

The Greatest Love of Mankind

General, you have the soul of a lion and the heart of a woman.

General Horatio G. Sickel

Describing Gen. J.L. Chamberlain

At the Quaker Road, Virginia, March 29, 1865

At the next full moon Red Hawk again appeared to Robbie.

“Hi, Robbie. Is there anything you would like to see or a place you would like to go to tonight?”

“General Chamberlain never really said exactly how he met Colonel Casey at Gettysburg. I’ve been curious about that, you know, since they were on opposite sides. Do you know anything about that? Can we go there?”

Red Hawk brought Robbie to the slope of Little Round Top on July 2, 1863 as the Twentieth Maine and the Fifteenth Alabama prepared to clash. Red Hawk paused and cautioned Robbie that at this point they were about to observe actual battle but assured him that they would remain untouched by the action. He asked if the boy felt strong enough to witness the engagement. Robbie indicated his readiness. Red Hawk began with a brief description of what they were about to see.

“Casey was tasked with leading the 15th Alabama on an assault on the Union left flank at this location known as Little Round Top. Success in this venture likely would have allowed the Confederates to get behind the Union lines and claim victory. Failure to gain the flank would likely result in defeat! The sector was defended by the 20th Maine Infantry, commanded by then-Colonel Chamberlain.

“After a long forced march, and with no water, Casey and his men made a daring and gallant charge—uphill—to take the flank. Both sides fought viciously and fearlessly. Despite the heroic efforts of his men, Chamberlain saw the Confederates continue their charge. With his men nearly out of ammunition, he ordered his troops to fix bayonets and charge the rebels. This was an unorthodox and bold move to say the least.

“At this point the battle could have gone to either side. In fact, many people believe the disposition of the whole war hung in the balance during those fateful minutes on the slope of Little Round Top. Casey was wounded during the fray, hit in the leg by a bullet. Despite his terrible bleeding he continued with his men in their charge.

“Are you sure you’re ready, Robbie?”

The boy nodded.

Despite his assent, Robbie was stunned to be thrown into the fray and was immediately overwhelmed by the action. The heat, smell, and ear-shattering noise nauseated him. He saw dead and bloodied bodies all about and heard the visceral cries of those in their last moments of life. But he stood tall, comforted by the confidence that Red Hawk had brought him there to observe, not to participate.

The scene began as the injured Casey led the charge up the slope. He finally stumbled and fell just short of Chamberlain. The Confederate colonel aimed his pistol at Chamberlain, who was brandishing only his officer's saber. Just as Casey triggered his piece, Chamberlain instinctively dove to the ground and rolled toward the crippled southerner. He came out of his roll with his sword swinging toward the helpless officer. Chamberlain arrested his rage-filled swing when he sensed that the man he was about to kill was seriously wounded. Chamberlain rested his saber just below Casey's chin then slowly withdrew and sheathed it. The Union colonel immediately removed his neckerchief and applied it to Casey's gushing wound. Chamberlain summoned his medics to treat the officer. The men obliged, dragging Casey out of the fray and laying him next to a tree where they could more carefully treat his wound.

Red Hawk continued his description: "After Chamberlain had summoned his medics to treat Casey, he immediately returned to the carnage, leading his men in a stand to hold Little Round Top.

"Then after a brief rest, the 20th Maine was ordered as a support unit at Great Round Top. Chamberlain had been wounded in the foot at Little Round Top but chose to delay treatment while his men were still in reserve. His men helped repel the famous Pickett's Charge, and the Union line held. Only after the rebels began their retreat did Chamberlain report to the field hospital to tend to his wounds. When he arrived he specifically asked to see the Confederate colonel."

Red Hawk then took Robbie to the field hospital where Casey had been drifting in and out of consciousness all afternoon because of the tremendous loss of blood. As Chamberlain approached, limping badly, Casey identified him as the officer who had not only spared his life, but had saved it. Casey was grateful for the opportunity to thank the Union officer. The Alabaman extended his right hand, still shaking badly from the effects of shock. Chamberlain accepted the hand and held it firmly to ease its trembling.

“Colonel Patrick John Casey 15th Alabama, sir. You are wounded. You must be treated,” Casey pleaded.

