



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

APRIL, 1978

VOL. 22 NO. 8

-----179th Meeting-----

DATE: Tuesday, April 11, 1978
SPEAKER: Ed Bearss
SUBJECT: "Chickamauga"
PLACE: The Hermit Club, Dodge Court
PRELIMINARIES: 6:00 p.m. DINNER: 7:00 p.m.

CHICKAMAUGA! The Bloody Battle of the West!

CHICKAMAUGA! Was it "the most stubbornly contested battle of American history?"

Our speaker, Ed Bearss, is well known to our Roundtable, having addressed us on several occasions, and having been our guide on three field trips. Everyone agrees he is unsurpassed in his knowledge of Civil War battlefields.

Born in 1923 in Montana, Ed named the cows on his home ranch for Civil War generals and battles. We suppose that the lack of a large body of water inhibited him from naming them after Navy officers.

Serving with a Marine Raider battalion in the invasions of Guadalcanal and New Britain, he was wounded and spent more than two years in hospitals. After World War II he first attended Georgetown University, from which he received a B.S. in Foreign Service. Later he received an M.A. in History from the University of Indiana.

Ed's distinguished National Park Service career began at Vicksburg, Mississippi. Chosen 1963 Man of the Year in Vicksburg, he also received the Harry Truman Award for Meritorious Service in the field of Civil War History.

NEW MEMBERS

DAVID E. MACK Attorney at Law. Especially interested in the role of Ohio people in the Civil War. Sponsored by Dr. Callahan.

JAMES C. ENGLEHART President of The Select Aire Corp. Sponsored by Don Heckaman

BRIAN DALE KOWELL Salesman for Riker Laboratories, Inc. Especially interested in the Eastern theatre and Jackson's Valley Campaign. Sponsored by Dr. Schildt.

RONALD JOHN EVANS Sales Director of The Cintas Corp. Special interest is the Eastern theatre and leaders of both armies. Sponsored by Hoover and Bayless.

JOHN TORMEY Erstwhile chief executive officer of Roadway Express. Sponsored by Earl Hoover.

INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE

Our Roundtable's 1978 Field Trip will be to South Carolina during the first week in October. It will be under the aegis and leadership of Art Jordan who has lots of "ins" to the FFSC. More details will be sent to all members later.... There are plans for an old-fashioned Book Sale at one of our Fall meetings. More details on that later, also.

ALL GUN & ACCOUTREMENT NUTS -- ACHTUNG!!

The First Annual Ohio Civil War Relic and Collectors Show will be held Saturday and Sunday, April 22 and 23. It will be held at the Ashland National Guard Armory on East Main Street (U.S. 250) in Ashland. Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Admission is one dollar (\$1). The announcement states there will be no flea market or non-Civil War items on display. For further information or to arrange for a sales table call Don Williams at 419-289-3120 or John Sollinger at 419-683-1091.

QUICKIE BOOK REVIEW

ADAPT OR PERISH, THE LIFE OF GENERAL ROGER A PRYOR, C.S.A., by Robert S. Holzman.

"Roger A. Pryor, fiery Virginian who helped ignite the Civil War, deserves a biography, and Holzman...gives him a good one. Here in commendably compact form is the essence of a life spanning the fateful era from Andrew Jackson to Woodrow Wilson. And a fascinating life it was - son of a Presbyterian preacher, Hampden-Sydney graduate, articulate newspaper editor, 'fire-eating' Congressman who urged secession upon Lincoln's election, firebrand at Fort Sumter, Confederate general who resigned to become a private. At war's end, destitute, with wife and seven children to support, Pryor bravely embraced a new career, moved to New York, became an eloquent attorney and at age 67 a Supreme Court judge of a state that had once branded him a traitor...Altogether an admirable introduction to a colorful and important figure." Choice

THE CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO

FOUNDED FEBRUARY 19, 1957

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Neville Bayless, Ray Swanson
P. O. Box 5028, Cleveland, OH
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SHERMAN AND THE TORPEDOES

By Member Stuart Cramer

We are all aware of the devastating effects of land mines, and that literally hundreds of thousands of soldiers have been blown up, killed or maimed by this treacherous device. A few facts about its use in the Civil War may not be as well known, and hopefully, will be of interest.

