NATHANIEL C. HUGHES
- on -
“Tyree Harris Bell”

By Bruce Allardice

Thousands of Southerners rode with Nathan Bedford Forrest, that “Dread Warrior” of Tennessee. For generations Forrest’s story has been told and retold by worshipful soldiers, South and North, and by admiring historians, North and South. Indeed, Forrest, “The Wizard of the Saddle”, has become a military figure of international renown.

However, the principal subordinates of this legendary Confederate cavalry leader remain blurry background figures: William H. “Red” Jackson, Abraham “Abe” Buford, James R. Chalmers, Frank C. Armstrong and Tyree Bell. Like most of the brigade and division commanders in the Confederate army, Jackson, Buford, Armstrong and Chalmers had received college educations, and the first three served in the prewar U.S. army. The other lieutenant, Tyree Harris Bell, was cut from different cloth—a farmer with no prewar military experience whatsoever, a prototype citizen-soldier.

Bell has been overlooked by historians, as have Forrest’s other principal subordinates, largely, it seems, because of the powerful magnetism of their chief. Yet how can one understand Forrest and his importance in the American Civil War without knowledge of those lieutenants entrusted with carrying out his designs. “Wizard” as he was, Forrest nonetheless never won a battle by himself.

Nat Hughes first encountered Tyree Harris Bell while writing a book on the Battle of Belmont, where Bell led the 12th Tennessee Infantry. This overnight soldier performed with conspicuous and surprising competence during the 12th’s first combat. Bell later switched to the cavalry, raising a cavalry regiment in West Tennessee behind Union lines. He led a brigade of cavalry with “promptness and energy” in Forrest’s most spectacular late war engagements, including Brice’s Crossroads, Tupelo and Fort Pillow. Nat Hughes believed Bell would lead him to Forrest using a road less traveled. Thus he and two of Bell’s great-grandchildren spent three years preparing the general’s biography.

A native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr. attended Yale University and the University of North Carolina, receiving a Ph.D. in American History from the latter school. Headmaster of various schools in Tennessee, teaching English and History, Nat retired in 1987 to play duplicate bridge and write books. He is the author, editor, or compiler of over twenty books, including one collection of poems. Seven of his books have been selections of the History Book Club or the Book of the Month Club. Among Nat’s books is the “Military Memoirs of Brig. Gen. William P. Carlin” (co-edited with our own Rob Girardi) and the standard biographies of Generals William J. Hardee and Gideon Pillow. His latest book is “Brigadier General Tyree H. Bell, C.S.A.: Forrest’s Fighting Lieutenant” (U. of TN Press, 2004). Dr. Hughes is currently completing a study of Yale University’s Confederates.
In April and May 2005, once again Illinois troops “invaded” Vicksburg MS—but this time without death, destruction or disease!! The Chicago Round Table’s 55th annual battlefield tour, the Vicksburg Campaign, was again a resounding success! As befitting a return to the place where Ed Bearss’ renown was born, as well as our own 65th anniversary year, this was the largest tour in CWRT history—with 140 people on 3 busses participating! With Ed Bearss, Terry Winschel and Parker Hills as tour guides, all were in agreement that no Civil War tour in America ever had better, more well-informed, experienced guides!

The 2005 tour focused on the Vicksburg Campaign—not the actual siege or battle for the city itself, so our three busses put a lot of mileage on traveling Grant’s historic campaign routes. We returned to such familiar and previously visited places as Grand Gulf Military Park, the USS Cairo, Chickasaw Bayou, the ruins at Windsor, Big Black River and the Vicksburg National Military Park. The large group tromped faithfully behind Ed, Terry and Parker listening to their excellent commentary at each of these historic battle sites and places, following the Union or Confederate troop progress on Terry’s well-coordinated military maps. (Did anyone else marvel at Terry’s ability to hold those maps up forever for Ed’s commentary!?)

But also mixed into the tour were fascinating visits to new places the Chicago Round Table had not visited before, including a historic re-enactment of traveling Grant’s Louisiana route to get below the city, Winter Quarters plantation, the Dillon Plantation (recently acquired by the VNMP) and the battlefield (and historic courthouse) at Raymond. After traveling through the Louisiana cotton fields (historic site of some of the South’s richest plantations), more than one tour member was overheard to say that now, as never before, they finally understood and appreciated the logic and wisdom of Grant’s Vicksburg Campaign strategy.

