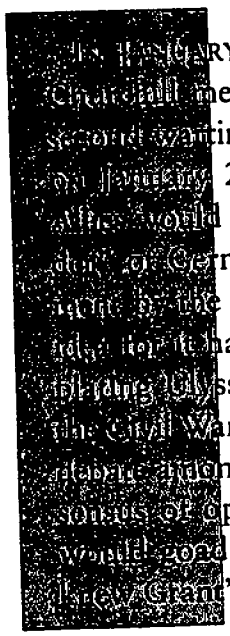
A LEGEND *is* BORN

At Fort Donelson, 'Unconditional Surrender' Grant learned that negotiating peace can be the most important part of making war

[*by* RICHARD F. SELCER]



IN JANUARY 1943, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT and Winston Churchill met in secret near Casablanca, Morocco, for their second wartime summit meeting. At the final press conference on January 24, Roosevelt announced to the world that the Allies would not stop until they had the "unconditional surrender" of Germany, Italy and Japan. It was an impulsive statement by the American president, who later explained that the idea for it had "simply popped into my mind" while contemplating Ulysses S. Grant's ultimatum to Confederates during the Civil War. At the time the pronouncement stirred a flurry of debate among British allies and his own generals, with the consensus of opinion being that it was a disastrous policy that would bond the Axis powers into a fight to the death. Who knew Grant's shadow was so long?

Conventional wisdom has alway pigeonholed Grant as a great militar captain but a dreadful president. Both a true as far as they go, but there w another side to Grant that was just important: He was a master of the art surrender. As the byproduct of a string battlefield victories, he forced the unc ditional surrender of three enemy armi something no other general officer American history ever accomplished—n Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArth George Washington or Winfield Scott.

The learning curve for Grant began the Battle of Belmont, Mo., on Novem 7, 1861. The fight was little more tha raid, but it gave Brig. Gen. Grant his f experience with negotiating milit terms. After that action he and seve

Ulysses S. Grant approached surrender negotiations much the same way he approached everything else in life—pragmatically, succinctly and free from the trappings of ceremony and pomp.

Confederate officers, including Benjamin Cheatham, met to settle a variety of issues, specifically prisoner exchange. The discussions were light and friendly, starting with reminiscences and other trifling matters such as horse racing before proceeding on to serious matters.

But it was at Fort Donelson in Tennessee, during his first negotiated surrender, that Grant initially revealed the character traits and behavior patterns of the victorious captain. Operations against Donelson were part of an amphibious campaign launched in early 1862 to push the Confederates out of middle and western Tennessee, thereby opening a path into the Southern heartland. In cooperation with Flag Officer Andrew H. Foote, Grant put together a joint task force of some 15,000 foot soldiers and seven gunboats to seize Forts Henry and Donelson, respectively guarding the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers.

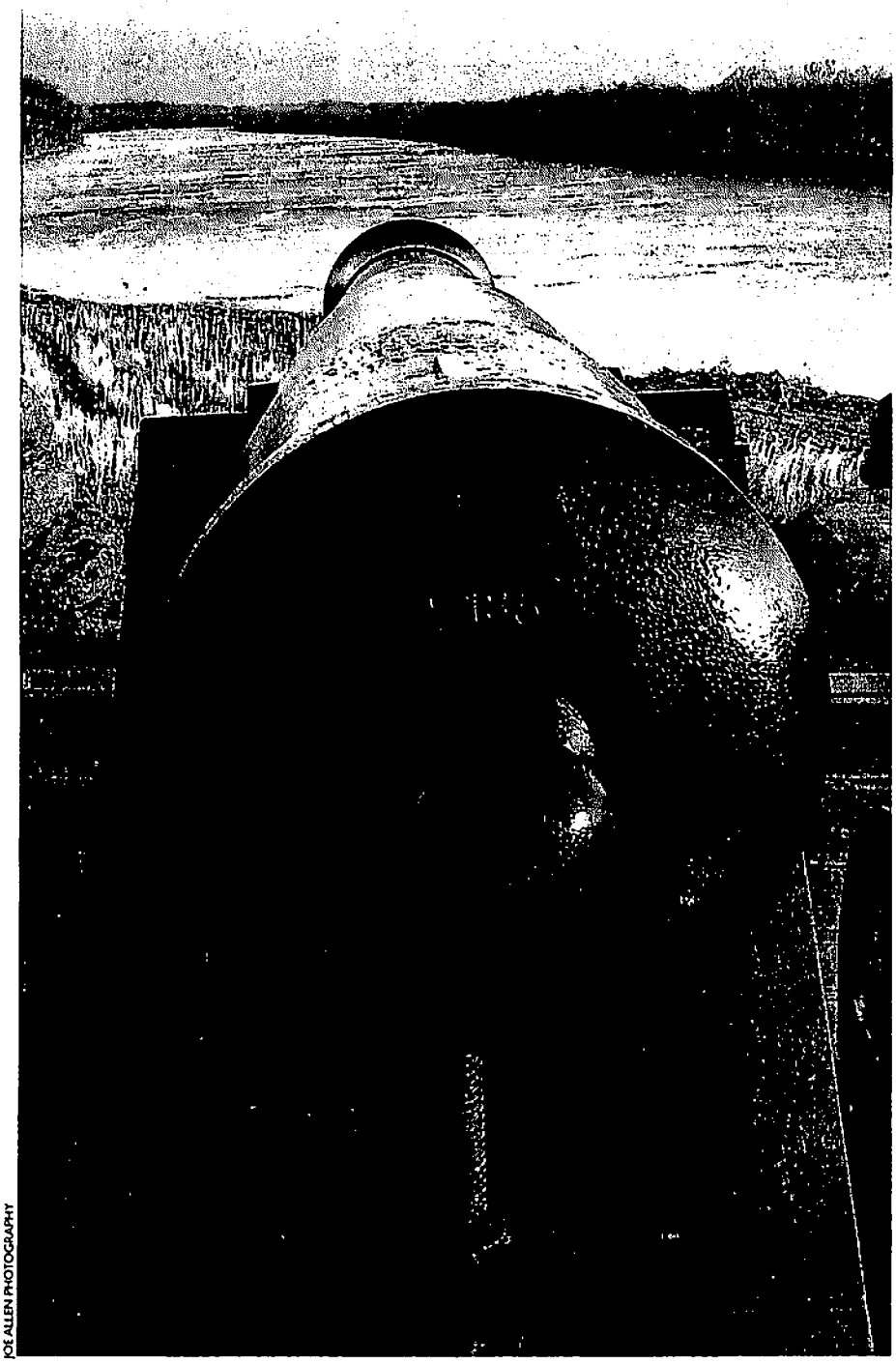
Foote won the first laurels by capturing Fort Henry while Grant's forces were bogged down in the mud miles away. When the Confederate garrison commander, Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman, sent out a flag of truce asking the terms of surrender, Foote sent back a blunt reply, "No sir, your surrender will be unconditional!" In one sentence Foote, the Navy man, had shattered all the old-fashioned and gentlemanly protocols of surrender.

