Guys,

I hope this blog finds you well. The business is going great. We are growing at an unprecedented rate and I am learning a lot. In this journey I have met some amazing people.

But even within a circle of amazing people there are those who are outstanding- and even within the innermost circles of excellence, there are folks who are extraordinary. One of those is my friend and mentor Billy "Wags" Wagasy. Even more extraordinary then his story is the man himself.

Wags

In late 2010 I was the Personnel Officer of the Special Operations Advisory Group (SOAG). Our job was to mentor and train the Afghan National Army (ANA) Commando Brigade, similar to the Army Ranger Regiment.

Their training and mentoring was overseen by Special Forces Groups (Green Berets) but because it was a Special Operations Command mission there were a few Navy SEALs thrown in. As a National Guard Major it was a cool way to spend a tour even if all I was doing was pushing paper. Wags was the Program Manager of the Afghan National Army (ANA) Commando Program.

When I first met Wags I couldn't get over how big he was. He must have stood well over six feet four in his socks, he was a mountain of a man with an infectious smile and a mop of unruly brown hair.

Over the next couple of weeks I would get to know his amazing story and how he came to be a Navy SEAL. First he had played football at the University of Notre Dame under legendary Coach Lou Holtz and even had a bit part in the movie, "Rudy."

As an outside Linebacker and Special Teams player he learned about adversity. Coach Holtz taught Wags an essential lesson in the quote, "Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it."

Wags told me that the last freedom you have is how you respond to your environment. Many times you can't control what is happening to you but you do have a vote in how you respond it. This message would play a central part in the life of Wags a few years later.

Far from being a dumb jock he graduated with an Accounting
Degree and a second Major in Philosophy in 1996 with honors. While finishing up his law degree at Pepperdine University the attacks of September 11th happened. After watching a TV Spot about Navy SEALs he decided he wanted to serve his country. Four days shy of taking the bar exam he joined the Navy.

BUD/S

Basic Underwater Demolitions/SEAL (BUD/S) is designed to create warriors. It is a brutal sorting out process that aims to find young men who would rather die than quit, then it seeks to instill in them a relentless desire to fight and win as a team. Once a prospective SEAL trainee reports to BUD/S training he is immediately immersed in the warrior culture of the SEAL Teams (Couch, 2004).

The method for doing this are brutal Physical Training (PT) sessions designed to get men to quit but also to teach the survivors how to overcome impossible odds. Harsh physical demands and grueling academic standards are the norm.

All of this is done to see if the young apprentice warriors have the desire to belong to an elite group- to become some of the finest warriors our nation has to offer. They have to not only have to demonstrate the highest degree of physical fitness but also intelligence.

The ability to think ahead and to clearly visualize one’s personal goals and their commitment to each other (Owen, 2012). The biggest lesson here is that an individual through hard needs to learns to submit his ego, desires and needs to that of the team, no matter where mission takes them.

“Chunking”

One day I was stressing out over getting some end of tour awards done- funny now looking back on it- and Wags told me how he had survived BUD/S. Showing up to the Navy SEAL training facility as a former offensive lineman, who was 30 years old- 10 years older than the average candidate- was tough for a man the size of a doorframe.

In BUD/S he learned to “chunk” each evolution into manageable goals. For instance, his aim could was to survive to lunchtime rather than whole 6 month training period. Once you do that, you pat yourself on the back, refocus, and set the next goal: Make it to dinner.

It didn’t matter if he couldn’t feel his arms as he hoisted logs over his and his teammates’ heads or if the cold surf soaked him to the core. It wasn’t going to last forever. There is a saying: “How do you eat an elephant?” The answer is simple: “One bite at a time.” Only his bites were separated by meals.

He came in last on almost all the runs, failed almost every physical evolution except the tested ones and then he only made it by a few seconds but in the end he had made it by breaking up each evolution to what he control in the present and not focusing on the future. It was the only way he could control his anxiety.
Relaying on what Coach Holtz had told him, "Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it." He vowed not to quit, no matter what happen. He never did despite some very tough days.

He told me that SEALs apply the principle of chunking to mission planning, learning to evaluate a goal by asking if its “specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely”—or SMART. This approach applies to any goal, whether it involves fitness, relationships, or work.

Later he refined this thought process by identifying four critical skills- goal setting, visualization, positive self-talk, and controlling stress by breathing- in which mastery is a strong indicator of success in combat and sports. Using this combination contributes to an improvement in performance. Using this method goal setting becomes second nature. You’re constantly seeking ways to improve every aspect of your performance including doing boring paperwork.

The Lessons

After completing SEAL training he deployed three times to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and once to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

In 2006 on his second tour in Iraq he was in Ramadi where he worked with famed Navy SEAL sniper Chris Kyle and was teammates with Marcus Luttrell. The Battle of Ramadi was the most sustained and vicious engagement fought by Navy SEALs since their inception in 1962.

The operational and intelligence-gathering capabilities of the SEAL Task Unit produced startling and unprecedented success on the battlefield and in this violent urban battle space (Couch, 2008). He applied his lesson and in combat and is now applying to another endeavor.

I have used Wags’ strategy in all aspects of my life including getting my Master’s Degree in only one year, overcoming depression and most recently to losing 20 pounds in less than one month. His message can be applied to all endeavors. He is now working with Marcus Luttrell, of “Lone Survivor” as a motivational speaker on something called the Patriot Tours.

Bibliography/Resources


Guys,

His story will take us up to 9/11. The intent is to offer leaders with information they may find useful.

The wisdom of Sun Tzu as expressed in the "Ping-fa" or "The Art of War" said it best. The revered old Chinese sage repeated advice was "know yourself" and "study your enemy." These blogs are an attempt for all of you to know a little more about the heritage of the National Guard during our nation's times of national emergency and the enemy we are fighting in Afghanistan.

From Last Time:

Soviet-Afghan War

Ahmad Shah Massoud was named "The Afghan who won the cold war" by the Wall Street Journal in 1989. He defeated the Soviet Red Army nine times in his native Panjshir Valley.

During the Afghan Civil War

After the war the mujahedeen warlords took over Afghanistan. In response to the warlords' terror the Taliban came to power and swept through the country. Soon the terror of the warlords was replaced by the tyranny of the Taliban repressive rule, inspired by the 10th Century version of Islam practiced by Osama Bin Laden and spread by Saudi Arabia during the Soviet-Afghan War.

The Taliban seized Kabul on September 27, 1996, and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Massoud and his troops retreated to the northeast of Afghanistan.

The Taliban comes to Kabul

At the gates of Kabul, the Taliban tried to negotiate with Massoud, but he refused to accept their terms and withdrew to his own northern mountains again, where he had fought and defied the Russians. So began the next civil war, between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance of Massoud, the Tajik, and Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek. It was November 1996.

Only Pakistan, who had organized it, and Saudi Arabia, who paid for it, recognized the new, strange government of Afghanistan. Far to the south, an airplane landed. It brought back a tall Saudi who had fought in the caves east of Kabul in the legendary Tora Bora (Forsyth 2007).

The rich Saudi paid immediate obeisance to Mullah Omar, paying huge tribute in money and equipment, and thus securing his lifelong loyalty. It was through this tribute that he was allowed to open
terrorist camps. These same camps would train the hijackers of planes over America on the morning of 9/11 (Tanner 2002).

Almost the first act of the Taliban in Kabul was to drag the toppled ex-president Najibullah from his United Nations house arrest, torture, mutilate and execute him, hanging his corpse from a lamppost. That set the tenor of the rule to come.

The tactically brilliant Massoud had counterattacked and again caused huge losses to the less competent Taliban. Throughout Afghanistan there had been massacres carried out by the unforgiving and fanatical Taliban (Moore and Lennon 2007).

At Mazar-e-Sharif, where first the native Hazara had risen in revolt and killed six hundred Taliban. This was after the brutal beating of a Hazara shop keeper for cutting his beard, an offense in Wahabbist Islam. The avenging Taliban had gone back and butchered over two thousand civilians (Tanner 2002).

Massoud fought to unite his homeland once and for all, and over the next five years his alliance had been beaten back to two small and obscure enclaves. It was truly a battle of epic proportions of a modern-day David-Massoud against an unforgiving brute Goliath-the fanatical masses of the Taliban.

