

Book Review: Ball's Bluff by Byron Farwell

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The following is a review and short summary of *Ball's Bluff: A Small Battle and Its Long Shadow* (EPM, 1990), by Byron Farwell. Farwell's book covers the October 21, 1861 Battle of Ball's Bluff, a small fight between the Confederate Brigade of Nathan "Shanks" Evans and the Union forces under Senator Edward "Ned" Baker, in which Baker's troops were mauled, driven off of Ball's Bluff, and chased across the Potomac River. The book contains 239 pages, of which 220 contain the actual story. There are only a few pages at the end containing both the bibliography and an index, with no notes. In addition, there are only two maps, both on the same page at the beginning of the book. One contains a rough sketch of the area around Ball's Bluff, including Leesburg, Virginia. The other is a poorly reproduced map of the battlefield itself, but it hardly gives the reader the kind of detail I prefer and expect out of good battle histories. This book definitely could have used more maps. There is also no Order of Battle. This is another omission for which I do not particularly care. Farwell's book is really more for the beginning Civil War buff or the more general military history buff, as he describes some relatively simple things in detail which a veteran reader will not need an explanation for. Indeed, as the title implies, Farwell's book is not so much meant as a minute tactical study of the Battle of Ball's Bluff as it is a look at the oversized consequences this small fight engendered. Farwell's main point is that Gen. Charles Stone, who commanded the Division to which Baker's Union Brigade was attached, was unfairly made a scapegoat for the whole situation by the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War, when Col. Baker, a very close friend of Lincoln, was clearly responsible.

In his "Foreword", Farwell begins by mentioning that battles do not always end with the fighting, noting that this was especially true at Ball's Bluff. He calls the battle a "Greek Tragedy", with a clear beginning, middle, and end. While Ball's Bluff was not strategically important, at the time it was considered a momentous happening. Farwell concludes that the political consequences in the North were "enormous", and that the Battle led to Gen. Stone's Court Martial and the formation of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War.

In "A Prelude to War", Farwell introduces the key players on the Union side, including Sen. (and Colonel) Edward "Ned" Baker and Brig. General Charles Stone. In 1861, Farwell writes, regional differences were much larger than they are in today's connected world. Each State

had its own way of looking at things. The origins of the 1st California (a.k.a. the 71st Pennsylvania), Baker's initial regiment, are discussed, as well as Baker himself. Baker had been a Colonel in the Mexican-American War, and had become Lincoln's close friend while living in Springfield, Illinois. He became a first-rate politician with a fondness for faro, and he was an impulsive and impetuous man. Charles Pomeroy Stone, his commander in the upcoming fight at Ball's Bluff, was West Point trained, though he had not graduated due to some strange circumstances. Farwell obviously thinks highly of Stone, saying he "more than most...had the potential for greatness". Stone was placed in charge of Washington, D.C.'s defenses early in the war by General Winfield Scott, and he also protected Lincoln at his first inaugural address. Farwell again speaks highly of Stone, saying "Mr. Lincoln and the Union were fortunate indeed to have such an officer at such a place at such a time". Stone frankly told someone who mentioned that Lincoln felt he owed him a debt gratitude that Lincoln did not owe him anything, that he had opposed Lincoln's election because it would divide the country, and that he had only done his duty as a soldier. Farwell notes ominously that "political differences tended to be treated as traitorous" in the upcoming months and years of the war.

The second chapter of the book, "Manassas Men", chronicles the various Southern commanders and units who were to be involved at Ball's Bluff. First, the early war encounters at Ft. Sumter and First Manassas are included, with Farwell going into more detail at Manassas. Here, he chronicles the accomplishments of Nathan "Shanks" Evans on that day. He also mentions the eponymous "Manassas Men": 42 Colonels or lesser officers who became Generals. Nathan Evans was one of those men. Farwell argues that Evans' quick thinking on the Confederate left flank was most responsible for the Confederate success at First Bull Run. Obviously he holds Evans in high regard. Evans' Brigade, the 7th Brigade, I Corps, Army of the Potomac (as the main Southern Army in the east at that time was called), was moved shortly after First Manassas northwest to Leesburg, Virginia in Loudoun County, along the Potomac River near Ball's Bluff.

