

General George Patton's Famous Address to the Third Army

(Somewhere in England June 5th, 1944)

Source: *The Patton Museum Foundation, Fort Knox, Kentucky*

Be seated.

You are here today for three reasons. First, because you are here to defend your homes and your loved ones. Second, you are here for your own self respect, because you would not want to be anywhere else. Third, you are here because you are real men. When you, here, every one of you, were kids, you all admired the champion marble player, the fastest runner, the toughest boxer, the big league ball players and the All-American football players. Americans love a winner. Americans will not tolerate a loser. Americans despise cowards. Americans play to win all of the time. I wouldn't [care] for a man who lost and laughed.

You are not all going to die. Only two percent of you right here today would die in a major battle. Death must not be feared. Death, I time, comes to all men. Yes, every man is scared in his first battle. If he says he's not, he's a liar. The real hero is the man who fights even though he is scared. Some men get over their fright in a minute under fire. For some, it takes an hour. For some, it takes days. But a real man will never let his fear of death overpower his honor, his sense of duty to his country, and his innate manhood.

Americans pride themselves on being He Men and they are He Men. Remember that the enemy is just frightened as you are, and probably more so. They are not supermen.

All through you Army careers, you men have [complained] about 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 [respect] a man who's not always on his toes. You 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.

An Army is a team. It lives, sleeps, eats, and fights as a team. The individual heroic stuff is pure [malarkey]. We have the finest food, the finest equipment, the best spirit, and the best men in the world. Why I actually pity those poor [fellows] were going up against. I [really] do.

My men don't surrender, and I don't want to hear of any soldier under my command being captured unless he's been hit. Even if you are hit, you can still fight back.

Every single man in this Army plays a vital role. Don't ever let up. Don't ever think that your job is unimportant. Every man has a job to do and he must do it. Every man is a vital link in the great chain. What if every truck driver suddenly decided that he didn't like the whine of those shells overhead, and jumped headlong into a ditch? [He] could say, 'They won't miss me, just one man in thousands.' Where would he be now? What would our country, our loved ones, our homes, even world, be like? No, Americans don't think like that. Every man has a job. Every man serves the whole. Every department, every unit, is important in the vast scheme of war. The ordnance men are needed to supply the guns and machinery of war to keep us rolling. The Quartermaster is needed to bring up food and clothes. Every last man on K.P. has a job to do, even the one who heats our water.

Each man must not think only of himself, but also of his buddy fighting beside him. One of the bravest men I ever saw was a fellow on top of a telegraph pole in the midst of a furious fight in Tunisia. I stopped and asked him what the hell he was doing up there in a time like that. He answered, 'Fixing the wire, Sir.' I asked, 'Isn't that a little unhealthy right about now?' He answered, 'Yes Sir, but the wire has to be fixed.' I asked, 'Don't those planes strafing the road bother you?' And he answered, 'No, Sir, but you sure as hell do!' Now there was a real man. A real soldier. There was a man who devoted all he had to his duty, no matter how seemingly insignificant his duty might appear at the time, no matter how great the odds.

And you should have seen those trucks on the road to Tunisia. Those drivers were magnificent. All day and all night they rolled over those roads, never stopping, never faltering from their course, with shells bursting all around them all the time. We got through on good old American guts.

Many of those men drove for over forty consecutive hours. These men weren't combat men, but they were soldiers with a job to do. [And] they did it. They were part of a team. Without team effort, without them, the fight would have been lost. All the links in the chain pulled together and the chain became unbreakable.

Don't forget, you men don't know that I'm here. No mention of the fact is to be made in any letters. The world is not supposed to know what happened to me. I'm not supposed to be commanding this Army. I'm not even supposed to be here in England. Let the [ones] to find out be the Germans.

Sure, we want to go home. We want this war over with. The quickest way to get it over with is to get [those] who started it. The quicker they are whipped, the quicker we can go home. The shortest way home is through Berlin and Tokyo.

When a man is lying in a shell hole, if he just stays there all day, a German will get to him eventually. My men don't dig foxholes. I don't want them to. Foxholes only slow up an offensive. Keep moving. And don't give the enemy time to dig one either.

I don't want to get any messages saying, 'I am holding my position.' We are advancing constantly and we are not interested in holding onto anything. Our basic plan of operation is to advance and to keep on advancing regardless of whether we have to go over, under, or through the enemy.

From time to time there will be some complaints that we are pushing our people hard. I don't [care] about such complaints. I believe in the old and sound rule that an ounce of sweat will save a gallon of blood. Pushing means fewer casualties. I want you all to remember that.

There is one great thing that you men will all be able to say after this war is over and you are home once again. You may be thankful that twenty years from now when you are sitting by the fireplace with your grandson on your knee and he asks you what you did in the great World War II, you won't have to cough, shift him to the other knee and say, 'Well, your Granddaddy shoveled [manure] in Louisiana'. No, Sir, you can look at him straight in the eye and say, 'Son, your Granddaddy rode with the Great Third Army and a SOB named George Patton!'

That is all!