“Colonel Lawrence Chamberlain, 20th Maine. I’ll be fine,” the northerner replied calmly.

Not knowing if and how long he might live, Casey labored haltingly: “You, sir, spared then saved my life when you could easily and justifiably have ended it in the name of your cause. You have demonstrated the most remarkable display of honor and compassion man has ever witnessed.”

“There has been more than enough death in this conflict already, my good man. I am sure that you would have done the same. Please rest.”

Casey motioned to a medic to bring his pack. During every step of the campaign Casey had carried the bag and its precious contents with him, and it had provided him strength and wisdom. Casey’s mind drifted back to the scene when he had received the stick twenty-five years before. It seemed yesterday to him.

Casey handed the stick and bag to Chamberlain and continued his laborious comments, “For a man to spare the life of an enemy at great peril to himself is to have shown the greatest love of mankind. You, sir, are the epitome of nobility. This gift is in honor of your

magnanimity. I hope it will serve you as well as it has served me. Godspeed. Now, please tend to your wounds."

Chamberlain squeezed the colonel's hand one last time and, despite a tremendous desire to stay to comfort the Confederate, he obliged the request to seek treatment for his own wounds. He had already tempted fate in his delay. As Chamberlain was assisted to the Union tent, he prayed that the colonel would survive.

Robbie watched the exchange between the two colonels. For the first time in his life, ground combat had a face. At his young age, his schooling had provided only superficial details of battle, mostly names and dates. These were real people with real wounds and real feelings, Robbie thought. He was deeply moved by the heroic and noble actions of both officers.

Robbie woke with a new-found energy. He made some remarks in his journal before he headed out to school and elaborated on them later that night.

Name. Rank. Division.

Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead,

Dear as the blood ye gave,

No impious footstep here shall tread

The herbage of your grave.

Nor shall your glory be forgot

While fame her record keeps,

For honor points the hallowed spot

Where valor proudly sleeps.

From "The Bivouac of the Dead"

Theodore O'Hara, 1847

Lewis met Robbie and his family at the visitor's center at Gettysburg National Military Park at the appointed time of 8 a.m. on March 10th. The group sat briefly for doughnuts, coffee, and drinks before embarking upon the ambitious task of the day—to cover as much of the Battlefield and Cemetery as possible before heading to Johns Hopkins to watch the Blue Jays' season opener versus Princeton.

"Robbie couldn't wait to meet you here today, Jim," John Jones said as his welcome.

"I thought this would be a good place to visit. Robbie has probably gained some sense of the significance of this Battlefield, but I thought it might be useful for all of us to visit

here together. There's a lot to see. Mr. Turnbull met me and my parents here in 1962 before I entered the Naval Academy. He showed us the spot where he had met General Chamberlain in 1913. He also took me to the site of the makeshift field hospital. It has stayed in my mind ever since."

Lewis drove the family first to Little Round Top. He parked the car and allowed the family to mill around to take in the sight for a few minutes. Lewis drifted away down the slope.

"Well, this is where it happened," Lewis said as he stood on the steeply sloped hill. The family picked their way through the rocks to meet him.

"This is where Chamberlain and Casey met face-to-face. If Casey's shot had hit Chamberlain, there is a good chance none of us would be here."

The group stood quietly for several minutes, surveying the terrain and picturing in their own ways what must have happened here. Robbie could not believe the correspondence between his vision and the actual landscape.

Lewis then led them back up the hill and down a narrow walk—away from the main battle area and a number of impressive monuments—to the modest 20th Maine Monument.

“This is where Mr. Turnbull met Chamberlain,” Lewis offered, looking at Robbie for confirmation of the exact location. Robbie nodded. The family noticed the Maltese Cross emblazoned on the sides of the cubic granite marker. Robbie’s mind went back to the visit with Red Hawk—how they had watched Chamberlain sit there. Lewis then escorted the group back to the main area on Little Round Top, suggesting that the family peruse the grounds for themselves.

The sheer number of markers, statues, and historical plaques was enough to capture the attention of the guests for over an hour. Lewis smiled as he watched Robbie and Catherine struggle through the cracks and crevices of the rocky terrain while the parents contented themselves largely with the plaques and statues on the main walk.

