

**#1 NEW YORK TIMES** Bestselling Authors of *KILLING LINCOLN*



**BILL O'REILLY**

**& MARTIN DUGARD**

**Killing Patton**

The Strange Death of World War II's Most Audacious General

# Killing Patton

THE STRANGE DEATH OF WORLD WAR II'S  
MOST AUDACIOUS GENERAL

**Bill O'Reilly**

and

**Martin Dugard**

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*To my father, William O'Reilly, who served his country as a naval officer in  
World War II, and to my grandfather John O'Reilly, who served in World  
War I*

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*We'll win this war, but we'll win it only by fighting and showing the Germans that we've got more guts than they have; or ever will have. We're not just going to shoot the sons-of-bitches, we're going to rip out their living Goddamned guts and use them to grease the treads of our tanks.*

GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON JR.  
JUNE 5, 1944

## Map Legend

### Allied



Advance



Highlighted movement



Retreat



Infantry



U.S./U.K.

Armor/  
mechanized\*



U.S.S.R.

### Axis



### Military features



Front line



Defensive position



West wall



Clash/event



Battery



Machine-gun  
emplacement



Barbwire

\*On some maps, only tank symbols are used. In these cases, tanks represent armies or army groups that also include infantry.

White symbols are used periodically to highlight Allied units and their movements.

### Physical features



Major roads



Minor roads



Railroads



Rivers



Terrain



Forest



City/town with  
urban area

### Combatant nationalities



United States



United Kingdom



Canada



France



U.S.S.R.



Germany





# Prologue

ROOM 110

U.S. ARMY 130TH STATION HOSPITAL

HEIDELBERG, GERMANY

DECEMBER 21, 1945

5:00 P.M.

The man with forty-five minutes to live cannot defend himself.

Gen. George S. Patton Jr. fears no one. But now he sleeps flat on his back in a hospital bed. His upper body is encased in plaster, the result of a car accident twelve days ago. Room 110 is a former utility closet, just fourteen feet by sixteen feet. There are no decorations, pictures on the walls, or elaborate furnishings—just the narrow bed, white walls, and a single high window. A chair has been brought in for Patton’s wife, Beatrice, who endured a long, white-knuckle flight over the North Atlantic from the family home in Boston to be at his bedside. She sits there now, crochet hook moving silently back and forth, raising her eyes every few moments to see if her husband has awakened.

Patton is fond of the finer things in life, and during the course of the Second World War, he made his battlefield headquarters in mansions, palaces, castles, and five-star hotels. But right now the sole concession to luxury is that, as a four-star general, Patton does not have to share his room with another patient.

“Old Blood and Guts,” as his soldiers refer to the sixty-year-old legend, is a man both revered and feared. He has many enemies. Thus the need for the white-helmeted armed guards posted directly outside his door, at the end of the long hallway leading to the hospital lobby, and at every entrance and exit of the building. Nicknamed for their helmets, these “Snowdrops” protect Patton from the American journalists who have descended on this quiet former cavalry barracks in a great pack, ignoring the ongoing Nuremberg war crime trials so that they might write about Patton’s accident and expected recovery. General Patton “is getting well like a house afire,” the Associated Press reported four days ago, basing its information on the army’s daily 6:00 p.m. briefing about his condition. The story also reported that Patton sat up in bed, throwing off his injury “with a speed reminiscent of his wartime advances.”

The truth, however, is far different. Gen. George S. Patton Jr. is paralyzed from the neck down. Bones in his spine were dislocated when his car collided with an army truck full of drunken joyriding soldiers. Patton’s number three cervical vertebra was shattered, badly bruising his spinal cord. The good news is that he has recovered some movement in his extremities. The bad news is that his doctors believe it is highly unlikely he will walk again.

The reporters don’t know this, and so they work overtime to invade Patton’s privacy to see his amazing recovery for themselves. Some have tried to sneak into Room 110 dressed as nurses or orderlies. Others have bribed hospital staff with Hershey bars and nylons. Thanks to the sentries, however, all of them have failed. The closest call was when Richard H. O’Regan, the same reporter from the Associated Press who wrote of Patton’s remarkable recovery, cadged an interview with Patton’s nurse by pretending to be a patient. For his troubles, O’Regan was able to reveal to the world that doctors were allowing Patton to sip a thimbleful of whisky each night with dinner.

