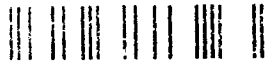


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SENIOR LEADERSHIP: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

BY

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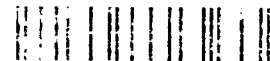
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ABSTRACT

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In the spring of 1988 the unit I commanded, 4th Battalion 30th Infantry, conducted a staff ride of Chickamauga battlefield. Chickamauga was chosen because it was one of the bloodiest battles in the Civil War. This battle provides tactical and leadership lessons that all military leaders can use to further develop leader skills.

General George H. Thomas and Colonel John T. Wilder stood out from other leaders at Chickamauga because of their leadership and tactical expertise. This caused the battalion officers to wonder what leadership characteristics or qualities these officers possessed and if they would meet the modern day definition of senior leader. As a result of this interest and my interest in the leadership competencies, I chose to research the leaders of Chickamauga.

This paper defines desired traits and/or competencies of today's senior leader and evaluates General Thomas and Colonel Wilder in respect to those identified traits. It concludes with a determination of whether or not the leaders of Chickamauga possessed the traits of a modern day senior leader.

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SENIOR LEADERSHIP: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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This paper defines desired traits and/or competencies of today's senior leader and evaluates General Thomas and Colonel Wilder in respect to those identified traits. It concludes with a determination of whether or not the leaders of Chickamauga possessed the traits of a modern day senior leader.

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1988 the unit I commanded, 4th Battalion 30th Infantry, went on a staff ride of the Chickamauga Battlefield located in the northwest corner of Georgia. Chickamauga was chosen because it was one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War (34,000 killed).¹ It was the greatest Confederate victory of the war in the western theater.

After the battle of Vicksburg the war emphasis became the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee a key rail center and gateway to the heart of the confederacy. On August 16, 1863 Major General William S. Rosecrans, commanding the Union Army of the Cumberland, advanced upon Chattanooga from the northwest, leading almost 60,000 men against General Braxton Bragg's Confederate Army of 43,000 men. On September 9, the Confederates evacuated Chattanooga. Rosecrans pushed forward assuming Bragg's army was in retreat. However, Bragg moved south to LaFayette, Georgia to concentrate his forces and prepare to attack. Here reinforcements from East Tennessee, Virginia and Mississippi increased his forces to more than 66,000 men. Bragg tried two times to destroy isolated segments of Rosecrans' army, but was unsuccessful. Then, on September 18, after the arrival of three brigades of Lieutenant General James Longstreet's Corps, Bragg issued orders for an attack. Fighting

began shortly after dawn on September 19 when Union infantry encountered Confederate cavalry at Jay's Mill. This brought on a general battle that spread south for about four miles. The armies fought desperately all day, often hand-to-hand, and gradually the Confederates pushed the Union back. On September 20, Bragg again tried to drive between the Union force and Chattanooga, but failed to dislodge Rosecrans' line. Then a gap opened in the Federal ranks, and General Longstreet's Confederates smashed through the hole, routing Rosecrans and half his army. Major General George H. Thomas took command of the remaining Union soldiers and formed a new battleline on Snodgrass Hill. Here his men held their ground against repeated assaults, earning Thomas the nickname "Rock of Chickamauga." After dark, Thomas withdrew his men from the field.

At the end of the terrain walk, the unit officers had four observations.

First, they were impressed with the bravery of MG George H. Thomas. Thomas had stood firm, resisting all attempts to drive him from his position. His inspired leadership caused his men to fight even though they were outnumbered.

Second, they were fascinated with the inventiveness and dedication of Colonel John T. Wilder. Wilder's inventiveness was evident by his purchase of the newest rifle for his men. The Spencer repeating rifle had seven cartridges to a magazine and ten refills in the cartridge cases for each rifle - 160,000 rounds of .52 caliber ammunition that could be expended in five minutes by his men.² Wilder worked a deal with bankers in his home town of

Greensburg, Indiana to buy his men Spencer rifles. He asked if they would loan him money to buy the rifles. They agreed. Each man in the Brigade offered to pay for his own rifle, so they signed a note for \$35. Wilder co-signed and the deal was done.

At Chickamauga, Wilder fought under Thomas' 14th Corps. He pressed the fight through the 19th finding on the morning of the 20th that his unit was the only one on the field on the Union right. At that point, Wilder decided to cut through Confederate forces and go to Thomas' assistance. Although the enemy outnumbered his men five to one, he knew by massing his 2,000 repeating rifles he could break through to Snodgrass Hill and join Thomas. However, Assistant Secretary of War, Charles A. Dana, ordered Wilder not to attack but to retreat. Wilder obeyed the order to not attack but moved his brigade around the enemy and joined Thomas even though the odds were greatly against his unit being successful. Wilder helped Thomas stop the advancing Confederates. His brigade was the last to leave the field. His dedication to the Union cause helped save the day.

Third, they wondered what leadership traits and skills one must have for a leader such as General Thomas to lead men in a fight as deadly as Chickamauga.

Fourth, given that we can define the attributes and skills necessary for senior leaders today, did Thomas and Wilder possess those attributes and skills.

The questions the unit officers asked were insightful. Can we take a historical perspective (using two leaders of a battle)

and determine if they exhibited the leadership attributes and skills necessary for senior leaders today.

The following pages define the required leadership traits of modern day senior leaders, provide a biography and leadership evaluation of MG Thomas and Col Wilder and conclude with an assessment of whether or not MG Thomas and Col Wilder meet my definition of senior leader.

MAIN BODY

SENIOR LEADERSHIP DEFINED

Leadership at senior levels is the art of direct and indirect influence and the skill of creating the conditions for sustained organizational success to achieve the desired result.³ Dr. John W. Gardner, a leadership authority, defines leadership as "the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers."⁴ The goal of senior level leadership is to create a force that works together so efficiently that the team itself becomes a force multiplier. The senior leader builds a cohesive, resilient unit that displays confidence and a willingness to sacrifice in order to accomplish any mission. Good leadership makes the vital difference in the staying power and effectiveness of units.⁵ Field-Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery described leadership as the capacity and the will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which will inspire confidence.⁶ Leadership is based on truth and

character. A leader must be the servant of a truth, and he must make that truth the focus of a common purpose. He must then have the force of character necessary to inspire others to follow him with confidence. Both are necessary, truth and character - with willpower in the character.⁷

As senior leaders move up in rank and responsibility, they continually work to better their professional knowledge and build on experiences. The senior leader becomes more aware of organizational needs and his place and/or responsibility in the organization. However, the biggest change the senior leader faces is his leadership style. He must become an indirect leader of men. A leader that now works through subordinate leaders to effect change. Since the U.S. Army assignment and rotation policy does not permit repetitive tours in the same job, leaders learn their skills with everyone else in the unit. We have all observed different leadership styles; few leaders have the same combination of personal traits. However, one common thread is true. No great achievements can be made by a unit until the person in charge wins the hearts and respect of his men.

To assist in the unraveling of this senior leadership dilemma, the following pages identify the basic leadership attributes (values learned in life, found in prudent men), professional skills (skills learned or enhanced during military career) and organizational skills (skills that enhance unit effectiveness) that are essential in the exercise of leadership. These three areas are at times interactive. Some of these leadership skills and

attributes develop concurrently while others require specific study.

BASIC LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

Senior leaders must adhere to basic leadership attributes. Most attributes are learned early in life. However, some are developed from experience. These attributes are basic to living a good life. As a result of a review of Army doctrine and current leadership literature, I developed the following list of personal attributes that I believe senior leaders should possess.

