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Prayer of the Horse to the Master

To Thee, My Master, I offer my prayer: Feed me, water and care for me, and, when the day’s work is done, provide me with shelter, a clean, dry bed, and a stall wide enough for me to lie down in comfort. Always be kind to me. Your voice often means as much to me as the reins. Pet me sometimes, that I may serve you the more gladly and learn to love you. Do not jerk the reins, and do not whip me when going up hill. Never strike, beat or kick me when I do not understand what you want, but give me a chance to understand you. Watch me and if I fail to do your bidding, see if something is not wrong with my harness or feet. Do not check me so that I cannot have the free use of my head. If you insist that I wear blinders stand well out from my eyes. Do not overload me, or hitch me where water will drip on me. Keep me well shod. Examine my teeth when I do not eat. I may have an ulcerated tooth, and that, you know, is very painful.

Do not fix my head in an unnatural position, or take away my best defense against flies and mosquitos by cutting off my tail. I cannot tell you when I am thirsty, so give me clean cool water often. I cannot tell you in words when I am sick, so watch me and by signs you may know my condition. Give me all possible shelter from the hot sun, and put a blanket on me, not when I am working, but when I am standing in the cold. Never put a frosty bit in my mouth. First warm it by holding it a moment in your hands. And finally, O My Master, when my useful strength is gone, do not turn me out to starve or freeze, or sell me to some human brute, to be slowly tortured and starved to death; but do Thou, My Master, take my life in the kindest way, and your God will reward you Here and Hereafter. You will not consider me irreverent if I ask this in the name of Him who was born in a stable. Amen.
moved to form for his attack on Veracruz. Scattered elements of Mexican cavalry, armed with long lances, short-barreled shotguns, sabers and lassos, could not stand up to the more heavily armed dragoons, each armed with a pair of pistols, carbine, and saber, and riding heavier horses. In combat, the Americans generally closed on an enemy force so they could use their sabers in a slashing fashion. Although their role was minor in the capture of Veracruz, the coming campaign would see them playing a vital role on numerous battlefields. At the Battle of Cerro Gordo, Harney was in his element. Persifor F. Smith, one of the two brigade commanders in the division of Brigadier General General David E. Twiggs was down with a fever, so Scott appointed Harney to command the brigade. In the flank attack on the Mexican position, Harney justified the honor. As John S.D. Eisenhower described in *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott*, in the charge of Harney’s brigade, “He led the brigade down the swale and up the slopes of El Télégirafo under heavy Mexican fire. Tall and athletic, he cut an inspirational figure for his men as he waved them on with his sword. It was said his shrill voice could be heard above the din.” The battle was a total victory for Scott and a thorough defeat for Mexican General Santa Anna.
Harney was respected as a fighter, but was not a popular troop commander nor popular with his peers. He was a harsh disciplinarian, given to hanging soldiers by their thumbs and imposing bucking and gagging on them, as well as other unpopular physical punishments. In the Seminole War, he was said to have hanged Seminoles without benefit of trial. In the earliest stages of the Mexican War, he had led an unauthorized foray into disputed territory. When his superior, Brigadier General John E. Wool, placed him under command of a politically appointed general, he objected and requested a transfer to General Taylor's army.

Harney's mounted brigade performed a variety of duties, both mounted and dismounted, with Scott's army. Reconnaissance was particularly valuable to Scott as he advanced through miles of hostile territory. Mounted clashes continued to be part of the troopers' activity. Escort duty, particularly of supply trains, was critical, with some companies detailed to escorting senior officers. But dragoons and mounted riflemen were trained to fight dismounted, so Harney's troops were often integrated into infantry attacks. Finally, when Scott entered Mexico City, his ceremonial column was led by his mounted troops.

When the Mexican War started, Harney had served for twenty-eight years. Although he continued after the war as colonel of the Second Dragoons, including fighting in Oregon, he was more often on detached service than serving with the regiment. By the onset of the Civil War, he was one of only four general officers of the line. A southerner, he was removed in 1861 from command of the Department of the West because of doubts about his fidelity to the Union. Never given another assignment, he retired in 1863 and spent his remaining years in Mississippi, where he died in 1889.

When the word came Sheridan had moved a little up the Valley to Berryville. Early was camped west of him, before Winchester in a position where several roads came to a nexus among some jutting heights. Stonewall Jackson had won a battle there in ’62; perhaps the Confederate commander felt it a place of happy augury to his side. Sheridan, who had visited the town during the early days of his Valley command, thought it radically defective as a military post, refused to put his own army there, and now planned to crush Early in it. At one o’clock in the morning of September 19, the men were roused from their beds, given a meal and hot coffee; at two, the whole army marched. Early had been moving his forces restlessly about during the previous days. Sheridan hoped to strike Winchester while only two of Early’s four divisions were there, but planned to inflict a Leuthen on whatever he did find. The main road from Berryville to Winchester, a good metalled highway, runs for three miles through a narrow ravine, then crosses a little belt of plain country and mounts a low plateau, at the far side of which stands Winchester town, the abutments of Little North Mountain soaring up behind it. A series of tracks, passable for infantry but not much else, roughly parallels the road through the hills south of the ravine. There are more hills broken and knob-like, north of it, reaching to the very foot of the plateau before Winchester.

The rebels had a fort at the outlet of the ravine, and their camps lined the plateau behind it, which was not quite high enough to afford a good view over the hills, nor did they have any force out in those hills.

Sheridan’s orders put Wilson’s cavalry division at the head of the advance. This officer was to use his mobility to the full; as soon as he found himself within the walls of the three-mile ravine press on at the gallop to seize the outlet fort, the only real danger to the movement. Behind Wilson, Wright’s VI Corps was to march through the ravine to the edge of the plateau, attack and fix the Confederates there, while Wilson covered their left flank, filing off onto some flat country southeast of the town. (see map 1.)