But reporters are the least of Patton’s worries. Throughout the course of the Second World War, he made many high-ranking enemies in Moscow,

Berlin, London, and even Washington, DC. Patton's fiery determination to speak the truth had many powerful men squirming not only during the war, but also afterward. He recently went on the record praising his former German enemies for their skills as soldiers, while also criticizing the Soviet Union as being a foe rather than an ally of the United States. Some have come to see Patton as a roadblock to world peace. And now Patton is at his most vulnerable, an easy target for any of those enemies.

A year ago to this day, Patton was in the midst of the most glorious battle of his career, racing across France with his beloved Third Army to rescue American forces pinned down at the crossroads in Bastogne, Belgium. The German army had long considered Patton to be the Allies' greatest general, but the Battle of the Bulge, as it would become known, elevated him to legendary status throughout the world.

Now the swaggering, fearless renegade who prowled the front lines in a specially modified Dodge WC57 command car outfitted with a .50-caliber machine gun, siren, and two air horns to announce his arrival is hidden from the public. The George S. Patton who sleeps fitfully as Friday evening descends upon Heidelberg has a low pulse and a high fever. He drank eggnog for lunch and for a time felt upbeat, but his energy sagged before he finally fell asleep. A blood clot in his lungs made his face turn blue yesterday, and there are fears that another embolism might soon give him more trouble breathing.

The auto accident was brutal. Stitches and bruising cover Patton's head from the bridge of his nose to the top of his scalp, marking the line where doctors sewed a Y-shaped flap of skin back onto his head. His face is gaunt from weight loss, and there are open holes in his cheekbones where doctors drilled into his face to insert steel fish hooks to hold his head in traction. But the general has a high pain threshold and has endured his sufferings with a smile and his usual blue humor. He banters with the nurses, who find him "cute." Despite the fact that he has taken a sudden and unexpected turn for the worse in the past few days, the general still expects to be flown to Beverly General Hospital in Boston to further his recovery.

Beatrice has been with him around the clock, reading to him and calling for the doctors when he has a hard time catching his breath. She has a small room of her own down the hall, but is rarely there. The former heiress is a plain woman with a charismatic personality who wed Patton just a year after he graduated from West Point. Throughout their thirty-five-year marriage, Beatrice has braved the many hardships of military life for her beloved “Georgie,” never wavering in her love and support.

Suddenly Patton wakes up. His dark blue eyes flick back and forth, searching for signs of Beatrice.

There she is.

“Are you all right, Georgie?” Beatrice asks. She is every bit as fiery as her husband, a fearless equestrienne and accomplished sailor.

Patton gazes intently at his wife. She is the only woman he ever truly loved, and the mother of his three children. Beatrice leans forward to pat her husband’s hand.

“It’s so dark,” Patton says. “So late.” He closes his eyes and falls back to sleep.

Beatrice soon leaves for the hospital mess, where she hopes to grab a quick dinner before returning to the bedside, not knowing that her husband has just spoken his last words.

At 6:00 p.m. the urgent news is delivered for Beatrice to return immediately to Room 110.

But she is too late.

The general whom Nazi Germany feared more than any other, the former Olympic pentathlete, the cavalry officer who once hunted the infamous Pancho Villa across the desert plains of Mexico, and the warrior who publicly stated that he wanted one day to be killed “by the last bullet, in the last battle, of the last war,” is already dead.

\* \* \*

The official military report states that Gen. George S. Patton Jr. “died at 1745, 21 December 1945.” A pulmonary embolism, brought on by his

twelve days lying immobile, had weakened his heart. The official causes of death, as listed in the army adjutant general's report, are "traumatic myelitis, transverse fourth cervical segment, pulmonary infarction, and myocardial failure, acute."

There is no autopsy. His body is immediately taken to the hospital basement and placed inside what was once a horse stall, where his personal four-star flag is laid over the corpse. At Beatrice's request, Patton is laid to rest at the American Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg, near the scene of his greatest battlefield triumph. Years later, when Beatrice falls from a horse and dies, she will be denied burial next to her husband, so her children will secretly smuggle her ashes into Europe and sprinkle them atop the grave.

It is a grave that may hold even deeper secrets.

\* \* \*

The truth is, some do not believe Patton's death was accidental. He had already survived several "accidents," including the time his personal airplane was almost shot down by a British Spitfire fighter plane in April 1945—almost miraculously, Patton escaped injury.

