

**A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION –  
LEE AND HIS LIEUTENANTS AT GETTYSBURG**

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Preface

This paper was originally prepared for University of Maryland University College Course ADM-625, Organizational Communications, Dr. Arthur Korotkin. For publication purposes, it has been edited down a bit, and the scheme of referencing has been simplified.

## Introduction

General Robert E. Lee is usually counted among the greatest military commanders of history, and is often identified as the greatest in United States military history. However, even so staunch a Lee supporter as Douglas Southall Freeman, winner of two Pulitzer Prizes for Lee-related works, acknowledges that Gettysburg was not Lee's finest moment. Lee's shortcomings at the battle of Gettysburg have variously been categorized as failure to coordinate, failure to adequately supervise his subordinates, failure to have a clear concept and vision for the overall campaign, employment of faulty tactics, or responding to an unrealistic sense of the invincibility of his Army of Northern Virginia. Each of these, or some combination of them, may be true. This paper proposes another possible contributor to the loss of the battle – a systemic failure in organizational communication. Specifically, Lee failed to adjust his communication concept and techniques to accommodate the changes in the organization necessitated by the death of Lieutenant General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson two months earlier.

The lessons of Gettysburg, like those of other Civil War battles, have long been recognized as being applicable to more recent generations of soldiers. For example, the observation tower on the battlefield at Antietam, Maryland, and several of the towers at Gettysburg were originally constructed to assist students from the Army War College in studying those battles. There is, however, a growing interest on the part of business leaders in the lessons to be learned from military commanders. Management consultants and executive trainers are using the Civil War battlefields as training grounds for modern business executives. Weick (1996) draws parallels between the interpersonal dynamics of a team of forest fire fighters facing an emergency (itself an analog of a military command in battle) and those of a modern business team responding to crises. This paper will extend the organizational communication lessons of Gettysburg to consider how those lessons might be applied in modern business organizations.

## Challenges to Analysis

One would expect that the passage of 135 years since the event<sup>1</sup> would naturally complicate the task of analyzing the interpersonal communication at the battle of Gettysburg. That is certainly true, but there are two additional factors which come to bear on the problem: the distinction between communication technology and communication content; and the availability of accurate and complete information on the exact content of the communication.

### Communication Technology vs. Communication Content

To a military person, the term "communication" most often is taken to refer to the technology of communication. A search of the literature for communication in a military context is most likely to identify references to satellites, radios, telegraphs, cryptography, railroads, and carrier pigeons. In fact, a recent search of the internet for the terms "military" and "communication" using the Infoseek search engine returned over 99% references to the technology of communication. A repeat of that search in the Harvard Business Review archives still returned 95% references to technology. However, in the organization sense it must be acknowledged that most communication is eventually between people, even though a great deal of technology and computer processing may intervene.

The literature of interpersonal communication in military and many business organizations is dispersed among several disciplines, further complicating the research task. Since "communication" is dominated by technology issues, it is necessary to find related key words blended into discussions of leadership, management, organizational development, and even generalship.

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<sup>1</sup> Coincidentally, the date of this paper is exactly 135 years to the day from the date of the battle.

This modern emphasis on communication as networks of things (ships, aircraft, computers, satellites) is not only an obstacle to analyses such as this paper, it is an obstacle to improving organizational communication in the military and elsewhere. The development of increasingly more capable communication modes and channels can distract from the need to improve communication between people. In fact, as technology enables faster and richer communication channels, it could be argued that the need for improved interpersonal communication is actually greater (Hout & Carter, 1995). In this age of nearly instant global communication, corporate work groups are becoming smaller while the stakes are high, personnel turnover is expected, bad news travels fast, and the only certainty is uncertainty. Weick observes that in that kind of crisis environment the only solution is effective interpersonal communication.

#### Availability of Information

The proposed analysis is further complicated by difficulties in determining what communication was actually sent, what the sender intended, and what the recipient interpreted. Of the six principals in this analysis (including Jackson), only Lee, General James Longstreet, and General Richard S. Ewell survived the war. Jackson was killed at the battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863; General James E. B. Stuart was killed at the battle of Yellow Tavern in May 1864; and General Ambrose P. Hill was killed at the battle of Five Forks in April 1865, only days before the end of the war. Moreover, Lee and Ewell never wrote memoirs. The book entitled Memoirs of Robert E. Lee (Long, 1886/1983) is really a biography drawn from his personal papers. Longstreet's memoirs were written well after the war and are tainted by the cloud of controversy surrounding his post-war political activities, and his original personal papers were destroyed in a fire.

Fortunately, there is extensive information in the compiled Official Records of the armies, although some participants and observers never submitted official reports due to death or wounds. Other reports were written months or even years after the fact, and may therefore suffer from self-serving hindsight. Reports from subordinate commanders and other observers exist. Some are contemporaneous, informed, and objective, such as Alexander and Scheibert. Others, such as Early, Gordon, Hood, Fitz Lee, Long, Longstreet, and Taylor are useful but must be read with caution due to the possible secondary motives of the writers. Fortunately, several relatively unbiased secondary sources from respected historians, including Coddington, Kegel, Pfanz, Piston, and Robertson, have recently become available which draw on new research into the contemporaneous letters and other writings of the participants.

Analysis is further complicated by the language of the times. Particularly in the South, communication was written, and presumably was spoken, in a very formal and polite language. This was typical of the Victorian age, and probably did not seem as stilted to the participants as it does to modern readers. More to the point, modern readings of Victorian formalism might misinterpret the degree of forcefulness which was implied or omitted. Whenever possible, that potential misinterpretation will be noted.

### **Military and Historical Background**

#### General

The Battle of Gettysburg took place from July 1 through July 3, 1863, in and around the town of Gettysburg, in south-central Pennsylvania. It was part of a campaign by the Confederacy to carry the war to the North in order to relieve the pressure on Virginia and to diminish the will of the people of the North to continue the war.

#### Organization

The Union Army of the Potomac was commanded by Major General George Meade. The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia was commanded by General Robert E. Lee. The armies were

divided into a number of corps, which were relatively self-contained mini-armies. Each corps generally contained infantry (foot-soldiers) and artillery (cannons) plus perhaps a small cavalry (horse-soldiers) detachment, and was responsible for its own logistics support of commissary (food), quartermaster (supplies and transportation), and ordnance (ammunition). The main body of cavalry was organized as a separate corps or division reporting directly to the army commander. Nominally, each corps was divided into four divisions, which were the main combat unit. Divisions consisted of three or four brigades, which in turn consisted of two to five regiments of ten companies each. The regiment was the smallest self-sustaining unit, and the brigade was the primary fighting unit. Nominal size for a regiment was 1,000 men, though at this point in the war the average strength of a regiment on either side was 350 to 400 men, due to battle losses and disease.

Table 1 shows the typical strengths for organizational elements for both armies. At Gettysburg, the Union Army of the Potomac consisted of a total of about 93,500 combat soldiers. The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia had an effective strength at Gettysburg of about 75,000. Tables 2 and 3 show the principal commanders and organizations of the two armies at Gettysburg. The Union army is only carried to the corps level, since the discussion will not deal with the divisional commanders.

