

Bizarre, Fascinating, and Wacky World War I & II Secrets. Prayer Does Change Things

Along the battle front a very surprising event was taking place. In the trenches, some foot soldiers were kneeling, some removed their steel helmets and bowed their heads. Others were looking up into the sky reverently. Officers along the line were doing the same thing. What was everyone doing that was so unusual? Well, they were praying. Everyone held a little prayer card in his hand. This was the printed prayer upon the card "Almighty and most merciful father, we humbly beseech thee, of thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us as soldiers who call upon thee that, armed with thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish thy justice among men and nations! Amen!"

It seems incredible that everyone was asking the Lord to stop the rain. The time is December 22, 1944, and the place was the front battle lines in the Ardennes region, which is the western part of the Rhenish Schistose Mountains. It is heavily wooded, and stretches through northeast France, southeast Belgium, and the tiny country of Luxembourg. It was the scene of very heavy battles in both World Wars. The allied front lines were also stretched through this region.

On December 16, 1944, German field marshal Karl Rudolf Gerd Von Runstedt's group army "A" mounted a fierce counter-attack in this Ardennes region, Bastogne was in the center. The Germans penetrated 50 miles into this region, causing a big bulge in our defense lines. That is why it was called, "the battle of the bulge!"

Bastogne itself is a small Belgium town that was occupied by the 101st Army Airborne Division, the paratroopers called the Screaming Eagles.

Their home base is Fort Campbell, Kentucky, although two-thirds of the base is in Tennessee. The commanding officer is Brigadier General A.C. McAuliffe.

Soon the 26th Volksgrenadier Infantry Division under the command of Lieutenant General Heinz Kokott had Bastogne completely surrounded. After several days of bitter fighting, he sent a letter to Brigadier General McAuliffe, which read: "You are completely surrounded. You cannot escape. To avoid any further bloodshed, you must surrender at once!" When his answer was taken back to the German high command, they were very puzzled. McAuliffe's answer was only one word... "Nuts"! Finally, a German officer who had studied at Harvard University, the oldest university in the United States, said "Heil Hitler. That is just his polite way of telling you to shove it!"



General George Smith Patton Jr.

The U.S. Third Army was in charge of all operations in this region. But it was better known as Patton's Army. It went into action in France August 1, 1944, with a new commanding officer, Lieutenant General George S. Patton Jr. He quickly molded it into his own image. A hard hitting, fast driving, military machine. One of the things setting General Patton apart from the other officers, was his skill and ability to transmit to his soldiers the will to win. Many times he went into the front lines, and talked to every soldier there. The code name for Patton's Third Army was "Lucky", and it was indeed a lucky army under his leadership. Even as a small boy, he dreamed of being a soldier. When he graduated from the West Point U.S. Military Academy he said, "It is as natural for

me to be a soldier, as it is for me to breathe." Patton's Third Army fast became a legend. It moved faster and farther than any other army in history. In 231 days of active duty it liberated territory in France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Altogether, Patton's Third Army captured 1,280,688 prisoners of war, killed 47,500, and wounded another 115,700 Germans.

However, at this point in time, during his mad dash to liberate Bastogne, Lieutenant General Patton was brought to a standstill. He was bogged down, literally stuck in the mud, because it had rained and rained and rained, and was still raining. Some of the foot soldiers (infantry) complained that the mud was almost waist deep. Jeeps, trucks, and even tanks could not move, for they were stuck in the mud. Two full scale counter-attacks had to be postponed.

On December 14, 1944, General Patton called the Third Army Chaplain, James O'Neill into his office in Nancy, France. "Chaplain, I want you to write a prayer for some good weather. See if we can get God to work for us." Chaplain O'Neill answered, "That will take a mighty thick rug for that kind of praying." Patton replied, "I don't care if it takes a flying carpet, just get it done!" "But General, us chaplains do not usually pray for clear weather in order to kill our fellow men." Patton now grew much louder as he spoke, "I said I want that prayer, and I want it now!"

The army field topographical company printed 250,000 copies of this prayer. Because General Patton said, "I want every soldier in my Third Army to pray!" And as Christmas was very close, the general wrote a short Christmas message on the reverse side of the prayer card: "To each officer and soldier in the Third United States Army, I wish you a merry Christmas. I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle. We march in our might to complete victory. May God's blessing rest

upon each of you on this Christmas day. G.S. Patton Jr., Lt. General commanding Third U.S. Army."

