

WHAT IF REYNOLDS LIVED AND OTHER UNION WHAT-IFS FOR THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG?

Terrence L. Salada and John D. Wedo

Was the Battle of Gettysburg a Northern victory or a Southern defeat? Did Confederate generals make so many mistakes and did the army lose so many top officers that the Federals fell into an unavoidable victory? Many Southern apologists think so, and they present a long list of such adversities to make their case. Their case is simply that the North won the battle because it was lucky. This paper presents an accounting of similar Union adversities, along with the recorded solutions and shows that the North had its own list of woes and met them head on. Furthermore, analysis of each Union adversity with alternate solutions and their results, as presented in this paper, shows that the Union army won the battle the old fashioned way: they earned it.

The Battle of Gettysburg was fought in 1863. It is perhaps the most studied event in United States history. The Battle of Iwo Jima was fought in 1945. It is perhaps the most famous land battle of the Pacific Theater in World War II. History records that each battle had a definite winner and loser and that both were decisive. The book on Iwo Jima has been closed since 1945: no one argues about it in 2013. But arguments about Gettysburg continue to this day.

Not surprisingly, the Civil War and, in particular, the Battle of Gettysburg, are favorite discussion topics. Speculation about what might have happened is common not only to history, but in other areas such as politics and sports. At its best, thoughtful speculation can shed light on a battle situation and the corresponding decisions made

around that point. This requires detailed study of the situation and not merely biased, arm-waving arguments with no basis and grand conclusions. Although it can thereby enhance understanding, it can never change the result of a battle.

Curiously, all of the famous what-ifs about the Battle of Gettysburg convert the battle from a Confederate defeat to a victory. This might make adherents feel good, but it is quite one-sided. Because of these assertions the battle carries the accretion of 150 years of myth that produced a patina of unsubstantiated conclusions that exists to this day. This paper does not, however, refute directly these conclusions, but rather their underlying assumption, i.e., that in emphasizing their own adversities, Southern apologists overlook Northern adversities. (1) It offers, rather, an indirect challenge to this assumption in the form of Union what-ifs. In other words, if one analyzes what could have changed on the Federal side, does it result in a more convincing Federal victory or were they really just lucky to stumble on a bad day for the Confederates? To do this, it uses contemporary knowledge, hindsight, and comparisons to non-Civil War fields. (The word "adversities" is used in this paper as a collective noun to include both error, i.e., a bad decision, and mishap, i.e., the death of a general.)

This paper compares Civil War actions and persons to those in other wars. This technique is uncommon in Civil War historiography. Notable exceptions are Fletcher Pratt and John Keegan. But it can often help cast new light on Civil War topics and serve to explain them better than in solitude. Although many aficionados think that our civil war was fought in a historical vacuum and is unique among world conflicts with *absolutely* no comparison, the similarities are there if one is both willing to look and accept what they reveal.

Lest any reader consider this attempt pointless, it is no less valid than asserting with *absolute certainty* the action of someone who was dead over eight weeks before the start of the battle in question.

Finally, this discussion of adversities during those three days in 1863 should in no way be inferred as denigrating the enlisted men who were the true unlucky participants not only based on any errors mentioned below but in the battle itself. The record of their bravery and sacrifice can never be diminished.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Unlike Iwo Jima or the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, some Gettysburg historiography discusses alternate histories. This takes the form normally of changing theoretically a particular aspect of the battle and using that change to produce a different result. For instance, one could say, "If the Japanese had more men on Iwo, they would have won." No one believes this, however, because it is historically untenable given the isolation of the Japanese and the overwhelming power of the United States concentrated around the island.

One can still hear today, however, someone state with conviction that if General Robert E. Lee had moved his army to the south and east around the Federal Army of the Potomac (AOP) (per the suggestion of General James Longstreet), the Confederates would have been successful. Every book on the battle discusses this and it receives different levels of credence and approval from different authors.

And what book on the battle omits a discussion about the absence of General Thomas ("Stonewall") Jackson and the decision "he would have made" about taking

Cemetery Hill on July 1? And he was not even there. This is the equivalent of stating that the Germans would have won the Battle of the Bulge were General Erwin Rommel alive, which is never stated because it is improvable and untenable. The Jackson Absence and other myths abound, however.

Regardless of the reasons for propagating myths, they are all based on the premise that the North did not win or deserve to win the battle because the hapless South had so many adversities that the North could not help but to stumble into a win. In sports terms, the North was "lucky" that the South played so poorly.

Understanding that the South can never win the battle, these are the main Confederate adversities, presented chronologically, that benefitted the "lucky" Federals:

1. General James (Jeb) Stuart's cavalry division was not adjacent to the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV), where it could properly support it, but on the other side of the AOP beyond easy communication with Lee.

2. Generals A. P. Hill and Henry Heth started the battle after dawn on July 1 against General Lee's order to not bring about a general engagement until the army had concentrated.