**Table 1**

Army organizations - adapted from Luvaas & Nelson (1986)

UNIT	UNION	CONFEDERATE	COMMANDER <sup>2</sup>
Company	35 – 40 men	35 – 40 men	Captain
Regiment	350 – 400 men	350 – 400 men	Colonel
Brigade	800 – 1,700 men	1,400 – 2,000 men	Brigadier General
Division	3,000 – 7,000 men	6,000 – 14,000 men	Major General
Corps	12,000 – 14,000 men	24,000 – 28,000 men	Lieutenant General

**Table 2**

Army of Northern Virginia Commanders - adapted from War Department (1889) , Series I, Vol.27

Army of Northern Virginia	General Robert E. Lee
First Army Corps	Lieutenant General James Longstreet
McLaws' Division	Major General Lafayette McLaws
Pickett's Division	Major General George E. Pickett
Hood's Division	Major General John B. Hood
Artillery Reserve	Colonel E. Porter Alexander <sup>3</sup>
Second Army Corps	Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell
Early's Division	Major General Jubal A. Early

<sup>2</sup> These are nominal ranks. Until late in the war, the highest Union rank was Major General. Many (sometimes most) units were led in combat by officers below the nominal grade for their position.

<sup>3</sup> Officially, the Reserve Artillery was commanded by Colonel James B. Walton, but Longstreet turned to Colonel Alexander as the *de facto* commander during the battle.

Johnson's Division	Major General Edward Johnson
Rodes' Division	Major General Robert E. Rodes
Artillery Reserve	Colonel J. Thompson Brown
Third Army Corps	Lieutenant General Ambrose P. Hill
Anderson's Division	Major General Richard H. Anderson
Heth's Division	Major General Henry Heth
Pender's Division	Major General William D. Pender
Artillery Reserve	Colonel R. Lindsay Walker
Cavalry Division	Major General J. E. B. Stuart
Imboden's Command	Brigadier General J. D. Imboden

**Table 3**

Army of the Potomac Commanders - adapted from War Department (1889), Series I, Vol.27

Army of the Potomac	Major General George G. Meade
First Army Corps	Major General John F. Reynolds
Second Army Corps	Major General Winfield S. Hancock
Third Army Corps	Major General Daniel E. Sickles
Fifth Army Corps	Major General George Sykes
Sixth Army Corps	Major General John Sedgwick
Eleventh Army Corps	Major General Oliver O. Howard
Twelfth Army Corps	Major General Henry W. Slocum
Cavalry Corps	Major General Alfred Pleasonton
Artillery Reserve	Brigadier General Torbert O. Tyler

General Flow of the Battle

The battle of Gettysburg began with Lee's army dispersed throughout south-central Pennsylvania from Chambersburg in the west to Harrisburg in the north and York in the east. The Cavalry Division was circling the Union army to the southeast, and was out of communication with the rest of Lee's army. The Union army was pursuing from the south and southeast, attempting to stay between Lee's army and Washington/Baltimore. To be prepared to counter that pursuit, Lee ordered the army to concentrate at Gettysburg, thinking there were no significant Union troops there. Figure 1 shows the general theater of operations. Figures 2, 3, and 4 depict the relative positions of the armies for each of the three days of the battle.