WHEN GRANT AND FOOTE turned their attention to Fort Donelson, they found an objective considerably more formidable than Fort Henry had been. Donelson sat on bluffs overlooking the Cumberland River, 12 miles east of Fort Henry. Fortunately for the Federals, the Confederates had made the fatal flaw of dividing their command among four mediocre leaders: Brig. Gens. John B. Floyd, Simon Bolivar Buckner, Gideon Pillow and Bushrod Johnson, with Floyd the senior officer and Buckner the only West Pointer. Although it did not seem significant at the time, Buckner had a history with Grant. The two of them had forged a very close friendship during their West Point years and also served together in Mexico.

Despite Confederate command prob-

PICTURE HISTORY

Pillow, for whom Grant had nothing but contempt, announced at Donelson that surrender was not in his vocabulary



JOE ALLEN PHOTOGRAPHY

lems, Donelson would be a tough
the Northerners to crack. Alber
Johnston, the department com
had proclaimed his determina
"fight for Nashville at Donelson,
use] the best part of my army to
while a resolute Pillow announc
surrender was not in his vocabul
garrison that would have to b
those words was made up of
18,000 men strongly fortified
earth-and-log bastions, supporte
heavy guns, situated on a high bl
made them impervious to assau
the river side. The fort's 2½ mile
dering landward defenses were i
point, but even those were well sit

The Confederates had their
quarters in Dover Tavern, in the vi
Dover, while Grant set up his co
post on the river steamer *New
Sam*—oblivious to the irony. On F
15, he would place himself closer
action by moving his headquarter
log cabin of a Mrs. Crisp, some tw
behind Union lines. Foote's fl
headquarters was the ironclad *St.*

Grant was still getting acquaint
his lieutenants, none of whom
rightly be mistaken for Na
Bonaparte's field marshals. Tw
politicians turned generals: J
McClernand, a former Illinois c
man angling for Grant's job, a
Wallace, an Indiana state senator,
and part-time author before the w
only professional soldier in the gr
Brig. Gen. Charles F. Smith, w
come up through the old Regula
and helped teach Grant the art
when he was a cadet at West Poi
the student was the commander
teacher was the lieutenant. Grant's
diate superior was Maj. Gen.
Halleck, commanding the Depart
the Missouri.

Grant opened the battle on F
13, hurling his newly bolstered
21,000 infantrymen against the
earthworks in a series of uncoor

**Fort Donelson was the key to the Cumb
River for the Federals in 1862, and will
the key to Grant's meteoric rise.**

Donelson's fate was decided during heavy fighting on February 15, 1862 (right). A Rebel breakout lost momentum after initial success, and the Confederates were pushed back to the fort. That night men searched for wounded comrades by torchlight (far right).

