



LONGSTREET &
JACKSON

C. P. Phipps 85

CAPTAIN MICHAEL A. PHIPPS

General Robert E. Lee's top corps commanders in the American Civil War were Lieutenant Generals James Longstreet and Thomas Jonathan Jackson. The campaigns of both are deserving of attention from historians and biographers. Unfortunately, though, only Jackson has received that attention in any great detail. In fact, he has been all but elevated to the level of deity by some, while Longstreet has been generally ignored, at least in his positive accomplishments. Most of the accounts that there are of his campaigns tend to criticize him for some fault or other.

Some writers, for example, have generally stereotyped Jackson as offense-oriented and lightning quick in maneuver, while characterizing Longstreet as defense-oriented and slow-moving in maneuver. To a certain extent, both characterizations are misconceptions. Jackson was capable of extreme lethargy and fought more defensive than offensive battles. Longstreet and his troops, on the other hand, made some of the greatest marches of the war while delivering numerous sledge-hammer assaults. All of Longstreet's battles except Fredericksburg and Antietam were offensive in nature.

There is no doubt that Jackson is one of the greatest military figures in American history, but if he had been a 20th century U.S. officer he probably would have been relieved. He was successful in only two of his first five campaigns, and that kind of record is no longer tolerated.

On Henry House Hill on 21 July 1861, Jackson became "Stonewall" when his brigade made a gritty stand that was instrumental in the Confederate victory at the first battle of Manassas. Jackson emerged from this amateurish engagement the most famous of any of the combat leaders involved. This was followed, however, by the fiasco of the Romney campaign in the winter of 1861. Jackson's small army in the western Virginia mountains was plagued by poor logistics, brutal weather, tactical fumbling, and a near mutiny by some of the officers and troops.

Again, disaster was close at hand for Jackson when he was defeated at Kernstown, Virginia, on 23 March 1862. Although the vaunted "Stonewall" Brigade was broken in this action, President Abraham Lincoln diverted strong reinforcements intended for George McClellan's Army of the Potomac and sent them to the Shenandoah Valley to contain Jackson. This proved to be a decisive move in that a two-pronged Union drive on Richmond at that time—one south from Fredericksburg and the other east up the York and James River Peninsula—would have been disastrous to the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. As it was, without the diverted reinforcements, the drive south from Fredericksburg never materialized. But the stage was now set for the campaign that would win for Jackson his reputation as a tactical genius.

During a brief period in May and June 1862, his two-division separate command marched up and down the Shenandoah Valley defeating three separate Federal armies in half a dozen major engagements. His Valley campaign was a masterpiece of maneuver and offensive tactics.

But Jackson soon demonstrated his other side—his lethargy and inconsistency. In late June, Lee ordered Jackson's army to join him in front of Richmond where McClellan's huge army was threatening the Confederate capital.

The Seven Days' Battle (26 June to 1 July 1862) was fought in an area just east of Richmond. Although strategically this was considered a Confederate victory, Lee's new Army of Northern Virginia was plagued by tactical errors and poor coordination. Time and time again—at Mechanicsville, Games Mill, Frazier's Farm, Malvern Hill—Jackson, upon whom Lee depended heavily, failed to move quickly enough.

With Jackson's cooperation, a large part of the Union army might have been surrounded and destroyed. Without it, on 2 July McClellan was able to withdraw his forces to the James River, thus ending the campaign. The threat to Richmond was gone, but Lee had been tactically outmaneuvered and had lost 20,000 men. In short, Jackson had inexplicably performed badly after his superb showing in the Valley.

CONFIDENCE

Still, neither Jefferson Davis nor Lee lost confidence in the hero of the Valley. Jackson performed brilliantly in the next three campaigns although he did, at times, suffer slight mental lapses. (It is significant to recall that in these three battles that led to Chancellorsville, Jackson deployed his troops in defensive actions.)

After Richmond, the next threat to the Confederates in Virginia was Major General John Pope's Union Army of Virginia, which was threatening the railhead of Gordonsville on the upper Rappahannock River.

At this point, Lee reorganized his army into the configuration that it would retain for the next year. Longstreet was given half the army and Jackson the other. (On 6 November 1862, these commands would become the First and Second Corps respectively.) In early August 1862, Jackson's command was sent west to engage Pope while Longstreet stayed near Richmond to watch McClellan. (McClellan's troops did not totally evacuate the Peninsula until September.)

