

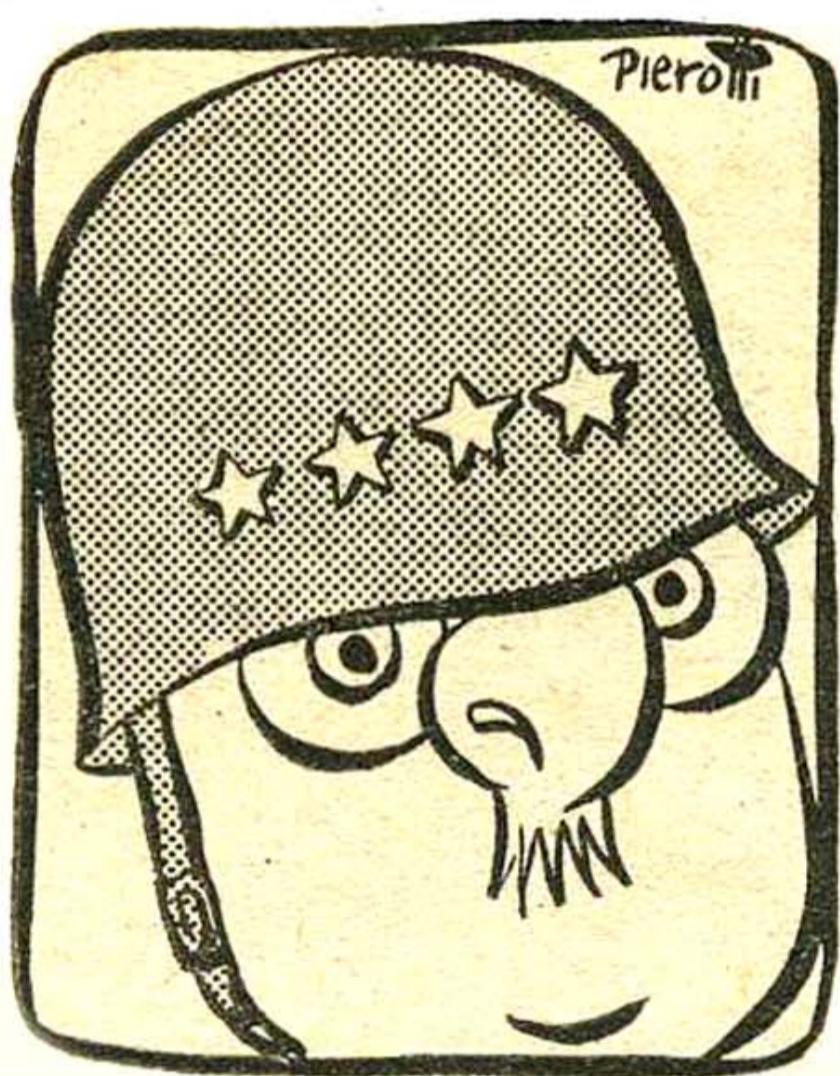
AUGUST 15, 1945

O'Reilly in Germany

Tom Meets General Patton

NURNBERG, Germany. — After a week of atrocious weather, General George S. Patton, Jr., arrived in town and ordered the heavens to quit bawling, so finals of the United States Forces European track and field championships were staged under azure skies.

Their pistol - packing commander was in the stands, flaunting four of the 18 stars that twinkled on the iron lids of 10 less picturesque generals.



The Third Army team ran off with the honors. Its discus thrower, Corporal Brady Walker, former Brigham Young U. student, of Provo, Utah, might have been excused if he fainted when the general, after making a nifty little speech in which he spoke of America as having the best God-damned army in the world, leaned over and kissed his hand right in front of 20,000 howling GIs. Glamorous Georgie can be gracious, too. When he entered the stadium, Patton's first gesture was to give some soldier verbal hell for not wearing a necktie.

Being something less than a Chesterfield myself, I was somewhat nervous about meeting Patton. I was fearfully reminded of General "Black Jack" Pershing's famous remark when he met the ambulatory Heywood Broun, sporting a rumpled puttee. Said Pershing, "Mr. Broun, did you fall down?"

O'Reilly in Germany

The Patton psychological build-up is pretty fierce. Wearing riding breeches, like most small men, he struts, his back is straight as a ramrod and that four-starred helmet brilliantly shellacked. However, with that makeup removed, you'd probably find him merely a cantankerous and unpredictable old man who knows his business. All the barbers in Seville and the masseurs in Sweden couldn't hide the fact that Patton is in his 60s.

His voice is high-pitched and girlish, like Jack Dempsey's. In fact, the minute he starts to talk he reminds you of Dempsey. He fights like Dempsey, too, coming out of his corner fast and throwing everything in the book at the opposition.

When I asked if the war really is over, he stepped to one side, threw a fake punch that stopped short of my chin, grinned like a fellow who had just finished his last football game in college by scoring the winning touchdown, and said, "I'm afraid it is, but don't quote me, because it hasn't been officially announced."

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Looking beyond him to the bench filled with 10 other beautifully groomed generals, it suddenly occurred that in about 12 months none of them probably would be any better known than many another group of nice old fellows and that in future their moments of glory would come only at annual Legion conventions.

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When we dragged out the corny helped a man to be a better soldier, Patton replied that he could only point to many generals in the Army who had been crack athletes at West Point. He named Ike Bradley Truscott and Keys, then he unaccountably got into a discussion about clean and dirty wars. He said athletics taught a man to fight and win cleanly, adding, "You know you can fight clean or dirty in war, too."

With a modesty that didn't exactly fit all the trimmings, Patton

O'Reilly in Germany

said he wasn't a very good athlete himself, pointing out that he was a substitute on the West Point football varsity and finished fourth in the modern penthalon of the 1912 Olympics. The way he put the order of finish was three Swedes, Patton, then four Swedes. He admitted that he probably was the best damned rider in the Army. He once was joint Master of the Cobbler fox hounds in Virginia. He said Mrs. Patton was co-master. Mrs. Patton is an excellent horsewoman. When he said that last, he looked almost homesick, just like everybody else in the park. Salute!

—TOM O'REILLY

PM