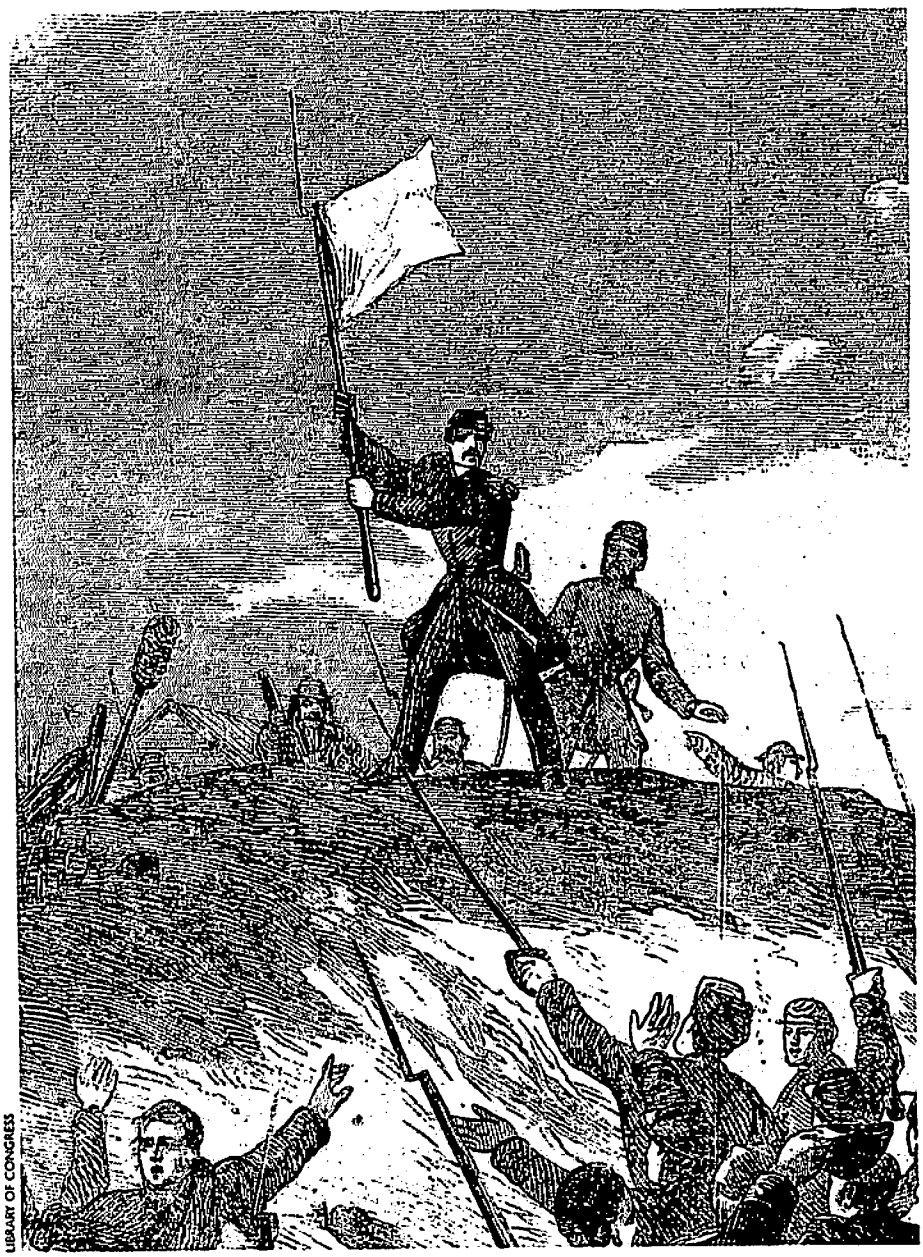
COURTESY OF RICHARD SELCER

HARPER'S WEEKLY

attacks while the gunboats traded shots ineffectively with Confederate riverfront batteries. At the end of the day, neither the Federal army nor the navy had made much progress. A winter storm descended on the area that night, adding to everyone's misery. The next day the infantry shivered in their siege lines while Foote, at Grant's prodding, resumed his ineffective duel with Confederate batteries. After Foote was wounded and his boats were badly mauled, the navy withdrew, leaving it all up to Grant.

THE SECOND DAY'S FIGHT encouraged the Confederates to go on the offensive on the third day to try to break out of their bottled-up position. When they struck early that morning, smashing into McClernand's troops, Grant was off conferring with Foote onboard *St. Louis*. The situation quickly became critical. The Southern assault pierced the right of the Union line and threatened to collapse the center and left, held by Wallace and Smith respectively. Meanwhile both Union generals meekly awaited orders from a commanding general who was nowhere to be found. By noon, the Rebels had opened an escape route and Grant's army was on the verge of crumbling when the day was saved by an inspired defensive stand from Wallace's troops coupled with the timely arrival of Grant on the battlefield. Grant ordered an immediate counterattack and then went looking for his old mentor. He found the unflappable old gent sitting serenely under a tree whittling away while the battle raged nearby, but as soon as Grant ordered him to "Take Fort Donelson!" Smith leaped to his feet and quickly prepared an assault.

By the end of the 15th, the Confederates had lost heart and pulled back to their original lines, leaving Grant in tenuous control of the situation. That night at Dover Tavern, a gloomy Confederate council of war took up the question of capitulation. By consensus, they decided the situation was hopeless, with



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Some Rebels escaped during the night, but the bulk of the men were left behind and surrendered the fort on February 16.

Grant had no desire to rub the Southerners' noses in their surrender; capitulation was humiliation enough

four of the general officers present (Floyd, Pillow, Johnson and Nathan Bedford Forrest) opting to escape the best way they could, leaving the disgraceful act of surrender to Buckner. Thus Buckner, mostly through no fault of his own, became the first general in gray to surrender an entire army. More important for this discussion, he became the first Confederate field commander who was forced to sue for peace terms.

BUCKNER GAVE HIS FELLOW generals a head start before beginning the painful process. He called for pen and paper to compose a message to his opposite number, though he was still not entirely clear on who that might be. Then he sent for a bugler and ordered him to sound the "parley" call, thereby alerting the Yankees that he wanted to talk. Finally he sent a staff officer, Major Nathaniel Cheairs, through the lines under a white flag to deliver the message to the first general officer he met. This is the communiqué that Grant received sometime before daylight on February 16: "In consideration of all the circumstances governing the present situation of affairs at this station, I propose to the commanding Officer of the Federal forces the appointment of Commissioners to agree upon terms of capitulation of the forces and fort under my command, and in that view suggest an armistice until 12 o'clock today."