"On the Upper Potomac" describes the area around the coming battle at Ball's Bluff, including the area around Leesburg, Virginia. Evans' Brigade was an outpost on the far left flank of Beauregard's Army. Fort Evans was built two miles east of Leesburg to guard against a Federal crossing of the Potomac in that area. Brig. General Charles Stone opposed "Shanks" Evans in the area with his own Union Division, or "Corps of Observation", as it was called. Farwell feels that Stone was admired more than loved, a Regular Army type who thought before he spoke, and carefully weighed his decisions. He believes Stone would

have fit in much better as a commander in a Professional Army somewhere, rather than as a commander of civilian volunteers. Farwell goes on to describe some of the men under Stone and Baker who would figure prominently in the upcoming fight. These included Col. Devens of the 15th Massachusetts; Col. Lee of the "Harvard Regiment", the 20th Massachusetts; and Col. Milton Cogswell of the 42nd New York "Tammany" Regiment. Stone's Brigades were commanded by Brig. General Willis A. Gorman, Brig. General Frederick W. Lander, and Col. Baker. During this time, the pickets grew friendly along the Potomac, and Farwell notes that even though Stone expressly forbade the practice, these events nonetheless would be used against him in the future. He goes on to discuss the camp life in the various regiments, and how they stayed busy. Farwell concludes by discussing the Massachusetts regiments' aiding and abetting of slaves in the area, and Stone's attempts to stop them.

On, October 20, 1861, Stone made "A Slight Demonstration" across the Potomac at Harrison's Island. Both Stone and his commander, Major General George B. McClellan, were worried about the Confederates possibly making an attack across the Potomac River in Stone's general area. At this time, Evans had fewer than 2000 men in his brigade, but spies placed his numbers as high as 26,000! As a result, McClellan had McCall's Division cross the Potomac on October 19 and take possession of Dranesville, southeast of Stoneman and Evans. Then he wanted Stone to make a demonstration across the river to see if Evans had retreated in the face of this advance. Stone made the demonstration on October 20th with Gorman's Brigade at Edward's Ferry, but it neither fooled nor concerned Evans, who knew precisely what Stone was up to. Later in the day, Stone ordered Col. Devens of the 15th Massachusetts to send Captain Philbrick on a reconnaissance mission to scout the Virginia shore opposite Harrison's Island. There was a delay because Devens was at church, and by the time Philbrick scouted the opposite side and made it to within 2 miles of Leesburg, it was past dark. Farwell notes that this delay was one of several costly mistakes that set the Union up for disaster on the following day. Philbrick saw "enemy tents" in the distance and then reported back to Devens. As a result of this information, Stone decided to make a raid and send Devens and 5 companies of his regiment to destroy the Rebel Camp early on the morning of October 21. Devens crossed his 400 men in three boats in groups of 30 at a time, and his force reached the Virginia shore by 4 A.M. Col. Lee and 101 men of his 20th Massachusetts followed as well. After taking a narrow path to the top of Ball's Bluff, they reached a small 8-acre field surrounded by woods, where they discovered Philbrick had made a mistake. His "tents" had only been a line of trees. The delay the day before had caused him to misidentify those trees in the dark. At Edward's Ferry

