George Smith Patton

Four Men Who Shared The Name

by Raymond C. Wilson, ...

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Preface

On my first “solo” date with Billie Jean Null (who later became my wife), I took her to see *Patton* when the film was released in April 1970. Since both Billie Jean and I came from military families, we thoroughly enjoyed the three hours that we spent together watching this epic motion picture.

Illustration:
George C. Scott as General Patton

Franklin J. Schaffner's *Patton*, released at the height of the unpopular war in Vietnam, was described by many reviewers at the time as "really" an anti-war film. It was nothing of the kind. It was a hard-line glorification of the military ethic, personified by a man whose flaws and eccentricities marginalized him in peacetime, but found the ideal theater in battle. In this George Smith Patton was not unlike Winston Churchill; both men used flamboyance, eccentricity and a gift for self-publicity as a way of inspiring their followers and perplexing the enemy. That Patton was in some ways mad is not in doubt—at least to the makers of this film—but his accomplishments overshadowed, even humiliated, his cautious and sane British rival, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery.

General Omar Nelson Bradley (played by Karl Malden), who had the film's only other significant leading role, cringed at the risk of lives and equipment that General George Smith Patton (portrayed by George C. Scott) was willing to contemplate, because he did not quite see that for Patton his men and equipment were the limbs of his ego. Vanity and courage found their intersection in Patton.

Illustration:
George C. Scott as General Patton and Karl Malden as General Bradley

Twentieth Century Fox paid General of the Army Omar Nelson Bradley $90,000 for the rights to use his World War II memoir, *A Soldier’s Story*, and to serve as the senior military adviser to the film.

The 1970 film, *Patton*, sparked renewed interest in General George Smith Patton (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.). The movie won seven Academy Awards, including Best Actor and Best Picture, and immortalized Patton as one of the world's most intriguing military men.

Less than one year after watching *Patton*, I joined the U.S. Army. Following Basic Combat Training (BCT) at Fort Dix, New Jersey and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, I was transferred to my first permanent duty station at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Illustration:
Specialist Four Raymond C. Wilson with wife Billie Jean in 1972

At Fort Knox I was assigned to the U.S. Army Armor School whose Assistant Commandant was Brigadier General George Smith Patton IV (son of General George Smith Patton of World War II fame). Shortly after befriending his driver, I found myself serving as Administrative Assistant to Brigadier General George Smith Patton IV from November 1971 to December 1972.

Illustration:
Staff Sergeant Raymond C. Wilson and Major General George Smith Patton IV in 1978

Six years later, I was selected to work in General Officer Management Office (GOMO) at the Pentagon. In addition to my duties as a career manager for all Active Army General Officers (including then-Major General George Smith Patton IV), I had the privilege of serving as Administrative Assistant to General of the Army Omar Nelson Bradley from 1978 to 1980.

Illustration:
Warrant Officer Raymond C. Wilson and General of the Army Omar Nelson Bradley in 1980

For decades our collective knowledge of General George Smith Patton of World War II fame has been based on this popular film and the opinions of General Omar Nelson Bradley. Bradley and Patton were never close friends, but both realized that they owed much of their respective success to the other. Bradley considered Patton profane, vulgar, too independent, and not a team player. For his part, Patton thought Bradley was overly cautious, indecisive at critical moments, and lacking the resolve to follow through when the operational opportunity presented itself. Historian Martin Blumenson characterized their relationship as “World War II’s Odd Couple.”

The knowledge I have of “World War II’s Old Couple,” portrayed by George C. Scott and Karl Malden in the epic film *Patton*, comes from serving with Patton’s son (Brigadier General George Smith Patton IV) at Fort Knox and from serving with General of the Army Omar Nelson Bradley at the Pentagon during the decade immediately following the release of this Academy Award winning film in 1970.

Based on my personal experiences with Patton and Bradley, I have come to greatly admire both men for the outstanding service they rendered to the U.S. Army and the nation.

In 2021, I wrote a book titled America's Five-Star Warriors in which I devoted an entire chapter to the life of General of the Army Omar Nelson Bradley. In my current book titled *George Smith Patton: Four Men Who Shared the Name*, I delve into the lives of the four generations of Pattons who used the same name. In order to distinguish between these four individuals, I attached the following Roman numerals to their names: George Smith Patton I, George Smith Patton II, George Smith Patton III, and George Smith Patton IV. It should be noted that the second George Smith Patton was originally named George William Patton, but changed his name to George Smith Patton after his father was killed during the Battle of Winchester in 1864. The third George Smith Patton of World War II fame was popularly known as George Smith Patton Jr. In addition, the fourth George Smith Patton dropped the Roman numeral 'IV' after his father died from injuries sustained in an automobile accident in 1945.

I hope that you enjoy reading my current book about the Patton family as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Raymond C. Wilson, Author

Introduction

George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr. of World War II fame) learned well the names of his ancestors, together with those of many cousins who had served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, and, before them, 2nd Great Grandfather Robert Patton, who settled in Fredericksburg, Virginia in the early-1770s.

Robert Patton

According to Patton family lore, Robert Patton fought for Bonnie Prince Charlie (the Young Pretender), and his real name was not Patton. Robert Patton has been variously described as "a smallish man who was hot-tempered and something of a dandy" and "a mule-headed, fiery little man with a fondness for ruffled shirts." He is also believed to have dropped hints from time to time that he was the son of a landed aristocrat, and that Patton was the name he had adopted and was known by in Virginia.

Another story has it that before his arrival in Virginia Robert lived in Bermuda, where he got into serious trouble when he killed the governor with a pistol after the latter insulted him. The only known painting of Robert, depicting a clear-eyed, well-dressed young man, gives no hint of his personality.

All this is myth. In fact a great deal is known of the first Patton. Robert Patton (son of James Patton and Eleanor Helen Gordon) was born in Mauchline, Ayrshire, Scotland, on 24 September 1750, well after the Scottish revolution. He emigrated

to Culpeper (Virginia) in circa 1770 from Glasgow (Scotland). To pay for his passage to America, Robert Patton was indentured for a period of five years to the great Scottish mercantile syndicate of William Cunninghame.

Illustration:
Mauchline, Ayrshire, Scotland

Robert Patton was based for a time at the Cunninghame depots in Falmouth and Culpeper before moving permanently to Fredericksburg. Patton's steady move upward within the Cunninghame syndicate to positions of greater responsibility is well documented. In 1773 he was placed in charge of the Cunninghame operation in Culpeper and appears to have been one of its rising stars.

Following the death of his fiancée, Nelly Davenport, in February 1790, Robert Patton married Ann Gordon Mercer, the daughter of Brigadier General Hugh Mercer on 16 October 1792. Hugh Mercer (Robert Patton's father-in-law and George Smith Patton III's 3rd Great Grandfather) was a Scottish patriot and a legendary Revolutionary War hero.

Illustration:
Brigadier General Hugh Mercer

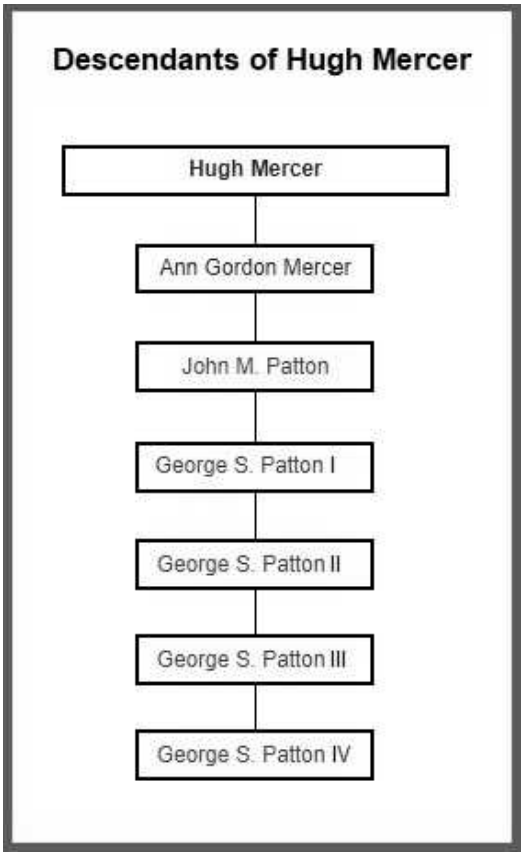
In the early days of the Revolution, Hugh Mercer took command of a small force of Virginia Minutemen from Spotsylvania, King George, Stafford, and Caroline Counties. Eventually, he rose to the rank of brigadier general in the Continental Army, and in the winter of 1776 accompanying his old acquaintance, George Washington, in the New York City Campaign, and subsequent retreat to New Jersey. He accompanied George Washington during the crossing of the Delaware.

Illustration:
Washington crossing the Delaware

On 3 January 1777, Mercer met a larger British force at Clarke's Orchard. The struggle between these two forces quickly turned into a race to secure the strategic position on the heights of a nearby hill. During the struggle, musket and rifle fire turned to hand-to-hand combat with bayonets. Unfortunately, an overwhelming majority of Mercer's men had no bayonets on their muskets. As his men began to fall back, Mercer stepped forward and desperately rallied his men with the words "Forward! Forward!" His command was met by the forceful thrust of British bayonets to his chest, and he fell to the ground.

Illustration:
The Death of General Mercer

Hugh Mercer reportedly said, "my death is owing to myself. To die as I had lived, an honored soldier in a just and righteous cause." Those words assumed talismanic importance for the heirs of Robert Patton.



Descendants of Brigadier General Hugh Mercer

As a boy, George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) wrote a poem in which he proudly concluded how his 3rd-Great Grandfather (Brigadier General Hugh Mercer) had laid the cornerstone for the future family-military legacy: “Then, Mercer, bear ye bravely, do no shame. Nor blot the scutcheon [a shield or emblem bearing a coat of arms] of our ancient name.”

That Robert Patton was well established as a merchant in Fredericksburg by 1774 is clear from the fact that the master of the sloop SPEEDWELL assigned a debt of forty-two pounds (more than sixteen hundred dollars—a huge sum at the time) to be repaid to him for wages advanced between July 1774 and May 1776. He is reputed to have "made a competent fortune in business." As a merchant and trader, Patton dealt in highly sought-after goods of the time, advertising for sale in 1792 in the local paper, the *Virginia Herald*, shipments of coal, salt, queensware (a beige-colored earthenware, popular at the time, often made by Wedgwood), eight to ten thousand "good" bricks, claret and other wines from London, Antigua rum, Holland gin, molasses, coffee, cotton, pepper, and muscovado sugar. Until 1805, when the partnership was dissolved by mutual consent and the business run solely by Patton, he was associated with another local merchant named Williamson.

Illustration:

Robert Patton built “White Plains”
overlooking Rappahannock River and the Falls

About 1800 Robert Patton used his wealth to build a stately mansion he named "White Plains," on five acres overlooking the Rappahannock River and the falls north of the town. In 1802 Robert was elected a vestryman in St. George's Episcopal Church, but like many other citizens of Fredericksburg, he and his wife soon grew disenchanted with the church and turned to Presbyterianism. The Patton family name appears prominently in references to the organization in 1808 of Fredericksburg's First Presbyterian Church, which was erected on land donated by Robert's wife.