But the auto crash that paralyzed Patton on December 9, 1945, was a far different story. The two-and-a-half-ton GMC army truck that collided with the general's touring car suddenly and inexplicably veered from the opposite lane and into Patton—as if intentionally trying to injure the general. Both the man driving the truck and his two passengers quickly vanished after the incident. No criminal charges were ever filed. No accountability was ever recorded.

Also, both the official accident report and several key witnesses soon went missing. And most ominous of all, a former American intelligence operative confessed in October 1979 that he had planned and participated in the assassination of Gen. George S. Patton Jr.

It was a shocking assertion that was mostly ignored.

And so it was that a man who saw so much death on the battlefields of Europe and Africa officially died in a most pedestrian way.

Officially.

---

## United States Third Army (October 1944)

LT. GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON JR.

### **XII CORPS**

MAJ. GEN. MANTON EDDY

#### **26th Division**

MAJ. GEN. WILLARD PAUL

101 Infantry Regiment

104 IR

328 IR

#### **35th Division**

MAJ. GEN. PAUL BAADE

134 IR

137 IR

320 IR

#### **80th Division**

MAJ. GEN. HORACE MCBRIDE

317 IR

318 IR

319 IR

#### **4th Armored Division**

MAJ. GEN. JOHN WOOD

8 Tank Battalion

35 TB

37 TB

10 Armored Infantry Battalion

### **XX CORPS**

MAJ. GEN. WALTON WALKER

#### **5th Infantry Division**

MAJ. GEN. LEROY IRVIN

2 Infantry Regiment

10 IR

11 IR

#### **90th Division**

MAJ. GEN. RAYMOND McCLAIN

357 IR

358 IR

359 IR

#### **95th Division**

MAJ. GEN. HARRY TWADDLE

377 IR

378 IR

379 IR

#### **10th Armored Division**

MAJ. GEN. WILLIAM MORRIS

3 Tank Battalion

11 TB

21 TB

21 Armored Infantry Battalion



51 AIB

53 AIB

54 AIB

61 AIB

**6th Armored Division**

MAJ. GEN. ROBERT GROW

15 TB

68 TB

69 TB

9 AIB

44 AIB

50 AIB

---

# 1

THE HILLS ABOVE METZ, FRANCE

OCTOBER 3, 1944

12:02 P.M.

Private First Class Robert W. Holmlund is scared. He believes his life may be over at age twenty-one. The American assault is just two minutes old—two minutes that feel like twenty. The private serves as an explosives expert in the Third Army, Company B, Eleventh Infantry Regiment, Fifth Infantry Division. Holmlund is a student from the American heartland who left trade school to join the war. His senior commander is the most ferocious general on the Allied side, George S. Patton Jr. But unlike Patton, who now oversees his vast army from the safety of his headquarters twenty-five miles behind the front, Holmlund and the men of Baker Company are in grave danger as they sprint toward the heavily defended German fort known as Driant.

German machine-gun bullets whiz past Holmlund's helmet at twice the speed of sound. Heads and torsos shatter all around him. U.S. artillery thunders in the distance behind them, laying down cover fire. The forest air smells of gunpowder, rain, and the sharp tang of cordite. The ground is nothing but mud and a thick carpet of wet leaves. Here and there a bramble vine reaches out to snag his uniform and trip his feet. Over his broad shoulders, Holmlund wears a block of TNT known as a satchel charge.

Grenades dangle from his cartridge belt like grapes on a vine. And in his arms, rather than carrying it by the wooden handle atop the stock, Holmlund cradles his fifteen-pound, four-foot-long Browning Automatic Rifle, or BAR, as he would an infant. Only, this baby is a killing machine, capable of firing 650 three-inch bullets per minute.

Though he doesn't show it, Robert W. Holmlund is scared, despite all that firepower, just like every single man in this lethal forest.

But there is no time to indulge his fear right now. No time for homesickness or doubt. Fort Driant looms four hundred yards distant. Everything about the fortress is a mystery, from the location of its big 150 mm howitzers to the maze of tunnels deep underground where its Wehrmacht inhabitants eat, sleep, pray, clean their rifles, plan their battles, and then suddenly poke their heads out of secret openings to kill.

