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Mr. Brian Lamb
CSPAN
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Dear Mr. Lamb:

Booknotes is one of my favorite programs. Keep up the good work!

Remarks by your guest author this past Sunday evening prompt this letter.

Obviously, the author has a deep respect for the late General Patton and has spent an enormous amount of time researching his subject and reducing his findings to writing. However, he failed to mention some critical facts about the late General. In other instances, he skewed the data and information he worked with. Following are a few examples:

- o Patton was not universally held in high regard within or outside the military. I would recommend that the author read some of the late General of the Armies Pershing's estimates of Patton during World War I.

- o Patton didn't "slap" anyone. He struck one of his victims (there was more than one) so hard he drove the soldier out of the tent and onto the ground, knocking his helmet off in the process. His profanity toward a soldier who was adjudged ill by a medical officer was shameful and should have resulted in his being sacked immediately and returned to the U. S. in shame. That he was not simply shows the gutlessness of the higher levels of the military.

- o It was not the war correspondents who first reported the Patton assault against an ill enlisted man to higher headquarters; rather, it was a relatively young medical officer with a lot of guts who blew the whistle on this bully. The correspondents took no action prior to the action of the aforementioned medical officer.

- o Patton was not "put to pasture" for a while in Sicily; rather, he was detailed to Malta.

- o Patton was a blaggard. He wore a helmet liner with 11 (count 'em, 11) coats of a special laquer which he had shipped from the United States. He wore a helmet which had been chromium-plated on specific occasions. What a "mud" soldier!

- o Occasionally, Patton would walk among enemy dead, blowing their heads off with his .45 caliber "Frontier Model" Colt. Those who witnessed this behavior were shocked and referred to him as being "sick."

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o On one occasion near Longwy, in Eastern France, when the troops had not advanced as far as he thought they should have, he came roaring to the front in a touring car with large Third Army insigna on its doors and with sirens roaring. Upon alighting from the car, he told the troops and their officers that they " . . . had shit in their blood!" He then added that " . . . the bullet has not yet been made that could pierce this hide," pointing to himself. This prompted a Major to remark (out of earshot, of course) "All he has to do is stand up on that embankment out there and we'll soon find out!" The Germans had launched a massive, sustained artillery barrage that would have wiped out anyone attempting an assault at that point in the line.

o I've read several versions of Patton's death in a road "accident." Actually, he was heading for an area East of Heidelberg for a day of pheasant hunting when his driver ploughed into a 2½ ton 6 x 6, which was backing onto the road. Clearly, his driver did not have the vehicle in which Patton was riding under control, yet Patton made a big deal of traffic safety throughout the Third Army area, even convening traffic court and sentencing violators to stiff sentences during which they were required to learn of vehicle mechanics and driving skills. Yet, he failed to control his own driver in this case.

o Following the crash, which proved fatal, some of his devotees tried to get the Congress of the United States to authorize the award of the Medal of Honor. The Congress would hear none of it. They were correct, he did not meet the stiff criteria for such an honor.

o Patton used to tell his troops that if " . . . they couldn't screw the women, they couldn't fight!" How's that for a morale builder? Many of his troops were sickened by him. Occasionally, he would send back to Paris for a couple of busloads of prostitutes and set up a few tents where his men could "enjoy themselves." I know of no other general officer who had such a low opinion of his troops.

o Patton's son-in-law John Knight Waters, a Lt. Col. at the time, had been captured in North Africa in 1942 and sent to Germany as a POW. Upon learning the location of the prison camp where Waters was held, Patton ordered a operation to free him and other prisoners at the same compound. The mission, while a success, subjected those in the relief effort to undue risk. Casualties were sustained. The question asked often throughout the European Theater of Operations (ETO) at the time was whether Patton would have risked his troops to liberate the POWs if his son-in-law had not been among them. Good question.

I could go on and on; however, I feel that the preceding should be sufficient to indicate why everyone did not have a universally high opinion of the general.

A booknotes regular. Thanks for listening.