There is no evidence to suggest that Robert Patton was anything more than a conservative, upstanding merchant and benefactor of Fredericksburg, where he apparently spent his entire adult life. One surviving description of him by a Fredericksburg native was that "Mr. Patton was one of the noblest, most upright, most generous men she had ever known," while another noted that "Mercer's daughter was as frail as her husband was majestic."

Robert Patton died in Fredericksburg on 3 November 1828, at the age of seventy-eight, and a brief obituary, which appeared in the *Virginia Herald*, read: "On Monday morning last, ROBERT PATTON, Sen., Esq.—an old and worthy citizen, and for many years a highly respectable merchant of this town." Robert's Fredericksburg epitaph seems to have been that "he was one of the many fine Scotch merchants who have by their splendid integrity and thrift added much luster to the commercial, social and religious history of old Fredericksburg."

Illustration:
Robert Patton is buried in Masonic Cemetery
located in Fredericksburg, Virginia

The union of Robert Patton and Anne Gordon Mercer produced seven children. Their third child, John Mercer Patton, became a physician, lawyer, and politician.

John Mercer Patton

Illustration:
John Mercer Patton and Margaret “Peggy” French Williams Patton

John Mercer Patton (son of Robert Patton and Ann Gordon Mercer) was born on 10 August 1797 in Fredericksburg, Virginia. After studying briefly at Princeton, he graduated from medical school at the University of Pennsylvania but did not practice medicine. Instead, he went on to study law in Fredericksburg and practiced law there.

John Mercer Patton married Margaret “Peggy” French Williams on 8 January 1824. John and Peggy Patton had 12 children, but only eight sons and one daughter lived to adulthood. John Mercer Patton was a lawyer and a politician

who believed in states' rights. Peggy Patton was of the Virginia plantation society. John and Peggy Patton were loyal Virginians and proud of their Southern aristocratic culture. Seven of their eight sons fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Four sons were graduates of Virginia Military Institute (VMI), three of whom studied under the tutelage of Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson along with several of their cousins.

Illustration:
Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson—The Professor from Virginia

Three Pattons rose to full colonelcies in Confederate service, and two were killed in battle as Confederates. They were not alone. In all, no fewer than sixteen members of the Patton family fought for the Confederacy.

In 1830, John Mercer Patton was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of Philip P. Barbour. Patton was reelected to four consecutive terms. He returned to Richmond and was elected to the Virginia Council of State, serving from 1838 to 1841. As senior member of the Council, John Mercer Patton assumed the office of governor upon the resignation of Thomas Walker Gilmer. He served for only twelve days, however, until the state legislature chose his successor. He returned to the practice of law and was appointed to revise and condense the Civil Code of Virginia in 1846, after which he prepared a new code in 1849. He was also appointed to the Board of Visitors of the Medical College of Virginia in 1854, serving as its president until his death.

Illustration:
Gravestone of John Mercer Patton
(1797-1858)

When John Mercer Patton died in 1858, his spirited, strong-willed wife became the matriarch of the family and continued to raise their children in the manner to which they were accustomed.

It was Peggy Patton who added her own words to the family mythology. When word came of the death of her son Tazewell in 1863, another son asked his mother why she was crying. She lifted her head from her hands. "I am crying," she said, "because I have only seven sons left to fight the Yankees."

Illustration:
Colonel Waller Tazewell Patton

One year later in 1864, Peggy Patton would lose another son (George Smith Patton I) during the Battle of Winchester.

In a diary entry entitled, "My Father as I Knew Him and of Him from Memory and Legend," George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.), a recent graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, wrote: "[the acts] performed by men of my blood remains; and it is these facts which have inspired me. It is my own sincere hope that any of my blood who read these lines will be

similarly inspired and ever be true to the heroic traditions of their race. Should my own end be fitting, as I pray it may be, it will be to such traditions that I owe what ever valor I may have shown. Should I falter I will have disgraced my blood."

The portrait emerging from these words do not merely depict an adolescent aspiring for military glory, but one who took seriously his duty to live up to his Confederate heritage. In this succinct diary entry, young Patton linked himself with the Lost Cause legacy of his Confederate forbearers.

The Lost Cause, as defined by historian Gaines Foster, was a literary and social movement that reigned in the South from 1865-1913. The leaders were primarily prewar southern elites and former leaders of the Confederacy who "defended their actions in 1861-65 and insisted that the North acknowledge the honor and heroism of their cause." Their efforts materialized in literature works, memorial activities and the construction of monuments that emphasized "superiority of Confederate ability and culture." Ultimately, this reconstructed collective memory that depicted the Confederate soldier as a moral exemplar of honor, heroism, and character not only helped postwar Southerners cope with the "cultural implications of defeat" and "triumph over reality," but also influenced Patton.

For George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.), the Lost Cause legacy, one that idealized the image of the Confederate soldier in terms of personal honor, courage, and duty, became the seed for his preoccupation for glory. Patton continuously looked to the Lost Cause legacy, a distorted image of the past, for motivation to supersede his contemporaries. Patton never escaped the Lost Cause image he imposed on himself.

Young George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) was selective in his ancestor worship. Enthralled by the martial glory of his father's ancestors, he paid little attention to the family of his mother, Ruth Wilson Patton.

Benjamin Davis Wilson

Illustration:
Benjamin Davis Wilson

In California, there was a man known as "Don Benito" Wilson. His real name was Benjamin Davis Wilson and he was one of the earliest pioneers in the Mexican territory of Alto California. Wilson was one of the unique breed of hardy trappers and fur traders known as Mountain Men, who were among the first to break through the mountains and cross the desert—previously barriers to exploration of the Far West. They counted among their number Kit Carson, Jedediah Smith, and Benjamin Davis Wilson.

Born in Nashville (Tennessee) on 1 December 1811, Benjamin was the son of John Wilson and Ruth Davis. His great grandfather, Adam William Wilson, was born in Scotland in 1727. Orphaned at age eight, Benjamin operated his own trading post at age 15, trading with Choctaws and Chickasaws in Mississippi. As a trapper for the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, Benjamin was captured by and escaped from Apaches in New Mexico.

Illustration:
Slim Chance

After Wilson survived a wound inflicted by a poison arrow from a band of marauding California Indians, he decided to settle in the village of Los Angeles in 1841.

In 1841, the small pueblo of Los Angeles was under Mexican jurisdiction and like other Americans, Wilson acculturated into his new environment. Known as “Don Benito,” Wilson bought Rancho Jurupa (now Riverside) and married his neighbor’s 15-year-old daughter, Ramona Yorba, of Rancho Santa Ana.

Illustration:
Grizzly Mountain

In the autumn of 1844, a grizzly bear pounced on Wilson’s horse from behind, crushing horse and rider to the ground. Badly mauled, Wilson was carried home where he was nursed back to health by native Californian women. Grievous scars remained on his body for the rest of his life.

In 1845, Don Benito Wilson rode into the Yuhaviat Valley with a posse of 20 men searching for outlaws who had been raiding their ranches in Riverside. As they entered the valley, they found it crawling with grizzly bears. Wilson claims to have killed 22 bears himself. It was with this discovery of an abundance of grizzlies that Big Bear Lake got its' modern name.

During the 1848 Mexican-American War, Don Benito Wilson was commissioned as a captain of militia by Commodore Stockton and subsequently enlisted 22 men for his company. He soon found his militia unit participating in the Battle of Chino. Surrounded by cavalry, Wilson and his men were taken to Los Angeles as Prisoners of War. When the United States won that war, Wilson easily acculturated back to American occupation. His oldest daughter, Maria Jesus Alvarado Wilson, became “Sue” Wilson and “Don Benito” became Benjamin again.

Benjamin Davis Wilson was highly respected in California. He was appointed Alcalde (Justice of the Peace) of "Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reine de los Angeles de Parciuncula" when it was Mexican, and then Mayor of Los Angeles when it became United States territory. Wilson later served three terms as a California State Senator.

By statehood in 1850, Wilson was one of the four richest men in Los Angeles. Aside from being wealthy and being in the "aristocracy", he was widely known as a savage fighter. He was not a man to cross. He once returned from a raid against some hostile Indians carrying baskets filled with heads of the enemy.

Wilson was an Indian agent who was among the first to advocate rights for the displaced Indian, feeling strongly that it was the Indian who needed protection from the White Man rather than vice-versa.

It was Wilson who was responsible for the start of the citrus industry in California. He also experimented with the farming of sugar cane and he planted some of the first vineyards for fine wines.

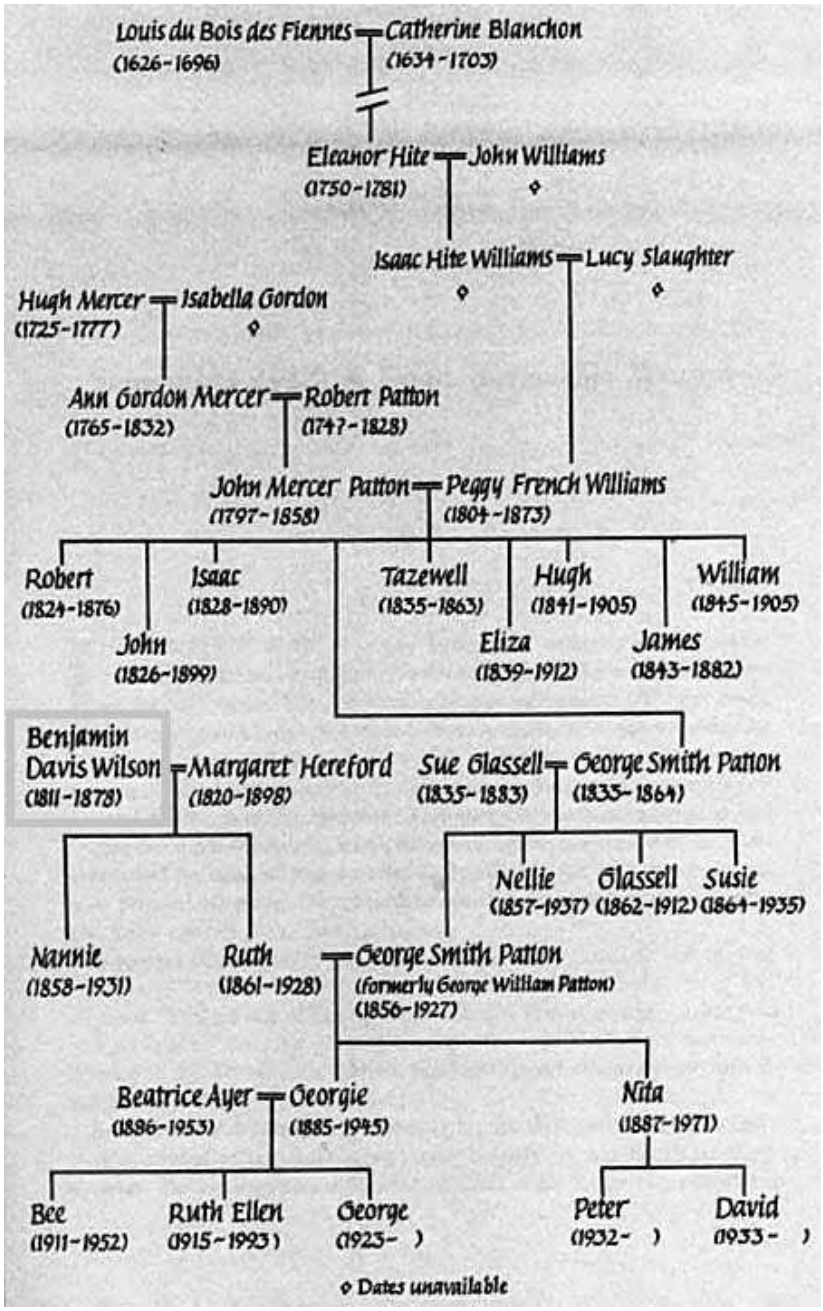
Contrary to the popular opinion of most people that Mount Wilson in California was named after President Woodrow Wilson, it was actually named in honor of

Benjamin Davis Wilson after his death. It was Wilson who made the first trek up the mountain and built a usable road around its slopes. Since 1904, an Observatory has been located on Mount Wilson.