Patton has ordered Baker Company to get inside Driant. The best way to do that is to climb on the roof, which is concealed by mounds of earth. From there, it's a matter of finding a doorway or some other hidden opening that will allow Baker to descend and wage war in the tunnels.

Baker is part of a two-pronged assault. On the opposite side of the fort, the men of Easy Company are also on the attack. But they do so warily, for Driant has already bloodied them once.

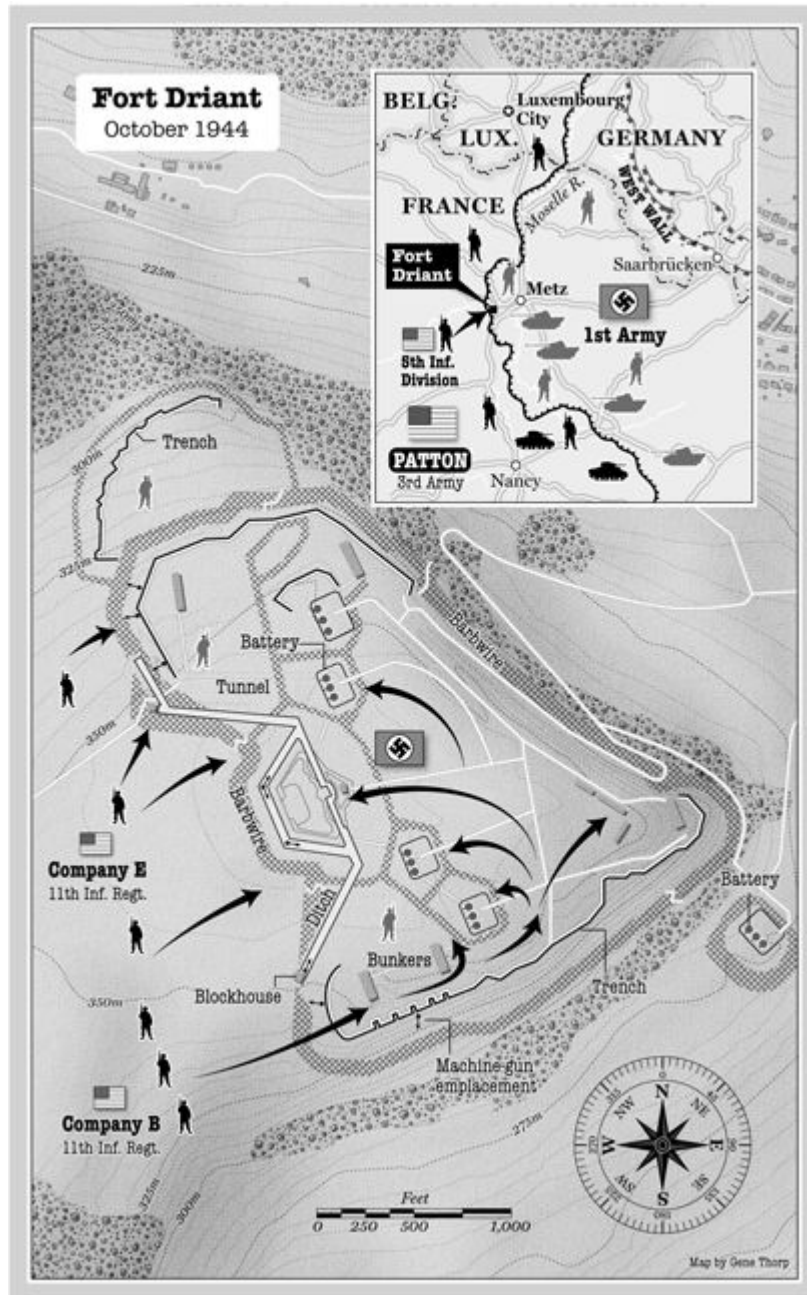
It happened six days ago. Skies were clear. P-47 fighter-bombers screamed in low on the morning of the assault, dropping napalm and thousand-pound bombs. American artillery then pounded Driant, shelling the Germans with deadly accuracy.

Easy Company launched their attack alongside the men of George Company at 1415 hours under a heavy smoke screen. They had no way of knowing that the aerial bombing and ground artillery had no effect on the Wehrmacht fighters, nor that the enemy was snug and secure within Driant's fifteen-foot-thick walls and in hidden forest pillboxes.