The very first use of land mines, then called "torpedoes", was made by a Union officer, although many, including the writer, have long thought that it was a Confederate innovation. Captain John G. Foster of the U. S. Engineers Corps planted some shells at the landing wharf of Fort Sumter, even before the first shot was fired. (Ye Gods, another first for Charleston!) Aware of this fact, when the Confederates seized Fort Moultrie they took ladders along, thinking that explosives had been buried in front of the main gate.

Later in the war Gabriel Rains was appointed to head the Confederate Bureau of Torpedoes and made many improvements. He was the officer who, in the Confederate retreat from Williamsburg, being pursued by Union cavalry, buried shells along the road, creating havoc and confusion among the pursuers. Rains' torpedoes were used extensively during the seige of Charleston, where a large minefield was laid on James Island to protect Fort Wagner. Another example was at Fort Fisher, where the field was wired so the explosives could be set off from within. This scheme was foiled by the prior bombardment, which destroyed the wiring.

The Confederates made a much greater use of "that devilish device", as General McClellan called it, simply because it was a defensive weapon.

What I'm leading up to is General Sherman's reaction to land mines.

His well-known short temper flared up in a rage when he found his men victims of the torpedoes sown by the retreating enemy. So Sherman instigated the practice of making prisoners, and sometimes belligerent civilians go before his armies to discover and dig up the mines planted along their advance.

For this he was castigated in the press and even by some of the authorities in Washington. This was given as another instance of his "inhumanity", but it was a sobriquet not shared by his own soldiers.

In those days there were no mine detectors; the men just went forward probing with sword or ramrod. "Why the hell should I let my own men be blown up when these people are the ones who put the things there and probably know where they are?" he is said to have asked. In answer to criticisms after the war, Sherman pointed out that Wellington had followed the same procedure in the Penninsular War, where the French, and especially the Spanish had made extensive use of land mines.

When General Sherman's great army, after a long, leisurely Halloween tour of Georgia approached its end at Savannah and the sea, where he was to rendezvous with the U.S. Fleet, the only thing that stood in the way was Fort McAllister. Located on the Ogeechee River, its formidable ramparts did not reveal its weak garrison of only 250 men, commanded by a Colonel Anderson. Only fifteen miles away, the Fort was the key to Savannah, then well-entrenched by 15,000 Confederates under General Hardee.

Sherman came up three corps wide, having cut a swath, as the saying goes, "sixty miles wide." He dispatched the 15th Corps, under General Hazen, to take McAllister from the rear, its main guns bearing for the most part down the river towards the sea. The General and some of his staff crawled up into the loft of a rice mill to watch the assault. There was a large minefield between the charging bluecoats and the works.

It was all over in fifteen minutes, but it is written that at one point Sherman dashed his hat on the floor when he witnessed the puffs of smoke from mines blowing up his men on their way in. Afterwards, he stated that he had lost more men to those damnable torpedoes than to cannon or musket fire. All told, the loss was 90 men, but Hardee eventually had to abandon Savannah...As far as this writer has been able to determine, it was the last extensive use of land mines in this war.

CRAZY EIGHTS

1. What did the following Confederate generals have in common: Charles Clark, Robert H. Hatton, Bushrod Johnson, Daniel H. Reynolds, Roswell S. Ripley and Otho F. Strahl?
2. Who was the first soldier killed in the Civil War?
3. Who was the first U.S. Army officer to come under fire at the outbreak of the Civil War?
4. Who was the youngest man ever to attain the rank of general in the Civil War?
5. How many Confederate generals were killed in action during the war: 30, 55 or 77?
6. How many Union generals were killed in action during the war: 47, 57 or 77?
7. Who was the highest ranking Union general killed in the war?
8. Who was the highest ranking Confederate general killed in action?