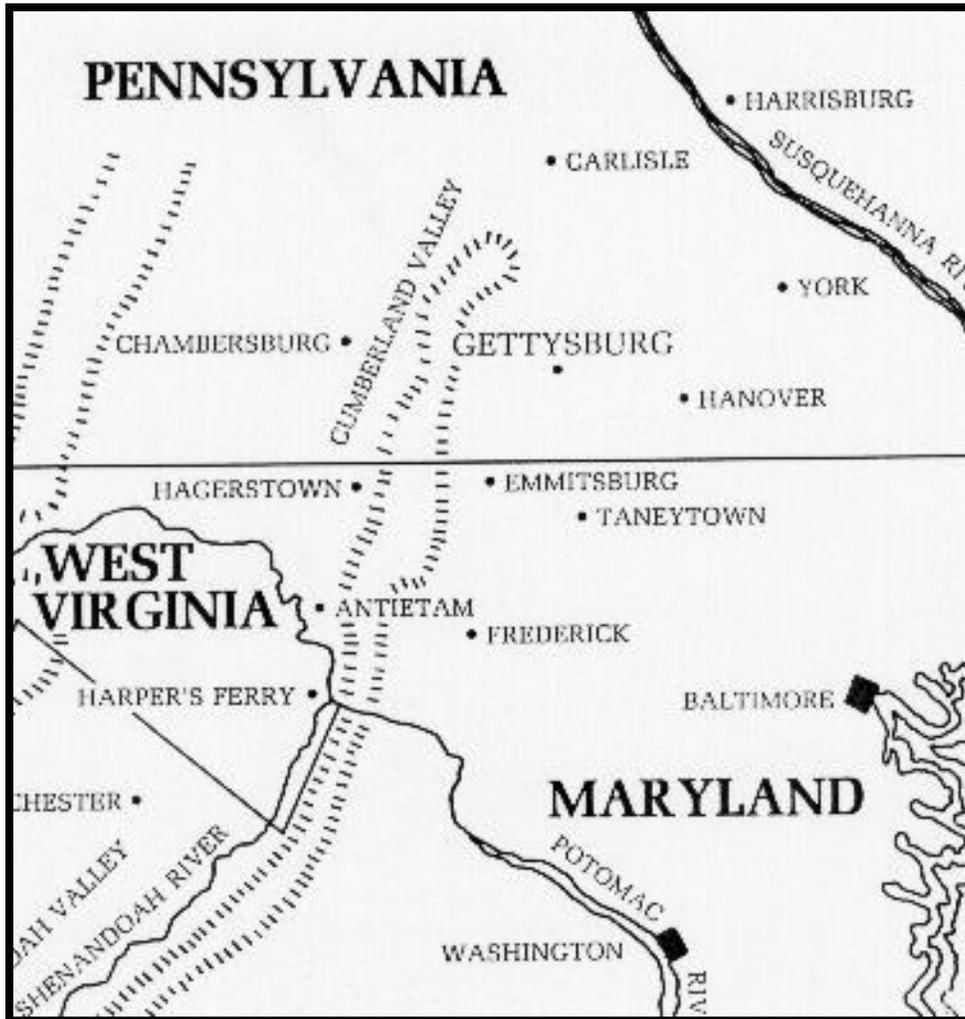
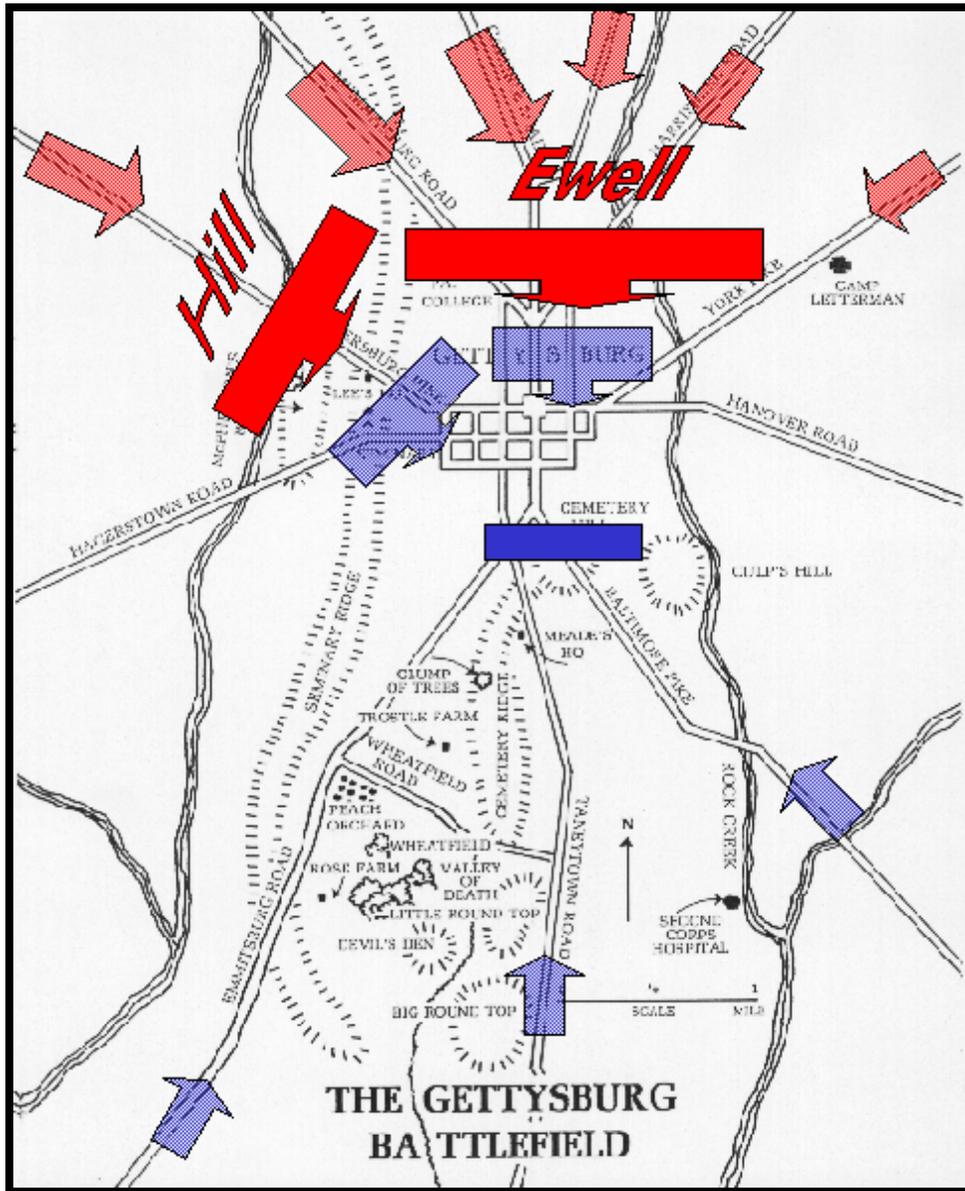
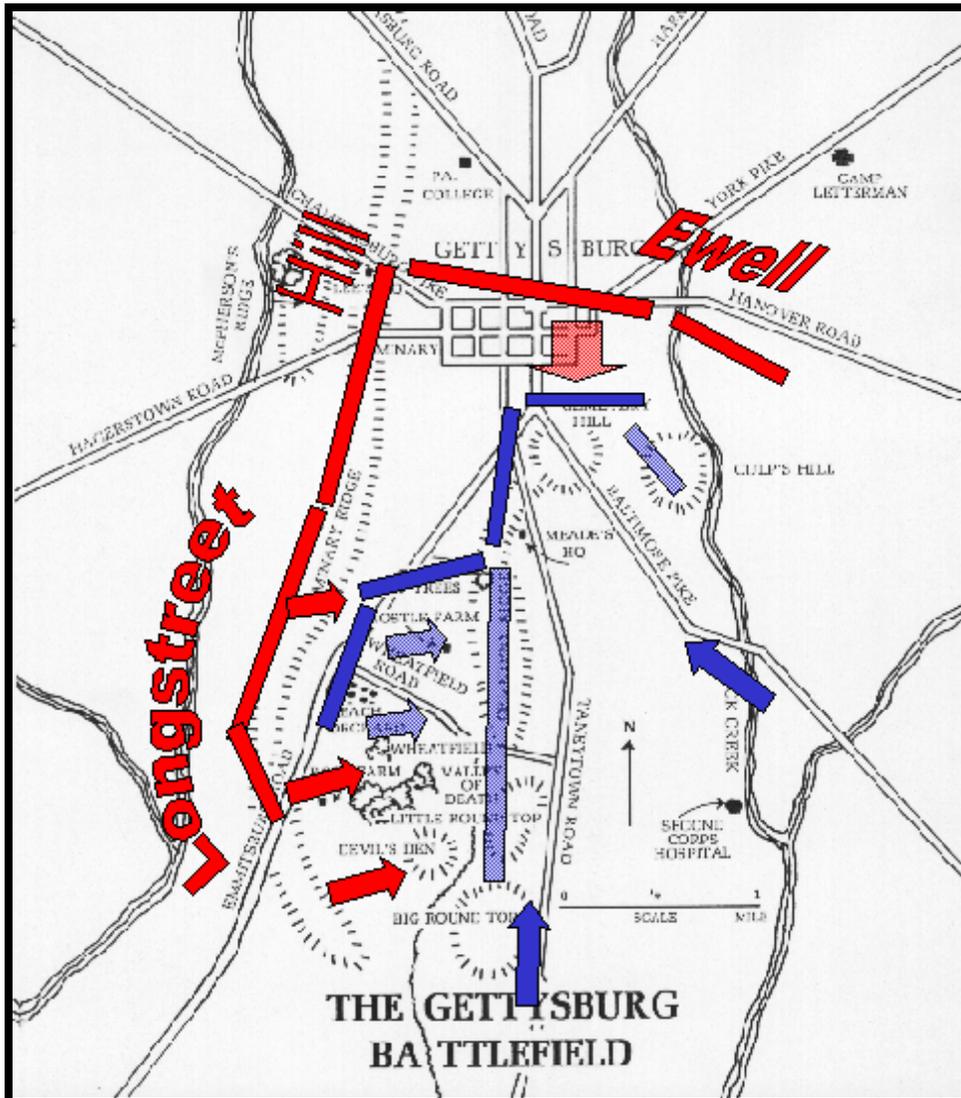


Figure 1 - General Theater of Operations (Frassanito, 1975)



**Figure 2 - Operations of July 1 (Adapted from Frassanito, 1975)**

On July 1, Hill's Corps approached Gettysburg from the west and encountered a strong force of Union cavalry, backed up by increasing numbers of infantry. He pressed forward and became heavily engaged in battle. Just as Hill's attack was stalling, Ewell's Corps began to arrive from the north and northeast. The appearance of the fresh troops on their flank created a virtual rout, with Union troops retreating through the town to Cemetery Hill, where a reserve position had been established. That evening, Longstreet's Corps began arriving from the west.



**Figure 3 - Operations of July 2 (Adapted from Frassanito, 1975)**

On July 2 the Confederate army was concentrated on Seminary Ridge and eastward through the town, with the exception of Pickett's Division of Longstreet's Corps, which was due to arrive from the west by evening, and the cavalry which was still behind the Union army. Meade's army was still arriving on the field, forming a line from Culp's Hill in the northeast to Cemetery Hill, then south along Cemetery Ridge. Lee attacked the Union left (southern) flank with Longstreet's Corps, then the right flank at Culp's and Cemetery Hills with Ewell's Corps. There were some successes, but the results were generally indecisive. Stuart's cavalry arrived that afternoon. By that evening both armies were fully concentrated.



