

Abraham Lincoln described him as a “*brown, chunky little chap, with a long body, short legs, not enough neck to hang him, and such long arms that if his ankles itch he can scratch them without stooping.*” The President was, of course, expressing his opinion upon first viewing General Philip Henry Sheridan. Impulsive, brash, inspiring, profane, electrifying, blustery, decisive, vindictive, spirited, opportunistic, temperamental—“*Little Phil*” was anything but bland. Controversy would follow him all of his life with even his birthplace and date in dispute. According to his memoirs, Sheridan stated he was born on March 6, 1831, in Albany, New York. At other times he listed his date of birth in 1830 and 1832 in such varied places as Somerset, Ohio and Massachusetts. (Some historians have him born at sea en route to America or in Ireland.)

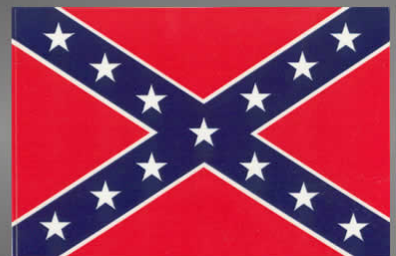
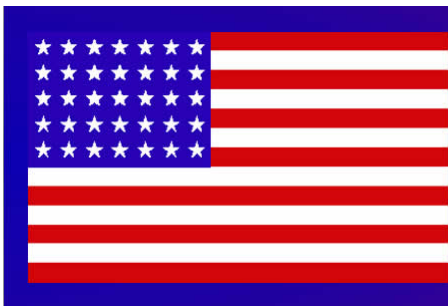
Shortly after his arrival at West Point while in military formation, Sheridan in a fit of rage at the cadet officer, William R. Terrill, broke ranks and chased Terrill with a fixed bayonet. He later fought Terrill with his fists and promptly received a year’s suspension from the Academy. He returned and graduated in the Class of 1853 (no. 34 of 49). Sheridan’s physical stature was certainly unimposing. He stood no more than 5’5” tall, weighed no more than 115 pounds placed on a torso with rather short legs and disproportionately long arms, and almost Mongolian eyes. Probably his most distinguishing physical characteristic was his “large, piercing black eyes” of which a friend said, “*I never saw eyes which showed as many shades of feeling....*”

When the Civil War began, Sheridan was a mere captain in the 13th Infantry in southwest Missouri. Few would experience such a meteoric rise. By war’s end he ranked as a Major General. In between he distinguished himself in both theaters of the war: Perryville, Stone’s River, Missionary Ridge, Yellow Tavern, Cedar Creek, the raids around Richmond and elsewhere. At Stone’s River he was credited with saving William Rosecrans’ army; at Missionary Ridge he led an impetuous charge which a newspaperman labeled as “*one of the greatest miracles in military history*”; at Cedar Creek he made a heroic ride to rally his beaten army. Ulysses S. Grant stated: “*I rank him with Napoleon, Frederick, and the great commanders of history.*” Yet, the controversy continued. At Chickamauga he was criticized for a sluggish and indecisive performance; his burning of the Shenandoah Valley was considered by some as unnecessarily brutal; his demand that Gouverneur Warren be removed from command the last week of the war entirely vindictive.

Sheridan’s post-war career included more of the same—Command of the Fifth Military District during Reconstruction, defeat of the Western Plains Indians, promotion to Lieutenant General in 1869 and Full General in 1888. Yet, always the hullabaloo....removal from the District command within six months for excessive harshness, inhumane treatment of the Indians, difficulties with former Civil War subordinates such as George Custer and George Crook, and continuing to support the scandal-ridden Grant administration. Sheridan died at age 57 on Sunday, August 5, 1888, just three days after completing his two-volume *Personal Memoirs*. Many years after his death his wife, Irene, was asked why she never remarried. “*I would rather be the widow of Phil Sheridan,*” she stated adamantly, “*than the wife of any man living.*” Even in death Sheridan remained a controversial figure. As one of the most hated names in the South, he was buried literally in Robert E. Lee’s front yard of the Custis-Lee Mansion in Arlington National Cemetery.