1. Integrity (honest beyond reproach)
2. Candor (open-mindedness, frankness)
3. Confidence (trust, belief in oneself and subordinates)
4. Intelligence (possesses capacity to acquire knowledge)
5. Common sense (good judgment, practical)
6. Moral courage (principles, ethical behavior)
7. Self-discipline (self-control, orderly conduct)
8. Selflessness (unselfish, concern for unit over self)
9. Tenacity (persistence, determination)
10. Conduct (acceptable standard of behavior)
11. Loyalty (faithful to family and institutions)
12. Devotion to duty (commitment to unit before self)
13. Set the example (standard bearer)
14. Courage (moral strength to stand up and be counted)

These leadership qualities are needed for leaders to be successful. Subordinates look for these qualities in their

leaders. Subordinates want leaders to lead them through example. Leaders essentially live in a fish bowl. Everyone on the outside is looking at the senior leader to see if he means what he says. Therefore, not only must the leader establish and emphasize standards, he must live them. Leader conduct, on and off duty, must be beyond reproach. He must exude integrity.⁸ Integrity in word and deed is an absolute. If lost, integrity cannot be regained. Integrity is generally thought of as adherence to a code of moral conduct.⁹ In our business it goes beyond the dictionary definition. Integrity is a commitment to act properly in accordance with the laws of the land and Uniform Code of Military Justice; to have unswerving adherence to standards of behavior (values).¹⁰ It is the foundation for which we establish the trust and confidence needed to lead units. Leaders earn trust by caring for people. Earning trust is a must. It is not necessary to like or agree with him. Trust is the conviction that the leader means what he says. It is a belief in something very old-fashioned, called integrity. A leader's actions and a leader's professed beliefs must be congruent, or at least compatible. Effective leadership--and again this is very old wisdom--is not based on being clever; it is based primarily on being consistent.¹¹

Effective senior leaders understand the ethical impact of their actions on their unit. They put an immediate stop to any unethical behavior in their unit. As the unit standard bearer, the senior leader will be known for what he knows and how he acts not for his rank or position. If he is personally straight and loyal

to his men then his integrity and professionalism will be emulated.

In times of conflict, it is the ethical dimension of leadership that will bond units together. The values and traditions handed down from leaders of the past have become the foundation for today's leader. The values of loyalty, devotion to duty and selfless service are still the values coveted by leaders today.¹²

Loyalty to the nation, the U. S. Army, the unit and the soldier is essential. Loyalty to the nation means to live up to one's oath of service which embodies a requirement to defend the Constitution. Loyalty to the Army means to support the military and civilian chain of command. Loyalty to the unit means a great obligation and devotion to soldiers and leaders that conveys a confidence and trust in their action, word and deed.

Duty is a moral and legal obligation.¹³ The U. S. Army tends to define duty as discipline required of a soldier as part of his obligation as a member of the U. S. Army. However, it goes further than just a required discipline. Duty requires everyone to accept responsibility, not only for our own actions, but also for the actions of those in their unit.

Selfless service is the putting of mission accomplishment above individual welfare. Putting self interest or personal gain above the good of the unit must be resisted at all costs. Selfless service leads to teamwork and unit efficiency. In fact, selfless service in the military means one might be called to sacrifice his life for the good of his unit and/or nation.

In a speech to Infantrymen at Fort Benning, General William J. Livesey, U.S. Army Retired, former commander of U.S. Forces Korea and noted leadership doctrine expert, said that some soldier qualities have come to be recognized as essential to success on the battlefield.¹⁴ These essential qualities are candor, competence, commitment, and courage. Candor is openness with one another - unabiding truthfulness. Competence is having the requisite ability and knowledge to perform the job. Commitment is putting self last and unit first. Courage is the moral strength to stand up and be counted in the face of danger, fear and/or the enemy. General Livesey is right. Success in battle depends on essential qualities.

Leaders with a solid foundation of leadership values and ethics will persevere even in the tough times of war. The units they lead will emulate their qualities and become a cohesive, committed unit working for mission accomplishment.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Senior leaders must possess professional skills, as well as, the basic leadership attributes discussed earlier. Professional skills are developed concurrently with basic leadership attributes as the senior leader moves up in rank. Leader professional development is crucial to the ultimate success of our Army. There is no making up for a lost opportunity to teach or to guide the professional development of our future leaders. Leader development is progressive, and at every level it must link our leaders

involved in war-fighting.¹⁵

Leader skills provide the senior leader the ability to demonstrate his competency, to think through a problem quickly, and to provide his subordinates clear thought. Sound professional development leads to professional competence. The only way leaders become competent is by hard work and study. Leaders must be an expert in the profession of arms. Effective senior leaders know the historical perspective of their profession. This builds confidence, analytical skills and lessons learned. In Machiavellis', The Prince, we read: "To exercise the intellect a man should read histories, and study there the actions of illustrious men, to see how they have borne themselves in war, to examine the causes of their victories and defeat."¹⁶ Constant study of the art of war gives the senior leader an operational perspective and insight into the evaluation of warfighting doctrine.

Senior leaders must be familiar with the capability of equipment and men. Study of new equipment, technology and organizational changes provides in-depth knowledge for the use of innovative approaches to training. Senior leaders must work hard to become technically and tactically proficient. They must continually seek self-improvement both mentally and physically. Leaders keep themselves physically fit so they can perform as required. They are present at all stressful training and capable of performing. The senior leader is a coach, talking to soldiers, mentoring and counseling subordinates. Senior leaders always care

for their men by rewarding and encouraging initiative. They understand prudent risk taking and are consistent in policies. Senior leaders listen to people and communicate effectively both orally and in written word. Two way communication creates trust, integrity, mutual respect and a healthy exchange of ideas. Effective listening coupled with professional knowledge enables the senior leader to conceptualize actions to be undertaken by the unit. With this ability, leaders provide insight into the planning process and create staffs that provide the needed information to make decisions.

Professional skills are necessary for the senior leader to implement his vision.¹⁷ Attila the Hun said: "In order to skillfully lead our nation, we must have leaders who possess essential qualities, which through experience become mastered skills: loyalty, courage, desire, emotional stamina, physical stamina, empathy, decisiveness, anticipation, timing, competitiveness, self-confidence, accountability, responsibility, credibility, tenacity, dependability, stewardship." ¹⁸

As a result of a literature and doctrine review I developed the following list of professional skills that I believe senior leaders should possess.

1. Dependability (mean what you say & sign, accomplishes missions with minimum supervision)
2. Adaptability (flexible in approach to tasks, adjusts as required for situation)
3. Positive attitude (motivates, challenges subordinates)

4. Decisiveness (capacity to set priorities, decides promptly with sense of purpose)
5. Innovative (new ideas or thoughts)
6. Initiative (acts on own, assertiveness)
7. Creativity (ability to bring about a course of action)
8. Judgment (logical decisions)
9. Appearance (walks, talks & acts like a soldier, possesses military bearing)
10. Stamina (maintains physical & mental condition)
11. Understanding (appreciates concerns of others, understands people motivations, seeks the facts)
12. Communication (expresses & exchanges ideas effectively)
13. Seeks self improvement (works to improve self)
14. Knowledge (tactically & technically proficient - studies history, understands international perspective)
15. Coach (teacher, trainer)
16. Mentor (leader who sets an example to be emulated, trusted and experienced counselor)
17. Counselor (listens to subordinates, assists in performance enhancement)
18. Caring (sincere concern for subordinates, rewards and encourages initiative)
19. Accountable (accepts responsibility for his actions & those of his subordinates)
20. Forceful (executes actions with a sense of purpose, will to win)

21. Trust (believes in self & subordinates)

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Organizational skills are learned skills necessary to guide an organization in the direction of the senior leader's vision. A senior leader's vision provides a clear path for all unit members to channel their efforts. This vision becomes the sense of direction that provides motivation to get the job done. Leaders start to trust subordinates to do their share. The great leaders of our time have been not only effective operators and decision makers, but also people of vision who have had a marvelous sense of what was possible, how to set and articulate goals, and how to motivate their people to strive successfully for these goals. Great leaders tend to be great planners.¹⁹