3. General Richard Ewell chose to not attack Cemetery Hill or Culp's Hill on the afternoon of July 1, finding it "impracticable." (This is the result of General Jackson's death on May 10 after being wounded at Chancellorsville. He could not be resurrected, although most adherents are convinced that he would indeed have found it "practicable" to attack Cemetery Hill and take it.) Ewell's "error" is at the top of the Hit Parade of Southern Lamentations over the battle and perhaps the war.

4. General Lee chose to stay and fight in opposition to General Longstreet's suggestion to break off from the town and venture south and east around the AOP. This is number 2 on the aforementioned Hit Parade.

5. General Longstreet sulked or pouted but generally took too long to prepare for the attack on July 2, which did not start until about 4 p.m. This ruined any coordination from the Second Corps on the opposite side of the Confederate Line.

6. General Longstreet did not allow General John Bell Hood to take his division south around Big Round Top on July 2 where it supposedly would have met light resistance from supply wagons.

7. Generals Hood and Dorsey Pender were wounded on July 2 and out of the battle. Pender died soon after the battle, and Hood's shattered left arm was useless permanently.

8. General Longstreet sulked or pouted (again) and did not prepare well for the attack on July 3, which resulted in the disaster known as Pickett's Charge.

9. The artillery barrage prior to Pickett's Charge failed to dislodge either the Federal artillery or infantry from Cemetery Ridge.

10. General Stuart's cavalry attack behind the Federal line (about 2 miles east of Cemetery Hill) failed to break through the Federal cavalry.

Enough already. The reader should note that none of these contentions can be substantiated or verified and that none of them provides *any substantive insight* as to what actually happened. It is not even clear that a reversal of any of them could lead to a Confederate victory, but that does not diminish their continued emergence. This paper

attempts to refute none of these contentions; rather, it presents them as background to illustrate the length and breadth of Southern irritation with the battle.

Another measure of Southern discontent and promotion of the "lucky North" assumption appears in *Last Chance for Victory* by Scott Bowden and Bill Ward. Their book presents an exhaustive accounting of General Lee's whereabouts and actions during the battle, presented mainly to blame everyone else. This includes a curious and repetitive (as if the reader did not understand it the first time) linguistic *apologia* for General Ewell's understanding (or *mis*-understanding per the authors) of the term "if practicable." Part of the conclusion is a list of 17 reasons for the battle's result under the heading "Why Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were defeated at Gettysburg." Of the 17 reasons, four are Federal accomplishments, leaving 13 Confederate adversities including most of those listed above. The first Federal "virtue" occurs at number 8. (2) By the numbers then, according to Bowdon and Ward, Confederate adversities outpaced Federal accomplishment by a ratio of better than three-to-one: once again, the North did not win the battle, the South lost it.

It is for these reasons that a study of Federal adversities and their possible results is required to fully understand the extent of the Northern victory on those first three days of July, 1863. This study does not require that each Confederate adversity be rebutted in turn or that each one is matched one-for-one with a corresponding Federal adversity. It is sufficient only to show that the North had its own share of problems and prevailed despite them.

GROUND RULES

For credulity, this analysis of Federal what-ifs requires bounds, both spatial and temporal. In each case, the battle occurs as recorded until the proposed change occurs, and then the possible options and results are analyzed relative to these bounds. Each event is studied individually and the events do not stack or cascade into a single scenario. What this means is that none of the points presented herein results in a conclusion similar to this: "If Sickles stays put, Longstreet's corps is destroyed *and the North wins the war!*" All too often this is the conclusion of many of the Southern what-ifs above. This is curious because the North did win the battle despite its adversities, and the war continued for almost two more years; yet, many Confederate what-ifs carry the *inevitable conclusion* that somehow the South would win quickly if these Southern adversities did not occur. The reader deserves to have his or her intelligence respected, and this paper tries to do so.

Such analysis requires bounds because each decision and action is part of a sequence in which each sets the stage for the next. This is because decisions and actions do not occur in a vacuum; on the contrary, they occur within a specific historical context, or environment. In addition, in a battle the size of Gettysburg, hundreds of actions occurred concurrently; one can assume that they are part of that environment and still occur. Therefore, the only valid conclusion for an alternate historical course is within the immediate historical environment: no actions in the battle will "win the war" for either side.

Only four rules are required to limit the analyses presented in this paper, which are:

Rule 1. The Inverse Square Rule

Those with a minimum knowledge of science should recognize this as the basis for Isaac Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation. This says that an object's gravitational effect is inversely proportional to the (radial distance from the object) - squared, or $1/r^2$. This means that for distances of 1, 2, and 3, the effect is 1, 1/4, and 1/9, respectively. So at three times the distance, the effect decreases by one-ninth, at four times, it decreases by 1/16, and so forth. This just means that the *linear effect of an action decreases greatly the farther one departs from the action*: the charge of the 1st Minnesota Regiment on July 2 had no effect on the fighting on Culp's Hill or on Pickett's Charge the next day.

Rule 2. The Short Shelf Life Rule.

Each action analyzed has a limited temporal effect, a short shelf life, usually only in response to the immediate Confederate action. For instance, the analysis presented below on General John Reynolds ends with actions on the first day and does not dare surmise what Reynolds would do during Pickett's Charge two days later. Too much will happen in the interim; to do so would be re-writing the battle and that is not the purpose of this paper. (It, of course, assumes that if Reynolds lived, that there *would be* a Pickett's Charge: this is the danger of propagating historical analysis too far in the future.)

