

Cher Ami

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Cher Ami (French for "dear friend", in the masculine) was a female homing pigeon who had been donated by the pigeon fanciers of Britain for use by the U.S. Army Signal Corps in France during World War I and had been trained by American pigeoneers. She helped save the Lost Battalion of the 77th Division in the Battle of the Argonne, October 1918.^[1]

Contents

- 1 World War 1 service
- 2 Awards
- 3 Remembered
- 4 Sex and color
- 5 Popular culture
 - 5.1 Books
 - 5.2 Film
 - 5.3 Television
- 6 References
- 7 External links

World War 1 service

On October 3, 1918, Major Charles White Whittlesey and more than 500 men were trapped in a small depression on the side of the hill behind enemy lines without food or ammunition. They were also beginning to receive friendly fire from allied troops who did not know their location. Surrounded by the Germans, many were killed and wounded in the first day and by the second day, just over 190 men were still alive. Whittlesey dispatched messages by pigeon.^[2] The pigeon carrying the first message, "Many wounded. We cannot evacuate." was shot down. A second bird was sent with the message, "Men are suffering. Can support be sent?" That pigeon also was shot down. Only one homing pigeon was left: "Cher Ami". She was dispatched with a note in a canister on her left leg,

We are along the road parallel to 276.4. Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us. For heaven's sake, stop it.

Cher Ami



Cher Ami on display at the Smithsonian Institution

Died	June 13, 1919
	Fort Monmouth, New Jersey
Place of display	Smithsonian Institution
Allegiance	United States of America
Service/branch	United States Army
Years of service	1918
Unit	77th Division
Battles/wars	World War I
Awards	Croix de Guerre
Other work	Department of Service mascot

As Cher Ami tried to fly back home, the Germans saw her rising out of the brush and opened fire. For several moments, Cher Ami flew with bullets zipping through the air all around her.^[3] Cher Ami was eventually shot down but managed to take flight again. She arrived back at her loft at division headquarters 25 miles to the rear in just 25 minutes, helping to save the lives of the 194 survivors. In this last mission, Cher Ami delivered the message despite having been shot through the breast, blinded in one eye, covered in blood and with a leg hanging only by a tendon.

Cher Ami became the hero of the 77th Infantry Division. Army medics worked long and hard to save her life. They were unable to save her leg, so they carved a small wooden one for her. When she recovered enough to travel, the now one-legged bird was put on a boat to the United States, with General John J. Pershing personally seeing Cher Ami off as she departed France.

Awards

Upon return to the United States, Cher Ami became the mascot of the Department of Service. The pigeon was awarded the Croix de Guerre Medal with a palm Oak Leaf Cluster for her heroic service in delivering 12 important messages in Verdun. She died at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, on June 13, 1919 from the wounds she received in battle and was later inducted into the Racing Pigeon Hall of Fame in 1931. She also received a gold medal from the Organized Bodies of American Racing Pigeon Fanciers in recognition of her extraordinary service during World War I.^[4]

Remembered

To American school children of the 1920s and 1930s, Cher Ami was as well known as any human World War I heroes. Cher Ami's body was later mounted by a taxidermist and enshrined in the Smithsonian Institution. It is currently on display with that of Sergeant Stubby in the National Museum of American History's "Price of Freedom" exhibit.^[5]

Sex and color

Originally registered as a Black Check cock, Cher Ami was a Blue check, and she was discovered after death upon taxidermy procedure to be a hen. She is still erroneously represented as a cock bird at the National Museum of American History and by many other educational and military history information sources.^{[6][7]}

Popular culture

Books

- *Cher Ami* by Marion Cothren
- *Cher Ami* a poem by Harry Webb Farrington
- *Finding the Lost Battalion - Beyond the rumors, myths and legends of America's famous WWI Epic* by Robert J. Laplander
- *Cher Ami* a short story by Heather Rounds

Film

- *The Lost Battalion*, a 2001 film featuring the story of Charles White Whittlesey's unit during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.
- *Cher Ami... ¡y yo!*, a 2008 film directed by Miquel Pujol and produced by Accio Studios. Also known as *Flying Heroes* or *The Aviators*^[8]
- "Flying Home/ Racing Hearts", 2015 a romantic drama, starring Jamie Dornan features the story of Cher Ami's heroic feat.

Television

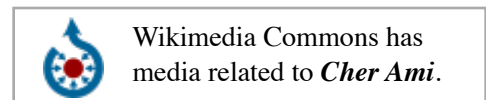
- "White Collar" in Season 3 Episode 11, Cher Ami is mentioned by Caffrey while sending a message by carrier pigeon, referencing the saving of over 200 lives.

References

1. "Cher Ami "Dear Friend" WWI". Flickr. Retrieved 2008-04-26.
2. "The 'Stop It' Telegram". www.lettersofnote.com. Retrieved 2010-05-26.
3. Jim Greelis. "Pigeons in Military History". World of Wings. Retrieved 2007-09-13.
4. National Pigeon Day. "History of Cher Ami". Retrieved 2011-03-31.
5. "Cher Ami - World War I Carrier Pigeon". Smithsonian Institution. Retrieved 2008-11-26.
6. "A History of Army Communications and Electronics at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey 1917 - 2007". Defense Dept., Army, Fort Monmouth Historical Office. Retrieved 2012-11-05.
7. cecom.army.mil. "Cher Ami". Retrieved 2012-11-05.
8. "Cher ami: The Movie". Retrieved 5 July 2013.

External links

- Cher Ami, World War I carrier pigeon - Image (<http://historywired.si.edu/enlarge.cfm?ID=522&ShowEnlargement=1>)
- "Crois de Guerre" medal and message holder - Image (<http://historywired.si.edu/enlarge.cfm?ID=522&ShowEnlargement=2>)
- Lost Battalion Survivors Immediately After the Event - Image (http://prosites-johnrcotter.homestead.com/lost_battalion.html)
- Pet tribute to Cher Ami (<http://www.lostandfond.co.uk/pet-tribute/cher-ami/1025>)
- *Cher Ami* (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1476250/>) at the Internet Movie Database



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Categories: Collection of the Smithsonian Institution

| Recipients of the Croix de guerre 1914–1918 (France) | Individual domesticated pigeons

| Military animals | Military animals of World War I

| World War I military equipment of the United States | 1919 animal deaths

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