- **Robert E. Lee** - Lee could probably be described as a classic Virginia aristocrat. He was the son of Revolutionary War hero Richard Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, and his wife was a granddaughter of George Washington's wife. He graduated from West Point in 1829, second in his class without having received a single demerit during the entire course of study. Trained as a military engineer, Lee was a hero of the Mexican War, and had served as superintendent at West Point. His last U.S. Army duty was colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> U. S. Dragoons regiment in Texas. He was offered command of all the Federal armies, but chose loyalty to Virginia instead. Lee assumed command of the Army of Northern Virginia in June 1862. At the time of Gettysburg he was 56 years old. His leadership style can best be described as highly delegative. He seldom gave direct orders, and allowed his subordinates a great deal of discretion. He was described by Buell (1997) as being of an old school of leadership and command, and being slow to embrace new technology. According to Robertson (1987) and Long he was suffering from both coronary problems and diarrhea during the battle.
- **James Longstreet** - The 42-year-old Longstreet was born in South Carolina and raised in Georgia, but most of his pre-war adult life was spent as an Army paymaster on the western frontier. In the class-conscious Confederacy he suffered from not being a Virginian. Piston (1987, p.2) states bluntly that "he would never be mistaken for an aristocrat." He graduated from West Point in 1842. During the Mexican War he had combat experience and served as a regimental adjutant, responsible for preparing and distributing his colonel's orders and communication and writing daily reports. He commanded a brigade at Bull Run in 1861, and quickly moved to division then corps command. Freeman (1943, p. xlv) describes him as "not brilliant, he is solid and systematic." Three of his children died in an epidemic in early 1862, after which he was much more subdued and withdrawn.
- **Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson** - At his death in May 1863, Jackson was 39 years old. He was a Virginian, a West Point graduate with the class of 1846, and a veteran of the Mexican War, but did not serve actively in the army between the wars. At the outbreak of the Civil War he was a professor at the Virginia Military Academy. Jackson earned the nickname "Stonewall" at the battle of Bull Run in 1861 as a brigadier general. Much of his early service was in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia where he commanded independently, attached to but not under the direct control of Lee in the Army of Northern Virginia. Freeman describes him as "fanatically religious, with a precise regard for discipline and army regulations." He gave detailed orders to his subordinates, and expected exact compliance. He was perhaps best known for tactical and strategic audacity in the face of overwhelming odds. Jackson was married and had no children.
- **Richard S. Ewell** - Ewell was born to an old Virginia family. His grandfather was a friend of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison attended his parents' wedding, and his maternal grandfather was the first United States Secretary of the Navy. In spite of his aristocratic origins, he was generally considered rough, profane, and irascible. After graduation from West Point in 1840, he spent most of his pre-war career on the frontier as an Indian fighter. Through much of the early war he was a principal subordinate of Jackson. The appointment to command of the Second Corps was his first active service since loss of a leg at the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862. Freeman, who was generally critical of Ewell, felt that he was suffering from stomach ulcers during the Gettysburg campaign, and referred to his sharp tongue. Pfanz (1998), a sympathetic biographer, agrees that he was a "high-strung individual and often lost his temper in times of stress".
- **Ambrose Powell Hill** - Yet another member of the landed gentry of Virginia, Hill's grandfather had served under Lee's father in the American Revolution. A West Point classmate of Jackson, he was in several ways the antithesis of the pious disciplinarian. He had become infected with gonorrhea while at West Point, and his illness caused him to graduate a year later than Jackson. The disease was to affect him at various times in his life, and he may have been suffering from a relapse during the Gettysburg battle. Hill served as an artillery officer in the U.S. Army, and at the start of the war he was elected colonel of an infantry regiment in Longstreet's brigade. When Longstreet was appointed

to divisional commander after Bull Run, Hill took over the brigade. By the time Lee took command of the Army of Northern Virginia in June 1862, Hill was developing a well-deserved reputation as one of the hardest-fighting division commanders in the Confederacy (Freeman). He was most effective in semi-independent operations, where he could lead his troops aggressively in the face of the enemy but not have to answer to close management by a superior. This attitude, in particular, caused friction with the taskmaster, Jackson. Hill had the distinction of having been placed under arrest for disobedience of orders by both Jackson and Longstreet, but his disobedience was always on the side of pressing the enemy.

- **James E. B. "Jeb" Stuart** – At 30, Jeb Stuart was the youngest, least experienced, and most flamboyant of Lee's command group. Too young to serve in the Mexican War, he served with the 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Cavalry in Texas from the time of his graduation from West Point until the Civil War. Stuart had a good understanding of the uses of cavalry as a screening and scouting force, but also longed for the attention gained by raids on the enemy (Freeman). His personal and military elan were legendary. He led the cavalry in three raids completely around the Union army, the last of which was during the Gettysburg campaign. According to Freeman, "He is disposed to somewhat reckless adventure, but he has remarkable powers of observation." The regard which Lee held for him is illustrated by the fact that Lee summoned Stuart to take command of the Second Corps at Chancellorsville after Jackson was mortally wounded. Perhaps the best indication of his military personality was the manner of his death. As a major general, he was wearing a red-lined cape and an ostrich feather in his hat, and was personally rallying his troops within easy pistol range of the enemy when he was shot.

### **Organizational Communication Before Chancellorsville**

From June 1862 when Lee assumed command, until May 1863 when Jackson was killed, the Army of Northern Virginia had been operating as two corps plus a cavalry division. The organization was de facto until October 1862, when the Confederate Congress formalized it by promoting Longstreet and Jackson to lieutenant general. During that time the army achieved some of its greatest successes. They fought the major battles of Fair Oaks, Mechanicsville, Seven Days, Malvern Hill, Cedar Mountain, Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville plus numerous smaller engagements.

Lee, Longstreet, Jackson, and Stuart developed a fairly close working relationship based on a common overall goal and a shared sacrifice. While there were differences and setbacks, the overall effect was a very high morale in the army, in spite of the physical hardships and food and materiel shortages, which worsened as the war progressed.

#### Close Communication

The effectiveness of the Lee-Longstreet-Jackson team was partly the result of complementary styles and partly of effective communication. While either Longstreet or Jackson was sometimes detached on independent duty, the evidence is that the three, plus Stuart, conferred jointly whenever possible. Certainly plans for all the major campaigns were worked out in face-to-face meetings between all of the participants. Details of these meetings are sketchy, but Long suggests that Lee used a participative style of decision making which fit on the left/center of the leadership continuum, as described by Fisher (1993). On this level of command, Lee was either seeking ideas on how to carry out a plan to which he had already committed, or presenting a tentative decision. As will be discussed in the following section, there was not always agreement, but there was usually open communication.

Once a campaign began, the two corps and the cavalry division were often physically separated, so meetings were less frequent. Still the generals communicated by courier and visited as often as possible. Longstreet was in the habit of riding to Lee's headquarters each evening during a battle to review the situation and discuss the next day's plans. In fact, on the march Lee often traveled with

Longstreet's Corps, although writers are unsure whether that was a social, communication, or supervision preference.

### Complementary Styles

Jackson was famous for his aggressive marching and risk-taking. As early as August 1861, he was declaring his intent to "go on the offense and end the war quickly" (Kegel, 1996). The Shenandoah Valley campaign of early 1862, by which his legend was greatly magnified, is a good example. With only 17,000 troops he defeated four separate Union armies totaling over 50,000 soldiers. He accomplished this by boldly splitting his forces to take advantage of enemy weaknesses, by making maximum use of his interior lines of communication and the excellent road system of the Valley, and by pushing his troops and his commanders relentlessly. Eventually, his men came to realize that by wearing them out on the march he was actually saving their lives on the battlefield, allowing them to attack before the enemy was able to consolidate their forces or strengthen their positions.

Jackson's relations with his immediate subordinates, however, were tumultuous. He provided orders in great detail and specificity, and expected them to be carried out literally. Most of his generals had found themselves under arrest for failure to carry out his instructions to the letter, at one time or another. On the other hand, he seldom communicated with his subordinates in any other form. He was even secretive and detached in dealing with his own staff.

In contrast to Jackson's early independence of command, Longstreet's early command experience was almost entirely within the context of the main army. He was generally close to Richmond, where he had political and social friends, and was surrounded by comrades from the "old army". In that environment, under both Lee and his predecessor, General Joseph E. Johnston, there were frequent staff meetings and councils of war at which plans could be debated and ideas developed. Both on the march and in camp, Longstreet frequently sought out the comradeship of his division commanders and some brigade commanders, particularly if they had served with him on the frontier. John Hood, George Pickett, and Lewis Armistead all shared his campfire.