Buckner's parley note first came into the hands of Smith, who read it and snorted, "I'll make no terms with rebels with arms in their hands—my terms are unconditional and immediate surrender!" Having expressed his opinion, Smith properly sent the courier and dispatch on to Grant, who decided to consult with Smith before composing an official response. The crusty old veteran told Grant the same thing he had said to Major Cheairs: "No terms to the damned Rebels!" This, in essence, formed the basis of Grant's official response. Although Grant's historic ultimatum of February 16 echoed the words already pronounced by Foote at Fort Henry and Smith to Major Cheairs, Grant would make no mention of being influenced by either Smith's or Foote's words in his memoirs, written many years later. One reason for the unusually blunt language was that Grant believed he was dealing with Pillow, for whom he had nothing but contempt, and that Buckner's signature only meant he was the amanuensis for his commanding general. Grant sent a terse message back to Buckner: "Sir, Yours of this date proposing Armistice, and appointment of Commissioners, to settle terms of Capitulation is just received. No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately upon your works."

As a member of the brotherhood of Old Army officers and Grant's personal friend, Buckner had every reason to expect a sympathetic reply from his counterpart. That was the way such things were supposed to work among gentlemen. Just 10 months earlier, after Fort Sumter surrendered, Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard had allowed Major Robert Anderson to march his troops out under arms while the victors formed ranks and delivered a salute.

But Grant was not Beauregard. Buckner was stunned by the tone of Grant's reply and had to reread it several times. He had assumed that his forces would be allowed to go home with what West Point graduates had learned to call a *parole d'honneur*, although there was no formal protocol on such things between the North and South at this point in the war—and there would not be for another five months. What Buckner wanted was an extemporized agreement that would be strictly local and informal. Grant's hard-nosed reply made him briefly consider taking back his offer to surrender, but he was in no position to be proud, with his men threatening to become unruly, his defenses breached and a parley already opened. For the rest of his life Buckner believed that if Grant had known who was in command at Donelson, then "the articles of surrender would have been different," that is, more generous and chivalrous.

After weighing his options, Buckner decided that honor and protocol permitted no further resistance. He accepted Grant's ultimatum, but sent back a reply that was more petulant than submissive: "The distribution of the forces under my command, incident to an unexpected change of commanders, and the overwhelming force under your command, compel me, notwithstanding the brilliant success of the Confederate arms yesterday, to accept the ungenerous and unchivalrous terms which you propose."

The first high-level contact between the two armies involved Generals Wallace and Johnson, both of whom were freelancing. Accompanied by their aides, Union Lieutenant James R. Ross and Confederate Major W.E. Rogers, the generals met in front of Wallace's lines, with Rogers given the unwelcome job of carrying the white flag. Following stiffly formal introductions, Wallace spoke first, asking whether the surrender was "perfected." Johnson admitted that he did not know about the rest but his troops were already drawn up with their arms stacked and ready to be processed. Wallace ordered Ross to go with Rogers to carry the news to Grant's headquarters, then he issued orders for his men to move forward and take possession of the Confederate lines. His orders included a strong prohibition against any taunting or cheering. Concluding their brief unauthorized parley, Johnson and Wallace rode into Dover. For the next several hours Wallace continued to operate entirely on his own, ignoring the chain of command and acting as if Grant were a thousand miles away instead of only two.

GRANT MAY NOT HAVE HAD everything under control, but he was far from passive during this time. His first actions after receiving Buckner's capitulation were sensible. He dictated orders repositioning his troops to receive the Confederate surrender. Then he ordered his quartermaster to assume control over all public property, and strictly forbade any pillaging in or around Dover. At that point, however, his natural impatience got the better of him. He simply could not stand the thought of being stuck at headquarters and out of the action. He could

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Simon Bolivar Buckner was a colorful Confederate brigadier from Kentucky and a prewar friend of Grant's. The surrender of Donelson was dumped on him by superiors.

have let commissioners handle things—that was customary—and waited for Buckner to come to him in supplication, but he chose instead to go in person to Buckner's headquarters to finalize the surrender. He was not concerned with following military protocol or showing who was in charge, and at this point he was still unaware that Wallace was trying to grab the glory. Grant simply wanted to settle matters face to face. As he would later tell Confederate General John C. Pemberton, "I do not favor the proposition of appointing commissioners to arrange the terms of capitulation because I have no terms other than [unconditional surrender]."

Grant's approach to surrendering was the same as it was to fighting: pragmatic and unpretentious. He had no intention of holding a formal, parade-ground surrender ceremony, with the Confederate commander handing over his sword. Not only was Grant uncomfortable with such formality, but he had no desire to rub the Southerners' noses in it; capitulation was humiliation enough. To finalize the surrender on this Sunday morning, Grant simply mounted up and rode through the lines into Dover, taking along minimal staff and no bodyguards. The fact that Confederate troops were "in a bad humor," and therefore liable to take a bead on the first Union officer they saw, apparently did not enter his mind. He did not request a Confederate escort to ensure his safety, and there is no indication that he traveled under a white flag.

Up to this point, Grant had been upstaged by his subordinate officers, Wallace and Smith, who had interjected themselves into the process uninvited. Smith was subsequently consulted by Grant, but Wallace continued to act separate of the chain of command. On his own initiative he rode to Dover Tavern to see Buckner. Like Grant, Wallace had been friends with Buckner before the war, but that hardly justified his presence at Confederate headquarters without Grant's authorization. And, according to Wallace's account of the meeting, they did not confine their conversation to prewar reminiscences or simple pleasantries.

