

THE
THIRD ARMY
IN
WORLD WAR II

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The United States Third Army enjoyed an impressive history of glory and victory during its lifetime. The Third Army was at its best and most famous when it was commanded by the great combat general, George Smith Patton, Jr.

One of the thousands of battle hardened veterans of the Second World War who served under Patton's command said of the fighting unit, "The Third under Patton, was probably the cleanest, neatest army that ever fought a war. Patton saw to that. And I've always believed that was one of the reasons it was such a fine army. We hated the rules, but we never lost a battle."

It was under the command of General Patton that the Third Army saw its only period of actual combat.

1918 – 1941
THE EARLY YEARS

The Third Army was officially created on the 15th of November, 1918, four days after the First World War Armistice was signed in Europe. It was moved from Ligny-En-Barrios, France to Koblenz, Germany where it was officially the American's army of occupation. On the 2nd of July, the Third Army was deactivated and its units and personnel were renamed to *American Forces Germany*.

The Third Army's job in Europe after World War I helped to create the design of its shoulder patch. The patch is a white **A** on a round, blue background with a red circle around the **A**. The meaning of the patch was originally **ARMY** (white A) *of* **OCCUPATION** (red O).

Thirteen years later, in 1932, the Army reorganized its forces within the continental United States. There were only 48 states at that time, Hawaii and Alaska being added in the late 1950's.

This reorganization divided the United States into four sections with one army in each section. Third Army was located in the Southeast section. Its headquarters alternated between Atlanta, Georgia and Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

1941 – 1943
LT. GEN. WALTER KREUGER

From 1941 until 1943, the Third Army was commanded by Lieutenant General Walter Kreuger. General Kreuger made the Third Army the best training army in the United States. He was born in Germany and was only a child when his parents brought him to America, the land of opportunity. He had seen army life from both sides of command. He had served several years in the enlisted ranks as a *doughboy* before he was given an officer's commission in 1901. He had combat experience in World War I and he was known as an officer who was fair with his men even though he was tough on them.

Kreuger had in his Third Army two men who would become famous in World War II. One of these men was his Chief of Staff, a new brigadier general, named Dwight D. Eisenhower. General Eisenhower would later be elected to two terms as President of the United States. The other man was a flamboyant cavalry major general who was the leader of Kreuger's *Hell On Wheels* 2nd Armored Division. His name was George S. Patton, Jr.

Although Kreuger did a fine job of training troops, he really wanted a combat command. One problem in his way was his age. He was sixty-four, one year away from the mandatory age of retirement. Luckily, an old friend of his came to his aid. General Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief of Pacific Forces, personally requested that Kreuger be given command of the Sixth Army. In January of 1943, Kreuger reported to MacArthur and took command of his new army.

1943 – 1944
LT. GEN. COURTNEY H. HODGES

Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges commanded the Third Army from 1943 until 1944. Like Kreuger, Hodges had been an enlisted man before he had received a commission as an officer. He had combat experience as an Infantry Battalion Commander during World War I. Hodges, like both Eisenhower and Patton, had also served under Kreuger's command at Third Army. By the year 1940, he had gained the status of *Chief of Infantry* when the Department of the Army decided to reorganize the entire United States army. After the reorganization, the office of *Chief of Infantry* had been abolished so Hodges was given command of a corps in Kreuger's Third Army. After Kreuger left for the Pacific Theater of Operations, Hodges was made commanding general of the Third Army.

Unfortunately, Hodges was not as much interested in training and maneuvers as General Kreuger was. He left much of his duties to his subordinates, especially his Chief of Staff.

Hodges did not keep a firm hand on policies or decisions. He left most of the administrative duties to his Chief of Staff. Because of this situation, the Chief of Staff actually became the *commanding general* of the Third Army. Because of the power of the Chief of Staff and his abrasive personality, there were some sore feelings among the rest of the general's staff. It was most probably this demonstrated lack of command ability which caused Hodges to be removed from command of the Third Army.

It was during Hodges period of command that the Third Army trained the first three Negro divisions in the United States Army; the 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions and the 2nd Cavalry Division.

Officially, the Third Army was changed from a *training army* to a *combat army* on December 31, 1943.

1944 – 1945
GEN. GEORGE S. PATTON, JR.

On New Year's Eve 1943, the Third Army was put on alert for overseas movement. They would travel to England where they would train for participation in the coming European invasions. The members of the Third Army would make their journey aboard three ships of an English steamship line. The ships were the ILE DE FRANCE, the QUEEN ELIZABETH, and the QUEEN MARY. In 1967 the QUEEN MARY was sold to the city of Long Beach, California. It was converted into a Hotel and Floating Museum.

When the staff of the Third Army docked at Glasgow, Scotland, they were met by their new commanding general, Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. He explained to them, "I'm your new commander. I'm glad to meet you. I hope it's mutual. There's a lot of work to be done and there's little time to do it. There's a special train waiting on the dock to take you to our Command Post. We will leave in one hour."

The day after the staff were safely in their guarded billets, all of the men, enlisted and officers, were assembled on the large terrace in front of Peover Hall, Patton's headquarters. Peover Hall was a private residence near Knutsford, England which had been turned over to the military for the duration of the war.

Patton stood before his men, wearing a tailored, form-fitting, brass buttoned battle jacket with four rows of battle ribbons and decorations. He also wore whipcord riding breeches, and polished, high-topped cavalry boots with spurs. Around his waist he wore a wide, hand-tooled leather belt which had a large, shiny brass buckle with the letters *U.S.* embossed on it. It was the old style cavalry buckle Patton had worn as a young lieutenant. He held in his hand a long riding crop with a hidden sword in it. On his shoulders, his shirt collar, and on his helmet, were a total of fifteen large stars.

