those who rise to the highest ranks, especially in time of war.

Generalship derives from leadership. Military leadership takes on a significance of its own, especially considering the consequences of failure. Further, the three distinct levels of warfare—tactical, operational, and strategic—also require another set of expert skills. Ironically, though, in many cases, this process may often actually involve unlearning certain behavioral traits and transforming one's temperament.

Attending the U.S. Army War College as an Army Reserve officer, I participated in an elective course that analyzed the "Type A" behavior characterizing the aggressive, driven, results-oriented leader. The premise of the course was to suggest leaders should adapt to a "Type B" personality, often viewed as a pejorative. Indeed, the intense focus of a Type A can easily be a hindrance as it pertains to grasping the "big picture." George C. Marshall and Dwight D. Eisenhower modeled classic Type B personalities, and their military accomplishments have seldom been eclipsed in modern history. The Type B personality, despite its stereotype, also decidedly does NOT entail a lack of aggressiveness or assertiveness. This context allows us to better understand and appreciate Generalship in the American Civil War among a selection of those who commanded at the corps level and above.

Many Civil War generals excelled at the tactical level, but were mediocre at the operational level. A. P. Hill, Richard Ewell, and, to some extent, Jeb Stuart are but a few like this. There are those who were extremely, or sufficiently, competent at the operational level but could not grasp a broader strategic overview. These include Stonewall Jackson, James Longstreet, George Meade, George Thomas, and perhaps Joe Johnston. This despite the latter two who exhibited a classic Type B personality. All that said, when you think of Civil War generals, Robert E. Lee, William T. Sherman, and Ulysses S. Grant come to mind. This is no coincidence, when considering their very unique combination of personality type, vision, and strategic ability.

Lee fits the description of a Type B personality. Despite this evaluation, there is no doubt of his ability to very decisively act or react. The one major instance in which he displayed Type A behavior was during the Battle of Gettysburg. It did not serve him well, as his impetuosity at that critical time, whatever the underlying cause, culminated in the disaster of Pickett's Charge. Lee's operational and strategic ability allowed the Army of Northern Virginia to hold off superior Union forces for the better part of three years. However, there is also the concept of Grand Strategy. Since Lee only became the Confederate general-in-chief very late in the war, it is difficult to evaluate him on that score.

It is almost a false analogy to mention Sherman and Grant in the same narrative. Then again, their command styles and thought patterns intertwined and forged a partnership that became a true tour-de-force. Sherman's personality is most likely too complex to analyze in this regard, but his vision of the nature of Total War was beyond any doubt. Grant's contribution, forged by the underlying strength of his Type B personality, was his deep understanding of Grand Strategy. His professional skill set, as well as his basic humility, served him well at every echelon of command. Grant became not only the quintessential general of the Civil War, but he certainly ranks high within the pantheon of the United States military.

Pop culture has had a tendency to largely portray generals as one-dimensional Type A caricatures, usually brash, completely direct, and unable to recognize or process conflicting information. The reality could not be further from the truth. The most successful generals have been those with a Type B temperament to analyze their operating environment and move well beyond their previous notions. A proper description of senior leadership traits includes the ability to devise and articulate a strategic vision. The key to facilitating that ability is the requisite personality type, whether innate or developed. In particular, the most effective Civil War military leaders have been, and will always be, the best examples for future generations of leaders to emulate.

Major General William "Bill" Terpeluk, a graduate of Virginia Military Institute, is the former Commander of U.S. Readiness Command, Fort Drum, New York.

Brig. Gen. Jack Mountcastle with West Point cadets | courtesy of the author

Leadership ... When Lives are on the Line

By Brigadier General Jack Mountcastle

Spring had come again to Gettysburg. On a sunny day in late May, our group of young men and women, all first class cadets at West Point, stood among General Lee's Confederate cannon and looked across a mile of open ground between our position and the center of the Union defensive line on Cemetery Ridge. Their energetic chatter dwindled as we stared across the killing ground where George Pickett's Virginia division was shattered on the afternoon of July 3, 1863. Within a few weeks, the cadets would be commissioned as Second Lieutenants in the U.S. Army. They all expected to lead troops in combat.

Accompanied by senior Army officers (both active duty and retired), the cadets had spent two days on the great battleground, with their intellect and energies focused on learning all they could from those soldiers who had gone before. They came to the Gettysburg National Military Park to consider the timeless nature of the challenges commanders face when confronted with uncertainty, stress, danger, and fatigue. On the verge of taking up their duties of leading America's sons and daughters in uniform, they had nearly completed their studies in a class on "Officership" at West Point. Now they were culminating their academic experience by using the battleground as a great outdoor seminar. They talked about leadership ... when lives are on the line.