With less than 5,000 fighters at any one time and 10 tubes of artillery and five aging helicopters, Massoud had held off the Taliban’s fanatical army of more than 50,000 volunteers for five years. Odds of 10 to 1 with ten tactical victories in that time but with not enough soldiers to hold the land he won in battle after battle, he was slowly beaten back (Tanner 2002).

In the end the holdout areas were a group of Hazara resisters, bottled up in the mountains of Dara-i-Suf, and the other was Massoud himself, in the impregnable Panjshir Valley and the northeastern corner called Badakhshan. With little outside help he held off the tide of the Taliban took over the remaining parts of Afghanistan.

By 1998, Massoud remained the only main leader of the North Alliance in Afghanistan and the only leader who was able to defend vast parts of his area against the Taliban. Most major leaders including the Islamic State’s President Burhanuddin Rabbani, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and others were living in exile.

The Taliban repeatedly offered Massoud a position of power to make him stop his resistance but he always declined. In contrast to the time of chaos in which all structures had collapsed in Kabul and throughout Afghanistan, Massoud was able to control his troops very well during the period starting in late 1996. Human Rights Watch notes no human rights crimes for Massoud’s troops in the areas he controlled in the period from October 1996 until his assassination in September 2001.

He bravely continued to lead his guerilla warriors into battle until he was killed in a suicide attack by Al Qaeda operatives posing as foreign journalists. He died on September 9th, 2001 – just two days before the attack on the World Trade Center (Forsyth 2007).
The man whose charisma had held together the cause of the useless Rabbani, whose cleverness as a guerrilla fighter had caused the Soviets to revere him and whose generalship had carved Taliban forces to pieces, was no more. Massoud wrote a battle plan to destroy the Taliban and waited for the United States to join him. His battle plan survived to defeat Mullah Omar and reunite the nation under Karzai.

Massoud’s Legacy

Massoud’s personal mysticism led him to fight without hatred, bitterness, or spirit of revenge, regarding armed conflict only as an imposed and necessary evil in order to defend his people’s freedom, certainly not as an end in itself to be enjoyed as bloodlust or intoxication with power.

He always provided protection for humanitarian relief in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances, looked for reconciliation with defeated enemies, and invariably treated his war prisoners with humanity and dignity as the Koran dictates that true Muslims do.

Such moral integrity, I believe, in the midst of warfare ranks Massoud as one of the very few “Philosopher Kings” in history, that is, men who have been forced to wage war so as to protect their nation and people, but who detested war in itself and sought no personal political gain in doing their duty to their utmost.

Bibliography:


The Picture

The picture is the Lion wearing a Pokol- an Afghan beret- tilted back on his head with a too large camo jacket and khaki trousers stuffed into worn and tattered Russian combat boots. He is leaning forward, one eyebrow cocked, his face furrowed in concentration, as though he was respectfully listening to someone. His mahogany and serious face lighted with a rare smile at the simple, rare, and forbidden pleasure of being able to take a rest during his long years of war.

Guys,

This one is a long one because the story is so involved. But to understand the present situation in Afghanistan we must look at the recent history of this turbulent country. To do that we will look at the life of Ahmad Shah Massoud.

From Last time:

Ahmad Shah Massoud was named “The Afghan who won the cold war” by the Wall Street Journal in 1989. He defeated the Soviet Red Army nine times in his native Panjshir Valley. The Soviet Union’s defeat was not only a defeat in Afghanistan, but led to the collapse of the Soviet system and was followed by the liberation of the Central Asian and Eastern European countries from Moscow’s control.

The Afghan Civil War

On the morning of 15 February 1989, General Boris Gromov, commander of the Soviet 40th Army, the army of occupation in Afghanistan, walked alone back across the Friendship Bridge over the Amu Darya River back into Soviet Uzbekistan. His entire army had preceded him. As quietly as it started the Soviet-Afghan war was over (Tanner 2002).

In Afghanistan, the Soviets had left a government that most analysts predicted would last no time as the victorious warlords formed a stable government and took over. But the pundits were wrong. The
government of President Najibullah, the whiskey-appreciating
Afghan the Soviets had abandoned in Kabul, hung on for two reasons
(Forsyth 2007).

One was that the Afghan Army was simply stronger than any other
force in the country, backed as it was by the KHAD secret police, and
was able to control the cities and thus the bulk of the population.

More to the point, the Mujahedeen warlords simply disintegrated
into a patchwork quilt of snarling, grabbing, feuding, self-serving
opportunists who, far from uniting to form a stable government, did
the reverse: They created a civil war.

Pakistan backed Hekmatyar to become controller of all Afghanistan,
and in areas he ruled utter terror existed. All who had formed the
Peshawar Seven to fight the Soviets were now at each other’s
threats, and the people groaned. From heroes, the mujahedeen were
now seen as tyrants (Moore and Lennon 2007).

With the end of the war, the Arabs had almost all left the mountains
and their precious caves. The one who by the end had become their
uncrowned leader, a tall Saudi with deep pockets, was also gone,
starting another organization that would later be known to the
world as Al Qaeda (Forsyth 2007). Some 500 Arab veterans stayed
behind, but they were not popular, were scattered far and wide and
living like beggars.

President Najibullah fell after three more years of bitter war but he
was alive, confined to a United Nations guesthouse in Kabul. He had
supposedly been succeeded by Professor Rabbani. As a Tajik he was
not acceptable to the Pashtun, the largest ethnic majority in
Afghanistan. Outside Kabul, only the warlords ruled their domains,
but the real master was chaos and anarchy (Forsyth 2007).

But something else was also happening. After the Soviet war,
thousands of young Afghans returned to the Pakistani madrassahs
(Islamic schools) to complete their educations. Others, too young to
have fought at all, went over the border to get an education—any
education. What they got was years of Wahhabi Islamic
Fundamentalist brainwashing. Now they began to return.

The returnees were ill educated, having been taught by barely
literate Imams. They knew nothing of life, of women—most lived and
died virgins—or even of their own tribal cultures, that had been
destroyed by the war. Apart from the Koran, they knew only one
other thing: war. Most came from the deep south, where Islam had
always been the most strict in all of Afghanistan (Tanner 2002).

Then something happened in the deep south. Since the fall of any
semblance of a central government, the old official Afghan Army had
simply reassigned itself to the local warlord who paid the best.
Outside Kandahar, some soldiers took two teenage girls back to
their camp and gang-raped them.

The local preacher in the village where they came from, who also ran
his own religious school, went to the Army camp with thirty
students and sixteen rifles. Against the odds, they trounced the
soldiers, and hanged the commandant from the barrel of a tank gun.
The priest was called Mohammad Omar, or Mullah Omar. He had lost his right eye in battle with the Soviets (Tanner 2002).

The news spread. Others appealed to him for help. He and his group swelled in numbers, and responded to the appeals. They took no money, they raped no women, they stole no crops, and they asked no reward. They became local heroes.

By December 1994, 12,000 had joined them, adopting this mullah’s black turban. They called themselves the students. In Pashtu, “student” is talib, and the plural is “taliban.” From village vigilantes, they became a movement, and when they captured the city of Kandahar, an alternative government and they began to swing north and in less than 18 months they were outside of Kabul (Naylor 2005). In 1995, the Taliban took power in several provinces in southern and central Afghanistan.

The Northern Alliance

After the collapse of the communist Soviet-backed government of Najibullah in 1992, Massoud became the Minister of Defense under the government of Rabbani. In late 1994, most of the militia factions (Hezb-i Islami, Junbish-i Milli and Hezb-i Wahdat) which had been fighting in the battle for control of Kabul were defeated militarily by forces of the Islamic State’s new Minister of Defense Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Bombardment of the capital came to a halt. A conference in three parts was arranged by Massoud. He united political and cultural personalities, governors, commanders, clergy and representatives, in order to reach a lasting agreement.

Massoud, like most people in Afghanistan, saw this conference as a small hope for democracy and for free elections. Massoud was now trying to put a consolidation process into action to unite Afghanistan. He also invited the Taliban to join the process wanting them to be a partner in providing stability to Afghanistan. The Taliban refused.

The Taliban

The Taliban army was no real army; it had no commanding general, no general staff, no officer corps, no ranks and no infrastructure. Each “lashkar” or fighting party was semi-independent under its tribal leader, who often held sway through personality and courage in combat, plus religious devotion (Forsyth 2007).

