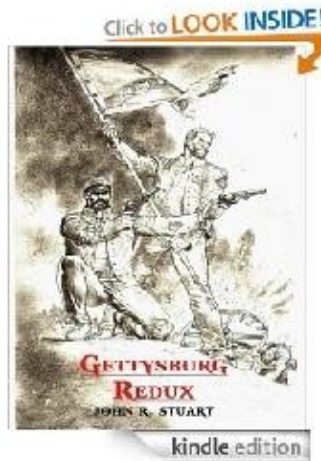


# GETTYSBURG REDUX

By : **John R Stuart**

An alternative version of the American Civil War! For three bloody days in July 1863 two great American Armies pounded each other to pieces in Gettysburg. This novel follows the exploits of the military elite of both the Confederate and Federal high command and chronicles the hell on earth that was experienced by seven common Rebel soldiers. Could a single bullet change the course of history?



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GETTYSBURG REDUX

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## GETTYSBURG REDUX

An alternative version of the American Civil War

BY: **JOHN R. STUART**

PUBLISHED BY:

JOHN R. STUART

GETTYSBURG REDUX

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COVER DESIGN - LAN MEDINA

BOOKSIE SAMPLE

ISBN # 978-0-9918337-0-2

This book is dedicated to my wife Heather, who never stopped believing!

Any novel is a journey, and my journey as a writer began in 1994 when I visited the fields of Gettysburg. The genesis of GETTYSBURG REDUX was planted as I stood on those hallowed fields. Written between 1994 and 1996, I took the traditional approach and looked for a publisher- without success. In 2012 Gettysburg Redux was re-worked and finally published as an eBook.

The characters in this book are fictitious, however, it would be impossible to write a book about Gettysburg without including the heroes, fools, cowards, villains and the rogues gallery of actual historical figures that participated in the battle, artistic liberty has been applied.

Cover art is by the talented LAN MEDINA .

# GETTYSBURG REDUX

Throughout the novel I have attempted to use the Southern vernacular, therefore spelling errors are intentional!

## PROLOGUE

In July 1863 two great American armies met in battle at Gettysburg Pennsylvania. To date it remains the largest battle fought in the Western hemisphere. It is often viewed as the turning point in the American Civil War.

Could a single bullet change the course of history?

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### PART ONE

#### THE GRAY WOLVES

#### CHAPTER ONE

June 30th - Chambersburg Pike., west of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Like the spokes of a wheel, all centering on the hub, the roads all lead to Gettysburg, eleven unpaved dusty roads, radiating out to each direction of the compass. The old, gray haired man sitting restlessly on his horse knew the town of Gettysburg and would not have chosen it as the site of so important an engagement; at this moment, however, he could not know that history would think otherwise, that it would list this as one of his greatest and bloodiest battles.

General Robert E. Lee, Commander of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, wiped the red dust from his face, dismounted at the side of the road and slowly walked into the shade. He had not been well of late and this combined with his age had slowed him down considerably. Traveller, his dappled gray horse nuzzled up against him, looking for a treat; unfortunately there were none to offer.

The Army was marching past him on his left, countless faces blurring together, calling out to him, cheering, waving, eager to receive his praise. One young boy advanced from the ranks and approached him, his eyes wide with awe. This after all was the great General, the savior of the Confederacy, the Father of the Cause. The boy spoke, "Excuse me Sir, but would the General like some fresh picked Yankee cherries, just picked them myself Sir," and extended a battered slouch hat filled with deep red cherries. "Thank you son, your

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generosity is appreciated," said Lee. Lee reached into the pocket of his gray coat and produced a large gold handkerchief into which he deposited several handfuls of the plundered fruit. "Now go and join your comrades and don't make yourself sick on those cherries," he called after the boy. Lee could remember being that age, full of life and eager to fight and knew the boy, who wasn't older than nineteen would gorge himself on the pilfered Pennsylvania cherries and end up squatted over a log somewhere tonight with the Virginia Quick Step, - "the shits". Well, you have to learn these lessons the painful way, he thought. My but the weather is fine and hot here in the North, too hot for battle but that was inevitable now, the two great armies were on the move, the Army of Northern Virginia coming from the north and west while the pursuing Army of the Potomac is driving up from the south, and here we will collide at little Gettysburg.

Lee ignored the men moving past him. They were largely just a blur, which distracted him from thinking about the events ahead. "General, General!" a voice cut into his consciousness and he turned to see his aide, Colonel Walter Taylor pushing his horse through the men on the road. Taylor rode into the shade and said, "Sir, General Longstreet is on his way and will be here shortly." "That's excellent, excellent, please have my camp table brought up and placed under that oak tree and break out the ordinance maps as well. I will confer with "OLD PETE" when he arrives." A voice from the passing army called out "General we're ready Sir, are there lots of Yankees up ahead for us to scrap with?" The speaker was swept away by the press of the army before Lee could even identify him, let alone call back a reply.

In the press of sweating, marching men, a large Sergeant Major cuffed the speaker on the back of the head and said, "Leave the General alone Rory, he's got thinking to do, you just keep on marching." "Sorry Sergeant, but that's the first time I've seen the great man and I just couldn't resist the temptation, now I can tell my children that I spoke to the General," replied Rory Winston. Sergeant Major Ben Gallows returned to his place at the head of the Regiment and as he marched he adjusted his pack, settling it back in place, until he felt it move into its comfortable niche across his wide shoulders. That boy will be lucky to live long enough to marry and have children, what with the battle that lay ahead of them. Gallows always lost himself in thoughts like this when he was on the march, this was his main complaint with the military, marching! He just plain hated it, no other words came to mind, just plain hatred. As a Texan he had joined the cavalry when he first enlisted, only to find that at that time the Rebel army was flush with Cavalry and he was convinced to move to the infantry. He had never realized how much he hated walking until the Army made its first long trek northward to meet the Yankees.