Step by step, thinking themselves unseen, the U.S. soldiers advanced. Fingers were on triggers as the men scanned the forest, waiting for the muzzle flashes that would expose the enemy. But the Germans did not

shoot. Not yet. So Easy and George crept closer to Driant. With each passing moment, they became more convinced that the smoke screen had completely concealed them. They marched closer and closer, and still no German gunshots. Soon a thick tangle of barbwire loomed before the Americans, marking the outer perimeter of Driant's defenses. There was no way through the razor-sharp coils. The advance ground to a halt.

The Germans opened fire.



The autumn afternoon was rent by a terrifying sound the Americans knew all too well. Their slang for the high-speed ripping sound of a German MG-42 machine gun is “Hitler’s Zipper.” To the Wehrmacht, this killing tone is simply the “Bone Saw.” MG-42s opened up from every direction. Bullets tore through the woods at twelve hundred rounds per minute, capable of killing a man from more than a half mile away.

But the machine guns were just the beginning. Soon mortars, rifles, and even heavy artillery pounded the Americans from every direction. And just like that, the American attack was over. Soldiers hugged the ground for four long hours as German gunners pinpointed their positions and took slow, deliberate aim. It was only after darkness fell that the men of Company E and Company G crawled back to the safety of the American lines.

September 27 was a bad day for the men of Easy. By the end of the fight, eighteen soldiers had been either killed or wounded.

Today will be even worse.

\* \* \*

Private Holmlund can go no farther. Nor can the rest of Baker Company. The mountain of barbed wire surrounding Driant blocks their path. Thirty feet tall and just as thick, the impenetrable tangle waits to trap any man unlucky enough to snag his uniform or his body within its tendrils. Clipping at it with hand cutters will take days—which is why Holmlund's company commander, Capt. Harry Anderson, has given the order: blow the wire to hell.

Behind him, Holmlund hears the low rumble of a Continental R-975 air-cooled engine. The telltale crunch of steel treads soon follows, announcing the arrival of an M-4 Sherman tank. Even as the German machine gunners continue to fire on Baker, the Sherman weaves through the trees and takes aim. Its 75 mm gun belches smoke as it fires a round of M-48 high explosive into the wire. A direct hit is soon followed by another, and then another. Within moments, the barbed wire parts just enough for Baker Company to sprint through.

Captain Anderson splits the soldiers into three groups. Holmlund's squad continues toward Driant in a straight line, while the other two squads flank to the right. The landscape is pocked with shell craters, like a man-made lunar surface. Trees and shrubs grow randomly, offering just the slightest bit of camouflage from the German defenders.

The private is in the first wave of American attackers. He dives into a shell crater, presses himself flat against the lip, then pokes his head over the top and fires his BAR at the enemy. Holmlund then sprints forward to a row of small elm trees, where he once again takes cover and seeks out a target. The ground is cool and damp, moisture seeping through his uniform. He fires and moves forward, always forward, never taking his focus off the flat roof of Driant. Despite the cool October temperature, Holmlund is now drenched in sweat. His face and hands are flecked with mud. He hurls himself into another shell crater and hugs the earth. This close to the ground, he is eye level with the fungus and bright green mold sprouting up through the fallen leaves. Bullets whiz low over his head. He reloads and listens, waiting for the chance to fire.

The sounds of the battlefield are familiar: the chatter of machine guns, the screams of the mortally wounded, the concussive thud of hand grenades, orders barked in short, terse sentences. Screams for “Medic” fill the air.

Holmlund fires a burst from his rifle and then runs forward. He races past fallen comrades. He knows them all. They did push-ups side by side during basic training in Alabama. They sailed together for Europe in the hold of a troopship. They sat in an English pasture just hours before D-day, listening to General Patton deliver the greatest speech any of them had ever heard. And then, after D-day, Holmlund and Baker fought their way across France, rejoicing as they captured one small village after another, following Patton’s order that they kill Germans in brutal and relentless fashion—lest they themselves be killed first.

Now many of Holmlund’s buddies lie dead or dying. And so ends the sound of their laughter, their rage, their boasts, their tales about that special girl back home, and all that talk about what they’re going to do with their lives once the war ends.

Holmlund doesn’t even give them a second glance.

And he doesn’t stop moving forward. To stop is to become a target. Holmlund’s fighting squad dwindles from twelve men down to six. The squad leader is hit, and Holmlund takes command without thinking twice

about it. Slowly, in a form of progress that is measured in feet and inches instead of yards, Baker Company moves closer and closer to the German fortress.