Like the original Muslim warriors of the first caliphates, they swept their enemies aside by fanatical courage, which gave rise to a reputation for invincibility-so much so that opponents often capitulated without a shot fired.

When they finally ran into real soldiers, like the forces of the charismatic Ahmad Shah Massoud, they took unspeakable losses. They had no medical corps, so their wounded just died by the roadside. But still, they came on.

At the gates of Kabul, they negotiated with Massoud, but he refused
to accept their terms and withdrew to his own northern mountains again, whence he had fought and defied the Russians. So began the next second civil war, between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance of Massoud, the Tajik, and Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek.

On September 26, 1996, as the Taliban with military support by Pakistan and financial support by Saudi Arabia prepared for another major offensive, Massoud ordered a full retreat from Kabul. The Taliban seized Kabul on September 27, 1996, and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Massoud and his troops retreated to the northeast of Afghanistan.

Once the Taliban took Kabul only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates recognized the government as legitimate, but it was generally accepted thought that the rest of the world that the Taliban would eventually takeover the rest of the country. The only thing that stood in their way was the last ditch defenses was Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Bibliography/ Sources


Guys,

I have been busy the last couple of days. I will try and make it up for it here. I was asked by a friend to turn out some stuff about Afghanistan. I was assigned as an Advisor and Mentor to the Afghan National Army (ANA) three times in the space of four years. In 2008 I was worked with the ANA’s Counter Narcotics Infantry Kandak (Dari for Battalion) – CNIK- as part of a National Guard Embedded Training Team in Helmand Province. From September 2010 to April 2012 I served with ANA Commando Brigade as a Staff Advisor to both the Personnel and Operations Officer in Kabul. I even went so far as to try and learn Dari (a dialect of Farsi/Persian), one of the two primary languages of Afghanistan, so I could speak directly with the Afghan Officers I was working without a translator - it was never really that good, LOL!

This experience gave me a unique insight into Afghan Culture. I am far from being an expert but based on my experience with the ANA and historical research I thought I might be able to offer some insight to the country and its rich history.

I did my best to capture the history of Ahmad Shah Massoud because his story is the story of Afghanistan and the last five years of his life would affect all of us after 9/11. Widely seen as a guerrilla genius – his country’s Che Guevara, with charisma and beard to match – Massoud successfully played David to the Soviets’ Goliath in the 1980s and the Taliban in the 1990s.

A lot of people who knew him felt that he was the best hope for that part of the world. Afghanistan’s government has been accused of being corrupt and weak. Massoud had a reputation for quiet integrity and strength. He would have been very hard for the insurgents to intimidate because he had spent his whole adult life standing up to and defeating tyrants.

Ahmad Shah Massoud

Ahmad Shah Massoud was easily the greatest battlefield commander seen in the Afghan-Soviet War and the Afghan civil war that followed, both in reputation and command skills. Massoud was a Kabul University engineering student turned military leader who played a leading role in driving the Soviet army out of Afghanistan, earning him the name “Lion of Panjshir.”

“Lion of Panjshir,” is a rhyme and play on words in Persian, which alludes to the strength of his resistance against the Soviet Union, the mythological exaltation of the lion in Persian literature, and finally, the place name of the Panjshir Valley, where Massoud was born. The place name of “Panjshir” Valley in Persian means (Valley of the) Five Lions. Thus, the phrase “Lion of Panjshir”, which in Persian is “Shir-e Panjshir,” is a rhyming play on words, with the connotation “Lion of the Five Lions.” It makes sense in Dari.

Massoud joined the Islamic movement as a young student at Kabul University.

During the Soviet war he created the strongest and most
independent rebel force in Afghanistan with the least international help. He was widely read in guerilla war, politics, and the world in general, and while an Islamic fighter, he was more moderate than Hekmatyar, Sayyaf, and Ismail Khan. A Sunni Muslim who reportedly always carried a book of Sufi mystic Ghazali (a Persian theologian from the 11th century) with him, he strongly rejected the interpretations of Islam followed by the Taliban, Al Qaeda or the Saudi establishment.

Following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan the Wall Street Journal named Massoud "the Afghan who won the Cold War." He was killed two days before 9/11. Presently, Massoud is worshipped as a martyr and a patriotic saint in Afghanistan. But what made him such an effective commander?

The Soviet-Afghan War

In December 1979 an entire Soviet Army rolled across the Amu Darya River from Soviet Uzbekistan roared through the Salang Pass and had took Kabul in less than two days. Afghanistan would become the last setting of the Cold War and the actions here would have a far reaching impact on the future of America.

But for the free-spirited people of Afghanistan it was about something bigger. Another foreign invader had come to their homeland and was trying to impose their will on the will of the Afghan people (Tanner 2002). It was from their fathers who had taught them the rules of the code by which an Afghan must live. Honor, hospitality, the necessity of vendetta to avenge insult—these were the rules of the code (Maurer and Bradley 2011). And Moscow had insulted them.

It was in the mountains that the resistance began, and they called themselves "Warriors of God," or Mujaheddin. But first the mountain men of Afghanistan needed a conference, a "Shura," to decide what to do and who would lead them. They knew nothing of the Cold War, but they were told they now had powerful friends, the enemies of the USSR. That made perfect sense. He who is the enemy of my enemy and all that (Forsyth 2007).

First among these were Pakistan, lying right next door, and ruled by a fundamentalist dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq (Moore and Lennon 2007). Despite the religious difference, he was allied with the Christian power called America, and her friends, the English, the onetime enemy of the Afghan people.

Before the invasion was half a year old, it was clear that the Afghans would still not do one thing that had always been impossible for them: unite (Tanner 2002). After weeks of arguing in Peshawar and Islamabad, with the Pakistani Army insisting it would not distribute American funds and weapons to any but the resisters accredited to them. After a time the number of rival resistance groups was reduced to seven. Each had a political leader and a war commander. These were the Peshawar Seven. Only one was not Pashtun: Professor Rabbani, as well as his charismatic war leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud, both Tajiks from the far north (Forsyth 2007).

Massoud the Fighter
By 1980, after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to prop up the teetering Communist government, Massoud had already collected a small band of resistance fighters in his native Panjshir Valley.

As a guerrilla base the Panjshir couldn’t have been better. The valley is long and has many smaller side valleys feeding into it, and is a natural fortress with 80,000 inhabitants. Protected by the mountain ranges of the Hindu Kush and blocked at the entrance by a narrow gorge named Dalan Sang, the seventy mile long valley was the perfect staging area for raids against a highway that supplied the Soviet bases around Kabul, Afghanistan’s capital. Massoud’s strategy was to dominate the mountain road that brought fuel and grain to Kabul from the Soviet Union (Maurer and Bradley 2011).

Massoud quickly realized that the only way to fight back when you’re as badly outnumbered as he was is to wage an insane guerilla war, choosing your battles carefully, striking quickly and fading back into the shadows like Che Guevara, Mao Zedong and the Rebel Alliance at the Battle of Yavin IV.

Between 1979 and their withdrawal ten years later, the Soviets launched nine major offensives into the Panjshir Valley (R. D. Kaplan 2005). They never took it. They tried assassinating Massoud, but his intelligence network always warned him in time. They made local peace deals, but he used the respites to organize resistance elsewhere in the country. The ultimate Soviet humiliation came in the mid-eighties, after the Red Army had lost hundreds of Soldiers trying to take the Panjshir.

A brilliant strategist and an uncompromising fighter, Massoud had become the bane of the Soviet Army’s existence and his subsequent victories would largely be responsible for finally driving them out of the country. He was fiercely independent, accepting little, if any, direction from Pakistan, which controlled the flow of American arms to the mujahidin. His independence made it impossible for the CIA to trust him, but agency officials grudgingly admitted that he was an almost mythological figure among many Afghans. It would be in the Afghan Civil War he would really shine.

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Guys,

Scott Brundidge is one of the best men I know. A quiet Christian of uncompromising integrity and kindness. He has been a brother to me.

Each time I left for Afghanistan, or came home, he gave a party at his house. He wrote me daily when I was overseas (the idea behind these emails). The best gift he ever gave me was a simple book called “Mere Christianity” by C.S. Lewis.

It was an insightful book but the story of the man is even better.