As usual, General Patton gave a short talk. He never talked too long if he could help it. He said, "I've been given command of the Third Army for reasons which will become clear later on (he was referring to Operation OVERLORD, the code name for the D-Day invasion on the Normandy beaches). I'm here because of the confidence of two men; the President of the United States and the Theater Commander. They have confidence in me because they don't believe a lot of lies that have been printed about me and also because they know I mean business when I fight. I don't fight for fun and I won't tolerate anyone on my staff who does."

"You're here to fight. Ahead of you lies battle. That means one thing. You can't afford to be a fool, because in battle fools mean dead men. It's inevitable for men to be killed and wounded in battle. But, there's no reason why such losses should be increased because of the incompetence and carelessness of some stupid S.O.B. I don't tolerate such men on my staff."

"We're here because some crazy Germans decided they were supermen and that they had a right to rule the world. They've been pushing people around all over the world, looting, killing, and abusing millions of innocent men, women, and children. They were getting ready to do the same thing to us. We have to fight to protect ourselves."

"Another reason we're here is to defeat and wipe out the Nazis who started all of this trouble. If you don't like to fight, I don't want you around. You had better get out before I kick you out. There's one thing you have to remember. In war, it takes more than the desire to fight to win. You've got to have more than guts to lick the enemy. You also must have brains. It takes brains and guts to win wars. A man with guts but no brains is only half a soldier. We whipped the Germans in Africa and Sicily because we had brains as well as guts. We're going to lick them in Europe for that same reason."

"That's all. Good luck."

BLITZKRIEG — AMERICAN STYLE

Third Army's battle record began on August 1st, 1944 at 1200 hours. That was when the Third Army was *officially operational* as a combat army.

In nine months and eight days of fighting, the Third Army compiled a great record. Not only did the Third Army astonish the world, but its deeds, in terms of statistics, challenged the imagination. The Third Army gave a new meaning to *fluid* warfare. The Third had only one general order from Patton; "Seek out the enemy, trap him, and destroy him."

The Germans never knew what to expect from Patton. His methods of operation were very different from British General Montgomery and the more conventional American generals. Patton's Third Army tore open the German lines of defense and trapped thousands of German soldiers. Most of them were either killed or they surrendered.

The history of the Third Army is a story of constant attack. They drove on in fair weather or foul, across favorable terrain or across mud, ice, and snow.

The soldiers in the Third Army knew the value of teamwork. Aircraft and artillery teamed with infantry and armor to a perfection that amazed not only the enemy but other Allied Armies. The XIX Tactical Air Command's bombing and air cover, coupled with the Artillery's timed, precision barrages, wrecked all enemy hopes to profit by American inexperience.

The Third Army was an army on wheels. Thousands of trucks driven by soldiers who called themselves the *Red Ball Express* carried tons of supplies to the army to keep it fighting and on the move. The Red Ball Express also set up special convoys that carried nothing but gasoline just to keep Patton's tanks rolling toward Germany.

One of the Third Army's greatest assets was American ingenuity. American soldiers were creating new instruments of war on the spot to overcome new problems encountered day after day.

Third Army had an excellent command structure. Each level of command had a special job and each did the best job they could. The planners who told the soldiers what to do also made every effort to help them do it.

Of course, a war cannot be won without hard fighting and personal courage. The Third Army had more than its share of courageous front-line fighting men; infantry, tankers, tank destroyers, engineers, all of them were soldiers who met every new challenge with courage and endless endurance.

Not all soldiers were part of combat teams, though. Many important jobs were done by administrative soldiers. It was these soldiers who backed up the front-line soldier, making sure he had the tools he needed to fight; food, weapons, ammunition, gasoline, and clothing. As General Patton once said, "No matter how small your job might seem, it's important in the vast scheme of things. Every job is important."

It was this type of teamwork which enabled each single squad to capture and hold a piece of ground taken from the enemy.

In terms of speed of advance, in amount of ground liberated or captured, and in terms of losses inflicted upon a powerful enemy there was never before anything like the Third Army's lightning quick sweep across France.

BREAKOUT

After Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges' First Army punched a hole in the German defenses at a French town called St. Lo, the Third Army began roaring through the hole with their Sherman tanks. They began an attacking advance that moved in every direction on the compass; north, south, east, and west, all at the same time. There was no stopping them once they got started.

They went east toward Le Mans, south and southwest through Laval, west toward Brest, and north toward St. Malo.

Third Army was not a defensive army. General Patton didn't believe in defensive tactics, he believed in attacking. He often told his soldiers, "When in doubt, attack." They knew that to defeat the Germans, they had to be on the offensive at all times. Like a boxer, they understood that once you got your opponent on the ropes, you had to keep at him until he went down. You couldn't let up and give him a chance to rest.

The soldiers of the Third Army took the fight to the enemy. They swept over the Brittany Peninsula before the enemy knew what was happening. Two tank columns of the Sixth Armored Division, commanded by Major General R.W. Grow, forced the Germans to withdraw into the fortified ports of St. Malo, Lorient, St. Nazaire, and Brest.

Threatened with a severed supply line where it narrowed to a ten mile wide strip at Avranches, the soldiers of the Third Army delivered those needed supplies despite nightly air attacks. At the same time they repulsed a vicious German counter-attack at Mortain.