The XIX Corps would follow the VI through the ravine, swing right around the foot of the plateau and deliver an oblique attack on the left wing of the rebels as they faced Wright. Meanwhile the VII Corps would take the mountain tracks south of the ravine, strike Wright and Wilson on the right wing of the Confederates. Torbert with the division of Averell, was to come down the main Valley Pike on the Confederate left rear into the town. It was a combination attack, but one that stood in no debt to time, which make combinations fail; for Sheridan’s main body would be always under his hand for a change of assignments. In fact, all accidents were provided against but the one that occurred after Wilson went galloping up the ravine with the first false dawn behind him, and dismounting his men, stormed the fort. General Wright, that capable but formal soldier, marched on behind Wilson to deliver a surprise attack with his full equipment of ambulances, wagons and baggage following the infantry. With break-downs and bunching this transport jammed the road through the ravine; the XIX Corps could neither pass nor speed up (map 2). It was already noon and the VI engaging the whole rebel army in a fire-fight of the most murderous character when Sheridan in person discovered what was wrong, ordered the teamsters to “get those damned wagons into the ditch” and brought the XIX Corps to the field.

Now it was too late for them to oblique onto the Confederate left. Early had every man up; as the XIX Corps began to reach the field, he flung forward a storming column under his best officer, Rodes, against the right of the VI. One of Wright’s brigades went; the attack rushed on till it was halted by a battery of heroes from Maine, who stayed to shoot things out—unsupported artillery against foot. They gained time enough for the XIX to reach the line, marching and firing across the rebel front—suffering so much that by one o’clock the battle had sunk to a lull along parallel lines.

But one o’clock brought Crook and his VII Corps. Boldly changing plans in the middle of action, Sheridan switched it across the rear of his front around the foot of the plateau to the right of
the XIX, through the hills. Crook got his artillery onto a commanding eminence from which it would enfilade the rebel line. At three he delivered the attack meant for Emory under cover of the sudden, surprise fire from these guns. Among the confederated Gordon's division was broken and driven in, the XIX and VI Corps took up the forward movement and it was only some distance back that Early managed to reestablish a right-angled line at 4:30. (Map 3.)

And now he found himself in still deeper trouble. Young Wilson had gotten his cavalry division into the saddle again after Wright took over the fort from him in the morning. All day now he had been circling through open ground south of Winchester, great masses of horseman in full view but beyond gun-range of Early's men, reaching for their strategic flank, his action the perfect pattern for that of a motorized division. In the fog of war where decisions must be based on a glance, Early assumed that this was the whole Union cavalry force. He switched his own cavalry to fend it off, had nothing left to cover the left flank that was floating in air on the Valley turnpike when just at 4:30 Torbert came riding in at the head of five thousand horsemen.

As they appeared the Union men set up a whoop. Crook charged, Emory charged, Wright charged, the Confederate line was carried right away. "It was sad, humiliating, disgusting; I never saw our men in such panic before," wrote a Confederate officer who was in the wild rout that went tumbling through Winchester in the fading light. "God bless you," telegraphed Lincoln to Sheridan; for a moment all the voices of politics were stilled as this morning star of victory rose in the North, the brighter because it shone on the Valley, Stonewall Jackson's Valley, the rebels' great road of war.

That night Sheridan sent his tired, happy men to early rest. Next morning he had them on the roads with day. At Strasburg, where the Massanutten chain juts forth to split the Valley into twin tunnels, Early had taken his stand.

The eastern half of this double Valley had bad roads and few from here south. Against an army it is necessary only to watch the other gap, and right across this behind Strasburg cuts a deep gorge whose rocky sides are ill work for even an unarmed man to climb, its western beginning being back among the folds of Little North Mountain. Early held a promontory on the far side of this gorge, called Fisher's Hill, and thought the position so strong that he sent his gun limbers to the rear.

On the night of September 20th Sheridan was already in Strasburg and had formed his plan of
attack. As the Union troops filed in that evening the VI and XIX Corps were brought up with much parade and skirmishing to take position facing Fisher’s Hill across the gorge. The VIII Corps, last in line on the roads, by Sheridan’s order delayed its arrival, and then came by a long circuit, concealed behind hills from the Confederate signal stations on the Massanutten. Crook did not join the other corps, but made for the slopes of Little North Mountain. (Map 4.) It is all forest there; the VIII Corps men kept well back among the trees, scrambling all day of the 21st and 22nd among slopes and around peaks till they reached a position, still in woods, behind Confederate left rear. Even their weapons were wrapped in rags to hide the gleam and clang.

Along the side of Little North Mountain, past the front where Crook’s men lay concealed, runs a narrow road. Well, back on it Averell’s cavalry division was massed to draw the Confederate left as far forward as possible, and to ride in behind Crook after he had delivered his blow. Torbett meanwhile, with the divisions of Merritt and Wilson, was hurried forward up the road of the eastern Valley through Luray, a forty-mile march which only cavalry would make at speed. He was to get across the Massanutten where they flattened at their lower end, seize New Market in Early’s rear, intrench it and hold there. This march was the reason for delaying the main attack; Sheridan meant to make a clean sweep.

By evening of the 22nd September the cavalry had been given three days for its forty miles. The day had been spent in inconclusive skirmishing and artillery discharges around Fisher’s Hill. The rebels were gathering round their campfires for supper in very good heart when the sun went down. It was the signal; through the long shadows that stalked across the valley, eleven thousand men of Crook’s command dropped from heaven on the rear of the Confederate line. A shout went up. “We are flanked!” They broke, then began to run. The VI Corps took up the charge, scrambling across the wall-like ravine, with Sheridan in the middle of them, shouting “Forward everything! Don’t stop! Go on!” whenever anyone asked for instructions. Everything went forward; in the brief space between sundown and dark Early was driven in rout with the loss of part of his artillery and a big haul of prisoners.