Intro

Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis career was defined by scholarly pursuits. He was a renowned scholar of medieval literature and Christian Apologetics - a field of Christian theology which attempts to present a rational basis for the Christian faith, defending the faith against objections.

His works brought magic into the world of adults and kids through imagination and adventure through his series “The Chronicles of Narnia.” He was called Jack by his friends.

Early Life

Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland in Northern Ireland on November 20, 1898. His family was upper middle class. He was surrounded by book of literature, myths and adventure. This feed his great imagination.

At 9 years old, he lost his beloved mother to abdominal cancer. This
caused him great sadness and grief. It was the great tragedy of his childhood.

The loss of mother caused him to become an atheist. It was hard for him to reconcile his beliefs in a loving God that would take his mother.

He attended Oxford for a time before World War I.

**The Great War**

Lewis was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant of Infantry. On his 19th birthday he arrived at the front in France. He was wounded in action less than a year later and returned to Oxford.

While in the trenches he asked himself important questions, “What happens to a man in combat when his best friend is killed? What is the need for the death of the men under his command?” The war had a profound impact on Lewis.

He lost his best friend in the war, Irishman Paddy Malone.

They made a pact. If either of them died, they would take care of the other’s family. Lewis took in Paddy’s mother and sister when he returned home.

*Lewis in World War I*

**Academic Life**

In 1929 he purchased a home in Headington Quarry only three miles from the Oxford Campus. He called the two story house “The Kilns.”

*The Kilns*

Most of his time was spent on the grounds of Oxford University. Here he lectured, taught and wrote for nearly 30 years. Literature was the primary source of his imagination. He loved the life of the mind.
There are more than 30 colleges that make up Oxford University. Throughout his tenure, he taught at Magdalen College. He was a professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature.

He kept rooms at Magdalen where he tutored students. He spent many late nights in philosophical discussions with friends such as J.R.R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, Neville Coghill and Hugo Dyson.

Tolkien would often go to Magdalen to dine with Lewis. Lewis in turn would go to Pembroke College to dine with Tolkien. This friendship would be the start of both the men’s work.

Almost 80 years after the publication of “The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe” and Tolkien’s “Lord of the Rings” theirs is one of the great serendipitous friendship of literature.

Myths and Conversion

Along with Tolkien, Lewis started the Inklings. They would meet at The Eagle and The Child Pub or in Lewis’ Magdalen rooms. All the members supported each other socially and contributed to each other’s work critically.

Some members helped to transform Lewis from being an atheist to a theist to a Christian. From the age of 10 to about 33 years old Lewis thought that Christianity was a popular myth- a beautiful lie.

He was a reluctant Christian, but felt called to God. In 1931 he asked Tolkien and Hugo Dyson to dine with him. They talked about myths. Myth is not fact. This is how he saw Christianity.

Tolkien, a devout Catholic, said "Jack don't you understand that these older myths were glimpses that people had received of what was going to happen."

They debated until 4am in the morning. In the end, Lewis believed in God.

Dyson and Tolkien showed Lewis that one at some point myth becomes fact. Lewis began to understand that myth is not a false belief.

Throughout history there are mythic storylines. Each of them reflects a truth. Ancient myths of all cultures represent the human imaginations’ attempt to express their understanding of the relationship between human beings and divine power.

All common myths come out of a similar origin, but what happens, in Lewis’ view, with Christianity is different. He saw Christianity as the one true myth.

Lewis believed that Christianity held onto everything that is true and became an historical fact. All myths talk about a “dying God” but this actually happened in Christianity.

For Lewis this was an absolute truth. Lewis believed you could date the life of Jesus and in the end prove the myth of Christianity to be true.
His transformation from atheist to Christian was the most significant event of his life.

_Tolkien and Lewis_

_C.S. Lewis’ Great Works_

Already a scholar of medieval literature, after his conversion to Christianity, he began his career as a Christian writer and novelist. Some of his books are, "The Screwtape Letters", "That Hideous Strength", "Till We Have Faces", "The Great Divorce" and, of course, the trilogy-"The Chronicles of Narnia."

Throughout the 1940’s and 50’s he was a household name in the US and Great Britain.

He is best remembered for what is simply called, “The Chronicles.” Some people the story parallels the story of Christ as seen by Lewis.

In all of his work he wrote about right and wrong. Both Christian and non-Christians were cheered by his message of hope and faith.

He saw life in epic proportions. The ultimate struggle of light versus and darkness.

He wrote about a personal and loving God who created an enchanted world all around us. He saw the world as full of mystery and hope if we look for it. All decisions have consequences.

He insisted throughout his lifetime that the Narnia Chronicles were not an allegory. Aslan is a Christian figure, but not exactly like Christ.

The books are a landscape of the soul where we can make choices that affect our spirit. In essence, it is the power of free will.

His writings appeal to all Christian faiths. There is a reinforcement of the ideal of Christianity- the hope and love in believing in Jesus Christ.

_Influence of his work_

At the height of World War II, he would talk to the public of England. His talks started during the Battle of Britain- a relentless bombing campaign carried out by Nazi Germany during the summer and autumn of 1940. They lasted throughout the war only adding to his fame.

These talks were put into his most famous book- “Mere Christianity.”
Writing Style

Like many of his writings the concept was simple, inclusive and unifying. During World War II the reigning mindset was naturalism or materialism. Lewis takes all this on in a logical fashion and explains why the world is the way it is. He offers an alternative in basic Christianity. He gets to the essence of what Jesus is really all about.

Lewis states that there is a common theology and doctrinal tradition that runs through all Christian traditions. He does it all with humor and simplicity.

In "The Screwtape Letters" he engages people and activates their imaginations - a trademark of his writing style.

His narrative tool is a series of letters from a senior demon to his nephew a junior demon. His message is about the battle of good versus evil. The struggle for the soul of man.

He was a prolific writer. He gained inspiration through mental images. He looked for visual cues on what to write.

He believed, "... he was given things to say." He stated he was the writer but that God was the author.

Academic and Writing Career

Despite his literary success he was repeatedly denied a tenured professorship at Oxford. Cambridge offered him his dream job - the Head Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature. From 1955 to 1963 he split his time from Cambridge and his home life at "The Kilns."

By now he was a world famous author. He was besieged by correspondence from all over the world. With the help of his brother, he responded personally to almost every letter he ever got.

Throughout the world, there are personal letters from Lewis to his fans. He would average a 100 letters a week for almost 20 years.

Love and Marriage
Through answering letters an encounter changed his life. It crystallized his emotions and spiritual core.

An American Jewish woman named Joy Davidman Gresham living in New York begins reading his books and they change her life. Her life is harsh. She has a failing marriage, an alcoholic husband, two sons and a yearning for something far more. His books offer her hope. In 1950 she begins to write to Lewis.

He loves her letters and over the next two years they correspond regularly. Joy’s letters were powerful and they moved Lewis.

In 1952 they met in a café in London. For Joy meeting Lewis was the culmination of self-discovery. The meeting leads to friendship, love and finally marriage.

Their relationship was an intellectual tennis match. They constantly talked back and forth. Lewis had met his soulmate.

Joy and Jack

The relationship changed Lewis. He opened his heart and felt more deeply than other time in his life.

Within months of the marriage, Joy was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Joy and Lewis prayed for a miracle. After a few months the cancer went into remission baffling doctors.

They spent a few more happy years together. In 1960 the cancer returned and she died.

Lewis wrote about her death to God in one of the most profound essays ever written about death in “A Grief Observed.”

In The End

His health soon declined after Joy’s death. He died the same hour President Kennedy was assassinated on November 23, 1963.

He is buried at Holy Trinity Church, Headington Quarry is located in Oxfordshire in the church’s small graveyard.

His legacy is his over 30 books on children’s books, literature, scholarly works, adult fantasy, science fiction, and Christian Apologetic essays. He is considered by many scholars to be the greatest Christian writer in the English Language.

One critic said that Lewis saw the universe almost as surely as God
Guys,

I wanted to explain how I used the Military Decision Making Process for my Business Plan. But first we need to talk a little about military strategy, how it helps us plan and what lessons we can learn from it.

This is both a recent history lesson and a primary for understanding strategy. From here on out I will provide a bibliography for all the emails.