The most important organizational skill a leader can have is the ability to build a team. Team building is the key to success. General Carl E. Vuono, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, says that building a team is the single most important thing a leader can do for his unit or job.²⁰ Among other things, team building encompasses the proper use of motivation. A positive motivational climate causes high esprit de corps and a willingness to sacrifice when challenged to do so. Under this philosophy, we find units that execute tough, realistic training to standard while excusing honest mistakes. Above all, a positive leadership style cares for soldiers and their families regardless of grade. A positive attitude is persuasive and a key to good unit morale. The emphasis of the positive

reinforces the soldier's visualization of himself as a winner.²¹ This approach simply builds confidence. Smart leaders know that confidence is a combat multiplier. When the door of confidence is opened, a caged eagle soars.²² Leaders instill confidence by ensuring subordinates are trained to standard. Lieutenant General Arthur S. Collins, Jr., U.S. Army (Retired), wrote "it is the responsibility of the top levels in the chain of command - and to me that means the general officers and full colonels - to create an atmosphere in which effective training can be conducted. In brief, what is needed is a relaxation of tensions accompanied by a rise in the standards of performance. That means the senior officers on command assignments must become more familiar with weapons, troops and the tactical environment."²³

The most we can ask of our subordinates is to give their very best effort in everything they do. Everyday is not a great day; however, good leaders approach tasks in a positive manner and give it their best shot regardless of the outlook. The senior leader must have complete familiarity with the human condition and how it must be carefully shaped to develop cohesive, winning teams. Training subordinates to operate independently within the context of the commander's intent is a senior leader responsibility. Subordinates want to be held accountable for their actions - they enjoy doing their job. Too often leaders try to help subordinates do their job and end up doing it for them. This type of leadership ruins team building and creates distrust. Field-Marshal Montgomery wrote that a man who is always immersed in details is

unfit to be a leader in any walk of life.²⁴ Senior leaders address this dilemma by simply not doing something at their level that should be done at a lower level. Give subordinates the standard and let them do the work then hold them accountable for the results. Talent or ability of subordinates is usually not the problem. The problem is that senior leaders are not willing to empower subordinates to do their job. Remember subordinates have the right to fail. If we don't operate this way, we will never develop the type of leader we need to execute the doctrine of FM 100-5. A leader is characterized in FM 100-5 as bold, risk taking, forward looking, confident and warrior spirited.²⁵ A number of campaigns in history, such as the battle of Malaya & Singapore or the battle of France, confirm that trust, confidence and empowerment of subordinates provide the impetus for victory. The winner of these battles was outnumbered or inferior in equipment. The leaders of the victors had the vision to understand that on dispersed battlefields there is no way they can directly control every move by subordinate leaders. They had the guts and courage to trust subordinates to execute their part of the operation. The losers tried to direct every detail.

Granting discretion to subordinates increases the uncertainty and tension the superior must face.²⁶ The bottom line is that this type of behavior builds trust, respect, camaraderie, competence and proficiency in the few units in which it has been implemented.

Leading soldiers effectively requires building a team with a winning spirit. Vince Lombardi said "that running a football team

is no different than running other kinds of organizations - an army, a political party, a business. The principles are the same. The object is to win - to beat the other guy. Maybe that sounds hard or cruel. I don't think it is."²⁷ This kind of says it all. Leaders must have an intense desire to win. On the battlefield there is no second place. Those who finish second in combat are either dead, wounded, a prisoner of war, or fleeing a victorious enemy.²⁸ Being a member of a winning team is what we strive for in life.

Leadership requires a balanced attention to the internal workings of the organization and the external environments upon which the leader must operate. The senior leader must be aware of the international, national and local political situation. He must understand the problems of society in general. This awareness will keep him abreast of the external environmental influences on his unit. He must operate in the center of his unit balancing the competing demands on his time. If he goes in one direction, he becomes involved in the internal details of the organization, unaware of changes and new demands in the external environment. If he goes in the other direction and spends too much time outside his organization, he loses touch with his own people. The senior leader must stay in the middle balancing his time. He needs to know his organization and its capabilities so he can best represent his unit to external organizations (higher command, etc). The balanced leader is best able to provide the direction and inspiration needed to make an effective unit.²⁹

Unit organization skills are not necessarily learned in the military. However, all these qualities of organizational skills are developed over time. Experience is a great teacher. The senior leader uses his experience coupled with learned skills and attributes to mold his unit as his vision intends.

After a review of leadership literature and doctrine, I developed the following list of organizational skills that senior leaders should possess.

1. Team builder (achieving unity of effort)
2. Visionary (keen foresight, conceptualize future events & requirements, plans and shapes the future of the unit)
3. Perspective (broad international, national and local outlook, able to view from different angles)
4. Positive motivator (winning attitude)
5. Decentralization (leadership that empowers people to do their job)
6. Communicator (explains thoughts & reasons why)
7. Resilient (ability to stick with it in face of obstacles, perseverance)
8. Adaptive (ability to be flexible to new situations or events)
9. Cohesive (establishes and maintains mutual trust)
10. Lead by example (serves as symbol for all to emulate)

MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS

BIOGRAPHY

George Henry Thomas (1816-1870)

George Henry Thomas was born on July 31, 1816 on the family homestead near Newsom's Depot, Virginia five miles of the North Carolina boundary. His father, John, was of Welsh descent and his mother, Elizabeth Rochelle, was of French descent.

After graduation from a local academy at the age of eighteen, he worked at the law office of his uncle.³⁰ He helped prepare documents and enjoyed reading law. In the spring of 1836, Congressman John Young Mason called his uncle's office and let it be known that he had a United States Military Academy appointment to fill. George volunteered and passed the entrance examination. Congressman Mason submitted his name for appointment and it was approved by President Jackson. Thomas entered the academy in the fall of 1836. While at West Point, he roomed with William T. Sherman and Stewart V. Vliet. In his four years at West Point, he got to know such people as Ulysses S. Grant, William S. Rosecrans, Don C. Buell, Joseph Hooker, Braxton Bragg, Bushrod R. Johnson, William J. Hardee and Daniel H. Hill. Little did he know that some of these men would be future enemies. There were forty-two graduates of the class of 1840; Thomas stood twelfth.

Orders to Thomas, after graduation and leave, assigned him to the 3rd Artillery at Fort Columbia in New York Harbor. Here on

Governor's Island, he helped train (with Lieutenant Braxton Bragg) four companies of regulars for service in Florida. He embarked on several campaigns against the Seminole Indians that gained him distinction as a planner and gallant fighter. For his actions in Florida, he was promoted to Brevet First Lieutenant on Nov 6, 1841.³¹

He was sent to spend some happy and quiet months at Fort McHenry near Baltimore. In July 1844, he received his permanent promotion to First Lieutenant. Thomas received orders to go to New Orleans on June 27, 1845. Here he would ready himself for war in Mexico.

In the Mexican War, Thomas learned the principle of logistics. Thomas' company was commanded by Braxton Bragg. Brevet Brigadier General Zachary Taylor was the commander ordered to defend Texas from invasion from Mexico. Taylor decided to set up his supply lines perpendicular to the enemy's front, with the result that his army was unable to protect it. The enemy cut the supply lines at will. Thomas never forgot this mistake. He never permitted his fixed bases of supply to be interrupted. He always kept the supply base protected and to the rear of the fight.

After Thomas' involvement in the Monterrey Campaign, he received a promotion to Brevet Captain on Sept 23, 1846. Again, Thomas distinguished himself for providing accurate and timely fire from his artillery guns at the Battle of Buena Vista.³² According to General Zachary Taylor "we would not have maintained one position if it was not for the support of the guns." As a result

of distinguishing himself at the battles of Monterrey and Buena Vista, Brevet Captain Thomas received another promotion. This time to Brevet Major on Feb 23, 1847.

At the close of the Mexican War, fourteen of Thomas classmates had won one brevet, three had won two brevets and Thomas and Oscar Winship had won three each.

In Aug 1849, Thomas rejoined his regiment at Fort Adams, Rhode Island. Again the unit was sent to Florida. He stayed in Florida until his unit was redeployed to Fort Independence, Boston.