What would take only two hours at Appomattox took two days of dickering at Donelson

Buckner nervously asked his friend, "What will Grant do with us?" Wallace, choosing his words carefully, replied that the Grant he knew would treat them as "prisoners of war," whatever that implied.

Wallace was not the only officer on the Union side with his own agenda. Shortly after Wallace arrived at the tavern, another Union officer came through the door—Commander Benjamin M. Dove, who was on a mission to accept the surrender of the fort on behalf of the U.S. Navy. Dove would have claimed the honor of receiving Buckner's sword too if Wallace had not gotten there first. The two Union officers had a brief discussion before Dove withdrew. Afterward the Navy suspended him for letting the Army claim all the credit.

Grant arrived at Dover Tavern an hour and a half after Wallace to find the two generals enjoying a traditional Southern breakfast of coffee and cornbread. Wallace offered no explanation for his presence at enemy headquarters, and such a breach of military etiquette startled even the phlegmatic Grant, causing him to later write in his memoirs, "I presume that, seeing white flags exposed in his front, he rode up to see what they meant and, not being fired upon or halted, he kept on until he found himself at the headquarters of General Buckner." Wallace's presence thoroughly annoyed Grant and began a rift between the two that never healed. Grant's ire, however, did not extend to Buckner.

When Grant arrived he peremptorily took over possession of the tavern as his temporary headquarters. Then, with Wallace on hand as a witness, the formal surrender discussions commenced. Until this moment Grant had not realized whom he would be dealing with, expecting that it would be Pillow. Face-to-face with Buckner, he adjusted his thinking accordingly, and the subsequent mood of the discussion was one of unfailing politeness. Still, as Buckner recounted the event many years later to an English friend, neither commanding general seemed eager to get down to business. Instead they broke the ice by reminiscing about the old days together at West Point and in Mexico. They even managed a wry exchange about their present situation when Buckner observed somewhat defensively that if he had been in command of the fort from the beginning, Grant would not "have got up to Donelson as easily as [he] did." Grant graciously conceded the point, adding that if Buckner had been in command, he (Grant) "should not have tried in the way he did."

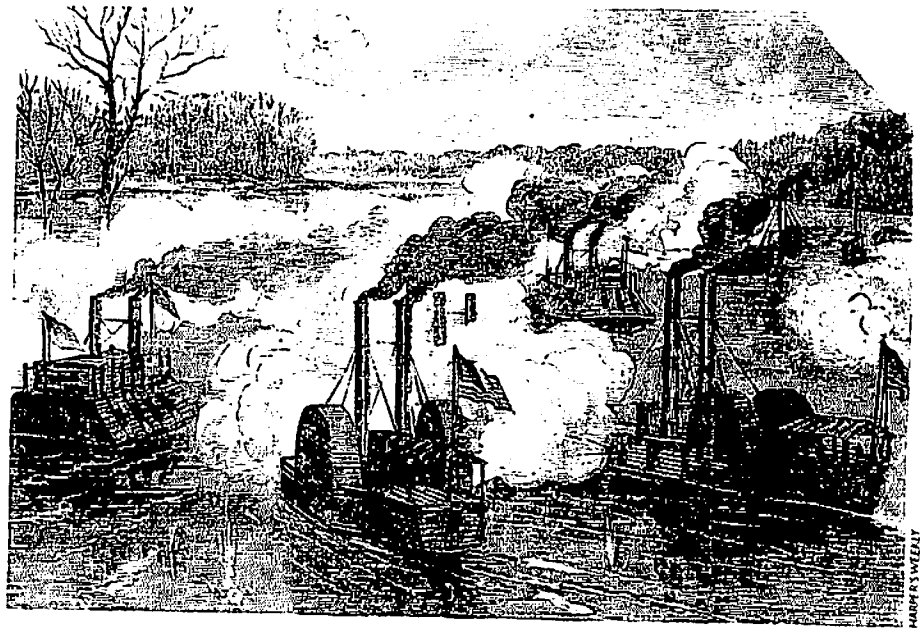
The light banter continued as Grant asked about the missing General Pillow. "Why didn't he stay to surrender his command?" Grant inquired. "He thought you were too anxious to capture him personally," replied Buckner, to which Grant quipped mischievously: "Why, if I had captured him I would have turned him loose. I would rather have him in command of you fellows than as a prisoner." The banalities helped soothe Buckner's ruffled feelings, allowing the discussion to proceed smoothly to more substantive matters. It was an approach that would serve Grant well in similar situations later.

Apart from Grant and Buckner taking each other's measure, very little was settled at this first meeting. The two commanders agreed to cease all operations immediately, and Grant asked for details on the condition of Confederate forces. Buckner, more out of ignorance than deceit, was unable to provide much helpful information, but he agreed to do so as soon as possible. He asked permission to send out search parties between the lines to bury Confederate dead. Grant agr immediately issued the appr orders. This was an act of genero Grant later regretted, believing t numbers of Rebels took advanta opportunity to melt away. Tw later, after the Battle of the Wil Grant would not be so gener trusting.

One of the first rules of negot to try to reach agreement early o points, then build on that found addressing more substantive r Even though he was untrained ir of surrender, Grant did this inst at Dover Tavern. The first day's between the two men set the t hammering out the major issues day.

Buckner had more to worry ab the fate of his men. He was unde ment back home in Kentucky for ing a brigadier general's commi the Confederate Army in Sep 1861. Now, having been capture act of bearin against his he faced real pro trial

Flag Officer Andrew Foote and his gunboats are sometimes forgotten in Fort Donelson's story. While not as effective as it had been at Fort Henry, the Navy considered its contribution important enough to send its own envoy to accept Donelson's surrender, but he was beaten to the punch.