The verdict of Winchester was confirmed. The North went wild with delight, and hundred-gun salutes were fired from every military post, but to Sheridan it was his most unsatisfactory battle. He had planned for destruction; he got only victory. Down the Luray Valley Torbett had encountered an insignificant Confederate force in an intrenched position. He was a good officer, but in the old style; though he had seen it at the Wilderness, the new tactic of cavalry charging on foot meant nothing to him. He kept his men in the saddle, uselessly jiggling around, till the opportunity passed. At Fisher’s Hill itself Averell committed an even worse fault. He waited respectfully for the infantry to clear the road ahead of him, and when they they had not entirely done so by dark he went into camp. Sheridan instantly relieved him and gave the division to Custer.

Early meanwhile, was given no chance to rally. The infantry pursuit held so hot to his heels he was driven to the limits of the Valley. Washington, supported by Grant, wanted Sheridan to follow on and make a campaign against the rear of Richmond, but the latter turned this idea down—it meant long communication lines without any railroad support. Through the next three weeks, therefore, he moved slowly back north, burning out the ripe grain, driving off animals, and answering all protests by the bland statement that loyal citizens could bring claims against the Federal government.

SECTION II

His operations had caused as much consternation in the Confederacy as delight in the North. It was impossible to repair the physical damage the Army of the Shenandoah had caused, but for the moment this was less important than the question of morale to Lee and the Confederate high command. Desertions were rising at an
 alarming rate; the men needed the stimulus of a spectacular victory, preferably one that would severely punish Sheridan, since his was the only one of the Union armies that had gained clean-cut wins in offensive battle. Moreover, his work in the Valley was done; the Confederacy was not ignorant of the reports that the bulk of his forces would be returned to Petersburg.

It was thus that Lee came to detach Longstreet's corps to Early for one more drive down the Valley, the last and greatest. They made a long, fast march. At 3:30 in the morning of October 19 they were on high hills from which they could look down into the sleeping Union camps along the line of Cedar Creek, just north of Strasburg. At four o'clock a clinging mist hid everything a hundred yards away; at five the rebel yell went up and an attack from three directions at once struck the horseshoe circuit of Union camps. (Map 5.)

We may be sure that if Sheridan himself had been in those camps, with his uncanny gift for discovering an enemy's purpose and movements, there would have been no surprise. But Sheridan was not there; he was in Winchester (not twenty, but fourteen miles back) holding a conference with some bigwigs from Washington. The first division of the VIII Corps, caught in their beds, was swept away, partly driven in flight, all its guns captured, without firing a shot. What was left of the corps tried to form a line on the XIX, but was taken simultaneously in front and from both flanks and likewise driven into rout with hardly any resistance. The XIX, taken in reverse by infantry, cannonaded in front but the captured guns of the VIII, lasted less than an hour before dissolving, all but part of one division, which fell in with the VI and some of the cavalry and made a stand on a hill overlooking the road, well back.

It was a hasty assemblage, ill-organized, only the cavalry thoroughly sound, which had camped so far from the foot as to be outside the circle of the rebel attack. Early might have swept it away, but his tired, hungry men could not be torn from the luxurious plunder of the Union camps. At nine in the morning, he got enough of them together to form line of battle and attach Wright, who retreated slowly, in pretty good order, swinging out Torbert on his left in a movement that held so much menace that Early gave up the notion of driving home for the time being.

At eleven the Confederate leader had his men in hand and could try again. He came on all along the line, order had been given for the Union force, the small surviving Union force to fall back once more, when the discouraged and beaten soldiers heard, far in their rear, that unbelievable and intoxication music—the cheers of Cedar Creek.

As they stared at each other in amazement the distant murmur swelled and swelled to a roar. In a few moments more men wearing the Maltese cross of the XIX Corps and the star of the VIII were joining them, not in order, but falling in under any standards or officers they could find. With them came Sheridan. He had mounted his horse at the shock of distant guns early in the morning, riding toward the sound until he met the first group of fugitives, whom he turned into a provost's guard by forming them across the road. “Turn around boys, we’re going back,” said he. The provost's guard grew to the strength of a company, a regiment, a division, a corps, shouting “Here's Phil Sheridan; we're going back!” and according to one witness, “throwing up their caps, leaping and dancing in wildest glee” as they hurried back to the battle.

“Where's the VI Corps?” asked Sheridan as he approached the front. There was nothing wrong with that formation; Wright had just stopped Early's last push, was all in line with Custer champing at the bit on one flank, asking every five minutes for
permission to go, the other two cavalry divisions in his left along the road, and such guns as had been saved with them. Early, upset by this bold countenance on the part of an army that ought to be in flight, and still more upset by the presence of so much cavalry—his own was weak and had fought badly—was beginning to think of defense. He formed a new line, along walls and rail breastworks, carrying it out left and right to bring infantry opposite those menacing clouds of horse.

While he was doing it Sheridan rode the front of the Union formations from one flank to the other, swinging his old blue campaign cap shouting, “We’re all right. We’ll whip them yet.”

It would be near four o’clock when he reached the extreme right away of the line and there noticed how thin the successive prolongations had made Early’s line. There had been time now to get the returned fugitives into some semblance of organization; Sheridan swung them forward in a general attack. It is inaccurate to say that it broke through anywhere; the whole Confederate line rolled right away before the attack, with Sheridan everywhere, urging his men to, “Run! Go after them!”

“We can’t run, we’re all tuckered out,” cried a private at him and drew the reply:

“If you can’t run, then shoot and holler. We’ve got the goddamnest twist on them you ever saw.”

They kept them going. The overpowering Union cavalry smothered Early’s attempts to rally. They recaptured the Union guns that had been taken in the morning; they captured all Early’s artillery; all his ambulances; his ammunition wagons, his transport of every kind, and 1,500 prisoners to balance the 1,400 they themselves had lost in the morning. Early went flying up the Valley in such shape that his corps had to be completely reorganized before it could take its place in Lee’s lines, and the Shenandoah was out of the war.

