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Two Angels and Walt Whitman: Servant Leadership and the American War Between the States

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I must begin with a caveat we'll call "truth in advertising." My upbringing branded me on the tongue, and although I lack my father's drawl, I seriously doubt that anyone mistakes me for a Yankee. In case I'm wrong, I've worn the correct color and the tartan I share with John C. Calhoun. I'll also remind you of my bio and relate a story.

I'm a Southerner born, bred, and educated, never living farther north than Louisville, Kentucky, for any length of time. I'm also just four generations and less than a century removed from what folks still referred to in my childhood as either "The Late (some said "Recent") Unpleasantness" or "The War Between the States." They used both terms advisedly, but also in an unconscious eloquence born of human memory. Thus the story.

In 1982, James McPherson's prize-winning *Ordeal by Fire* was newly published. My grandmother, whose paternal grandfather commanded Law's brigade of Alabamians under Marse Robert's direction, asked about possible Christmas presents; my cousin Craig requested that book. Mama Ray said if he wanted it, she'd get it for him, but she doubted its value. "Anybody who grew up in the South," she insisted, "knows what that time was really like."

I grew up hearing stories from the past. From them I learned history's many faces—human faces distorted by perceptions that accrete fact with myth. If God is in the details of life, then the importance of the past lies in its humanity. I'll talk tonight about servant leadership in an era from which Americans still seek artifacts they call relics. In so doing, I'll offer a monument to some whose actions imprinted themselves on observers' minds and hearts. Tonight we'll resurrect the memory of the Angel of Marye's Heights, Richard Rowland Kirkland, and the Cairo Angel, Mary Jane Safford.

In his sterling initiation of this year's lecture series, Ben Elrod reminded us that the heart of servant leadership is choosing a life of service to others rather than self; leadership is a product of that life observed. To Dr. Elrod's observation I would add that such service must be constructive for the served and the larger whole.

One might expect this talk to center on The War's great leaders: Robert E. Lee, whose selfless service to state and section, devotion to duty, and acceptance of personal responsibility made him a Southern icon; or Abraham Lincoln, whose selfless devotion to Union and singleminded pursuit of a quick victory and lasting peace led to his assassination. But neither they nor any of their ilk qualify for our discussion. Military and political leaders—indeed any in authority—are disqualified because of the natures of the military, politics, and position.

First, consider the military. Its hierarchical structure commands absolute and unquestioning obedience that is reflexive rather than reflective. Its mission is destructive and operates on a pragmatic estimate of the minimum force necessary to render the opponent incapable of resistance. Military leadership unleashes man's destructive instinct through the group psychology of a military setting and movements *en masse*. In wartime, the military plays its role on a stage on which leaders calculate to achieve goals through destructive force when they assume they can win. Cost is never directly part of the equation. Hence Lee and Grant could be called butchers for sending wave after wave of men against fortified lines that tactically should have been avoided at Gettysburg and Petersburg respectively.

Second, consider politics. Political leaders accumulate and exercise power through self-service. The American iteration calls upon partisanship to reward friends and punish enemies through a party system that elevates loyalty above ethics. Politics is pragmatism defined; it also emphasizes that any means is justified by the end of success. No trick is too dirty, no scheme too low--unless it fails. Though this spirit exists at all levels, the quest for more prestigious office strengthens it proportionally. As one pre-war politician said of a perennial presidential aspirant, "No man who has ever gazed upon the purple has been completely sane again."

Finally, consider position. Just as achievement of place requires service to self, so does its possession and maintenance. The fame of Cincinnatus, called to an absolute authority which he relinquished at the crisis' end to return to plowing his fields, has lived since Roman times because its rarity validates Lord Acton's famous observation: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Position instills constraints of thought and action that obviate servant leadership.

Testing these assertions against Dr. Elrod's model clarifies why Christ rejected military and political power in the wilderness and in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Each time, He rejected the premise that man, not God, offers humans their salvation. It also clarifies why He remained outside the traditional power structure.

