

30 Business “No No’s” (9)

It is a “No No” to give your energy to foolish people.

Don't bother talking sense to fools; they'll only poke fun at your words. Solomon¹

In the Civil war the largest battle to ever take place on American soil took place at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Hidden in the archives on this battle is a little known story involving two heroes who fought in the Battle of Gettysburg. One was a brilliant West Point graduate and the other a politician who was given a commission by the US Congress. Major General Daniel Sickles Commander of the Third Core and the Commander of the Potomac Army General George Meade are the two heroes.

Daniel Sickles was elected to congress to represent the district of New York. He was a brilliant politician. However, when he found that his wife was having an affair he was enraged. He learned who the man was and peering out his window one afternoon he saw the man walking near the Whitehouse. Sickles left his office and shot the man in plain sight of several nearby witnesses. He was later acquitted on the basis of his defense. He claimed he was temporarily insane. Sickles was reckless, and the more he drank, and womanized the better it seemed to get for him as a politician. He had his eyes on becoming president of the United States, but this scandal ruined his political career.

As a result of his disastrous choices he sought for other ways to gain a chance at being a politician again. He sought a commission with the United States Army, and gained it because he was able to use his influence to raise an army from New York. The congress commissioned him as a general and he performed well in his first two battles. However, Sickles was stubborn and foolish. He wouldn't take orders. He wouldn't listen. He was reckless and given to being overly eager for a fight.

In the army that General Meade was given command over leading up to the Battle of Gettysburg Sickles was the only general that was not a West Point graduate. He was a politician. Meade was a well known tactician with a great understanding of the importance of knowing the topography of the land you may have to fight on. He received at least two commendations for bravery and was recommended to President Lincoln by several other generals to take over as commander of the Army of the Potomac. He inherited Sickles who was very good friends with General Joseph Hooker. Hooker resigned after being defeated by General Robert E. Lee at Chancellorsville. Meade was a military genius. He quickly moved the army of the Potomac west toward the mountains vowing to fight Lee and the Virginia's where ever he met them. In the process he forced General Lee to bring his army together. Learning that Lee had come down from the mountains he arranged for the army of the Potomac to take up lines of defense in a fish hook along a place called Cemetery Ridge just west of the town of Gettysburg. In this position he believed that Lee could beat his head against his lines all he wanted, but would meet with defeat if he chose to do so.

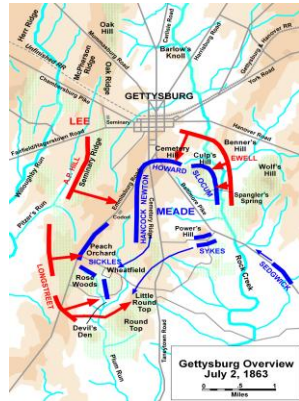
Sickles division, third core, was to connect the lines of two other divisions and hold a little place along the ridge that led up to a hill called “Little Round Top”. Sickles was literally the tail end of the fish hook along the southern most line. Sickles did not like Meades thinking and since his army was in a little recession in the ridge he refused and sought permission to move his division to a place called Peach tree ridge. When the orders to form the line in the way that General Meade wished came back Sickles refused and ordered his division forward to what he believed was the higher ground. However, this decision moved the line about a ½ mile south of where it was supposed to be. It exposed the whole western side of the union line and did not protect the Union's supply lines. Sickles division was in an indefensible position. At about that time General Meade and General Sickles ride out to the line and Meade sees that Sickles division is too far out and orders the division back. Sickles asks General Meade if would like for him to recover his division to the ridge as he order. Meade's response was, “I do not think that your division is recoverable.” At that moment the rebels opened up fire on Sickles Third Core. The fool was caught. Sickles Third Core and two divisions that were sent to support them were all but destroyed or had to be reformed as parts of other divisions. Sickles leg was hit by a canon ball and crushed. His leg was amputated later that day. You can find this fool's leg in The National Museum of Health and Medicine on display.

Make no bones about it! It is a “No No” to give your energy to a foolish person.

¹ Proverbs 23:9 (MSG)



General Sickles Leg



Map of Sickles Breaking Line

The Lord commonly gives riches to foolish people, to whom he gives nothing else. Martin Luther⁴

After Sickles was retired out of the army he served as US Ambassador to Spain for then President Grant. He returned and won a seat in the US Congress. Later, he became the chairman of the New York State Monument Commission for 26 years till his death. Sickles was given the Congressional Medal of Honor and is buried in Arlington Cemetery. General Meade died of complications from his wounds during the war and is buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery, near Philadelphia. He did not receive any award from Congress other than being forced to defend his victory against the accounts of General Sickles. Sickles, after being shot went to Washington and published several "true" accounts of the Battle of Gettysburg honoring himself as the hero. These were published anonymously. However, Meade was damaged politically and these publications resulted in Grant becoming the lead General of the Civil war, and Meade having a diminished role. When Grant took leadership Meade offered his resignation, but Grant refused it.

Round Table:

Are there any foolish people that you are giving your time to?

What makes a fool?

What are some ways to handle foolish people if you can't avoid it? What types of people do you think you should be spending the bulk of your time with?

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sickles_leg.jpg/ April 30, 2009; 2 PM

³ http://www.posix.com/CWmaps/Gettysburg_Battle_Map_Day2.png/ April 30, 2009; 2:20 PM

⁴ <http://en.proverbia.net/citastema.asp?from=1&ntema=Money&tematica=780/> April 30, 2009; 2:30 PM