Rule 3. The Hindsight Is Permissible Rule.

Normally, history should judge decisions based on what the participants knew when they made those decisions and to filter out the effects of hindsight on those decisions. This paper judges nothing, however. The analyses presented herein, therefore, must look at the situation around a particular event especially the location of other forces in the area, even those unknown to the participants. In addition, because all conclusions

of the Southern Lamentations are based on hindsight, this rule gives the analyses presented herein equal chance.

Rule 4. The No Heroic Measures Rule.

This is perhaps the most important rule. It means that in no case will units appear in an analysis if that appearance requires super human (or super animal) effort. For infantry divisions marching to or on the field, a nominal speed of 2 miles/hour is reasonable and for cavalry, 4 miles/hour. In no case will this be violated to allow units to appear magically.

Note that these rules cover only the analyses and *not* actual historical events. For instance, the Federal error at Chickamauga opening a hole in the Federal line through which Longstreet's divisions poured certainly had an effect much farther and longer than these rules allow (but obviously not enough to win the war). These rules are designed to analyze theoretical events, not actual ones.

UNION WHAT-IFS

Because no one situation presented is more important than the others, this list is chronological.

Case 1. General Reynolds Lives.

General Reynolds commanded the advanced wing of the AOP comprising his own I Corps and the III and XI Corps. (3) On July 1, he arrived on the field with his corps around 10 o'clock in the morning while General John Buford's First Cavalry Division was amid its delaying action versus General Heth's Division. He sent a message to General George Meade that he would barricade the streets to hold the town. (4) He

was shot and died instantly shortly thereafter. General Abner Doubleday assumed command of the corps and General Thomas Rowley assumed command of the Doubleday's Third Division. This corps fought on the west and northwest of town for about five or six hours, stubbornly and steadily falling back from McPherson's Ridge to Seminary Ridge and finally into town by about 3:30 or 4 p.m. as Confederate numbers increase, a considerable day's fight. (5)

Assume that Reynolds lives. Can he improve on the performance of I Corps or of the Federal forces in general on July 1? He directed the initial deployment before he was killed, so his intentions then are clear: start the defense as far out as is reasonable and buy time all day until the rest of the army arrives. General Oliver Howard thought Reynolds's energetic attack made the Confederates cautious and disrupted the timing of Hill's schedule. (6)

Three improvements stemming from Reynolds's presence are possible:

1. Although it is difficult to fault I Corps under Doubleday for its fighting on July 1, one could argue that they delayed too long their retreat to Seminary Ridge. If Reynolds had ordered an earlier, more coherent retreat to Seminary ridge, it could have allowed time to barricade the streets and saved a larger part of the corps by day's end. The two Federal corps would have still ended the day on the hills southeast of town, but in much better shape.

2. Reynolds might have restrained the advance of Howard's XI Corps north of town to align better with his corps. The XI Corps extended to Blocher's (now Barlow's) Knoll. This proved to be too long a front to defend and was easily flanked by General

Jubal Early when he arrived from the northeast. The two Federal corps would have still ended the day on the hills southeast of town, but in much better shape.

3. Because Reynolds commanded the wing of the AOP containing General Daniel Sickles's III Corps, he would most certainly have ordered Sickles to move part of his corps, 10,000 strong with about 30 cannon, from Emmitsburg to the town. (The III Corps anchored Meade's left flank so it was important to maintain an adequate force there.) In addition, he might have had more pull with the punctilious General Henry Slocum to move his XII Corps much earlier in the day. This would have afforded about 9,500 more men and 30 cannon to the Federal defense. (In the recorded history, Slocum remained in the hamlet of Two Taverns four miles south of town within earshot of the battle until about 5 p.m. despite repeated requests from General Howard to support the battle. General Slocum claimed that he remained there in accordance with the Meade's Pipe Creek Circular and because Howard did not speak with the "authority" of General Meade.)

This improvement would have resulted not only in a better line, as do 1 and 2, but in a line stronger by a factor of almost two depending on how much of III Corps moves into town. The Federal line might have been strong enough to reshape the final battle lines at the end of the day, resulting in a different line up for the morning of July 2, and a different battle. Projecting further violates Rules 1 and 2 so the discussion ends here.

Result: All three improvements caused by Reynolds' living result in a better, more compact Federal line west and north of town. In addition, the third improvement results in a much stronger Federal line, and possibly a different battle after July 1.

Case 2. XI Corps Does Not Overextend Itself.

General Reynolds was dead and Doubleday commanded I Corps. The XI Corps started to arrive in force around noon. General Howard kept Steinwehr's Division on Cemetery Hill as a prudent fallback position and ordered Generals Carl Schurz's and Francis Barlow's divisions north of town. Given the disgrace of this corps after Chancellorsville, this was somewhat an aggressive posture. But it was too aggressive, because at about one mile out, it was too far north and its right flank was completely open, a situation that General Early's brigades took full advantage of when they arrived on the field in mid-afternoon. Although the corps fought well for about three hours, it was outnumbered and outflanked once again, and with some rear-guard actions, broke and headed for town and eventually Cemetery Hill.