Our speaker this month, Larry Arnold, will present “Another Look at Sheridan.” Larry is a member and newsletter editor of the Ann Arbor Civil War Round Table. He is also a member of the Plymouth Historical Society and has agreed to write their newsletter as well. He is retired after a career in sales management for such major food manufacturers as Del Monte and Best Foods. As an admirer of Sheridan, Larry contends that “Little Phil” is “one of the most overlooked and under appreciated” generals of the war and has “suffered unfair criticism from recent revisionists.”

This is a must-see presentation! Mark your calendars: **MONDAY, MARCH 28.**

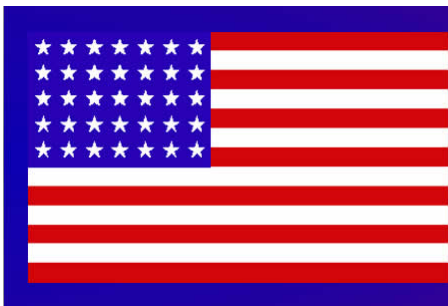
**ODDS & ENDS:**

- **FALL FIELD TRIP:** Details for our trek to Antietam/Harpers Ferry in October have been finalized (dates, food, bus, motel, etc.). Come hear the information and SIGN UP for the trip.
- **ELECTIONS:** This month we will hold our yearly elections for officers. Anyone interested in throwing his/her hat into the ring, show up and let us know.

QUIZ: Generals (and others) “Who Didn’t Like Each Other Much” [Part II]

1. Which general did Stonewall Jackson have court-martialed for “retreating” at Kernstown against orders? And, which general constantly quarreled with James Longstreet and was transferred to Jackson’s command where Stonewall would have him arrested or reduced in command on numerous occasions?
2. Which Union general chastised a subordinate at Second Manassas by remarking, “To say that his non-action during the whole day was wholly unexpected and disappointing, and that it provoked severe comment on all hands, is to state the facts mildly”? And, of whom was he speaking?
3. Braxton Bragg was hated by a slew of fellow Confederate generals. Which one said that Bragg’s failures “had totally lost him the confidence of the army, and....this fact alone destroyed his usefulness”? And, which one said that Bragg “could be of greater service elsewhere than at the head of the Army of Tennessee”?
4. Which Confederate general said of Jeb Stuart: “[He] carries around him a banjo player and a special correspondent. This claptrap is noticed and lauded as a peculiarity of genius, when, in fact, it is nothing else but the act of a buffoon to get attention”? And, which of Robert E. Lee’s cynical generals earned a reputation as a disputatious “croaker” and was criticized by a War Department official as “harsh, abrupt, often insulting in the effort to be sarcastic”—a man who would “offend many and conciliate none”?
5. Which Michigan colonel (later a general) preferred charges against Colonel Dixon Miles for his mistakes at First Manassas? And, of whom did Lincoln say, “I think that during General Burnside’s command of the army, you have taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country....”?
6. Which of his corps commanders did George Meade severely rebuke for the unauthorized movement of his corps at Gettysburg? And, who did Meade hotly blame for not giving more specific orders at Fredericksburg?
7. Which Confederate general, who served under Stonewall Jackson and was severely wounded at Second Manassas, accused Jackson of “bad marches and bad management”? And, which Confederate general, mortally wounded at Gettysburg, critically said, “Jackson would kill up his army the way he marches and the bad management in the subsistence Department”?
8. Which Union general slapped a fellow general in the face at the Galt House moments before he was shot and killed? And, who shot him?
9. Of whom did George McClellan state: “The paltry young man who wanted to teach me the art of war will in less than a week either be in full retreat or badly whipped”? And, of whom did Henry Halleck say, “He does not understand strategy and should never plan a campaign”?
10. When Jeb Stuart’s father-in-law remained in the U.S. army, Jeb wrote: “He will regret it but once, and that will be continually.” Name this Union general. And, because of his dislike for his father-in-law, what did Jeb do his own young son?

