

This is the story of Cher Ami- The Patriotic Pigeon

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Cher Ami lived almost 100 years ago during the time of World War 1. Her name means "Dear Friend" in French. She was given to the Americans by British soldiers to be a messenger pigeon during the War.

On October 3, 1918, 500 American troops from the 77th Infantry Division were trapped behind enemy lines without any food or ammunition. They were hiding behind a small hill during the Battle of Argonne in France. The men of this Lost Battalion sent out one messenger pigeon with this message:

MANY WOUNDED. WE CANNOT EVACUATE.

This pigeon was shot down by the enemy and many men were killed and wounded that first day because they did not receive the help that they needed. By the second day only 194 men were left alive. They sent out a second messenger pigeon with this message:

MEN ARE SUFFERING. CAN SUPPORT BE SENT?

Again, this second pigeon was shot down. By now the men were in desperate circumstances. The enemy was closing in on them and they had begun to receive "friendly fire" from Allied Troops who did not know their location. They had one messenger pigeon left, "Cher Ami."

She was sent out with a note in a canister fastened to her leg. The message read:

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.

As soon as Cher Ami rose from the brush, the Germans started firing on her. The men watched anxiously as Cher Ami flew through the air with bullets zipping all around her. Suddenly, Cher Ami was shot down. The men's only hope seemed lost. Then Cher Ami rose into the air again. She flew frantically back to her loft at company headquarters 25 miles away, arriving in just 65 minutes. She delivered her message even though she had been shot in the breast and was blinded in one eye. She was covered in blood and had one leg hanging on by a tendon.

Because Cher Ami successfully delivered her message, the 194 remaining men were rescued and their lives were saved. Meanwhile, Army medics worked to save Cher Ami's life. They were unable to save Cher Ami's leg but they carved a wooden leg for her. When she was well enough to travel, the one-legged bird was put on a boat back to America with the American General John Pershing himself seeing her off.

Once she was back in the United States, Cher Ami was awarded the Croix de Guerre medal for her heroic service in delivering 12 messages during the war. Cher Ami died of her wounds on June 13, 1919 at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Cher Ami is now displayed at the National Museum of American History in the Price of Freedom Exhibit. She is a true American hero for her service during the war.