Assume that the two forward divisions advanced only up to the intersection of the Mummasburg Road and the Heidlersburg Road (modern Business U. S. Route 15, the Old Harrisburg Road), about one-half mile north of town. The roughly 6,000 men of these divisions would have concentrated along a much smaller arc and would have been in a better position to support I Corps on its left. More important, the smaller arc would allow Barlow's division on the right to cover the area between the Heidlersburg Road and the York Road (modern U. S. Route 30), the area from which Early's Division outflanked Barlow and forced the hasty retreat back to town in the recorded history. In addition, a line so situated could receive better protection from the Federal artillery that increased all afternoon as batteries from both corps arrived. Thus, coupled with I Corps excellent fighting and withdrawal from the west, a concentrated XI corps would have delayed the Confederates with more cohesion, fewer casualties, and less shame than as recorded. The

two Federal corps would have still ended the day on the hills southeast of town, but in much better shape.

Result: Restraining XI Corps's advance north of town results in a better, more compact Federal line west and north of town. This configuration uses more efficiently the artillery support from Cemetery Hill.

Case 3. General Slocum Moves Promptly Into Town.

As stated above, General Slocum XII Corps remained in Two Taverns for most of the afternoon of July 1. After a short march of six miles from Littlestown, the corps arrived there around noon, went into bivouac and did not depart until about 3 p.m. It started to arrive on the field around 5. All afternoon his men and officers could hear the battle to the north and Slocum received multiple requests for assistance from General Howard. Various reasons have been proposed for Slocum's timidity that afternoon—not all complimentary—but one is important here. This involves Slocum's outranking all other generals on the field in town and in how Meade handled this in his orders, or at least how Slocum interpreted his role relative to Meade's orders. For whatever reasons, Slocum's corps arrived on the field too late to counterattack to assist XI Corps in its retreat. (7).

Assume that Slocum responded as soon as he knew a battle raged to the north. Two times are recorded for this. Cannon could be heard and smoke and shell bursts could be seen as early as 1 p.m. Howard's first messenger arrived between 1:30 and 2. In addition, local civilians ran to inform the commanding general in Two Taverns that a battle raged in Gettysburg. If Slocum started during this time, his corps would not be deployed in force prior to 4 p.m. By this time, the retreat of XI Corps was well under

way, so there is little that Slocum's appearance could do to help that situation. That said, the appearance of 9,500 men and 30 cannon by 4 p.m. would have gone a long way toward strengthening the Federal defense of Cemetery and Culp's Hills.

Result: Accelerating XII Corps arrival affects none of the July 1 battle as it was fought, but serves to merely increase the defense of the hills by late afternoon: this is still an improvement over the recorded history. The limited result of this case derives mostly from the restraint provided by Rule 4.

Case 4. General Buford Remains On The Left Flank.

On July 1, General Buford's First Cavalry Division performed as efficiently as could be expected. After Buford detected Confederate forces around Gettysburg and notified General Reynolds, the division performed an outstanding delaying action, then spent the rest of the day identifying the location of upcoming Confederate forces and protecting the flanks of the fighting and then retreating divisions.

At dawn on July 2, Buford's division was south of town (out of reach of Confederate guns) guarding the Federal left flank by the Emmitsburg Road (modern Business U.S. Route 15) near the Rose Farm. Despite early morning skirmishing, Buford's division had sustained only five percent loss in the previous day's fighting. General Wesley Merritt's brigade was not engaged the day before and was just arriving with the division's supply wagons. Units from General Sickles's III Corps deployed just west of Little Round Top covered Buford's right flank. (8)

It was thus considered strange that Buford asked General Alfred Pleasanton for permission to take his division to the rear for a refit. It was equally strange that Pleasanton approved apparently with Meade's knowledge, especially because as of the

morning of July 2, Buford's was the only appreciable Federal cavalry force on the field. Many of his troopers questioned this decision because they thought that the division was still in decent fighting shape, but to no avail. By July 3, the entire division was back in Westminster, Maryland, refitting and guarding the rear of the AOP. Although Meade was aware of the move, most historical censure falls logically on Pleasanton for approving such a move during the middle of a major battle with no cavalry immediately available to replace Buford's division. (9)

No one informed General Sickles of this move, however. When he realized that his flank was exposed, he expressed his justifiable concern to Meade. His concern increased when he noticed no replacements, and he acted on it. Unaware but anxious about the location of the Confederates, he deployed a heavy skirmish line that included two regiments of the U.S. Sharpshooters. They scouted a good distance across the Emmitsburg Road along Warfield Ridge before they met the brigade of General Cadmus Wilcox. (10) Sickles even claimed that part of the reason he moved his entire corps out to the Emmitsburg Road was because of his worry about detecting a Confederate offensive on his front. (11)

Assume that Buford's division remains in place. Until about 2 p.m. it is the only major cavalry unit on the field. It is in perfect position not only to protect the left flank of III Corps, but to also perform the reconnaissance that the army (and not just Sickles) needs. Mobile reconnaissance might have detected General Longstreet's southward move in time to allow Federal forces early warning and time to prepare. In addition, for an attack, Buford's approximately 2,800 carbines would provide excellent coverage on Sickles's flank regardless of when Longstreet attacked.