Illustration:
Observatory on Mount Wilson

When his first wife died in 1849, Wilson married Margaret S. Hereford of Los Angeles. Their daughter, Ruth Wilson, married George Smith Patton II, the son of the Civil War commander. George Smith Patton II and Ruth Wilson Patton bore George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) and Anne Wilson “Nita” Patton.

Illustration:
Benjamin Davis Wilson and his wife Margaret Hereford
(circa 1852)



Lines Overview

Illustration:
Wilson family at Lake Vineyard estate in San Gabriel, CA

A pioneer, politician, and magnate, Don Benito (a.k.a. Benjamin Davis Wilson) failed to cast a spell over his grandson George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) as the military paternal forebears.

Illustration:

Gravestone of Benjamin Davis Wilson (1811-1879)

When Benjamin Davis Wilson died on 11 March 1878, his business partner mismanaged his estate that included a winery. Determined to come to the rescue of the enterprise, Wilson's son-in-law (George Smith Patton II) gave up his law practice in Virginia and moved the family to California.

Illustration:
George Smith Patton III holding vineyard grapes in circa 1890

George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) idolized his father (George Smith Patton II) and resented how the winery and a myriad of other business affairs monopolized his time.

George Smith Patton I

(a.k.a. George Smith Patton Sr.)

Illustration:
George Smith Patton I

The famed general of World War II, George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.), often spoke with pride of the military deeds of his forefathers. From an early age, George Smith Patton III had been regaled with the exploits of the Pattons and their relatives from the Revolutionary War (a.k.a. War for Independence) to the Civil War (a.k.a. War of Northern Aggression). These stories of courage and great deeds of his heroic ancestors and their mighty battles, greatly influenced the man who would lead American troops in World War I and World War II.

Of all the courageous men spoken of, none stood taller in the eyes of the young George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) than his grandfather, Confederate Colonel George S. Patton I. This was the man the younger Patton regarded as a noble fighter, who had displayed great bravery and had met his end leading his troops in battle. So who was this unheralded soldier of the Civil War that the younger Patton knew only through stories, but who helped to inspire him to become one of the great generals of World War II?

George Smith Patton I (son of John Mercer Patton and Margaret "Peggy" French Williams) was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on 26 June1833. John Mercer Patton realized early on that to maintain the Southern way of life he and his wife held so dear would eventually lead to secession and hostilities. He therefore prepared his sons for the future conflict by sending them to military school.

Illustration:

Virginia Military Institute (circa 1850s)

George Smith Patton I, like three of his brothers (John Mercer Patton, Waller Tazewell Patton, William MacFarland Patton) attended the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). When George Smith Patton I entered VMI, he was only 16 years of age. For the first two years he was academically in the middle of his class but was a leader in demerits. Maturing in his last year at VMI, George Smith Patton I graduated second out of a class of 24 in 1852. He excelled in Latin, English, French, chemistry, and artillery tactics.

At VMI George Smith Patton I impressed his classmates with his mild-mannered but responsible personality and genial wit. Upon graduation from VMI, the tall, slim, handsome young man was ready to make his way in the world. In the summer after graduation, Patton met 17-year-old Susan Thornton Glassell, who was visiting friends in Virginia. A relationship blossomed and by the fall they were engaged. Susan Thornton Glassell could trace her ancestry back to King Edward I of England and Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne (shown below).

Illustration:
George Smith Patton I and Susan Thornton Glassell Patton

For the next two years George Smith Patton I taught in Richmond while studying law. Although he found teaching difficult and eventually quit, he did better at his law studies and was admitted to the Richmond bar in 1855. In November 1855, he and Susan were married. On their wedding night the couple headed for Charleston, Kanawha County, Virginia (now West Virginia), where George Smith Patton I had been offered a partnership in a small law firm.

At Charleston, a small town located in the Kanawha River Valley, Patton set up a successful law practice and became involved in local affairs. The Pattons were well liked by the citizens of Charleston. On 30 September 1856, the Pattons had their first of four children, a son they christened George William Patton. Also in 1856 George Smith Patton I organized and became captain of a militia company called the Kanawha Minutemen.

Although Kanawha County held the fewest slaves of any county in Virginia—and of these most were domestic servants—George Smith Patton I followed his father's beliefs and soon became a passionate supporter of secession. After John Brown's invasion of Harper's Ferry in the fall of 1859, Patton's militia company changed its name to the Kanawha Riflemen and stepped up its drilling. Patton, feeling that war was just around the corner, devoted himself increasingly to his militia company at the expense of his law practice. With the firing on Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861, what Patton had prepared for finally arrived—the country was at war. When Virginia seceded from the Union on 17 April 1861, the Kanawha Riflemen became Company H of the 22nd Virginia Infantry Regiment.

Besides George Smith Patton I, six of his brothers would go off to fight for the Confederacy. John Mercer Patton would become the commander of the 21st Virginia; Isaac William Patton would lead a Louisiana regiment and be captured at Vicksburg; Waller Tazewell Patton would lead the 7th Virginia and be killed at Gettysburg during Pickett's Charge; Hugh Mercer Patton would become an officer

in his brother's 7th Virginia; and teenage brother James French Patton would become an officer with George in the 22nd Virginia. The last Patton to serve was William MacFarland Patton who, as a cadet at VMI, would take part in the battle of New Market.

George Smith Patton I first saw combat on 17 July 1861, only 20 miles down the Kanawha River from Charleston, at a place called Scary Creek. Recently commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate Army, Patton commanded some nine hundred men who were part of a force under Brigadier General Henry A. Wise that was attempting to stop a Union push up the Kanawha Valley. The Federals were part of Major General George McClellan's assault into western Virginia from Ohio. Late into the battle, while trying to rally retreating troops in the center of the Confederate line, Lieutenant Colonel Patton was struck by a minie ball in the right shoulder, shattering the bone in the upper arm and throwing him from his horse.

Lieutenant Colonel Patton was carried to the rear where he was told that his arm needed to be amputated. Patton adamantly refused and pulled out his pistol to emphasize his point. He kept his arm, but never regained full use of it. Although the Confederates had won the battle, they were later forced to retreat from the Kanawha Valley. Unable to be moved because of his wound, Patton was left behind and captured by the Union troops. A few weeks later he was paroled and went home to recuperate.

After spending eight months at home impatiently waiting to get back into the war, Patton finally received word that he had been exchanged. Although he had only partial use of his right arm and could not raise it above his head, he returned to the 22nd Virginia as its commander. On 10 May 1862, Lieutenant Colonel Patton saw action again when he led the 22nd Virginia in an attack against a Union regiment at Giles Court House, Virginia, during Brigadier General Henry Heth's campaign against Union forces trying to cut railroad lines in southwestern Virginia. The Confederates were victorious, but Patton was wounded in the belly.

Illustration:
Battle of Giles Court House in Virginia

Lieutenant Colonel Patton was laid against a nearby tree and, fearing that he was dying, he began writing a farewell note to his wife. General Wharton, his brigade commander, rode up and asked him how he was doing. George answered that he believed the wound was fatal. According to Patton's son, George, "General Wharton dismounted and asked if he could examine the wound. He stuck his unwashed finger into it and exclaimed, 'What is this?' as his finger hit something hard. He then fished around and pulled out a $10 gold piece. The bullet struck this and had driven it into his flesh, and glanced off." The bullet had struck a $10 gold piece that his wife had put into a money belt she had made and given him just before he left to rejoin his regiment.[1]

Illustration:
$10 gold coin saved Patton's life

Thanks to the thoughtfulness of his wife, his life had been saved; however, although the wound was not serious, he developed blood poisoning and had to return to his family, now living in Richmond, to recuperate. While at Richmond, he learned that he had not been properly exchanged in March. For honor and to avoid being executed if captured again, Patton was forced to remain out of the war until he could be properly exchanged.

After waiting for what seemed like an eternity but was only a few months, Patton was finally exchanged. He rejoined the 22nd Virginia at Lewisburg, Virginia. His regiment was now part of the First Brigade, under Brigadier General John Echols, in the Army of Southwest Virginia. Because Echols suffered from heart disease and was frequently absent, Patton regularly took over command of the brigade. In the fall Patton's regiment took part in the campaign to chase the Federal forces out of the Kanawha Valley and retake Charleston, which the Confederates had lost the year before. The drive was successful, but less than a month later the Confederates were driven back to Lewisburg, where they set up camp for the winter.

In the spring of 1863 the Army of Southwest Virginia began operations with a raid into the Union-controlled mountainous region of northwest Virginia (now West Virginia). The purpose of the raid was to impede the New State Movement in the region (the creation of a new state in western Virginia loyal to the Union which, of course, eventually succeeded); the destruction of the rail lines of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and other Union property; and to forage for food, clothing, and other badly needed supplies. Patton and his regiment were part of Brigadier General John Imboden's force, one prong of the two-prong raid. Leaving camp at Shenandoah Mountain on April 20, Imboden's raiders roamed slowly through the region capturing wagon loads of supplies, livestock, and horses before returning to the Shenandoah Valley. Patton, proud of how his regiment had performed, noted that 40 of his men marched the entire 400 miles barefooted.

Illustration:
Confederate Colonel Patton versus Union Major General Averell

In August 1863, Union Major General William Averell, a friend of George's before the war, led 3,000 men against Lewisburg. On the 26th, at Dry Creek, Averell's cavalry force collided with the First Brigade under Patton. After two days of hard fighting, Averell was beaten back. The victory at Dry Creek showed Patton's ability to command troops in battle to the fullest.