John and Mary Jones read the marker honoring Colonel Strong Vincent’s famous order to Chamberlain, “Hold this ground at all

costs." Lewis gently whispered over their shoulders, "I think it is fair to say that any less an order may have caused Chamberlain to rethink his tactics. He really had no choice but to do what he did. Vincent died in the engagement."

Catherine and Robbie marveled at the life-size statues of the famous combatants. The group walked several hundred yards to the north and east. Again Lewis's eyes solicited Robbie's concurrence as he announced their arrival at the location of the field hospital. "This is where the actual exchange of the stick took place." The parents contemplated the circumstances occurring one-hundred-and-forty years before that had so dramatically affected their lives. A chill ran through them.

Lewis collected the group and drove them next to the wall made famous by imposing the ultimate failure of Pickett's Charge. Again the group was struck by the countless markers along the way and at the site. The larger-than-life bronze statue to General George Meade on horseback not far from the wall drew the family's attention. Virtually every regiment that fought had erected some tribute to their fallen comrades.

They walked to The Soldiers National Cemetery at Gettysburg. "Has Red Hawk brought you here yet, Robbie?" Lewis asked.

"No, sir."

"This might be the most compelling part of the whole park. This cemetery is located pretty near where the center of the Union line was positioned during the battle."

They walked to the large statue of Abraham Lincoln and read the words of the "Gettysburg Address" that he had presented as part of the dedication ceremony November 19, 1863. Next, they walked solemnly to the area where the Union soldiers were buried. Laid out in a semicircle around the centerpiece of the Cemetery—the magnificent Statue of Freedom—were 3512 gravestones, 979 of which were simply marked "unknown." The austerity of the markers struck Robbie and his family—small granite stones. Name. Rank. Division. There was no separation between officers and soldiers. Each state was arranged together. Mary Jones was particularly pained to see the markers for the unknown soldiers. She silently pined over the mothers, the wives, the children, the families who never achieved closure.

As the group walked through the cemetery, Lewis pointed out the New York Statue, looming high above their heads, commemorating the state that suffered the most severe losses. Lewis offered little commentary at this point and allowed the sights—and the assorted stanzas from the poem “The Bivouac of the Dead” spaced at equal intervals along the road—to speak for themselves.

Lewis then told Robbie and Catherine a story of his visit to this park with Doug Turnbull. “Mr. Turnbull shared with me that as beautiful, magnificent, compelling, and important as these monuments are, he was concerned that they might actually render a *disservice* to these heroic men.”

The children stared at Lewis with inquisitive looks.

“Mr. Turnbull believed that a statue could never replace an actual person. That to reduce such brilliant lives to cold, unfeeling, inert masses can lead one to forget the spirit, energy, and life of these men. The artists commissioned to craft these pieces have an obligation to convey—somehow—these very traits. And as brilliant as they are, he thought

they tell only a tiny fraction of the story. He told me that having his brother Jack back would have been worth more than a million statues.

“So as you look at each of these markers and monuments, try to remember that each of these men was a son, brother, husband, father. A real person with a smile, a wit, a spirit, a life all his own—gifts each shared with families, friends, communities, and comrades.

“Mr. Turnbull made a compelling case that it is up to those left behind to keep the memories of their fallen comrades alive. I have since lost many friends, colleagues, and shipmates. I have seen them remembered in a number of ways—tributes roughly similar to these at the United States Naval Academy, Arlington National Cemetery, as well as many other places. I have tried very hard, though, not to let the lives of my friends be reduced to marble or bronze. I have actively tried to keep their spirits alive in what I do, to keep them alive in my heart and mind, to share their goodness—what they have given me—with as many people as I can. I try to live the example these people have provided me. Each of these markers has inspired me to give a little more,

to be a little more patient, and to be a better person.”

The children began to understand Lewis’s point.

“Well, I guess that’s about it for now. 51,000 killed, wounded, or captured. Not much else to say.

“We need to be leaving soon if we want to get to Johns Hopkins on time. There’s a pre-game ceremony which I think you’ll like to see.”