Last month only 20-some hearty souls braved the snowy weather and attended our **AUCTION**. Even with our reduced numbers, 15 people purchased items ranging in price from \$1 to \$12, totaling \$185 for our Treasury. A special thank you is extended to all who showed up and participated.

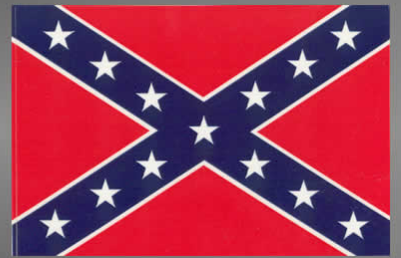
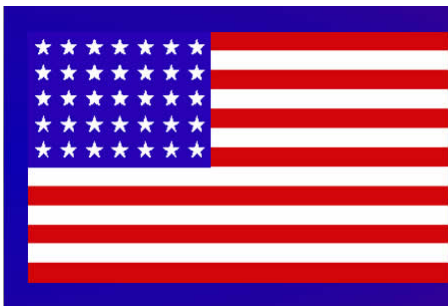


In the late summer of 1864 John S. Mosby's Partisan Rangers continued to harass and make life miserable for Phil Sheridan's forces in the Shenandoah Valley. When Sheridan complained to Grant, the commanding issued this order: *"The families of most of Mosby's men are known and can be collected. I think they should be taken and kept at Fort McHenry....When any of Mosby's men are captured, hang them without trial."* On August 17 Sheridan sent Grant a note: *"Mosby has annoyed me and captured a few wagons. We hung one and shot six of his men yesterday."* On September 23 a group of Mosby's raiders attacked a force of Federals near the town of Front Royal, and in their retreat, the Partisans killed a Lieutenant Charles McMaster. Conflicting stories emerged from his death scene: The Rebels claimed he *"was killed in the excitement of a fight, by men who were seeking to escape from a superior force and who were fighting for their lives."* Federals, however, stated that McMaster was brutally slain after he had been wounded and attempted to surrender. Either way, George Custer rode up to find McMaster's body. Six of the Rangers had been captured, and Custer ordered them executed. The townspeople who witnessed the execution never forgot the scene. *"The 'dark day' of 1864 is indelibly photographed in my memory,"* wrote one young girl. *"I have often wished I could blot it out, for it clouded my childhood."*

Four Rangers—David L. Jones, Lucian Love, Thomas E. Anderson, and Henry C. Rhodes—were shot and killed. The 17-year-old Rhodes, a local, had borrowed a horse to participate in the raid, hoping he could show his bravery and be accepted into Mosby's outfit. When the boy was ordered to be shot, his widowed mother ran forward and in tears begged the Federals to spare her son. A Michigan soldier pulled his pistol and killed Rhodes. An eyewitness wrote: *"Such excitement and cruelty as never was witnessed here before....His poor mother is almost crazy."* Two others—William T. Overby and another named Carter—were to be hanged. Carter asked for a Bible, read a few passages and then prayed. Impassively, Overby assured his executioners: *"Mosby'll hang ten of you for every one of us."* Before dawn the next day some of the townspeople, daring consequences, slipped out of their homes and used wheelbarrows to bring in the bodies. A sheet was draped mercifully over that of Henry Rhodes before it was delivered to his mother.

On October 29 Mosby notified Robert E. Lee: *"I desire to bring through you to the notice of the government the brutal conduct of the enemy manifested toward citizens of this district....During my absence from the command, the enemy captured six of my men, near Front Royal; these were immediately hung by order and in the presence of General Custer. They also hung another lately in Rappahannock. It is my purpose to hang an equal number of Custer's men whenever I capture them...."* Robert E. Lee sent Mosby's message on to Secretary of War James Seddon with an attachment endorsing Mosby's suggestion. *"I have directed Colonel Mosby....to hang an equal number of Custer's men in retaliation for those executed by him."*