The news arrived north with that of the capture of Atlanta. “Sheridan and Sherman have knocked the bottom out of the Copperheads,” remarked Horace Greeley—correctly. For Democratic candidate McClellan was forced to repudiate his party’s platform declaring the war a failure and the elections went Lincoln by so huge a majority as to constitute carte blanche to the President.

**SECTION III**

Latrine rumor had set the date of the opening of the 1865 campaign for March 29. The day broke cold, wet and cheerless over the Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac, which had done little but outpost duty since Sheridan left last fall. Gregg, whom the men adored, had resigned; Wilson had gone to the West; they did not know the new leaders—and it seemed that the war of siege and thicket in which they were now tangled would never end. But that morning a bugle blew sourly through the damp; they saw a guidon half lift and behind it there came riding down the line a skinny little man on a big black horse. Little Phil was back; the men cheered and passed the word that things would be humming now.

They were right. For days now Little Phil had been pacing the floor at the headquarters conferences, replying to every argument with, “I tell you I’m ready now to strike out and smash them up. Let me go!” He had permission for that date. Before noon the whole corps, now 13,000 strong, was moving through the wet spring woods in the walking columns that meant a long pull with a hard fight at the end of it.

Nominally, it was to be a cavalry slash at the Confederate communications—Sheridan’s orders were effectively to break the two railroads that fed Lee—but actually the assignment was different, reflecting a subtle change in the status of both corps and commander. In the corps it was marked by the fact that only one of the three division leaders was now of the cavalry service—Custer, who had been brought up under Buford, and to the front under Sheridan himself. The others were led by a pair of infantrymen—Devin, Crook. And still more marked was the fact that now the whole corps was armed with repeating rifles and accompanied by that lavish equipment of artillery Sheridan had asked the year before—more artillery in proportion than the infantry itself had.

Obviously, this signified the triumph of Sheridan’s Theory of cavalry over Meade’s. But this is not all. As a subordinate leader whose idea had gained preference over those of his nominal chief, his position was somewhat anomalous. This anomaly was reflected both in his title, which was “Commander in Chief of the Army of the Shenandoah, serving with the Army of the Potomac,” and his assignment on this opening campaign.

For the drive he headed was only nominally against the rebel railroads. As Grant instructed
Sheridan before the move began, the true purpose was to make Lee come out of his trenches and fight. If, after Sheridan has reached the railroad lines, the Confederates threw against him more forces than he could handle, good—he could use his mobility to dodge them and either swing back to the main army, or turn south and hook up with Sherman, who was now thundering through the Carolinas. Meanwhile Grant would take Richmond; for the detachment of a force big enough to handle Sheridan would leave Lee’s lines unable to resist assault. If Lee divined the presence of the cavalry corps and opposed it with strong forces before it reached the railroads, good again—Sheridan was to call to his aid whatever infantry corps he found nearest, assume command of it, and fight the big battle right there, under his own direction.

That there would always be one or more infantry corps near enough to help Sheridan was provided by the remainder of the army orders for the movement. Sheridan’s corps was to cross the north-south Hatcher’s Run, headed west, then swing north in a vast half-right wheel. Inside his movement, making the same wheel through a narrow circle, Warren’s V Corps was to march; and inside Warren, through a circle still narrower, Humphreys with the II Corps.

In effect, then, Sheridan was given a semi-independent command as leader of a vanguard, with as many troops as he needed under his orders. In effect also, the last distinction between cavalry and infantry was abolished except during the period of the approach march. Sheridan’s own corps was merely placed at the extreme wing of the turning movement because, of all the corps, it had the greatest strategic mobility, and of all the generals, he had the greatest skill at using speed.

On the afternoon of the 29th March it rained, continuing through the night and the next day. The country southwest of Richmond is low-lying, densely wooded, quaggy, cut by wide, slow streams that give poor drainage. Under the pounding rains roads became impassable to wheels unless corduroyed, an important element in the military situation. It enabled the Confederates to gain utmost advantage from their South Side Railroad, running laterally behind the front of operations, and unaffected by the weather.

On the 27th, Lee had already learned of the cavalry concentration behind the extreme Union left, and realized that it portended a raid around his army—though, it seems, he did not grasp the ultimate purpose of the movement—he planned to use his superiority in communications to drive a wedge between Sheridan and the main Federal army, smashing the former.

The night of the 29th therefore saw General Fitz Lee arrive at Five Forks with all the cavalry of the rebel army. Next morning he was joined there by Pickett, who was to have charge of the operation, and who had brought two infantry divisions with their guns down the railroad. At the same time the Confederate forces in the trenches executed a general slide rightward along their lines, setting free part of A.P. Hills Corps and all of Anderson’s for a surprise attack. This blow was to strike in on the extreme left flank of the Union infantry, where their trenches ended near the junction of the White Oak Road and Boydton road, rolling their line up eastward and away from Sheridan.

The 30th March was a day of obscure skirmishing in the woods under the rains, Sheridan’s division Devin making contact with Pickett’s cavalry vanguard near Five Forks. That same rain and the configuration of the roads delayed the march of Warren’s V Corps, at the same time keeping Warren to a narrow front. When A.P. Hill’s attack developed on the morning of the 31st it therefore struck the head of a deep column instead of the flank of a line. (Map 6.)

Warren’s leading division was indeed driven in, but the defense impacted along the line of a stream. At noon Gill was stopped; in the afternoon help from Humphreys joined Warren and he counterattacked so vigorously that by afternoon Hill had lost more than his gains and was clinging for dear life to his field works, so lamed as to be unable to take more than a defensive part thenceforth.