The principal differences between Longstreet and Lee, though, were not of style, but of strategic and tactical philosophy. As mentioned above, Jackson believed in offense. He wanted to keep on the move to keep the enemy off balance and to catch him with his force divided. The Valley Campaign of 1862 and the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863 were the classic examples of that philosophy. Longstreet, on the other hand, had evolved a theory of strategic offense and tactical defense. His understanding of modern weapons and tactics had convinced him that forces on the tactical defensive had a distinct advantage. As Alexander (1877) observed, "They never had driven us from a field since the war began." Therefore Longstreet advocated aggressive maneuvering to a defensible position where the enemy had to attack (strategic offense), then defending against that attack (tactical defense). Ironically, the best example of that approach was provided by Jackson, at the Second Battle of Bull Run.

Stuart, in general, was supportive of any plan which allowed his cavalry to be on the move. That was not necessarily motivated by a quest for glory, although that motive cannot be discounted. In a practical sense, cavalry needed to move in order to survive. As the most horse-intensive branch, it needed vast amounts of fodder, which was difficult to bring in by wagon to stationary camps. Active campaigning allowed the horses to move to the fodder, instead of vice-versa, and also helped keep the horses fit.

As a good commander, Lee valued and encouraged that diversity. Jubal Early, who succeeded to command of Ewell's Division, wrote that Lee conducted his staff meetings with a very participative style, soliciting input and comment from all present before reaching a decision. This account must be accepted with caution, since Early was only a brigade commander at the time in question, did not routinely participate in Lee's planning conferences until 1864, and had a vested interest in defending Lee's

generalship when he wrote in 1877. However, the style of communication is consistent with other accounts from the period.

That Lee held both Jackson and Longstreet in high regard was obvious. Thomas (1995) states: "Longstreet seemed to Lee to be steady and dependable, the consummate professional. ... Jackson was a killer, possessed of the same sorts of aggressive instincts which obsessed Lee." When Jackson was wounded, Lee wrote, "I have but to show him my design, and I know that if it can be done it will be done".

It is clear that Lee used the predisposition of his key lieutenants to balance each other. On some campaigns, such as Chancellorsville, he favored Jackson's approach. At other times, such as Fredericksburg, Longstreet's suggestion was used with spectacular success. The Second Bull Run campaign is an example of a hybrid of the two.

The most important point of the Lee-Longstreet-Jackson period is that Lee obviously communicated often and openly with his subordinates. Lateral communication among them was less frequent, but that is understandable in the highly structured military organization of the period. Stuart and Jackson had a warm relationship, as did Longstreet and Stuart. There is little record of informal communication between Longstreet and Jackson outside of the actual battle context.

### **Army Reorganization**

In the early morning hours of May 3, 1863, the communication structure which had evolved over the past year was shattered when friendly fire mortally wounded Jackson at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Stuart temporarily assumed command of Jackson's Corps. The battle was a tremendous victory for the Confederates against more than 2-to-1 odds, but Jackson's wounding cast a pall over the army. His death seven days later was mourned by the entire nation. It was obvious that some sort of change in the command structure would be required; if nothing else either replacing Jackson in the Second Corps or leaving Stuart there and replacing him in the Cavalry Division.

Coddington (1968) states that Lee had been concerned that, at approximately 30,000 men each, the two corps were getting unwieldy, but had not made any changes due to a shortage of qualified commanders. Jackson's death now forced him to make a change. He settled on a three-corps structure, with Ewell to be promoted from within the Second Corps, and Hill to be promoted from within Longstreet's Corps to command the new Third Corps. The proposal was submitted to the president on May 20. The change involved considerable risk, and it is not clear that Lee understood the degree of risk.

The first risk was the fact that it placed two thirds of the army under new corps commanders. Lee should have been able to anticipate that there would be challenges associated with that fact. While his record as a hard-fighting divisional commander was impeccable, Hill had never commanded more than one division in combat. Ewell had temporarily commanded two divisions, but had been absent from the army since August 1862, recovering from a leg amputation.

Second, the reorganization placed the majority of the army under commanders who were unacquainted with Lee and his methods. While Lee knew Hill from personal observation, the opposite was not necessarily true. Because of his division assignments either under Longstreet or Jackson, Hill had generally not been a participant in the command conferences, nor did he usually see or hear the directives from the commanding general. Buell assesses that Lee hardly knew Ewell, and he therefore represented an even greater risk. In addition, he suffered the same unfamiliarity problems as Hill.

Third, the new structure meant that most of the division commanders would be serving under unfamiliar corps commanders. According to Freeman the First Corps was the best organized. Two of his three division commanders were experienced, and Pickett had administrative experience commanding a division but had not yet been exposed to combat. The Second Corps had billets for 17 generals, from

brigadier to lieutenant general. Only three were filled by officers who had been in their post for six months or longer, and those were brigadiers. In the Third Corps, Hill had one experienced division commander out of three, and eight experienced brigadier generals out of thirteen.

Finally, there was the risk of the upcoming campaign. At the time of the reorganization, Lee had already been planning an invasion into Pennsylvania. Thus, he was embarking on perhaps the most ambitious operation in the history of the army with what was effectively an entirely new organization. A prudent modern manager would closely examine the communication structure and procedures under which the new organization would operate, with an eye toward mitigating the risks. Options available to Lee included adjusting his personal style of communication, augmenting his personal staff, augmenting the personal staffs of the corps commanders, or altering the concept of the campaign. There is no evidence that any of these actions were even considered.

### **Organizational Communication During the Campaign and Battle of Gettysburg**

#### Planning the Campaign

It seems that the invasion plan was developed by Lee, Jackson, and Stuart in January - February 1863, while Longstreet was on detached duty in Southern Virginia and North Carolina (Kegel). There is no indication that Longstreet participated in its planning, either by correspondence, in person, or through emissaries (not an uncommon practice at the time), until his return to the army immediately after the Battle of Chancellorsville. This seems to represent a major change in Lee's communication among his command group. It would not have been difficult to include Longstreet, even though he was not with the army. During this period Lee often traveled to Richmond, as did Longstreet, and Longstreet could easily have been brought into the process by coordinating one of those visits. There is no evidence that Longstreet was deliberately excluded, so his participation in the early planning must have been deemed not necessary. In retrospect, however, this seems to have been a major oversight. Without Longstreet's balancing opinion, the initial plan which was presented to President Davis was probably over-aggressive in scope.

As soon as he heard of the proposed campaign, Longstreet began actively participating in the planning. In personal meetings with Lee, he argued that the campaign should be offensive in strategy but defensive in tactics. He proposed that the army should maneuver boldly, but once the Union army was drawn out into the open, the Confederates should assume a strong defensive position and force the enemy to attack. Under the old communication scheme, these proposals would have been balanced by Jackson's counter arguments for tactical aggression, and Lee would have worked out either a compromise or a consensus decision. But Lee did not realize or react to the fact that the communication dynamics had changed. He listened to Longstreet's arguments and did not express any objections to the philosophy. Freeman says that Lee's silence was rooted in courtesy and tact – that he was always careful to avoid conflict or offense, did not like to express disagreement. In retrospect, Lee would have done well to have had the advantage of Argyris' (1998) observation that "by adeptly avoiding conflict with coworkers, some executives eventually wreak organizational havoc". Longstreet assumed that Lee's polite hearing of his arguments, in the absence of dissent, was acceptance. He believed that Lee had pledged himself to the defensive tactics approach. As events later showed, this was not Lee's intent. This miscommunication was the root cause of Longstreet's problems on the second and third days of the battle, as will be seen.

The communication fault here was not so much failing to adjust to changing circumstances, but of seeking to avoid conflict. Because Lee did not state disagreement with his views, Longstreet assumed that there was a sort of unstated contract between them. That unstated contract, as one of the barriers to communication, may well have caused many lives to be lost on July 2 and 3. Lee should have learned the lesson expressed by General Colin Powell, as reported by F. W. Hill (1997): "I learned you cannot let

the mission suffer, or make the majority pay to spare the feelings of an individual." As Freeman stated, "It would have been better if Lee had stood Longstreet before him and had bluntly reminded him that he and not the chief of the First Corps commanded the Army of Northern Virginia." The result of that failure will be discussed later.