2 companies of the 1st Minnesota and 31 troopers crossed the Potomac under cover of a Union battery. The Cavalry proceeded to scout towards Leesburg, and captured a prisoner after encountering the enemy. After receiving word from Col. Devens, Stone ordered Col. Baker to take his entire brigade, along with the 42nd New York, the 15th Massachusetts, and the 20th Massachusetts, to find out where the enemy was and in what force. Baker was specifically ordered to avoid a general engagement, according to Stone's testimony at his Court Martial. Baker was to retreat to Harrison's Island if he was outnumbered. Stone and McClellan hoped to "push slightly", according to Farwell. They knew the difference, notes the author, between a "push" and a "shove". Stone attempted to explain this difference to Baker, and assumed a man as intelligent as Baker understood and would make the proper decisions. Farwell believes that Baker, both because he was an inexperienced soldier and also due to his impetuous nature and relish for "romance", did not understand or did not listen. At this point, the author argues that Baker was the wrong man for the mission, and that his appointment to command the expedition was a mistake Stone would regret in the future.

As October 21, 1861 dawns, "The Battle Begins". Captain Duff's Co. K of the 17th Mississippi discovered Devens and moved his 40 men to counter the Union probe. At 6 A.M., Evans received word of the attack and also of the crossing at Edwards Ferry. Evans did nothing when hearing this news. The Federals could move on him from three directions, with McCall at Dranesville and these two Union bridgeheads at Edwards Ferry and Ball's Bluff. So instead he simply watched and waited. Finally, at 9 A.M. Evans sent 2 companies of the 18th Mississippi and 70 cavalry, all under Lt. Col. Jenifer, north to aid Duff. Devens sent Lt. Howe of his regiment back to Stone to tell him of the skirmish. Howe found Lt. Col. Ward crossing over with the rest of the 15th Massachusetts at Harrison's Island, and Ward decided to help Devens rather than go to his assigned position at Smart's Mill, which could be covered by Union artillery positioned on the Maryland side of the Potomac. Howe kept going and reported first to Col. Baker, and then to Brig. General Stone. Baker told Howe that Devens could set up his line however he wanted, and then went to Harrison's Island. A little later Stone sent Howe back to tell Baker to watch his right flank. Some time around noon Lt. Col. Jenifer's 320 Confederates attacked Devens' left. Devens at this point wanted to retreat, and Farwell believes he could have done so with little consequence. However, right around this time Howe passed along Baker's order to set up his lines as he pleased, and this caused Devens to believe Baker intended to fight it out on the Virginia side of the River. The 1st California started to cross the river around the time Baker showed up on Harrison's Island. At 10 A.M. Evans

decided Ball's Bluff was the main attack point, and he sent Eppa Hunton's 8th Virginia to the battlefield. At 12:20 P.M., Hunton arrived and the Rebels again attacked Devens' left. Meanwhile the rest of the 20th Massachusetts under Major Paul Revere arrived between one and two in the afternoon. Baker had stayed on Harrison's Island trying to fix the bottleneck caused by the shortage of boats. Col. Cogswell of the 42nd New York complained that the boats were not being filled to capacity. As a result, far fewer men actually got into the fight when they were needed. Baker essentially fixed none of the problems, but stayed there for over an hour. By this point, the 1st California was completely across the river, and the 42nd New York was partially across. Stone sent a message to Baker at 1:30 P.M., and Baker replied in a positive tone, never mentioning he had not yet been across the Potomac! Shortly after 2:30 P.M. Evans sent Col. Burt's 18th Mississippi north to Ball's Bluff to attack the Federal left again. Some time after 3:30 Evans sent Featherston's 17th Mississippi to the fight. Farwell calls this "a bold move" on Evans' part because he was now guarding Edwards Ferry with the equivalent of one regiment and a battery of artillery. Evans also attempted to call out the Loudoun County militia, but for some (disputed) reason they failed to turn out.

As the battle progressed, Farwell follows the actions of "Baker".