1. All were born in Ohio.
2. Daniel Hough (huff). A Union artillery private, he was killed April 14, 1861 in an accidental explosion while a salute was being fired before the evacuation of Fort Sumter.
3. Capt. Jefferson C. Davis, USA. An officer in the regular army, he had just come on duty inside Fort Sumter on the morning of April 12, 1861 when the first shell of the war exploded over his head at about 4:00 a.m.
4. Galusha Pennypacker. He was born June 1, 1844 and was commissioned a brigadier general of U.S. Volunteers on February 18, 1865, four months before his 21st birthday.
5. 77
6. 47
7. James Birdseye McPherson, an army corps commander. He was killed July 22, 1864 before Atlanta.
8. Albert Sidney Johnston. A full army commander, killed April 6, 1862 at Shiloh.

- Adapted from "The Canister", Cincinnati CWRT

EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS

LIFE OF THE CAPTURED PRISONERS AND ESCAPEES

-Second Part of a Series
By Ray Swanson

Because the Federal Government was anxious to avoid recognition of the Confederacy, exchanges of prisoners, at first, were made by commanding officers on both sides unofficially, though with the knowledge and tacit consent of the Government at Washington. On July 12, 1861, Quarter-General Meigs, USA, urged Secretary of War Cameron to appoint a commissary-general of prisoners. In the West, Generals Halleck and Grant exchanged a number of prisoners with Generals Polk and Jeff Thompson unofficially. As the number of prisoners grew, much of the time of the commanding officers was required for this business and pressure was put on Washington to formalize an arrangement for exchange of prisoners. This was done in February, 1862 and the Confederates gladly accepted, being conscious of their deficient resources. Considerable haggling ensued before a satisfactory agreement was reached.

On June 6, 1862, a week after the battle of Seven Pines, a general order was issued from Washington that all surgeons should be considered non-combatants and not to be sent to prison. General Lee accepted this order on June 17th for the Southern side. Finally, General John A. Dix was appointed Commissioner of Prisoners by Secretary Stanton but was cautioned to avoid any recognition of the Confederate government. The cartel in force between the United States and Great Britain during the War of 1812 was suggested as a basis for action. General D. H. Hill was appointed for the Confederacy and after several acrimonious meetings the commissioners came to an agreement.

All prisoners in the East were to be delivered to Aiken's Landing on the James River (soon to be changed to City Point) and in the West at Vicksburg. In the East, the most active Federal agent was Brig.-Gen. J. E. Mulford, while for the Confederacy, Colonel Robert Ould was in charge. Disputes and uproars occurred from time to time, some of which were caused by officers in the field such as Generals Pope and Butler. Pope had ordered the arrest of all disloyal male citizens unwilling to take the oath of allegiance, their property to be confiscated and the men to be sent to the Confederate lines. Fortunately, Pope was overruled by General Halleck and his order was never put in effect. As is well known, General Butler had hanged a private citizen in New Orleans and was denounced by Confederate President Davis as a felon deserving capital punishment.

Disputes occurred almost constantly and on May 25, 1863, General Halleck ordered all exchanges stopped. However, exchanges still continued in the field at different points until stopped by General Grant's order of April 17, 1864.

Grant's motive was to prevent exchanged Southern prisoners from being used again against his army and he held firm in spite of tremendous pressure to allow exchange. Because of dwindling resources, the burden in the South became overwhelming and in November, 1864, about sixteen thousand sick and wounded Northern prisoners were released without exchange at Savannah and Charleston. After January, 1865, when it was apparent that the issue would soon be settled, prisoner exchange was again resumed.

Life in the prisons often revealed unexpected capabilities and unsuspected deficiencies. In some cases, the misfits and eccentrics showed themselves better able to cope with situations before which their supposed superiors quailed and surrendered. The veneer of convention often peeled away, showing the real man beneath, sometimes attractive, sometimes unpleasant. Men who were confined for any length of time stood naked, stripped of all disguise, before their fellowmen. Where conditions were particularly hard, the stories of the attitude of some of the prisoners toward their companions are revolting. In Andersonville and Salisbury, organized bands preyed upon the weak for possession of a blanket or kettle. The trial and execution of a number of these men by their companions in Andersonville is well known.

In those prisons where the men cooked their own food, the possession of a tin pail or skillet made a man a plutocrat. He might charge rent for it, a portion of cooked food or a chew of tobacco. There were traders and speculators in prison as well as the thriftless and improvident.

