

## THE CHAPEL IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

John F. Hall

This is more than a story about a chapel in the Shenandoah Valley. It is also a story about the man responsible for building that chapel. And it is also about the General responsible



for the birth of the United States and two Generals on the losing side of the American Civil War. I know a few things about Army Major Generals. During the nine years that I was an Army Reserve Inspector General (IG), I served under five different Major Generals. They rated and senior rated me. I put some intrigue in this true story.

To become an IG, I had to attend a two-week IG School on Fort Belvoir, Virginia. I attended this IG school in the summer of 1993.

At the time, I was an assistant G-3 training officer in the 100th Training Division in Louisville, Kentucky. I had previously attended a mobilization/deployment course in Fort Sam Houston, Texas in 1989. Because of that training, in 1990, I was mobilized on Fort Knox for Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. I was the Liaison Officer for all Army Reserve and National Guard units mobilizing on Fort Knox. It was my responsibility to coordinate their arrival and their departure from Fort Knox. I had to have the Assistant Division Command sign a form that the unit had completed the necessary deployment training. I then had to follow the unit to the airport in Louisville to watch the unit depart the airport. The next morning, I had to brief the Division Commander on the unit's departure.

During one morning briefing, the Major General was really mad. He wanted to know why the CID Unit pulled out of Fort Knox without giving him prior notification. I was still a captain at the time. The Major General turned around from his front row seat and said: "Captain Hall, do you know why the CID unit pulled out without telling me?" I calmly said, "Sir, that unit is under a different command and they don't report to you." I'm sure that my answer did not make the Major General happy. I had been working 20 hours a day, I would come back to my room and just collapse from exhaustion. After one long day, I remembered what my wife, Paula reminded me to do. She was concerned about a spot on my back that needed to be looked at by a physician.

One slow afternoon, I decided to go to the emergency room at Ireland Hospital on Fort Knox. I asked the Army doctor on duty to check the suspicious spot on my back. I pulled off my uniform shirt and my tee-shirt. The doctor looked at that spot and said: "Let me tell you a story. A soldier's wife had been after her husband to get a spot checked on his back that was similar to yours. After about six months, the soldier finally came to me. But it was too late, the melanoma cancer had spread inside his body and five months later the soldier died."

The Army doctor told me to lay face down, on the table. He sprayed something on my back to numb the skin, then he cut out a chunk of my skin and sewed up the hole. So, in addition to working long hours, I was in constant pain from the hole in my back, and I was not given any pain medication. There was a bright spot in that mobilization. I

received a promotion to the rank of Major. The Fort Knox G-3 performed the ceremony and had the Orders read aloud. My wife, Paula and my son, John drove to Fort Knox for the ceremony.

Three years later, the 100<sup>th</sup> Division IG was impressed with the courtesy copies of the battalion units that I had inspected. He asked me to submit an application to become an Inspector General. I told him that I would not give up my position as the assistant G-3 training officer until the Washington DC IG approved my application. I remembered back in 1981 when the Kentucky National Guard sent a Major to meet with me in Cadiz. I was a First Lieutenant with less than three years experience as an officer. I had transferred from the Kentucky National Guard to the Army Reserve. I made the transfer because the Trigg County District Judge, who was also a brigade commander in the Army Reserve, wanted me to fill an Executive Office position in a Murray, Kentucky company that was under his command. I was a Kentucky State Trooper and was in his courtroom on a regular basis. So I transferred to the Murray Army Reserve unit.



(Pictured: L to R: Paula Hall, John F. Hall & John A. Hall. Ft. Knox, KY Operation Desert Storm promotion to Major. 1990)

I wondered why the National Guard Major wanted to meet with me. So I went to the meeting at the Cadiz, restaurant. I knew the Major from my time as an assistant S2/S3 in the 198th Military Police Battalion in Louisville, Kentucky. The Major wanted me to replace a Captain in command of the 614th Military Police Company in Murray, Kentucky. The unit had just transitioned from an artillery unit to a military police unit. The Battalion Commander wanted me to replace the Captain when his two-year command time was up. I was just a green First Lieutenant. The problem with the Captain is that he was denied tenure as a professor at Murray State University. Word got back to Battalion that he intended to do something against the President of the University. I was told that the assignment was risky because the Captain might retaliate against me. I considered the President of the University to be a friend.