Averell, however, was to get his revenge against Patton in November 1863, when he confronted him at a place called Droop Mountain and where Averell's force of 5,000 cavalry defeated Patton's 1,700 men. Patton was forced to retreat, allowing Averell to occupy Lewisburg for a few days before the threat of a counterattack forced the Union cavalrymen to leave. At the time of the battle, Patton's family was living in Lewisburg. His son William vividly recalled seeing the defeated troops passing through Lewisburg and later wrote: "Late in the night my father came by with the last of the rearguard and stopped to tell us goodbye and give my mother a letter for General Averell asking him to see that we were not bothered." The next

morning Susan took the letter to Averell who, honoring the request from his old friend, posted a guard at the Patton home.

Patton's finest hour came the following year at the Battle of New Market. Patton's regiment was part of a small army hastily assembled under Major General John C. Breckinridge to counter a Union thrust under Major General Franz Sigel up the Shenandoah Valley toward Staunton. (Because the Shenandoah River runs south to north, the Union thrust up the valley was actually going in a north to south direction.) The Confederates, being vastly outnumbered, had to call upon 247 cadets from VMI as reinforcements. One of the cadets who immortalized the VMI Corps of Cadets that day was Patton's youngest brother, William Mercer Patton.

The two sides clashed on the Valley Turnpike at New Market on 15 May 1864. In the ensuing battle the Confederates made a heroic stand against superior Union forces and won the day. During the latter stage of the battle, Patton, who for all practical purposes was commanding the First Brigade for the ailing Echols, was defending the right against Union cavalry attempting to outflank the Confederate line. When the cavalry broke through the left of his line, Patton quickly wheeled his 22nd Virginia and the 23rd Virginia of Lieutenant Colonel Clarence Derrick to either side of the gap, catching the Union cavalrymen in a deadly crossfire. With the help of several pieces of artillery, the Confederates decimated the Union horsemen, forcing many to surrender and the rest to retreat in panic.

Illustration:
Battle of New Market

According to historian William C. Davis, "The principal architects of the triumph [at New Market] were Patton's 22d Virginia, to a lesser extent Derrick's 23d Virginia, and Breckinridge with his magnificent guns. Patton's and Derrick's men, spread thin, successfully withstood that most terrifying of assaults to an infantryman, a mounted charge. More than that, they threw it into disarray, turning it into a rout." New Market proved without a doubt that Patton was an outstanding and resourceful leader. A week later, when his poor health forced Echols to give up his command permanently, Patton was given command of the brigade—a promotion he rightly deserved. Patton was also recommended for a promotion to brigadier general.

Soon after the battle at New Market, Breckinridge's army was rushed east to help Robert E. Lee stem Major General Ulysses S. Grant's advance on Richmond. Patton's brigade joined Lee's forces at the crossroads hamlet of Cold Harbor, only eight miles from the Confederate capital, on June 2nd. Hastily building defense works through the night, Patton and his men were barely ready when at 4:30 am Grant launched a full-scale attack against the entrenched Confederates. Grant was repulsed, losing nearly 7,000 men in half an hour. One Confederate general said, "It was not war, it was murder."

Immediately after the battle Patton's brigade headed back to the Shenandoah Valley to join Lieutenant General Jubal Early's army. The Union forces were again advancing south, and Early had been tasked with countering this new threat. After pushing the Federals out of the valley, Early continued on through Maryland

to the outskirts of Washington. Patton's brigade was one of the first Confederate units to reach the city on July 11th. Finding the city's defenses heavily reinforced the next morning, Early called off an assault on the city and that night headed back to the Shenandoah Valley.

In response to Early's incursion into Maryland and the threat to Washington, Major General Philip Sheridan was ordered to deal with Early and lay waste to the Shenandoah Valley. The two sides clashed on September 19th at Winchester, Virginia, in the Third Battle of Winchester. Greatly outnumbered, the Confederates could not stand up to the Union's lightning attack and were defeated. Early lost one-third of his army and Patton's brigade lost half its men. But that was not all that Patton's brigade lost that day; it lost its commander as well.

Around 2 pm, as the Confederates were being pushed back, Colonel George Smith Patton I was making a stand on the left of the line against a determined attack by Sheridan's cavalry. It was then that he was wounded. Robert H. Patton, in his book on the Patton family, described the event: "He was standing in his stirrups on a Winchester street when an artillery shell exploded nearby and sent an iron fragment into his right hip. He'd been trying to rally his men, who were in full retreat before onrushing Yankee cavalry…" He was taken to a nearby house and later captured. Amputation of his right leg was recommended, but as he had done after Scary Creek, he refused. Within a few days gangrene set in and he ran a fever. On 25 September 1864, he died of his wound.[(2)]

Illustration:
Colonel George Smith Patton I was fatally wounded during third Battle of Winchester

Patton's wife Susan, reading about her husband's wounding in the newspapers, hurried to Winchester; sadly, by the time she arrived, he had passed away and been buried. Rather than move her husband's body to one of the family plots in Richmond or Fredericksburg, she left it interred at Winchester. Some 10 years later Patton's younger brother, Waller Tazewell Patton, who was killed at Gettysburg, was moved to Winchester, and he and George were reburied in a simple grave.

Illustration:
Gravestone for George Smith Patton I and Waller Tazewell Patton

In 1867, George William Patton had his middle name changed to that of his father, Smith. George Smith Patton II would later become the father of General George S. Patton III of World War II fame. This is somewhat confusing because George Smith Patton III was also known as George Smith Patton Jr.

The year after the war ended Susan and her four children joined her brother in California. In 1870 Susan married George's close friend and first cousin George Hugh Smith, who like George Smith Patton I had served the Confederacy, commanding two Virginia regiments. Smith adopted the Patton children and lovingly brought them up as his own.

In 1883, Susan died after suffering from cancer for several years. Patton's oldest son, George Smith Patton II, attended Virginia Military Institute (VMI) like his father but did not pursue a military career. He did, however, keep the memory of his father's military service alive through the stories he told his son, George S. Patton III (a.k.a. George S. Patton Jr.).

Illustration:
George Smith Patton III visiting grave of grandfather and great-uncle

In 1919, George Smith Patton III visited the grave of his grandfather (George Smith Patton Sr.) and his great-uncle (Waller Tazewell Patton) who are both buried in Stonewall Cemetery in Winchester, Virginia.

George Smith Patton II

Illustration:
George Smith Patton II

George Smith Patton II (birth name George William Patton) was born on 30 September 1856 in Charleston, West Virginia (then Virginia). He was the son of George Smith Patton I (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Sr.) and Susan Thornton Glassell.

Patton's father served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War and attained the rank of colonel as commander of the 22nd Virginia Infantry Regiment. By some accounts, he had been recommended for advancement to brigadier general, but was killed at the Battle of Opequon (Third Battle of Winchester) in 1864 before the promotion was acted on. Patton was only seven years old when his father died in battle.

Illustration:
The fall of Richmond, Virginia in 1865

As a child growing up in Richmond during the war, young George was deeply affected by the Confederate defeat. In addition to the traumatic death of his father, he also witnessed the fall of the besieged capital in 1865.

After the war, the Patton family lost most of its fortune and moved to California, a popular destination for ex-Confederates. In 1866, Susan Glassell Patton took her four children to live near her brother, Andrew Glassell. Susan Glassell Patton later married former Confederate Colonel George Hugh Smith who had commanded the 62nd Virginia (Mounted) Infantry in the Civil War. During the war, Smith was wounded several times and fought under the command of his former instructor "Stonewall" Jackson at the Battle of McDowell. He also participated in such notable battles such as Chancellorsville, Cold Harbor, and New Market. After the

war, George Hugh Smith became Andrew Glassell's partner in the Glassell & Smith law firm.

Illustration:
Colonel George Hugh Smith
(stepfather of George Smith Patton II)

George Patton was raised to follow in his father's footsteps and in 1868, he chose to have his middle name changed from William to Smith, his biological father's middle name.

George Smith Patton II was educated in the public schools of Los Angeles. In 1873, he returned to Virginia to begin attendance at the Virginia Military Institute, taking advantage of a scholarship offered to the sons of Confederate officers who died in service. Thus, typical of the Patton men, he continued the family legacy at VMI. In Lexington he furthered the family name by his academic achievements. In his senior year, he was promoted to first captain of “A” Company, a position that made him the first-ranking cadet officer both in his class and within the entire Cadet Corps. He also graduated first in his class in 1877 and delivered a colorful valedictorian speech in which he vindicated his father and the Confederacy. He postulated how the Institute was “still scarred and blackened” from the torches of Union invaders, “continually reminding the sons of the South that their fathers once dared to strike for liberty.”

Illustration:
Union troops under Colonel David Hunter
burned the VMI campus in June 1864

Patton remained at the school for a year as an instructor of Latin, then returned to California to study law at Glassell & Smith.

Patton was admitted to the bar in 1880 and practiced in Los Angeles as a member of his family's law firm, now renamed Glassell, Smith and Patton. According to some sources, he served as the first City Attorney of Pasadena, but the city's records for its officeholders do not include his name.

In 1882, Patton was elected to a seat on the Los Angeles board of education and he served as the board's secretary. Patton also became active in the California National Guard, and was appointed inspector of the 1st Brigade with the rank of major.

In 1884, Patton married Ruth Wilson, daughter of Benjamin Davis Wilson, a prominent landowner, businessman, and politician, and Margaret Hereford Wilson. They had two children, George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) and Anne Wilson "Nita" Patton.

Illustration:
Ruth Wilson Patton with son “Georgie” and daughter “Nita”

In January 1887, George Smith Patton II became Los Angeles County District Attorney and he served until resigning in April 1887 because of ill health.

The Patton family later moved to Lake Vineyard, a large landholding in San Gabriel, California, where they grew oranges, operated a winery, and raised other crops.

Illustration:
The Patton family (George III, Ruth, George II, and Anne)
in circa 1901

In 1894, George Smith Patton II was the Democratic nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives from California's 6th District and lost to Republican James McLachlan. In 1896, Patton made another bid for the Democratic nomination in the 6th District. After he and another candidate were tied for several ballots, both withdrew in favor of a compromise choice, Harry W. Patton (no relation).

George Smith Patton II was a longtime friend and neighbor of businessman Henry E. Huntington. Beginning in 1902, Patton worked as an executive for Huntington's real estate development company, which was responsible for construction and settlement in much of the San Gabriel Valley, and extended throughout southern California.

In 1913 the city of San Marino was incorporated separately from San Gabriel, and Patton was elected the first mayor of San Marino. He served from April 1913 to April 1922, and again from October 1922 to August 1924.

Illustration:
George Smith Patton II
(1st Mayor of San Marino)

George Smith Patton II was the 1916 Democratic nominee for U.S. Senator from California. Running as a conservative opposed to women's suffrage and other reforms, on 7 November 1916, Patton lost the general election to Governor Hiram Johnson, a progressive Republican.