Some time after 2 P.M., the Senator (and Colonel) finally crossed over to Ball's Bluff to take command. He immediately rearranged his men for the worse. Devens had been posted behind a fence line along the woods, but Baker pulled him back and deployed his four regiments in a straight line in the small, open field along the edge of the bluff. The Union men had nowhere to go if pressed, and even worse, they were out in the open while the Confederates could hide in the woods. Devens was relieved Baker had come, thus taking command responsibility away from him. In addition to the foolish deployment of his front lines, Baker also posted his reserves incorrectly. They weren't able to hit the Confederates but they were exposed to enemy fire coming through the Union front lines. Baker asked his subordinates for their opinion of his deployment, looking more for acceptance Farwell believes rather than what Baker got from Cogswell. Col. Cogswell knew Baker's deployment was faulty and told him so, mentioning that they should instead move into the woods a short distance and take a hill which dominated the field they were currently posted in. Unfortunately for many Federal soldiers there, Baker ignored him. The Confederates soon occupied the very same hill and the rest of the woods surrounding the open field and began pouring a galling fire into the vulnerable Yankee lines. Lt. Col. Wistar of the 1st California was hit three times and had to leave the field. No one had told the Union troops to keep fighting when men went down, and as a result 6 or

7 men would help one wounded comrade to the rear. Farwell says Baker was "in a state of euphoria" and "saw himself as a heroic leader. He was an actor playing the role, and, like all actors, he sought the approval of his audience. The orders he gave and those he failed to give were alike disastrous." Through some confusion, Baker believed Brig. General Gorman's Brigade was coming north from Edwards Ferry and would support his left or southern flank. Around 5 P.M., Baker realized things were starting to go terribly wrong and sent his aide Captain Francis Young to request reinforcements from General Stone. As Young was heading down the narrow path to the River from the Bluff, he heard shouts that Baker had been killed. At that moment, several Confederates had run out into the open field, and a big redhead had fired several shots at Baker, killing him instantly. Baker's death demoralized his men on the field of battle, and also unnerved the 19th Massachusetts, who saw his dead body being brought down to the Potomac as they were waiting to cross the Potomac on Harrison's Island. Around this time, Stone telegraphed McClellan, saying things were going well but that he was "a little short of boats". Farwell again notes ominously that this phrase would soon be proven to be disastrously true.

Farwell describes "The Battle's End" in the next chapter. Stone's positive telegrams to Washington all afternoon had never hinted of the disaster which was about to happen. But the bad news started trickling in at 6:45 P.M. when Lincoln and McClellan learned that Baker had been killed. Then at 9:45 P.M., Stone elaborated with news of the defeat and the heavy casualties. Col. Lee temporarily assumed command at Baker's death, but Cogswell ranked him and took over. He wanted to cut his way south to Edwards Ferry. Farwell agrees that this was the only logical answer to the Federals' predicament. Cogswell ordered the attack, but unfortunately for him (he was captured) and the Union troops, only a few companies of the Tammany Regiment followed him. The rest stayed back. Soon thereafter, the Confederates attacked and the Union line broke in utter confusion. The Yankees ran to the edge of the 100-foot bluff and leaped over the side, often landing on the heads and bayonets of their friends who had jumped previously. The men tried to swim the 50 feet to Harrison's Island as the Confederates lined Ball's Bluff and blazed away. Boats capsized as panicked men overcrowded them and shoved off. No Union troops tried to surrender, and oddly enough, notes Farwell, no Confederates demanded it. Amazingly, many of the Yankees tried to save personal possessions like their money, swords, and rifles, oftentimes costing the man who owned them his life. As the Yankees crossed successfully or were shot, drowned, or captured, the Confederates made no effort to finish the victory. The 17th and 18th Mississippi were pulled back to a camp near Leesburg for the night.

"Evans now was ready to call it quits", says Farwell. He had not been on the field of battle, "but `Shanks' Evans had really been responsible for it all". Evans had gambled that Gorman's men at Edwards Ferry were really just a feint. Evans celebrated his victory in Leesburg that night with a few drinks. Farwell notes in amusement that Eppa Hunton, a teetotaler, thought Evans drank a little too much that night. As the battle wound down, the Confederates sent a detail down the narrow path to the River and picked up 325 prisoners in all.