Result: Retention of Buford's division provides increased reconnaissance and flank protection for III Corps, especially for a Confederate attack. It might actually have prevented Sickles from moving his corps and risking the entire left flank of the army.

Note that this is an excellent example of Confederates wallowing in their own errors and ignoring those of the Federals. Longstreet complained about and blamed Stuart for not providing cavalry coverage for his move south, but Pleasanton matched this error with his own identical error. For a few hours until about 2 p.m., both sides had no appreciable cavalry coverage for anything; Southern apologists seem to never mention this. (12)

Case 5. III Corps Remains On Cemetery Ridge.

This is often considered the most egregious Federal error during the battle. It is debated to this day whether General Sickles disobeyed Meade's orders, interpreted them creatively, felt a genuine concern for his left flank (as described above), or could not shake the experience of being ordered off Hazel Grove two months before at Chancellorsville. One can also argue that his movement forward, regardless of whether it disobeyed orders, blunted unwittingly Longstreet's late afternoon attack long before it could hit the main Federal line on Cemetery Ridge.

The numbers and resulting densities are as follows. Prior to the move, approximately 10,000 men and 30 cannon covered originally one mile of the Federal line from the left flank of II Corps to Devil's Den. In this position, they were protected by mutually supporting positions and the heights of the Round Tops. General George Sykes's V Corps and the Artillery Reserve were in support. After the move, which fact

Sickles communicated to no one, not even the army commander, those same 10,000 men were stretched in a wedge approximately two miles long with its point about one-half mile west of the line at the intersection of the Wheatfield and Emmitsburg roads. There were no appreciable reserves inside the wedge: it was an empty shell. The line was so thin that part of it had to be filled in by batteries from Lieutenant Colonel Freeman McGilvery's Reserve Artillery Brigade. General Henry Hunt, AOP Chief of Artillery, was appalled when he inspected it and asked Sickles if Meade was aware of its extent.

By stark coincidence, Longstreet's attack struck at the exact time that the defective III Corps line was most extended and therefore most vulnerable. The next four hours until sunset saw some of the heaviest fighting of the war. The eight brigades of Generals Hood and Lafayette McLaws seriously disrupted or damaged 13 Federal brigades, including Sickles's six brigades and seven from other corps sent in support. (13) This of course depleted the Federal line where the supporting brigades originated, some as far north as Culp's Hill. Had the Confederate attack continued in earnest farther north in General A. P. Hill's Corps, it might have breached the Federal line irreparably. The topographical Confederate gains were small and did not justify the sacrifice of the men lost.

It is during this crisis that the abilities of Generals Meade and Hancock came to the fore. Both were extremely active receiving reports and gathering brigades to send into the Confederates charging into the III Corps wedge. (14) In fact, Bowden and Ward's reason number 12 for the Confederate defeat (and remember *not* for the Union victory) is "Winfield Hancock's excellent performance throughout the battle." (15) It should be noted that at this critical period in the battle, Federal leadership at all levels,

from commander to regiment, with the unfailing fortitude of its fighting men stemmed the Confederate tide.

Assume that III Corps remains in position along the Cemetery Ridge line. The III Corps (10,000 men and 30 cannon) is in its position just below the Round Tops, V Corps (11,000 men and 25 cannon) had arrived on the Hanover Road (modern PA Route 116) in the morning, was stationed near Powers Hill (about one mile from the Round Tops) and was being deployed north of Little Round Top, and by 2 p.m., VI Corps (13,000 men and 45 cannon) started to appear on the Baltimore Pike. Therefore, in addition to the well-placed, compact line of III Corps, sufficient Federal brigades were nearby to provide close support.

Longstreet's march and countermarch to get into attack position would occur regardless of Sickles's action; therefore his attack still starts at 4 p.m. Between the Warfield Ridge where Longstreet's attack started and the base of the Round Tops is almost one mile. With the Peach Orchard vacant, Lee or Longstreet have no reason to modify the original attack plan of attacking northeast along the Emmitsburg Road. Federals on Little Round Top and skirmishers would have spotted them as they jumped off. The approximately 20-25 minutes required to cover the ground would give all three corps ample warning of their approach and would have allowed Federal artillery time to start hitting them from the start. The battle would undoubtedly still have been hard fought, but the Federals would have been in better position to repel the Confederate attack.

Result: The III Corps remaining in place provides a set of conditions non-existent in the recorded history. The lack of cavalry on both sides for most of the afternoon of

July 2 means that both sides would have groped for directions and intelligence. A highly secure Federal line exists with concentrated, supporting firepower from both infantry and artillery. The locations of V Corps and VI Corps ensure ample reserves in the immediate area.

Case 6. General Meade Orders V Corps To Replace III Corps On Cemetery Ridge.

