

## Gettysburg staff ride gives leadership lessons to National Security Seminar participants

By Alex Pinnell, Public Affairs Office 13 June 2018



*National Security Seminar participants and historian Doug Douds take sides in a discussion about toxic vs. immature leaders. Staff Ride historians used discussions to connect the events of the Battle of Gettysburg to modern-day leadership issues, dur*



*NSS participants make their way up Little Round Top while learning about the Union's strategy. Army War College historians recounted conditions and situations in the context of the terrain of the Gettysburg Battlefield to help NSS participants under*

About 160 civilian leaders and experts from across the country gathered for a Gettysburg Staff Ride Leadership Experience as part of the National Security Seminar. Participants enjoyed the expertise of Army War College historians as they took leadership and strategy concepts to a new level with detailed, historic discussions.

The Gettysburg Staff Ride, which took place on June 6, 2018, emphasized the elements of leadership that had been introduced to participants during the National Security Seminar, the capstone event of the Army War College's 10-month curriculum. While touring Little Round Top and walking the field of Pickett's Charge, they examined military decision-making processes during the battle. By the end of the tour, they had a deeper knowledge of how these strategic choices relate to their roles as community and business leaders.

The staff ride was like watching history come alive. said Joel Press.

founder of Press Management LLC, thanks to the visualization of the personalities and issues at play. A staff ride is a traditional military teaching tool that uses tours of historic encounters to provide visual insights into leadership, strategic processes, and the human condition during combat.

Professor Julia Ivy, of Northwestern University, agreed that the expert historians brought the battle to life with their storytelling skills. The four staff ride historians were Army War College faculty whose focus is on the strategic leaders' efforts to link tactical decision-making with larger objectives of the geo-political environment of the day.

These historians led animated discussions about the choices of Civil War superiors like Gen. Robert E. Lee and Gen. George Meade. This interaction covered historical context and relevant lessons for civilian leadership by encouraging participants to weigh the options from the generals' point of view.

"It's about leadership issues that we... deal with everyday. They haven't changed in 100 years," said John McBeth, President and CEO of Next Century Corporation. Among other lessons about judgment and adaptability, "It's really about the interpersonal relationships between the leaders."

The historians asked tough questions: "Where do you place yourself for the greatest impact? How do you pass on a vision? What is your life worth?" Despite the centuries that separate us from the Civil War, the battlefield is still full of these lessons about mentorship, accountability, and overcoming friction, noted the participants.

"In many ways, things don't change. Principles remain the same even though conditions don't," said Ira Friedman, CEO of Material Technologies, Inc. He connected this to the National Security Seminar: "The greatness of our Army [is] that we train our people at places like the War College to think on their feet."

At the same time, Army leaders learned the civilian view: their priorities, strategies, and understanding of military issues. These interpersonal relationships are as crucial today as they were in Gettysburg, said the historians. This is the role of the National Security Seminar: to unite a diverse group of leaders to examine how strategic, critical thinking impacts both national security issues and civilian leadership.

Janet Tippet, a retired publisher for The Daily Item, said, "I have a greater appreciation of the military and its work." Her leadership was affirmed by

this experience, she said.

The Gettysburg Staff Ride Experience is key to understanding the National Security Seminar's lessons, and the historians are vital to making the staff rides relevant year after year. Doug Douds, Director of Expeditionary Warfare at the Army War College, received many compliments for his detail and guidance. Before his recent retirement, Douds was a colonel in the United States Marine Corps, and he now teaches the Carlisle Scholars Program seminar.

He thoroughly enjoys leading these tours of Gettysburg, he said. "From here you can look back... [and] from here you can spring forward."