

that Jackson's fateful last ride was made necessary by the inaccuracy of his personal map of Chancellorsville. Furgurson even speculates, quite convincingly, that it was the victory at Chancellorsville that ultimately led to the defeat at Gettysburg. Convincing by his men's bravery at Chancellorsville that they were invincible, Lee sent his men across that field from Seminary to Cemetery Ridge:

"And so he sent them. And so Gettysburg was lost, and so the war."

While Furgurson clearly favors the Confederates, presenting the South as the shoeless-waif underdog against the embarrassment-of-riches industrialist North, he does not allow such favor to cloud either his narrative or his analysis. If, at the end, Jackson and Lee emerge as larger than life, it may well be

because they were. This is a haunting, compelling tale suitable for the military historian and general public alike. The book cannot be put down and, like Chancellorsville itself, stays with you long after it is over.



>See bio on p. 71.

## In Hooker's Defense

reviewed by Col Daniel C. O'Brien

**CHANCELLORSVILLE.** By Stephen W. Sears. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1996, 602 pp., \$35.00. (Member \$31.50)



MajGen Joseph E. "Fighting Joe" Hooker

Ernest B. Furgurson's excellent account of the Chancellorsville campaign could probably be used as the "school solution" or "yellow" for any staff college campaign analysis. Stephen W. Sears sees the campaign differently. In his latest book, *Chancellorsville*, Sears assumes the mantle of a voice in the wilderness and champions MajGen Joseph E. Hooker as the maligned warrior ill-served by his subordinates and misunderstood by history.

Hooker's performance at Chancellorsville has consistently been relegated to service as just another case study

of squandered opportunity and lost victory. Stephen Sears contends that history has been unfairly harsh on Hooker, whose brilliantly conceived and tactically and operationally sound campaign was betrayed by incompetent subordinates and plain old bad luck. In telling the story, the former editor of *American Heritage* has added yet another highly readable book to his previous works which include *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* and *George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon*. His latest effort, *Chancellorsville*, typifies Sears' characteristically superior scholarship and presents an absorbingly fresh slant on Hooker's (as well as Robert E. Lee's) generalship during the fight around the sleepy Virginia crossroads in the spring of 1863.

Sears concedes that Hooker made serious mistakes. His tactical transgressions included ineffectually apportioning his cavalry between raiding Lee's supply lines and guarding his own army; abandoning key terrain early in the fight for the crossroads; and maintaining decentralized command and control of his artillery long after he had assumed the tactical defensive. Sears argues, however, that these errors would not have cost the campaign were it not for inadequate corps commanders. The analysis is compelling—if not entirely convincing—and merits

consideration.

Of Hooker's eight corps commanders, four did not execute their assigned missions and therefore fail Sears' fundamental competency checks. Although Howard justifiably receives a large measure of blame for failure to prepare his 11th Corps to receive Gen Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's assault, Sears also takes MajGen George Stoneman, MajGen Daniel E. Sickles, and even MajGen John Sedgwick to task for their well-documented failings during various phases of the campaign. Adding to all this the bad luck typified by chronically poor communications with his various formations (poor even by Civil War standards), Sears concludes that Hooker was more poorly served than any Union general in the war.

A few spinoffs of Sears' expansive research bear mentioning. Citing a wealth of primary and secondary sources (many of which remain unpublished), he systematically debunks various myths that have come to be accepted as historical fact. He persuasively explains, for example, how Hooker's alleged and often quoted remark to Abner Doubleday during the march to Gettysburg ("For once I lost confidence in Hooker") is apocryphal. A comprehensive order of battle for each army is included as an appendix. The exhaustive bibliography runs for 15 pages. Casualty figures and commanders, listed down to regimental level, make interesting reading in and of themselves and materially contribute to the book's value as a superb reference.

Sears' case for Hooker as the aggrieved victim of bumbling corps commanders is logically presented and well supported by extraordinarily thorough research. His campaign analysis

carefully examines the tactical and operational components of the campaign and arranges them within the strategic frameworks of both sides with a systematic orderliness that makes *Chancellorsville* an excellent history text. At the same time, the rich detail and sweeping human drama make for an unquestionably great read. With respect to the central question of whether Hooker was more sinner or sinned against, however, the book is less convincing.