**Using a military strategy for a business plan**

Strategy is a grand sounding word. It is frequently misused by the layman as a synonym for tactics. In fact, strategy has a very different and quite simple meaning that flows from one short set of questions:

1. Who are we?
2. What are we ultimately trying to do?
3. How will we do it?
4. What resources and means will we employ in doing it?

The four answers give rise to a strategy. Ideally, the practitioners tactics will follow from them:

1. Who we are?
2. What is the outcome we wish to achieve?
3. How we aim to do it?

Like strategy itself, addressing these simple questions can be
surprisingly difficult. If the answers are incorrect or incomplete the goals list are not reachable. The consequences can be disastrous.

Using a football metaphor to explain the difference between strategy and tactics. Strategy is how you will win the game (long-term). Tactics (short-term) are how you win using individual plays and stacking up points in the quarters.

Many military leaders are great tacticians (short-term goal) but have trouble thinking long-term (strategically). Thinking about the classic Clausewitzian question should always be asked. What is the nature of the outcome you want from your plan?

The Strategy of the 2003 Invasion of Iraq

Look at the war in Iraq. The US invasion was built around the US technological and mechanical advantages. Terms like “shock and awe” or “speed kills” were fine driving into Iraq. Administering the country is another matter.

They are tough sounding maxims that slice through bureaucratic nonsense.

But you soon you start to hit some hard realities:

1. Speed doesn’t kill the enemy- It bypasses him.
2. Shock and Awe- Will eventually wear off and the enemy will regroup and attack.

All of these terms sound great and are direct descendants of the German Blitzkrieg strategy of World War II. Tactics like this win the short-term campaign (the quarters) but it doesn’t win the war (victory in the Super Bowl).

The Plan

The American War Machine is at its absolute finest in maneuver warfare (Ricks, 2006). In recent history, we can see it in the American invasion of Iraq.

The US war plan was built on capturing Baghdad. It initially didn’t have a long-term strategy after removing Iraq’s regime. Where the invasion fell apart was the far more difficult task of changing the direction of the entire country.

Colin Powell, President George W. Bush’s Secretary of State, had been the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during Desert Storm. His advice to President Bush before the US invasion was about the rule of Pottery Barn: “You break it, you own it,” (Ricks, 2006).

Powell was the saying, that whatever wreckage the military invasion caused the US would be responsible.

The same is true is business. You must have a long-term plan (strategy) that is not built on a series of operational assumptions. In business and in war, strategy is the searchlight that illuminates the way ahead.
Without it a military or a business can fight hard, but will be blinded.

Noble sacrifice of soldiers and time (your most precious resource next to loyal, competent people) will be lost without thoughtful leadership.

**Recovering from Vietnam - Learning from Past Mistakes**

To see how we got to today we need to look at the past. In the early 1970’s, after Vietnam, the new US Army was born after the ashes of defeat.

The fix was a doctrinal (a written set of beliefs) that allowed the army to change the way it thought about fighting.

A new warfighting strategy was devised centered on "the Big 5"- five cutting edge vehicles - the Apache attack helicopter, the Blackhawk utility helicopter, the M1 tank, the Bradley infantry vehicle and the Patriot missile defense system.

**Making Change**

In order to change the army applied one of the most important techniques of success coach Tony Robbins - Learn and model on the success of others.

By looking at finding real-world exempts of people or things with the results you want. Robbins teaches "success leaves clues." You can "model" excellence to work more effectively.

The Army theorized its next war would be in the desert against a Soviet armor threats.

It revamped the National Training Center (NTC). A huge training area set out in the high Mojave Desert near the California-Nevada border. It offered plenty of space and a close facsimile of where we would possibly fight our next war.

Next the army looked for a model. The answer came as a surprise. It began on the Golan Heights in northern Israel in 1973.

As army leaders were trying to figure out what to do the next after Vietnam the next Arab-Israeli war - called the Ramadan War or the Yom Kippur War - was happening.

**Yom Kippur 1973**

The Israelis were caught by surprise from Syria and Egypt. The Israelis rallied and launched a counteroffensive. The results were staggering.

The Israelis lost only 250 tanks and 772 troops. The enemy lost 1,150 tanks and 3,500 enemy soldiers were killed.

This was the first battle fought with NATO weapons against WARSAW (Russian) tactics and machines. The battle was almost completed one-sided with the victory of the Israelis. The US Army had found its model.
General Donn A. Starry was the first American observer sent to Israel to learn about the results of October 1973 Yom Kippur war. His observations from the battlefield inspired sweeping changes in US Army operational doctrine.

The results were written up in Field Manual 100-5: Operations- the army’s primary warfighting bible.

A Vision for Change

The leader for this change was General William DePuy. A veteran of World War II and Vietnam, he was the first commander of the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) from 1973 to 1977.

His vision drove a post-Vietnam institutional change across the army. He focused on three things: 1. Training 2. Doctrine 3. Leader training.

He and his staff instituted the Army Training and Evaluation Program to check on unit training readiness. He oversaw the creation of the NTC at Fort Irwin, CA as the vehicle for evaluating this change in the vision for the army.

He reinvigorated the discussion of army doctrine. He rewrote Field Manual 100-5: Operations- army’s doctrine was evolving.

He added his perceptions of the changes in warfare exhibited during the Yom Kippur War. It was controversial, but it did accomplish his intent to stimulate thinking throughout the army.

AirLand Battle Doctrine

General Starry, was the next commander of TRADOC, in 1977, he launched another revision. It focused more on agility, initiative, and winning campaigns instead of just battles.

The resulting operational-level AirLand Battle doctrine proved itself in future American conflicts in Panama in 1989 and Kuwait in 1991.

After Generals DePuy and Starry came another visionary- General Carl Vuono.

A difficult task lay ahead from an army broken by Vietnam. The reshaping or restructuring of the force for the post-Cold War era was his primary focus of the Chief-of-Staff of the army from 1987 until Desert Storm in 1991.

It was his ideas and influence that brought AirLand Battle Doctrine into being.

To do this the Army south the best planners in the Army’s Fort Leavenworth’s School for Advanced Military Studies. This led to a new sense of jointness that resulted in the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act.

Along with Desert Storm in 1991, he helped to shape an army that maintained worldwide readiness and managed a restricting of the
active and reserve forces.

Although smaller, the Army retained its fighting edge and prepared to meet future challenges.

The Result- Applying the Lessons Learned

The Army had taken a hard look at itself and knew it could do better.

In the Yom Kippur War, Israeli tanks engaged the enemy at 2,000 yards. This was much further than the 750 yards of most tank battles of World War II.

The army needed to look at the lethality of its weaponry to fight not on the front line. It needed to look at fighting all echelons at once and in-depth. This gave birth to the ideas of the M1 Tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

The army started looking at the long-view of war. Looking beyond tactics to the entire area of which fighting is occurring.

Operational Level of War

Between tactics and strategy, there is an intermediate level of warfighting. The Germans recognized this as the operational level of large units. In short, where strategy is applied to actual warfighting.

The operational level of war is defined by gains after the enemy's center of gravity.

The army changed the way it looked at Vietnam. It said at the operational level of the war- it had failed to allow its tactical success to lead to an overall strategic victory.

The army had done a harsh self-assessment and looked at all of its problems, warts and all.

The vehicle the army used for this change was equally critical. The army improved its combat abilities through tough, realistic training.

Another tool was something called the After Action Review- a kind of US military version of Maoist self-criticism.

In Chinese communist culture a self-critique is a public declaration of all of your faults is practiced. The idea is to be freed of your selfish tendencies to learn through constructive criticism.

The idea is honesty. Sometimes it can seem like a public punishment and humiliation.

Collected data after the mock battles at NTC allow commanders to address weaknesses and mistakes.

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian (37AD to 101AD) said of the Roman military, "Their drills are bloodless battles, and their battles bloody drills." The army learned this well.

Lessons learned at NTC were credited for the swift victory in Kuwait.
The 1991 war had an unfortunate side effect. It reinforced the changes the army made. A short blitzkrieg-style warfare was something it was remarkable at.

12 years later when faced with a protracted ground conflict against an unconventional enemy using guerilla tactics the army became stuck. The army had trouble shifting its strategy back to the tactical lessons of counterinsurgency, it had perfected in Vietnam.

The 2003 invasion was a great operational plan but a strategically deficient. It focused on the short-term goals without defining the long-term ones.