There were, as always, some unforgettable moments. Meeting 5th generation Sid Champion himself atop Champion Hill, listening to he and Ed discuss family and local history on an overcast Saturday afternoon, will remain a lasting memory to all present. Others will never forget the Friday afternoon visit to historically recreated Bethel Church, gazing into the historic, unchanged, deeply-sunken road Union troops used in a rare night-time march moving inland to Port Gibson from their river crossing. Who can forget the Friday night presentation by Terry Winschel to Margie (Ed) Bearss of the first United States flag to fly over the USS Cairo since its sinking in 1862? Some recall Judge Bobbie DeLouder describing his courtroom in the historic Raymond courthouse. Others may recall the Confederate Purple Heart going to recently returned Iraq War veteran Robert Rudich (whose frantic race for a departing bus at Grand Gulf earned the honor).

All these moving memories are what truly make our Chicago Round Table tour unique and historic. For those present, the Vicksburg Campaign of 2005 was an eternally memorable occasion!
On May 13th Daniel D. Nettesheim gave an informative and interesting perspective on “Winfield Scott Hancock: Leadership and the Subordinate General” in front of 85 members and guests at the 641st regular meeting of The Civil War Round Table of Chicago. A retired Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nettesheim has been a professor of history at West Point among several other prestigious positions. In his presentation he used the life and career of General Hancock to examine the role of a subordinate commander.

During 1862-63, the Army of the Potomac had mostly mediocre corps and division commanders, but Winfield Scott Hancock was the exception. After serving in the Mexican War, Hancock, a career army officer, served in brigade, division, and corps command. At the Battle of Gettysburg he led the Union forces at the end of the first day. During “Pickett’s Charge” Hancock was wounded. He was instrumental in Union success during the Overland Campaign of 1864. His Gettysburg wounds forced him into early retirement in 1864.

Exemplary in every aspect of command, Hancock set a tremendous example for his soldiers. “He was in he middle of every drill,” explained Nettesheim. “He stood up for his men and did what he thought was right. He also had the ability to be human and could laugh at himself.” An example of his decision-making, regardless of criticism, occurred during Pickett’s Charge. In the artillery bombardment Hancock overruled the order of the artillery chief for the Union artillery to conserve its ammunition, because he believed artillery counter-fire, however inefficient, would encourage his infantry.

Hancock repeatedly illustrated his attitude toward professional soldier’s behavior. Before the Battle of Fredericksburg (December 13, 1862) he turned down the use of a house to sleep in, in order to sleep on the ground with his men. Prior to Pickett’s Charge, Hancock slowly and deliberately rose up and down his lines in order to boost his men’s morale. At one point, he emphatically stated, “There are times when the life of a corps commander does not matter!” Explained Nettesheim, “Hancock shared adversity with his soldiers by setting a good example.”

Using the imagery of symbols, Hancock enhanced his reputation. He often praised his men, and his men responded. Soldiers under Hancock’s command had pride in the feeling that “we’re all in this war together.” Believing a commander must look, as well as be, in control, he kept a supply of ten starched shirts so that he would always appear well dressed. His men nicknamed their tall, immaculate commander “Hancock the Superb”. Another characteristic of Hancock was his instinct to preserve and protect his artillery. In the retreat after Fredericksburg Hancock refused to pull his last three regiments away until his last cannon was saved.

The role of a subordinate general is difficult. He must obey the orders and battle plans of the overall commander. He must offer constructive criticism if asked, walking the fine line between loyalty and honest disagreement. Prior to the Battle of Fredericksburg, Hancock and other Union generals voiced their apprehensions about the attack on Marye’s Heights. Stung by the implied criticism, General Ambrose Burnside informed Hancock and others that they would be disloyal if they disagreed with him. Hancock replied, “I did not realize that the order to attack was already planned.” He loyally swallowed his apprehensions, and pressed his attack with such verve that his division sustained 40% casualties. Nettesheim contrasted this with the actions of General Dan Sickles at Gettysburg, where Sickles, not liking the line army commander George Meade laid out for him, disobeyed orders and advanced, destroying the integrity of the Union line. In the ensuing rout of Sickles’ corps, Hancock took six specific actions to restore the Union line. Nettesheim concluded, “As a subordinate general, General Hancock was indeed superb!”

**MAY MEETING**
**BY LARRY GIBBS**

During the recent CWRT Vicksburg tour, Ed Bearss announced his choices as co-winners of the fourth annual Edwin C. Bearss Preservation Award: the Franklin (Tennessee) campaign of the Civil War Preservation Trust and the Friends of Raymond (Mississippi). This year our contributors generosity, a sign of abiding respect and affection for Ed, has provided us with funding for these two awardees. Each receives $1,000 from the Battlefield Preservation Fund of the Civil War Round Table of Chicago in recognition of this honor—along with the gratitude of Round Table members and preservationists everywhere for jobs well done.