Facing complete encirclement, the Germans quickly withdrew to the east. Although the Third Army had almost surrounded the German Seventh Army, they were not allowed to close a gap that existed between the towns of Argentan and Falaise. They were told to wait and let General Bernard L. Montgomery close the gap with his British Second Army.

Montgomery moved too slowly. He failed to close the gap until almost a week later. Because of this the Germans were able to continue their retreat from this *pocket* and they managed to save a large portion of their armor. They did, however, suffer a great loss of men and materials.

This *Argentan-Falaise Pocket* later became a very controversial issue. Many people claimed that the Third Army could have closed the gap themselves and they could have destroyed the complete German Seventh Army. If this had happened, the war might have been won much sooner than it was.

The Germans desperately raced toward the Seine River while being chased by the Third Army's spearhead units. Fearing a second encirclement west of the Seine River, the Germans fought to save their dwindling escape routes. All during their escape, they were hit with a never ending barrage of air and artillery bombardment which took a fearful toll of their lives and material.

IN PURSUIT

With their fast moving armored columns racing toward Paris and to the northeast of the French capital, the Third Army had to give up control of the XV Corps commanded by Lieutenant General Wade H. Haislip. Along with the Corps, the Third Army relinquished the Corps area to command of First Army. Always on the move, the Third Army continued to advance to the south, southeast, and southwest of Paris while continuing to fight.

The enemy was under continuous attack by both the Third Army's infantry and tank forces and Brigadier General O.P. Weyland's XIX Tactical Air Command's fighter-bombers. At this point, the enemy lost all hope of regaining the initiative.

The speed of the Third Army's advance forced the Germans to break into a hap-hazard, hasty retreat. The Third Army gave the Germans no time to occupy any natural defense lines or strong-points. It just kept punching it's way toward victory.

The German's retreat continued until only the Moselle River and the German built *Siegfried Line* lay between the Third Army and German soil. As the month of August drew near to a close, there was much evidence that the Third would have to actually slow down it's advance so that the other Allied armies could catch up with them.

Amazingly, despite shattered communications and huge losses, the Germans had not collapsed. They remained to be good soldiers and hard fighting professionals.

OUT OF GAS

In September 1944, General Eisenhower decided to let British General Montgomery put together a massive attack called *Operation Market Garden*. Because of this, a large part of all available supplies were diverted to the British Second Army. This included supplies that should have gone to the Third Army.

Eisenhower's decision created a shortage of gasoline and other necessary supplies that were badly needed by the Third Army to keep up its fast-paced advance. Without these supplies the Third Army was forced to slow down and finally to halt its rapid advance.

This was another decision made by Eisenhower and his officers at SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) that would become very controversial later. Many people thought, and still think, that if the Third Army had not been stopped when it was, it might have been able to bring the war to a close by the end of 1944, instead of the middle of 1945.

One thing was for certain; General Montgomery's plan was a failure. It not only failed to encircle and trap the Germans, it also failed in that it lost and wasted thousands of tons of supplies that could have been used by other armies (especially the Third Army) to continue their successful attacks. Because none of the plans were accomplished, it was also a waste of many soldier's lives. Lastly, it caused unnecessary destruction in the Netherlands. After it was all over, Prince Bernard of the Netherlands said, "My country can never again afford the luxury of another Montgomery success."

Since the Germans opposing General Patton's soldiers were not stupid, they were took full advantage of the opportunity given to them by Eisenhower's orders to stop the Third Army.

Without the Third Army chasing them, destroying their equipment, and killing them, German soldiers now had enough time to reinforce their battle lines with hastily reorganized units. The reorganization included non-battle tested, untrained troops who had never before performed non-combatant duties.

The Germans dug in and entrenched themselves in a frantic effort to stabilize their front lines. One counter attack followed another as the Germans sought to gain valuable time to strengthen the favorable terrain with fortifications. Even with all of their efforts, however, they failed to stop the Third Army from forcing the line of the Moselle River.

Helped by the greatest possible use of artillery, Third Army units pushed across the Meurthe River and then established important bridgeheads across the Moselle River. Progress was slow and costly because of the shortage of supplies, but at least it was positive. Even though the Third Army wasn't gaining ground at the speed it had been just weeks before, at least they weren't losing ground. Some terrible and vicious battles were fought along the Moselle River as the Third Army battled to break through the outer defenses of the city of Metz.

Even though German losses in personnel and materiel were high they did manage to firm up their front lines after the Third Army was ordered to hold it's positions. During this period there was not only a shortage of gasoline, but also a shortage of ammunition.

As usual, the Third Army refused to waste their time by doing nothing. As General Patton often told them, "There's always something you can do. There's never any excuse for being lazy." Bridgeheads over the Moselle River were improved so that when they got their badly needed supplies they would be ready to immediately start their offensive again.

Although the Third Army was expected to do nothing but patrol their lines during Operation Market-Garden, they always patrolled *aggressively*. This was one of General Patton's terms for a lot of small attacks. This *aggressive patrolling* kept the soldiers sharp and kept the Third Army moving forward.

Third Army continued to build up supplies, ammunition, and much needed winter clothing. This forced *rest period* and buildup continued through October and the first week of November.

METZ AND MUD

Finally, on November 8th, the waiting was over. The Third Army once again had been given a green light from Eisenhower. That is just what Patton and his soldiers had been waiting for. The soldiers of the Third Army knew that, as Patton had told them, "The road home is through Berlin." After their long delay, they started their first big fight by attacking the German city of Metz.