Lewis made sure that his guests were seated and prepared for what was about to occur. Most of the other spectators were remarkably subdued a full fifteen minutes before game time. It was the first home game of the season for the Blue Jays, and the sophisticated followers of the program knew that reverence and quiet was in order.

“Ladies and gentlemen, at this time we ask that you please stand for the Annual Memorial Ceremony,” the public address announcer began. The 8,000 fans stood and directed their attention to the Hopkins team captains standing on the midfield line in front

of their team's bench. As each of the two players began walking solemnly toward opposite goals, the announcer continued, "For 82 years, at each home game of the Johns Hopkins University, there has hung at one goal a service flag with three gold stars. That flag, presented by the lacrosse team of 1919, commemorates the loss in World War I of three Hopkins lacrosse players. These men are:

W. Brown Baxley

Warren B. Hunting

And Theodore Prince.

"A second service flag bears eight gold stars which pay tribute to eight former Hopkins lacrosse players who lost their lives in the Second World War and in the Vietnam War.

"From World War II, they are:

Frank Cone

Walter J. Farenholz

David H. W. Houck

George D.

Penniman III

Edward A.

Marshall

Peter W. Reynolds

And John I.

Turnbull.

“And in the Vietnam War:

Charles E. Aronhalt.

“We pause today to rededicate the flag of World War I and the flag of World War II and the Vietnam War. These flags will always hang in the goals at each home game of the Johns Hopkins University lacrosse team.

“Please remain standing until these flags are attached to the goals.”

Lewis and the Joneses stood unfazed by the biting March wind, absorbed by the solemnity of the ceremony. The length and *depth* of the silence shook the first-time observers as all in attendance patiently observed the captains perform their time-honored duty. The captain nearest Lewis’s group paused as he arrived behind the goal, took an exaggerated breath, stared at his flag momentarily, and knelt next to the goal as if before an altar. Mary Jones’s knees buckled in sympathy with the player’s as he assumed his position. The captain carefully weaved the strings of the flag into the stringing of the net.

The only noises Robbie heard were the steady whistling of the wind and the sharp cracking of the American flag flying above the stadium. Then his ear picked up the muffled tone from the goal near him. Though not nearly as loud, the service flag had begun to sing the same song as the Stars and Stripes above. As Robbie stared at the service flag he was shaken by the thought that one of the stars represented the life of Jack Turnbull. He watched the stars gently undulate in response to the wind. The boy felt as though the wind—maybe it was Jack—was talking to him.

The captains made their way to the sideline and the warm welcome of their teammates and coaches. The visiting Princeton Tigers rendered their respect with soft applause for the captains.

“Thank you,” the public address announcer concluded.

As the teams gathered for final coaching instructions and team cheers, the crowd sat and began to buzz with excitement for the impending season-opening face-off. Lewis leaned closer to Robbie and whispered above the wind, “Robbie, I played against the last player they mentioned—Chuck Aronhalt. He

was Class of '64 here at Hopkins, so I played against him when he was a senior and I was a sophomore. I knew Chuck had died in Vietnam in 1967 so I called Hopkins a few weeks ago to get some information about this ceremony and Chuck. They sent me everything they had. I read all of the records on Chuck's actions in the battle in which he was killed, and let me just say that he took actions to protect his men at the expense of his own life. There is no greater service that anyone can provide for another or for his country. Chuck had already been awarded the Bronze Star for heroism in *another* engagement and then was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross—the second highest award for heroism behind the Congressional Medal of Honor—for the valiant actions that cost him his life. Chuck also played football here and was captain of the team as a senior. The football team has presented an award in Chuck's honor and memory since he passed away. I remember him hitting me pretty hard a few times when we played in Annapolis in 1964! We still beat them, though, 15-3, I think," Lewis concluded with a smile.

"O.K. should we watch the game? Remember when you asked me what it's like to play college lacrosse? Well, this is it right here.

These two teams are about as good as you'll see. You already know quite a bit about Hopkins, but Princeton is fantastic also. This should be a great game. Just watch how skilled these guys are and how hard they play. See what you can learn from them. It should be fun—and you should get some sense of how much I enjoyed it!"

True to Lewis's prediction, the game was a hard-fought battle with excellent play by both teams for the entire sixty minutes.