On November 6 Mosby exacted his revenge. On this day Mosby ordered 27 Federal prisoners to draw a slip of paper from a hat. Twenty of the slips were blank; seven had a mark on them, indicating the death sentence. One drummer boy began to sob hysterically: *"O God, spare me! Precious Jesus, pity me!"* When he pulled the blank slip from the hat, his entire demeanor changed as he shouted, *"Damn it, ain't I lucky!"* For seven others, however, fate dealt a different hand. The final lot included two corporals from the 2nd New York Cavalry, James Bennett and Charles E. Marvin; a private of the 5th Michigan Cavalry, George H. Soule; a Private Melchior H. Haffnagle of the 153rd New York Infantry; Lieutenant Israel C. Disosway of the 5th New York Heavy Artillery; and two other unidentified soldiers. (Disosway was able to escape execution by flashing a Masonic pin and the Masonic distress signal to one of the Rebels; a substitute was selected for his execution. Dispute exists as to his identity.) These seven men were taken as close to Custer's headquarters as they could be taken in safety. Mosby had ordered that four of the prisoners should be shot—for Jones, Love, Anderson, and Rhodes—and three hanged—for Overby, Carter, and Willis. It was Mosby's way of retaliating, in what he described as *"the most loathsome act of his career."*



Night came on, dark and rainy, as the condemned men were conducted toward Custer's headquarters. In the darkness about 4:00 A.M. Soule, the Michigan man, managed to escape after working his bindings loose. A halt was made near Berryville on the Winchester Turnpike in Beemer's Woods, where three of the Federals were to be shot. Corporal Bennett and Private Haffnagle were instantly killed, but when a third weapon misfired, Charles Marvin knocked his would-be executioner to the ground and also escaped. The remaining three victims were hanged. It was slow work—"too damned slow work," commented one of the executioners. On one of the bodies a sign was placed for the Federals: "*These men have been hung in retaliation for an equal number of Colonel Mosby's men hung by order of General Custer, at Front Royal. Measure for Measure.*"

Later that morning a local resident discovered the grisly scene. He examined both Bennett and Haffnagle, and to his surprise found they were both still alive. The two men miraculously recovered. Bennett lost much of his eyesight and the use of his arm, while Hoffnagle had his right arm amputated. When Mosby found out that two of the original seven had escaped, it did not appear to bother him. He later stated: "*If my motive had been revenge I would have ordered others to be executed in their place & I did not. I was really glad they got away as they carried the story to Sheridan's army.*" His object, he said, "*was to prevent the war from degenerating into a massacre....It was really an act of mercy.*"

On November 11 Mosby had another note sent to Phil Sheridan. In part, it read: "*Some time in the month of September....six of my men....were hung and shot in the streets of Front Royal, by the order and in the immediate presence of Brigadier-General Custer. Since then another [Willis]....was also hung. A label affixed to the coat of one of the murdered men declared that 'this would be the fate of Mosby and all his men.' Since the murder of my men not less than 700 prisoners....captured from your army by this command, have been forwarded to Richmond....On the 6th seven of your men were, by my order, executed on the Valley Pike, your highway of travel. Hereafter any prisoners falling into my hands will be treated with the kindness due to their condition, unless some new act of barbarity shall compel me reluctantly to adopt a course of policy repulsive to humanity.*"

Executions of the variety described above now stopped between the two armies.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Richard Garnett and A.P. Hill
2. John Pope and Fitz-John Porter
3. Patrick Cleburne and James Longstreet
4. Lafayette McLaws and Daniel Harvey Hill
5. Israel Richardson and Joseph Hooker
6. Dan Sickles and Ambrose Burnside
7. William Taliaferro and Dorsey Pender
8. William "Bull" Nelson and Jefferson C. Davis
9. John Pope and George McClellan
10. Philip St. George Cooke ; changed his name from Philip St. George Cooke Stuart to James Ewell Brown Stuart, Jr.

Circle the date: **MONDAY, MARCH 28**, for "Another Look at Sheridan," as presented by Larry Arnold. It's one you won't want to miss. The meeting, which begins at 6:30 P.M., will be at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). Show up early for some extra fellowship. See you there....

Also try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.