They focused on only the fighting and defeating the enemy force. They had trouble figuring out what would follow.

How Strategy Applies to Business

A business plan must be flexible. A concept and not a precise, planning chart or timeline. In the army this is called a campaign plan (Sullivan, 1996).

The campaign plan provides the framework for moving on but it allows us to achieve our endstate.

You put such a plan together piece-by-piece. Not like Henry Ford running an assembly line, but like an artisan. Each piece of the plan is crafted individually, and always with your team.

By looking at the way army learned from past mistakes and reshaped itself into a respected institution after Vietnam we learn the importance of strategy. By seeing how the lessons of Vietnam were forgotten in the early days of Iraq we see the army stumble.

How it turned that disaster around is a great story too.

Bibliography:


Guys,

I do lead in an interesting life. I am an Anglophile. My brother-in-law is Scottish and after serving with British soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan I truly love their country. I meet the most amazing people. Let me tell you a story.

The British Counsel General visit to the University of Louisville

A few weeks ago I attended a conference hosted by the Business School at the University of Louisville. It was an interesting afternoon.

The guest speaker was the British Counsel General to the Commonwealth of Kentucky. He explained that the Counsel General represents the UK government in the Mid-South region of the United States. There are 13 of them throughout the United States.

Back in the days of Rome the Counsel General would act as a form of ambassador to a province. A modern day consulate represents a foreign government in several spheres.

It is important to maintain relationships in three spheres- Foreign Policy, Prosperity (business), and Residence. The guest speaker that day was representing Economic Development. All of these spheres enhance the reputation of both the guest and the host country.

The US and UK relationship

The United States has produced more Nobel Laureates than any other country followed closely by England. He gave a scientific example of the special relationship of the United States.

In the 1970s the launching of satellites in the UK could have not been done without US assistance. Equally important was the research and money donated by the UK in the enterprise.

He emphasized the nature of this special relationship, especially in regards to commercial growth.

Some unknown facts about the UK is that it is the 6th largest manufacturer on earth. Many of those products are used in the US.

Good financial decisions are made in two arenas. One is financial but the other is production. What is needed for an assembly line or factory to run is blue collar guys.

We are running out of auto mechanics in both the US and UK. Technical engineering in manufacturing is the key to success. In this relationship the US and UK have a long standing relationship. In that relationship Kentucky is the jewel in the crown.

$1.5 billion passed from Kentucky to the UK last year alone.

Why Kentucky

When most people think of Kentucky they think of Bourbon and horses. Yanks are considered as naïve to the worldly Brits. Kentucky
is seen as one of “the fly over” states in-between New York City and Los Angeles, the hub of American culture.

He called a weekend in Louisville, “The best 48 hours on earth.” The hospitality of its citizens is the stuff of legend, especially during the Derby. Its unique vibe is fueled by the city’s alternative youth culture, are some of the hippest and coolest in the world.

He added to this by saying he had partied in some of the earth’s premiere cities and Louisville was his favorite. He instantly made friends with everyone in the crowd.

The EU

He continued his talk by emphasizing the education process that needs to happen. Real diplomacy is awareness of opportunity. The European Union (EU) is good for the UK.

The EU is now the biggest market in the world. Populism is rabid especially with the Transatlantic Trade Partnership. This is the biggest trade potential in several years.

He talked about the benefits of doing business in the UK. Allowing business to seek growth in the public sector is important.

The UK had a sizable debt after the 2008 economic crash. It actually helped to drive the economy forward. Corporation tax in the UK is 21 percent, the lowest in Europe.

More and more international high tech companies are finding bases in the UK. The UK offers a skilled workforce for American companies. Not to mention a place for US companies looking to set up in Europe.

The UK is at the heart of global creativity and the UK is the gateway to the EU market. There are 60 million people in the UK.

There are many similarities between the UK and the US. Not to mention a common language. It’s an “and” not an “or” in describing all the ways the countries are similar.

When it comes to academic research there is common ground. For years, Americans have studied in the UK and UK students have found refuge in the US. Academics by their nature coalesce.

There are similar frameworks of understanding for both nations in doing business together.

In essence the UK has education, a research base and a chance for entrepreneurial development. The UK is an engine for growth. There is a spirit of innovation.

The idea is to replicate what is successful and grow. Blue jays love to fly with blue jays. Business folks love to talk to business folks.

A lot of European companies offer a holistic wholesale offer without the benefit of a common culture. The UK scene offers entrepreneurial sprit and innovation skills necessary for a new
There is always an element of fear in any new business venture. Failure in American business is almost a badge of shame. Risk appetite is bigger in the US.

This spirit of risk is needed in the UK. But the beauty of the UK is the offer of a long tradition of risk management.

Financial service (bean counters) have a different approach to risk than manufacturers. Manufacturers are more elastic and more flexible.

Failure is viewed differently in the UK. There is more acceptance of risk and failure in the UK. The idea of the long-game of strategy.

Take Aways

First and foremost, he was a gifted public speaker. He spoke in a Posh British accent and represented all that is positive about his country- courtesy, culture and hope. He should because he is a diplomat.

I did learn quite a lot of things in the hour long talk. I am attempting to run a small business as a writer. I go to these open forum a few times a month to learn more and to hear new ideas.

In the end, I didn’t really learn anything from his talk I couldn’t have gotten from YouTube University or on-line. It was a great talk and well worth the price of admission- free.

I am always fascinated at how other countries view Americans. I hope you guys like something a little different.

MILITARY HISTORY

LAFAYETTE- ROCK STAR OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

Intro

We can never know what really happened in the past. Marquis de Lafayette is the forgotten father of the American Revolution. History has an imperfect memory.

Many towns in America are named after this obscure hero- Fayetteville, NC and Lafayette, LA to name a few. There are more than 50 cities in America named after him.
France and the United States have a love-hate relationship. They define themselves by other.

Americans say the French are snobs, but admire their sense of style. The French think the Americans are violent and uncivilized, but love to imitate them. We share common values that bind us together.

It made us allies when it really mattered. This first time was in the American Revolutionary War. Looking at the Marquis de Lafayette can tell us something important about ourselves. To do this we must go back to the beginning.

Who was the Marquis de Lafayette? How and why did he come to America? This piece tells the story of the life and legend of an intriguing, neglected and controversial figure. He left France at the age of 19 and fought courageously for the independence of the United States.

**Lafayette the Man**

Marquis de Lafayette was born on September 6, 1757, in Chavaniac, France.

His family had a noble military lineage that had seven centuries of service to France. His father was killed in the Seven Years War when he was two years old. Lafayette grew up seeing himself as a hero.

At 11 he goes live to the Palais de Luxembourg. It is one of the grandest homes in Paris. His mother dies when he is 14 leaving him a very rich bachelor. He joined the Royal Army in 1771 at fifteen.

In 1773 he married a 14-year-old named Marie Adrienne Françoise de Noailles, a member of another prominent French family. He and his wife are the host of Paris. The teenage couple are the Bradgelina of their day.

In the French Army, he joins his father-in-law’s regiment. On August 8, 1775 dinner with the Duke of Glouster he hears about the American Revolution for the first time.

He meets with the American Envoy to France Benjamin Franklin. Lafayette goes to America and joins the colonist cause.

He serves the cause of Freedom because he sees the American cause as a beacon of light. At a time when America struggle was the symbol of freedom to the world.

He says, “The happiness of mankind is intimately tied to the happiness of America.” He sees the potential of the young and struggling nation. He arrives in Philadelphia and knocks on the door of Independence Hall but is turned away.

He pushes forward and says he wants to serve but at his own expense. He teaches himself English. He is a made a Major General in his first six weeks in the Continental Army.
Marquis de Lafayette

Battle of Brandywine Creek

His first major combat duty came during the September 1777 Battle of Brandywine. He is shot in the leg while helping to organize a chaotic retreat. General George Washington requested doctors to take special care of Lafayette. This ignited a strong bond between the two that lasted until Washington’s death.

Lafayette is seen as a hero. His service captures the imaginations of the American and French people. His examples helps to secure French support for the Colonist cause.

Battle of Brandywine Creek

Valley Forge

A rough winter at Valley Forge follows. The American soldiers suffer but Lafayette lives with and endures with the men. They have little provisions, the winter weather is bitter cold and they have very little warm clothing.