If my assertions become givens, with traditional leaders rejected from consideration, what form might servant leadership take in time of crisis, and what might its characteristics be? Some answers lie in tonight's three examples.

First, consider Walt Whitman. Through a combination of intent and happenstance, he came to a wartime avocation as hospital visitor, which he poetically christened wound dresser. He was familiar with hospitals long before brother George signed on as a 100-day militiaman for a war that politicians confidently predicted would be over in 60 days—long before war turned the entire country into "one vast central hospital." When war came, the Poet of America had visited sick and injured stage-driver friends in New York Hospital wards for a year or so and was at home with the sights, sounds and smells of every procedure of a peacetime hospital.

Walt lacked any discernible qualifications to be an officer, and, at 42, was over-age for the ranks which his brother joined. He also never fancied himself a soldier: "I could never think of myself as firing a gun or drawing a sword on another man," he mused. Still, he could not be left out of his generation's great defining moment.

Hospital work connected him to what he called "the distinguishing event of my time." It originated when Walt hastened from New York to Fredericksburg, where he'd heard that George had been severely wounded. Finding George whole, he visited hospitals. At a large brick mansion on the banks of the Rappahannock he saw, not ten yards from its front door, a horse-cart load of amputated feet, legs, hands and arms lying in a heap at the foot of a tree. Other hospitals were merely tents—sometimes very poor ones—beneath which the wounded lay on the ground, lucky if their blankets were spread on layers of pine boughs or leaves to shield them from hard-frozen ground and occasional snow.

Walt began Washington hospital visits shortly after returning from Fredericksburg at the end of 1862, when he casually visited some Brooklyn men. Gradually he became a regular, going almost daily and frequently in the evenings, circulating through the wards, as he said, "distributing myself and the contents of my pockets and haversack": delicacies, and tobacco for those who craved it; bits of clothing; and especially writing materials and reading matter.

By 1863, Washington offered a variety of venues: about fifty hospitals housed up to 70,000 sick and wounded at any given time—roughly equal to the city's peacetime population. Hospital overflow filled the Capitol, churches, taverns, schools, Georgetown prison, General Lee's Alexandria mansion, and even the spaces between the glass display cases in the Patent Office. In 1865, Whitman contrasted Lincoln's Second Inaugural Ball there with "the amputation, the blue face, the groan, the glassy eye of the dying, the clotted rag, the odor of wounds and blood" that had filled it earlier.

Doctors warned against hospital fever and hospital fatigue, and against spending too much time breathing the effluvia of gangrene and dysentery, but Walt continued anyway. He saw every kind of malady and "pretty bad, some frightful," wounds on men who arrived "in their old clothes, unclean and bloody." He watched soldiers waste away, sometimes over months; in one case, over a year. He saw trials of soul and body that "dwarfed indignation, baffled understanding and description, made conventional piety blasphemous," convinced him that war was "nine hundred and ninety-nine parts diarrhea to one part glory" and led him to conclude that "people who like the wars should be compelled to fight the wars."

Mostly he saw the war's trademark—amputations. Three of four surgical procedures were amputations; at Gettysburg, some surgeons did naught but amputate all day for a week. Some soldiers threatened with a pistol to save their limb, and in some cases Whitman intervened; even years later, a stranger would occasionally accost him and point to an arm or leg he had saved. Such heroics were not always successful, and some amputations even had to be done over, driving men crazy from too much suffering and leaving Walt feeling "I sometimes wish I was out of it."

In part, the wish came from sheer numbers. Watching an ambulance procession in 1863, he observed that "This is the way the men come in now—seldom in small numbers, but almost always in these long, sad processions." A year later was "just the same old story, poor suffering young men, great swarms of them...every day, all battered and bloody...." By the war's end, he figured he had made over six hundred hospital visits, often lasting several days and nights, and ministered to nearly a hundred thousand sick and wounded of both sides—a creditable estimate in light of the four million cases treated in Union hospitals.