Jackson was in peak form during the next month. He defeated a Federal force at Cedar Mountain on 9 August, then began a tremendous flank march around Pope's right flank along the Rappahannock. After destroying the Union supply base at Manassas Junction, he withdrew to a strong defensive position near Groveton, where Pope assaulted him for three days (28-30 August). Jackson held long enough for Longstreet's corps to crush the Union forces on the last day of the battle.

This was the only other campaign in which Jackson drove his men as quickly as he had in the Valley. More importantly, it was here that he demonstrated his proficiency in the defense. In this and his next two engagements, at Antietam and Fredericksburg, "Stonewall" would live up to his name with stubborn tenacity. He said, "My troops may fail to take a position, but are never driven from one." (This is a fact that few historians emphasize.)

Jackson was one of the first modern era combat leaders to use defense in depth. At Fredericksburg on 13 December 1862, Antietam on 17 September 1862, and Second Manassas (29-30 August 1862), Jackson used three defensive lines of battle. In each of these battles, when his front line was pene-

trated, he was able to plug the gap with a secondary line or with his reserves. During this period, his only "failure" was his delay in capturing Harper's Ferry during the Antietam campaign. He was two days late in doing so and just managed to join Lee before McClellan struck the Army of Northern Virginia. This delay might have been more serious than it turned out to be. While the Army of the Potomac could have attacked Lee as early as the 15th (the day Harper's Ferry was taken), McClellan did not attack until the 17th and thus allowed the Confederate Army to concentrate.

In late April 1863, Major General Joseph Hooker split his huge Army of the Potomac and sent three corps northwest to cross the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers and flank Lee's impregnable position on the heights south of Fredericksburg. By 30 April the maneuver wing of Hooker's army had moved virtually undetected onto the Confederate left flank at the small crossroads named Chancellorsville. The main body meanwhile threatened Lee at Fredericksburg.

At this point, Hooker strangely became conservative and ordered his right wing to "dig in" in the tangled underbrush known locally as "the Wilderness." He sent for all but his Sixth Corps to join him at Chancellorsville. Lee had only 55,000 troops available in six divisions. (Longstreet, with two divisions, was operating in southeastern Virginia at the time.) Leaving one division to watch the Union Sixth Corps at Fredericksburg, Lee sent two other divisions to meet Hooker and fix him in position. Lee wisely had Jackson's corps follow as one large body to exploit any opening Hooker might offer.

The Confederate lead elements found five Union Corps dug in around Chancellorsville. However, J.E.B. Stuart, Lee's cavalry commander, reported on the evening of 1 May that Hooker's right flank was "in the air." Lee, *not* Jackson, then decided to split his already separated army and strike the Union force in the flank. Jackson was to march three divisions around the Federal right and try to cut Hooker's units off from the Rapidan crossings. Jackson told Lee he would start his movement at 0400, 2 May.

DELAY

The dramatic assault on the Union Eleventh Corps by Jackson's men and the flank march are well documented and will not be reiterated here. What historians do not detail, though, is that Jackson did not start his march until 0730, three and one-half hours after the proposed departure time. As a result, the assault did not begin until 1715. There cannot be much doubt that the Confederates, even against the stout Union resistance, would have gained much more ground, possibly capturing the Rapidan fords, if darkness had not set in around 1930. Those three hours of lost daylight may have saved Hooker from complete destruction, and may have cost Jackson his life: As he returned from a reconnaissance in the dark, he was shot and mortally wounded by his own troops who mistook him for the enemy. He died of his wounds on 10 May 1863.

Fifty-two days later at a town called Gettysburg, his replacement, Lieutenant General "Dick" Ewell, hesitated in

front of a crucial hill. Many, including Lee, felt that Jackson would have taken that hill and that as a result the war might have ended differently. This is certainly possible. These same people seem to forget, however, that exactly one year earlier, Jackson had hesitated in front of Richmond. If he had not, Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania may not have been necessary.