Patton had gone through the ordeal of a *trench war* in World War One. He knew how bad the effects of a stalemate could be. It was exactly that type of *trench warfare* he wanted to avoid with his rapid, motorized war of continual advance. "Never let the enemy rest," he told his men, "once you have them on the run, keep them on the run."

Major General Walton H. Walker, commander of the XX Corps, and Major General Manton S. Eddy, commander of the XII Corps, managed to establish bridgeheads across the Saar River because of bold attacks. Both of these generals knew how important it is to surprise the enemy so they started battles during weather so bad the Germans didn't think it was possible to attack.

As usual, because of their boldness, the Third Army achieved a tactical surprise. They were becoming famous for being able to do the impossible.

During these attacks, heavy rains left the terrain muddy and the rivers at a record flood level. These conditions called for more than average performance by the bridge building engineers.

The wet and cold weather caused a trenchfoot epidemic among Third Army troops, but a program of individual foot care was ordered personally by General Patton. This lowered the casualty rate and broke the epidemic.

The severe weather helped the Germans to prevent a complete breakthrough, but they still had to withdraw into Germany and take defensive positions behind the Siegfried Line. In spite of fanatic German resistance, Metz was captured for the first time since 451 A.D. The Third Army entered the city on November 18th after it was completely encircled.

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

After capturing Metz, General Patton ordered a powerful drive into the Siegfried Line, which he called, "A monument to the stupidity of mankind." Using this attack, he planned on fighting its way into the coal mining region of Germany. The Third Army was forced to give up this attack because of a problem that developed in the First Army's area to the north.

German General Von Rundstedt started an attack against the First Army's VII and VIII Corps on the 16th of December. Von Rundstedt's forces hit quickly and gained the element of surprise. Because of this, his soldiers were making excellent progress.

Eisenhower and his staff at SHAEF began to worry that they had underestimated the ability of the Germans. They feared that the Germans might be able to use this massive offensive to go to the north and west to capture the cities of Liege and Antwerp.

Liege was extremely important because the Allies had large supply dumps there. If the Germans managed to seize those supplies, they could possibly push the Allies back to the coastline, causing them to lose all the ground they had gained.

Antwerp was important because it was a port city. If captured, the Germans could use it to bring in badly needed supplies.

At a special meeting of all the highest ranking generals in the American, British, and Canadian armies, it was decided that the toughest job would go to General Patton and his Third Army. They would have to relieve the soldiers who had been surrounded by the Germans at the Belgian city of Bastogne.

After the meeting, Eisenhower, who had just been promoted to the five-star rank of General of the Army, was talking with General Patton. He remarked, "George, every time I get promoted I get attacked." Patton shot back with the comment, "And every time you get attacked, I pull you out!"

The 101st Airborne Division, commanded by Major General Maxwell D. Taylor, was holding out and fighting off the fierce attempts by the Germans to overrun Bastogne.

The Third Army had to stop a full scale attack they had started to the east, pull back the entire army, swing around ninety degrees to the north, and then begin another full scale attack on the southern flank of the German forces. Nothing like that had ever been done in the history of warfare. Everyone thought it was impossible except General Patton. He knew his men could do the impossible.

It only took three days for the Third army to perform that massive maneuver. Today, military historians readily admit that only Patton's Third Army could have accomplished a maneuver like that and make it look easy. Patton always demanded more from his soldiers than other commanders did and they never let him down.

One of the reasons the Third Army performed so well is because they expected the German attack. While Eisenhower and his friends were playing cards in London and the First Army turned part of their area into a R & R (Rest and Recuperation) area, Patton's intelligence officers were hard at work.

The events leading up to the Battle of the Bulge have, like the Falaise Gap and Operation Market-Garden, become controversial issues. Many people believe that Eisenhower's staff at SHAEF made poor decisions when they ignored Third Army reports about a possible German offensive in the Ardennes.

Colonel Oscar Koch, head of Third Army's G-2 Intelligence department, had sent intelligence reports warning SHAEF that the Germans were probably planning a major attack against the First Army's R&R area. His report was ignored. They refused to believe the Germans could collect the mass of weapons, men, and material to launch a large attack. It was a classic case of underestimating the enemy. At Colonel Koch's suggestion, General Patton gave the order for his staff to design two separate plans in the event of a German attack. General Patton believed Colonel Koch and considered him to be the best G-2 in the European Theater of Operations.

When Patton attended the meeting with the other Allied commanders he told them he could attack in two days with at least two divisions. Everyone thought he was crazy, but he told them that he had already set plans in motion before he left his headquarters. All he had to do was place a phone call. When it was finally decided that he should attack as soon as possible, he phoned his headquarters and said, "Nickel." The attack was on.

The General never returned to his headquarters. Instead, he and his driver, Sergeant Mims, began traveling along the roads where he knew he would meet his soldiers heading north. He gave orders on the spot and told everyone he met to head north and kill Germans. Sergeant Mims once said to Patton, "General, the army is wasting a lot of money on your staff officers. You and I can run the whole war from your jeep."

While watching his men heading toward the Germans surrounding Bastogne, he said, "No other army in the world could do this. No other soldiers could do what these men are doing. By God, I'm proud of them."

On the 26th of December a 4th Armored Division Task Force, commanded by Major General H.J. Gaffey, made contact with the soldiers at Bastogne.

By this time, urgently needed snow camouflage for both troops and vehicles was being quickly supplied. Because of the problem of tanks slipping on the icy terrain, supply troops had installed special *cleats* on the treads of the tanks, much like the cleats on athlete's shoes.