On 10 June 1927, George Smith Patton II died at his Lake Vineyard home in San Marino. He was buried at San Gabriel Cemetery in San Gabriel, California.

Illustration:
Gravestones for George Smith Patton II and Ruth Wilson Patton

George Smith Patton II devoted his whole life to sustaining the memory of his own father and his service in the Confederacy. For George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.), his father was a living connection with the old world. In an entry, he haughtily spoke of him as an individual who had “commanded the battalion at the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876 as a cadet.

Illustration:
George Smith Patton II commanded Virginia Military Institute

troops at Philadelphia Centennial

Patton remarked: “This was the first time Southern troops had appeared in the North since the war and a great fuss was made over them.”

In a private letter to his father on 11 February 1915, Lieutenant George S. Patton III (a.k.a. George S. Patton Jr.) undervalued his late step-grandfather. According to him, Colonel George Hugh Smith “did not have the military mind in its highest development, because he was swayed by ideas of right or wrong rather than those of policy. Still he was probably more noble for his fault. Also the education of law hampered him.” Thus for Patton, raised within the Lost Cause mythology, Smith never lived up to his biological grandfather, who died gloriously during the war.

George Smith Patton III

(a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.)

Illustration:
George Smith Patton III

George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) was born on 11 November 1885 in San Gabriel, California. He was the son of George Smith Patton II and Ruth Davis Wilson. His family, originally from Virginia, had a long military heritage, including service in the Civil War. Patton decided early on that he wanted to carry on his family’s military tradition.

Twenty years before George’s birth, his family had lost much of their wealth when they found themselves on the losing side of America’s Civil War. However, by the time of George’s birth the Patton family was prosperous and influential once again.

Childhood

Illustration:
George Smith Patton III
(a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.)

George Smith Patton III enjoyed a privileged childhood. His early years were marred, however, by difficulties in spelling and reading, which has led some historians to speculate that he suffered from undiagnosed dyslexia.

His formal education did not begin until age 11, but, in time, he became a voracious reader and later in life published numerous articles on military subjects.

Patton enjoyed military history in particular, especially books about the American Civil War, a conflict in which his grandfather (Colonel George Smith Patton I) and great-uncle (Colonel Waller Tazewell Patton) had been killed while fighting for the Confederacy.

Military School Education

Patton spent a year (1903-1904) at Virginia Military Institute (VMI) located in Lexington, Virginia. This was the alma mater of his grandfather (George Smith Patton I), his father (George Smith Patton II), and several other family members. While at VMI he studied Algebra, English, History, Drawing and Latin. He was left tackle on the "scrub" football team, a group which scrimmaged several times a week against the varsity team. One of Patton's classmates described him as "quiet, straight as a string, courteous, well-mannered, more serious minded than lightsome in conversation."

Illustration:
George Smith Patton III at VMI

After attending VMI for one year, Patton transferred to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, in June 1904. The first year at West Point was the most brutal for Patton. During his plebe year at West Point, Patton wrote to his future wife, Beatrice Banning Ayer, that, "I am either very lazy or very stupid or both for it is beastly hard for me to learn and as a natural result I hate to study." He failed the end-of-year mathematics exam and was formally expelled before being allowed to re-enter with the next year's class of first years. The following years at the military academy were very trying for him, and he struggled to maintain the grades necessary to remain enrolled.

Although Patton continued to struggle with academic subjects, he had no such problems on the parade ground where he was far more comfortable and nearly perfect. When it came to soldiering, Patton was unequivocal, declaring that, "God willing... and given the chance I will carve my name on some thing bigger than a section room bench."

Illustration:
George Smith Patton III at West Point

Patton's fifth and final year at West Point was his most successful. At the Annual Field Day in June 1908 he established a new school record in the 220-yard hurdles, won the 120-yard hurdles and rounded out the most triumphant day of his athletic career at West Point as the runner-up in the 220-yard dash. His feat won him a place in the cadet yearbook, the *Howitzer*, alongside the fifteen other wearers of the coveted letter "A." Patton also shot "Expert" with the rifle and continued to excel in swordsmanship.

After five grueling years the ordeal of West Point ended on 11 June 1909 when Patton was commissioned as a second lieutenant of cavalry. His final class

standing was number 46 out of the total of 103 who graduated. If that seemed average, it was not, for had it not been for his dyslexia he undoubtedly would have graduated near the top of his class.

On 26 May 1910, a lovely Spring day, George Smith Patton III and Beatrice Banning Ayer were married at Beverly Farms Episcopal Church near Boston, Massachusetts. Beatrice, the daughter of Frederick Ayer of Boston who was owner of the American Woolen Company, could have done much better than George Patton, a shavetail career soldier just one year out of West Point. At least that was the consensus among many family friends. Luckily, "doing better" never occurred to Beatrice. She loved Lieutenant Patton, and he loved her.

Illustration:
Wedding photo of George Smith Patton III
and Beatrice Banning Ayer

Throughout his military career, George wrote the most beautiful love letters to Beatrice such as: "I love you so, Bea... I am not so hellish young and it is not spring, yet still I love you just as much as if we were 22 again on the baseball grandstand at West Point the night I graduated."

Participation in Olympic Games

Illustration:
George Smith Patton III placed 3rd in Riding at Olympic Games

As a lieutenant in the cavalry from 1909, Patton's good sportsmanship qualities gained him a place on the American team for the Olympic Games of 1912 in Stockholm, Sweden. Patton had learned of his appointment to the U.S. Olympic team on May 10th, less than two months before the Games were to begin, and trained tirelessly in the short time he had. Patton was competing in the first of the five events in the inaugural Modern Pentathlon. The event, created by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, father of the modern games, is a riff on the pentathlon of ancient Greece. Like the original, it celebrates the skills of a soldier. The events play out under the elaborate, if improbable, idea that an officer carrying a message on horseback comes upon the enemy and must defend himself first with pistol, then with sword, before escaping across a river and running to his destination. (The events have remained the same over the years, even as the order has changed.) With 42 athletes battling to be first-ever Modern Pentathlon gold medalist, Patton excelled in all the contests except in Shooting—a hard blow for a military man.

Illustration:
Patton placed 4th in Fencing, 15th in Running,
and 21st in Shooting

In fact, Patton was 4th in Fencing, 3rd in Riding, 7th in Swimming and 15th in Running, but could only finish 21st in Shooting. There was a certain controversy about Patton's performance on the range: he was using a 38-caliber while most of his competitors were using a smaller 22-caliber. Patton aimed at a target 25 meters away and fired 20 bullets into it. Or so he thought. When judges scrutinized the target, they counted only 17 holes. He put forward an explanation, which failed to convince officials, that his first shots had made such big holes in the target that some balls had passed through the same hole as the previous shots. Although Patton had fired a near-perfect score during practice the day before, the judges decided that he had missed the target and the future General had to be content with 5th place overall. Certainly, George Patton missed out on an Olympic medal which he had been expected to win. Patton made the U.S. Modern Pentathlon team for the 1916 Summer Olympics, scheduled for Berlin, Germany, but the Games were canceled because of World War I.

After the Olympic Games in 1912, Patton went to France to the Cadre Noir cavalry school of Saumur, where he made progress with his Riding and learned new Fencing techniques with Charles Cléry, who was known throughout Europe, at the time, as being the greatest military swordsman.

Later, while attending the Mounted Service School in Fort Riley, Kansas, Patton was designated an instructor of swordsmanship and was the Army's youngest-ever 'Master of the Sword'.

In his role as 'Master of the Sword', Patton designed the U.S. Model 1913 Enlisted Cavalry Saber, known as the "Patton Sword." The weapon was never used as intended. At the beginning of U.S. involvement in World War I, several American cavalry units armed with sabers were sent to the front, but they were held back. The nature of war had changed, making horse-mounted troops easy prey for enemy troops equipped with Gewehr 98 rifles and MG08 machine guns. Those cavalrymen who saw combat did so dismounted, using their horses only to travel.

Expedition Against Pancho Villa

The political landscape between Mexico and the U.S. in the 1910s was as treacherous as the actual landscape between the countries. The Mexican Revolution was in full swing, as was the violent Border War it spawned. The revolution did not go as planned for Pancho Villa and he ended up poking the red, white and blue bear with raids on American towns and executions of civilians, which provoked a full-on American invasion.

President Wilson, despite a seemingly imminent entry into the First World War, ordered General John J. Pershing across the border into Mexico with thousands of men to disband the bandits, and to capture or kill Pancho Villa. Pershing was romantically involved with George Smith Patton's sister, Nita, at the time, and the general offered the young officer the opportunity to participate in the expedition as his aide.

Illustration:

Nita Patton & John J. Pershing

Illustration:
Villa (center), Pershing (2nd from right), Patton (1st from right)

The terrain in northeast Mexico tested the grit of man and machine alike. Pershing special ordered Dodge Brothers touring cars for the expedition. They wore a unique khaki color to blend in, with special canvas tops and interiors to withstand the elements.

In the first motorized military attack in United States history, George Patton led a trio of Dodge touring cars—in Pershing's personal car—to strike a farm where Julio Cardenas, Pancho Villa's right hand man, was hiding.

Illustration:
Patton led attack on Villa's men using Pershing's car

Illustration:
Patton (5th from left in right photo)

The story goes; Patton was making a run to buy supplies from locals when he got word that Cardenas was at the farm. He had already performed recon on the area, as they suspected Cardenas would come back there to visit his wife. Now, Patton decided his small group of men, with the advantage of their speedy Dodge cars, could shock and awe the rebels. This was a bold decision, considering no assault in the history of American warfare had ever used motorized vehicles. The ensuing shootout was legendary. Lieutenant Patton and his men kept their cool under fire and took out three of Villa's top men including Cardenas. As the Americans left the farm with the dead bandits strapped to the hoods of their vehicles, they did so as quickly as they first attacked, because a band of 40-50 bandits had arrived for back-up! Again, the horses could not keep up with the Dodges. As word leaked with the details of the attack… the gun handling, the marksmanship, the Dodge cars, the escape… Patton's ascension to hero status was launched. Nine days after the shoot-out, Patton, dubbed "Bandit" by his general, was promoted to first lieutenant. A year later, he was made a captain.

Though the mission failed to apprehend Villa, the attack garnered much publicity and was notable for being the first time that automobiles had been used in combat by the U.S. Army.

World War I

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, Captain George Smith Patton III went along with General Pershing to Europe, where he became the first officer assigned to the newly established U.S. Tank Corps. His assignment was to study the French and British tank schools, examine the use of light tanks and come up with a plan of action to bring light tanks into the U.S. Army as a fighting

force. Shortly thereafter a young first lieutenant, assigned to the artillery branch, was transferred was assigned to help him. His name was Lieutenant Elgin Braine of Battery D. 6th Field Artillery.

Neither of them knew anything about tanks and together they were ordered to the French Light Tank Training Center at Chamlieu near Paris, France. They visited the battlefields and studied both the French and British approaches to the use of these brand new weapons of war. After a little over a month of intense study, Captain Patton submitted a highly detailed 58 page double spaced report with several attachments and recommendations to Pershing's staff, eventually to be read by Pershing himself.