Ben Gallows had a long stride, his long legs setting a pace which ate up the miles and this caused the soldiers of the 101st Virginia Infantry to curse him. At six feet four inches, he was the tallest man in the regiment and this combined with his powerful build made him a force to be reckoned with. Benjamin Franklin Gallows was a blacksmith originally from Dallas, Texas, where he had spent most of his life working at the anvil with his father Angus. Swinging a hammer all day had layered his long lean body with muscle that would have made the sculptor Michelangelo envious. The years of hard work in the heat of the Dallas shop had formed him into a hard man both physically and mentally, however, he never obtained the massive bulk that Angus displayed, but he had inherited the hardness of character that his father possessed.

Private Rory Winston watched Gallows as he strode along ahead of him, and tried to imitate the military bearing that was Gallows's trademark. Rory rubbed his upper lip as if to check the light growth that he was trying to cultivate there. It was a pale substitute for the long luxurious mustache that the Sergeant Major wore. That was a fine growth indeed, the red mustache reached almost to the lower edges of his jaw. At 19 he could only hope to be as hairy as the Sergeant Major, for he was one of the few men in the 101st Virginia that didn't sport facial growth of some sort; most of his younger and older comrades were distinctly hairy, and this did not add to his self confidence. The day's long march was wearing him down for he had not acquired what Gallows called his "Soldiers Legs" yet, but Rory loved to watch the Texan stride along so effortlessly. At his side were Corporal John Boggs and Private Callahan, who both marched with the relaxed stride of the seasoned veteran. Callahan was talking to "Fat Jack" Boggs as the Regiment had nicknamed him. Callahan

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was always talking and if Fat Jack could hear him he gave no evidence, as he had long ago learned to ignore the babbling of Callahan, for he talked incessantly, in a never ending rambling, wandering discourse. He talked about anything and everything. Right now he was praising the beauty of the Pennsylvania countryside, the rich farms, lush fields, tidy houses and large barns. Rory heard Callahan say, "These Yankees seem to do jest fine with no slaves to do for them; how can they do so fine, jest look at this rich land, with no niggers to tend it." Fat Jack finally turned to him and swore, "God damn it Callahan, quit jawing at me for Christ's sake." At this outburst Gallows was at Boggs's side; he steered Callahan away from Boggs and said, "Brooks, go talk with Ezra, and leave Corporal Boggs alone." Gallows took Boggs's arm in a grip of steel, "Leave Callahan alone, if you can't stomach his babbling, jest direct him to Ezra or Rory or me for that matter; we don't get irritated so easy and next time you take the Lord's name in vain I will make you suffer." Gallows pushed Boggs aside and returned to his place at the front of the regiment, just behind the Colonel and beside the Color Bearer. As the regimental Sergeant Major, he enjoyed far-ranging powers and was the key man in maintaining both the discipline and morale of the unit, he had been well chosen for his job.

A horseman was riding towards them down the side of the Chambersburg Pike. Dust was floating off his horse and clothes making him look larger than he already was. Looking straight ahead, General James Longstreet rode through the heart of the Rebel Army to meet Lee. He was a large powerful man, who made Gallows thankful that he was the Commander of their Corps, the 1st Corp, and although their regiment was in Pickett's Division the soul of the Corps belonged to "Old Pete" Longstreet. Ben had no idea where that nickname came from, probably earned during his early years out west when he was an Indian fighter. But the men of the 1st Corps always called him by this name and it was a term of respect and love, not one of disrespect as many of the nicknames that filled the Rebel army were. The commander of their division was Major General George Pickett and the men usually referred to him as "the Jay" - short for popinjay, no explanation was required here, for the General was the greatest dandy in the South. "Thank the Lord for that capable man" Gallows murmured as Longstreet rode past them.

A mile farther west, Longstreet saw Colonel Taylor at the side of the road giving directions or commands to a Colonel, the red facings on the man's uniform and kepi identifying him as an artillery officer. Taylor waved him to the trees where General Lee awaited him. The shade was a welcome relief as he moved into the cool depths of the copse of maples. Lee rose from the stump where he sat and called out "My Old War Horse, it's with great pleasure that we meet. Taylor, some water for the General." They shook hands and Longstreet couldn't help but notice that Lee's grip was now that of an old man, a man too old in his opinion to be the commander of an army of approximately 70,000 men. This is the task of young killers like me, but such was the nature of their relationship; one that covered many years, that James still greatly admired the old man. It was just he felt at odds with many of the decisions that Lee made. They settled down upon the folding camp stools that Taylor had set up by the table. Lee sat and watched his army pass, a river of gray and butternut, regiment after regiment, and this was only a small portion of the Army of Northern Virginia.

"The men are in fine shape, I don't think they've looked this fit since Bull Run," said Longstreet. "This is rich country, the Yankees have been very generous to provide us with such bounty, I actually think that some of the boys are beginning to fill out again," he continued. Lee looked at Longstreet and wondered what he would do without this veteran; Old Pete was the anchor that kept this army from drifting onto the rocks of destruction. Lee knew that this battle was the one that every General faced once in his career, the battle that decided the final course of the war. If we lose this one, it is the end, not the end of the war but definitely the end of my faith in winning the war.

Longstreet poured them a drink of water and waited for Lee to begin the conversation. One flaw in Longstreet's character was that he always felt in awe of men such as Lee; he had served with soldiers of the informal aristocracy of both the North and South through out his career, and had learned to always let them lead the discussion and then he could sound them out. He usually found their ideas and tactics flawed and dangerous, as they were seldom the ones who actually faced the fire of the enemy. After they stated their

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plans he usually found he could turn them and subtly sway them to his point of view and never let them see exactly what he was doing. He was a master at making his superiors think that these were actually their ideas. Only Jubal Early of the 2nd Corps had the same ability to manipulate a senior officer, but Jubal's caustic attitude would always prevent him from gaining further advancement.

Longstreet was viewed by his peers and many of the other senior Officers of the High Command as an unsophisticated, distant and aloof man; it was a sign of their lack of insight that they considered him this way. He enjoyed the simpler things in life, his family, his drink and smokes and the feel of the cards in his hand when he would draw to a full house. He was once described by a fellow officer as a Tough case with gold braid!