Even so, few Civil War actions come close to the genius of Jackson's Second Manassas or Valley campaigns, and no one would want to deny him that credit. But Longstreet's performance in those years is also worthy of note. He was more consistent and at times quicker on the march than Jackson. And although he did favor the tactical defense, he could also hit as hard as any in the assault.

At First Manassas, then a brigadier general, Longstreet performed quite well but was not heavily engaged. His first major battle was on the peninsula at Williamsburg on 5 May 1862. In a spirited assault as a division commander and a major general, he gave the leading elements of McClellan's army quite a jolt. After Williamsburg, his division covered itself and him with glory with its savage but uncoordinated assaults at Fair Oaks, Gaines Mill, and Frazier's Farm. Lee was quite impressed with "Old Pete" Longstreet's tactical ability after the Seven Days' Battle and gave him command of half of the Army of Northern Virginia.

At Second Manassas, Longstreet delivered one of the most devastating assaults of the war. On 29 August 1862, Pope's Union army was attacking Jackson's corps that was posted in an unfinished railway cut near the old Bull Run battlefield. Longstreet's 30,000 troops moved rapidly through the Bull Run mountains and linked up with Jackson's men on the same day. They were squarely on Pope's left flank. Because of a poor reconnaissance effort, the Union commander never fully realized this danger. Although Lee wanted Longstreet to attack on the 29th or early on the 30th, Longstreet recommended patience. Allowing the Federal troops to exhaust themselves in frontal assaults against Jackson, Longstreet surged forward and crushed the Union's left flank on the afternoon of the 30th. Pope's army retired to the northeast, thus ending the battle.

After Second Manassas, Longstreet, by then a lieutenant general, fought his only two real defensive battles. At Antietam most of his troops were used as local reserves for Jackson's line, which was assaulted unmercifully on 17 September 1862. Although he was not able to demonstrate his overall tactical ability, he constantly took command of numerous small-unit actions throughout the day while fearlessly exposing himself to enemy fire. (It was here that Lee called him "My Old War Horse.")

Just as Jackson was remembered for his stand on Henry House Hill, Longstreet gained his reputation as a tough defender at Fredericksburg on 13 December 1862. Observing the open plains that Major General Ambrose Burnside's Army of the Potomac would have to cross to attack his corps on Marye's Heights, Longstreet stated bluntly, "If the entire Union army comes across there, I will kill them all."

As if to test him, three Federal corps marched toward Marye's Heights on that mid-December day. Longstreet was true to his word—9,000 valiant Yankees fell in front of the

now famous Heights. None of them came within 30 meters of Longstreet's main line.

The First Corps commander spent the spring of 1863 in southeastern Virginia and missed the battle of Chancellorsville. But up the road Little Round Top, Devil's Den, the Wheatfield, and Cemetery Ridge awaited him in the peaceful Pennsylvania countryside.

MYTHS

Even today, few people really understand the actual details of the Battle of Gettysburg. One of the chief misconceptions concerns the role that Longstreet and his corps played in the engagement. *Four of the most prominent myths are that Lee ordered Longstreet to attack the Union left at dawn on 2 July; that Longstreet delayed unduly during the march into an assault position on the second day of battle; that Lee ordered the Round Tops captured; and that "Old Pete" did not control his units well at Gettysburg.*

The mysterious "sunrise attack order," as one historian terms it, has never been found in any official Confederate records. Pendleton, Lee's artillery chief, later claimed he had heard Lee issue that order. But Pendleton, along with Early and others, had a running battle after the war with Longstreet, and their accusations are questionable at best.

Most historians now agree, however, that Lee did not decide on a definite plan for Gettysburg until 1000 or 1100 hours on 2 July. This thesis is documented by a simple examination of the Confederate troop dispositions at dawn on the second day. Two divisions of Longstreet's First Corps, led by John B. Hood and LaFayette McLaws, were three miles behind the main Confederate positions and had been marching all night. The other First Corps division, George E. Pickett's, was still 25 miles to the west of Chambersburg, while E.M. Law's brigade of Hood's division was 25 miles away at New Guilford.

In other words, Longstreet had only seven of his eleven brigades to take into action early on the 2d. On the other hand, A.P. Hill's Third Corps and Richard S. Ewell's Second Corps had 11 fresh brigades actually in position at dawn. If Lee had wanted an early attack, then Hill and Ewell would have had to deliver it. With six divisions already facing Major General George Meade's Army of the Potomac, it would have made no sense for Longstreet to force march into unfamiliar terrain to lead the assault at dawn.