The report was extremely concise and went into every aspect of what it would take for the US Army to build a light tank corps capable of fighting on the battlefields in France, was covered. The report outlined the establishing of a tank school, use and maintenance of the Renault FT 17 tank and even the numbers of nuts, bolts and tools needed to be on hand to keep them running in combat. His report, with input from Lieutenant Braine, was so comprehensive that it was accepted without revision and Captain Patton was ordered to make it happen.

Patton soon earned a reputation for his leadership skill and knowledge of tank warfare. Over the next months he organized, trained, and even designed the uniforms for the new tank units; he was also promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Illustration:
Patton was first officer assigned to U.S. Tank Corps

Training at the tank center took place all summer. Additionally, Lieutenant Colonel Patton attended and taught schools for AEF staff officers. By 16 August 1918 there were 900 men and 50 fully trained officers at the tank center and but they still had only 25 tanks.

Illustration:
Patton at the Tank Center

On 12 September 1918, Patton, ignoring orders to stay in radio contact, personally led the first U.S. tank units into battle during the Saint-Mihiel offensive.

In the Meuse-Argonne offensive a few weeks later, Patton led a troop of tanks into Germany lines near the town of Cheppy. On 26 September, at 10 o'clock, Patton and his men had advanced to a crossroads on the southern edge of Cheppy. A few minutes later, when the fog began to lift, Patton discovered that he had advanced beyond his own tanks, many of which were now entangled in a trench barrier over a hundred yards to his rear. As the protective shield of fog lifted, Patton and his troops were subjected to withering fire from all directions. The defending Germans had pre-positioned at least twenty-five machine gun nests to protect the town. When at last the men got five tanks across the breach, Patton exhorted them to advance again, yelling and cursing and waving his walking stick. About a hundred and fifty doughboys followed him, but when they arrived at the

crest of the hill, the onslaught of gunfire forced them all to the ground, hugging it for protection.

Suddenly desperation and fear stripped away Patton's veneer of bravado, and he began to shake with terror. He wanted to run. He lifted his face up from the dirt, gazed out over the German lines, and then lifted his eyes up to the clouds and saw faces. He blinked, then squinted his eyes, but the faces remained. They were faces of his ancestors. There was his 3rd great-grandfather Brigadier General Hugh Mercer, mortally wounded at the battle of Princeton in the Revolutionary War. There was his paternal grandfather Colonel George Patton I, killed at Winchester in the Civil War; and his great-uncle Colonel Waller Tazewell Patton, who died from wounds received at Gettysburg.

Patton seemed to understand instinctively that the faces were beckoning him to his destiny. He immediately became calm, shaking off his tremors of fear. "It is time for another Patton to die," he said aloud. He stood up, grabbed his walking stick, and turned to the soldiers behind him. "Who is with me?" he yelled. Patton headed back out into the enemy fire, certain of meeting death. Of the hundred and fifty soldiers, only six followed him, one of whom was his orderly, Private Joseph Angelo. Soon only two men were standing—Patton and Angelo. The others lay dead or wounded. As he charged forward, Patton eerily saw himself as a small, detached figure on the battlefield, watched all the time from a cloud by his Confederate kinsmen and his Virginia grandfather.

As he came closer to the German lines, Patton was hit. He staggered forward a few steps before collapsing. An enemy machine gun bullet had torn through his body, entering his upper thigh and exiting his buttocks, ripping open a wound the size of a teacup. He lay in a shell hole for hours before it was safe to evacuate him, but he refused to be taken to the hospital until he had reported to his commander. Patton was promoted to the temporary rank of colonel and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for bravery under fire.

Fortunately Patton's injuries weren't life threatening, but they were serious. By the time he had recovered sufficiently to return to combat the armistice had been signed and the guns fallen silent.

After World War I, Patton reverted to his permanent rank of captain, though he was promoted to major the next day. He served positions in tank and cavalry units at various posts in the United States. While stateside, Patton learned to fly an airplane, he drove the latest automobiles, he sailed his yacht, he mixed with high society, he kept a stable of horses, and he won hundreds of trophies and ribbons in numerous sporting events. Such an extravagant lifestyle would ordinarily be well out of reach on a major's salary, but Patton was married to Beatrice Ayer—the extremely wealthy heiress of a Boston industrialist. The Pattons had more than enough money to do whatever they wanted, but George never wavered from his belief that he was destined to be a great soldier. By the time the United States began to rearm itself in 1940, Patton had risen to the permanent rank of colonel.

World War II: North Africa and Sicily

Illustration:

Patton in 2nd Armored Division

Soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Patton was given command of the 1st and 2nd Armored Divisions and organized a training center in the California desert. Patton headed to North Africa late in 1942 at the head of an American force; before the initial landings on Morocco's Atlantic coast, he presented his troops with an expression of his now-legendary philosophy of battle: "We shall attack and attack until we are exhausted, and then we shall attack again." Patton's lust for battle would earn him the colorful nickname "Old Blood and Guts" among his troops, whom he ruled with an iron fist. With this formidable aggression and unrelenting discipline, the general managed to put U.S. forces back on the offensive after a series of defeats and win the war's first major American victory against Nazi-led forces in the Battle of El Guettar in March 1943.

Patton rapidly built a reputation for himself in North Africa, but it was here that he began his rivalry with Bernard Montgomery, commander of the British Eighth Army. While Patton was bold, aggressive, and often acted on gut instinct, Montgomery was by nature a far more cautious man who put great store in meticulous planning. Patton believed Eisenhower deferred to Montgomery far too often, a feeling that was only strengthened when the British commander was given the go-ahead to plan the invasion of Sicily.

Illustration:
Patton and Bradley with Field Marshal Montgomery

A month later, Patton turned over his command in North Africa to General Omar Bradley in order to prepare the U.S. 7th Army for its planned invasion of Sicily. The operation was a smashing success, but Patton's reputation suffered greatly after an incident in an Italian field hospital in which he slapped a soldier suffering from shell shock and accused him of cowardice. He was forced to issue a public apology and earned a sharp reprimand from General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

World War II: France and Germany

Though he had greatly hoped to lead the Allied invasion of Normandy, Patton was instead publicly assigned command of a fictitious force that was supposedly preparing for an invasion in southeastern England. With the German command distracted by a phantom invasion of Pas de Calais, France, the Allies were able to make their actual landings on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day (6 June 1944). After the 1st Army broke the German line, Patton's 3rd Army swept through the breach into northern France in pursuit of Nazi forces. Late that year, it played a key role in frustrating the German counterattack in the Ardennes during the massive Battle of the Bulge.

Illustration:
Patton during Battle of the Bulge

In early 1945, Patton led his army across the Rhine River and into Germany, capturing 10,000 miles of territory and helping to liberate the country from Nazi rule. In the months following Germany's surrender, the outspoken general caused another firestorm of controversy when he gave an interview criticizing the Allies' rigid de-Nazification policies in the defeated country; Eisenhower removed him from command of the Third Army in October 1945.

Accidental Death

On 9 December 1945, Patton was still stationed in Germany when he accepted an invitation from his chief of staff, Major General Hobart "Hap" Gay, to go pheasant hunting near the base. Originally, Patton was sitting in the front seat of the Cadillac which was being driven by Private H.L. Woodring, his favorite chauffeur. However, when the general noticed the hunting guide's dog was riding in an open-top jeep, he asked for the party to pull over and had the dog sit in the front of the car so it could warm up. Patton moved to the backseat. Sadly, the good deed would not go unpunished.

While traveling over a railroad crossing, the Cadillac collided with the passenger side of a U.S. Army truck which was turning left. Some claim the limousine Patton was riding in was traveling at a relatively low speed. Others say Private Woodring was going too fast for conditions. During the accident, Patton struck his head on the glass partition in front of him.

Illustration:
Automobile accident that led to General Patton's death

No one was hurt except Patton, who, despite a nasty gash on his head, immediately realized he had been paralyzed. He asked his chief of staff, Major General Hobart "Hap" Gay, who was sitting next to him, to rub his fingers. When Gay did so, Patton barked, "Go ahead Hap, work my fingers."

Patton was rushed to the 130th Station Hospital in Heidelberg, 12 miles away. There, he was x-rayed, revealing two crushed vertebrae. Simply put: Patton had broken his neck. For the next 12 days, Patton lay in traction, at times with painful fishhooks implanted into his cheeks on either side of his upper jaw, attached to weights to stabilize his neck. His wife, Beatrice, flew in from Boston to be at his side and read him books and letters from well-wishers. Showing a few signs of recovery, his doctors put him in a body cast to prepare him for a flight home to the United States. Unfortunately, he succumbed to his paralysis and took his last breath before the move could be made.

With the General's passing, Beatrice had to decide where her husband's remains would reside. She wanted the body returned to the United States and buried near their Massachusetts home. The French government, grateful for Patton's role in liberating their country, offered to bury him in Napoleon's tomb, where a number of great marshals were laid to rest. But at the recommendation of Major General Geoffrey Keyes, Patton's deputy commander in North Africa and

Sicily, Beatrice made up her mind. “Of course,” she declared, “he should be buried here. Why didn’t I think of it? I know George would want to lie beside the men of his Army who have fallen.” She decided her husband would be buried at the American Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg, which was filled with Patton’s Third Army soldiers killed during the Battle of the Bulge.

Illustration:
General Patton’s gravesite at the American Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg

Legacy

Patton’s memoir, titled *War As I Knew It*, was published posthumously in 1947; his larger-than-life persona later made its way to the silver screen in an Academy Award-winning 1970 biopic starring George C. Scott at General George Smith Patton and Karl Malden as General Omar Nelson Bradley.

George Smith Patton IV

Illustration:
George Smith Patton IV

Born in Boston (Massachusetts) on 24 December 1923, he was the fourth in his family to bear the George Smith Patton name. The first was his great-grandfather, a Confederate colonel killed during the Third Battle of Winchester in Virginia. His grandfather, George Smith Patton II., was a lawyer, politician, and major in the California National Guard. His father, third in the lineage, served in two world wars and earned two Distinguished Service Crosses and two Silver Stars.

Illustration:
Father and son sailing together

As a child, George Smith Patton IV had been quite close to his own father: they rode horses, read poetry and even built a 22-foot motorboat together in the garage. At 13, George IV sailed from Hawaii to Southern California aboard a small schooner with his parents, a few of their friends and a professional mate. But after George IV left for boarding school as a teenager, they communicated mainly through letters, most of which were a formal, man-to-man mix of advice and strategy.

During college, George IV saw his father only twice—once before then-Major General Patton left for North Africa as part of the secret Operation Torch invasion force in 1942 and again briefly just after the war, when General Patton returned to

the States for a War Bond tour featuring victory parades in Boston and Los Angeles. A 1944 letter written from Europe to George IV, who had just flunked math, captures the tenor of their new relationship: "Get as high a stand in math as you can before you hit the stuff you flunked on. In that way, you have further to retreat. It's just like war: in a delaying action, meet the enemy as far out as possible."