He knew they were not impressed with him on many occasions, however he had parlayed his skills until he was the General who was second in command only to Lee, and Lee was the only man he considered his superior. They might not agree on tactics on every instance but even Longstreet had to admire the skills of the old man. Lee finally broke the silence, "The reports of your spy are correct, the Army of the Potomac is in fact on the move and units of Buford's cavalry are close to Gettysburg." "Harrison has never been wrong, General, he is the best agent to send behind enemy lines, and his acting talents have served him well," replied James. "That may be so, but I find it hard to believe that Hooker has been replaced by General George Meade as the commander of the Army of the Potomac. To replace a veteran such as Hooker on the eve of battle is fools play on the part of Washington," interjected Lee. Lee turned and again watched the army stream by. He was finding it more and more difficult to focus his thoughts on the business at hand.

After several moments of silence Lee began. "Couriers have been sent out; they went yesterday morning with orders to all the Corps commanders to make for Gettysburg with all speed. I do not want the army to engage the enemy until we have had a chance to consolidate our forces; we are not strong enough to face them on their terms. I can remember the town of Gettysburg, James, but little of the surrounding countryside. It is imperative that General Stuart return soon and supply us with more detailed information about the enemy. His cavalry must be the eyes and ears of this Army. I cannot make the right decisions when I am blind like this. Stuart is out there on the enemy's flank causing mischief, but I need him and his men here and now. I am sure the entire Army of the Potomac is on the move and I need to know numbers, location and speed of march. This is an opportunity that I must seize, while we are as strong as we are. An opportunity such as this will not come again, I fear." "James, what are your recollections of Gettysburg, I believe you are familiar with the town." "Sir, I spent some time at the Cavalry school located at Carlisle, some 30 miles away, and my memory of Gettysburg is clouded, but I remember it as a small quiet place, largely north-south in layout, with roads entering the town from all directions. There is some high ground to the south east of the town, past the cemetery," answered Longstreet.

"My memories of the place are similar to yours James, and I wish they were better; these maps show it as just a dot, I am in serious trouble without Stuart's cavalry to guide me." "Sir, without better information about the town and the enemy I believe we should divert the army to the west of the town, concentrate there and utilize the cavalry that General Hampton commands to gather detailed information. Then we can make realistic plans. You know my preference is to find high ground that we can defend and make the Yankees come to us, at a place of our choosing. I feel this is what God wants of us." Lee noticed a light burning in Longstreet's eyes as his best General spoke, a spark that had been absent since his tragedy the year before, and although he admired the strength of Longstreet's convictions he couldn't agree with them. "That will not do here James, I will fight the enemy at the first opportunity that presents itself. If I ask these boys to steer clear of a scrap with the Blue Bellies it will seriously affect their morale. This army is primed and ready to fight, they will do anything that I ask of them. They feel invincible, and by God, maybe they are just that. No! To back away from this fight is an error I can't afford to make. We will concentrate the army at Gettysburg along the Seminary Ridge and then see what old Meade does, then we will break them as we have done so often in the past."

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Longstreet looked away from Lee, for there was hatred in his eyes now, and he stood up, grinding his teeth together he spat, "General, to fight now is like trying to draw to an inside straight. Damn near impossible." Surprised by the anger in this sudden outburst Lee saw Longstreet in a new light. Was his trusted General losing his faith in me, Lee wondered, or is he under so great a strain that he is no longer fit to command? He would not be the first senior officer that had found the responsibilities of his rank too great a burden. Many officers were found to be unfit, and were quietly transferred to a command where they could do little harm and yet still serve the Confederacy, I hope my "Old War Horse" is not one of these, Lee prayed. "Then James, it's a good thing that I don't play poker for this is a gamble that must succeed," Lee answered. Longstreet turned very quickly, mounted his horse, and rode away without even a glance backwards.

As Longstreet thundered down the road he came very close to pushing Colonel Taylor into the fence which bordered the road. The look on his face was contorted with a fury that Taylor had never seen Longstreet exhibit before and he knew the meeting had not gone well. Longstreet pushed his horse hard on the long ride back to his Corps, west on the Chambersburg Road, he leaped the split rail fence and cut across a lush cornfield, crushing the stalks and leaving a clear path in his wake. I must control myself; remain composed, for God has spoken to me and shown me that I will lead this Army to victory, that I am his servant, not Lee, that I will be his sword of vengeance. In order to do that I must contain my emotions and keep such outbursts bottled up, I must not jeopardize myself before the Lord makes clear to me his plans to destroy the Yankees. Praying for guidance, Longstreet returned to the head of his Corps with a clear head and composed face.

Lee folded the maps and returned them to the leather case. "Let us venture forth Taylor, the day is long and the enemy is waiting." Where possible Lee and Taylor skirted the stream of men. Moving across fields and where the forest made this impossible they joined the press of men on the dusty road, only to find that soldiers parted and gave them free passage. Lee was proud of these men, mostly volunteers, they had been molded over the last two years into a fighting force that was beyond belief. These men were farmers, clerks, and teachers, in fact every occupation was represented in the Army of Northern Virginia, most with no military experience prior to enlistment and yet they had extended the war beyond the initial six months that the Northern government had expected.

In battle after battle they had defeated the Yankees, marching incredible distances, with poor rations and supplies they were able to deliver victory where defeat had been almost a certainty. They may be the best soldiers in the world Lee thought, from Bull Run in 1861 to the last major battle at Chancellorsville in May, they have consistently defeated armies that outnumbered them. The Yankees are afraid of them now, when they hear my boys let loose their war cries, the Rebel Yell, they start to shiver and quake; my boys have taught them to fear the Army of Northern Virginia.