In April 1851, he became an instructor of artillery at West Point. During this tour of duty, Thomas met Mrs. Julia Augusta Kellogg. She and Brevet Major Thomas were married on Nov 17, 1852. He received his permanent Army rank of Captain on Dec 24, 1853. It had been nearly ten years since he had been promoted to permanent First Lieutenant. In the spring of 1853, he received orders to Fort Yuma near the California and Arizona border. He was named commander of Battery A, Third Artillery. After a tough and exhaustive trip to Fort Yuma, Captain Thomas spent hours working the logistical problems associated with making a remote post operate. He spent several weeks with Indian interpreters studying the language of the Yuma tribe and, after learning to speak it, make an attempt to reduce it to writing.³³

Working to get out of the Yuma hell hole, Thomas applied for reassignment. Braxton Bragg, now stationed at Fort Washita in the Indian Territory, wrote Thomas and asked if he wanted to exchange positions. But since Thomas was waiting for a reply to his

application, he held Bragg's offer in abeyance, hoping for the best. In the meantime, Bragg was asked by the Secretary of War Jefferson Davis to join a new cavalry regiment. However, Bragg was thoroughly disgusted with the service and resigned. However, Bragg recommended to the Secretary of War that Thomas take his place in the new unit. Thomas received the assignment and a promotion to Major. Ordered to do some recruiting on the way to his new post at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, Thomas joined his unit in September of 1855. Thomas spent the next six years with the 2nd Cavalry outfitting and training new recruits. He also spent many months on court martial duty in Texas.

On Nov 12, 1860 Thomas left Texas on a six month leave which he planned to spend in New York City. As the War Between The States began to unfold, Thomas made a decision to remain aligned with the Union. He had sworn an oath to defend the United States of America and felt it only right for a lot of reasons to uphold that oath. He was ordered to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania to meet the 2nd Cavalry as it returned from the south to ready for war.

As the ranking officer at Carlisle Barracks, he handled the details essential to getting soldiers into new uniforms and into the field. The 2nd Cavalry had to reconstitute because it lost at least one quarter of its enlisted men during the transition from Texas to Pennsylvania. Thomas made Lieutenant Colonel when the 2nd Cavalry Commander, LTC Robert E. Lee, decided to fight for the south. He made Colonel when the brigade commander, Colonel Albert

S. Johnston resigned. Thomas continued to organize and train his unit reaching the rank of Brigadier General. On Aug 17, 1861, he was promoted to Brigadier General of Volunteers. He was assigned to the Department of the Cumberland at Louisville. Thomas relinquished command of his brigade and moved out to Kentucky.

He defeated a Confederate force at Mill Springs in southern Kentucky on January 19, 1862, the first decisive Federal victory in the west. This victory secured eastern Kentucky for the Union. In April 1862, he was promoted to Major General of Volunteers and assumed command of a Union division.

He served in the Perryville campaign and fought at Stones River (Murfreesboro), Dec 31, 1862, to January 2, 1863, where he was in command of the center of the Union line. He was in charge of the most important part of the maneuvering from Decherd to Chattanooga, Tennessee.

For two days, September 19 and 20, 1863, 125,000 men fought for the city of Chattanooga at the Battle of Chickamauga. General Thomas became famous as a result of his actions during this battle. The Union army under General W. S. Rosecrans, had skillfully maneuvered the opposing Confederate army under General Braxton Bragg out of Chattanooga, Tennessee and had occupied the town. Rosecrans, believing Bragg's army to be in retreat, moved his troops into the Chickamauga Valley, intending to attack and destroy his enemy there. Bragg evacuated Chattanooga to insure the safety of his line of communications and to meet up with the reinforcements of General James Longstreet coming from Virginia.

Bragg believed he could recover the ground evacuated and sever supply lines if he could get between Rosecrans' army and Chattanooga. Bragg decided to attack Rosecrans on the morning of September 19. His attack was poorly organized and became a series of skirmishes without either side winning decisively. With Longstreet's troops completing their arrival the night of the 19th, Bragg decided to renew his attack on the 20th. Bragg's troops pushed against the Union left, commanded by Thomas, but could make no progress. However, Thomas had to have reinforcements to hold the left flank. In one of these movements of troops from right to left, a gap was created and the Confederates under Longstreet stormed through the gap. The Union lines were flanked and driven back in headlong retreat. Rosecrans and a great part of his army was in a full retreat to Chattanooga. Only Thomas, on the left, stood firm resisting all attempts to drive him from his position. Thomas moved to a defensive position on Snodgrass Hill. The Confederates attacked Thomas three times. During these attacks Thomas' men held the line. The battle surged the whole day of the 20th. The Confederates would reach the crest of the hill and seemed about to overrun it, only to be thrown back by a renewed effort from the Union defenders. Thomas was everywhere giving commands. He told Division commanders to hold Snodgrass Hill at all costs. The men felt inspired by the coolness and tenacity of Thomas. It gave them the incentive to fight. The Confederates continued to hit Thomas' flanks. Thomas' lines remained weak in his center, but at a fortuitous time, Major General Gordon Granger

moved two brigades to Thomas' assistance. The arrival of the brigades saved the day. They repelled the Confederate attack up Horseshoe Ridge and startled the enemy with the suddenness and ferocity of their fight. The Confederates retreated. When recalling the battle, General Longstreet said he made twenty-five assaults in all on Snodgrass Hill. The fight was bloody and intense. It came down to the Union resolve to not give up their position. Thomas for his part became known as the Rock of Chickamauga in honor of his brilliant defense and for saving the Army of the Cumberland from disaster. He was the hero of the day. It was not until dark of the 20th that Thomas was ordered to withdraw. The losses were heavy on both sides, coming to about 16,000 for the Union army and more than 18,000 for the Confederate troops.³⁴

For this action, Thomas was promoted to permanent Brigadier General and succeeded Rosecrans in command of the Army of the Cumberland. He was promoted to Brevet Major General on Dec 24, 1864.

In the autumn of 1864, General Sherman called on Thomas to deal with the threat to Union lines of communications (LOC) by the Confederate forces of General John B. Hood on Sherman's push to the south. Thomas successfully protected the Union LOC's by checking the enemy at Spring Hill and then by intercepting and defeating Confederate troops under Hood at Nashville, in one of the most one sided battles of the war.

Thomas was made a permanent Major General and reserved the

thanks of Congress.³⁵

After the war, Thomas commanded the military departments in Kentucky and Tennessee until 1869, when was placed in charge of the Pacific with headquarters at San Francisco. In May 1870, he died. Next to Grant and Sherman, he was undoubtedly the most capable Union leader.³⁶

EVALUATION

SENIOR LEADER REPORT

PART 1

NAME	GRADE	DATE OF RANK
GEORGE H. THOMAS	MG OF VOLUNTEERS	25 APRIL 1862
PERIOD COVERED	REASON FOR REPORT	
JUNE 1840 - NOV 1863	SENIOR LEADER EVALUATION	
RATER	GRADE	DATE OF RANK
WILLIAM F. LANDRUS	LTC	01 SEPT 1987

PART 2

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

A. BASIC LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES - TO WHAT DEGREE DOES THE OFFICER EXHIBIT THESE ATTRIBUTES (COMMENT ON ANY AREA WHERE THE RATED OFFICER IS PARTICULARLY OUTSTANDING OR DEFICIENT IN BLOCK BELOW)

1 = HIGH DEGREE 2 = AVERAGE DEGREE 3 = LOW DEGREE

INTEGRITY	1	CANDOR	1
CONFIDENCE	1	INTELLIGENCE	1
COMMON SENSE	1	MORAL COURAGE	1

SELF-DISCIPLINE	1	SELFLESSNESS	1
TENACITY	1	CONDUCT	1
LOYALTY	1	DEVOTION TO DUTY	1
SET THE EXAMPLE	1	COURAGE	1

comments: An officer of exceptional basic leadership attributes in all areas, Thomas' selfless service was the hallmark of his performance. He possessed total devotion to duty and could always be counted on to give an informed, honest opinion. "Thomas possessed an even temperament and was never violently demonstrative".³⁷ He was always right on time, self-confident, serious minded, take charge type of guy, conducted himself properly at all times, highly sympathetic and easy to get along with. He made decisions that made sense. General Bragg thought him to be an excellent planner and gallant soldier. A honest, high-toned gentleman, above all deception and guile. ³⁸

He set the example for his soldiers in many ways. Few commanders were as visible on the battlefield as Thomas. He shared discomforts with the men, using the same type of open campfire and the same type of shelter.³⁹ Thomas was there when his men needed him. His tenacity in battle, as exemplified at the Battle of Chickamauga, gave him great credibility as a leader. He displayed a confidence about him that soldiers could easily recognize. Because of their love for Thomas, his men gave him a testimonial sword for his courage and confidence in war.