Walt's daily visits allowed him to get on "intimate and soon affectionate terms with noble American young men...." His three years "aroused undreamed-of depths of emotion." Encounters with patients opened "a new world...to me, giving closer insights, new things, exploring deeper mines than any yet, showing our humanity." Soldiers clung to him, and he felt enriched "personally, egotistically, in unprecedented ways." It was "delicious to be the object of so much love & reliance." His "chronically objectless affections" had never been "so thoroughly and...permanently absorbed, to the very roots, as by these huge swarms of dear, wounded, sick, dying boys...."

From them he learned details which filled the little notebooks that he made and carried everywhere—details from

which he wrote when he left the hospital. He yearned to capture the war's essence: "You want to catch the first spirit," he recorded, "to tally its birth. By writing at the instant, the very heartbeat of life is caught." His imagination fed on the combat experiences of patients, though the writing at times was costly; he confessed that "Some days I was more emotional than others; then I would suffer all the extra horrors of my experience; I would try to write blind, blind with my own tears."

After the War, Whitman tried to articulate why he had done what he had. He did not go to the hospitals "to proselyte, to observe, to do good, to sentimentalize—from a sense of duty, from philanthropic motives" like the "women, preachers, emotionalists, gushing girls..." he met there. He undertook hospital work from "a profound conviction of necessity, affinity, coming into closest relations...with the whole strange welter of life gathered to that mad focus." He wanted to "collect a little of the driftwood of that epoch and pass it down to the future." He found "a religion....that...seized upon me, made me its servant..." and offered "a trail of glory in the heavens." He concluded, "there were thousands...needing me....What could I do?"

His ledger of gain and loss was simple. The war's feverish excitements, physical deprivations, and lamentable sights offered "the greatest privilege and satisfaction...the most profound lesson of my life. It has given me my most fervent view of the true ensemble and extent of these States." Despite the cost, he said that what he got made the price seem cheap: "I got the boys; then I got *Leaves of Grass*—but for this I never would have had...the consummated book...."

Walt Whitman undertook the admirable good of hospital visiting in order not to miss his generation's defining event, and out of a need to provide grist to the mill of his writing. He profited emotionally from his investment of time and effort. His reasons for serving were selfish and his example singular. We may agree with the Armory Square hospital nurse who said, when she saw the beard, ruddy face, big soft-brimmed hat, and country clothes that reminded one contemporary of an old Southern planter, "There comes that odious Walt Whitman to talk evil and unbelief to my boys. I think I would rather see the Evil One himself." We may dismiss his visiting as self-serving and exempt him from consideration as a servant leader. Such is not the case with our second example. She had no desire to achieve the immortality of letters and no kin for whom the boys served surrogate. The Cairo Angel began her experience as a hospital visitor, but unlike Walt, she became a nurse.

Mary Jane Safford was born on the last day of 1834, a farmer's daughter from Hyde Park, Vermont. She had three older brothers and a sister or two, and by the time she could walk they had all moved to Crete, Illinois. When she was about ten, Mary went back east near Montreal, then on travels at home and abroad for an "ornamental education" to equip her for polite society. Orphaned at fifteen, Mary lived with brother Alfred, who read law but gave it up for business. In 1854, they moved to Shawneetown, where Alfred did a little banking and she opened what locals derisively called "The Safford Ragged School." Four years later the Saffords moved to Cairo.

In 1861, the Saffords found themselves adjacent to the camp of the Army of the West, commanded by former Galena merchant Ulysses Grant. The Saffords knew Grant and new President Abraham Lincoln, who had left Springfield for Washington only two months before. With her friends' permission, Mary immediately began bringing food and supplies to soldiers who suffered from exposure, illness, and malnutrition during that first year, when a third of the Union army was on sick call at any given time.