Lee did not seriously consider taking action until Hood and McLaws were in the field and in a position to strike Meade a crippling blow. At about 1000 hours, the Confederate commander ordered his First Corps to move south and assault the Union left and rear. A vital point that has to be addressed here is that Lee felt the main enemy force was on Cemetery and Culp's Hills facing north. His plan, therefore, was for Longstreet to advance northeast up the Emmitsburg Road. Hill would support him while Ewell demonstrated against the two hills.

The problem with Lee's plan was that the actual Union line was in a "fishhook" configuration extending south to

Little Round Top, and if the First Corps forces had paralleled the Emmitsburg Road before 1500 hours, they would have been flanked by the Federal forces on Cemetery Ridge.

At 1500 hours, Major General Dan Sickles moved his veteran Union Third Corps off Cemetery Ridge and Little Round Top and advanced westward toward the high ground around the Peach Orchard. So, contrary to popular notion, Longstreet, *not Lee, lined McLaws and Hood up facing Little Round Top so as to strike Sickles' exposed troops.* Lee's original plan could not work with Sickles blocking the way. Longstreet, accordingly, sent his men after Little Round Top and Cemetery Ridge instead of Cemetery Hill.

Five hours after Lee ordered Longstreet to attack, the First Corps struck. (Because of the delay, Law's brigade was able to join Longstreet.) This "delay" has been blamed on the "Dutch" slowness of Longstreet. Douglas Southall Freeman, the noted Civil War historian, even suggests that he was sulking. This is a ridiculous assumption. In reality, two orders issued by Lee caused the lapse of time between the order and its execution.

The first order Lee gave was that the First Corps was not to move until the route of march had been scouted by a Captain S.R. Johnson. Captain Johnson did not report to Longstreet until almost 1400, whereupon Hood and McLaws began to move. Lee's second order was that the column was to stay concealed during the march. When the lead elements reached Black Horse Tavern, Captain Johnson saw that if it continued it would be exposed to the view of a Union signal station on Little Round Top. In strict obedience to Lee's orders, therefore, Longstreet ordered his corps to turn around and use a more concealed route.

As for the contention that Longstreet did not control his units well in the attack on the 2d, nothing could be further from the truth. No two divisions in United States military history fought harder or were more competently led than were Hood's and McLaws' on 2 July 1863. These 14,000 Confederates assaulted almost 30,000 Federals. They captured the Peach Orchard, the Wheatfield, and Devil's Den, and came within a hair's breadth of taking Little Round Top and southern Cemetery Ridge as well. Longstreet's *en echelon* assault (a maneuver in which one brigade at a time attacks and probes for a weak spot) shattered the Union Third Corps and enveloped seven brigades from the Second and Fifth Corps in the Wheatfield area.

REALITY

The reality is that it would have been virtually impossible to break the Federal left. In fact, Meade shifted more than half of his army to meet those two divisions.

This left only five fresh brigades and the remnants of the shattered First and Eleventh Corps (17,000 men) to oppose Lee's remaining six divisions of 40,000 troops. But these Confederates either attacked in an uncoordinated fashion or remained inactive. This was Lee's opportunity to break Meade's line, but the sheer weight of numbers meant Longstreet's men were to be sacrificed. *(They suffered better than*

50 percent casualties.) But Hill's and Ewell's weak efforts meant that the sacrifice was to be in vain. Pickett's charge and repulse inevitably followed on 3 July 1863.

Despite his disgust at the failure at Gettysburg, Longstreet still had two great battles left. When Jefferson Davis decided to reinforce Lieutenant General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee, Lee sent his "War Horse" with Hood's and McLaws' divisions to northern Georgia. These veterans arrived by rail just in time to play a crucial role in the battle of Chickamauga on 19 and 20 September 1863. The "slow" and "defense oriented" Longstreet launched an all-out assault that shattered the Union center and sent half of the Army of the Cumberland fleeing toward Chattanooga. After Longstreet's only real failure of the war—his failure to capture Knoxville in November 1863—his troops rejoined Lee in Virginia.