Two hours into the battle, PFC Robert W. Holmlund of Delavan City, Wisconsin, finds himself standing atop Fort Driant.

\* \* \*

“The real hero,” Holmlund heard George S. Patton say just four months ago, “is the man who fights even though he’s scared. Some men get over their fright in a minute under fire. For some, it takes days. But a real man will never let his fear of death overwhelm his honor, his sense of duty to his country, and his innate manhood.”

As Holmlund watched, General Patton drew himself up to his full six-foot-two-inch height. His shoulders were broad and his face ruddy, with a strong chin and an aquiline nose. His uniform was a marvel, with four rows of ribbons, four shiny brass buttons, a polished helmet bearing his three general’s stars, tan riding pants, and knee-high cavalry boots. Most vividly, a Colt .45-caliber pistol with an ivory grip was holstered on his hip, sending a strong signal that Patton is no bureaucrat. He’s a warrior, and everybody had better know it.

Patton continued: “Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best, and it removes all that is base. Americans pride themselves on being He Men—and they *are* He Men. Remember that the enemy is just as frightened as you are, and that they are not supermen.”

George Patton delivered “the Speech” in the British countryside, to the men of his Third Army, on June 5, 1944. Some of the soldiers watching were combat veterans. Most, like Holmlund, were brand new to the war. They found hope in Patton’s words. They found a belief in their own courage. And most of all, each man sitting in that pasture under a glorious blue English sky found strength in the knowledge that he was being



commanded by the most audacious, forthright, and brilliant general on either side of the war.

Until that day, Holmlund had never seen Patton in the flesh, and had only heard stories about the legendary general—the man who'd never lost a battle, hero of North Africa and Sicily, but who was temporarily relieved of his command for slapping two privates convalescing in a military hospital whom he considered cowardly.

Neither Holmlund nor any of the thousands of other soldiers seated in this pasture had any idea that their feelings for the general would come to vacillate between love and hate. In fact, Patton's nickname is "Old Blood and Guts," with the understanding that the guts of Patton rode on the blood of his soldiers.

"You are not all going to die," Patton reassured the men whom he would soon lead into combat. His voice was high instead of gruff, which came as a surprise to Holmlund. "Only two percent of you right here today will die in a major battle. Death must not be feared. Death, in time, comes to all men."

\* \* \*

One half mile north of where Private Holmlund and the men of Company B are making their stand atop Fort Driant, death, as predicted, is coming to their fellow soldiers in Easy Company. The hope of Patton's speech is long forgotten.

Unlike their first attack on Driant six days ago, Company E made it through the barbwire this time. But the Germans turned that into a fatal accomplishment, for once inside Easy was pinned down with precision mortar fire. Going forward has become impossible. Even worse, enemy shells are exploding to their rear, meaning that retreating back through the wire is also out of the question. Easy Company tries to solve the problem by calling in an artillery strike on their position, but this "Danger Close" barrage does nothing to stop the dug-in German gunners. Instead, friendly fire kills one of their own in a most gruesome fashion: the soldier's head is sliced cleanly from his body by a piece of flying explosive.

Easy Company digs in. They have no choice. Two-foot-long portable shovels scrape troughs in the earth as German machine gunners continue to rake Easy's position. It is every man for himself.

The terror continues. The Germans of Kampfgruppe Petersen take aim with 8 cm Granatwerfer 34 mortar fire and MG-42 machine guns. The Americans are defenseless. Killing them is as easy as finding the target and patiently squeezing the trigger. The Germans are in no hurry. The Americans are going nowhere. One after another, the young men who comprise Easy Company are cut down in the prime of their life. The company medics race from foxhole to foxhole to tend the wounded. But soon, one after another, they die, too.

Hours pass. Rain drizzles down. The nightmare chatter of the *Maschinengewehr* accompanies the sounds of Company E digging their trenches deeper and deeper. Each man squats as low as possible, careful not to lift his head above ground level. Doing so would be an act of suicide. Easy's foxholes become filled with water, mud, blood, and each man's personal filth. Trench foot, from prolonged exposure to cold and wet, has become so common since the autumn rains arrived that it makes standing in yet another puddle a time of agony. But the men are beyond caring about the stench and squalor of their fighting holes.

All they want to do is stay alive.