Southwest of this battle Pickett had caught
Sheridan’s column coming along the several roads into which they had been forced by the rains. With artillery and concentration in his side (Sheridan’s guns had been delayed when he pushed on with the horse), he drove the Union cavalry back to Dinwiddie Court House. But here, about the time Warren finished his job on A.P. Hill, Sheridan got all his men assembled in trenches and Pickett also was brought to a standstill.

At this point Sheridan’s mission was already a success. Off to the east Grant was asking Wright and Parke whether they thought Lee had not taken enough men from his lines to make the final assault of Petersburg possible and they were answering “Yes.” But Sheridan was not thinking in terms of the general success alone. He was filled with the spirit of the offensive, when he learned at five o’clock of Warren’s success against Hill, he instantly perceived an opportunity to destroy Pickett. His own position, facing a little west of north, meant that the rebels facing him were nearly east-west, with Warren’s Corps far in behind their left rear, already across the direct communications between Pickett and Hill. Warren had dealt Hill so rude a stroke as to eliminate him for the time being; he was therefore free. If now, during the night, he swooped on Pickett’s rear with his three divisions--

Sheridan asked for the move. Far in the rear Grant and Meade, reports and maps in hand, discovered the same opportunity and sent Warren orders for the same move. But Warren, always a perfectionist, only replied by telegrams suggesting different routes of march, suggesting that a bridge be built, suggesting a dozen minor improvements in the plan, and while he wrote carefully worded dispatches the night passed. Pickett’s scouts brought him word of the danger he was in. At daybreak he drew in his horns, and Sheridan was in no mood over the missed opportunity as he followed up the retreat.

But now, on the morning of April 1, the weather conditions that had fought for the Confederates shifted their allegiance. Pickett’s men had come with trains and guns; even were these sacrificed they could hardly get away from Sheridan’s lighter-moving cavalry along the foundered roads. Pickett had to stand for a fight. He chose a position at Five Forks, where some old trenches, hastily improved, gave him some chances. His front was a rough crescent covering the road junction, facing south and with the left flank covered by a switch. (Inset, Map 6.)

Sheridan, as usual in possession of complete, accurate information about the enemy, had been following close with his 13,000. His orders brought back Warren on the scene from the right and at one o’clock the position solidified. Custer was facing the right flank of Pickett’s trench-line, Devin was spread along its front. Both were dismounted, along the edges of woods, with instructions to offer constant threats of attack, with the exception of one brigade of Custer’s command, which was kept in the saddle working westward, as though to attempt something against Pickett’s right wing, and thus attracting Fitz Lee’s cavalry to the defense of that flank.

This left Pickett with only that reentrant angle of trench to cover his left, and against this Sheridan designed to put in the whole of Warren’s Corps, supported on its right by the independent cavalry division of Mackenzie, which Grant had speeded forward. The attack was to be an oblique with a tremendously reinforced right wing, to throw the Confederates away from their main army. Of Warren’s three divisions, that of Ayres, the weakest, was deployed to come against the Five Forks lines from the southwest, linking up with Devin on its left engaging the attention of the rebels at the angle. Crawford, the heaviest of the three divisions, would dress on Ayres, slide past the end of the refused angle of trench and cut around to take the line in reverse. Griffin, with the third division, was to follow Crawford in column, lending intolerable weight to his push, Mackenzie ride beyond Crawford and cut the rebel retreat.

But Warren drew his sketch-map for the operation wrongly, placing the limit of Pickett’s trench-line too far east. The consequence was that Crawford, with Griffin following, missed it
entirely. Ayres, with whom Sheridan himself was riding, suddenly received an intense fire of musketry from his left, where his troops caught the blast from the angle.

Sheridan himself rode to the skirmish line, helping Ayres half-wheel the division leftward, bringing up the reserve brigade to prolong the line out to the right. His staff rode off to keep Crawford and Griffin going in the line they had already taken, striking far around behind across direction of the rebel retreat. Little Phil labored like a demon, got everything into position, carried two regiments out until they lapped round Pickett’s trench line, and then personally led a whirlwind charge, riding his big black horse with a guidon in his hand. Pickett’s flank burst; Devin swung in as the attack reached his front and the Confederate line rolled up. Griffin and part of Crawford arrived from the woods to destroy the last rally; Pickett lost 4,500 prisoners, all his guns, most of his trains, and Lee’s striking force, the only one he had for offensive operations, was destroyed.

And where was Warren while this was going on? He had been near Sheridan when Ayres was struck by the first flanking fire. When that broke out he rode off into the forest to change the direction of divisions Crawford and Griffin, but in the tangle of the woods missed them too, and did not again reach the front till it was all over but the pursuit. There was one thing Little Phil Sheridan could never forgive in any man—unwillingness to get to the scene of action. Now Warren had twice in two days been missing when he was most wanted. Sheridan preemptorily removed the hero of the Little Round Top and gave his core to Griffin.

SECTION IV

Now the lion of the South was wounded to death, no more men left for any offensive blow and along the Petersburg lines Wright and Parke attacking him. They won a lodgment, a trench, a whole line of trenches, they were in, during that twilight when Pickett’s last stand before Sheridan so disastrously broke. Next morning Jefferson Davis was summoned from church to flight; another morning and Weitzel’s men of XXV Corps were marching into Richmond under smoky pillars of destruction.

The pursuit started that April 3, Sheridan leading, with the cavalry and V Corps under his orders, Meade following fast with the II and VI Corps, and Grant bringing up the rest of the army. Lee’s assembly point was Amelia Court House. Both Grant and Sheridan guessed it would be near there. The moment the Petersburg lines were won Sheridan had been rushed forward to get across the Danville Railroad between Jetersville and Burke’s Junction. He reached position on the 4th of April, before Lee was fully assembled. That same night the V Corps was intrenched at Burke’s Junction, (Map 7), and one of Crook’s brigades lashed out along the line of the South Side railroad toward Farmville. It was this brigade that caught and burned Lee’s headquarters train the next morning, where it had been sent on ahead of the flying army.