We sure gave them Hell at Fredericksburg last year, my old friend General Ambrose Burnside received a lesson he won't soon forget. Lee remembered the lesson they had taught the Yankees, the toll had been so terrible that he had hoped the Federal Army would sue for peace. The battle had developed around Fredericksburg, south of the Rappahannock River in northern Virginia. The Federal troops made fourteen attacks against Rebel troops commanded by Generals Longstreet and Stonewall Jackson, attacking across an open plain in the face of a hellish fire. Into a fire that was so thick it was like a solid obstacle of minie' balls and canister, they attacked again and again, towards the Sunken Road which was protected by a stone wall four feet high. The attacks were spirited; they had not realized the impossible task that had been asked of these brave men from New York and Maine, and they soon learned, no army could take the position that the Rebels held. But try and try again they did, until the Federal troops had been nearly annihilated, leaving the field covered with the dead and dying as nightfall. These brave men never reached the Confederate stone wall and suffered nearly 13,000 casualties. The scene which was seared into Lee's mind was the sight of the naked Yankee dead, fallen in straight lines where they had been mowed down in masses, naked because the poorly equipped Rebel soldiers had stripped the dead Yanks of their uniforms and boots during the night. This ghastly sight combined with that of seeing his men freshly turned out in looted Union uniforms would never

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leave him. He knew his men often looted items from the dead, it was difficult to find fault with the practice, especially when shoes and boots were involved. As the war had progressed the South had become hard pressed to provide equipment for its armies. The Southern economy lagged far behind that of the North. The South was an agricultural land, depending largely upon the production of cotton. The king of fabrics was the life-blood of the South and as the Northern blockade cut the cotton trade to Europe off, the country was becoming impoverished. Cotton was piled high on docks throughout the South, and was being burned in many States to keep it out of the hands of the Yankees. The end result was that the Confederate Government was cotton rich and cash poor, leading to shortages in almost everything. What gold the government had was spent on arms and ammunition, keeping the Army on the field and the common necessities of the soldier were hard to come by.

Lee's men wore the strangest combinations of uniforms, and often depended on Union dead to keep them in shoes and pants. The light blue pants that are standard Union issue, were now worn by close to fifty percent of the Rebel Army and thousands of his men were barefoot. The only item of Yankee uniform that his men refused to wear were the dark blue jackets, and this, only for the practical reason that many Confederates who had looted them, had been shot by their own men in confusion. Now only the wealthy men and senior officers were able to maintain a regulation gray uniform and some of his senior officers had adopted the strangest outfits, but this was largely because they were eccentric.

As noon approached, the Pennsylvania heat was becoming unbearable and Lee decided that he would commandeer the next suitable farmhouse as his headquarters for the evening. He and Taylor were moving past the 101st Virginia Infantry and the men were singing Dixie as they marched. Private Ezra McGruder watched Lee ride by and suddenly moved up through the mass until he was beside Ben Gallows. In a deep resonant voice he spoke, "Sergeant Major, permission to stop and pray for the General." Gallows knew that Ezra would stop even if permission was denied so he nodded and said, "Don't lag too far behind." McGruder pulled at his waist-length gray beard and said, "Thanks Sergeant, I feel the General is in need of God here in the land of the Abolitionist dogs." He jumped out of the moving throng, he was very lively for a man of fifty, and climbed to the top of a tree stump at the road's edge. Here he removed his worn kepi and pulled a large leather bound Bible from his knapsack. The staff he wore slung over his shoulder came quickly to his weathered hand and he stamped it twice on the stump and began to pray.

"I stand here before you today a sinner, verily I say a sinner, as are all men born of woman, I come to confess my sins and by doing so, become free in the eyes of the Lord. I come to pray for General Robert E. Lee the Sword of the South, for he will have need of God's strength in the days to come, as will we all. Come brothers join me in prayer, pray as you march and ask for God's forgiveness, come join me in the Lord's Prayer." The men of the 101st repeated the Prayer under the hot Pennsylvania sun, for Preacher McGruder was right, they would all need God's strength in the battle to come.

Thirty miles to the south on the packed dirt of the Taneytown Road, Union Colonel Lawrence Chamberlain was having a hard time dealing with the unrelenting sun. It cut into his brain right through the blue cavalry hat he had adopted, causing him to sway as he led the 20th Maine Infantry northward towards Gettysburg. Sunstroke is a condition that once it has a hold on a man, it is reluctant to let him go. Chamberlain thought he had recovered when he reported back to his regiment a week ago, but the searing sun was now proving him wrong, he felt like he had just finished a five day drunk. Behind him the 350 men of the regiment were sweltering in their dark blue jackets and their packs and rifles had assumed the weight of lead ingots. They didn't see the Colonel sway from side to side at their front. It was a point of pride with Lawrence Chamberlain that he marched with the Color Bearer at the head of his men, he regularly left his horse with his aide and marched with his regiment. Perhaps if he had been regular army he would not have felt the constant need to earn the approval of the enlisted men, a regular army officer would not have cared what the men thought and would have used the horse. Chamberlain was a teacher from Maine and he often felt that he had never taught Modern Languages at Bowdoin College, he felt he was a true soldier now and he doubted he could ever go



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back to the peace and quiet of a classroom. If he were thinking properly he'd have realized he was thinking in Latin and then in Greek, he squared his shoulders and straightened his stride. This took a terrible effort but his men depended on him. His younger brother Thomas was a Lieutenant in the regiment and he had promised his mother that no harm would come to him as long as they were together. This combined with his other responsibilities drove him to exhaustion. He cared and worried too much.

The pounding in his head receded somewhat, his vision cleared and he actually began to feel better. He noticed a presence at his right and he turned to find Major Ellis Spear, his second in command, beside him. "Colonel, did you hear what I said ! Are you all right? You look sick as a dog." Lawrence began to speak and was overcome with dizziness and his stomach threatened to expel his lunch of bread and hard tack. Grasping Ellis's shoulder he answered, "Just a touch light headed, I'll be fine once we get in some shade." He dropped to his knees in the center of the road, his head clasped in his hands, there was a white light filling his head and the acrid taste of vomit tainted his mouth. "Ellis I don't think I'm fine after all," as he spewed vomit down his front. Spear and three of the men carried him to the side of the road, into the shade of a tree, and poured the contents of a canteen over his head. "Christ, he's out cold," shouted the Major, "get the doctor and hurry."