As the Army's former Chief of Military History, it was both an honor and a pleasure for me to be invited by Gen. Fred Franks, my former division commander and Seventh Corps commander, to participate for a number of years in this annual "Battle Command" staff ride at Gettysburg. Holding an endowed chair in the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic at West Point, General Franks inspired and challenged his cadet students to ask questions and share their thoughts throughout our time together on this battlefield.

We had already visited both Culp's Hill and Little Round Top, those rocky outcroppings that anchored the Federal "fishhook" defense on the second day of the three-day battle. Now we considered the demands placed on the man Robert E. Lee called "My Old War Horse," Lt. Gen. Longstreet. Given the order to assault the center of the Union defense on July 3, Longstreet protested, but decided that he could not pass this responsibility to any of Lee's other subordinates. The cadets concluded that he had but two choices: to carry out the order to the best of his ability or to request that he be relieved of command. He gave the order to stand. Standing there in front of the Virginia Memorial is a powerful, emotional experience. I have stood on this ground many times and have never failed to appreciate once again the awesome demands of leadership in combat.

That these West Pointers were searching for the enduring truths that surround battle command should not surprise you. Many of you are familiar with the concept of the military "Staff Ride" that has been practiced by the military for more than a century. The benefits that come from leaving the schoolhouse behind and standing on ground that was fought over are both numerous and powerful. Time, distance, topography, visibility, and weather all impact us differently when we are standing on the actual ground where combat took place. This is true whether the location is Yorktown, Shiloh, Gettysburg, or Normandy.

How long have we been returning to these scenes of conflict? We know that America's historic battlefields have been preserved as national parks for more than a century. In the 1890s, Congress approved the establishment of national parks on four famous battlefields of the Civil War. These parks, at Chickamauga, Shiloh, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg, provided the citizens of the United States—especially veterans—with locations at which their deeds could be memorialized and where later generations could come to better understand the greatest conflict in our nation's history.

Of interest to those of us who have long recognized the value of staff rides is the growing number of corporate groups who have embraced this concept as an effective means of developing their managers and exploring the keys to inspired leadership skills. Over the past 20 years, business leaders and practicing professionals have come to use America's Civil War battlefields as valuable metaphors for the challenges they face on a daily basis. Many CEOs and senior staffers discuss topics relating to the definition of "winning," the management of fear and fatigue, and the critical importance of providing models for ethical behavior. At Gettysburg, for example, they can look to the organizational changes Lee had to make in his army after the death of Stonewall Jackson. They can discuss the stress endured by George Meade when he was promoted to "CEO" of the Army of the Potomac just days before being locked in battle with Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Assisted by talented guides and facilitators, corporate groups are learning lessons that they can apply to their modern-day battles for market share.

The fact that we still have access to these hallowed fields and forests is a great gift. And this is due to the foresight of our forebears, the maintenance of these national treasures by our government, and, increasingly, by the selfless work of non-profit preservation organizations like the American Battlefield Trust. The Trust has preserved thousands of acres of historically significant ground at battlefields throughout the United States. Likewise, we can all be thankful that the Blue and Gray Education Society provides the opportunity to visit this hallowed ground.

As you can see from the photo above of West Point cadets, the hallowed ground of Gettysburg can still provide lessons that are essential to the maintenance of our nation and our democracy.

Brigadier General John "Jack" Mountcastle obtained his B.A. from Virginia Military Institute and Ph.D. from Duke University; he is the former Commander of the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

Parker Hills on the battlefield | courtesy of the author

Battlefields for Training Leaders

By Brigadier General James Parker Hills

Over three decades ago, I added a slide to my military leadership presentations before I took the training to the field. The slide included a quote from Gen. William C. Westmoreland: "The military don't start wars. The politicians start wars." I then elaborated with a familiar, but often misquoted, quote from Gen. Karl von Clausewitz: "War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means. The political view is the object, war is the means, and the means must always include the object."

Why add this slide to my presentations? I wanted my audience to understand that we were soldiers, not politicians. As soldiers our profession dealt with strategy, the operational art, and tactics. Politics dictated the strategy, but our job as soldiers was to implement that strategy, not to question it.

My duty as an officer was not only to lead soldiers, but to train other soldiers to lead. My task as a trainer was to use the most effective and realistic methods of training possible within the boundaries of safety. I used firing ranges for weapons training, and I used battlefields for leadership training.