George Patton IV was in his last year at West Point when his father tragically died on 21 December 1945 after breaking his neck in an automobile accident in Germany. Following his father's death, George Smith Patton IV changed his name to drop the Roman numeral.

After graduation from West Point in 1946, Patton was sent to Regensburg, West Germany as an infantry officer and participated in the 1948 Berlin Airlift. The troops under his command were used to load supplies onto Air Force transport aircraft bound for Berlin.

Illustration:
Captain George Smith Patton IV during Korean War in 1953

In 1952 he became an armor officer. A year later, while in Korea with the 140th Tank Battalion, 40th Infantry Division, Patton received a Silver Star and Purple Heart. Returning to the U.S. in 1954, Captain Patton was initially assigned to West Point but was quickly picked up as part of an exchange program and sent to teach at the U.S. Naval Academy.

Patton served a total of three tours of duty in Vietnam. His first tour from April 1962 to April 1963 was at Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MAC-V), where he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. He then commanded 2nd Medium Tank Battalion, 81st Armored Regiment, 1st Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas. Lieutenant Colonel Patton's second Vietnam deployment was in 1967 and lasted only three months. Patton's final and most intense. tour lasted from January 1968 to January 1969. During that tour, he was initially assigned as Chief of Operations and Plans at Headquarters, U.S. Army Vietnam. However, following his promotion to Colonel in April 1968, he was given command of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Patton frequently used helicopters as a mobile command post in Vietnam and was shot down three times. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

On 9 August 1968, during a search operation with a unit from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the ARVN troops were struck by enemy forces fighting from tunnels under the village of Chanh Luu, north of Saigon. Patton instructed his senior staff to cover him while he took a smoke grenade (he couldn't find a fragmentation grenade) and advanced toward the enemy. Exposing himself to heavy fire, he threw the smoke grenade into a tunnel opening. Patton's actions resulted in 16 enemy killed, the capture of 99 suspected Viet Cong and a second Silver Star.

On 5 September 1968, Patton, in his command helicopter, saw 58 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers trying to escape the encirclement his troops had made. While his door gunners fired, Patton ordered his pilot to land. As the helicopter landed, it sustained heavy damage traced to fire from a ravine. Patton

directed an assault that forced the NVA to withdraw. He also led a squad in an attack on the ravine. Patton personally captured one soldier and killed two as they tried to flee the ravine. He received the Distinguished Service Cross.

Illustration:
Colonel George Smith Patton IV in Vietnam

On 24 September 1968, Patton and the 11th Armored Cavalry were on an operation near Chanh Luu with ARVN rangers. He disembarked and, as the firing continued, moved the rangers into a supporting position near the NVA, while blasting the enemy with a grenade launcher. Patton then led his men on a charge that demolished the house and exposed a heavily fortified bunker. As his men covered him, Patton crawled across the open terrain and threw a grenade into the entrance. It didn't do the job. Patton came back with two other men and TNT, which pulverized the bunker. He received another Distinguished Service Cross.

Illustration:
Colonel George and Joanne Patton
at the Blackhorse Military Ball

George Smith Patton IV was every bit the soldier that his father was. He saw more actual frontline combat and was just as highly decorated by his country for valor. He commanded more than 4,400 men—the largest combat unit led by someone of his rank and age during Vietnam—and more than once landed in his helicopter in the middle of a battle, pulled out his revolver and led the charge. Along the way, he earned the nation's second- and third-highest medals for bravery—twice each—and a Purple Heart. The son matched in two wars the two Distinguished Service Crosses and two Silver Stars awarded to his father in two wars. Before he left Vietnam, Patton's decorations included a Distinguished Flying Cross and 27 Air Medals.

Patton was promoted to brigadier general in June 1970 and subsequently served as Deputy Post Commander and Assistant Commandant of the Armor School at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Known by the troops as a "GI General," Patton regularly appeared in A-2-3 Dining Hall during meal times. Often he would be helping on the serving line.

As a major general, Patton IV commanded the 2nd Armored Division (1975-1977), the same division his father had led (1940-1942). This was the first time in U.S. Army history that a father and a son had both commanded the same division.

Illustration:
Major General George S. Patton
Commander of 2nd Armored Division

While in Germany as Deputy Commander of VII Corps, Patton IV became friends with Stuttgart's mayor, Manfred Rommel, also born on Christmas Eve, five years

after Patton. Rommel was the son of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, whose German tanks had gone head-to-head with Patton's father in North Africa.

Illustration:
General Patton III & Field Marshal Erwin Rommel

Illustration:
Major General Patton IV & Manfred Rommel

Patton's last assignment was Commander of the United States Army Materiel Development and Readiness Command (commonly referred to as DARCOM) located in Alexandria, Virginia. DARCOM (now USAMC) is responsible for the life-cycle management of the Army's materiel, beginning with concept; progressing through research and development, test and evaluation, procurement and production, supply, distribution, and maintenance; and ending with disposal. USAMC also acts as the Department of the Army's executive agent for foreign military sales. Patton retired from the U.S. Army in 1980 due to complications from hip surgery and other ailments.

In the years following his retirement from the U.S. Army, Patton turned an estate owned by his father (located north of Boston) into the 250-acre *Green Meadows Farm*. There he named the fields after soldiers who died under his command in Vietnam.

In 1986, George Smith Patton IV accidentally set fire to his basement. Until then he could often be found down there, in the office he had carved out for himself in a far corner, smoking a cigar and working on his diaries. He had been keeping them—dozens of identical volumes bound in red canvas—for most of his adult life. In the span of a few hours, the flames that rose from the smoldering butt he had tossed in the wastebasket destroyed two rooms. Patton suffered second-degree burns trying to rescue his journals, but nearly all of them were reduced to ash. Benjamin (George Smith Patton IV's son) noted that the burning of his office extinguished something in his father. He lost his desire to review these scraps for an autobiography and start anew.

History had always formed a huge part of the Patton family life. The fact that George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) had kept thousands of pages of his own letters and diaries was no fluke. As kids, Benjamin W. Patton and his four siblings (Margaret Georgina Patton, George S. Patton V, Robert H. Patton, and Helen Ayer Patton) were fed a steady diet of biographies. Wherever they lived—Kentucky, Alabama, Texas, Germany—they spent a lot of time trudging through battlefields and other historical sites.

After the basement fire, assorted family relics dating back to the Civil War era were restored, cataloged and donated to museums. The oil portrait of General George Smith Patton III that was represented in the film *Patton* now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Illustration:
General George Smith Patton's portrait in National Portrait Gallery

Other keepsakes went to West Point and the Patton Museum in Kentucky, and each has a story. Family mementos include the gold coin that Confederate Colonel George Smith Patton I carried in his vest pocket during the Civil War. When a Yankee minié ball struck him during the Battle of Giles Court House in 1862, the coin deflected the bullet just enough to prevent it from penetrating his gut and likely killing him.

In 1997, Patton finally agreed to work alongside author Brian Sobel to write *The Fighting Pattons*, a book that served as an official family biography of his father, as well as a comparison between the military of his father's generation and that of his son; a time that covered five conflicts and almost 70 years of combined service.

George Smith Patton IV died from a form of Parkinson's disease on 27 June 2004 in Hamilton, Massachusetts. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in a simple pine box made by the sisters of the Abbey of Regina Laudis from trees grown on the property. His daughter Margaret was the Mother Subprioress of the Abbey.

Illustration:
Funeral of MG George Smith Patton IV

The insignia of the 2nd Armored Division and the 11th Armored Cavalry are inscribed on the coffin as well as the emblem of the cross. Also, the unit flags were placed inside the coffin prior to burial.

Illustration:
Joanne Holbrook Patton with her family

Since her husband's death in 2004, Joanne Holbrook Patton (daughter of Brigadier General and Mrs. Willard A. Holbrook, Jr.) has been at the helm of *Green Meadows Farm*, ensuring that it continues into the future. Joanne embodies the grace and strength of an "army wife" providing stability for her children: Margaret, George V, Robert, Helen and Ben, through many moves and periods of separation from her husband during his deployments. Understanding the hardships of military spouses and families, Joanne continues her lifelong dedication to military families through the *National Military Family Association*, and *Operation Troop Support*, among others. She advocates tirelessly through her membership in various service organizations for persons with disabilities, including veterans.

Illustration:
Margaret Georgina Patton

Margaret Georgina Patton is the first-born of five children of Major General George Smith Patton IV and Joanne Holbrook Patton. She was born in Washington, D.C. while her father was fighting in Korea in 1953 and grew up largely on army posts in the United States and Europe. Margaret first came to the *Abbey of Regina Laudis* in the early 1970's while a freshman at Bennington College amidst the social turmoil surrounding the Vietnam War, a conflict that touched her personally through her father's military service in Vietnam. Mother

Margaret Georgina Patton was named Subprioress of the Abbey in February 2015. She embodies the spirit of service handed down to her from her parents, which has prepared her well to take on the role of Subprioress.

Illustration:
George Smith Patton V won gold medal
at the Special Olympic Games in 1987

George Smith Patton V (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) is the oldest son and namesake of George Smith Patton IV and Joanne Holbrook Patton. Although developmentally delayed from birth, George is a Special Olympian and like his grandfather, is a competent horseman. In June 1994, Robert H. Patton told *The New York Times* that his brother George "has many of my grandfather's traits but will not be passing them on. In a sense the line has come to an end with him." After George V won a gold medal in an equestrian event at the Special Olympic Games in 1987, Major General George Smith Patton IV remarked: “I used to worry that George wouldn’t be able to do all the things that the rest of our kids could do. And look here, he’s the only one to make the Olympics.”

Illustration:
Robert H. Patton

Robert H. Patton (son of George Smith Patton IV and Joanne Holbrook Patton) has published three novels, two histories, and a family memoir. After taking degrees in literature and journalism from Brown University and Northwestern University, Robert worked as a Capitol Hill reporter, a commercial fisherman, and a real estate developer before publishing *The Pattons: A Personal History of an American Family* to wide acclaim in 1994. The book chronicles five generations of ancestors culminating in his grandfather, General George S. Patton of World War II fame.

Illustration:
Helen Ayer Patton

Helen Ayer Patton (youngest child of George Smith Patton IV and Joanne Holbrook Patton) is also carrying the torch for her father and grandfather. From attending ceremonies commemorating WWII anniversaries to heading up the *Patton Foundation*, which aids returning troops and veterans in need, Helen continues the Patton tradition of giving to our great country. Her work with the *Patton Foundation* and the *Patton Stiftung Sustainable Trust* keeps the memory of the WWII generation alive. She set out to fix a missed opportunity in history by hosting the soldiers of the 101st Airborne in a game of football. In 1944, there were plans for the troops to play what was dubbed “The Champagne Bowl.” These plans were cut short on Christmas Day because they were needed in a march toward the Battle of the Bulge. With Luxembourg firmly liberated for nearly three quarters of a century, Helen Patton played in integral role in hosting what was

renamed the “Remembrance Bowl.” The game was played on 2 June 2018, in Sainte-Mere-Eglise, France by men of the 101st. The event will now be an annual tradition. Helen Patton champions military history as well. She has produced two award-winning documentaries, one about General John Joseph “Black Jack” Pershing and another about the continued struggles of war long after troops return.