By the time the Corporal returned with the Division's surgeon they had moved Chamberlain into a farmhouse 100 yards down the road, where he lay sweating and shivering. The surgeon took one look at him and said "Well the Rebels may not get him but the Pennsylvania sun sure did. I tried to convince him he wasn't ready to return to duty, the obstinate bugger!" He set to work and told Spear to take command as Chamberlain wasn't going anywhere for two to three weeks. Major Ellis Spear rejoined the regiment, knowing the men didn't trust him the way they did the Colonel and he prayed he would not fail in the days ahead. Definitely, he was a good administrator, his experience of command was limited at best, he hoped the Regiment missed the battle or was held in reserve until Chamberlain returned. He convinced himself that this was just another forced march, to find the Rebels gone when they arrived, that the 20th Maine would be spared the carnage 30 miles to the north. He couldn't know that hell that awaited them.

Oblivious to the events transpiring to the south, Ben Gallows sat and rubbed the back of his neck, he poured some water into his hand and wiped his grimy face, and thought a long cool swim would be like heaven and just about unattainable here in Pennsylvania. He hoped this battle would be the final episode in this adventure. The heat was almost a physical presence here, the temperature in the high eighties with a suffocating humidity. He enjoyed the dry heat of Texas, but found this wet heat hard to take. Sweat poured off of him even in the shade at the roadside where the Regiment was taking a much needed break.

Chattering like a squirrel, Callahan handed out the some hard tack rations to the members of the "THUNDER" mess. It was common practice in the Army of the Confederacy for groups of five to seven men to establish an informal mess, an association that looked after the cooking, cleaning and shared a tent if they were lucky enough. The "THUNDER" mess had been born when the 101st Virginia was first founded in 1861, and Callahan and Sergeant Luther Pendergast were the only original members left. Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville had killed the other founding members and they had been replaced with Rory Winston, Fat Jack Boggs, Lieutenant Rogete, Ezra McGruder and Sergeant Major Gallows. It had been Luther, the Regimental Color Bearer who had christened it the "THUNDER" mess early in 1861, after they had consumed an entire kettle of beans and molasses with hard bread to dip in the sauce. A concert of thundering farts had filled the tent that night and Luther had sat out front whittling for hours to escape the overpowering stench of six men farting with military precision. Luther had whittled a hand carved sign bearing the word "THUNDER" and Callahan had hung that sign on the tent every night since.

Gallows accepted a handful of hard tack biscuits and a slice of smelly cheese that Callahan had picked up somewhere. He thought, how did I ever end up in this God forsaken field in Pennsylvania with such a group of misfits. He was at heart a shy and unassuming man, who had had authority thrust upon him. Of the men he was sharing lunch with he only liked Rory and Lieutenant Rogete, the rest were just chaff that the war had

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dumped on him. That was unfair he realized, there was of course Brooks. This was the nickname he had given Callahan the first week he knew him, due to Callahan's nonstop talking. Gallows saw him as a Brook babbling over a bed of rocks, never stopping, never really saying much of anything, just talking for the sake of talking. Little was known of Callahan's past, but Ben did know that Brooks had been in a Richmond prison when the war had begun and all the inmates were paroled on the condition that they enlist in the Confederate Army. The Yankees that had been in prison were still there, saving the South the trouble of killing them in some little place like this. Brooks had been the first and only member of the 101st to welcome him into the regiment, except of course for Colonel Martin, the commanding officer. He had never learned the reasons for his transfer from the 1st Texas Infantry, only that he had been requested by Brigadier General Lewis Armistead. At first he had assumed he had committed some transgression and that he was being cast out of his State regiment, but he was assured by Armistead in person that he came with the highest recommendations and that the 1st Texas were sad to see him go. Gallows was sure that some members of the 1st Texas had celebrated his departure for there was no question he was a hard man and had made enemies in the 1st, but most of them had died in the Cornfield at Sharpsburg or Antietam as the battle was more commonly known.

But Brooks had welcomed him that first night with a bowl of boiled onions and he had joined the "Thunder" mess. Brooks was a simple man, uneducated and ignorant, yet he had become devoted to Ben almost right away, and this had caused Ben some concern because he was uncertain of Brooks's reasons for his devotion. Time had taught him that Brooks simply had adopted him as his best friend because Ben was the only person who treated him with common decency and not as a stupid dog to be kicked about and mistreated.

He finished his rations and washed it down with water from his canteen, this was the third canteen he had possessed, this one he had liberated from a Yankee prisoner after Chancellorsville. The Yank didn't need it where he was going. Stamped with the letters U.S., Gallows wore it turned backwards so the letters didn't show. He was glad to have it and didn't care if it was looted Federal property. He stroked his short red beard, it wasn't a goatee, he had trimmed it down to a small thick triangle that sat just under his lower lip and his very long mustache curled down on either side of it giving him a devilish look that frightened young recruits in the regiment. As he sat and enjoyed the respite from the march, their slave arrived and fell panting in the dust at the side of the field. Many messes had black slaves that looked after the needs of the men and Second Twin was the property of Boggs.

Fat Jack had returned to camp one night in January 1863 with a small, thin, very miserable looking slave that he had won in a poker game in Richmond. He had the unusual name of Second Twin. It seemed his owner had little imagination and was having trouble with names for his stable of darkies, so he simply called them First and Second Twin. Boggs felt he was too important to look after his own needs in camp so he had acquired his own slave. The truth was Fat Jack had no idea how to look after himself and needed someone to do nearly everything for him. It was ironic that they were fighting a war over slavery, as Boggs was the only member of the mess to ever own a slave. In the eyes of most Confederate soldiers, the war was being fought over the right to own slaves, and it was the principle that the Federal government had the audacity to try to tell the Southern states what they could or could not do! "Brooks, give Second Twin some of the rations and water," called Gallows, and he gave Boggs a look that said, - just do it. Slaves were not allowed to march with the regiment and were always to the rear, this meant many didn't get any rations or water, but Ben had insisted that a portion of whatever rations they had were to be set aside for Second Twin, so he starved or feasted as they did. Fat Jack had resented Ben's interference with his darkie and they had almost come to blows on several occasions for that reason.