Thomas' sacrifice and selfless service was demonstrated by the hardships he encountered during his military career. Serving in the west and Civil War often without his wife is one example. Receiving the hardest assignments in remote areas is another example. He rarely complained. He was considered a modest and reliable soldier with a great capacity for caring for soldiers. He was not an overly religious man although he went to his methodist brigade for church weekly because he enjoyed singing hymns.

Thomas was never wounded during the Civil War. The only time he was wounded during his career was in the western mountains in 1860. He was hit by an Indian arrow. It passed through his chin and pinned to his breast. Though the injury was exceedingly painful, he removed the shaft, tossed it aside and continued after the Indians. This shows that Thomas was a man of courage and had a willingness to sacrifice in the face of the enemy.

A very loyal officer, Thomas stayed with the North when others of similar background broke ranks and went South. Thomas felt a Virginian should be first a nationalist then a Virginian.⁴⁰ He had taken an oath to defend his country against all enemies, therefore, he could not forswear it. Neither did he ever forswear his obligation to his men.

B. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS - TO WHAT DEGREE DOES THE OFFICER EXHIBIT THESE SKILLS (COMMENT ON ANY AREA WHERE THE RATED OFFICER IS PARTICULARLY OUTSTANDING OR DEFICIENT IN BLOCK BELOW)

1 = HIGH DEGREE 2 = AVERAGE DEGREE 3 = LOW DEGREE

DEPENDABLE	1	UNDERSTANDING	1
ADAPTABILITY	2	COMMUNICATION	1
POSITIVE ATTITUDE	2	SEEKS SELF IMPROVEMENT	1
DECISIVENESS	1	KNOWLEDGE	1
INNOVATION	1	COACH	1
INITIATIVE	1	MENTOR	1
CREATIVITY	1	COUNSELOR	1
JUDGEMENT	1	CARING	1
APPEARANCE	2	ACCOUNTABLE	1
STAMINA	2	FORCEFUL	2
TRUST	1		

comments: Displayed a depth of knowledge and confidence rarely seen in leaders. Excelled when the going got tough. Up front in battle where the action was when needed. A model for emulation in all aspects of ethical behavior. His decisions were based on what was in the best interest of the unit and best safeguarded the welfare of soldiers. He readily sought out responsibility. He did a superb job of developing subordinates. An honest, straight forward officer who instilled trust and confidence in his men. Thomas was a exceptional communicator, coach and mentor to his men. In preparation for the Battle of Mills Springs, he attended parades of each regiment, inspected clothing, arms, and accoutrements. He instructed staff officers on their duties. All his staff officers were young men whose hearts were easily won by Thomas' kindness and appreciation for their hard work. Thomas worked hard training his

force. He studied tactics and politics and required his soldiers to do the same. He had the trust and confidence of his men. As a roommate of Sherman at West Point, Thomas became known as "Old Tom" because he was dignified, self-possessed and steady. As the Civil War progressed, Thomas became known as a tactician of utmost capability. Thomas improved his professional knowledge throughout his career. He studied science, history and philosophy. He was well versed in constitutional law. The San Francisco Alto (newspaper) heralded Thomas as a man of uncommon executive ability...modest, unassuming, affable...a truly great gentleman.⁴¹ Sherman once introduced Thomas as a determined soldier, and a beloved commander.⁴²

Thomas promoted people who were reliable, energetic, and displayed sound judgement. He also would not promote anyone who did not possess sobriety. He lived this way as well. He had superior professional skills. He could effectively communicate both in writing and orally. He held his leaders accountable for their equipment and for the caring of their men. Thomas often walked the lines asking soldiers if they had been properly cared for while checking every detail. He very seldom lost his temper which gave the impression that he was not very forceful at times. Grant thought him to be slow, not always getting to the place Grant wanted him at the time Grant needed him. But Thomas would not move his forces until the logistical capability was ready. Thomas insured that all details had been attended to before moving. He understood logistics. He often commented on Sherman's gambles to

push deep when his logistics were not properly cared for.

He possessed exceptional judgment. He could read the eyes of his men and determine their ability to fight. Soldiers had a feeling of security under him, a feeling so strong that it frequently aroused comment among them. Soldiers read their answer in his look and manner, entirely calm as usual - soldiers could sleep better.⁴³ Dana Wilson, Assistant Secretary of War, reported to Secretary of War Stanton that he knew of no other man whose composition and character are so much like George Washington, he is at once an elegant gentleman and a heroic soldier.⁴⁴ Thomas was called various nicknames "Old Tom," "Old Reliable," "Old Slowtrot," "Old Pap," "Uncle George," and "Rock." All these meant that he was the right kind of man to have as your commander. Thomas was successful because he viewed everyone in his unit as a man and a soldier. He was unremitting in his effort to insure his men were well supplied, well looked after and always at the right place at the right time. Thomas was always found ahead of the column at the skirmish line. His navigation skills were exemplary. Many accounts have Thomas navigating his way through the woods finding soldiers or reconnoitering points of conflict. T h o m a s ' philosophy of accountability was simple. He believed soldiers were to obey orders and the officers would do the rest. Thomas could be trusted to be with his men and support their every effort. His biggest weakness, if he had one, was his appearance. He was a big man, about six feet in height. In the 1850s he weighed 175 pounds, however he took on many pounds during the years of war, and by age

of fifty-two, he weighed 246 pounds.⁴⁵ I believe Thomas' overweight gave Grant the impression that Thomas was slow and unenthusiastic.

Thomas fully understood the psychological aspects of warfare. Thomas thought emotions could be subdued by seasoning and careful training to a point where the men could handle battle. He believed military success came more from training than anything else. Thomas coached his subordinates, rarely criticizing them in public. He continued to be creative in training by finding training aids to give his soldiers familiarity with the enemy. He wanted them to understand the world of violence by acquainting them with gunfire, explosions and death. Professionally astute Thomas, although subtle in style, was a soldier's soldier and a competent, confident leader that had the professional competencies necessary to lead his men to victory.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS - TO WHAT DEGREE DOES THE OFFICER EXHIBIT THESE ATTRIBUTES (COMMENT ON ANY AREA WHERE THE RATED OFFICER IS PARTICULARLY OUTSTANDING OR DEFICIENT IN BLOCK BELOW)

1 = HIGH DEGREE 2 = AVERAGE DEGREE 3 = LOW DEGREE

TEAM BUILDER	1	COMMUNICATOR	1
VISIONARY	1	RESILIENT	1
PERSPECTIVE	1	ADAPTIVE	1
POSITIVE MOTIVATOR	1	COHESIVE	1
DECENTRALIZATION	1	LEAD BY EXAMPLE	1

comments: MG Thomas was, by any measurable standard, one of the most highly competent officers in history. Perceptive, mission oriented, visionary, sincere and concerned; MG Thomas' performance was outstanding. Assuming the leadership of units that were disorganized and demoralized, he rigidly rebuilt them into cohesive, efficient units that demonstrated an outstanding level of proficiency when tested in battle. MG Thomas exhibited an intense personal interest in his soldiers. He devoted much of his personal time to providing the guidance and counseling so necessary to properly prepare his officers to assume future positions as combat leaders. As a result of his bearing, professional attitude and understanding of all assigned tasks, MG Thomas quickly gained the highest respect and loyalty of his subordinates. He was an avid reader, constantly seeking to improve his mind in the areas of political science, philosophy and military history. He was a stable, mild mannered officer possessing the ability to be firm when the situation required it.

He was a tough, yet compassionate leader who had that unique ability to muster spirit and pride in every soldier to better accomplish any mission. MG Thomas set high standards and got results in the field and in garrison. He was greatly respected and admired by his men.