Though she lacked kith and kin in the camp, Mary was drawn to it as she had been to the poor children of Shawneetown. Two categories of people generally persevered in visiting soldiers: relatives; and a collection of men, about one in three a Protestant minister, the others elderly gentlemen, retired or with private means and time to spare. Mary Livermore, head of the US Sanitary Commission, remembered Safford as the first woman in the West—probably in the country—to "enter upon hospital and camp relief." The sister of Cairo's richest banker may have been "utterly unaccustomed to hardship," petite (she looked all of about twelve); "young, ornamentally educated and frail as a church lily," as one person described her (though folks would have called an unmarried female of 27 an old maid); or "beautiful, patriotic and sweetly romantic," as another observed. And the role of ministering angel may have been very popular in the era's fiction and poetry. But when realities of summer heat, flies, and smells repelled other visitors, Mary persevered.

Grant's men lacked organized care, so Mary set out to establish regimental hospitals and see that they functioned. Some say she hung white lace curtains at the bare windows and provided flowers or colorful leaves to brighten the wards. Others remembered that she held Sunday afternoon meetings, with sacred music and visiting preachers. Mary's refinement, persistence, and care led soldiers to dub her the "Cairo Angel." As one wrote from Cairo to Chicago early on, her life "since the beginning of the war, has been devoted to the amelioration of the soldier's lot, and his comfort in the hospitals." He noted that she was "by no means officious," but "wholly unconscious of her excellencies, and the great work she is achieving...in the quietest and most unconscious manner." He closed with the lament of a soldier in the nearby Mound City

hospital: "I'm taken care of here a heap better than I was at Cairo; but I'd rather be there than here, for the sake of seeing that little gal that used to come in every day to see us. I tell you, she's an angel, if there is any."

Mary's introduction to war's realities came at the end of the first week in November. Grant's feint against Belmont, Missouri, threw just over 3,000 troops through thick woods toward a Confederate camp. He left the field and his wounded to the Confederates and took some captured guns and horses and a few prisoners back the twenty-odd miles to Cairo.

Mary was the only woman traversing the field the morning after the battle. She stopped by each fallen man to see if he still lived and if so, what might be done for him. No truce agreement was in place, and as she neared the Confederate line a shot rang out. She tied her handkerchief to a ramrod and carried it through the cold November wind as she cared for the wounded. Boats carried the men back to Cairo. Mary met them with every wagon, buggy, handcart, and wheelbarrow she and others could scrape up, and ferried some to spare rooms in the homes of the Cairo residents she had convinced to provide space.

Mary had found her calling. She was in the wards at all hours, performing the intimate services that helpless men require. A colleague remembered Safford "wearing herself out, not eating enough and sleeping little. She never learned the necessity to spare herself," throwing herself instead into hospital work with energy and "forgetfulness of self...." She "learned to set aside the inhibitions and artificialities of the traditional lady...discard superficialities,...and come to grips with the essentials of life in the dirt and blood of the wards."

Things slowed down a little through early winter, but by mid-February, 1862, Mary was tending the wounded after the Battle of Ft. Donelson. There she encountered, on a larger scale, the same suffering she had found after Belmont. She left the field hospitals for a floating one named the "City of Memphis." On it she made trips between the Fort and Cairo before failing health forced her to revert to hospital visitor. As a co-worker noted, Mary "never learned to endure suffering in others without emotion...."

At Shiloh that April, Mary encountered the worst of war. Grant's troops were disposed with a view to favorable camping facilities rather than defense, and the Confederates caught them unprepared. In the section of the battlefield bounded by the Hornet's Nest, Hell's Hollow, and a peach orchard in spring's bloom, rifles and guns shredded the ranks of both sides until the water in the shallow pond in the center of that region reminded participants of the plague-reddened Nile. When the underbrush around the peach orchard caught fire, smoke carried the smells and sounds of the wounded, dying, and burning men and horses toward the river. Grant lost more men at Shiloh than he had engaged at Belmont, and his memoirs recorded that at this bloodiest battle in the West "I saw an open field...so covered with dead that it would have been possible to walk across the clearing, in any direction, without a foot touching the ground."