### Stuart's Absence

Perhaps the most catastrophic communication error in this phase of the campaign related to the cavalry. It may have arisen from Lee's overconfidence in his subordinates' ability to interpret his intent, and his failure to adapt his style to changing circumstances. Ewell was to lead the move northward, to the west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Lee gave Stuart permission to swing around the Union army to the east, joining Ewell in Pennsylvania. However, those orders were contingent on the Union army not having started a northward pursuit. If the enemy had begun to move, Stuart was to cross the Potomac "east of the mountains" and join Ewell as soon as possible, to keep him informed of the enemy's movements.

The problem is that "east of the mountains" could mean anywhere from Harper's Ferry to Washington, and there were no instructions as to when and where Stuart should rejoin the army. In the context of other writings and troop movements, it seems that Lee meant that, if the Union army were moving, Stuart should cross the river close to the mountains, say at Point of Rocks north of Leesburg. That is the only way he could have effectively supported Ewell.

As the campaign developed, Stuart used the discretion given him to ride around the Union army, based on reports from his scouts that the Union army was not pursuing Ewell. Crossing the river at Seneca, he raided Rockville, Maryland, feinted toward Baltimore, then rode northeast toward York, Pennsylvania. The scouting reports were wrong – the Federals were on the move. Stuart never did connect with Ewell and did not join the main army until late on the second day of the battle. For over a week Lee received no messages from Stuart, and thus was deprived of his principal source of information about enemy movements. Many writers, including Scheibert (1878), feel that Stuart's absence was a critical factor in the loss of the battle.

Long admitted: "In the performance of this duty Stuart had never failed, and probably his great confidence in him made Lee less specific in his instructions than he otherwise would have been." Zimmerman (1998) tried to excuse Stuart's absence as merely operating within the bounds of the discretion granted him. But he also suggests a factor that Lee should have anticipated in forming his communication with Stuart. On June 8 Stuart's cavalry was surprised and embarrassed by an attack by Federal cavalry at the Battle of Brandy Station. Knowing Stuart's pride, Lee should have anticipated that Stuart might see a ride around the Union army as a chance to restore some tarnished reputation, and should have restricted Stuart's available discretion. If Stuart was looking for a chance to activate that discretionary clause and make the raid, he found it when John Mosby, his scout, brought word that the Union army was stationary, and not pursuing Ewell. That report was false, but it was the report that Stuart had hoped to hear. Using that information, and ignoring contradictory intelligence, Stuart crossed the Potomac on June 22, and was not heard from again until July 2. Nolan (1992) even contends that Lee was aware of the Union army's movement before Stuart's departure, but did not wish to remove the discretion once it had been granted. Once again, a style of communication which might have been effective in the past was used even though there was information available which should have indicated the need for a change in style.

### Day 1 of the Battle

Once Lee learned that the Union army was in active pursuit, he ordered the army to concentrate near Gettysburg. In so doing, he emphasized that he did not wish to bring on a full battle until all of the army was gathered. The battle began when Hill's leading division stumbled into Union cavalry, backed by infantry. Although he was ill, it seems that Hill, unlike Lee, was eager for battle. Other than the fact that Hill did not seem fully supportive of the need to avoid a general engagement, there is little to fault Lee on

in the area of communication in the opening of the battle. Lee was riding with Longstreet, several miles west. He rode to the front as soon as he heard indications of battle, but the battle had already begun by the time he arrived.

Ewell, however, was already feeling the effects of Lee's communication style. Lee's order to consolidate had specified either Gettysburg or Cashtown, "according to circumstances". To Jackson, the phrase would have meant, "Scout ahead and use your best judgment about which location would be best." But that the discretionary component of the order left Ewell uncomfortable. Under Jackson, such discretion was never allowed. He pressed on toward Gettysburg, however, while grumbling about the ability of Lee's staff to write a coherent order. The arrival of Ewell's Corps threw the Union First and Eleventh Corps, who had been fighting Hill, into a rout with his troops wildly pursuing the Federals through the town. Coddington contends that Jackson would have maintained positive control of his troops, and would have been able to attack Cemetery Hill within an hour of the beginning of the rout without further orders from Lee. Seeing that Ewell's Corps was not advancing out of town, Lee sent an order to Ewell to take the hill. However, it was phrased for a Jackson, not a Ewell, and included additional discretionary language. Members of Ewell's staff and several of his brigadier generals were amazed that he did not press on to take the hill. They were used to the form in which Jackson received orders from Lee and understood Lee's intent, but could not persuade Ewell. As a result, the hill was not taken and the moment was lost. By the time an assault was planned and made the next day, the Federal forces had recovered from the rout, fortified their position, and received reinforcements.

From the communication perspective, the fault lies clearly with Lee for failing to realize that Ewell would require a different form of direction and communication than Jackson. Taylor (1877b) says: "In the exercise of that discretion, however, which General Lee was accustomed to accord to his lieutenants, and probably because of an undue regard for his admonition, given earlier in the day, not to precipitate a general engagement, General Ewell deemed it unwise to make the pursuit." Taylor was Lee's chief of staff at Gettysburg and carried the order to Ewell. Brigadier General Isaac Trimble, who volunteered to lead the assault, was not as polite, accusing Ewell of losing his nerve. Lee, though, knew that Ewell was subject to fits of indecision, and that he had spent the majority of his career under Jackson, who issued specific orders and expected exact compliance. As recently as June 14 Lee had observed a clear example of Ewell's hesitancy. Lee, however, continued to try to communicate with him as if he was Jackson.

### Day 2 of the Battle

For the second day of the battle, Lee hoped to defeat the Federals by assaults on each flank. Throughout the night of July 1, he met with his commanders and developed plans. He visited each corps headquarters and also met at his own headquarters. Interestingly, while Lee met with Longstreet, Ewell, and Hill individually on several occasions during the night, there is no evidence that any of the corps commanders met with each other. Early (1877b) even reported, of the conference at Ewell's headquarters where it was decided that the main assault would be on the right (Longstreet's) flank, "I do not recollect that during all this time Longstreet's name or corps was mentioned." Is it any wonder, then, that "it seemed impossible to get the co-operation of the commanders along the line" (Taylor, 1877a)?

An interesting communication dynamic happened with Ewell and his staff that night. Lee rode over to discuss the feasibility of an assault on Cemetery Hill the next morning. The meeting included Ewell, Rodes, and Early, Johnson's Division not yet having arrived. Ewell generally deferred to Early, who by training was a lawyer and a politician. The meeting resulted in unanimous agreement that the morning's assault should be on the right, not at Cemetery Hill, though no orders were issued at that time. At about midnight Lee summoned Ewell to his tent to continue the discussion. One-on-one with Lee, Ewell agreed that an attack was feasible, although there was still no time set for the attack. It could be that there was a form of groupthink going on among Ewell and his subordinates. The reports of the earlier meeting suggest that there was a certain pressure toward conformity and an illusion of unanimity.

Thus far, this discussion has focused on planning for attacks from the Confederate left flank. We now turn to Longstreet's right flank. It is here that the unstated contract between Longstreet and Lee began to affect the communication.