The Germans threw everything they had into the attack against Bastogne. It was their last chance against the Allies. They made every attempt to smash and close the corridor the 4th Armored Division had opened to Bastogne. When failure was certain they began to withdraw their armor behind the Siegfried line for the second and final time. Badly hurt by the beating they had taken, the Germans used what was left of their infantry to screen their movements.

Although they were handicapped by bitterly cold weather, ice, and snow, the Third Army continued its pressure on the south flank of the enemy penetration. By the end of December, the

enemy had succeeded in saving what armor had not been destroyed. The *bulge* slowly became a *wedge* and the wedge finally disappeared. Finally, another *bulge* appeared except this time it was on the German side of the front lines.

Officially, on the 28th of January, the *Battle of the Bulge* was over and Von Rundstedt's *Ardennes Offensive* (as the Germans called it) had lost all of the ground that it had originally won. The enemy was now completely pushed back into German territory.

The soldiers of the First Army had fought gallantly and bravely throughout the entire Battle of the Bulge. Although they were to be commended for their courage and fighting ability, the truth is that they would have lost the battle without the help of the Third Army.

It was General Patton's Third Army that performed the most crucial role in stopping the Germans. Without their quick and decisive maneuver and attack, the Battle of the Bulge would have been a massive disaster for the Allies.

What cannot be understood was General Eisenhower's attitude toward General Patton and the Third Army. General Bradley, 12th Army Group Commander, and General Hodges, First Army commander, received Distinguished Service Medals for their poor leadership. It was also partly due to their lack of discipline among their soldiers that the Germans were able to get so far in their attack. Yet, General Patton, whose Third Army was mostly responsible for saving the day, was never even thanked by Eisenhower.

Patton, however, didn't have time to worry about such small things. He was getting ready for another drive into Germany. After *The Bulge* became history, the Third Army began a powerful advance to the Kyll River. It was during this advance that the Third Army captured the German city of Trier.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

There's a funny story about the capture of Trier that shows the differences between General Patton and General Bradley and their ability to judge a military situation. After the battle was already won and the Third Army had taken the city, General Patton received a message from General Bradley. The message said, "Bypass Trier. It would take too many divisions to capture it." Patton's humorous reply to Bradley was, "Have already taken city, do you want me to give it back?"

By this time, Germany's manpower problem was becoming very evident to the Allies. All units of the Third Army was meeting great numbers of rear echelon German troops. Among these were many *Volkssturm* (German militia) troops.

After their defeat at Bastogne, the Germans were now totally incapable of stopping the Third Army in its sweep across the Rhine River. Parts of eleven German divisions were trapped between the Third Army in the south and the First Army in the north. They were being chopped to pieces with only a very few of them managing to escape. The enemy was all but whipped and they knew it. They were becoming more demoralized as each day passed.

By driving quickly to the Rhine River, the Third Army exposed the enemy's right flank. This created the opportunity for Patton's men to reopen a devastating war of movement for the first time since the fighting they had done in France. This was Patton's favorite kind of war. He liked to hit hard and fast. He never stopped to regroup his forces the way General Montgomery did with his British 2nd Army.

After crossing the Moselle River south of Koblenz, Third Army's 4th Armored Division ripped across the enemy's rear. They were followed closely by XII Corps Infantry units who did the mopping up. Shortly afterwards, XX Corps armored units plunged through the Siegfried Line and they, too, raced toward the Rhine River. When the XX Corps linked up with the XII Corps units, they had trapped the remaining Germans in the Hunsruck Mountains.

While the Third Army was busy cleaning out the Hunsruck Mountains, the American Seventh Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Alexander Patch, attacked to their north through the Siegfried Line. There was no safe place for the Germans and there was no place for them to hide.

By now, the Germans were panic-stricken. They tried, but failed, to hold a line of defense against the Third Army's unstoppable armor west of Mainz and Mannheim.

Third Army's 4th Armored Division penetrated deeply into Germany territory and into the Seventh Army's zone of operations. Major General W.H.H. Morris' 10th Armored Division and Major General R.R. Allen's 12th Armored Division pushed the enemy eastward toward the Rhine.

The German withdrawal was completely disorganized and confused. It was quickly becoming a complete rout. The enemy was making a mad dash for the city of Speyer. It was the only city they could get to that still had an open crossing to the Rhine River.

During this period, the enemy lost the greater part of two entire armies. They were chopped to pieces by the powerful armor rushing on him from three different directions.

From the air, the XIX Tactical Air Command, commanded by General O.P. (Opie) Weyland, attacked the Germans relentlessly with their P-47 and P-51 fighter-bombers. On the ground, they were pursued closely by Third Army infantry. In addition to losing a large part of two armies, more than 81,000 German soldiers were captured as prisoners of war during this campaign.

To the north, at Remagen, General Montgomery was planning a major assault. Montgomery never believed in attacking unless he had such overwhelming odds in his favor that he was assured of victory simply by the weight of his attack. His massive preparations for crossing the Rhine River included landing craft, air support, artillery, and large numbers of troops. All of the materials, supplies, and manpower he planned on using was almost equal to that used by the Allies during their landings in Normandy on D-Day.

Montgomery's crossing of the Rhine was supposed to be a spectacular invasion of Germany. It was meant to be an earth-shaking event that would be broadcast throughout England over the BBC radio network. *Monty* had even invited the Prime Minister of England, Winston S. Churchill, to be present at the crossing.

Meanwhile, very quietly, and without any great fanfare or massive preparations, Patton's Third Army was already crossing the Rhine and driving toward the heart of Nazi Germany.