Farwell then discussed what happened "In the Battle's Wake". Farwell mentioned that what is done after a battle is often more important than the battle itself. A rumor circulated that Evans had been drunk during the battle, but Farwell doesn't believe this at all. As a result of Ball's Bluff, Evans became a Brigadier General, was given a gold medal by his native state of South Carolina, and became a popular hero for a very brief time. "(Evans') career reached its apogee at Ball's Bluff", says Farwell. Stone was to be punished due to the Federal losses and the death of Baker. Stone's reactions changed from shock, to a desire to know what had gone wrong, to anxiety about possible Confederate follow-up attacks. Stone spent the night of October 21st conversing with McClellan and Lincoln by telegraph. McClellan sent Banks and his Division to reinforce Stone. Banks took command on the 22nd, and McClellan soon showed up as well. The Confederates feared an attack as well as a result of the battle. Soon, however, the situation returned to normal and things became similar to the way they had been before Ball's Bluff. Each side thought they were outnumbered, but Farwell believes they each had somewhere between 1600 and 1700 men each. In the South, the battle was called a "great victory", while in the North Farwell says the shock was greater than that displayed at larger Union disasters later in the war. "First Bull Run could be explained away, but the rout of Baker's force had been such a clear-cut victory for the South that the Northerners were stunned." Some poems were written about the battle, with "The Vacant Chair" being the most memorable. It was eventually set to music and turned into a popular song. Farwell says with much truth, "For the dead, the wounded, and those who love them - a battle is a battle is a battle".

"The Wounded and Dead" are discussed in the aftermath of the battle.

Farwell defines casualties as those who were, through some result of the battle, no longer able to fight with their regiment. He notes that discrepancies usually occurred when discussing casualty figures.

According to the Official Records, the Union lost 49 killed, 158 wounded, and 714 missing. The Confederates lost 36 killed, 117 wounded, and 2 missing. The number of Union killed was obviously

inaccurate. Farwell concludes after studying various sources that just over 200 Union troops had been killed, many due to drowning during the precipitous Union flight down the bluff and the attempted swim to Harrison's Island. The Confederate handling of the wounded was "careless, not to say callous", according to Farwell. Union handling of the wounded was better, but at this early stage of the war it was still inadequate. Union regiments were forced to care for their own wounded, and there was a shortage of surgeons. A truce arranged a few days after the battle allowed the Union troops to cross over and bury their dead. Bodies had washed ashore as far as fifty miles downstream from Ball's Bluff. Baker's body had been taken to Washington, D.C., where it was washed, embalmed, dressed in a new uniform, and displayed. In the ensuing years, Baker was reburied no less than three separate times.

"The Prisoners" taken at Ball's Bluff are discussed in Chapter 10.

More than 550 Union soldiers had been captured at the battle, while only one Confederate had experienced that fate. Apparently the Union troops treated him poorly and he later complained to Gen. Beauregard when exchanged. The Confederates' treatment of their prisoners, however, was "unexceptionable", says Farwell. No Union prisoners complained about their subsequent treatment. Farwell at this point again recaps Evans' performance at Ball's Bluff. "His handling of his brigade at Ball's Bluff, his measured risks, and his correct estimates of his enemy's dispositions and intentions - all displayed brilliant generalship". Farwell notes that Evans was right to stay at Edwards Ferry in case the Union troops there advanced. Half of the Union prisoners were marched to Manassas the day after the battle. The other half soon followed. Eventually the prisoners were shipped to Richmond. Here they formed a Prisoner's Association, received visitors, received care packages, and generally tried to stay comfortable in an uncomfortable situation. Massachusetts towns especially were generous in donating money and goods for the prisoners.