GRANT

In the spring of 1864, the Army of the Potomac was poised above the Rapidan preparing for its last campaign. This time it would be led by Lieutenant General U.S. Grant. Lee's decimated but still formidable Army of Northern Virginia awaited Grant in the vicinity of Orange. Grant finally moved on 4 May into the same wilderness where Hooker had met disaster a year earlier. Ewell's and Hill's corps were closer to the southward line of Grant's march than was Longstreet's command, so Lee met Grant's men with these two corps while "Old Pete" marched hard for the field. Fighting raged on 5 May about five miles west of Chancellorsville.

Grant was like no other commander Lee had faced before, though, and the hardened Union veterans launched heavy assaults time and time again. On the morning of the 6th, A.P. Hill's corps was shattered by a massive push by Major General Winfield Hancock's Union Second Corps. As these Federals victoriously advanced, they were stunned by one of the most timely counterthrusts of the war.

By forced marching and double-timing all day on the 5th and through the night, the First Corps arrived and attacked just as Hancock's men had become somewhat disorganized in their advance. The Federals fell back, but Longstreet, in a brilliant tactical move, sent a flanking force through an unfinished railway cut, and that force caved in Hancock's left. As Longstreet and a few members of his staff rode forward, shots rang out and Longstreet went down, shot by his own men in generally the same area where Jackson had met the same fate a year earlier.

But the "War Horse" recovered and rejoined the army on 19 October 1864. He commanded his corps and the Richmond defenses until 2 April 1865 when Grant's all-out attack at Petersburg forced Lee to retreat to Appomattox. Longstreet's corps went with Lee, and to the end "Old Pete" opposed surrender.

In comparing Longstreet and Jackson, no one would deny that Jackson was a true military genius who excelled in independent missions. Few Civil War actions even approach the genius of Jackson's Second Manassas and Valley cam-

paigns. But objective historians should analyze the mediocre along with the superb. Although one historian likened him and his flank march at Chancellorsville to Frederick the Great and his victory at Leuthen, Chancellorsville was Lee's victory, not Jackson's. (In fact, by starting his flank march late, "Stonewall" may have cost the Confederates a chance at a total victory.)

Longstreet was also a great military leader. Within the confines of an army, it would be difficult to find a finer corps commander. So why has he been either falsely characterized or generally ignored? For one thing, Longstreet became a Republican after the war and was therefore branded a traitor by Southern writers. The chief reason, though, was the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg.

After the Confederate fiasco there, everyone was looking for scapegoats whose actions might explain the defeat. Although Stuart, Ewell, and A.P. Hill received their share of the criticism, much of the weight was placed on Longstreet's shoulders. This was all part of an effort after the war to exonerate Lee of any mistakes or tactical errors. (Even today, to blame Lee for a defeat is sure to bring many angry cries.) The tragedy of this is, however, that Longstreet's performance at Gettysburg was far superior to that of the other Confederate commanders, including Lee.

As Donald Bridgman Sanger states in his biography of James Longstreet:

Without possessing the strategic ability of either Jackson or Lee, [Longstreet] was, I believe, superior to both in battle leadership and in an appreciation of tactical values. He knew instinctively the exact moment for the counterstroke. Defensively, he was, as Grant said, Lee's best general, and the crushing effect of his well-timed assaults at Second Manassas, Chickamauga, and the Wilderness are eloquent testimonials of his skills on the offensive. He was the best fighting general in the armies of the Confederacy and the best corps commander, north or south.

Sanger's statement is a bit strong, of course; some would bring up the names of George Thomas, Winfield Hancock, and John Reynolds as corps commanders to rival Longstreet. Such debates are likely to continue.

But it is high time Longstreet's name was at least mentioned in the same breath as Jackson's. And high time the empty shelves alongside the only two Longstreet biographies were filled with more objective accounts of his accomplishments.



Captain Michael A. Philpps is an Infantry officer serving with the 7th Infantry Division at Fort Ord. He is a student of the Civil War and a graduate of Johns Hopkins University. He has served as a rifle platoon leader and company executive officer in the 82d Airborne Division and the 3d U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard). He has had two previous articles published in *INFANTRY*, "McPherson's Ridge: A Study of a Meeting Engagement" (January-February 1984) and "A Forgotten War" (November-December 1984).