\* \* \*

"Americans despise cowards," Patton continued all those months ago, putting his own spin on U.S. history. "Americans play to win all the time. I wouldn't give a hoot in hell for a man who lost and laughed. That's why Americans have never lost nor will ever lose a war; for the very idea of losing is hateful to an American.

"All through your Army careers, you men have bitched about what you call 'chickenshit drilling.' That, like everything else in this Army, has a definite purpose. That purpose is alertness. Alertness must be bred into every soldier. I don't give a f-ck for a man who's not always on his toes.

You men are veterans or you wouldn't be here. You are ready for what's to come. A man must be alert at all times if he expects to stay alive. If you're not alert, sometime, a German son-of-an-asshole-bitch is going to sneak up behind you and beat you to death with a sock full of shit!"

A handful of the senior officers listening to the speech disapproved of Patton's coarse language. Patton could not care less. He believes that profanity is the language of the soldier, and that to speak to soldiers one must use words that will have the most impact.

Few can deny that George Patton is entitled to this belief, nor that he is the consummate soldier. He is descended from a Civil War Confederate colonel, and has himself been in the military since graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1909. Soon after, he fought in Mexico against Pancho Villa. He then fought in the First World War at Saint-Mihiel, the legendary battlefield west of Metz where he walks now. Patton was the very first officer ever assigned to the U.S. Army tank corps, and is renowned for his tactical brilliance on the battlefield. He lives by the words of the great French general Napoléon, "L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace"—"Audacity, audacity, always audacity"—a motto that works well on the field of battle, but not so well in diplomatic situations. Patton has damaged his career again and again by saying and doing the sort of impulsive things that would see a lesser man relieved of his command for good.

"An Army is a team," he continues; "it lives, sleeps, eats, and fights as a team. This individual heroic stuff is pure horse shit. The bilious bastards who write that kind of stuff for the *Saturday Evening Post* don't know anything more about real fighting under fire than they know about f-cking!"

Patton was forced to pause, as he knew he would be. The waves of laughter rolling toward the stage were deafening.

\* \* \*

Four months later, Patton knows the battle for Metz is failing, and that Easy Company is being decimated. Even more galling, his intelligence briefing

about the defenders of Fort Driant was wrong. These are not the cooks, clerks, and new recruits he was led to expect. These are hardened German veterans, willing to die for their Nazi führer, Adolf Hitler. They are not about to surrender. Word is arriving from the battlefield that the attack has stalled. For the second time in six days, an assault on Driant teeters on the brink of failure.

Normally in such a situation, Patton might jump in his staff car and race to the battlefield to direct the action. More than one soldier has been shocked to see the general himself barking orders at the front lines. But that is clearly impossible now. The risk would be too great. So Patton can only pace in his headquarters and fret, swear loudly, and quietly seethe about the lack of gasoline and bullets that are limiting his ability to assault Driant with a massive, full-blown attack. Due to a shortage of supplies, Patton has been capable of sending only two companies, numbering a total of just three hundred men, to capture this citadel. It is madness. He should have far more firepower at his disposal.