Lieutenant Rogete signaled to Gallows, and the bugler called the men to their feet. Sergeant Pendergast pulled his lanky body up and placed the pole of the regimental Colors into the leather harness he wore around his waist. The red flag with the diagonal blue bars and thirteen white stars hung limp in the hot air. Luther was proud to carry the Colors and cared for them like he would have cared for his three sons back home. A gift from the wife and daughters of Colonel Martin, it replaced the worn flag the regiment had carried for the past

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two years. The old flag had been badly damaged at Chancellorsville, and upon its retirement it had carried 26 bullet holes and was stained with the blood of the six men who had carried it before Pendergast. Luther had taken it from the hands of its last bearer on the fields of Chancellorsville as he died. A position of great danger, the Colors attracted bullets like a flower draws bees. Deep gold in color, they had sewn the State of Virginia's motto across the center - "SIC SEMPRE TYRANNIS" (Thus always Tyrants) and had added in gold the names of all the regiments battles including Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

Colonel Martin stepped forward and called, "Forward Virginians," and as the drummer beat out the step they turned towards Gettysburg. Rory asked, "Where exactly are we going Sergeant?", and Boggs replied, "Gettysburg, you stupid idiot," before Gallows could answer. "More likely Hell," commented Gallows.

### CHAPTER TWO

June 30th, The Campgrounds of the Army of Northern Virginia

James Longstreet sat in a camp chair in front of his tent on a low rise that looked out over the campfires of the Army of Northern Virginia. Dusk was just settling over the valley and the reflection of the sunset against the low clouds gave the sky an eerie blood-stained hue. Not unlike the ground after a battle he thought. There was still time before Lee's staff meeting and there was still plenty of whisky in the bottle so James didn't feel inclined to any activity, a good time to sit and watch the fires burn below and observe a few moments of peace. For Longstreet there had been few times such as this. He had been a professional soldier for his entire adult life, graduating from West Point in 1842. Service under the Stars and Stripes had taken him across the country several times and to Mexico as well, fighting the enemies of the United States whether they are Indians or Mexicans. These years had taught him well and he had earned the respect and love of the men he had served with on every occasion. He always felt at home when he moved among his men, and often wished he had never entered the senior ranks of the Army. It had been his father's desire that he attend the Academy and that act had set him upon the path to this hill in Pennsylvania, and his destiny. Tonight, Pickett would ask him to join the others after the staff meeting to play poker, and he felt the need for their companionship very keenly, but he must remain true to his objectives, and as welcome as a game of cards would be, he would not be distracted from the events ahead.

A hand on his shoulder awoke him from his thoughts and pulled him back to the tasks at hand. Beside him stood his lanky aide, Major Sorrel, with a package wrapped in brown paper. "Here's a bundle from your wife Sir, the mail caught up with us this evening." Now here was an unexpected surprise, and Longstreet smiled for the first time in many days. It was good to see, mused Sorrel, who had watched Longstreet change over the last months, since the tragic death of his three children. The robust, lively, good natured General, had withdrawn into himself and a dark brooding man had emerged. He had pulled away from his friends and family, and although it hadn't affected his abilities it was becoming known that he was not the man he had been. "There are a dozen other parcels for you from ladies all over the south judging by the return addresses, - shall I distribute them to the men as usual?" "By all means Sorrel, but pull out any bottles that are in them, wouldn't want to waste any fine brandy on the men now would we?" said Longstreet, with a wink. They had a standing joke that they saved all the liquor for themselves because they didn't want to tarnish the fine morals of the troops. Laughing, Longstreet poured Sorrel a good measure of whisky and the noise of their laughter drifted down to the men below.

The sound of the cicadas filled the night air with a loud shrill humming that rose and fell in a symphony unique to these winged grasshoppers. The men of the 101st Virginia sank to the ground, most

too tired to move, let alone set up tents and make camp for the night. Gallows moved among them, checking for any problems or particular needs that might require his attention. The standard request was for slatternly

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women and strong liquor to which his standard reply was "Get set for the night, there's marching and killing ahead."

Once he had toured the entire area he returned to the Colonel's camp site where he ensured that the Colonel didn't require his services. He could now return to his mess for dinner and some sleep. If his father could see him now he would not recognize his son. He had changed dramatically since his enlistment, not so much physically but in his habits, attitude and behavior. His father, Angus, was a devout Christian who dedicated his entire life to the service of God, he had seen to it that his son followed in his beliefs. Ben had been raised in a home that was deeply Presbyterian, there was no smoking, drinking, swearing or gambling, life was dedicated to God and the Church. Angus was a lay minister and had acquired a reputation as a man who was uncompromising in the way he lived. If a customer came into his smithy and acted in an unchristian fashion, which usually meant swearing and in particular, taking the Lord's name in vain, he would find himself thrown out at best and often knocked unconscious at worst. It cost Angus business but he was such a good smith that the people of Dallas still patronized him.

Coming from such an environment, the Army had been a shock token for even at the age of 22 (when he enlisted) he was still dominated by his father in all things. His religious education had not only taught him to love and respect his father, but mostly to obey him. Army life had quickly changed him, the men had looked to him for advice and leadership and the men of the regiment promoted him quickly, to Corporal within a week, to Sergeant within two months and to Sergeant Major after Antietam. Still a quiet man, he gained the respect of the men with his calmness under fire, combined with an utter disregard for his own safety. Soldiering had changed him forever, he would always love and respect his father, but he would never again be dominated by him. Gallows had learned to enjoy the company of other men, to play baseball (not well), and to gamble, all sins in his former life. He could still not condone profanity but he had learned to tolerate the drinking of his comrades.

He was writing a letter to his wife Mara when Major Sorrel walked into the firelight. Sorrel was accompanied by several junior officers, all loaded down with items from Longstreet's parcels. Tossing gifts of socks, shirts, and writing paper to the men he called "Compliments of OLD PETE Longstreet boys, there's too much here for him." As he passed by Gallows he tossed him a two pound tin of coffee. Catching was his weakness in baseball, but he snagged the tin perfectly and Boggs called "Maybe we should use tin cans instead of a ball, then you'd never have an excuse to drop one agin." Coffee was Ben's one true weakness and since he had enlisted, coffee was always scarce, in fact his hoarded supply was almost exhausted. Ben leaped to his feet and let loose with a stream of high pitched yells that carried through the camp. He danced about the fire, whooping and kissing the tin of coffee much to the surprise of Rory, who had never seen him "get his spirit up". "Major, give my regards to the General," he called as he fell to the ground cradling the tin like a new born baby. Longstreet must be the finest gentleman in the Confederacy was his opinion and he would remember this moment for the rest of his life. "We'll brew up a pot before the battle boys, that way ifâ n itâ s your day to be mustered out at least you die with a bellyful of fine coffee."