Foote's gunboats had done the bulk of the work at Fort Henry 10 days earlier while the infantry—and Grant—were bogged down in the mud. It was Foote who accepted the fort's surrender on February 6.

desertion and treason. Grant could easily have placed him under arrest and held him for court-martial, which was what many Northerners advocated for former U.S. Army officers who had resigned their commissions. Yet he offered no judgments of Buckner's choices and would not hold the sword of Damocles over his head. Instead, he treated the Confederate as the duly authorized representative of a legitimate government and kept focused on matters at hand. As he left Dover Tavern at the end of this first meeting, Grant made a magnanimous gesture completely outside the scope of traditional surrender protocols: He drew Buckner aside and offered him money out of his own pocket.

"Buckner," he said, "you may be going among strangers, and I hope you will allow me to share my purse with you." According to an observer who knew both men well, Buckner was grateful for the kindness but told Grant he had already made provisions "so that he would not require financial assistance." Writing in his memoirs in 1884, Grant recalled it as a "friendly conversation," an entirely different take than what Buckner described to an interviewer in 1904. Forty-two years after the fact, he recalled their conversation as a "rancorous exchange," ending when he struck the purse out of Grant's hand and stalked away. Either way, Grant's offer was commendable.

It did not come out of the blue, however. Back in 1854, just after Grant had left the Army and was down and out in New York City, the two old friends had bumped into each other and Buckner had loaned the penniless ex-captain money to get home to Ohio. Now Grant had an opportunity to repay what was both a financial obligation and a debt of honor. Grant was not one to forget a kindness, no matter how much time had gone by, nor to let the business of war trump friendship. On the other hand, he would not let his personal sense of obligation interfere with his responsibilities as a U.S. Army officer. In the end, he delivered his old friend into captivity along with 50 other Confederate field officers, and Buckner would spend six months at Fort Warren, Mass., until exchanged by formal cartel in August.

The final act in this little drama would come 24 hours later. In the meantime, Grant and Buckner busied themselves attending to the myriad details involved in giving and receiving the surrender of a large armed force. Lines had to be disentangled, the dead had to be buried, booty and prisoners had to be counted, transports had to be brought up to remove the POWs—and those were just the obvious things. Neither officer had any prior experience to fall back on, and the West Point curriculum did not include courses in how to surrender.

GRANT MADE SEVERAL ERRORS of omission while feeling his way through his first surrender. For one thing, he should have appointed an experienced officer as provost marshal to handle the transfer of some 12,000 men. Instead things got so chaotic that Buckner complained to him on February 16, "There seems to be no concert of action between the different departments of your army in reference to these prisoners." Still, Grant was more comfortable keeping a light hand on the reins.

Another consequence of his command style was that his senior officers, specifically Smith, felt free to hand out paroles to Rebel officers on their own initiative. Even Buckner got in on the act, insisting on issuing passes to his men that would be honored by Union sentries. Amiable as ever, Grant went along, seeing no harm in letting men move back and forth between the lines now that the fighting was over. This was another decision he came to regret. Finally, Grant was lax in regulating the behavior of his own men. In the first 24 hours of the truce, jubilant Union soldiers left their lines to parade through Confederate encampments with U.S. flags flying and bands playing. Only the intervention of Confederate officers prevented ugly confrontations with Rebel soldiers.

On February 17, in the salon of *New Uncle Sam*, the final terms were nailed down and the necessary documents signed. What would take no more than two hours to accomplish at Appomattox in 1865 took two days of dickering at Donelson before everything was settled.

It did not make Grant's situation any easier that Buckner was a far tougher negotiator than Robert E. Lee, partly because Buckner was not shy about using his friendship with Grant to wring out every concession he could get, and partly because war-weariness had not set in and both sides still entertained hopes of ultimate victory. However, Grant was no gullible farm boy; his instincts were shrewd. For instance, he insisted on using his own headquarters on the second day instead of returning to Dover Tavern. He thereby forced his enemy to come to him, a valuable trump card in any peace negotiations.

When Buckner, accompanied by a pair of staff officers, came onboard *New Uncle Sam*, Grant was in conference with his senior officers. He got up immediately to receive the Confederates and make introductions all around. Then, since there were still substantive matters to be settled, they got down to business. Grant and Buckner took seats facing each other across a table in the center of the room while a recording secretary sat down at Grant's elbow. Staff members arranged themselves behind their respective generals. As on the previous day, Grant was

low-key, even affable, and steered the conversation away from politics and military affairs at the beginning. "Dignity and dispatch," noted one observer, marked the day's proceedings from beginning to end.

Neither brigadier general wore a dress uniform for the occasion, preferring to stay in campaign clothes—which were more suitable for a cold, wet February day. According to newspaper correspondent Charles C. Coffin, a witness to the affair, the short, round-shouldered, "rather scrubby looking" Union general, whose ill-fitting uniform emphasized his slight stoop, did not look the part of a victorious captain. But it did not matter, as Buckner hardly cut a dashing figure either, with his "meager whiskers" and mud-caked boots, casually attired in a "light-blue kersey overcoat and a checked neckcloth." Their negotiations looked like the meeting of a couple of farmers across a pasture fence.

BESIDES THEIR EDUCATION and military background, Grant and Buckner shared a fondness for the occasional stogie. Both men lit up during the meeting, filling the small room with pungent smoke. Afterward the Northern newspapers picked up on this detail and recast it as a defining quirk of Grant. Those newspaper reports would result in thousands of admiring citizens sending him boxes of cigars, leading to a 20-cigar-a-day addiction—which eventually led to his death from cancer of the throat in 1885.