As III Corps deployed forward, General Meade rode out to speak with General Sickles and Sickles asked whether he should withdraw. Meade told him that the rebels would not let him withdraw. As the Confederate shelling began, Meade galloped back to bring support.

General Longstreet's two divisions attacked General Sickles's over-extended III Corps at 4 p. m. The fighting started along the southern boundaries of the wedge formation of the corps as recorded. General Meade's response was to order General Hancock to assume command of III Corps as well as II Corps and to make available any reinforcements he needed to defend the line. Both Meade and Hancock were energetic and ubiquitous in their efforts to send brigades piecemeal into the Peach Orchard, the Wheat Field, and Devil's Den, and they tapped II Corps, V Corps, XII Corps, and the Artillery Reserve to do so. Although the attacks by Hood and McLaws were stopped to the west of the Round Tops, this piecemeal defense resulted in the destruction or damage of seven brigades in addition to Sickles's six and seriously compromised the entire Federal line as far north as Cemetery Ridge near General John Gibbon's II Corps division. Only determined, courageous fighting at all levels and corresponding hesitation of A. P. Hill's brigades saved the AOP that afternoon.

Assume that Meade, as soon as he was aware of the unexpected advance of III Corps, keeps II Corps in position and orders V Corps to fill the area vacated by Sickles. The III Corp's forward deployment started in early afternoon and took about 2.5 hours to complete. The V Corps is less than one mile from the original line of III corps, and this distance could be covered easily in two hours, especially if hurried. In addition, V Corps and even VI Corps could occupy the Round Tops. In this case, with the Confederates attacking from the west or southwest, a complete battery on Little Round Top could use all six cannon to shell the approaching Confederates.

Meade could have told Sickles to either fight it out as best he could or cover a withdrawal with two brigades and get everyone else back as best he could. He then could gallop back and oversee Sykes's deployment into the area that Sickles was supposed to cover. Neither Sykes nor Hancock would move troops towards the Wheat field. Instead they stand on the defense and allow the 3rd Corps to withdraw through their position to the rear where it can reform to assist in the defense of the line.

Result: Longstreet's attack with two divisions would be met by III Corps with VI Corps and II Corps in direct support, and with VI Corps in proximity to support if needed. Culp's Hill, Cemetery Hill, and the northern part of Cemetery Ridge would not be stripped of brigades so their defense is much stronger.

EXCLUDED CASES

Three cases arose which require discussion. These appear to be Union errors, but closer examination disproves this. These cases are:

Excluded Case 1. General Reynolds Commits Two Corps Piecemeal.

Bowden and Ward offer two opinions on this action. First, they state logically that had the Federals lost the battle, the decision to commit I and XI Corps against converging Confederate columns might be considered a blunder. This would be especially true because the Federals had the decided advantage of competent cavalry on July 1 which the Confederates did not. (16) Later, in their list of 17 reasons for the Confederate defeat, number 11 is "The sacrifice by the Federal First Corps on July 1." Here they state that the 70% casualties suffered by I Corps that day allowed the AOP to survive long enough to arrive in town and firm its defenses on the heights southeast of town, where of course it stayed and won the battle. (17) So is this a blunder or not?

Casualties turned out high, but Meade *did order* Reynolds to take the town. Reynolds had much more comprehensive intelligence from Buford, *knew exactly what he was getting into*, and went into town with the only forces he had. This was a measured, calculated action and not the result of haphazard command. Generals Hill and Heth, on the other hand, ignored the accurate intelligence from General J. Johnston Pettigrew indicating the existence of Federal cavalry in town, believing it to be local militia or home guard. Their brigades thus entered the town on July 1 expecting light resistance.

This is the equivalent of the United States Pacific Fleet in April, 1942. Naval Intelligence indicated that the Imperial Japanese Navy was mounting operations in the southwest Pacific Ocean against New Guinea. Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, Admiral Chester Nimitz had only two fleet aircraft carriers available, the *Lexington* and the *Yorktown*, to contest the incursion. In the ensuing Battle of the Coral Sea, the Japanese were stopped from invading Port Moresby at the cost of one light carrier. The cost to the Americans was one carrier sunk, the *Lexington*, with the *Yorktown* damaged so heavily

that the repair estimate was 90 days. This was a dreadful loss for the United States (proportionally larger than Federal losses on July 1) with a minimal cost to Japan. Although American material losses were larger, the Japanese were stopped: history has judged this a necessary move based on reasonable intelligence.

Had American sustained more carrier losses in the Pacific, would Coral Sea have been judged a blunder? Possibly, but critics would have to supply a reasonable alternative for Nimitz to consider *in April, 1942*. By the same token, Meade or Reynolds sending two corps into town separately and entering the fight as they arrived was the only alternative available. At the very least, hesitation might have produced the critique that the Federals were once again timid in the face of the "dashing" Confederates.

Result: Reynolds and Buford expected a fight and acted accordingly, whereas Hill and Heth were not expecting a fight and arrived unprepared. Thus, one must be careful to avoid the temptation of labeling Federal deployment to Gettysburg on the morning of July 1 as an error. Just as with Coral Sea, this was a necessary move based on reasonable intelligence.