Patton's men were just following his basic order to, "Kill the enemy before they kill you." The soldiers of the Third Army gave the Germans no chance to recover from the beating they were taking.

Third Army quickly moved two bridgeheads over the Rhine River within five days. Patton had often warned his men that, "Many battles have been lost because of an army stopping on the wrong side of a river."

The 5th Infantry Division, under Major General S. Leroy Irwin, made a perfectly executed assault crossing of the Rhine early on the morning of March 23rd. They had received no artillery or air support and the Germans offered little or no resistance at all.

Third Army's VIII Corps made a second assault crossing of the Rhine south of Koblenz on the 26th of March. The Third Army's bridgeheads were expanded rapidly. The enemy's high losses and his concern over First Army's bridgehead at Remagen left him with totally inadequate forces to contain the Third Army. Advancing to the Main River, the Third Army seized bridgeheads over that river in the vicinity of Hanau and Aschaffenburg on the 25th of March. The enemy's attempt to contain the Main River bridgeheads ended in utter failure. The Third Army broke through and by March 28th, the 4th Armored Division had swiftly driven thirty miles northward to join forces with the First Army. Their movement had again trapped thousands of German troops in the Wiesbaden and Bingen area.

When General Patton was ready to cross the Rhine, he did it on foot. He got out of his jeep and walked across the river on a pontoon bridge built by his Third Army Engineers. When he reached the half-way point he stopped and urinated into the German river. He then continued his walk to the other side of the bridge and got back into his jeep. Patton always enjoyed being dramatic.

Advancing as quickly as their tracks could carry them, the Third Army again gave the enemy no time to build defense lines. Armor and troops drove swiftly down both sides of the Werra River, across the Fulda River, and twenty miles beyond, ruining any hope the enemy had of making a strong stand.

They met strong enemy resistance only at the town of Kassel. By the 10th of April, the Third Army was pushing toward the Mulde River in a five day drive that gained them eighty miles. This campaign ended on the 21st of March. While the Third Army was getting ready to advance east of the Mulde River, they once again were ordered by Eisenhower to halt

After four days of preparation and regrouping (which Patton called the curse of warfare) the Third Army was given a new mission. On the 22nd of March they were to advance to the southeast into Bavaria to attack what SHAEF called the *National Redoubt* area. Patton protested this order claiming that the *National Redoubt* existed only in General Eisenhower's imagination. As it turned out, Patton was right again.

Patton had wanted to turn his Third Army north and head for Berlin before the Russians got there. Eisenhower, however, failed to understand the importance of the German Capital and he refused permission.

It was later discovered that Eisenhower had sent *unauthorized messages* to some Russian generals. He had taken upon himself the authority to make strategic decisions which were not his to make.

By now, enemy resistance appeared to be on the point of total collapse. Final victory was in the air. On the 4th of May, the 11th German Panzer Division surrendered unconditionally to the Third Army.

It became very clear that the Germans had no desire at all to defend the so-called *Redoubt* area. Germans were surrendering in ever increasing numbers.

Third Army's final campaign across the Danube River, into Czechoslovakia and Austria, was halted with the official end of the war in Europe at 0001 hours (one minute after midnight) on May 9th, 1945.

The Germans had officially surrendered all of Germany on May 8th, 1945, a date which would become known as V.E. DAY or VICTORY IN EUROPE DAY.

1944 – 1945
FACTS AND FIGURES

Reduced to cold, statistical figures, the feats of the Third Army were astonishing. The Army liberated or captured 81,522 square miles of territory. An estimated 12,000 cities, towns, and communities were liberated or captured, including 27 cities of more than 50,000 in population.

Third Army captured 765,483 prisoners of war. 515,205 of the enemy surrendered during the last week of the war to make a total of 1,280,688 POW's processed.

The enemy lost an estimated 1,280,688 captured, 144,500 killed, and 386,200 wounded, adding up to 1,811,388. By comparison, the Third Army suffered 16,596 killed, 96,241 wounded, and 26,809 missing in action for a total of 139,646 casualties. Third Army's losses were only 12.97 percent of the German losses. That is only about 13 American soldiers for every 100 German soldiers.

Third Army aircraft and artillery dropped or dispersed by shell 31,552,700 psychological warfare leaflets to enemy troops.

XIX Tactical Air Command completed 1,767 tactical reconnaissance missions and 77 photo reconnaissance missions which resulted in 3,205,670 aerial photographic prints being distributed.

XIX Tactical Air Command flew 7,326 missions and 74,447 sorties during the 281 days of fighting.

Third Army's air support dropped 17,486 tons of bombs, 3,205 napalm tanks, and launched 4,599 rockets.

The Air Command destroyed 1,640 enemy planes and only lost 582 of it's own from all causes.

Targets destroyed or damaged by the XIX Tactical Air Command included:

Tanks and armored cars	3,833
Motor vehicles	38,541
Locomotives	4,337
Railroad lines cut	2,585
Marshaling yards	974
Towns and villages	816
Factories	3,664
Supply dumps	220
Military installations	1,730
Gun installations	2,809
Highway and railroad bridges	285
Miscellaneous naval vessels	654
Miscellaneous targets	3,010

Third Army artillery fired 5,870,843 rounds of ammunition during the fighting.

Tank destroyers with the Third Army knocked out 648 enemy tanks and 211 self propelled guns. At the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line, they eliminated 801 pillboxes. They fired a total of 101,178 rounds of ammunition on direct fire missions and 231,998 rounds on indirect fire missions.