Thanks to the following individuals who contributed to the Bearss Award fund this year:


**BEARSS AWARD GOES TO FRANKLIN CAMPAIGN-CWPT AND FRIENDS OF RAYMOND**
**BY MARY ABROE**
On June 25th the DuPage County
Historical Museum is sponsoring a visit
to Milwaukee that includes a tour of the
Civil War Old Soldiers’ Home and the
historic Pabst family mansion. The cost is
$50 for members, $60 for non-members.
For more information, call Joyce
Matuszewich at (630) 682-7343

CWRT past president Bruce Allardice
will be speaking to the Evanston
Historical Society August 17th on “The
Election of 1864”. The meeting is at the
Dawes House, 225 Greenwood St.,
Evanston, at 7 p.m., and is open to the
public. Contact the EHS at (847) 475-3410
for more details, or visit their website
at www.evanstonhistorical.org.

Sylvia Castle at the Abraham Lincoln
Book Store wishes to remind us that the
10% discount for CWRT members at the
book shop covers “In print” books
ONLY. The other merchandise is not eli-
gible for a 10% discount.

Tom Cartright of the Carter House
Museum in Franklin will be speaking on
“Humor in the Civil War” at the Salt
Creek CWRT annual banquet Friday, June
3rd at the Lisle Hilton. For more details,
phone Bill Hupp at (630) 790-3823.

The Northern Illinois CWRT is having
Dr. Jack Welch speak at its 22nd annual
banquet meeting this June 17th at
Concorde Banquets in Lake Zurich. Dr.
Welch’s topic is “The Court Martial of
Union Surgeons”. Cost is $30 per person.
For more details, contact Tom Postema at
(847) 303-5030.

Know of any upcoming talks, events, or
publications? All members are welcome
to contribute items to the newsletter.
Contact the editor at
bsallardice1@aol.com or (847) 375-8305.

**Schimmelfennig Boutique**
The following items are generally avail-
able at each monthly meeting: The Civil
War Round Table History. Lapel pins,
Mugs, Meeting Tapes and CDs, and Civil
War Buff posters. Proceeds from the sale
of these items go to support the Battlefield
Preservation Fund of The Civil War
Round Table of Chicago. There is also a
book raffle, with proceeds again going to
benefit battlefield preservation.

**Silent Auction**
A silent auction is held at each monthly
dinner meeting, for books donated by
Ralph G. Newman and other members.
The minimum bid is $5 per book, with a
minimum raise of $1 per bid. Five minutes
after the conclusion of the speaker’s presen-
tation, bidding will close and the high-
est bid is the winner of each book.
Proceeds benefit battlefield preservation.

**Douglass Association Dinner**
Illinois State Historian (and CWRT
member) Tom Schwartz will address
the annual dinner of the Stephen A.
Douglass Association on Saturday,
June 11 at the Holiday Inn Mart
Plaza. His topic is “Lincoln and
Douglass in the Race of Politics and
Life.” Ceremonies at the Douglass
Tomb, 636 E. 35th St., will begin at 5
p.m., followed by cocktails and dinner
at the Holiday Inn at 6:30. Cost of the
dinner is $35 per person. For further
information and reservations, contact
David Richert at 773-761-6937,
drichert@earthlink.net.

**Vicksburg Tour Photos**
Hal Ardell, who takes those great pho-
tos of our meetings, has put together a
photo gallery of the recent Vicksburg
battlefield tour that anyone can access
Registration is required. Contact Hal at
hal229@ameritech.net for registration
and access details. Member George
Evans has another tour photo gallery
available for viewing at
http://George.smugmug.com/gallery/52
0694/1/21447234.

**Future Meetings**
Regular meetings are held at the Holiday
Inn Mart Plaza, 350 North Orleans
Street, the second Friday of each month,
unless otherwise indicated.

June 10: Nat Hughes, “Brigadier
General Tyrree H. Bell, C.S.A.”

Sept. 9: Nevins-Freeman Award
Address: Richard McMurry, subject
TBA

Oct. 14: Celebration of 65th
Anniversary of Chicago CWRT:
Ed Bearss, “The Most Forgotten,
Misunderstood Least Appreciated
Civil War Battles and Soldiers”

Nov. 11: (Veteran’s Day): Edward
Bonekemper III, “A Victor Not a
Butcher—U.S. Grant’s Overlooked
Military Genius”

Dec. 9: Stephen Fratt, “Civil War
Tactics and Technology”

**New Members**
Lincoln Memorial Shrine
125 W. Vine St
Redlands, CA 92373

**Dues Reminder**
Be early and save a few bucks! In order
to take advantage of the $5 reduction in
dues for Regular and Family members,
dues must be in by Sept. 1, 2005. The
dues are $40 ($35 for email newsletter)
for Regular members if paid by Sept. 1st,
and $45/40 if paid after that date. A
Family membership (two members) has
dues of $55 ($50 for email newsletter) if
paid by Sept. 1, and $60/55 thereafter. If
you have any questions, phone Janet
Linhart, our registrar, at (630) 752-1330,
or email her at janetlinhart@att.net.