Lincoln and Davis debated over "The Hostages" in early 1862. The United States Government tried to hold the men of the Confederate commerce raider Savannah as pirates, and threatened to hang them. Davis immediately chose thirteen officers from the prisons of Richmond to be likewise hung if any harm came to the Rebel seamen. Six of the thirteen Yankee officers had been captured at Ball's Bluff. Eventually Lincoln backed down and treated the Confederates as POWs. Davis then did the same. All but 150 of the Union soldiers captured at Ball's Bluff were exchanged in February 1862, and Major Paul Revere and his brother were able to rejoin their regiment in front of Yorktown in early April.



"The Joint Committee" and the making of Stone into a scapegoat are the topic of the next chapter. The military results of Ball's Bluff were slight, but there were some psychological effects. The South's sense of its military superiority was dangerously enhanced, if anything the battle made the ever-cautious McClellan even more cautious, and there were major political consequences in Washington, D.C. Stone's friends blamed Col. Baker, and Baker's friends blamed Stone. In addition, Congress demanded a "responsible party" for the debacle. Simon Cameron, the Secretary of War, was unwilling to put forth a sacrifice, and his statement blamed no one. This did not go over well in Congress, and the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War was formed on December 20, 1861. The Committee determined at their first meeting to collect information "to advance what mistakes has been made in the past and the proper course for the future". The committee was led by Sen. Benjamin Wade of Ohio, and his second in command, Sen. Zachariah Chandler of Michigan, both Radical Republicans. The Joint Committee existed until June of 1865, interfering greatly in military matters. Wade and Chandler were suspicious of Democratic generals. According to Farwell, they equated "differences of political opinion with treason". The Committee began its investigation into the Ball's Bluff affair on December 27, 1861. McClellan had always stuck up for Stone, and he placed the blame squarely on Baker. Throughout the proceedings, Stone did not realize the danger he was in. He answered the Committee's questions openly and frankly. Farwell, while supporting Stone, admits that he erred in giving command to Col. Baker. He also erred in not directing Gorman to break out at Edwards Ferry and come to the aid of the men at Ball's Bluff. Col. G.B. Tompkins, who did not like Stone, insinuated the General was a traitor. For some reason the Committee became infatuated with this gentleman. Farwell writes that he was kicked out of the Army only months later because he was such a bad officer. Col. Wistar, Baker's friend and subordinate, held Baker responsible, but the Committee ignored his testimony. Other Union Colonels who had been on the battlefield such as Devens and Cogswell also condemned Baker's handling of the troops and absolved Stone, while those who had not liked Stone for one reason or another tried to place the blame on him. The Joint Committee listened to all of the testimony, and somehow concluded Stone was a traitor.

"The Arrest of General Stone" is discussed by Farwell next. The General spent the eleven weeks between the Battle of Ball's Bluff and his first appearance before the Joint Committee troubled by the criticism leveled against him. Stone's superiors knew Baker was at fault and many including McClellan said so. Stone, angry over the

abuse, lashed out against his tormentors. He made powerful enemies in the process. There had been a big debate over what to do with slaves in the early days of the war, and Stone found himself at the center of this controversy. Through some misunderstanding, his Massachusetts regiments believed he had returned two slaves to their owner in Virginia against their will. Oddly enough, the slaves themselves requested they be returned, but the Confederates refused because the slave owner was a known Union man! In any case, word of this got back to Governor Andrew and Senator Sumner of Massachusetts. They attacked Stone, and this hurt his image, making many people unconcerned if he became the scapegoat for Ball's Bluff. Stone then quarreled with Governor Andrew over a second topic; whether or not Governors could interfere with their state troops in the field already in Federal service. Gov. Andrew thought he had a right to interfere, while Stone and McClellan indignantly denied his right to do so. Andrew asked Sumner for support, and Sumner realized he could get to the popular McClellan by going after his subordinate Stone. Wade and Chandler around this time said they suspected Stone of treason based on the dubious testimony of some of Stone's subordinates. Wade eventually laid three charges. First, that Stone had not guaranteed sufficient transportation in the form of boats to protect Baker in case of a repulse. Second, that Stone had communicated with the enemy through meetings under flags of truce and letters passed through the lines. And third, that Stone had allowed enemy fortifications to be built under his nose on the Virginia side of the Potomac. Stone, given no opportunity to see specific accusations or even who any of his accusers were, could only answer in general terms. Stone mentioned that letters had been allowed through the lines, but only after Stone had read them. He claimed to have gained much valuable information and to also have burned any letters which he found treasonous. He also stated that the Confederate fortifications had never even been occupied, and that he wouldn't waste ammo on such a specious errand. Nevertheless, on February 9, 1862, Stone was arrested and sent to Ft. Lafayette in New York.