The First Corps began arriving on the battlefield late in the afternoon of July 1, although Pickett's Division did not arrive until the evening of the July 2. Based on his meetings with the Second Corps staff, Lee announced to Longstreet his intentions to have the First Corps assault the southern end of the Union line. Longstreet immediately protested this as a violation of the unstated contract relating to his defensive tactics concept, and argued rather heatedly that a better tactic would be to entrench on Seminary Ridge and force the Federals to attack them. Lee insisted that Longstreet attack up the Emmitsburg Road. There has been a great deal of discussion over whether the attack was to be early in the morning or later, although that does not seem to have been a communication issue. In fact, the attack did not begin until about 3:00 p.m.

As Longstreet prepared for the attack, his scouts determined that the Union left flank was badly exposed, and that it would be feasible to sweep around Big Round Top and attack from the rear. Longstreet agreed with the analysis, and requested permission to sweep around the southern end of the Federal lines, instead of attacking up the Emmitsburg Road. Lee, remembering the heated discussion earlier about the tactical defense strategy, appears to have thought that Longstreet was talking about a strategic sweep, which he had already dismissed. Throughout the day, while bringing up and positioning his troops, Longstreet received fresh intelligence that the Union line was badly positioned and very susceptible to a flank attack. He repeated his request for an end run several times, to the point where Lee lost his temper and issued Longstreet a rare direct order to attack up the Emmitsburg Road. By that time it was clear that Longstreet's proposal was for a tactical change, not a strategic one; but Lee, perhaps showing irritation at Longstreet's persistence, seems to have been unwilling to consider any other options. John Hood commanded Longstreet's right-most division. Once he got his division in position for the attack and saw the ground and enemy positions, he begged Longstreet three times for permission to swing to the right. Each time Longstreet's answer was the same: "General Lee's orders are to attack up the Emmitsburg road" (Hood, 1875). By that time Longstreet seems to have given in, and refused to pass the new intelligence on to Lee, fearing he would only receive more rebuffs.

Time has shown that Longstreet and Hood were probably right. The Round Top hills were basically undefended, and from there the Confederates could have dominated the entire Union line. Longstreet, however, followed orders. His attack made significant gains but did not push the Federals off Cemetery Ridge. During the attack he received only minimal support from Hill; and the attack by Ewell, which was supposed to coincide with his, did not happen until several hours later.

On the north flank, there were other communication problems. Early claims that Ewell thought Longstreet was to attack earlier. Ewell attacked Cemetery Hill about sunset and Culp's Hill an hour or two later. Both attacks met with only limited success because they were not coordinated with each other or with other activities on the field.

Hill's left-most division was to coordinate with Ewell. His right two divisions were to support Longstreet and join the attack when Hill felt he could be most effective. Hill did neither. The reasons are unclear, but may be related to the fact the Hill was ill during much of the battle. Hill was present at several of the conferences between Lee and Longstreet, so he should have had a good understanding of the plan. Messages were sent from Longstreet to Hill as the former's attack progressed, but no significant support was provided. On the other flank, there is no record of any contact between Ewell and Hill. At the last minute, Ewell sent a message to the commander of Hill's closest division asking him to participate in the assault, but there was no response. It is true that the Third Corps' leadership had suffered in the previous day's battle but command attention from the top should have helped overcome that problem.

And what of Lee during this time of great lack of coordination? Coddington reports that during Longstreet and Ewell's attacks Lee remained near the seminary, at the middle of the Confederate line. He only received one written message and one report by courier during that time. In spite of the fact that Hill's headquarters were only a few hundred yards from his position, there is no evidence that Lee worked to ensure Hill's coordination with the attacks. It does seem clear that Lee was not feeling well during much of the battle. Robertson, Long, and Piston all point to the possibility of heart disease. Scheibert thought that Lee looked uneasy, as contrasted with his calm demeanor at Chancellorsville. Lee's body language showed restlessness, nervousness, and irritability. He thought the uneasiness was unsettling to the officers around him. Perhaps the most telling analysis, however, was from Coddington: "It was his [Lee's] policy to make careful plans with his corps commanders and then to leave them the duty of modifying and carrying them out to the best of their abilities." In other words, he was managing his team in the same way he would have if it had been Longstreet and Jackson. He made no allowance for the fact that this was Hill and Ewell's first major battle in corps command, that Hill was ill, that Longstreet felt betrayed, and that Ewell was confused.

### Day 3 of the Battle

During the evening and night of July 2 – 3, Lee determined to attack the center of the Union line. Stuart had arrived during the evening with his cavalry division, and Pickett's Division also reached the field, completing the consolidation of the army. In Lee's official report of the battle he stated that the plan for the 3<sup>rd</sup> remained the same as for the 2<sup>nd</sup> – Longstreet and Ewell to conduct coordinated attacks. There is no record of a general conference that night. Longstreet (1876) says that he did not visit Lee that night, contrary to his custom. Both Longstreet and Ewell made preparations for the morning.

Ewell apparently believed that Longstreet's attack would occur at first light. He ordered Johnson's Division to assault Culp's Hill to coincide with that time. The assault failed, but was sustained for two hours in the hopes that they were drawing Federal troops away from Longstreet's assault to the south. That morning assault never came. Longstreet says that there had been no discussion of a specific time for the renewed attack.

Probably at about this time Lee was with Longstreet. Understanding that the general plan was to be the same, Longstreet had begun shifting troops to the right to envelop the enemy's flank with the morning attack. When Lee arrived, Longstreet renewed his argument for a tactical defense. Lee, however, had different ideas. Apparently during the night he had determined that Longstreet's attack should be further toward the center of the line. By not meeting with Lee the previous night, Longstreet found himself working in the opposite direction from Lee's intentions. Over Longstreet's strongest objections, Lee ordered an assault on the center of the line with Pickett's Division, plus elements of Hill's Corps. With Lee's insistence on an attack on the center, the battle was effectively over from an organizational communication perspective.

### Aftermath

With the failure of Pickett's charge, Lee finally assumed the tactical defensive posture which Longstreet had long been advocating. When Meade did not attack on July 4, Lee began his retreat to Virginia. He had left nearly 20,000 casualties in Pennsylvania. His nephew, Fitzhugh Lee, assessed the reasons for the failure of the campaign as: "1<sup>st</sup> The absence of General Stuart's cavalry from the army; 2d. The non-occupation of the hills south of Gettysburg by General Ewell on the afternoon of the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1863. 3d. To the delay in the attack upon the 2d" (F. Lee, 1877). Nolan is more to the point in observing that: "This catastrophic consequence was a result of leadership failures on the part of the army commander." Key among those was Lee's failure to adapt his style and methods of communication to changes in his leadership group.

## **Analysis and Lessons Learned**

### How Could Lee Have Improved His Organizational Communication?

The above descriptions suggest several causes for the communication problems throughout the campaign.

- The choice of commanders created or revealed problems. Ewell turned out to be indecisive and not able to respond well to situations requiring initiative. His experience with Jackson had taught him to wait for orders, and then respond to them literally. Hill, on the other hand, was too independent. He was never comfortable with the limitations of corps command, and much preferred to personally lead his troops in combat. Longstreet and Stuart had always been good choices, but each failed in this campaign for other reasons.
- The new command team was never given the opportunity get to know each other and to work out lateral communication paths. The reorganization was announced on May 20, and the first troop movements of the campaign began on June 3. Ewell had been absent from the army for almost a year and would need time just to get ready for active campaigning. But at least he was familiar with his new division commanders, having served with all of them (in different capacities) in the Shenandoah Valley. Hill was familiar with Pender and Heth, but they were both new to division command. Anderson was a relative unknown to Hill. Finally, while Hill had served under Longstreet and with Ewell under Jackson, neither of those relationships was particularly cordial. Longstreet and Ewell only knew each other by reputation. All of them knew Stuart, but Longstreet was the only one with whom Stuart had any prior command relationship. It would take time for this group to learn each others' strengths, styles, and weaknesses; but there was no time available. Each was too busy trying to establish communication and team identity within his own command to be concerned with the others.
- The overall campaign plan was not adequately evaluated and understood by all the commanders. The original overall concept had been developed by Lee with Stuart and Jackson. Thus, of the five top commanders involved, only two had participated in the development of the plan. Longstreet was told of the plan early in May, but his concept of it was different than Lee's. Ewell and Hill did not receive the full details until only a few days before the first troop movements.
- There was no consistency in the development of leadership in the army. The pressures of the war compelled each officer to learn his job by trial and error, and by observing his superiors. Thus, the incentive was to learn the techniques and styles which pleased the superior, rather than the style which would have the best effect overall. As a result, the tendency was to learn how to follow rather than how to lead.
- There were few, if any, councils of war or joint meetings among all of the commanders to ensure that all were familiar with the overall plan and with the role each would take. In practice, Ewell was making recommendations to Lee for the employment of Longstreet's troops, Hill was not supporting Longstreet and Ewell's attacks, Longstreet was working at cross-purposes to Lee, and Stuart had taken himself out of the picture.
- Finally and most important, Lee did not adjust his style to compensate for the above problems.