Mary came to Shiloh from her sickbed, against her doctor's advice and her brother's pleadings. She had been ill since Donelson, unable to eat and sleeping only fitfully. She hitched a ride on a hospital boat. Friends hoped that shipboard duty would shield her from field hospital rigors; if so, it offered only the lesser of two evils.

Sanitary Commission worker Mrs. A.H. Hoge remembered the "Hazel Dell" after Shiloh:

"the vessel, from stem to stern, became a mass of wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. So closely were these men packed, that scarce room was left to plant the foot of relief without touching the quivering mass of nerves. Even if the foot of the merciful found a base of operations, it was oft-times submerged in the blood of the sufferers....The cabin floor...where the operations were performed, ran in streams of blood, and legs and arms...were rapidly dismembered...." The Cairo Angel worked on that boat "With a calm dignity and self-poise that never blanched at any sight of horror, with a quiet energy and gentle authority that commanded willing obedience...."

A wounded captain's story was a case in point:

"My wound got to bleeding, and though I was faint from loss of blood, I did not know what was the matter. She found it out, for she slipped in a pool of blood beside my bed, and called a surgeon to me just in time to save my life. Gracious, how that little woman worked! She was everywhere, doing everything, straightening out affairs, soothing and comforting, and sometimes praying, dressing wounds, cooking and nursing, and keeping the laggards at their work. For herself, she seemed to live on air. And she had grit, too, I tell you."

Her grit extended to living in the same clothes from the time she left Cairo until she returned after Shiloh.

Following Mary's example, a number of women were at Shiloh as regimental nurses; like her, they often paid a great price. Jerusha Small contracted "galloping consumption" and at her own request was sent home to die; Anna McMahon came down with measles and lived only five days. They lacked a coffin, so a carpenter made one as decent as possible from some cracker boxes. They wreathed it with flowers from the battlefield and buried her beneath three large trees on the bank

of the Tennessee River.

The strain of nursing at Shiloh broke Mary's health and injured her spine, requiring an operation in Paris during a five-year recuperation period abroad. Upon her return, she studied medicine, then practiced in Chicago and Boston, teaching in the latter city and writing several books. She evidenced a life-long pattern of service to those in need without seeking recognition, spending her time in Boston championing the lot of women in an urban industrial world by stressing the role of exercise, hygiene, environment, and climate in good health while advocating dress reform. When her health broke again in 1887, she moved to Tarpon Springs, Florida, where she died treating patients in a typhoid fever epidemic in late 1891.

Our first two examples come from hospital service, and are progressively selfless. Our last example, Richard Rowland Kirkland, the Angel of Marye's Heights, provides a different look at individual initiative as a basis of servant leadership.

Dickie Kirkland, for so his father called him, was born in August, 1843, near Camden, SC. When the Governor called for volunteers to defend home and hearth, John Kirkland's boys were hot to go, but agreed that not everyone could. They drew straws. James, oldest of the lot with a wife and three kids, drew short and stayed home with sister Caroline, their youngest brother (16-year-old Sammy), father, and the twenty slaves with whom they cultivated three farms. On April 9, 1861, Dickie, Jesse, Danny, and Billy signed up.

Dickie was trying to establish himself as a man when the war came. His mother had died shortly after Sammy's birth, when Dickie was only two; his father, siblings, and grandparents had reared them. Dickie worked his father's land and turned his hand at whatever came his way to earn money for farm implements, looking toward a place of his own. The year before, at sixteen, surveying as a chain carrier had become his major source of extra money.

He may have been Dickie to his father, but once he joined the army he grew a pencil-line moustache and answered to Richard at every roll call. His company showed up in Charleston before the shooting at Ft. Sumter stopped—witnesses to, but not participants in, war's inauguration. The spring tobacco crop had been planted and everyone expected to be back for harvest, but by mid-April they had entrained for Richmond. There Richard never complained of the discipline, the meals and quarters shared with strangers, or any of the hundreds of things that affect a young man away from home and family for the first time. But he was homesick. What he wanted most, he wrote, was to do his duty and go home.

