

THE
MAXIMS
OF
GENERAL
PATTON

Gary L. Bloomfield



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To my father, Army Command Sgt. Maj. Robert D. Bloomfield, who taught me to never give in, to never back down, to never give up, and to never ever quit. His hero was General Patton.

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West Point. When I was seven, my father took me there

on our way to visit relatives in Toronto. At the Military Academy, we stopped by the statue of Gen. George Patton, my father's boyhood hero. From my small vantage point, he looked massive, larger than life, and after hearing my father's stories about America's most notorious World War II leader, I understood why he was invincible. Many years later, as managing editor of *VFW*, I relied on the staff at West Point for photos, paintings, and reference documents, and I continue to do so for my books. Thank you, to everyone, for your guidance and patience.

The Public Affairs Office at Fort Riley, Kansas. Having served two tours there with the Big Red One (the First Infantry Division, which had a red *I* on its shoulder patches), I was able to research General Patton and his impact on early army training and tactics. This was long before I ever considered writing a book about Patton. Fortunately I'm a packrat and kept all of the reference files for more than twenty years before using them for this book.

The Public Affairs Office and the Command Historian for U.S. Army Europe in Heidelberg, Germany. This was another duty assignment, where I took advantage of access to references not available to the general public and began compiling my own files and photos of the army's history in World War II, a history in which General Patton played a prominent role.

Introduction

George Patton was born to be a warrior. As a boy, he had heard the tales and read with wonder the stories of adventure and conquest, of heroes returning home to rousing ovations, of fallen combatants who chose death before dishonor. He dreamed of fighting alongside Caesar and Alexander the Great, Achilles and William the Conqueror, Washington and Sherman, and one day he too would order his charges to fight on some of the same battlefields his heroes fought on in centuries past.

Later, as a young man he walked the battlefields of the Civil War and envisioned how the Union and Confederate commanders maneuvered their forces. As a junior officer in the Great War, he would stand on hillsides, look out at the vast expanses, and imagine the invincible Roman Legions and the brutality of Attila and the Huns rampaging over the horizon, terrorizing all who dared to challenge them. He could feel the thunder of the Charge of the Light Brigade and the prestigious Polish cavalry (before they were cut down by the Nazi blitzkrieg during the fall of 1939).

He explored the fortresses and ramparts of North Africa and walked among the ruins of Sicily, conquered and conquered again by so many, and he said without hesitation, "I was there."



As a youngster, George S. Patton, Jr. (1885-1945), listened to tales of daring and yearned to someday be a great army commander. The cadet excelled in his studies at Virginia Military Institute,, knowing he was destined for greatness. (U.S. Military Academy)

He said it so often in so many places, and could recall in such detail how the battles had unfolded decades before, that many others thought just maybe he had been there. In a past life? Maybe. As a boy with a wild imagination and a voracious appetite to learn? Probably. As a student of war? Definitely.

More importantly, going into every engagement, General Patton, the leader of warriors, studied his opponent for tendencies, strengths, and weaknesses. He analyzed previous battles waged on the same terrain, even those many centuries ago, finding the keys to victory and the factors that led to defeat. This allowed him to develop contingency plans to counter any moves his enemy might try to turn the offensive to their advantage.

He studied changes in war fighting, such as the massed formations of the American Revolution and the Civil War, squaring off at fifty yards and decimating the enemy ranks. He had survived the trench warfare of World War I and despised it, and he read with fascination about this new “lightning warfare” developed by the Germans that utilized the combined forces of infantry, armor, artillery, and aviation to overwhelm an opponent.

By the end of World War II, Patton was credited with using blitzkrieg tactics even better than the Germans had. In fact, the German High Command feared Patton more than any other Allied leader because he was the most daring and the most successful.

Patton understood that, despite the advancements in weaponry—from the catapult to the howitzer, from the ball and musket to the machinegun—ultimately, wars were fought by warriors. He also knew that those armies that trained to be expedient and brutal, disciplined and ruthless would be victorious over any opponent that did not also have the supreme trait: a warrior’s soul. Patton demanded that unforgiving warrior’s soul from himself and every soldier in his command. While others served proudly with the Big Red

One, the Second Armored, the Screaming Eagles, the Tenth Mountain, or any of the many battle-tested units of the U.S. Army, those soldiers who stood the tallest would simply state years later, "I served with Patton." That's all they needed to say, and everyone understood.

Here then is a glimpse into the psyche and the recollections and the soul of the ultimate warrior . . . the incomparable George S. Patton, American World War II soldier par excellence.

"My poetry, my rhymes, were written by a man who, having seen something of war, is more impressed with the manly virtues it engenders than with the necessary and much exaggerated horrors attendant upon it. They are offered to the public in the hope that they may help to counteract the melancholy viewpoint of many of our poets who write of the great wars. We should not dwell on sorrow that these slain in battle have died, but rather be thankful that they have lived."
~ *Patton on his writings.*

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