Within the Army area, 2,186,792 tons of supplies were transported a total of 141,081,336 miles by trucks in the transportation pool. A total of 2,092 miles of railway track was reconstructed and placed into operation.

The Army repaired 99,114 general purpose vehicles, 21,761 combat vehicles, 11,613 artillery pieces, 125,083 small arms, and 32,740 instruments.

Third Army Engineers constructed 2,498 bridges with a total footage of 255,520 feet, almost 48 and one half miles of bridging. They built or maintained an average of 2,240 miles of road.

Third Army's nine chemical mortar companies expended 349,097 rounds of 4.2 inch mortars, including 189,095 rounds of high explosive and 160,002 rounds of white phosphorous. Chemical warfare supplies included 32,454 gallons of flame thrower fuel and 335,944 grenades.

Third Army Signal Corps personnel laid 3,747 miles of telephone wire. The Third Army message center handled a total of 7,220,261 code groups and switchboard operators handled an average of 13,968 telephone calls daily.

Military personnel in the Third Army were paid a total of \$240,539,569 from the 1st of August, 1944 until the 30th of April, 1945.

The forward echelon of the Third Army (code named *Lucky Forward* by General Patton) traveled 1,225 miles while making 19 complete moves during combat.

The decorations awarded to soldiers of the Third Army were:

Medal of Honor	19
Distinguished Service Medal	44
Distinguished Service Cross	291
Legion of Merit	159
Silver Star	4,990
Soldier's Medal	247
Bronze Star	29,090

Normal promotions numbered 6,464; battlefield promotions totaled 1,817; and combat appointments totaled 848.

The correspondents of the Third Army and soldier correspondents wrote 30,326 stories totaling 7,010,963 words. They submitted 7,129 photographs about the Third Army's combat fighting.

A total of 11,230,000 soldiers attended motion picture shows at the Third Army. The USO shows played to 650,000 soldiers, and the soldier talent shows played to a total of 625,000 soldiers.

General Patton was right when he said, "It sure takes a lot to kill a German."

In this way, the Third Army played its proud part in helping to crush the Nazi war machine. When men talk of the Second World War the name of the Third U.S. Army and of its commander will awaken a special thrill of courage and adventure.

Perhaps more than any other group of soldiers in the European Theater, the soldiers of the Third Army deserved the praise of the Supreme Allied Commander Eisenhower when he said, "Working and fighting together in a single indestructible partnership you have achieved perfection in unification of air, ground, and naval power that will stand as a model in our time."

GENERAL PATTON'S PRAYER

On December 17th, 1944 General Patton gave the order to swing the Third Army from an eastward attack to a northward attack. At the time his order was issued, a blizzard was raging in the Ardennes. Because of the added difficulty faced by this bad weather, Patton called for his Chaplain, Colonel James H. O'Neill. When O'Neill arrived, he was ordered by the General to write a prayer asking for good weather to fight the Germans. O'Neill was concerned about this, saying, "Sir, surely you don't want me to ask for divine assistance in killing people." General Patton replied, "I want a prayer for good weather and I want it now." The Chaplain left the General's office and wrote the prayer.

General Patton had both the prayer and a special Christmas greeting printed on thousands of wallet-sized card that were given to every soldier in the Third Army. Patton believed the prayer must have worked because on the 20th of December the sky cleared and the XIX Tactical Air Command's planes began flying and raising havoc with the Germans. Third Army's soldiers could now get on with their job of winning the war.

To show his appreciation, General Patton awarded the Bronze Star Medal to Chaplain O'Neill.

The full text of the Prayer and General Patton's Christmas Message follow on the next page.

HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY

To each officer and soldier in the Third United States Army, I wish 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G.S. Patton, Jr." with a stylized, cursive script.

G.S. PATTON, JR.,
Lieutenant General,
Commanding, Third United States Army

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech of Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to 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.

THE END OF THE ROAD

In September of 1945, General Patton turned over command of the Third Army to an old friend of his, Lieutenant General Lucien K. Truscott.

After the Third Army's return to the continental United States, it resumed its pre-war role of *training* army.

Eventually, the Third Army was phased out of existence. In 1947, the Third Army returned to the United States and occupied the military installation which is today Fort McPherson, located in Georgia. In 1973 the Third Army was *inactivated*, the official date being 1 October, 1973.

**GENERAL PATTON'S
FINAL GENERAL ORDERS**

HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 403

GENERAL ORDERS

9 May 1945

NUMBER 98

SOLDIERS OF THE THIRD ARMY, PAST AND PRESENT

During the 281 days of incessant and victorious combat, your penetrations have advanced farther in less time than any other army in history. You have fought your way across 24 major rivers and innumerable lesser streams. You have liberated or conquered more than 82,000 square miles of territory, including 1,500 cities and towns, and some 12,000 inhabited places. Prior to the termination of active hostilities, you had captured in battle 956,000 enemy soldiers and killed or wounded at least 500,000 others. France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia bear witness to your exploits.

All men and women of the six corps and thirty-nine divisions that have at different times been members of this Army have done their duty. Each deserves credit. The enduring valor of the combat troops has been paralleled and made possible by the often unpublicized activities of the supply, administrative, and medical services of this Army and of the Communications Zone troops supporting it. Nor should we forget our comrades of the other armies and of the Air Force, particularly of the XIX Tactical Air Command, by whose side or under whose wings we have had the honor to fight.

In proudly contemplating our achievements, let us never forget our heroic dead whose graves mark the course of our victorious advances, nor our wounded whose sacrifices aided so much in our success.