After the heat of the day the cool night breeze was a tonic, rejuvenating Lee. His staff meeting had gone well and his orders had been met with no opposition, which although not unusual was always a good sign. The three Corps would all commence the march early in the morning with General Hill's Corps in the lead followed by that of Ewell and arriving last would be the 1st Corps of his Old War Horse General Longstreet. Stressing the need for the concentration of the Army prior to engaging the enemy, he had reluctantly given permission to General Henry Heth for his men to enter Gettysburg if the enemy was not present as they had heard there was a shoe factory in town. Morale amongst the men would be even further improved if they could secure a large supply of shoes and boots for the men, Rebels in boots would be a surprise to the enemy. Lee was again confident that Longstreet was in control of himself. He had been most supportive at the meeting and there had been no sign of the discord displayed earlier in the day. I must try harder to be patient with him, he thought. The shock of his children's death last January had nearly destroyed him, and all traces of

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his previous good spirit and enthusiasm were gone. Solace in God had saved Longstreet from a deep depression from which most men would never have recovered. Recently it had become a common occurrence to see James sitting in front of his tent his Bible clasped in his hands, his lips reading silently as he prayed and spoke with God, and one night Lee had approached Longstreet's tent and to his dismay he thought he had heard James having a discussion with his dead children. Lee knew the heartbreak that his friend suffered, for his own daughter Annie had passed away in 1861.

There had been one curious moment that evening. Longstreet stayed behind after the others left, remaining in his chair looking at his long time friend and commander. After a few moments of silence he asked, "Robert, do you remember the vow we took at the beginning of our careers, when we pledged our allegiance to the Flag and the Government of the United States? It often troubles me that I broke my word, for if a man can't be judged by his word then what can he be judged by?" Lee was startled by this question, as well as by Longstreet's use of his first name, this was a breach of military protocol that he frowned upon. It was fine for a superior officer to use the first name of one of his junior men but the reverse was questionable. He chose to ignore the protocol indiscretion and answered the question. "James, there has never been any question in my mind as to where my loyalty lies, my first allegiance is to Virginia, and where she goes so must I. The vow I took to the Union was conditional upon Virginia's membership in said Union of States. Once Virginia broke with the Union my decision was automatic, my loyalty to Virginia is my badge of honor, not some vow to the United States." "I have trouble with this Sir, I've always been a man of my word and until the day I resigned my commission I had never broken it, never! Looking across the field of battle I see my friends are now my enemies, these are men that have risked all for me in the past, and I have broken my vow to them. There are times I feel I have betrayed them and God."

Longstreet paused and looked out across the sprawling hills covered with hundreds of twinkling campfires. He made a steeple with his fingers and rested his bearded chin on it. "Please try to understand me Sir, I don't question the Cause, I am just at war with my conscience at times and I had hoped you could guide me with this question." Lee was touched that this powerful man would confide in him and realized that in some way this was also a veiled apology for his earlier bad behavior. "James you have not broken your vow. It is the reverse, as the Union has broken its vow to us and forced us to take the only path open to us. Could you look yourself in the face every morning if you wore a blue uniform and were bearing arms against Georgia? I think not. There was never any question as to where your loyalty resides and you must stop second guessing your choice. Fate has chosen our destiny, there was no other choice we could have made." James nodded his agreement and stood slowly, he set his dark gray cavalry style hat on his head and said, "As usual Sir, you have set my mind at ease. Thank you again, and goodnight."

Lee remained at the table and finished his cup of tea, he felt the tension drain from his tired body and hoped he would sleep well tonight. In recent weeks troublesome dreams had spoiled his sleep. It was time to write a letter home to his wife Mary, she was living in Richmond with her family and dearly missed their home at Arlington. The beautiful mansion across the river from Washington had fallen into the hands of the enemy early in the war and he shuddered to think of how the Federals would treat his mansion. Ah well, the dues of war. Taylor entered the tent and placed Lee's revolver on the table. "Cleaned and loaded as you requested Sir, do you require my services further or may I retire for the night?" "Thank you Walter, a fine job as usual, I don't know what I would do without you to look after me. Sleep well, as I suspect we will be very busy tomorrow." He picked up the .28 caliber Colt revolver and held its beautiful walnut handle, the lantern's light played across the gleaming surface, highlighting the engraved floral patterns that covered its silver-gray metal. Such a beautiful killing machine, he thought, as he carefully placed it in its holster that hung on the head of his folding bed. A tangible reminder of one of the happiest periods of his life, the gun was a gift from Samuel Colt when he had finished his three year assignment as the Superintendent of West Point. How many of his former students would he face tomorrow on the battlefield, for he felt sure the enemy would be at Gettysburg, maybe not in the morning but certainly, soon. I pray I didn't teach them too well! Enough of this, time for a few hours of sleep before the final march to Gettysburg in the morning. As he settled into his bed he could

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hear his Generals talking as they played poker in Hill's tent. He hoped that Longstreet was with them.

Arthur Fremantle threw his cards down in disgust, that was the fifth consecutive hand where he had come in second best. Pickett was stroking his long curly goatee and said, "Colonel, at least you have won the deal," and he laughed heartily as the others joined in. Fremantle had believed himself to be an excellent card player, but since his arrival in the United States he had been on a long losing streak, which he felt was caused by the irreverent behavior of the Rebel officers he had been sent to observe. America had overwhelmed Fremantle and he now wondered who was observing whom. As the representative of Her Majesty's Government it was his role to observe the Confederate Army and send his reports and recommendations home to the Foreign Office in London. Arthur and Longstreet had spent many hours over the last six months discussing the possibility of Great Britain entering the war on the side of the Confederacy. Southern hopes rode upon the aid of Britain, as the war strained the Rebel's resources to the limit.