The Continental Congress gives little to no support to the fledging army. Men die from exposure. While visiting Philadelphia, Lafayette finds out about a cabal to replace Washington. Lafayette warns the general.

Some of this group make a toast. Lafayette make a public toast saying, “To His Excellency, General Washington!” A public declaration for his friend. He feels that scheming behind Washington’s back is the worst betrayal of the ideals of the new republic.

Washington is impressed with his loyalty and helps to further his military career. Washington treats Lafayette as a surrogate son. They are close despite a 30 year age difference.
Lafayette the General

The British are embarrassed by a Frenchman giving so much exposure to the American cause. They want to capture him. Lafayette is given command of a detachment and tasked to do a reconnaissance of Philadelphia. He is only 20 years old.

He is surrounded by the British. He attacks from the treeline and stone walls. He distinguishes himself by thinking on his feet.

Lafayette as an Ambassador

Lafayette is sent back to France as an advocate for the US. The French are excited by the American cause. Lafayette is welcomed at court. He repeatedly tells the story of his time in America. He is seen as a rock star.

Lafayette returns to America. Washington has a different plan. He sends the Frenchman to the south to fight with the Virginia Militia against the British General Cornwallis.

Lafayette fights using skirmish lines. He occupies more than 5,000 British soldiers with his handful of militia soldiers.

Lafayette sends out spies. He uses a spy, a slave, named James Armistead to give false information. Lafayette defeats Cornwallis at the coast of Yorktown. Armistead is freed due to his contribution. He changes his name to Armistead Lafayette.

Lafayette matures throughout his experiences. He commands a regiment of American forces and leads a charge with fixed bayonets while taking the fort at Yorktown. He ordered the playing of “Yankee Doodle Dandy” at the surrender of Yorktown.

Return to France

Lafayette is seen as a hero on his return to France. He becomes a star. He is a charismatic man.

He writes to Washington to abolish slavery. He argues that the ideals of the American Revolution are violated by not applying to the slaves. Washington writes back about the need for slavery.

Lafayette urges the French King to do away with slavery. He frees the slaves of French Guyana.

The French Revolution
He helped to get the French revolution started a few years after returning from America. Inspired by the ideals of the American struggle. He wants to import those ideas of freedom to France. He sees himself as a French Washington.

In 1789, he drafts “The Declaration of the Rights of Man” with Thomas Jefferson, the American Ambassador to French. It may be his most important contribution to the cause of democracy. It provides a vision of human rights at the core values of a society.

Within few days of its release the people of Paris, encouraged by more radical voices, storm the Bastille Prison. It is a symbol of the tyranny of the king. They parade the streets with heads impaled on their spears.

Lafayette takes charge of a "National Guard" of French soldiers that is responsible for defending Paris. He finds himself in the untenable position of being caught in the middle of the French Revolution.

He is a tragic figure. He was caught between the monarchists on the right and the populists on the left. His family is old money, but he deeply believes in the ideals of freedom of the French cause.

He is a champion of freedom in his writings and beliefs. He is a figure of authority as a French General charged with the safety of the royal family.

A crowd of angry peasant women come to capture the queen. Lafayette leads the queen out on a balcony and kisses her hand. It achieves a momentary truce.

On July 15, 1790, a year after the storming of the Bastille, a crowd of a quarter of a million people gathers around Lafayette. He has been a progressive leader and has found a middle ground. His plan to give them a constitution to give them liberty and a king to protect order.

A year later everything goes wrong. A rioting crowd shoots at him and his soldiers. His soldiers fire back. The revolution spins out of control. The French had so much more to revolt against than the Americans.

In the next year and half more 3,000 people, including the French king and queen, will die on the guillotine.

**Tragedy**

Lafayette is viewed as a traitor on both sides. He tries to escape back to America. He is captured by the Austrians. He ends up in a series of prisons. He is hated for his spreading of ideas that caused chaos across Europe.

His wife is thrown in jail for three long years. His old friend, Washington, now the President of the US, tries to help with no luck. Finally, with American influence he is released.

Napoleon allows Lafayette to return to France. His beloved wife only three years later.
Return to America

On the eve of the 50th Anniversary of the American Revolution President James Monroe invited General Lafayette back to America. He was a unifying hero who everyone in America can thank for his contribution to independence.

Americans had fallen in love with the story of Lafayette who devoted his life to the struggle of democracy. On August 16, 1824 an elderly Lafayette returned to the land he had such an influence over.

80,000 people were by the harbor of New York City to greet him. The population of NYC was a little over 120,000. It was like the Beatles coming to America. He was the beloved hero of the revolution.

He would take a 13 month victory lap around America. He visited all, then 24, states of the US. His return allows America to refocus on what brought it together in the first place.

At a Congressional banquet he states, “Someday America will save the world.” We did too- in two world wars. Throughout the tour Lafayette can see the results of the freedom he worked so bravely to achieve.

He returns to his beloved Virginia. At the biggest rally at the tour he is given a parade. Halfway through the parade, he stops the procession as he recognizes a face in the crowd.

It is his old friend, the freed slave Armistead Lafayette. The two comrades embrace and cry as a city of slaveholders looks on.

Washington’s Tomb

Just before he sails home he stops at the tomb of his old friend George Washington. He stops and kneels at the gravesite with son, George Washington Lafayette, by his side. He collects dirt from the grave.

He is buried with a portion of the American soil, he gave so much to defend.

After his death President John Quincy Adams wrote, “Pronounce him one of the first men of age and you have done him justice.”
Marquis de Lafayette had two ideas. They were the ideas of the century. The idea of freedom for his fellow man and equality for those who fought for it.

In Lafayette, a Frenchman, he gave the American Revolution its voice by showing his sacrifice through his humanity.

Guys,

My favorite posts are the ones about writing. They allow us to explore the craft of writing. They allow me to articulate ideas, explore themes and in the end to tell you a story.

I will define a few terms for our future lessons. In each new lesson I start with a “Lead.”

“The Lead” is the first paragraph or first several sentences of a newspaper story (sometimes spelled lede). This defines the “why” we are reading something.

A “Summary Lead” is the first paragraph of a news story in which the writer presents a synopsis of two or more actions rather than focusing on any one of them. It is known as the “narrative hook” in a story.

“Narrative hook” is a literary technique in the opening of a story that “hooks” the reader’s attention so that he or she will keep on reading. The “opening” may consist of several paragraphs for a short story, or several pages for a novel, but ideally it is the opening sentence.

The Opening

One of the most common forms is dramatic action, which engages
the reader into wondering what the consequences of the action will be. The idea is that you want in the opening is to keep them engaged. To start a slow drip of the addictive subject that is your story.

This kind of writing has been recommended from the earliest days, stemming from Aristotle.

The use of action as the hook is a way to immediately "turn the engine" of a story on. Narrative hooks are essential to great content. You want the reader to become addicted to your story so he keeps reading.

Jane Austen’s opening line from *Pride and Prejudice*, “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.” She sums up her entire book in that one sentence.

Some writers spend years working on the first opening sentence. There is a superstitious belief that states, “So goes the first sentence, so goes the rest of the book.”

Either way, Ms. Austen grabs your attention. She compels you to ask, “Why is this important?” Her hook helps set the stage for the story. The best hooks leave you with questions. They drive you to continue reading to satisfy your growing curiosity.

One last one from Mr. Charles Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* with his indelible narrative hook, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times…”

**Don’t Bury the Lede**

Journalistic leads and opening sentences to stories emphasize grabbing the attention of the reader. In journalism, the failure to mention the most important or attention-grabbing elements of a story in the first paragraph is sometimes called burying the lede. It is discouraged with the catch phrase “**Don’t bury the lede.**”

**Finding your lede as a Writer**

Writing feels like what I am supposed to do. For the last three months I have buried myself in the craft, practice and discipline of writing. I am attempting to become good at something difficult very fast.

I want you, the beloved reader, to have an understanding of this undertaking. Writing makes it own demands. But for me the process has been fun. It has become the thing I look forward to most in my day.

I see the act of writing to all of you as a gift. It allows me to paint my book with a wet brush. Writing to you all first allows me to "get into the mood" to write more.

These emails act as an extension of lessons of learning to write and of my feelings. They have taught me to have more empathy. They
have taught me about altruism—the righteous of action to help other people. I think it has made me a better human being.

