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WITHOUT WARNING: THE SAGA OF GETTYSBURG, A RELUCTANT UNION HERO AND THE MEN HE INSPIRED

Captain Terry C. Pierce, U.S. Navy (Retired).
Stanwood, WA: Heart Ally Books, 2020.
734 pp. Maps. Illus. Appxs. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Rear Admiral Paul Becker,
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This is an amazing, exciting, easily readable historical novel. America's Civil War and those who fought it feature prominently in today's social discourse. The

timing could not be better to renew one's understanding of such a pivotal moment in our history.

Few, if any, authors in recent decades have examined the perspective of the Union Army victors at Gettysburg. Vanquished Confederates have drawn most of the literary and cinematic attention, while Northern leaders often appear as minor characters in supporting roles. Daring author Terry Pierce has no trepidation in flipping the script with a compelling character study of the champion of the most decisive battle ever fought on American soil.

Michael Shaara's well-known 1974 novel *The Killer Angels* tells the story of Gettysburg from Confederate viewpoints,

mostly those of Generals Robert E. Lee and James Longstreet. In *Without Warning*, Pierce provides a masterful depiction of triumphant Union General George Meade, Lee's counterpart. He does so through a writing technique called "deep point of view," which enables readers, scene by scene and chapter by chapter, to penetrate the main character's psyche.

General Meade was a reluctant commander of the Army of the Potomac. His orders from President Abraham Lincoln were unexpected and unsolicited as he took command of more than 90,000 troops from General Joseph Hooker just three days prior to Gettysburg. A sharp-tempered topographic engineer (his nickname was "the Snapping Turtle"), Meade was elevated from leading a corps to becoming the Army's fourth commander in eight months. It was a daunting task that lends itself to captivating scenes involving leadership challenges with a new staff and fog-of-war decision making while the Confederate Army's whereabouts was unknown.

Many have the impression that Meade's choices at Gettysburg played little role in the battle's outcome. Pierce's examination of the historical record from 27 June through 3 July 1863 dispels that perception and makes the case that Meade out-generaled Lee. A former commanding officer himself, Pierce employs realistic, gripping battlefield dialogue to depict Meade's operational course of action and deliberations, as well as the tactical choices of subordinates in the field.

All events in *Without Warning* are factual and paired with timestamps and illustrated maps to ensure a smooth flow of information. The characters were real-life participants in the battle. Meade is the centerpiece, but much attention is devoted to senior leaders such as Generals George Sykes, Gouverneur K. Warren, Winfield Scott Hancock, John Newton, David B. Birney, and George S. Greene. Also covered is the especially unscrupulous General Daniel Sickles, a viciously compliant Chief of Staff General David Butterfield, and several heroic First Minnesota Infantry Regiment soldiers from a unit that suffered an 82 percent casualty rate—while charging at Cemetery Ridge and the following day repelling Pickett's Charge.

American book readers and moviegoers enjoy stories of protagonists' struggles to succeed even when the endings are known in advance. *Apollo 13*, *Argo*, and *On Wings of Eagles* are a few examples. After reading Pierce's *Without Warning*, I am emphatic that it belongs in this category. Not only is the fast-paced story entertaining, but it is replete with case studies on dedication to duty, devotion to planning, flexibility in plan execution, making sense of ambiguous indicators in the absence of intelligence, and the value of humble, apolitical senior military leadership.

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