The great difficulty was the necessity of getting through the twenty-four hours. Some men slept for fifteen hours, some improvised chess or checker boards from pieces of plank while others played cards until the cards were worn beyond use. Men who were

handy fashioned jewelry from buttons or bone or wood. Discussion of the possibility of exchange occupied much time while occasionally men volunteered for labor details which sometimes brought in a few cents pay or increased rations.

Life in all prisons was very much the same. Many men slept in their clothes and after rising, washed themselves usually with a scanty amount of water. Meals were generally breakfast about eight a.m. and supper at four. After breakfast, a squad would police the camp. Reports in those days stressed the vermin which infested the clothing, quarters and often the persons of the prisoners. Occasionally, if the prison was large enough, a boxing match or wrestling match would be held. Among officer groups, classes in various activities such as debating, music, etc. were held.

Next to a hope for exchange, the idea of escape was uppermost in the minds of many prisoners. No sooner had they been confined than they began to lay plans for escape. Occasionally, clothes were smuggled into the prison, sometimes by the connivance of the guards. On both sides it was found almost impossible to prevent prisoners from trading with the guards. A bribe might cause a guard to turn his back or a pass might be forged. Prisoners were known to climb out the chimneys of temporary quarters and let themselves down to the ground with a rope or bedding. However, the favorite method was the construction of a tunnel. This required organization of a group. A shaft would be sunk beneath a bunk for three or four feet and then run out horizontally beyond the fence or wall. The diameter of the tunnel was no greater than would accomodate one person on all fours. The loosened dirt would be carried back in a haversack or pail and disposed of in a sink or well or latrine. A dark night would be chosen for escape. Only a few men could be trusted with the secret of an attempt as any considerable gathering of prisoners in any particular spot was sure to arouse the suspicions of the guards. Frequent inspections were made to discover these underground passages and some of the guards became quite skillful in thwarting such plans. Also, spies in the guise of prisoners reported any suspicious circumstances to the authorities. Sometimes, a tunnel angled upward too soon so that on breaking through at the top, the prisoners found themselves still inside the fence or wall. Attempts at escape when discovered were not always treated with severity. In some prisons the guards regarded it as a game, at which each side was trying to outwit the other.

Escapes from Andersonville were not frequent. A triple stockade required such a long tunnel that many prisoners grew tired before it was completed while other prisoners simply were not up to the physical effort required. In the North, frequent escapes were made from Camp Douglas at Chicago due to careless guards before a fence was constructed. Probably the most celebrated escape was

that of General John H. Morgan from Ohio State Penitentiary at Columbus. After three weeks of tedious work, they cut through two solid feet of brick and masonry and ran a tunnel beyond the wall. Morgan and seven officers escaped; two were recaptured but Morgan made his way south to freedom.

DIDJA KNOW?

That Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the former Commissioner of Baseball, back during the Babe Ruth era, was named by his father in honor of the Battle of Kenesaw Mountain. His father, Dr. Abraham Landis, was assistant surgeon for the 35th Ohio Vol. Infantry, and lost his leg at the battle - which he termed "the only blunder in the drive of General Sherman from Chattanooga to Atlanta."

THEY BOMBED OUT

Francies W. Palfrey in The Antietam and Fredericksburg from the 1882 Campaigns of the Civil War series writes of Generals Burnside and Hooker as follows:

"Burnside, also, was a West Point graduate, but he had been out of service more than seven years when the war broke out. Few men, probably have risen so high upon so slight a foundation as he. He is dead, and what must be said of him is therefore to be said with forbearance. His personal appearance was striking and fine, and his manner was frank and captivating. Nobody could encounter his smile and receive the grasp of his hand without being for sometime under a potent influence. It is probably true that that man's manner made his fortune, for he remained long in service in high places, and yet his presence was an element of weakness where he was a subordinate and was disastrous when he held a great command.

"Hooker, too, is dead. Brave, handsome, vain, insubordinate, plausible, untrustworthy, he had many of the merits of a lieutenant, but not all, and he too failed dismally when he was made Commander-in-Chief. As an inferior, he planned badly and fought well; as Chief, he planned well and fought badly. He was so unfortunate in his bearing as a corps commander that his great chief Sherman was glad to be rid of him, and he left the Army in front of Atlanta, and never was set to work against troops again."

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