Meade did not arrive with the other two union Corps till the 5th. Lee got his men fully in hand that day, and though the troops were dog-tired and starving, dared not stay with Sheridan’s formidable force already seizing positions along the only line of retirement now left open. He marched by night, in several columns with the trains north of them, to their right—a change from his original plan, which had been to send the trains ahead, clearing the roads—a change forced by Sheridan.

In the morning Meade went toward Amelia Court House in attack formation and found Lee gone. But Humphreys of the II Corps caught the tail of one rebel column and cannonading helped turn the whole army in the right direction. Besides, Sheridan, reaching far north on the extreme left wing of the Federal army, had already attained so great a distance that the Confederate columns had been unduly crowded toward their right, in their own trains. This slowed them up badly. Crook’s cavalry division was granted time to slip between two of the formations and attack trains so energetically that Anderson’s Confederate Corps had to stop and form line of battle to drive Crook off, just west of Sailor’s Creek.

This halt also stopped Ewell, who was behind Anderson on the roads; Wright’s VI Corps caught up the latter and forced him to stand on the banks
of Sailor's Creek. Meanwhile Sheridan brought the rest of his division up to help Crook hold Anderson's force. The latter was now in a line of hasty field works; Sheridan fronted it with all his corps but Crook, who was shifted round Anderson's front to close the only road of retreat. Ewell sent to Anderson, proposing they unite and drive this cavalry off, but before either general could do anything about it, Wright's artillery opened and at the same moment Crook led a dismounted charge onto Anderson's flank and rear.

Anderson was blown right away, with half his command taken prisoner, and the advance rushed on to surround Ewell, who surrendered with what was left of his corps before evening. The trains all went, too. But though Lee had lost nearly half the men he had on March 29, he had now gained a lead on the whole Union army with the rest.

However, there was still Sheridan; there was always Sheridan in this campaign, reaping the fruit he had planted at Yellow Tavern, when the Confederate cavalry service was struck down forever. As soon as the fighting round Sailor's Creek was over, he turned southwest, spending his mobility without stint to get round the Confederate column toward Lynchburg. Behind Sheridan the V Corps was moving west on the roads south of Appomattox River, and south of the V Corps, Ord with the XXV Corps, which had marched far and fast, taking no part in the move toward Amelia Court House.

On April 7, while Humphrey's II Corps was pecking at Lee's rear guard near Farmville and the Appomattox crossing, Sheridan was gaining, going right past Lee to the south. On April 8 in the morning he turned north to Appomattox Court House. There he caught Lee's trainloads of provisions, and the poor rebels went to hungry beds that night. Next morning Fitz Lee and Gordon were appointed to fray a passage through Sheridan. They tried; there were a few shots fired and some little movement but for once the greatest fighting leader of the Union did not fight. Sheridan's cavalry merely moved tight and left like a parting curtain, and allowed the Confederates to see the solid lines of Ord, rank on rank.

"Then there is nothing left to do but go and see General Grant," said Lee.

SECTION V

After the war Grant, who had come to lean on Sheridan as his man of all work as he had leaned on Sherman in the west, remarked that Little Phil was the one man he could trust to lead an expedition without going off on a private war of his own. "I rank him with Napoleon, Frederick and the great commanders of history."

At the time there seems to have been general agreement, but since then Sheridan's fame has been somewhat obscured by that of Sherman and Grant himself. Partly, this is no doubt due to what may be called the atmosphere of modern military thinking. The method of Grant and Sherman, strategic attack combined with caution in the tactical field, is apparently more in accord with modern conditions of war than Sheridan's free offensive.

Sectional feeling also plays an appreciable if minor part in the relative decline of Sheridan's renown. In New England, where the best and most numerous studies of the Civil War have been written during the last generation, Sheridan has always been seven kinds of scoundrel for removing the chivalrous Warren in the very hour of victory. Grant's own reason for his appreciation of Sheridan furnishes another partial clue—Little Phil did not go off on private wars. To anyone reading the orders he received with a record of subsequent events, his contribution is apt to appear purely executive. His full influence does not appear till one examines the part he played on having the orders written as well as the documents themselves.

Yet in the long run, it is Sheridan's very success that has deprived him of more complete appreciation. The eye of the beholder becomes irresistibly fixed on the spectacle of the mad scramble up Missionary Ridge, the ride from Winchester and the rally at Cedar Creek, the little man jumping his horse over the barricade at Five Forks. It makes him look like a leader of happy improvisations, of whom it could be said as of Logan, "Everything he did on the spur of the moment and in the heat of battle was sure to be right; everything he did on mature reflection was wrong."

This would not be too heavy an accusation, even if it were true. No nation and no army were ever in more need of such moral stimulus as brilliant improvisation can supply than the United States and its forces in the summer of 1864. No man was better fitted to supply that stimulus that Sheridan, who showed a gift of arousing...
enthusiasms paralleled in American history only by Jacob Brown.

But the accusation is not true. We should not let the fact that none of Sheridan’s great battles were fought out exactly as planned blind us to the other fact that he could plan a battle as well as fight one. Something neatly always happens to disturb battle plans—the obstinate refusal of the enemy to behave as expected, if nothing else. The rare thing about Sheridan, the quality that lifts him to several thousand feet altitude over the ordinary commander, was the ability to recognize in the midst of action that a change of plan was necessary. At Winchester, he planned to break down on flank; it became impossible, but he instantly and successfully broke down the opposite wing. At Five Forks the failure of his original plan only led him into another, far better.

