



More than any other military leader, General George S. Patton Jr. conjures up the image of the ultimate World War II American warrior, and even today, the Patton mystique continues to grow. Despite his renowned egotism, Patton above all else understood that it was the toil and blood of his soldiers that earned the glory attributed to him.

*Patton's Forward Observers* is a story told by a unique collection of highly trained artillery observers who fought every step of the war with Patton's famed Third Army. We remember Patton today only through the service of men like these.

Formed on the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the 7th Field Artillery Observation Battalion (7th FAOB) was assigned the hazardous task of determining the source of enemy artillery fire. Exceptionally well trained, the battalion was prepared for combat when they landed in Normandy in July 1944. Serving as XX Corps (the Ghost Corps) primary counterbattery unit, the battalion spearheaded the stunningly quick advance through France. With the Third Army stopped cold by a ferocious German defense in Metz and Saarland in the bitter winter of 1944-1945, the 7th FAOB participated in some of the bloodiest, yet least well published, fighting of the Second World War. Finally breaking through the seemingly impregnable German West Wall, XX Corps and the 7th FAOB ultimately crossed the Rhine and ended the war at Hitler's birthplace in Braunau, Austria.

*Patton's Forward Observers* is a soldier's story. Derived from wartime letters and oral histories told by the veterans themselves, we see the classic American Army experience of World War II—the friendships, courage, terror, carnage, humor and ultimate victory that is all part of the Patton legend—a legend built by soldiers.

by John Kurt Rieth

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel (U.S. Army, retired) John K. Rieth spent a twenty-two year career as an infantry and military intelligence officer. Rieth grew up in Warwick, RI, a son of Kurt Rieth, a WWII veteran of the 7th Field Artillery Observation Battalion. With an eventual assignment to Germany following his father's death, Rieth stumbled into contact with a group of veterans from his father's unit, and began a profound effort to amass data on the experiences of the 7th Field Artillery Observation Battalion. Rieth's bonds with the veterans grew to the point that the 7th FAOB Association asked him to prepare a history of the battalion. In support of the book, veterans and family members produced hundreds of personal accounts of wartime service. Fusing these oral histories with official records, his father's own letters and other published works, the story of Patton's premier field artillery observers emerged.

Lt. Col. (ret.) Rieth has a B.S. from the University of Rhode Island and a M.S. in Public Administration from Golden Gate University. He retired from active Army service in 2003 and is currently employed by the U.S. Government.

## ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

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