

***Between the Lines:
Reading about the Civil War
Book Discussion Group***

**A Partnership between Linebaugh Library and
the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area**

***Soldier of Tennessee: General Alexander P. Stewart and the Civil War
in the West (1999), by Sam Davis Elliott***

Questions—Stewart as Commander

What makes a good biography? Does this biography succeed?

Do you get a sense from the book for what kind of person Stewart was? Do you feel like you got to know him?

What kind of a commander was Stewart? What were his strengths and weaknesses?

How did Stewart perceive and treat other officers and everyday soldiers?

Does Elliott provide a fair assessment of Stewart as a commander? Does he seem too ready to forgive his flaws?

Questions— General Stewart and the Politics of the Army of Tennessee

Stewart didn't like to take a stand, he played both sides to the extent possible—is that just another, more subtle way of playing politics?

He did assert himself at least once on a political issue—when he disagreed with the replacement of Johnston by Hood before the resolution of the Atlanta campaign. APS thought the order should be suspended, and Hood agreed—but Davis did not (p. 200). Steward does not seem to have been impressed by Hood’s abilities as a corps commander. p. 218: Also after the fall of Atlanta, APS told Davis that the army preferred Johnston as commander.

Is it strange that when all hope was just about lost, he began to assert himself more?

What about the role of President Jefferson Davis? Could he have nipped the discontent within the Army of Tennessee in the bud? What kind of a commander in chief was he?

Is the kind of military politics/backbiting evident in the Army of Tennessee prevalent today within the armed forces?

Questions— General Stewart’s Postwar Life and Reputation

Elliott refers to Stewart as unrepentant in private (pp. 293-294), but he seemed pretty willing to move on with his life after the war. What were his first priorities?

How significant is it that Stewart could influence history as resident commissioner at Chickamauga-Chattanooga?

Was it fair to have a former Confederate general as resident commissioner, though obviously he still had to work with Union veterans?

What is Elliott’s overall assessment of Stewart?

Questions—Q & A with Sam Davis Elliott

What were the greatest challenges in writing this book? What were the greatest satisfactions?

Did you know before you started how little Stewart left behind as far as his own writings?

Why isn't Stewart more of a known historical figure? Is it mainly his personality and the lack of controversy surrounding him?

Should Stewart rather than Forrest be the Tennessee Civil War general that people know about and respect?

Are you working on another project now?

What advice do you have for someone who wants to write a biography?