It is this quality and flexibility of mind, of being able to do anything and everything that make Sheridan difficult to classify or even to appraise. He had no military specialty, like Thomas’ counterattacks, or Stonewall Jackson’s flank sweeps or Sherman’s clutch-and-circle. He did whatever the occasion required. At Perryville he counterattacked; he entrenched at Halltown, cautiously; at Missionary Ridge he was bold to the point of recklessness; worked a surprise attack at Boonville; ordered two gigantic flank sweeps at Fisher’s Hill and a frontal assault at Winchester. The limits of his talent were never reached. Perhaps there were none.

Grant apparently thought so, and if his testimony be thought biased by association, one need only turn to the archives of the French Empire. There is a report there from Marshal MacMahon, a not-qualified judge, dating from 1866, when Sheridan went to the Texas border with an army corps to help the French make up their minds to clear out Mexico. “It might be worth making a fight” say this report in substance, “if Grant were their commander. But not against this man.”

This is not the kind of opinion one expresses with regard to a mere improviser, and the more one studies Sheridan’s career, the clearer it becomes that behind his improvisation there was steady, careful planning, based on intimate knowledge both of the enemy and geographical conditions. It is not the type of planning that aims to eliminate chance, but to leave sufficient reserves of force to overcome chance.

Even Cedar Creek, the last planned of Sheridan’s battles, the one in which he was planned against, corresponds to this rule. His camping arrangement placed the cavalry so far from the infantry during the night that the two camps could not be comprehended in the same attack. That cavalry formed the reserve in a sense, when he began the battle again in the afternoon. It won the fight, though the infantry did the physical work, handled the contacts. For it was the threat of the cavalry that prolonged and thinned Early’s lines in preparation for the infantry action, as the threat of cavalry paralyzed Pickett in preparation for infantry attack at Five Forks, as the threat of cavalry halted Anderson and Ewell in preparation for infantry attack at Sailor’s Creek.

In fact, it is this constant use of the mobile force as a threat that more than anything else characterizes Sheridan’s technique and perhaps holds the key to the recovery of the lost offensive by armies of the future. Sheridan’s cavalry as cavalry, mounted, charged into the thick of a fight just three times – at Boonville and Winchester (Torbert’s), where the charges came altogether as surprises, and at Yellow Tavern, where the horsemen were operating against an enemy also in the saddle, who had lost momentum. In the rest of Sheridan’s campaigns cavalry merely threatened to charge, and by this threat dislocated the enemy mentally and physically, induced him to alter his dispositions and prepared the way for the decisive advance of the infantry. This happened at Cedar Creek, Winchester, Five Forks, even in a scene at Fisher’s Hill, where Early kept watching Averett. At Sailor’s Creek alone was the threat made good—but then by cavalry metamorphosed into foot.

Yet when all is said and done these are details of something that one is not permitted to examine in detail. There are no details of Sheridan’s careers. It is one, and that one inimitable, from the day when he tried to spit a cadet sergeant on a bayonet to the day when he ramped victoriously across the fields of Appomattox. Between the tow he had won the greatest moral victories of the Civil War.

**Editor’s Note:** This is the last part of Little Phil that is available for reprint into the Journal. I hope it has been enjoyable for, you the reader.
Philip Henry Sheridan, the son of Irish immigrants, John and Mary Sheridan, made a name for himself fighting against the Confederacy during the Civil War. During his lifetime he was known as “Little Phil” because of his five foot, five inch stature. His memoirs state that he was born in Albany, New York, and his family moved when he was an infant to Somerset, Ohio, but there has been confusion over his birthplace. Stories told by his niece, Nelly Sheridan Wilson, say that he was born on the voyage from Ireland to America. His birthplace has been researched and with no baptismal or birth records for him in America or in Ireland, we are led to believe that Nelly’s account may in fact be true.

Philip attended West Point and graduated in 1853, a year after he was supposed to because of a suspension due to a quarrel he was involved in with another cadet. He made rank quickly to Major General of the Volunteers getting the attention of Ulysses Grant who then put Sheridan in charge of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Sheridan received a thank you from Congress and made rank of Major General in the Regular Army by 1864.

During the reconstruction phase after the Civil War Sheridan was put in charge of the 5th Military District which included being the military governor of Texas and Louisiana. Sheridan took complete advantage of his time in charge. He limited voter registration of former confederates and that allowed only registered voters to serve on juries. He replaced leaders that he thought were dishonest and happened to be confederates with Republicans of his choice. President Andrew Johnson did not like Sheridan’s choices that he had made in the 5th district, and therefore, (he) relieved him of his duties. He was then sent out west to the Great Plains, and in the winter of 1868-69 he used similar plans as he had used at Shenandoah Valley and attacked the Native American tribes, taking their supplies, killing everyone who resisted and forcing others back to the reservations. Sheridan promoted slaughtering of bison which took away an essential resource of the Native Americans.

After the Native American skirmishes had calmed, Sheridan oversaw the military relief efforts of the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. The grateful city gave his family a house. Then he became the Commanding General of the Army in 1883.

Sheridan personally fought for the establishment of Yellowstone National Park. He saved this land from being sold for development and organized opposition to the development plan and lobbied Congress for Yellowstone’s protection. The Sundry Civil Bill was passed in 1883 which allowed official protection of the park. Although Sheridan had promoted the military control over the prevention and destruction of natural formations and wildlife, the Sundry Civil Bill gave Sheridan the legal right to designate the 1st Cavalry to protect the park. The military operated the park until 1916 when the National Park Service took over.

Philip Henry Sheridan married Irene Rucker, the daughter of General Daniel Rucker, in 1875. Philip and Irene had four children—Mary, twins Irene and Louis, and Philip Henry Jr. His daughters never married, and Philip Jr. attended West Point and was married with two children.

Three months before his death Sheridan fell ill and was promoted to General of the Army in June 1888. At this time, he moved to his summer home in Nonquitt, Massachusetts where he died on August 5, 1888. His body is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. His wife, Irene, never remarried, stating, “I would rather be the widow of Phil Sheridan than the wife of any man living.”