The first item on Grant's agenda was getting detailed intelligence on the size and structure of the Confederate forces. According to Coffin, Buckner freely gave all the information Grant requested about Confederate fortifications, troop dispositions and the intentions of the high command. Grant was not indulging idle curiosity; the fact was, he did not have an intelligence operative on his staff to ferret out such information. As a result, he had only a fuzzy notion of what he had won.

For his part, Buckner was still trying to get all the wiggle room he could under the original "unconditional surrender" dictum. He asked for both military and humanitarian concessions, and as they talked, Grant began to realize just how many perfectly reasonable conditions could attend an unconditional surrender. Step by step, Grant backed off his original demand. Grant the relentless bulldog on the battlefield became Grant the compassionate conqueror at the peace table.

The suffering of Buckner's cold and hungry men in particular touched the Union general's heart. Grant had come to negotiate a surrender, not to feed the multitudes. Now he found himself in uncharted waters, where no American commander had ever gone before. It was Buckner who broached the subject, explaining that his men had eaten almost nothing for two days, and now they were facing a delay of at least another two days before reaching their final destination. Could Grant see his way clear to provide food out of the ample Union stores?

This was Grant's first notification of the chronically poor state of the Confederate commissary supply. It took him a few moments to digest this new information and respond appropriately. At first he demurred that he would like to help but his own commissary staff was not up to speed yet. Buckner did not give up so easily. "My staff is perfectly organized, and I place them at your disposal," he said. Grant was a thoroughly practical man, and this was a practical albeit unorthodox solution. He accepted Buckner's offer and issued the special orders for his commissary supply officers to deliver two days' rations to the Confederates.

Buckner continued to lead the conversation, making additional requests, each of which received a fair hearing from Grant. For example, Grant "readily acceded to" Buckner's request for "special treatment" for his wounded officers. It was not just their injuries that aroused his sympathy but the fact that these were brother officers, some of whom Grant knew well from West Point and service in the Old Army. That was the same reasoning behind his decision to allow commissioned officers to retain their side arms, although it meant that Rebel officers would be going into captivity carrying pistols and swords. Grant knew that an officer's sword was more than just a weapon; it was the traditional symbol of his rank and authority. And many revolvers were family heirlooms that had great sentimental value. In the military world of rank and privilege, Grant was cognizant of both.

HIS GENEROSITY DID NOT stop with opposing officers. Without Buckner even asking, Grant sent the sick and wounded of both sides off to Union hospitals in Paducah, Ky. "No distinction has been made between Federal and Confederate [casualties]," he notified his superiors. Grant agreed to let the rest of the Southerners, who were facing extended incarceration in prison camps, keep whatever clothing they possessed as well as blankets and "such private property as may be carried about the person." By tradition, as Grant knew, POWs were relieved of everything but the clothes on their backs. Grant saw no need to impose unnecessary suffering.

In fact, Grant was proving so agreeable that it was beginning to seem as if there were no request he would refuse. If that was what Buckner thought, however, he had misjudged his opponent. Buckner asked that he be allowed to send a brief report to his department commander, Albert S. Johnston, explaining his actions. And he asked that his officers be allowed to send open letters to their families or friends back home to put their minds at rest.

Grant the relentless bulldog on the battlefield became Grant the compassionate conqueror at the peace table.

Although the historical record is inconclusive on Grant's response, there is no evidence that Johnston's headquarters at Nashville received any communiqué from Buckner at the time. There is, however, good evidence that Grant allowed at least some correspondence of a personal nature to go out, in the form of a letter from Buckner to his wife Mary, which opens, "I am a prisoner of war." It is dated February 18, 1862, and its contents suggest that Grant was not too concerned about military intelligence being leaked. In the letter, the general mingled profes-

sions of love with descriptions of final Confederate operations, the conduct of his two fellow commanders (Floyd and Pillow), Confederate losses and his destination as a POW.

As the discussions wound down, Grant continued to demonstrate exceeding generosity, charging Buckner to see to it that his troops laid down their arms and proceeded in an orderly fashion to the Dover landing, where they would board prison transports. Grant told Buckner to accomplish the objective however he deemed best, with the proviso that Confederate regimental and company grade officers should remain in command of their troops right up until the men boarded the transports. Even Buckner was struck by how trusting Grant was.

This was more than a matter of trust, however. Grant, it should be remembered, had no provost guard, no prisoner stockade and no experience handling large bodies of POWs. Simple necessity forced him to trust his enemies to be men of honor, and at least one of them did take advantage and escaped after surrender protocols were invoked. Johnson went over the hill on February 18, a prospect that Grant did not foresee when he telegraphed Henry Halleck two days earlier that he had both Johnson and Buckner in custody.

If he was less than rigorous about the details, it was because Grant did not consider himself a prison warden. He saw his job as winning battles and regarded the POW problem as a distasteful byproduct of victory on the battlefield. Concerning the thousands of prisoners captured at Donelson, he wrote his superiors that he would be "truly glad" to get rid of the lot of them. They were easier captured than taken care of, he groused, predicting they would "prove an elephant" for the government. His preferred solution would have been to parole all captured Confederates on the spot, but that decision was not his to make.