I should be both ungrateful and wanting in candor if I failed to acknowledge the debt we owe to our Chiefs of Staff, Generals Gaffey and Gay, and to the officers and men of the General and Special Staff Sections of Army Headquarters. Without their loyalty, intelligence, and unremitting labors, success would have been impossible.

The termination of fighting in Europe does not remove the opportunities for other outstanding and equally difficult achievements in the days which are to come. In some ways the immediate future will demand of you more fortitude than has the past because, without the inspiration of combat, you must maintain — by your dress, deportment, and efficiency — not only the prestige of the Third Army but also the honor of the United States. I have complete confidence that you will not fail.

During the course of this war I have received promotions and decorations far above and beyond my individual merit. You won them; I as your representative wear them. The one honor which is mine and mine alone is that of having commanded such an incomparable group of Americans, the record of whose fortitude, audacity, and valor will endure as long as history lasts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G S Patton Jr." with a stylized, cursive script.

G. S. PATTON, JR.,
General

**GENERAL PATTON'S
LEADERSHIP SECRETS**

"A good solution applied with vigor now is better than a perfect solution applied ten minutes later."

"Do everything you ask of those you command."

"Do more than is required of you."

"Do not fear failure."

"Do not make excuses, whether it's your fault or not."

"Do not take counsel of your fears."

"Give credit where it's due."

"In case of doubt, attack."

"It's the unconquerable soul of man, and not the nature of the weapon he uses, that insures victory."

"Lack of orders is no excuse for inaction."

"Make your plans to fit the circumstances."

"Moral courage is the most valuable and usually the most absent characteristic in men."

"Say what you mean and mean what you say."

"Take calculated risks."

"The duties of an officer are the safety, honor, and welfare of your country first; the honor, welfare, and comfort of the men in your command second; and the officer's own ease, comfort, and safety last."

"The soldier is the army."

"There is only one tactical principle which is not subject to change; it is, 'To use the means at hand to inflict the maximum amount of wounds, death, and destruction on the enemy in the minimum amount of time.' "

"There is only one type of discipline, perfect discipline."

"There's a great deal of talk about loyalty from the bottom to the top. Loyalty from the top down is even more necessary and is much less prevalent. One of the most frequently noted characteristics of great men who have remained great is loyalty to their subordinates."

"You're never beaten until you admit it."

THIRD ARMY COMMANDERS

7 Nov 1918	–	19 Apr 1919	MG Joseph T. Dickman
20 Apr 1919	–	2 Jul 1919	LTG Hunter Liggett
15 Sep 1932	–	30 Sep 1933	MG Edwin B. Winans
4 Oct 1933	–	27 Feb 1936	MG Johnson Hagood
4 Apr 1936	–	30 Sep 1936	MG Frank Parker
1 Oct 1936	–	30 Sep 1938	MG George Van Horn Moseley
1 Oct 1938	–	30 Sep 1940	MG Stanley D. Emdick
1 Oct 1940	–	15 May 1941	LTG Herbert J. Brees
16 May 1941	–	2 Feb 1943	LTG Walter Kreuger
16 Feb 1943	–	25 Jan 1944	LTG Courtney H. Hodges
26 Jan 1944	–	7 Oct 1945	GEN George S. Patton, Jr.
8 Oct 1945	–	15 Apr 1946	LTG Lucien K. Truscott, Jr.
16 Apr 1946	–	9 Jan 1947	LTG Geoffrey Keyes
10 Jan 1947	–	14 Mar 1947	MG Ernest N. Harmon
15 Mar 1947	–	14 Apr 1947	LTG Oscar W. Griswold
15 Apr 1947	–	18 Jun 1947	LTG Edward H. Brooks*
19 Jun 1947	–	31 Aug 1950	LTG Alvan C. Gillem, Jr.
1 Sep 1950	–	7 May 1952	LTG John R. Hodge
8 May 1952	–	21 Aug 1952	MG William A. Beiderlinden*
22 Aug 1952	–	31 Jul 1955	LTG Alexander R. Bolling
1 Aug 1955	–	30 Apr 1958	LTG Thomas F. Hickey
1 May 1958	–	17 Feb 1960	LTG Clark L. Ruffner
18 Feb 1960	–	4 Mar 1960	LTG Robert F. Sink*
5 Mar 1960	–	30 Sep 1960	LTG Herbert B. Powell
1 Oct 1960	–	16 Oct 1960	LTG Thomas J. H. Trapnell*
17 Oct 1960	–	2 Oct 1961	LTG Paul D. Adams
3 Oct 1961	–	30 Nov 1962	LTG Thomas J. H. Trapnell
1 Dec 1962	–	1 Feb 1963	LTG Hamilton H. Howze*
2 Feb 1963	–	15 Jul 1964	LTG Albert Watson, II
16 Jul 1964	–	31 Jul 1964	LTG John W. Bowen*
1 Aug 1964	–	23 Jun 1965	LTG Charles W. G. Rich
24 Jun 1965	–	14 Jul 1965	MG William C. Bullock*
15 Jul 1965	–	31 Jul 1967	LTG Louis W. Truman
1 Aug 1967	–	31 Jul 1969	LTG John L. Throckmorton
1 Aug 1969	–	19 Jun 1972	LTG Albert O. Connor
20 Jun 1972	–	14 Jun 1973	LTG Melvin Zais
15 Jun 1973	–	30 Jun 1973	LTG John H. Hay*
1 Jul 1973	–	1 Oct 1973	MG Warren K. Bennet

*Denotes *Acting* Commander

SOURCE MATERIAL

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