Sources:
Following his preliminary training at the Induction Center (remount Depot), Bandy is sent to the Cavalry Replacement Center at Fort Riley, Kansas, for further training in his military career.

After his arrival at the Replacement Center and a short period of quarantine, Bandy, like his human contemporary, gets his series of "shots". He is inoculated at the Veterinary Hospital against sleeping sickness, tetanus, and glanders; then he must go into the dipping chute where he is immersed in a solution of lime and sulphur to rid him of ring worm, lice, and other parasites. Meanwhile, he is assigned to a clean, roomy, well-ventilated and lighted stall in the "Horse Barracks".

Now comes the important step in Bandy's army career-preliminary training. This has been planned and discussed by the selected men who will participate in training him and the other remounts. First, there is a continuation of the methods of gentling already started at the Remount Depot-hand feeding, petting, picking up feet, etc. Then he is sent to the shoeing shop for his first pair of shoes, after which his early lessons follow in slow, methodical succession. A week is spent longeing without a saddle; then the first saddling and more longeing under the saddle, usually for about two weeks, As soon as he is accustomed to the saddle, mounting and dismounting exercises are given to acquaint him with a rider.
Bandy is taught a series of mounted exercises so that he will obey the reins and respond to the weight and legs of the rider. These exercises include work on the leading and bearing reins, decrease of gait (often as many as a hundred times in each training period), shoulder in (to teach him to relax and become supple and most valuable in horse gymnastics).

Now Bandy is ready for his advanced training. He learns to jump over low obstacles, gradually increased in height; to move rapidly but at controlled gaits over rough terrain; to gallop calmly during mounted pistol firing; to negotiate steep slides; and to take his place with other horses at troop drill.

Finally, after weeks of hard and tedious training days he is ready to leave the ranks of the "trainee" and to take his place beside the "old trooper", ready and willing without growl or grumble, to sacrifice his life if need be in the defense of his country.
In 1964, the conflict in South Vietnam was becoming heavier by the day, particularly in the area of the III Corps combat zone north of Saigon. It was in that area that the three armored cavalry troops of the army of Vietnam’s 1st Armored Cavalry Squadron were operating, suppressing the main force Viet Cong, and preventing incursions from Cambodia.

The squadron headquarters had its base on the edge of the Chinese community of Cholon, immediately adjacent to Saigon. The squadron headquarters was felt to be the best force to prevent further coups (one had occurred the previous year), and was not allowed to deploy with its operational troops.

The squadron Senior Advisor, an American army major, did not seem to appreciate the position of the Vietnamese squadron commander, thinking that the commander simply did not wish to move his headquarters out of the comfortable base in Cholon. The discussions between the two officers became heated at times, which did little to improve the major’s influence with his Vietnamese counterpart.

The major was spending most of his time with one or another of the M-113 troops in the field, and perhaps was not as sensitive to the squadron commander’s feelings as he should have been. Finally, the squadron commander felt that he had been subjected to the complaint of lack of willingness to go to the field long enough, and took his grievance to his next higher headquarters. The squadron came under the supervision of the Vietnamese army’s Armor Command, the commander of which was a personal friend of the Vietnamese III Corps Commanding General. A complaint about the major was made and the Corps commander spoke to his own Senior Advisor, a very senior colonel in the American army.

The III Corps Senior Advisor had a long and illustrious history of service as an Airborne regimental commander. He was well known in the Army for requiring, in preparation for an important inspection at the stateside post, that all the coal be removed from the outside coal bins, that the bins be white-washed, and the coal carefully returned. For this he became forever known as Coal Bin Willy.

The Colonel’s own tendency to take the fight to the enemy caused him to have some reservations when the Vietnamese Corps Commanding General relayed the complaint of excessive aggressiveness on the part of the Squadron Senior Advisor. Nevertheless, it was clear that something needed to be done. After some thought on the subject, the Colonel instructed his staff to have the major report to him.

Upon receiving the radio message summoning him to III Corps Headquarters, the major obtained a helicopter ride back to civilization, changed into a clean uniform, and made arrangements to meet with the colonel.

Filled with trepidation, the major reported to the colonel, who loudly directed that his senior staff be assembled in his spacious office to “witness punishment”. Ignored by the colonel, the major stood at attention, nervously cooling his heels.

When all were present, the colonel recounted the offense levied against the major, that of excessive aggressiveness. He then picked-up an engraved plaque from his desk, and read aloud the following quotation from Rudyard Kipling:

*The end of the fight*
*Is a tombstone white*
*With the name of the late deceased, And the epitaph drear: “A fool lies here Who tried to hustle the East.”*

On conclusion of the reading, the plaque was handed to the major with the admonition to be guided by the message, and he was dismissed to return to the field. The major left with a much lighter heart.

Although it was not mentioned at this meeting, both the colonel and the major remembered quite well the instructions the major had received months before when he had met with the colonel to receive the assignment as the squadron senior advisor. The major was told, in colorful airborne language, that one of his main missions was
to get the squadron headquarters out of Cholon and into the field with its subordinate units!

It is a matter of record that the squadron headquarters was shortly thereafter ordered to go to the field and to situate its headquarters at the Ranger Training Center in the District of Trung Lap, northwest of Saigon. The squadron was involved in a significant level of fighting following that move.

Whatever Happened to the 2013 Bivouac and National Cavalry Competition?

The short answer is Sequestration. In August, we began hearing the first hints that Army Mounted Color Guards might have to cancel their planned participation in the NCC because of the belt-tightening the Army was having to do. As those major participants began to drop out, we realized we were in trouble as they have made up about three quarters of the competitors and over half of the Bivouac attendees. By the end of August, grossly short of sufficient registrations to meet our hotel, facility, and catering commitments, and with no prospects of being able to meet them, we regretfully made the decision that we had to cancel the entire event. We don’t know where the sequestration problem is going to lead us, but we will do all we can to make next year a success.

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