The considerable evidence Sears

submits in support of his thesis does not quite acquit Hooker of the charge that he was the chief architect of his own defeat. Hooker had fallen in love with his plan, and he refused to adjust to the rapidly changing tactical situation with which he was faced. When the plan finally did collapse, he had no alternative course of action with which to continue the fight. Injured and rendered incapable of sound tactical judgment by a confederate artillery round, he refused to delegate authority to subordinates even though some of his

lieutenants were fine tacticians. In the final judgment, Gideon Welles' diary entry may indelicately but accurately remain the most appropriate eulogy for the Union defeat: "The President says if Hooker had been killed by the shot which knocked over the pillar that stunned him, we should have been successful."

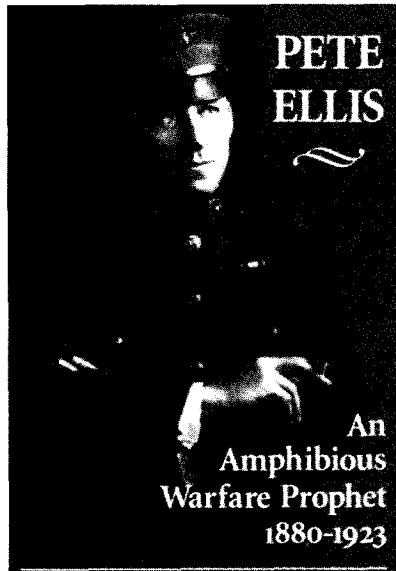


>Col O'Brien is military assistant to the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs.

## A Corps Enigma

reviewed by Col Wendell N. Vest, USMC(Ret)

**PETE ELLIS: An Amphibious Warfare Prophet, 1880-1923. By Merrill L. Bartlett and Dirk A. Ballendorf. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1996, 200 pp., \$26.95. (Member \$24.25)**



Corps. Every now and then a name comes up that is included among the great, but whose deeds are obscure or long forgotten. All who have served at Quantico know of names such as William P. Upshur, Charles D. Barrett, and James T. Breckenridge, but few really know who they were and what they did. Another name which is well known to all who have attended the Marine Corps University is Ellis. Everyone knows about Ellis Hall, where amphibious demonstrations are held, and many know that LtCol Earl H. "Pete" Ellis was a mysterious figure who was a pioneer in the Marine Corps development of amphibious warfare in the years prior to World War II. But, to Marines of today, Ellis' deeds have been obscured by the passage of time. Who was Pete Ellis and what did he do?

Professor Dirk Ballendorf and LtCol Merrill Bartlett, USMC(Ret) have, in their biography of Ellis, removed most, but not all, of the veil that has hung over the life of this complex and mysterious officer. The simple questions of his life are answered with authority and excellent research. The more complex is

Marines, who are interested in their Corps' history, soon learn that there are many Corps heroes whose names and deeds are well known. Archibald Henderson, John A. Lejeune, Smedley D. Butler, Daniel J. Daly, John H. Quick, Alexander A. Vandegrift, Lewis B. Puller, Merritt A. Edson, and many others are writ large in the annals of the

sues—those that made Ellis worthy of having a building named after him and those that made him mysterious—are explained, but a bit of the unknown still remains. The work done by Ballendorf and Bartlett has uncovered most of the mystery. The rest will never be known.

The biography plunges the reader into the center of the mystery by beginning with the story of Ellis' death in 1923 on the Japanese island of Palau in the Caroline Islands. It quickly comes to light that Ellis is not what he appeared to be—a trader for the Hughes Trading Company. The plot, which thickens when he is identified as a Marine officer on leave, becomes even more complicated when the U.S. Navy officer sent to Palau to retrieve his remains returns in a catatonic state, unable to relate the circumstances of Ellis' death and then dies himself in an earthquake while in the Navy hospital in Yokohama, Japan. What mystery writer could have dreamed up those bizarre circumstances?

Moreover, when inquiries were made to the Marine Corps as to what Ellis was doing in the Pacific islands, no explanation was forthcoming, either from the Commandant, MajGen Lejeune; the Assistant Commandant, MajGen Wendell C. Neville; or the director of the Operations and Training Department, BGen Logan Feland. What was Ellis, a Marine on active duty, doing in the Japanese held islands at the time of his death? And who sent him there?

The story of Ellis' life before and during his 20 years in the Corps gives clues galore, and the authors have done a good job of digging out the facts. Dirk Ballendorf, a professor of