Once I became a senior officer, I often found myself being confronted by a serious training distraction. I would be asked to discuss and often justify the politics behind the strategy. Although it was sometimes tempting to become engaged in that kind of dialogue, discussing politics was a challenge that I simply could not accept. Now, an officer does need to understand the politics that drive military actions; however, an officer also needs to avoid becoming involved in those politics. We have seen what can happen to soldiers who foolishly dive into the treacherous politics of war.

For several decades, politics have been, and are currently being, argued in regard to the Civil War, especially its leaders. Again, this is not relevant to soldiering and it is not relevant to the training of soldiers. Good soldiering is good soldiering, and I would study Attila the Hun if I thought I could learn from such a study. For well over 30 years I have used the lessons of leaders of the past to train the leaders of tomorrow, and politics were not a consideration.

Why study the lessons and leaders of the Civil War? The simple fact is that Civil War battlefields and campaign trails are readily available and inexpensively accessible. In fact, our national military parks are so named because they were initially established as training grounds for soldiers, and many of our nation's premier military schools include training on Civil War battlefields in their curriculum. The nuts and bolts of it are that Civil War staff rides are cost-effective training.

But, what is a staff ride? In 1906 the General Service and Staff School at Fort Leavenworth initiated a program known as the "staff ride," during which the military students would literally roam the battlefields, often on horseback, while studying the actions of leaders. These actions would be interpreted to convey the lessons of the past to modern leaders, who could then apply them to modern situations. The crisis of World War I brought an abrupt end to staff rides, then finally, in the 1980s this method of training found its way back into Army curriculums.

So, why study the leaders of the past? The answer is that weapons will change, tactics will change, and even the terrain may change, but the one constant in warfare is human nature. A staff ride is not a study of who killed whom with what weapon system; a staff ride is a study of how leaders react under extreme pressure in their attempts to implement strategy, operations, or tactics. It is basically a study in psychology, usually supplemented with lessons of how terrain influences combat. And, in my opinion, the Civil War is one of the last conflicts in which meaningful decisions can be attributed to a single leader, all the kudu being kicked aside. That allows for the introduction of psychology and for meaningful discussions of the offensive spirit.

Now, this needs to be said because we sometimes become technologically crazy. Despite methods that make use of virtual reality, there is no substitute for getting out and walking the ground. A staff ride requires that the students get in the leaders' heads and get out and pound the ground. No amount of reading can take the place of tramping the dirt, and despite the modern tendency to dress casually during a staff ride, I much preferred wearing the combat uniform on the battlefields. I wanted the soldiers to be in spirit, and frankly, I wanted the tourists and park staff to see us training in uniform in national military parks. Many is the time that my staff rides picked up civilians who wanted to hear what we were learning at lecture stops.

For many years, starting in 1987, I led military staff rides, primarily at Brice's Crossroads, for Regular Army and Army National Guard units at the brigade and battalion levels. Brice's Crossroads is almost pristine countryside and is the first battlefield that I have ever found for tactical level training on the use of the Nine Principles of War and the Effects of Terrain. Looking back, I was happy when I was training junior officers and non-commissioned officers at Brice's Crossroads.

In 1989, I was tasked with leading an Army National Guard staff ride of 120 soldiers at Vicksburg National Military Park. That was the beginning of my love affair with the Vicksburg Campaign. It is the finest campaign that I have ever found for training in the strategic and operational levels of war, and I always welcome the opportunity to take senior leaders along the campaign trail to discuss the lessons of this magnificent campaign.

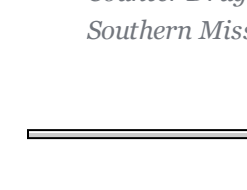
Even after I re-entered active duty in 1991, I took advantage of every opportunity to lead staff rides, ranging from Marines in New Orleans to British officers at Gettysburg. After all, human nature is human nature and training soldiers is not limited to color or nationality of uniform.

A perfect example of using the Civil War for training is Ulysses Grant's understanding of Abraham Lincoln's National Military Strategy in 1863—that is to open the Mississippi River for commerce in order to guarantee the support of the war-wearing "doubting Thomas" states in the Great Northwest and the Northeast. Other generals, some of whom were very close to Grant, could neither see nor understand this strategy. In fact, as Grant and Sherman arrived on the bluffs outside of Vicksburg, Sherman said to Grant: "Until this moment I never thought your expedition a success; I could never see the end clearly till now."

But Grant did understand what he was tasked to accomplish. He did not question the strategy because it was not his to question; he achieved it because it was his duty. That's what real soldiers do. Politicians start wars. Soldiers fight wars.

Brigadier General James Parker Hills is the former founder and Commandant, Regional Counter Drug Training Academy, Meridian, Mississippi, and a graduate of University of Southern Mississippi.

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