Fremantle was a great supporter of the Confederate Cause and used every opportunity to try to convince his superiors to join the conflict, but he himself had now given up all hope. Correspondence from England indicated that the mood of the people and the government had shifted to the North and that there would be no intervention in the little squabble in the Colonies. Britain had ignored his reports detailing the size and ferocity of the war, and considered the war as small scale, compared to British wars. Fremantle was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Coldstream Guards and knew from personal experience in the Crimean War that this was far more than a squabble in the Colonies. The magnitude and ferocity of the battles had shocked him and he realized that this war was going to set the course of the future, not just the future of North America, but of the world. When this war ended the victors might decide that they were in truth a warrior race and use the huge Armies they had gathered to spread either the Confederate or Federal vision to other parts of the world and he knew there were few Armies that could stand against them. He was not concentrating and lost the hand he had just dealt to General Armistead. "LO" Armistead scooped up the pot and said, "It sure is a pleasure to take your money Colonel, and everyone else's I might add." He was called "LO" by the other Generals because he was a perfect gentleman with the ladies. LO was short for Lothario, which was the name of a man who was a libertine or rake, someone obsessed with sex. Pickett had coined the nickname because Armistead had remained celibate since the death of his wife years before. Pickett had tried to talk LO into accompanying him on a visit to Madame Shelly's bordello in Richmond. Madame Shelly's house was the premiere whore-house in the South and catered to the wealthy and famous. Here Pickett said there was a hooker who dressed and acted like a Southern debutante and would screw Armistead half to death and then afterwards discuss poetry and literature.

According to Pickett, Armistead was suffering from intense sexual frustration and if he didn't find release soon, he would go insane. He would run amok in the streets of Richmond raping old ladies and Southern Belles. He had called him a secret Lothario and the nickname had stuck. Fremantle commented on the fact that General Jubal Early had not joined them at cards and was surprised when Lo had piped up, "Old Jubilee won't socialize with me, there's no love lost between me and that villain." He won't elaborate and Fremantle won the last hand with three kings.

The game broke up and the six Generals went back to their divisions that were scattered all over the countryside north and west of Gettysburg. Fremantle joined Pickett and Armistead, as he was now assigned to their care. Longstreet wanted him to get the best possible view of the Army and its officers and felt LO and George would supply this. On the long ride back to the camp they talked of the poker and they told Fremantle that he would have to learn to bluff if he was going to win

any of his money back. George suggested that he ask Longstreet for some lessons as Old Pete was the best poker player he had ever seen. Fremantle asked, "If the General is such an excellent player why was he absent from all the poker games," and he stroked his large handlebar mustache from side to side with exaggerated motions. "The General has retired from the game, and I suspect he will never again know the joy of the cards.

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He was playing cards with us when he received word that three of his children were gravely ill and he hasn't touched a card since. Itâs a shame too, because he was a master of the bluff. Mind you his exit from the game has increased our winnings, hasn't it Lo?" Sadly Lo replied, "I would gladly lose everything I own to see him happy again."

The room was dark and the shadows in the corners reached out to engulf Lee as he walked to the front of the classroom, he felt ill and unprepared for this lecture on basic artillery tactics. His chalk broke in his hand as he drew it across the blackboard. Beads of sweat formed and covered his face, he was very sick and felt he would have to cancel the class. Looking up for the senior student he called, "Cadet Underhill, I need you." His head was now spinning and he slumped at his desk. Where was Underhill? Forcing his head up, he faced the class and saw the seats were all filled with the gray clad figures of young men who had graduated years before and now served as his officers. Underhill stood and spoke in a low voice "Major James Underhill - killed at Shiloh," and a gaping smoking hole appeared in his chest. He stood aside and the next came forth, "Captain William Murray - killed at Gettysburg," and his face disappeared into a mass of destroyed flesh. Lee cried out, "No - No this is impossible," as they all came forward and stated their names and deaths and became transformed into torn and dismembered corpses. One last boy came forward and saluted, "General Custis Lee - killed at Gettysburg," "NO," screamed Lee as his son's body separated at the waist and fell to the floor into two bloodstained pieces. The corpse called to him, "You taught us well Sir. Very well, our deaths are detailed on page 1863 in the Manual of Death." Lee clutched his head and screamed, "Itâs not my fault, I didn't start this war, and itâs not my fault." The classroom faded and Lee stood now in the dining room at his home in Arlington, yet it was not the room where he had enjoyed so many fine meals. The walls were slanted and askew and there were solid walls where the bank of windows should have been. Flags, regimental colors to be precise, decorated the room, most of them tattered torn, and stained with blood. "No, no I can't take any more," pleaded Lee, "Let me go, I don't deserve this," he screamed. He ran to where the door should have been and tore the flags down and pounded on the blank wall. Finally he fell to the floor and found a river of blood running across the battered and splintered boards. A voice full of sorrow called to him and Lee rose to find the dining room table was now occupied by men whose faces changed and transformed as he watched in grim fascination. Wait, I am familiar with these men. They were all dressed in the dark blue uniforms of the Union Army. Terrified, Lee could not tear his eyes from the progression of changing faces. "What do you want of me," he begged the grim men around the table. He pounded on the table and in a fit of desperation grabbed the lapels of the soldier on his right only to see the man's head tumble from his shoulders leaving a spout of blood pouring from his neck, "Excuse me," the head called as the torso bent and picked up the mangled head. "What do we want of you, why nothing, the dead have no needs but we are curious - why didn't you keep your Vow? We kept our Vow, didn't we boys," and the now disfigured corpses around the table began to chant - "WE KEPT OUR VOW, WHY DIDN'T YOU," over, and over, and over again. Lee gasped and sobbed as Taylor shook him awake, "By God, General wake up before the men hear you crying." "Oh Walter â what have I done to deserve dreams such as these, I can't bear to sleep anymore, the dreams are beyond describing. I need sleep to function and now even this is denied to me."

**Authorâs Note:**

**I hope youâve enjoyed the first two chapters of Gettysburg Redux. If this alternative history of the American Civil War has peaked your interest, the novel can be purchased as an eBook at any vendor of eBooks.**

**John R. Stuart**

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