Grant was not so nonchalant about his own men being held by the enemy. During the first day's fighting, Confederates had captured some 250 Yankees. While their river access was still open they had shipped these men to a point safely behind Confederate lines. Now Grant announced he would keep an equal number of Confederate prisoners behind until those men were returned. As for the rest, they would go to Cairo, Ill., to await further disposition. There is no evidence that Grant's ploy was successful in prying Yankee POWs out of Confederate hands, but the fact that he made a good-faith effort is admirable.

AFTER THE LAST "i" WAS dotted and the last "t" crossed, Grant considered his work done. He wanted no stage-managed surrender ceremony that would demean the Southerners and force everybody to stand out in the cold, wet weather, and he certainly did not want Buckner's sword. He felt so vehemently about it that when Dr. John H. Brinton, the army's chief medical officer, asked when the official ceremony would be held where the Rebels marched by on parade, stacked their weapons and lowered their standard, Grant gave a waspish reply: "There will be nothing of the kind. The surrender is now a fact. We have the fort, the men, the guns. Why should we go through vain forms and mortify and injure the spirit of brave men, who, after all, are our own countrymen?"

Having won the victory, Grant did not waste time crowing about it either. He dashed off a perfunctory report to Halleck at St. Louis on the 16th, writing in the plural: "We have taken Fort Donelson...." The rest of the telegram was nothing more than an accounting of what was captured. He also sent off a brief handwritten dispatch to Brig. Gen. George W. Cullum, Halleck's chief of staff at Cairo, commending his officers and troops for their performance. Unofficially, Grant was more exuberant in a letter to his wife Julia, calling Fort Donelson "the greatest victory of the season" and "the largest capture I believe ever made on the continent."

The fruits of this victory were sweet indeed. The entire military situation in Tennessee and Kentucky now swung in favor of the North, setting the stage for the campaign that would ultimately wrest control of the Mississippi River from the Confederacy. The news reverberated as far away as London and Paris in short order. Halleck's headquarters issued official commendations for both Grant and Foote, and Grant got a fast-track promotion to major general of volunteers. He became the man of the hour to a Northern public starved for victories early in the war. "Unconditional Surrender Grant" was largely a legend created by the Northern press, but it served him well. He never took credit for coining the phrase that first made him famous, and he remained the same man after Donelson as he had been before. CWT

CORBIS

"Unconditional surrender" made sensational headlines, but Grant ultimately conceded on some fronts, particularly regarding the treatment and handling of 12,000 prisoners.

Richard F. Selcer is a professor of history and author of several Civil War titles, including Lee Versus Pickett: Two Divided by War. *Part two of this article will appear in next month's issue.*

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Wrath Awaits the Invader

A friend presented me with a copy of the August edition of *Civil War Times*. I read "Wrath Awaits the Invader" on Confederate Captain John Dickison and enjoyed it very much. I thought the article presented a well written and, more importantly, very honest view of the War of Northern Aggression. I quit reading *Civil War Times* years ago, nor would I advertise in it because this sort of unbiased article would seldom find its way into the magazine's politically correct pages. I must now give you a second look; perhaps the editor has changed since I quit reading 6-7 years ago.

I especially liked the account of the two women involved. Though I am an avid reader of first person accounts, I have seldom read accounts of Confederate women as participants or casualties and hope this may bring more examples to light.

Please keep up the good work. Every bit of truth you can introduce to the world will help brighten the Confederacy's undeservedly tarnished reputation.

Shannon Pritchard
Mechanicsville, Va.

Connecticut Connection

Given the great vastness and scope of the Civil War, it is remarkable when something can become so personal. Such is the case in your September issue of *Civil War Times*. In the "Friends to the Death" article by Jerry W. Holsworth, I was amazed to find that one of the lead characters, Union colonel Henry W. Kingsbury, was put in command of the new 11th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry—the same unit that my maternal great-grandfather, George H. Keables, mustered into in December 1861. Kingsbury took command right after the Peninsula campaign and was killed while valiantly leading a skirmishing party at Burnside's Bridge on September 17, 1862. I am fascinated by Kingsbury's stern reforms of the regiment that resulted in its being the "cleanest, most orderly, and best trained outfit in the division." I wonder what my ancestor's opinion of the young colonel was.

I learned from the National Archives that George H. Keables served in Company H of the 11th Connecticut. He was promoted to sergeant when he reenlisted as a veteran volunteer (under General Order 191) on December 13, 1863. He was promoted to second lieutenant at Chapin's Farm, Va., on December 10, 1864, and in June of 1865 was made first lieutenant and transferred to Company E as acting quartermaster. By this time the record shows he was in the 1st Brigade, 3rd Division, of the XXIV Corps under Maj. Gen. Edward Ord. He resigned his commission on May 16, 1865, an order approved and signed by General Ord.

The archival records, to my disappointment, give little information about the war record of my great-grandfather and the 11th. As for the battle at Burnside's Bridge on September 17, 1862, his muster roll records for the months of September and October 1862 have no remarks. I cannot say whether he was engaged in battle there or not. The records show only that the 11th was at Fredericksburg and the siege of Suffolk, Va., but I can assume they were at many other engagements.

The one fact the records do show is that in four years my great-grandfather went from a private to a first lieutenant at the age of 23. Given the casualty rate of soldiers due to disease and combat I find it remarkable that George H. Keables made it through the entire four years unscathed. He died in 1915 at 75 years old.

George R. Ullrich
Suffolk County, N.Y.

Printer Error

We apologize for a printer error that deleted and/or repeated pages in some copies of our October 2006 issue. The printer has been sent to old Libby Prison as punishment. If you were affected by this please e-mail us or send your name and address to our editorial office and we will send you a replacement copy.