Excluded Case 2. The Real Effect Of Federal Cavalry Mismanagement.

Case 4 above details Pleasanton's blunder in permitting Buford's cavalry division to depart entirely the battle area for refitting in the middle of what is obviously a major battle. Sickles indicated that the disappearance of this unit from the left flank was one reason he moved his III Corps forward on July 2 with disastrous consequences. Meade approved the transfer, but he assumed that General Pleasanton had cavalry units available to replace Buford. He did not, and in this Pleasanton was clearly remiss because Meade's concerns covered the entire army, and he expected each subordinate to know his job.

Pleasanton had only one concern, the cavalry, and his ineptitude would have lasting effect.

Not only did General Pleasanton leave the AOP without cavalry for a few hours on that day, but the transfer of Buford's division meant that the AOP was short approximately 4,500 experienced troopers, including General Merritt's brigade, which was in the rear on July 1. Three full cavalry divisions would have afforded Meade much more opportunity to cover the army's flanks and to scout for Confederate movement. Recall that Sickles was forced to send infantry out across the Emmitsburg Road to learn where the Confederates were. Because Stuart's arrival occurs in the afternoon of July 2 and has no appreciable effect on the battle on that day, Federal cavalry blunders diminish in importance once the infantry fighting begins: the Civil War was largely an infantry war, after all.

The real impact of Pleasanton's depletion of his cavalry corps occurs on and after July 3. Three cavalry divisions would have enhanced certainly the flexibility and power of the cavalry at the end of the campaign. There is no question that the major decision of July 3 was Pickett's Charge, but much of the next 24 hours involved cavalry actions, the largest the encounter with Stuart's cavalry off the Hanover Road. There is a sense of serendipity despite the mismanagement. For instance, Custer delays moving to the left flank of the army and in doing so is in the right spot to resist Stuart's charge on the Rummel Farm. On the left flank of the army on July 3, Custer's brigade would matter little because of the size of Pickett's Charge. An entire cavalry division on the Federal right flank, however, would demand attention in planning a charge on July 3.

The addition of 4,500 troopers might have made a difference during the retreat of the ANV. The presence of this force on the left flank must also be considered in the Confederate retreat, which used the diverging Cashtown and Fairfield (modern PA Route 116) roads to leave town. A strong cavalry force right across the Emmitsburg Road within shouting distance of the Fairfield Road coupled with relatively fresh infantry from VI Corps would certainly present Lee with a different threat. Such a stronger force would be a major concern because of its potential for blocking or harassing the Fairfield Road.

Compared to the disaster caused by Sickles's forward movement, however, these results are minor. Infantry won the battle: regardless of whether Meade pursued or not, the ANV was damaged far greater than anyone expected. Immediate fruits of that victory, however, would not see harvest partly because of one major error by General Pleasanton on July 1.

Note that these errors or effects do not include Kilpatrick's ordering General Farnsworth to charge with half his brigade into a *cul de sac* of rocky ground surrounded by Confederate infantry. This unfortunate event on July 3, in which Farnsworth was killed, is a local operation with no impact on the larger, strategic concerns of the battle stated above. It is a symptom of the lack of cavalry oversight and an example of bad generalship motivated by Kilpatrick's own desire for recognition and nothing more.

Result: Pleasanton's July 1 blunder of depleting his cavalry had effects on the battle much greater than normally considered. Most of the smaller cavalry errors during the battle stem from this one bad decision.

Excluded Case 3. General Meade Did Not Appoint General Sedgwick To Command The
Left Wing Of The Army.

At no time during the battle does Meade order General John Sedgwick to command anything more than his VI Corps. This lapse is mentioned sometimes as an error on Meade's part relative especially to the possibility of a counterattack on July 3 after Pickett's Charge and to the haphazard cavalry actions in that sector that day. (18) With all due respect to Edwin Coddington and others, this is an example of historical micro-criticism of the highest order. Sedgwick commanded the largest corps in the army, nearly 15,000 men, which had arrived only at 2 p.m. on July 2. This criticism is not meant to distinguish between a victory and a defeat or even on a decision that resulted in heavy, pointless loss of life as at Cold Harbor one year later, but splits hairs on the difference between a great victory and a "little more great" victory. Meade's record here is unassailable.

General Meade was awakened and ordered to command the AOP on the morning of June 28 around 3 a.m. He assumed command formally from General Hooker shortly after 7. During the next six days, he did this:

1. From couriers, determined the location of all seven army corps, which was not known exactly at that time.
2. Determined to continue a vigorous pursuit of the ANV and to do battle with Lee if the opportunity arose.
3. Planned routes for the seven corps to converge near Gettysburg on roughly parallel routes offering almost unfettered movement and mutual protection.

4. Promoted three promising cavalry captains four grades to general: Farnsworth, Merritt, and Custer. The latter would figure prominently in the cavalry battle on July 3.

5. Planned for a fallback position, the Pipe Creek line, a reasonable precaution. He was still aware after all that he was facing Robert E. Lee.