I accepted the MP Executive Officer position. I had meetings with the University President at his home on campus. I told him to watch his back. What the Captain wanted me to do was to give ammunition to the soldiers at the next Homecoming Parade. He would then have one of his favorite Lieutenants fire a shot in the air, and leak it to newspaper and radio station, that the University President wanted the Military Police soldiers armed. On the day of the Homecoming parade, the Company Commander asked me to come into his office.

His two favorite Lieutenants were there. He told me that he wanted me to issue ammunition to the Military Police soldiers assigned to provide traffic control assistance for the parade. I said to him, "That is not a lawful Order." He replied, "I am giving you a direct Order to give the soldiers ammunition." I replied, "There is no authorization from

Battalion to issue ammunition and I have no authority to issue ammunition.” When it came time for the Captain to write my Officer Efficiency Rating (OER), he wrote that I was insubordinate. The Battalion Commander did not concur and write that I was sent to the unit to replace the Captain. I served as the Commander of the 614th Military Police Company for two years, I increased the strength from 69 to 139 soldiers. Then my dad died and I was grief stricken. I wanted to resign my Commission, but I was told that if I did, my military career was over. I knew a Colonel in the Army Reserves and I called him and asked him if he could find me a position. He told me to call a Lieutenant Colonel. I called the Officer and told him that the Colonel told me to call him about a position on the MP Team. He asked me one question: “How much Command Time did I have?” I told him: “Two years.” He told me to report to Military Police Team in the 100<sup>th</sup> Division the next drill.

I was in a training session on Fort Knox. During a break, I was told that a National Guard Lieutenant Colonel was looking for me. I located the Officer. He was my former Military Police Battalion Commander. He was with a Captain. I was happy to see him. He told me that he wanted to promote me to Captain, but I transferred to the Army Reserve before he could do that. He had the Captain read the Promotion Order. Then he pinned the Captain bars on my uniform. I had a bad OER and I felt that the Washington DC Inspector General would deny my application to become an IG. To my surprise, the DC IG approved it.

At the end of the first week of the Inspector General School, I was given the weekend off. I drove the three miles from Fort Belvoir to Mount Vernon, Virginia. I wanted to visit the home of President George Washington. I did a self tour. I went to the back of the house and sat in a rocking chair on the back porch. President Washington, on the last day of his presidency, did one last official act. He wrote a letter to his Inspector General, Friedrich , otherwise known as Baron von Steuben. Congress promoted the Baron to the rank of Major General. I read the letter that the President wrote to the Baron. A few years earlier, I attended the wedding of my nephew near Valley Forge. After the wedding, I went to visit Valley Forge. There is a statue of Baron von Steuben in front of the field where he trained soldiers of the Continental Army. I believe that his training of the soldiers helped insure our victory in the American Revolution, and might be the reason why we are not singing “God Save the Queen” today.

Historians rarely write about what happens to some Generals, on the losing side, after the Civil War. Brigadier General Thomas Jonathan Jackson, other wise known as “Stonewall” Jackson, was wounded by friendly fire from his own troops, that thought he was the enemy. He was shot in his left arm. That arm had to be amputated. Eight days later, he died of complications from pneumonia in 1863. I wanted to visit his cemetery in Lexington Virginia; I was told the General Robert E. Lee was also buried in Lexington, Virginia. But that visit would have to wait for another time. I had to return to the Inspector General School.

After serving six years as an assistant Inspector General, I transferred to a Brigade in the 85th Division that was located in Indianapolis, Indiana. I was assigned as an S2/S3. I was

there for a few months when the unit was informed that it would be deactivated. So I went in search for another unit. There was a notice that the 85<sup>th</sup> Division needed an experienced Inspector General. I applied for the position at the 85<sup>th</sup> Division Headquarters, which is located north of Chicago, Illinois. I interviewed for the job. The IG section had a 108-case back log, and only one soldier in the seven-soldier section. That soldier was an active duty Major. He was going through a divorce and was not able to perform his duties. He had ignored a Congressional Complaint. I was selected for the IG position. I told the Major to transfer to another unit which would be in his best interest.

