

Sergeant Alvin C. York

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I. Introduction

A. References

1. SGT Alvin C. York's Diary By: SGT Alvin C. York
2. Legends & Traditions of the Great War, SGT Alvin York BY: Dr. Michael Birdwell
3. www.alvincyork.org

B. The research done for this paper was to show SGT York's life before and during the Army. The internet research listed above supports the information I briefed.

II. Body

A. December 1887-June 1917

1. York's childhood to prior Army service
2. His beliefs and values
3. Black powder rifle

B. November 1917-October 8, 1918

1. Basic Army life
2. Repeating shot rifle
3. British rifle & .45 Colt Pistol
4. SGT Alvin C. York's D.S.C. deeds

C. October 9, 1918-September 2, 1964

1. Gas and H.E. Artillery rounds
2. Promoted to Sergeant
3. November 1918 Armistice signed
4. February 11, 1919 awarded to D.S.C

5. April 18, 1919 awarded the M.O.H.

III. Closing

A. My intent behind this brief was to educate you on the rich and exciting accomplishments achieved by Sergeant Alvin C. York. I gave only a small snap shot of events that took place in His life and times. Each event is small but when combined they show why the Noncommissioned Officers are truly the backbone of the Army.

B. Are there any questions?

C. In conclusion, Sergeant Alvin C. York is just one of the few Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions during the World War I. Many Medals of Honors where awarded posthumously because of the savage fighting experienced by many U.S. Soldiers.

Sergeant Alvin C. York

Beyond the Call to Duty are words that titled Sergeant Alvin C. York for the rest of his life and beyond. Sergeant Alvin C. York was born 13 December 1887 in a Town called Pall Mall, Tennessee located in Fentress Country. He was the 3rd oldest child of 11 children. Sergeant York grew up in Fentress County, a place settled by his Great Grandfather who lived in a cave located there. Life outside of Fentress County was unknown to Sergeant York.

Sergeant York had a total of nine months of schooling, which is why some suggest that he was not an intelligent man when it came to dealing with money. This lack of knowledge led to him being poor. At a young age, Sergeant York was an excellent shot with a black powder rifle and used this skill to put food on the table and win many shooting matches.

Sergeant York was far from an outstanding member of the community when he was growing up. He stayed out late gambling, drinking, chasing women, fighting, and being an all around nuisance. Then one day a great change overcame Sergeant York. He came home late one night and his mother asked him when he was going to grow up and become a man so she could stop worrying about him. Sergeant York wrote in his diary that he made his mother a promise that very night that he would change his life.

Others have said that the change was due to the interest of a young woman that would soon become his wife. Whatever the reason, Sergeant York stopped drinking, gambling, and all other things that he considered wrong with his life. In 1914, Sergeant York became religious and became a member of the Church of Christ becoming a faithful member of the choir.

On 6 April 1917, America declared war on Germany and Sergeant York's life would change forever. In that same year of 1917, Sergeant York received his draft card and on it, he wrote these words "Don't (sic) want to fight" Dr Michael Birdwell. At this point a great debate

started and continues to this day. Sergeant York wrote in his diary that he never was a Conscientious Objector. He said that he prayed to God asking if it was right to take life and in the end, he found peace so therefore it must be okay.

Sergeant York wrote in his diary that it was his duty to defend his country and never once did he sway from that belief. Sergeant York said that this was one of the toughest decisions of his life and praying to God for an answer really happened. His dilemma was to kill a man for his country or not kill because it was against God's Commandments, but God showed him that it was okay to defend his country. He also wrote that due to his limited education of less than a year that he did not always understand words or some of the questions they were asking him. This is when his command started labeling him a Conscientious Objector.

By November 1917, Sergeant York was serving in the Army. The Command drafted papers to have him removed from the Army on the grounds of being a Conscientious Objector. They told Sergeant York that all he had to do was sign the papers and his discharges approved. Sergeant York also wrote in his diary that his friend, Pastor Pyle the Preacher at his Church, was the one pushing for the discharge. Sergeant York refused to sign the papers, saying that it was his duty to defend his country. Sergeant York's mother also wrote the Army stating that she needed his help at home. Once again, Sergeant York refused to sign the sole provider discharge papers saying that there were 10 other kids to help her.