What, then, could Lee have done differently? A reorganization really had been necessary. However much he might have wished it, Jackson could not be brought back and there was no one else like him in the Confederacy. It is unlikely that Lee could have chosen different corps commanders than Hill and Ewell. The only other serious candidate was John Hood, who was no more qualified or experienced than Hill. Besides, a different set of commanders would not have solved Lee's problems – only given him a different set of symptoms. The only truly effective answer would have been to learn to adjust his communication style to fit the particular circumstances.

There is not much that Lee could have done about the time-related factors. The reorganization was precipitated by the death of Jackson, and it was necessary to mount the invasion before the Federals had time to fully recover from the loss at Chancellorsville. If he had been sensitive to the communication issues, though, Lee could have used the available time to better advantage. By calling in the corps commanders to headquarters frequently he would have accomplished several things at once:

- Given them all time to get to know each other better;
- Stimulated better lateral communication;
- Given them all a sense of participation in and ownership of the plan; and
- Ensured that everyone understood the plan.

It seems clear that Lee badly needed to abandon his hands-off leadership style and provide positive direction to his new corps commanders. Ewell needed to be given direct orders. Hill needed supervision and coaching. Stuart needed to be kept on a shortened tether. The only way that he could effectively compensate for the conditions which he could not change would be through his personal involvement.

One major change which would have been useful, but which might not have been implementable in time, would be the employment of a "general staff" concept. A general staff is a group of officers, specifically chosen and/or trained for the task, whose job is to extend the span of the commander. In effect they act as his eyes and ears, and sometimes his surrogate, in dealing with subordinate commands. The concept was developed in the Prussian army in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was known to the Confederates. Lee's personal staff at Gettysburg consisted of 12 officers. These included specialists such as the medical director, commissary officer, and quartermaster. Of the 12, six were available for tactical service such as scouting, preparing messages, guiding troops, etc. A troop of enlisted couriers was available for carrying written messages, but any communication requiring explanation or discussion was carried by one of the staff officers. Under a general staff concept, Lee would have been able to attach knowledgeable senior officers semi-permanently to each corps staff in order to represent his views. In this way, he could have extended his control beyond his personal reach.

Unfortunately, as Buell and Coddington agreed, Lee was of the old school and rather set in his ways. Drucker (1997) observed that "command authority ... rests on the ability to share, to communicate." Without effective communication, Lee was unable to effectively extend his command authority beyond his own personal, physical reach. When communication broke down he was unable to command, and therefore control, his subordinates.

#### Modern Lessons

Many of Lee's problems at Gettysburg could be faced by modern organizations, although the context is obviously different. Combat has the effect of compressing time and amplifying mistakes, so that lessons become more obvious in hindsight.

**All communication is ultimately people-to-people communication.** The first lesson is the realization, as reported by Hout & Carter, that organizations are not run by processes or plants but by managers. All the intranets, video conferences, and satellite networks available to modern corporations are worthless without a recognition of the human beings at the other end of the communication. Van Creveld (1985) writes, "These deficiencies, to repeat, included the overconfidence generated by victory; a mistaken doctrine; a faulty command organization; a lack of mutual trust among the commanders involved." He could have been writing about the Confederate army at Gettysburg. Instead, he was describing the Israeli army in the 1973 Yom Kippur war. It would seem that they had not learned from Lee's experience. He concludes: "Taken as a whole, present-day military forces, for all the imposing array of electronic gadgetry at their disposal, give no evidence whatsoever of being one whit more capable of

dealing with the information needed for the command process than were their predecessors a century or even a millennium ago." By observing Lee critically, those military leaders might realize that all the communication technologies in the world are useless if you cannot communicate on a person-to-person level in the organization.

**Communication must be adaptable.** On the other hand, the United States Army seems to have learned the second lesson of Lee at Gettysburg, at least in principle. In their Military Leadership Manual, they define the four major factors of leadership as the led, the leader, the situation, and the communication. It is clear in this manual that soldiers are expected to adapt their leadership and communication styles to both the situation and the people being led. They also emphasize, in an echoing of Longstreet's state of mind before Pickett's Charge, that leaders must consider the motivation and confidence of subordinates in accomplishing an assigned task when selecting a level of supervision. They state that the delegating style of leadership is only appropriate with mature subordinates who support the leader's goals and are competent and motivated to accomplish the task. In the Gettysburg example, Ewell and Hill could not be considered mature leaders at the corps level, and Longstreet was certainly not motivated to make his attacks, so by this standard Lee's chosen leadership style was not correct. Greiner (1998) and Farkas & Wetlaufer (1996) found that successful CEO monitor the evolving interpersonal dynamics of their organizations and constantly adjust their communication styles accordingly. The lesson of Gettysburg is that a communication style which does not adapt to changes in the leader, the led, and the situation will not be successful.

**In a crisis, communication and trust are your best hope.** Weick drew parallels between the peculiar form of combat represented by a forest-fire fighting team and modern corporate tiger teams formed to deal with crises. He speaks of the tendency of apparently robust organizations to collapse under pressure. He asserts that open, clear, and constant communication is the only savior of an organization in crisis, but that the communication can only be effective when there is trust. In general, Longstreet and Lee were communicating, but Longstreet began to mistrust Lee over the issue of defensive tactics. Greenfield (1998) uses the 1998 General Motors strike as an example of the breakdown of communication when trust has been lost.

**Avoiding problems creates bigger problems later.** In discussing the problems of chief executive officers who try to avoid conflict with subordinates or co-workers, Argyris points out that they are creating larger problems, as did Lee by not expressing his non-acceptance of Longstreet's tactical defense concept. There is also evidence that Lee was aware of Ewell's tendency toward indecision, but took no action to deal with the problem. Eventually, issue-avoidance can become institutionalized and result in a culture which does not value honesty. When that happens, effective communication dries up very quickly.

## Conclusions

The question of whether the outcome of the battle might have been different had Lee recognized the communication deficiencies in his top command group must be left to the historians and armchair generals, for there were many interrelated factors which are beyond the scope of this paper. Most of us, fortunately, are not going to be in a position where our interpretation of organizational communication concepts could mean life or death for 70,000 men. But effective communication is critical to our organizations' effectiveness.

The problem is, though, that communication problems do not always show themselves as such. Lee's communication problems have been described as indecisive subordinates, personal illness, over-aggressive subordinates, surly and self-promoting subordinates, overconfidence, and glory-seeking subordinates. Most of these blame the subordinate, but ensuring effective communication is primarily responsibility of the leader, not the led. As good a leader as Lee was, in this campaign he neglected his

top command communication and the result was 20,000 casualties in his army and a severe setback for his country. Modern businesses should learn from his example, and give real communication top priority.

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