The units he commanded always acquitted themselves well and were never wanting. He knew where to place emphasis. For example, he knew that training soldiers to realistic standards was the most important thing he could do for his troops. He established

effective chain-of-commands and instilled a strong fighting spirit within the units. Consequently, his units were highly successful and showed steady improvement under his leadership. He was intelligent, conscientious and responsive. Each task, assigned or implied, resulted in sound, solid recommendations. Thomas was at his best under pressure - always calm, deliberate, and completely confident. Thomas was a visionary type commander who proactively shaped his command's future and achieved the highest level of performance across the broad fronts of training, maintaining, caring and safety. The best example of his vision was the discussion he had with Sherman just prior to the Civil War. Thomas and Sherman took a map and laid out lines of operations and strategic points that needed to be controlled by the North. As it turned out Thomas had expertly picked out the exact strategic locations that would become famous in the war to follow.⁴⁶ His leadership and organizational abilities, coupled with his team-building skills, underscore his capability as a commander.

There are many indicators of good units. Leaders who work hard at building a team with an emphasis on positive leadership skills have good units. For example, one of the Union Army's problems in the Civil War was Absent Without Leave (AWOLs), which was so widespread as to be considered uncontrollable. Thomas' corps had a better record than any other Corps in the Army of the Cumberland, yet he showed only 56.01 per cent of his total strength present for duty.⁴⁷

Thomas was a thorough trainer. He trained his troops in the

essentials. He insisted on skipping the ceremonial training to concentrate on essential war fighting techniques and procedures. He was a disciplinarian but got his results without harshness. He was a master of detail without permitting the demands to be excessive of his time. He could do this by using the chain-of-command and by not micro-managing everything.

Thomas demonstrated a combination of tenacity and flexibility. In action at Stone's River, Thomas' men stood ready to repel Confederate troops. Although he had retreated, he held on to attack later and push the enemy back. At Chickamauga, Thomas lead by example - bravely rallying soldiers to hold off Confederate advances. Again his tenacity prevailed.

Thomas spent most of his career restoring poor morale of his field commands or fixing the deficiencies of their former commanders. He reorganized the 2nd Cavalry at Carlisle Barracks after its morale had been destroyed. The 1st Brigade of the Army of the Cumberland had to be reorganized and expanded into a division.

There are examples of Thomas taking out personal loans, from what he called carpetbaggers, to buy supplies for his troops.

When it comes to the bottom line, Thomas was a superb organizer and leader of men. He was a positive motivator who brought a cohesiveness to units that few commanders are capable of doing. The best example of his unit leadership capabilities was at Chickamauga when Rosecrans left the battlefield and Thomas took charge. In two and one half hours Thomas turned the situation

great-grandfather, Seth Wilder, lost a leg in the Battle of Bunker Hill in the Revolutionary War. His grandfather, Seth Wilder, Jr., participated in the Battles of Saratoga, Monmouth and Stoney Point where he received a bayonet wound. His father, Reuben Wilder, fought in the War of 1812 at Plattsburg and Sackett's Harbour.⁵⁰

After receiving an average education, John Wilder moved to Columbus, Ohio at the age of nineteen. He worked in a foundry learning drafting, pattern-making and mill-wrighting skills. He was an ambitious, hard-working man and, therefore, received numerous promotions. In 1857, he moved to Greensburg, Indiana, where he invented many pieces of hydraulic equipment. By the Spring of 1861, Wilder had become a nationally recognized expert in the field of hydraulics.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Wilder had his foundry produce two six-pound cannons for a regiment he recruited. He planned to start a company of light artillery. However, the artillery company did not fit into the local regiment plans, and Captain Wilder and his company were mustered into Company A, 17th Indiana Infantry Regiment on June 12, 1861. The regiment moved to West Virginia and participated in the defeat of General Robert E. Lee at the Battles of Cheat Mountain and Greenbriar. Within a month of his arrival in West Virginia, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and a few months later to Colonel of the Regiment. In 1862, the 17th Indiana Infantry Regiment took part in the siege of Corinth and Munfordville, and in October the Battle of Perryville in Kentucky.⁵¹

around. Men who had been routed and facing defeat now joined Thomas on Snodgrass Hill. Even though Thomas made no exciting military maneuvers to make this happen, he personally moved to the place of danger and gave orders to his division commanders, Brigadier General John M. Brannon, Major General Thomas J. Wood, and Major General Joseph J. Reynolds. Most accounts say that Thomas' presence instilled confidence in his men. One observer said of the situation, "One of those crises had now arrived, rare in the history of our country, where the personal character and power of an individual becomes incalculable value to the general welfare."⁴⁸ One of Reynold's junior lieutenants recalled how Thomas gathered up the shattered forces and welded them into an army without a chain of command. Thomas who, without appeals, without words, without clamor, turned doubt into determination and rout into resistance. As he rode among them, the men cheered and their clustered flags dipped in salutation. Even with disaster closing in everywhere, this senior leader stood calm, silent, resilient, and resolved to hold the ridge until night came. Hemmed in by appalling potential ruin, yet supreme above disaster, stood "the Rock of Chickamauga."⁴⁹

COLONEL JOHN T. WILDER

BIOGRAPHY

John T. Wilder (1830-1890)

John T. Wilder grew-up in the Catskill Mountains in New York State. His family heritage is full of distinguished fighters. His

Colonel Wilder's Brigade was made up of the 17th, the 72nd and 75th Indiana Infantry Regiments, the 98th Illinois Infantry Regiment and the 18th Indiana Battery of Light Artillery. The 72nd was replaced by the 123rd Illinois and the 92nd Illinois was attached to the Brigade for the Chickamauga Campaign. For most of the war the units under Colonel Wilder were the 17th & 72nd Indiana, the 98th & 123rd Illinois and the 18th Indiana Battery.

Wilder became known as an innovator. He gave hatchets to his brigade instead of bayonets for he realized bayonets were only good in the hands of highly trained regulars and that hatchets were more useful for bivouacking. He learned quickly from combat experience. After chasing the enemy cavalry for months, Wilder realized he needed to be able to catch him to defeat him. He asked General Rosecrans if he could mount his brigade and fight them with the best available weapon. He arranged, through his hometown bank, the purchase of Spencer Repeating Rifles to arm his brigade. He co-signed a note for each man to buy his own weapon. The weapon had seven cartridges to a magazine and ten refills in the cartridge cases for each rifle. His innovative approach to problem solving and aggressive leadership style caused his brigade to become the workhorse of the Army of the Cumberland.⁵² They were General Rosecrans only element that could operate away from infantry support and be able to attack or defend themselves equally with the enemy.

The first use of the Spencer rifle came in a brief skirmish at Liberty in early June 1863. However, three weeks later during

Rosecrans' Tullahoma Campaign the nation found that the new rifles were indeed effective. General Rosecrans decided to move against General Bragg at Tullahoma and Thomas' 14th Corps was the main Union force to move through the mountains from Murfreesboro to Manchester. Wilder's Brigade moved out in front of Thomas' Corps. Wilder's men moved quickly, knowing the first major battle with their new rifles was imminent. Six hours after their departure, Wilder's Brigade reached the entrance to Hoover's Gap. Hoover's Gap, which was used to funnel the infantry into the rear of Bragg's defensive line, was a narrow, dangerous defile, three miles long through which flowed the headwaters of the West Fork of Stones River and provided a path through the Cumberland Mountains. Rosecrans chose this approach because it was the least likely route of attack into the waiting Confederate army. Defending the gap was the Confederate 1st Kentucky Cavalry, the same unit Wilder had met at Liberty. Wilder's Brigade rapidly advanced and caught the 1st Kentucky pickets by surprise forcing the Confederate retreat. The 1st Kentucky main body counterattacked but using superior fire power and the momentum of the initial attack Wilder's Brigade again forced the enemy to retreat. Wilder continued to push to the south end of the gap, which was the position the Confederates had planned to use for their primary defense.⁵³ Since the Lightning Brigade had advanced six miles farther than adjacent units, General Reynolds of Thomas' 14th Corps ordered Wilder to retreat. Under the threat of arrest for disobedience, Wilder declined to comply with the order. The Confederate 1st Kentucky attacked Wilder's

