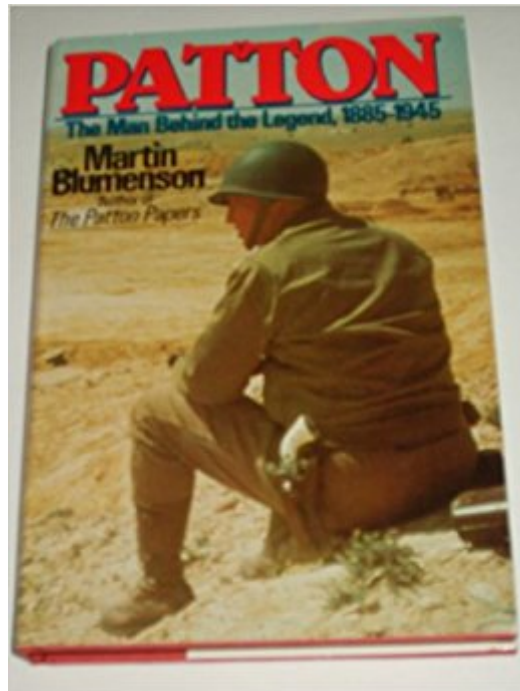




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Patton, The Man Behind The Legend, 1885-1945



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Customer Reviews

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Never received this book. I was looking forward to this book. I am retired Army. 12 years as a tanker

I good bio on General Patton. I have read others and this is almost as good. This is more of an abridged version of his life with fair treatment of each section of his life-the roots of his family, his childhood, pre-WWI, WWI, the between the war years and 3 chapters on WWII. If you want to read a bio on Patton and have not yet, this is a good one to start. If you have already read a number of bio's on Patton, I am not sure there is new material for you, but it is still enjoyable.

This is a rather short biography of General George Patton, who was the third most famous American commander in World War II. Only Eisenhower and MacArthur managed to eclipse him. The author had served as a young lieutenant under Patton in WW II and he greatly admires the man, of which he makes no secret. However, even though the author admits to personal bias and admiration for Patton, the book itself is fairly objective and well balanced. So who was George Patton? Yes, he was a famous general, but most people know little about him beyond that. George

Patton was born in 1885 into America's unofficial aristocracy. I say "unofficial" because while United States does not have official aristocracy, it does have wealthy families who have enjoyed privileged status for so long that they act and think like aristocracy in all but name. Right from early age Patton was raised on stories about duty, courage, patriotism and military heroics. His family had long, distinguished history of military service and right from early age young Patton dreamed of nothing more than becoming a soldier and making his family proud. Eventually, he got accepted into West Point (partially through his own talent, partially through his father's political influence) and in 1916 accompanied General Pershing on his punitive expedition into Mexico. When later Pershing was appointed as the supreme commander of all American forces in Europe, Patton tagged along. In Europe, Patton, a cavalry officer by training, became interested in tanks and personally led the biggest American tank battle of World War I. He was even wounded in that battle and spent the rest of the war in hospital. The interwar years were boring and uneventful for Patton. He was sent from one assignment to another, but most of them were not of any major importance. During these twenty years he developed and advocated the theory of fast mobile warfare using tanks, airplanes and armored vehicles. This kind of warfare would later be known as "blitzkrieg," but in 1920s and 1930s few paid any attention to his theories. It was only with the start of WW II and the German onslaught over Europe using precisely the tactics that Patton was writing about that people started to listen to him. In 1943 Patton led the American invasion of North Africa and, later, Sicily. Africa was a big success for Patton but Sicily not so much. After the landing at Normandy, he was sent to France where he commanded the American Third Army. His operations were quite successful, but severely hampered by lack of supplies and orders limiting his actions. Despite these serious handicaps, Patton's men were the most successful allied army group in WW II. A couple of months after the end of the war, Patton was involved in a car accident that left him seriously wounded. He died from complications a few days later. This, in very short, is the life of George Patton. The author of course offers a much longer and detailed version. But his book is not so much a narrative of Patton's life than a psychological analysis of the man. The subtitle of the book is after all "the Man Behind the Legend." The major focus is on Patton's character. And what kind of man was George Patton? After reading this book, I have to say not very good. He had positive qualities and flaws, but overall, the picture I got of him is not flattering. I would certainly not want a man like George Patton in my life in any shape or form. Let's start with good things. Patton was a superb organizer. Any unit he commanded soon became a model of efficiency and discipline. He was a demanding and hard taskmaster, but he was also a great leader. His men loved him and would follow him into hell. He was a deeply insecure individual, but rather than to give in to his insecurity, he worked hard to