6. Ordered Pleasanton to order cavalry into Gettysburg.

7. When he heard that Reynolds was killed, quickly ordered Hancock to take command of the field. On July 2, he ordered Hancock to command III Corps in addition to his own II Corps and to use any units required to stop Longstreet's attack.

8. Ordered Hunt to see to the artillery. There is no record of Meade looking over Hunt's shoulders anytime during the battle.

9. Listened to his trusted subordinates: Hancock determining the suitability of the ground and his generals voting to stay and fight.

10. Commanded vigorously on July 2 up and down Cemetery Hill finding reinforcements and sending them to Hancock.

11. Judged correctly where Lee would strike on July 3 and repelled decisively Pickett's Charge.

12. Decided *not to attack* Seminary Ridge after Pickett's Charge, determining correctly that it was folly to attack across the same field over which he had repelled the Confederates. (Lee made a similar decision to not attack the defeated Federals in Fredericksburg on the same side of the river mainly because of the strength of his position and the appearance of over 100 cannon of General Hunt's artillery facing his advance from across the Rappahannock River. For this similar decision Lee receives no criticism.)

Result: In his first six days of command, General Meade made a series of quick, definitive, and major decisions that were right on the mark. Remembering that Meade won the battle decisively, the omission of a special assignment for Sedgwick seems to not have affected the outcome of the battle significantly. It is understandable that President Lincoln, given his history with previous AOP commanders, was disappointed in the seeming lack of vigor of the pursuit; however, that lack of vigor is based on casualties, disorganization, and logistical considerations. The hesitation in the pursuit was not based on whether Meade chose or did not choose anyone for special assignment. Lincoln's disappointment should not migrate to "historical disappointment" over the extended result of the battle. There is no need to over-analyze Meade's performance until something is found. Given Meade's accomplishment in his first week of command, the criticism over this case seems unwarranted.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Two excellent armies fought the Battle of Gettysburg. Each had moments of competence, error, calamity, and luck. It is tempting to highlight the errors, calamities, and luck of the losing side in any contest to explain it away. This battle stands as perhaps the best example of this technique by the persistent question of why the South lost the battle, the answer to which is a long list of lamentations that have survived 150 years.

This approach of course downplays the opposite question of why the North won and ascribes the well-earned victory to a default status based on the long list of Confederate adversities, i.e., the assumption that the North simply could not help but win.

This paper took a limited approach to rebut this postulate by offering a collection of Union adversities from the battle to show that the AOP's performance was not as untarnished as the "Lucky North" position contends. In fact, all of the Union adversities listed herein have appeared in numerous histories of the battle; they have just never been listed together in opposition to the corresponding Southern list. History shows that the North recovered from all its adversities to prevail. This paper offers alternative Union solutions to those adverse situations to show that the recorded solutions were not the result of mere luck and that if the generals had chosen to meet them in other ways, they offered at minimum the same chance for success.

In addition, it proposes three situations sometimes listed as Union errors that might not really be so. These are mostly what played out after other events and show that sometimes Occam's Razor holds, i.e., the simpler solution is the better one: not every setback results from an error, after all.

In summary, both armies experienced adversities. One can attribute the victory to Southern bad luck, but this is the easy way out. It more likely that by Gettysburg, the Federal Army and its leadership had matured to where it was better prepared than ever to meet the tactical situation and to capitalize on Confederate mistakes. Referring to the continual appearance of Union officers who appear in the battle doing just the right thing, Fletcher Pratt wrote (Italics added): "The stars in their courses fought against the Confederacy, right on through Pickett's charge that would have gone through any line not held by Hancock. *Such a chapter of coincidence is impossible; when accident is repeated a dozen times the accidental explanation will not serve and we must look further.*" (19)

This paper has looked further and the victory was no accident. George Pickett was forthright when he said he thought that the Yankees had something to do with it.

REFERENCES

Most of the historical information in this paper is of a general nature and can be found in most works on the subject; therefore, no footnotes are provided for these data. Footnotes do appear for quotes and for the more obscure items herein.

1 Coddington, Edwin B., *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968, p. 445.

2 Scott Bowden and Bill Ward, *Last Chance for Victory: Robert E. Lee and the Gettysburg Campaign* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, Perseus Groups Books, 2001), pp. 499-525.

3 Coddington, *op. cit.*, p. 122

4 *Ibid.*, p. 267.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 286-97.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 277.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 310-315.

8 Longacre, Edward G., *The Cavalry at Gettysburg*, Lincoln, Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 1993, pp. 204-5.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 205-6.

10 Coddington, *op. cit.*, pp. 351-3.

11 Longacre, *op. cit.*, 206.

12 Coddington, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 445-8.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 448.

15 Bowdon and Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 504.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 508.

18 Coddington, *op. cit.*, p. 525.

19 Pratt, Fletcher, *A Short History of the Civil War - Ordeal by Fire*, Toronto: General Publishing Company, Ltd., 1997. Reprint of two previous editions from 1935 and 1948.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank graciously Steven Hedgpeth, former newspaper writer and editor, who reviewed it for content, style, and grammatical correctness.

Errors in the final version remain the responsibility of the authors.