Brigade but were easily repulsed because of his superb defensive position and overwhelming fire power. After this attack, Generals Rosecrans, Thomas and Reynolds rode up. Wilder explained his reasoning for disobeying orders. General Rosecrans not only agreed with Wilder but said "Wilder has done right, Promote him. Promote him."⁵⁴

The next day, Wilder's men were withdrawn for a much needed rest. General Thomas told Wilder that he had saved the lives of a thousand men by his gallant stand. General Thomas said from now on his brigade would be known as the "Lightning Brigade."⁵⁵

The Confederate Army was now safely behind the Tennessee River, headquartered at Chattanooga. On August 16, 1863 the Army of the Cumberland began to move against Chattanooga in a campaign that culminated at the Battle of Chickamauga. Leading in front of Crittenden's Corps, Wilder's men had the mission of creating a feint at or above Chattanooga while the main part of the Army hit the enemy below the city. The strategy worked and Bragg at the threat of being outflanked withdrew from Chattanooga. The Lightning Brigade's next mission was to move in advance of Crittenden's Corps toward Lee and Gordon's Mill. At Rock Spring the Lightning Brigade ran into an ambush, but a counter ambush attack caused the Confederates to retreat. However, Wilder found his units surrounded after he pushed the Confederates back. Hand to hand fighting occurred and finally Wilder's men pushed through a weakness in the line to return to Crittenden's Corps. At Chickamauga, Wilder was given the mission of preventing the

Confederates from outflanking the Union on the left. Wilder's men held the Union flank and without their bold defense the Union would have been flanked and subsequently destroyed. As the battle of Chickamauga continued, Wilder found his unit cut off. He was encouraged to retreat by Sheridan and assistant secretary Dana. However, Wilder felt he could fight through Confederate forces and go to the assistance of Thomas. Wilder knew Thomas was holding on desperately on Snodgrass Hill.⁵⁶ Thomas sent a message to Wilder and told him to take a position on his right to prevent the Confederate cavalry from getting in his rear. Wilder's men moved into position and provided resistance while Thomas fought off numerous assaults. Wilder's actions gave Thomas time to organize his forces and salvage the day. Twice during the Battle of Chickamauga the Lightning Brigade saved the Union Army from disaster - first, on the Union's left front at Alexander Bridge and secondly, at Snodgrass Hill. Two months later Thomas recommended Wilder for promotion to Brigadier General. However, he was never promoted.

Wilder moved his men back to Chattanooga and spent time preparing for defensive operations and refitting their war fighting capability. On November 18, 1863 the Lightning Brigade was split up. The artillery unit reported to the 1st Cavalry Division, the 17th Indiana and the 98th Illinois reported to Long's Cavalry Brigade and the 72nd Indiana and the 123rd Illinois remained with Rosecrans.

Wilder became sick and was forced to take sick leave. Colonel

Miller of the 72nd Indiana took command. Wilder returned to the Brigade on Jan 2, 1864 at Huntsville, Alabama. After a brief stay in Alabama, he was sent east to train the 17th Indiana. In April 1864, the Lightning Brigade was reunited under Colonel Wilder's command. The Brigade drew new horses and began to ready for the Atlanta Campaign. Assigned to General Garrard's Division of Thomas' 14th Corps, the offensive to Atlanta began with Wilder's men leading the way along the Oostenaula River toward Rome, Georgia. However, Colonel Wilder became sick again and had to give way once more to Colonel Miller. Shortly, thereafter Colonel Wilder had to retire from service. The Lightning Brigade fought on under Colonel Miller's leadership.

Colonel Wilder regained his health and became a wealthy industrialist in Chattanooga. He founded the University of Chattanooga and became a well-respected citizen.⁵⁷

Colonel Wilder molded the Lightning Brigade into one of the most effective fighting forces in the Union Army. As the first Spencer-armed mounted infantry forces in the Union Army, they had set the example, by using modern cavalry tactics and techniques for others to emulate later in the war. There wasn't a man in the war who did not have the utmost respect for the bravery and courage of Wilder and his men.

EVALUATION

SENIOR LEADER REPORT

PART 1

NAME JOHN T. WILDER	GRADE COL OF VOLUNTEERS	DATE OF RANK 16 AUG 1861
PERIOD COVERED 1830 - 1890	REASON FOR REPORT SENIOR LEADER EVALUATION	
RATER WILLIAM F. LANDRUS	GRADE LTC	DATE OF RANK 01 SEPT 1987

PART 2

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

A. BASIC LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES - TO WHAT DEGREE DOES THE OFFICER EXHIBIT THESE ATTRIBUTES (COMMENT ON ANY AREA WHERE THE RATED OFFICER IS PARTICULARLY OUTSTANDING OR DEFICIENT IN BLOCK BELOW)

1 = HIGH DEGREE 2 = AVERAGE DEGREE 3 = LOW DEGREE

INTEGRITY	1	CANDOR	1
CONFIDENCE	1	INTELLIGENCE	1
COMMON SENSE	1	MORAL COURAGE	1
SELF-DISCIPLINE	1	SELFLESSNESS	1
TENACITY	1	CONDUCT	1
LOYALTY	1	DEVOTION TO DUTY	1
SET THE EXAMPLE	1	COURAGE	1

comments: Colonel John T. Wilder set and enforced high standards of appearance and discipline in his brigade. He demonstrated a high degree of intelligence and common sense by continually looking

to improve his unit's war fighting capability. He was quick to make tactical assessments and to react to the enemy. His selflessness and tenacity gave strength to his men. He displayed a sharp honesty and frankness in expressing himself. Several times, he risked arrest believing that his commander did not know the real situation on the ground. These actions should not be interpreted as acts of disloyalty. Instead, they represent extreme devotion to duty and courage by doing what is right in the face of challenging and dangerous situations. An example of such an action occurred at Hoover's Gap. Wilder's Brigade went on the attack and subsequently gained control of the high ground at the end of the gap. Facing a counterattack and orders from his higher commander to retreat because he had out run his follow-on brigade, Colonel Wilder decided to hold fast and fight. Colonel Wilder felt that he could successfully defend his position and save the Army of the Cumberland six days of fighting. The Lightning Brigade fought hard and defeated the enemy. When his commander arrived, he realized Colonel Wilder had made the right decision.

General George Thomas recognized Colonel Wilder for his valor and ingenuity in a letter to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army. General Thomas felt that Colonel Wilder had displayed such courage and valor and the many qualities required of a commander that he recommended him for Brigadier General.⁵⁸

Colonel Wilder was a disciplinarian. He made an example of one of his men who had deserted by shaving the deserter's head and branding the letter "D" on his right cheek. The deserter was then

marched in front of the whole unit out of town. Colonel Wilder felt that the Brigade must have discipline in camp and in combat to be an effective fighting unit. Colonel Wilder had confidence in his officers and men. In his official report on Hoover's Gap, Colonel Wilder wrote that his highly trained men were at their best when in the greatest danger. He stated that their conduct was the same whether in a fight or waiting beside the road - always determined, ready and brave.⁵⁹

Colonel Wilder's valor at the Battle of Chickamauga was exemplary. In face of real danger and being told to retreat to Chattanooga, Colonel Wilder ordered his men to Snodgrass Hill to reinforce General Thomas. Colonel Wilder could have retreated but instead gallantly moved to save the day for the Union Army.

B. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS - TO WHAT DEGREE DOES THE OFFICER EXHIBIT THESE SKILLS (COMMENT ON ANY AREA WHERE THE RATED OFFICER IS PARTICULARLY OUTSTANDING OR DEFICIENT IN BLOCK BELOW)

1 = HIGH DEGREE 2 = AVERAGE DEGREE 3 = LOW DEGREE

DEPENDABLE	1	UNDERSTANDING	1
ADAPTABILITY	1	COMMUNICATION	1
POSITIVE ATTITUDE	1	SEEKS SELF IMPROVEMENT	1
DECISIVENESS	1	KNOWLEDGE	1
INNOVATION	1	COACH	1
INITIATIVE	1	MENTOR	1
CREATIVITY	1	COUNSELOR	1
JUDGEMENT	1	CARING	1

APPEARANCE	1	ACCOUNTABLE	1
STAMINA	2	FORCEFUL	2
TRUST	1		

comments: A highly innovative officer, Colonel Wilder successfully increased his brigade's combat capability by mounting his unit and providing them with the Spencer repeating rifles. His professional skills were generally learned through experience. He was a fast learner and able to use his creative ability to gain an advantage over the enemy. He lead the way in developing tactical doctrine for the employment of mounted infantry. His innovative approach of mounting a whole Brigade and insuring that it had the capability to be self-contained for logistics was creative for the time. Other cavalry units emulated Colonel Wilder's tactics as the war progressed.