Sergeant York served in G Co 328th Infantry and attached to the 82nd "All American" Division. Sergeant York was not an outstanding Soldier; in fact, no one noticed him until one day he went to the firing range. His rifle historians believe is Springfield 30-06 repeating shot rifle. This was where his days of shooting a black powder rifle paid off.

Sergeant York was a natural at shooting. Dr Michael Birdwell wrote in his book that Sergeant

York refused to shoot at the targets because they were in the shape of a man. Sergeant York wrote in his diary that he never made that statement.

Sergeant York used his great skill at shooting to teach others. Sergeant York wrote in his diary that the targets were so large how anyone could miss. He said the target was a bigger than the turkey heads that he shot at and that you got more than one shot to hit the target. Sergeant York's skill at shooting is legendary.

Sergeant York's unit shipped out to England where his unit turned in their Springfield 30-06 rifles for what Historians believe to be a British Enfield 303 rifle and was given a Colt .45 pistol. Sergeant York was upset about all the grease that was all over his rifle and thought it was a great shame for such a fine rifle to be in that kind of condition. Sergeant York's strong religious beliefs and his value of keeping a clean weapon were just some of the small things that would later make him an outstanding soldier.

Sergeant York's unit deployed to France during the war and he saw his first taste of combat. The Germans were using a new weapon called Mustard Gas. The Mustard Gas delivered in artillery shells to friendly lines had highly destructive results. Many of Sergeant York's friends died in different combat actions mostly by artillery shells and mustard gas.

The date 8 October 1918 and the place Chatel-Cherery in the Argonne Forest in France was about to become known to the world. Corporal York was on a patrol led by Sergeant Early and Corporal Cutting. The 17 men soon found themselves outnumbered. The patrol was lost, tired, and not paying attention when they stumbled onto a group of about 25 German Soldiers. The Germans, taken by surprise, surrendered to the patrol because they thought there were more American Soldiers behind them. When the Germans realized that this was all the American Soldiers they were not about to give up so easily. The German machineguns opened fire on the

American patrol and within a few minutes nine of the 17 Soldiers were killed or wounded. Sergeant Early wounded 15 times and Corporal Cutting died shortly after the fighting started. Sergeant Early fought until the blood loss from his wounds prevented him from doing so and he turned the patrol over to the next ranking Soldier standing, Corporal Alvin C. York.

Corporal York and the remaining Soldiers took control and soon were in charge of the situation. The few Soldiers of the patrol pushed on and soon outflanked the German line. Corporal York fired 28 rounds killing 28 men, captured 132 prisoners, and 35 machineguns. Corporal York and the remaining Soldiers took the prisoners back to Headquarters and returned to the fight.

Shortly after returning to combat, the Germans launched a gas and high explosive artillery attack and Corporal York was blown into the air and knocked out. This was just one of many narrow escapes Corporal York encountered. Corporal York's promotion to the rank of Sergeant happens after this timeframe.

The signing of the Armistice on November 1918 ended the war. On 11 February 1919, five months after that faithful day in the Argonne Forest, Sergeant York is wearing the Distinguished Service Cross. Two months after that Sergeant York is wearing the Medal of Honor for those same actions. Nine years later in 1927 after a review board, Sergeant Early and Corporal Cutting earned the Distinguished Service Cross for their actions on that cold 8 day in October of 1918. Sergeant York never said that he acted alone. He wanted to forget that it ever happened at all. Broke with massive bills piling up, he agreed to a movie about his life and that day he wanted to forget. Sergeant York died a very poor man.

In Summary, the intent behind this brief was to educate you on the rich and exciting accomplishments achieved by Sergeant Alvin C. York. This is only a snapshot of events that

took place in Sergeant York's life. Each event is small but when combined they show why the Noncommissioned Officers are truly the BACKBONE of the Army.

In conclusion, Sergeant Alvin C. York is just one of the few Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions during World War I. Many recipients of the Medal Of Honor received their awards posthumously because of the savage fighting experienced by many U.S. Soldiers.

Works Cited

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