Illustration:
Benjamin W. Patton

Benjamin W. Patton (youngest son of George Smith Patton IV and Joanne Holbrook Patton) is an author, filmmaker and film educator in New York City. He is the founder and executive director of the Patton Veterans Project nonprofit and CEO of Patton Productions, LLC, a video production company. With Jennifer Scruby, he is the co-author of *Growing Up Patton: Reflections on Heroes, History and Family Wisdom.*[3]

Illustration:
Shoulder Patch and Unit Crest for U.S. Army Armor School

Afterword

General Officer Assignments

During the early years of my U.S. Army career, I had the honor of serving at the Pentagon in General Officer Management Office (GOMO) from 1978 to 1980. The mission of GOMO was, and still is, to perform executive level human resources management for the Army's general officer corps in support of the Army and Department of Defense senior leaders’ decisions. While I worked in GOMO, that office was listed in the organizational chart under the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER)—Lieutenant General Robert Yerks (1978-1981). However, we had daily contact with the Army Chief of Staff—General Bernard Rogers (1976-1979) and General Edward Meyer (1979-1983)—who had approval authority over all general officer administrative actions. When I worked in GOMO, it was authorized a total of ten personnel: two lieutenant colonels, two majors, one captain, three enlisted soldiers, and two civilians. Today, GOMO falls directly under the Army Chief of Staff and is authorized eighteen personnel: one brigadier general, three lieutenant colonels, two majors, one captain, two warrant officers, eight enlisted soldiers, and one civilian.

Illustration:
Lieutenant General Robert Yerks

Illustration:
General Bernard Rogers

Illustration:
General Edward Meyer

My job in GOMO was to maintain the official records, resumes, and photos of all Active Army general officers; assist with general officer worldwide assignments; produce monthly general officer rosters; produce quarterly flag officer rosters; schedule general officer selection boards; prepare general officer nomination documents for the U.S. President (Jimmy Carter); prepare general officer confirmation documents for the U.S. Senate; schedule training seminars for newly selected general officers; coordinate initial distribution of a general officer 'kit' consisting of national and distinguishing general officer flags (indoor and outdoor), flag cases, flag staffs, automobile plate, belt, belt buckle, pistol, holster, and letterhead stationary; manage the allocations for enlisted aides approved by the Army Chief of Staff; work closely with the White House Liaison Office and the Public Affairs Office; and answer all inquiries about general officers (past and present).

Located across the hall from GOMO was the Pentagon office of General of the Army Omar N. Bradley. Although quartered at a special residence on the grounds of the William Beaumont Army Medical Center at Fort Bliss, Texas, Bradley would occasionally travel to Washington, D.C. and work in his Pentagon office. Whenever General of the Army Bradley showed up, I was detailed to serve as his Administrative Assistant. I was chosen for this additional duty because I had previously served as the Administrative Assistant to Brigadier General George Smith Patton IV (son of the famous World War II general by the same name) in the Armor School at Fort Knox, Kentucky in the early-1970s.

General Omar N. Bradley and General George S. Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) had quite a history together. In March 1943, General George Smith Patton III was installed as commander of II Corps and General Bradley was named his deputy. But in 1944 their roles changed when General George Smith Patton III commanded the Third Army under General Bradley's 12th Army Group. Patton owed his diminished status to his temper and lack of control. Had he not slapped those soldiers, it would have been difficult for General Eisenhower not to have named Patton as chief American planner for Operation Overlord, the invasion of France in the spring of 1944. Bradley and Patton were never close friends, but both realized that they owed much of their respective success to the other. Historian Martin Blumenson characterized their relationship as "World War II's Odd Couple." He was undoubtedly correct, for neither commander liked the other. Had Bradley had his way, Patton would not have commanded an army in the European Theater. Bradley considered Patton profane, vulgar, too independent, and not a team player. For his part, Patton thought Bradley was overly cautious, indecisive at critical moments, and lacking the resolve to follow through when the operational opportunity presented itself.

Illustration:

General Bradley, General Eisenhower and General Patton in Bastogne in 1945

How much did General Eisenhower value General Bradley by the end of the war? Following the official deactivation of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force on 13 July 1945, General Eisenhower penned a rather formal letter of appreciation of their services to all his former principal subordinates in the Allied organization. To Bradley he wrote, "In my opinion, you are pre-eminent among the Commanders of major battle units in this war. Your leadership, forcefulness, professional capacity, selflessness, high sense of duty and sympathetic understanding of human beings, combine to stamp you as one of America's great leaders and soldiers." The former supreme commander signed the message "From your old friend." No greater tribute could be paid to the "G.I. General."

On 9 December 1945, a day before he was due to return to the United States, Patton was severely injured in an automobile accident. General Patton died of an embolism on 21 December 1945 at the military hospital in Heidelberg with his wife present. He was buried at the Luxembourg American Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg along with other members of the Third Army. On 19 March 1947, his body was moved from the original grave site in the cemetery to its current prominent location at the head of his former troops.[4]

Remembered for his fierce determination and ability to lead soldiers, Patton is considered one of the greatest military figures in history. The 1970 film, *Patton*, starring George C. Scott, provoked renewed interest in Patton. The movie won seven Academy Awards, including Best Actor and Best Picture, and immortalized General George Smith Patton III (a.k.a. George Smith Patton Jr.) as one of the world's most intriguing military men.

Twentieth Century Fox paid $75,000 to best-selling author Ladislas Farago for the rights to use his book, *Patton: Ordeal and Triumph*. The company also paid General of the Army Omar N. Bradley $90,000 for the rights to use his World War II memoir, *A Soldier's Story*, and to serve as the senior military adviser to the film.

As time passed, the problems of producing the Patton film continued to mount. The second Mrs. Omar Bradley, the former Esther Dora "Kitty" Buhler, a one-time freelance writer and screenwriter who was a thoroughly controlling figure in Bradley's life, insisted that Charlton Heston play the role of her husband. Eventually a compromise was reached and the role went to Karl Malden, who turned out to be superb in the role of General Omar Bradley.

Although hardly noticed by those who viewed the film, Patton was paradoxical in that, as one critic later observed, if it glorified anyone it was Omar Bradley, not Patton. Moreover, for decades our collective knowledge of Patton has been based on this popular film and the opinions of Omar Bradley, who detested Patton, but who nevertheless owed him a giant debt for his support during the waning months of the war and for pulling Bradley's chestnuts from the fire during the Battle of the Bulge.[5]

There was one final challenge facing the producer and director: how to end the film. In real life, Patton died in December 1945, shortly after an ill-fated traffic accident in Mannheim, Germany. However, the filmmakers could hardly kill off the

hero of their movie; so instead they ended it by having Patton stroll into the sunset in Bavaria, his faithful dog Willie at his side.

Illustration:
Mrs. Beatrice Patton, General George S. Patton III.
and Cadet George S. Patton IV

George Smith Patton IV was in his last year at West Point when his father, General George S. Patton III, was killed in a traffic accident in Germany in December 1945. After his father's death, the younger Patton dropped the Roman numeral 'IV' from his name.

Thirty-three years after World War II ended, I had the honor of assisting General of the Army Omar N. Bradley whenever he came to the Pentagon. By the time I first met General Bradley in 1978, he was wheelchair bound and needed my assistance with managing his schedule and getting around from one meeting to another. I was so impressed with how he took the time to meet with admirers ranging from March of Dimes Child (Betsy Burch) to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (General David Jones).

Illustration:
Bradley with March of Dimes Child (Betsy Burch)

Illustration:
Bradley with JCS Chairman General David Jones

During one visit to his Pentagon office, General of the Army Omar N. Bradley asked for my assistance in getting him a pay raise. Bradley rationalized that because he was the only surviving five-star general, he should be the highest paid officer in the U.S. Armed Forces. In order for Bradley's pay raise to happen, it required the completion of paperwork requesting Congressional action. It took a while for Bradley to see a few more dollars in his monthly paycheck.

Illustration:
Actress Donna Reed with husband Colonel Grover W. Asmus

Coincidently, Grover Woodrow Asmus (husband of actress Donna Reed) served in the U.S. Army until 1972, attaining the rank of colonel. He had many assignments including senior aide to General of the Army Omar N. Bradley. During Bradley's visits to the Pentagon from 1978 to 1980, I performed administrative duties normally completed by his senior aide.

In January 1980, I was promoted from Staff Sergeant to Warrant Officer in a Pentagon ceremony officiated by Lieutenant General Robert Yerks. After completing the Military Personnel Officer course at Fort Benjamin Harrison, I was reassigned to Kaiserslautern, Germany. I was saddened to hear of the death of General of the Army Omar N. Bradley on 8 April 1981. Three months later, I was promoted to First Lieutenant and reassigned to the United States Military

Academy at West Point—the alma mater of Omar N. Bradley, George S. Patton III, and George S. Patton IV. While assigned to the Military District of Washington from 1985 to 1988, I regularly visited General Bradley's grave in Arlington National Cemetery. In April 2001, I traveled to Germany to visit my son and he took me to see General George S. Patton III's gravesite in the American Cemetery in Luxembourg.

It was not until 2016, while working on my family's genealogy, that I discovered how the Patton family tree connects to the Wilson family tree through the children of John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford. Their daughter (Joan Beaufort) married Ralph Neville and they became the direct ancestors of the Patton family including General George S. Patton III (a.k.a. George S. Patton Jr.) and Major General George S. Patton IV. Their son (John Beaufort) married Margaret Holland and they became the direct ancestors of the Wilson family (including Raymond Charles Wilson—the author of this book). I was unaware of this family connection when I took Billie Jean Null (my future wife) to see the movie *Patton* in 1970 or when I began serving as Administrative Assistant to Brigadier General George Smith Patton IV at Fort Knox in 1971.

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(1) In another version of this incident, it was General Heth, not General Wharton, who found the gold coin.

(2) Claims have been made that at the time of Patton's death a commission as a brigadier general was en route to him. According to Terry Lowery, a 22nd Virginia historian, there is only sketchy evidence to support this and no solid documentation has been found. However, George Smith Patton I had been recommended for the promotion on several occasions.

(3) Personal Note: When I began serving as Brigadier General George Smith Patton IV's Administrative Assistant at Fort Knox in 1971, Margaret was 18, George V was 16, Robert was 14, Helen was 9, and Benjamin was 6 years old.

(4) Personal Note: While visiting my son (Captain Jonathan Wilson) in Europe in 2001, he took me to see General George S. Patton III's gravesite in Luxembourg.

[5] Personal Note: My father-in-law (William G. Null) was a tank driver in the 18th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, 14th Cavalry Group when he served under General Patton during the Battle of the Bulge.