Almost three months to the day after arriving in Richmond, Richard crossed Bull Run with his unit at Mitchell's Ford and headed up a steep hill in the face of enemy fire, emerging from his baptism at the top unscathed. For the next year, he participated in Virginia battles and earned sergeant's stripes for his 19th birthday. By September he was in Maryland, facing the enemy at the little town of Sharpsburg after fighting his way past Harper's Ferry. He returned with Lee to Virginia and what he wrongly assumed would be a relaxing time snug in the log huts of winter quarters.

Despite personal misgivings about his competency, thirty-eight-year-old General Ambrose E. Burnside reluctantly assumed command of the Union army at the end of the first week in November, 1862. He eschewed winter quarters. Instead, through unusually bitter cold and a snow that began as they marched, his Army of the Potomac went south in search of the big victory that would end the war in the Union's favor. His line of march put him in position to strike between the separated wings of Lee's army and defeat them in detail, but Burnside abandoned that promising plan for the lure of Fredericksburg.

The first Union troops got there on November 17, before Confederate General Longstreet could arrive, but Burnside refused to allow a hasty river crossing. Only the 400-foot-wide Rappahannock River stood between him and victory, but the 122,000 Union troops awaited the arrival of a pontoon bridge until the 25th, then tried to protect the engineers assembling it. The delay gave Confederate General Stonewall Jackson time to arrive from the Shenandoah Valley, so that Lee's 78,000 men stretched above and below the town before Burnside acted. He finally settled on an assault through the town and up a hill which, if taken, would divide Lee's army. His men fought house to house from the river to the town's landward edge. There they prepared for the uphill assault across the open fields that lay between Fredericksburg and Marye's Heights.

About mid-day of December 13, 1862, blue-clad troops began their charge up the hill. Roughly halfway up waited the gray line, four ranks deep on Telegraph, which locals called the Sunken, Road behind a stone wall meant to keep wagons from toppling down the hill. In the freezing late morning, the Southerners kept up a steady round of volleys from each rank behind the wall in turn. No Union soldier came closer than ten yards to the wall; bodies piled up on the slope. After more than a dozen charges, as the light failed and the heavy smoke from black powder guns mixed with rising fog, the battlefield was left to the dead, the dying, and the wounded on the ground; to those poised under arms on both sides, sleeplessly waiting and watching through the cold night; and to snipers seeking targets of opportunity.

For warmth, Richard huddled next to his best friend from home behind the safety of the stone wall. Wounded Union soldiers who could, stripped clothing from their fellows, or piled the dead around them for warmth and safety from snipers. Everyone suffered from a cold which formed ice from their breath in the beards of the living; the wounded suffered also the fire of raging thirst which always accompanies severe blood loss. Through the cold night air came moans, groans, and calls for water, help, or mother from the wounded who could not leave the frozen hillside.

The early morning light revealed that the previous evening's mist had dissipated but not disappeared. Neither side had fires; those who would get them ate rations cold. Everyone waited. Snipers occasionally put out of their misery the wounded who tried to crawl and kept the venturesome of both sides behind their respective covers. Over the scene rose the undying sound of the wounded.

By midmorning, Richard had listened to the pleas for help as long as he could. He went to his company commander, asking permission to vault the wall and take water to nearby Union wounded. The captain sent him to the regimental commander, who in turn sent him to the General. Despite misgivings and an initial refusal, General Joseph B. Kershaw reluctantly approved Richard's request but denied the insistent sergeant's request to show a flag of truce. Not even a white handkerchief on the end of a ramrod, he cautioned.