overcome it through achieving various accomplishments and neverending self-improvement. Patton was personally brave. He never ordered his soldiers to do something he himself would not do. Many times he visited the battlefield where he came under attack. By his own admission, was scared to death, but he remained in his post and kept leading his troops despite bullets and shells falling all around him. In WW I, he was wounded but remained at the front for hours, refusing to be evacuated and continuing to command his soldiers. Patton tended to be fair to others and prepared to acknowledge his mistakes and apologize for any wrongs he had done. And now the bad, and there is a lot of it. Patton held ultra conservative, elitist, racist views. He believed that the lower classes were by nature like unruly children who need to be ruled with a firm hand by enlightened men from higher classes--men like him. Whenever workers or even veterans rose up to demand fair treatment, Patton labeled them Bolsheviks and advocated harsh treatment. When he was stationed in Hawaii in 1930s and there was talk of war with Japan, he advocated putting all Japanese immigrants into concentration camps (which U.S. government eventually did do later) and holding them as hostages because to him they were all dangerous subhumans. He was anti-Semitic and openly expressed his disgust for Jews despite seeing with his very own eyes what Nazis have done to them. He was a bad father and husband. He was abusive towards his family and cheated on his wife mercilessly. He even had an affair with his own niece. The author shrugs this one off by recounting how Patton, his family and his niece were supposed to go on a trip somewhere, but due to family emergency only Patton and his niece went. It was during this trip that they first started sleeping together. The author says, and words stuck in my mind, the following: "How could they not end up having an affair?" Excuse me? The author makes it sound as if an uncle having an affair with his own niece is the most natural thing in the world. Many of these faults can be explained (but not justified) by Patton's upbringing and social milieu. Patton was born and raised in 19th century patrician, semi-aristocratic society. Racism and elitism were widespread amongst American elites. In fact, racism and elitism were, back then, seen as the most natural thing in the world. As for his endless affairs, back in those days (and sadly even today) men were expected to prove their manhood through amorous conquests. This was doubly true amongst soldiers. Patton, being insecure as he was, wanted to prove to himself and to others how manly he was, and one way of doing so was by sleeping with as many women as possible. Patton was not perfect. In fact, he was seriously flawed. Then again, Jesus did say, "let him who is without sin cast the first stone." We all have our weaknesses. I could forgive all of Patton's faults, except for one, and this is the one that completely and utterly disgusts me. Patton was a warmonger. Throughout his whole life he hoped and prayed for war. Even before the outbreak of WW I, when he was a young lieutenant, he hoped that

there will be a war in Europe. He planned to resign from the army and go fight in Europe as a mercenary. The only thing that stopped him was his assignment with General Pershing in Mexico. The reason why he didn't go to fight in Europe in 1914 was because he could go fight in Mexico. Patton was hardly the first young man who thought that war is something glorious. But most young men who go to fight in a war quickly realize that war is hell. Not so with Patton. He loved war. Even after witnessing combat and what it does to human beings, even after being severely wounded himself, he desired war with all his heart. In WW I he was afraid that the war will end before he had a chance to fight and he prayed that it lasts as long as possible. In the interwar years, he advocated hyper aggressive American policy and war as a response to every problem. Had he been the president, United States would have found itself embroiled in two or three new wars every year. When WW II broke out, he was overjoyed and could hardly wait for United States to get involved. When the war finally ended, Patton was depressed and sincerely hoped for a war between United States and Soviet Union. (He derisively called Russians "Mongols.") As if the destruction brought by WW II was not enough, he could hardly wait for WW III. Why was Patton so belligerent? He did find war glorious and exciting. He did like combat. In 1916 in Mexico, he had personally killed a couple of Mexican rebels and showed no regret at the lives he took. To him it was like hunting big game. (He was an avid hunter.) Yet, his primary reason for loving war was not the love of combat, but because it presented an opportunity to gain recognition. As I have already said, Patton was seriously insecure and hungered after promotions and medals to prove to himself and others that he was a great man. The fact that war kills millions and shatters hundreds of millions of lives was of no importance to Patton. This lust for war and disregard for the evil it brings is the one thing I cannot tolerate or forgive. How would you feel if you met someone who told you, in all seriousness, the following? "Gee. I really hope that our country gets involved in a long, bloody war so that I can get a promotion at my job." Me, I would throw my drink in his face and never speak to them again. Probably I would do the same to Patton too.

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