

It's not often that rank-and-file soldiers win a battle without the aid or approval of their top brass. But that is just what happened to the Union Army at Missionary Ridge. This fight was part of the great Battle of Chattanooga. It turned out to be one of the major victories of the whole Civil War.

Some of the Union's best generals were on hand that day. General U. S. Grant was in overall command. Fighting Joe Hooker led the troops on his right. William Tecumseh Sherman was in charge on his left, and George H. Thomas in the center.

On this day the Union generals were less than happy. They were trying to drive Braxton Bragg's Confederates away from the high ground just outside Chattanooga. Up to the middle of the afternoon things had not been going just right. Hooker's troops had indeed taken Lookout Mountain. At the other end of the line, however, Sherman was getting nowhere with his attack.

At last Grant ordered General Thomas to attack the Confederates on Missionary Ridge. The idea was not to take the ridge. All Grant wanted was to take the pressure off Sherman's troops on the left. It was perfectly clear that this hill could not actually be taken by force. There were rebel rifle pits at the foot of the hill. At the crest was a solid line of troops. Grant's plan seems to have been to seize the rifle pits. Then Bragg would have to protect the crest more heavily. To do so, he would have to pull out troops in front of Sherman.

So Thomas sent forward four divisions of foot soldiers. They took the rifle pits without much trouble. But then they found them-

selves in a spot. They were wide open to heavy fire from the Confederates on the crest. To stay in the pits was out of the question.

Retreat, then? No, indeed. Suddenly the Union soldiers started up the steep hillside in a ragged charge.

A mile to the rear, at his headquarters on a hill, Grant watched in startled disbelief. He wheeled on Thomas and asked angrily who had sent the men up that hillside. Thomas, bewildered, said that *he* had not ordered it. The question then bounced down to General Granger, who commanded the attackers. Granger said that he had not ordered the advance either. But he added in a pleased way that once his men got started it was very hard to stop them.

Grant muttered that somebody would pay if this move ended in disaster. He then turned back to watch the incredible thing that was happening.

Up went the ragged column of soldiers. They were advancing in clusters, each cluster following a regimental flag. One of the foremost of these flags was carried by Lieutenant Arthur MacArthur, not yet twenty years old. He was scrambling breathlessly up the slope. He never looked back, trusting that his men were following him.

The Confederates blistered the slopes with gunfire. It was a costly climb; at least 2000 Union soldiers were shot down on that hillside. But somehow the rest kept going. One flag reached the top, then a second and a third. Suddenly the whole Confederate line broke and the defenders went streaming to the rear. Bragg's line was smashed. The great generals had been presented by their men

with one of the most spectacular and important Union victories of the war.

Lieutenant MacArthur was unhurt. He won a Medal of Honor for his day's work. Later he was placed in charge of his regiment. He served in the war with Spain. He became

military governor of the Philippines. Finally he retired as a lieutenant general. Along the way he became father of a son who was also to win fame as a soldier. That son? General Douglas MacArthur—a very good chip off a very good block.

CHECK YOUR READING

- 1. Missionary Ridge was taken during the Battle of**
 - A Bull Run
 - B Chattanooga
 - C Gettysburg
- 2. The unusual thing about the victory was that the generals did not**
 - A watch it
 - B want it
 - C plan it
- 3. The Union Army seems to have been spread out in**
 - A one long line
 - B several small circles
 - C one large circle
- 4. The general in charge of the Confederate troops was**
 - A Sherman
 - B Bragg
 - C Hooker
- 5. Grant ordered the attack on Missionary Ridge in order to**
 - A capture the hill
 - B surprise his own troops
 - C help General Sherman
- 6. Taking the rifle pits cost Thomas' troops**
 - A too much time
 - B not much trouble
 - C much loss of life
- 7. The Union soldiers could not stay in the pits because the Confederates were**
 - A shooting at them
 - B surrounding them
 - C spying on them
- 8. The charge up the hill was ordered by**
 - A Grant
 - B Granger
 - C none of the generals
- 9. The leaders of the charge were carrying**
 - A signs
 - B flags
 - C torches
- 10. In the charge, Lieutenant MacArthur was**
 - A killed
 - B wounded
 - C unhurt