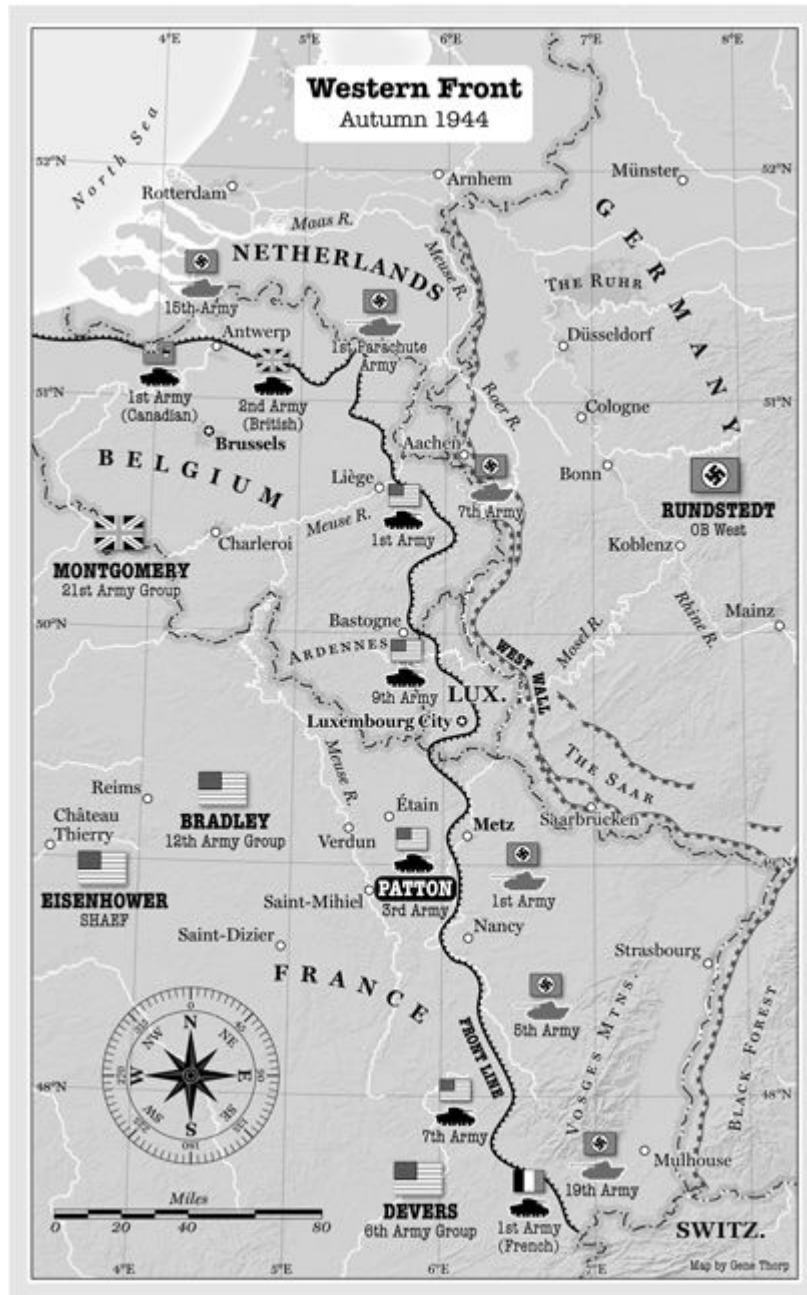
George S. Patton wants to defeat the Germans at Driant for any number of reasons, but the deep desire to wage war is at the top of the list. Decisions above his pay grade and logistical difficulties have forced the Third Army to a screeching halt after six weeks of nonstop running battle. He hoped that his rush from one side of France to the other would continue all the way across Germany to Berlin, where he planned on winning the war single-handedly. "We shall attack and attack until we are exhausted, and then we shall attack again," he boldly ordered his troops. And they did. Patton's aggressive tactics have placed the Third Army far in advance of the British forces, who are approaching Germany to the north. But now the supreme commander of Allied forces in Europe, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, has ordered Patton to go on the defensive, while allocating precious supplies of gasoline and bullets to the armies of British field marshal Bernard Law Montgomery. It is Monty, a finicky and self-important Englishman who considers himself a far superior general to Patton, who has been given the go-ahead to launch a decisive offensive toward Germany's

Rhine River. For the time being, there will be no more forward movement by the Third Army.

Patton feels that the decision was Ike's call, based on his incorrect assessment of the battlefield. Allied politics also played a role. The British have suffered grievously for five years, with London being devastated by German bombing. Tens of thousands of British subjects have died in the streets. Winston Churchill and his government want to deliver their vengeance.

The Nazi dictator Hitler was on the verge of victory, and might even have forced Great Britain to its knees, had it not invaded Russia. By opening a two-front war, Hitler put too much pressure on his ferocious military machine. The ten-million-man Wehrmacht could not possibly control all the hundreds of thousands of square miles it conquered. And so began the inevitable Nazi retreat, which is now in its final stages.

But the Germans are fiercely defending their homeland as Allied forces push toward the Rhine River border. The fighting is hard and personal, and Patton wants a piece of it. Nevertheless, Eisenhower has reduced Patton's fuel and supply line to a trickle.



But rather than simply sit still, per Eisenhower's directive, Patton has chosen to "adjust his lines" by crossing the Moselle River and conquering the ancient city of Metz. One problem: in order to take the city, he must first conquer Fort Driant, with its big guns capable of lobbing artillery shells into the town square. Only then will Patton accept Eisenhower's order that the Third Army stand down.