He continually served as a coach and mentor for his junior officers. He taught them to care for their men and horses. His creativity and tactical competence was demonstrated on numerous occasions. When given the mission of creating a feint at upper Chattanooga on the Tennessee River, Colonel Wilder had his men throwing boards into the river so that the Confederates would think they were building pontoons. At night he would have his men build numerous camp fires so the enemy would think a large force was camped in the area waiting to cross. Colonel Wilder's perception of how the enemy would react was correct and the feint worked.

Colonel Wilder was quick to find a way to improve his men's ability to train and fight. He used his initiative and innate ability to understand the needs and desires of his men. For example, he replaced the bayonet with hatchets when he determined the hatchet to be better suited for use in camp.

Colonel Wilder displayed a tactical and technical proficiency rarely observed in officers with limited formal training and experience. His high intelligence and personal initiative created a learning environment that resulted in unit success. He was able to coach, teach and lead by example. In so doing, his officers and men developed a great respect and confidence for his abilities. His constant study of the art of war and total familiarity with the capability of men and equipment made him adaptable to the many changing combat situations. Colonel Wilder displayed a trust and confidence in his men by always seeming calm when faced with danger. His professional competencies were simply outstanding especially in view of his background. A self taught officer, Colonel Wilder had a sense of purpose about him that enabled him to lead his men to victory. His military success stemmed from his burning desire to be a winner and from his successful background as a engineer and businessman.⁶⁰

C. ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS - TO WHAT DEGREE DOES THE OFFICER EXHIBIT THESE ATTRIBUTES (COMMENT ON ANY AREA WHERE THE RATED OFFICER IS PARTICULARLY OUTSTANDING OR DEFICIENT IN BLOCK BELOW)

1 = HIGH DEGREE 2 = AVERAGE DEGREE 3 = LOW DEGREE

TEAM BUILDER	1	COMMUNICATOR	1
VISIONARY	1	RESILIENT	1
PERSPECTIVE	1	ADAPTIVE	1
POSITIVE MOTIVATOR	1	COHESIVE	1
DECENTRALIZATION	1	LEAD BY EXAMPLE	1

comments: Colonel Wilder was a team builder. He built his team by treating his men with dignity and fairness. He believed that his men should have the best available equipment. He was a strong leader as evidenced by his low desertion rate. Wilder's Brigade had companies that did not have a single deserter during the entire war. Most units had a relatively high desertion rate. Colonel Wilder felt that keeping his men busy by going out and finding the enemy cavalry was the best remedy for homesickness. He spent time training his companies to act independently if necessary. He believed in decentralization.⁶¹

Colonel Wilder lead by example. In the Battle of Hoover's Gap, Colonel Wilder found his front unit (17th Indiana) being overrun. He ordered the 98th Illinois to attack to help the 17th. As the 98th attacked from the flank, Colonel Wilder lead the 17th in a frontal attack on the enemy and successfully forced the Confederates to retreat.

His great success in battle was primarily due to his resiliency and adaptive nature. His men understood the unit commitment and fought valiantly. Infantry units were able to go on furlough, but Wilder's Brigade was always on the line leading the way. Homesickness and other detractors of war set in, but Wilder's Brigade fought on proud of its reputation and cohesive fighting ability. The unit worked well together and displayed a pride rarely seen in war. For example, during the Civil War infantry and cavalry units did not like each other. Infantrymen had to walk- cavalrymen got to ride. One day when Wilder's Brigade was moving through Davis' Division, Davis' infantrymen started cursing the mounted men until they found out it was Wilder's Brigade. Davis' men knew of the great fight at Chickamauga and that Wilder's men fought dismounted. The word passed quickly through the infantrymen that this was Wilder's Brigade and the men began to tell each other to hush.⁶²

The Lightning Brigade was capable of working independently, often well forward of the main body. Wilder had the greatest confidence in his men to handle anything. He ensured that the unit understood the mission and worked hard to create a unity of effort in accomplishing the mission. He was able to build a team by anticipating problems and making his presence felt at the critical place and time.

Wilder's Brigade consisted of tough, lean farm boys and a resourceful and enterprising leader who injected new theories and methods into the Union Army that completely changed the concept of

mounted warfare during the Civil War. This units great success is a lesson in leadership and a tribute to the resilience and physical stamina of our ancestors. ⁶³

CONCLUSION

ASSESSMENT: DO THE LEADERS OF CHICKAMAUGA MEET THE MODERN DAY DEFINITION OF A SENIOR LEADER?

MG George Thomas demonstrated in tough assignments his potential for promotion to leadership positions at the highest levels. The army would have been best served by keeping this officer where he can influence, lead and train soldiers on the front line. As a corps commander at Chickamauga under General Rosecrans, Thomas displayed courage and commitment to mission rarely seen in leaders. He possessed the organizational and professional tools to lead armies anywhere. His only fault might have been his reluctance to accept risk by waiting to attack or move his forces until such time as his force was ready. This appeared to General Grant as a sign of slowness and/or a lack of aggressiveness. However, Thomas didn't wait forever or for overwhelming odds like other generals had done in similar situations. He simply wanted his supply lines established and functional before he committed his soldiers to a fight.

His mature handling of the injustices done to him with promotions and assignments gives Thomas high marks for perseverance and loyalty to both the army and his country. If he had been from the north, he could have been in General Grant's place as the man in charge. President Lincoln never had full faith in the general

from Virginia even though his skills were well known. Based on his demonstrated performance in Florida, Mexico and the Army of the Cumberland, MG Thomas possessed the professional tools and leadership capacity to meet the modern day definition of a senior leader. His understanding of the Army's mission coupled with his courage in battle and concern for soldiers enabled him to lead effectively at any level.

Colonel Wilder exhibited those qualities necessary to meet the modern day definition of senior leader. His initiative and exceptional operational ability combined with his sound recommendations for the development and implementation of new tactics, techniques and procedures in mounted infantry fighting significantly contributed to the effectiveness of the warfighting effort of the Army of the Cumberland. Although nominated several times for promotion to Brigadier General, the Union Army was best served by keeping Colonel Wilder in command of the Lightning Brigade. He was in the best position to influence, lead and train soldiers on the front line. Most likely, the decision to not promote him was due to his lack of military training and education and that he was already assigned at the appropriate level and position given his experience. There is also no historical evidence that Colonel Wilder wanted anything more than to command the Lightning Brigade. His leadership skills and personal valor were equalled by few in any war. He truly met the modern day definition of a senior leader.

MG Thomas and Colonel Wilder had several common traits. They

were both persistent, intelligent and insightful. Both seemed to have an inner ability to know right from wrong. They sensed the proper timing for making a stand or attacking the enemy. The fact that these two men were the heroes of the Battle of Chickamauga comes as no surprise given their record in battle. A study of these officers provides other examples of bravery and tenacity rarely seen by leaders in any era. These common traits, coupled with exceptional devotion to duty, leads one to understand why the Army of the Cumberland was so successful.

Senior leaders must provide the leadership to sustain a dedicated, spirited and motivated cadre that consistently maintains a high degree of professionalism, integrity and discipline. Effective leadership causes units to be adaptive, cohesive and resilient. Leaders must establish an environment in their units that encourages initiative and innovation causing soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers to excel. My research concludes that MG Thomas and Colonel Wilder did those things and did them well. They simply had the attributes required of a senior leader.

I am of the opinion that senior leader skills and attributes are the same today as they were in the Civil War. Today we have global responsibilities and technological advances that change the way we operate, but leadership requirements at the senior level remain essentially the same.

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