Richard gathered as many canteens as he could carry in both arms and around his neck. He jumped the wall to completely fill the canteens at Stevens' well, sheltering from Union rifle fire behind its stone curbing. Then the canteen-laden youth lurched onto the battlefield, pursued by fire from the lines below as Union troops sought to kill the enemy among their wounded.

Richard reached the first live casualty, knelt beside him, raised the man's head in the crook of his arm and rested it on his gray coat. Then Richard let him drink. Shoving a cartridge case under the fallen man's head, Richard straightened him out, covered him with an overcoat, left him the canteen, and moved to the next man. As Union troops realized what was happening, their firing sputtered out while the sounds of the wounded intensified.

When he had exhausted his water, Richard carried to the well the empty canteens he'd accumulated from the fallen. Some accounts maintain that intermittent fire resumed while he was at the well, none of it directed at him. All agree that whenever he moved among the wounded, firing ceased. Some accounts maintain that others emulated his action; other observers assert that he alone braved the battlefield. We know that one dying Union soldier thrust a letter into Richard's hands with the urgent request that it be mailed, and that another entrusted to him a watch and box, offering the sergeant the watch if he'd just see the box to the Yankee's girl back home.

By noon, Richard was safely behind the wall, rearmed, his errand of mercy finished and cheered by both sides. The last of the mist burned off and both sides prepared for a resumption of the attack, which never came. Having lost 12% of his men, Burnside finally withdrew his forces under cover of darkness. Richard too withdrew to go home and try to recruit more soldiers and to court his second cousin.

Between April and September, 1863, Richard survived Chancellorsville and the hellish fighting at Gettysburg's Little Round Top without a scratch while earning a battlefield promotion to lieutenant. From Pennsylvania he returned to Virginia, then boarded a train for north Georgia. In mid-September, the South Carolinians faced Union troops across another river—the one the Cherokee had named Chickamauga, the River of Death.

Through the north-Georgia woods that September 20, Kirkland's regiment fought a seesaw battle. On toward evening, exposed with two comrades on a grassy knoll in the face of advancing troops, Richard covered the two as they sought shelter. When they looked back, he was down, shot in the chest.

The force of the .54 caliber bullet drove him down the lee side of the hill, temporarily offering cover. The two returned, intent on carrying him to what safety they could find. "Save yourselves," he ordered. Then he implored, "Tell Pa I died right. I died at my post." A few minutes later the Confederate line reformed and recaptured the lost ground, ensuring that the body of this twenty-year-old would not end up in one of the mass graves so common during this war.

Richard joined the half of Kershaw's Brigade listed as casualties that day. They sent his body home, where his family buried it in a secluded part of White Oak Plantation beneath a simple stake marred only by his initials. This, and the stories told by the soldiers of both armies who witnessed his selfless act at Fredericksburg, were his only memorial for almost half a century. But as the ones who had survived that holocaust were dying off at the turn of the century, and the stories were being lost with them, some wrote those stories down.

The writing gave the stories reality. South Carolinians successfully asked the family to allow his remains to be moved to a place of prominence in Camden. Schoolchildren raised money for a fountain. And when the war's centennial rolled

'round, The Angel of Marye's Heights got a bronze sculpture dedicated near the site of his heroism.

So what do these three examples tell us about servant leadership in the maelstrom of the American War Between the States? They say that servant leadership is not the particular province of any political party, gender, or side of any given conflict; none of these three acted out of a sense of partisanship or as a result of orders. They say that neither noble acts like Walt Whitman's, nor selfless acts like Richard Kirkland's, necessarily provide servant leadership. They say that servant leadership is a matter of individual action, taken from a sense of internal prompting, often anonymously. They say that unprompted acts of merit often summon from those who witness or hear of them a like response, an urge to go and do likewise. They say that servant leaders are often ordinary people performing ordinary tasks in extraordinary circumstances. Most importantly, they say that servant leadership emerges in a pattern of individual acts. Our choices—not our abilities, titles, or affiliations—qualify us as servant leaders.