**Storytelling**

A way to think of fiction is in the form of short story or novel. A short story writer is a sprinter. A novelist is a marathoner.

Some writers are either by temperament or metabolism. John Barth is a sprinter and Hemingway was a marathoner. How he got conditioned for novel writing was by writing short stories. These emails are my short stories.

Writing is a process. Fun when things are flowing and going well. Hell when things aren’t going well. The goal is to settle in for the long haul. I think of writing of a book like a long military siege of a town. It doesn’t happen overnight.

Think of all the great battle scenes from "Braveheart" or the attack on "Helm’s Deep" in "The Lord of the Rings."

The walled fortress at Helm's Deep is under attack by the mighty Uruk-hai army. The forces of men, elves, and a dwarf must do everything they can to stop them from breaching the fortress walls.

You, the writer, are the attacking army attempting to breach the walls of the story.

Your goal is fill the expansive of that space with little marks that translate into a good story.

**The Short Story**

Most writers cut their teeth on the short form. It’s an excellent teaching tool. Apprenticeship usually takes place in a college or university writing program. My writing laboratory is all of you. I am a student of the University of YouTube, blogging and emails to my dearest and closest friends.

Once a writer masters the short story they can migrate to novels. Some writers migrate back John Updike, Carol Joyce Oates, Bernard Malamud or Stephen King.

The move is easier than. Writing a book or novel is a capital investment of time and effort. Best to get your learning done someplace else before tackling the dragon of a book.

There is a certain art form to the short story. The beauty is the civilized brevity of the short story. You have to be patient with the muse. Connecting the dots to make it all come together is the real fun.

**Being "Over There"**

The bestselling fantasy writer Terry Brooks explains it another way. He says that writers are not all here. A part of them is "over there"—"over there" being whatever world they are currently writing about.
He states that writers live in two worlds. This world with friends and families and the imaginary world of writing. He talks about how compelling the two worlds are because they make demands of the writer’s time.

I found that interesting because soldiers talk about “over there” being where they deployed. A part of them is always there. Struggling to take apart or make sense of what happened. For me writing has allowed me make peace with both worlds.

Writing is the undoing of the trauma war.

MILITARY HISTORY

BILTMORE ESTATE VISIT

SEPTEMBER 2, 2014

September 2014

Guys,

I went to visit my sister this past month. She lives in western North Carolina. On the way home, I stopped at the Biltmore Estate. I was moved by what I saw.

The Setting

It was a crisp, cool day when I visited the Biltmore. The Estate is set in the natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The Blue Ridge Parkway in the Southern Appalachian Foothills is beautiful any time of year. But this day the mountains seemed to wrap itself in the beauty of the autumn season.

Driving you get a breathtaking mountain view that is dotted with rivers leading to waterfalls. The landscape is sprinkled with small towns, farms and fields.

As I drove it looked like God had painted a rich tapestry of brilliant colors of red and orange on the leaves. It was a spectacular show of seasonal color.

The Blue Ridge Parkway
It is the boundary of the ancient Cherokee Indian Reservation.

The Vanderbilt Family

The Vanderbilts were an American family of Dutch origin that was prominent during the Gilded Age. The Gilded Age is the late 19th century, from the 1870s to about 1900.

The term was coined by writer Mark Twain in *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, (1873). He satirized an era of serious social problems disguised by a thin gold gilding.

America was still trying to recover from the devastation left after the four bloody years of the American Civil War (1861-1865). It was a time of the beginning of the Industrial Age. America was on the move.

The expansion of trade and commerce due to the Industrial Age attracted a large number of immigrants to the shores of America. The Vanderbilts were in the middle of it all and becoming filthy rich.

Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794–1877) built a shipping and railroad empire. Later, his descendants expanded the family fortunate into other areas of industry. The family is mainly remembered for the way it generously treated its employees and philanthropy.

George W. Vanderbilt (1862-1914) was the grandson of Cornelius.

George W. Vanderbilt

The Vision

George decided not to follow his brothers into the family business. He chose a life of the mind. He was a man with an inquisitive nature and broad interests. He had a lifelong habit of learning and many travels.

He had an extraordinary idea- his magnificent Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina. Using his fortune he gathered experts in architecture, landscaping and forestry to create his idea of a self-sustaining European-style estate.

He had an idea of the preservation of what he called, “The Biltmore Experience.” He wanted to create a place where the visitor could travel back in time and see new possibilities for the future.
His vision was an undertaking of enormous propositions. It all started with the estate name, a play on words. The name “Vanderbilt” literally means in Dutch “Man from the village of Bilt”. “More” is used to describe a country estate.

The House

The house is a 250-room castle. It covers four acres and has four levels. It was built as a French Renaissance chateau by George’s friend, architect Richard Morris. It is modeled after a working European estate in form and function. It is the American version of Downton Abbey.

The home still features the original furnishings and art objects collected by George. Each room has is done in rich individual colors. Many of the rooms feature hand-carved walnut furnishings designed for that room. George was a huge Francophile and there is a large French influence.

The Biltmore Mansion

The Staff

The house took 400 workers working 24 hours a day and six years to complete. Remember, the home was built in a time when all labor was done by hand. All the material to build it was brought up by horse and buggy. It was an icon of ingenuity.

The immense exterior of the house sits peacefully in pictures, you bet the inside was alive with activity. The thirty full-time staff was consumed with the cleaning and running of this massive home.

The Library

My favorite room, of course, was the library. The tour guide was especially helpful in explaining the grandeur of it. The library housed over 10,000 of the 23,000 books in the Biltmore House collection.

The library was the size of a gymnasium and two stories tall. Each level was wrapped with books on of at least 12 shelves.

George was a voracious reader and was said to have read over 3,300 of the books in the collection. The library reflected his love of learning and the arts.

On the ceiling is an 18th century canvas painted by Giovanni Pellegrini. It was brought to the Biltmore House from the Pisani Palace in Venice, Italy.
The Library

The Banquet Hall

The Vanderbilts hosted large formal dinner parties in the regal Banquet Hall. The hall seats 64 guests and has a ceiling that arches 70 feet into the air.

The walls are lined with beautiful artwork that represents the collision of European and American style that is the hallmark of Biltmore. It has five priceless sixteenth-century Flemish tapestries and the flags of the original 13 colonies of America.

The Banquet Hall

The Victorian Era

Biltmore was a product of the Victorian Era (1837-1901). Named after the reign of Queen Victoria of England. It was a time that caught the imagination. It was a period of new literary schools and artistic styles in the arts.

Religious and political movements flourished. It was the golden age of imperial expansion for both the US and the UK. It was a time of a Second Renaissance.

The period was also a time of “prudishness” and “repression of the sexes.” Men and women had very traditional roles.

Men would smoke, drink and do as they liked. Women rarely did anything outside the home except raise children. It was the beginning of Modern Times.

The horror and carnage of World War I would change all that.

Lasting Impression

The estate is still a working a 125,000 acre property that is a working estate with gardens, livestock and vineyard.

It is a testimony to one man’s great vision. It is a refuge of an
exceptional lifestyle complimented by the beauty of the landscape.

Biltmore captures the spirit of optimism and splendor. It recalls the romance of hope and expression of the turn-of-the-century elegance. It is a glimpse of a bygone era when everything seemed possible in the world.

*Biltmore Estate*
HISTORY has a long-term commitment to honoring and supporting veterans and military families from all backgrounds. Visit the websites below to learn more about the organizations we support, their work in communities and the resources they provide. By submitting your
The February issue of Military History Matters, the British military history magazine, is now on sale. To subscribe to the magazine, click here. To subscribe to the digital archive, click here. This issue, we're giving away three copies of Napoleon’s Military Machine Operations Manual. 250 years since the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte, a new manual from Haynes celebrates his Grande Armée, widely acknowledged to be one of the greatest fighting forces. The Siege of Ladysmith: a video tour. Preserving a Veteran's Military History. Posted by Jennifer Holik on November 7, 2016 in In The Community. This week there is a lot going on in our country as we elect a new President on Tuesday, November 8th. Did you also know that Friday, November 11th, is Veterans Day? Military: Ships on which a service member served. Include the dates and a photograph if you have one. Check Fold3.com for WWII Naval War Diaries to see what other information you can add to your tree.