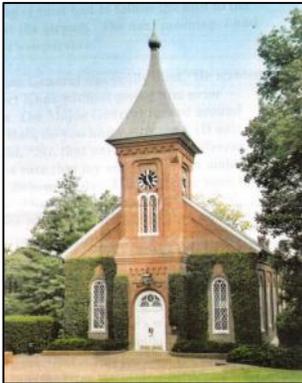
I began working on the Congressional Complaint. I was given another active duty Major.



I told him that his first responsibility was the Congressional Complaint. Then I received a phone call from the Inspector General School. They gave me a choice. I could return to the IG School for a one-week refresher course, or I would have to repeat the two-week IG training course. I asked the person at the IG School to give me the date of the next refresher course and I would have Orders published to attend the refresher course. The refresher course went by quickly. On the last day, I took a picture of the IG School's painting of Baron von Steuben. I

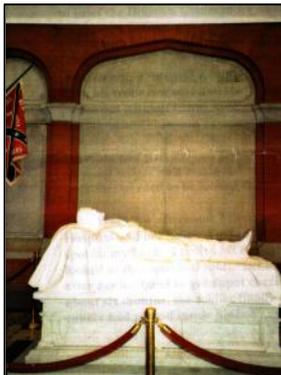
put a picture of the painting with this story.

On my way home, I stopped in Lexington, Virginia to visit the cemetery where



“Stonewall” Jackson and General Robert E. Lee are buried. I wanted to see what kind of memorial tombstones were given to the Generals. I went inside the local Chamber of Commerce building and asked for directions to the cemetery where “Stonewall” Jackson and General Robert E. Lee are buried. The receptionist gave me the direction to the cemetery. Then she said: “Only “Stonewall” Jackson is buried there.” She added: “General Robert E. Lee is buried in Lee Chapel on the campus of Washington and Lee University.” She told me that if I hurried, I could make it to the Chapel before it closed.

On October 2, 1865, the same day that General Robert E. Lee was inaugurated as



President of Washington College, he signed his Amnesty Oath, thereby fully complying with the provisions of President Andrew Johnson's Proclamation. But that document, allegedly, was given as a souvenir to a friend of the Secretary of State Willard H. Seward. So General Lee was not pardoned and his citizenship was not restored. An archivist at the National Archives found General Lee's Amnesty Oath among State Department records in 1970. In 1975, General Lee's full rights of citizenship were posthumously restored by a joint congressional resolution effective June 13, 1865. On August 5, 1975, President Gerald R.

Ford, at a signing ceremony, acknowledged the discovery of General Lee's Oath of Allegiance. He remarked: "General Lee's character has been an example to succeeding generations, making the restoration of his citizenship an event in which every American can take pride."

Artie Glen wrote the hymn "Crying in The Chapel." These are some of his lyrics: "You saw me crying in the chapel, the tears I shed were tears of joy. I know the meaning of contentment, now I am happy with the Lord. Just a plain and simple chapel, where humble people go to pray. I pray the Lord that I'll grow stronger, as I live from day today. I've searched and I've searched, but I couldn't find, no way on earth to gain peace of mind. Now I'm happy in the chapel where people are in one accord. Yes, we gather in the chapel, just to sing and praise the Lord. Take your troubles to the chapel, get down on your knees and pray. Then your burdens will be lighter, and you'll surely find the way...". General Lee was the President of Washington College from 1865 to 1870. He recommended the construction and helped design the chapel for worship and for student assembly. President George Washington left the college an endowment. General Lee helped stabilize the financial condition of the college and he made innovative improvements to the curriculum, to include adding a law school. The name of the college was changed to Washington and Lee College in 1870, after the death of General Lee. His wife, Mary Curtis Lee selected the chapel as Lee's burial site. His horse "Traveller." is buried in the grass next to the chapel.

I have been so blessed to have served this Nation as a soldier. But it is Christ's grace upon grace upon grace, and His inspiration that has allowed me to write stories. It is when we give Christ the honor, the glory, and the power, that we can find peace of mind, peace of soul, and contentment in the knowledge that we shall, one day, be with Jesus, in His Kingdom, forever and ever, amen.

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