Stone, "The American Dreyfus", was held for a total of 189 days without a trial. The 79th Article of War (created in 1862) stated that soldiers could be held a maximum of only eight days without charges being preferred. At first the public approved of the arrest.

Stone, while asking for a trial and repeatedly being denied, soon realized his troubles were more political than anything, so he called on his political friends to help. They were mostly thwarted as well, both by Stanton and Lincoln. Lincoln was finally asked to speak about the matter in Congress and he wrote a letter which took a "head in the sand" approach, according to Farwell. Farwell believes this is so because Lincoln blamed Stone for the death of his close friend Baker.

Stone was finally released on August 16, 1862, but he was never

returned to command. He did serve on the staff of Gen. Banks later in the war, however, and Banks thought highly of him and valued his advice. In 1863, the public perception had changed, and many believed Stone had been wronged. The Joint Committee had Stone appear again, where they finally allowed him to read specific accusations and defend himself. Apparently Stone did a masterful job of this. Stone was successful for a time in civilian life after the war, but then ran into trouble and signed up in Egypt's Army to pay his bills. He stayed in Egypt until 1882 when it was overrun by the British. Stone died in New York City in January 1887, a man who had taken the blame unfairly for Col. Baker's mistakes.

Farwell's book is most definitely NOT a tactical study of the battle.

Before reading this book, I had only a vague knowledge of the particulars of the Battle of Ball's Bluff. That knowledge has been increased slightly, but it still remains vague. Only three chapters focus on the fighting itself, and many times Farwell is commenting on Baker's actions away from the fight rather than the actual maneuvering of troops. The two maps at the beginning of the book are wholly inadequate for a beginning student of the war. I have been a student of the war for the better part of my 26 years, and this allowed me to at least be familiar with where Leesburg and Loudoun County are located in reference to the main Union and Confederate Armies, and also to Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, this book is aimed at the beginning student of the war, or just students of general military history rather than those of us looking for detailed studies of Battle of Ball's Bluff. The notes and bibliography are inadequate, and Farwell provides no order of battle. This is inexcusable. Surprisingly, I still enjoyed the book in spite of these faults. Farwell never intended this to be a tactical study, as I said in the opening sentence of my conclusion. Instead, he has put together a book looking at the injustices meted upon General Stone by everyone from his subordinates all the way to the President of the United States. Although he has few notes and a sparse bibliography to back him up, Farwell does make a convincing case with the information he did look at. It clearly shows Baker was at fault, Stone was scapegoated, and Lincoln and others in power looked the other way. Farwell kept me interested throughout, and I finished the book in only two days, a rarity for me in this extremely busy time in my life. I would recommend this book to beginning Civil War buffs with one caveat; find some decent maps of the Ball's Bluff battlefield and the area around Leesburg, Virginia before reading the book. It will make your life a lot easier. I own another book on Ball's Bluff called *A Little Short of Boats: The Fights at Ball's Bluff and Edwards Ferry, October 21-22, 1861*, by James A. Morgan III. I have briefly perused the book. It looks more like the tactical level study I crave, and

others have told me much the same thing. If you are a wargamer or student of tactics like me, go for Morgan's book. If you enjoy interesting history without needing to know where Regiment X was at time Y, Farwell's book will be a nice read. There is a place on everyone's shelf for both books, I would imagine.

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