The soldiers received the prayer cards on December 22, 1944. The next day, the weather cleared and remained perfect for six days. On Christmas day, thanks to quartermaster corps, every soldier in Patton's Third Army had some turkey. Those in the front lines had turkey sandwiches, and the rest had hot turkey. No other army in the world could perform such a feat!

On December 24, 1944, Chaplain O'Neill returned to General Patton's office, which was now in Luxembourg. The general shook his hand, and pinned a bronze star medal on his chest. "You sure do stand in good with God and my soldiers. You are the most popular man in this office too." Patton liked to cuss and present as a rough and tough old warrior. But he said, "Why yes, I believe in God, there are no atheists in the fox-holes." In fact, General Patton was a very intelligent man, a military genius. He also said he was a ham. He liked to play to the people. He wore highly polished boots, and also a polished helmet. His trademark was his pearl handled six-shooters, some soldiers called him the "cowboy general". He studied battles from previous wars, figuring how he could improve on them.

During World War One, General John "Blackjack" Pershing was commander-in-chief of American troops in Europe. He asked the then Captain Patton to form the first tank corps. Patton had said that the tank and the airplane would become instrumental in winning future wars. In 1918, he was seriously wounded, but recovered completely. He made many enemies everywhere, because he was too outspoken. George Patton just could not keep his mouth shut. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was commander-in-chief of allied forces in Europe during World War Two. Several times, if he would have taken General Patton's advice, the war could have ended much sooner.

Just a few months after Ger-

many surrendered, General Patton was tragically relieved of his command of his Third Army. Then he morosely said, "Now they have given me the job of paper shuffler. I am supposed to write the history of the American Army in Europe." He told several people, "I feel that the end of my life is near."

On December 9, 1944, General Patton was involved in a very mysterious traffic accident. He was riding in the back seat of a Cadillac limousine, which collided with an army GMC truck. Both vehicles were just starting up, as they had stopped for a train. Both were going around 20 mph so the crash was a very minor one. Hardly a scratch was on the truck, and only a small dent was noticed on the Cadillac's radiator. The driver and two passengers in the GMC truck were not injured. In the Cadillac, the driver, Patton's big dog, and one passenger were not injured. Yet, General Patton was bleeding from severe head wounds, and paralyzed from the neck on down! (For his neck was broken.) He said, "What a way to start a vacation!" (For he was going bird hunting, that is why his dog was along.)



General George S. Patton's Grave

December 21, 1945, General George Smith Patton Jr. died. To this day, many authorities believe that he was assassinated because of his outspoken criticism of Russia, for he hated the Russians with a passion. And at this time, the United States was trying hard to pacify Russia. The truth will probably never be known.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is a very tiny country. It is about the size of Rhode Island, the smallest state in our United States. Luxembourg is about 50 miles long and 30 miles wide.



by Cecil Owen

A Grand Duchy is a country ruled by a duke or duchess. It was located on the border of southwestern Germany. When Adolf Hitler took it over, he declared that the people had to become German, part of the "Third Reich". He used the slogan, "Heim ins Reich" (home to the Reich) Reich means "kingdom". Hitler called the first Reich the holy Roman Empire (962-1806) and the second Reich the German Empire (1871-1918) so that made his Nazi regime the Third Reich. He even named the main street of the capital "Adolf Hitler Street." The people had to change their names to a German or Aryan name. And of course they all had to speak the German language. In December 1944 and January 1945, during the battle of the bulge, great numbers of American soldiers died here. And the Luxembourgers have never forgotten. Every July, the little town of Ettelbruck honors the U.S. Third Army and it's commander, General George S. Patton Jr. Ettelbruck has a parade to honor them, and the town has become known as "Patton Town."

It was General Patton's wish to be buried at the head of the graves of his dead soldiers. This is in the American Military Cemetery near Hamm, Luxembourg. Fresh flowers are placed daily on General Patton's grave. The townspeople consider this a small token of appreciation, for the sacrifices our American sons gave to free them from Nazism!

Sources:
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