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Cher Ami: The Pigeon Who Saved 200 Men

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Pigeons are completely devoted to their families and most have an extraordinary ability to 'home' back to them, a trait we've utilized all over the world for thousands of years. Pigeons relayed the results of the first Olympic Games and the Associated Press used pigeons to rush breaking news dispatches. They are still being used in military conflicts and one of the most amazing stories is that of Cher Ami.

Cher Ami, French for "Dear Friend," was a messenger pigeon who flew for the US Army Signal Corps in France during WWI. Her courage and determination saved the lives of almost 200 soldiers in October, 1918.

The 308th Battalion in the 77th division was trapped in a small depression on the side of a hill behind enemy lines. Taking deadly fire, out of food and water, they attached messages to their carrier pigeons requesting urgent support. The first two pigeons sent were shot down by German forces. They had one pigeon left,

Cher Ami. The Battalion wrote one last message which they attached to Cher Ami, desperately hoping that she would somehow make it through.

Cher Ami was also shot - in her chest by German forces while flying across the battlefields. Persevering, Cher Ami flew the 25 miles to headquarters to deliver the message. When she arrived, she was blind in one eye, covered in blood, with a bullet in the chest, and a leg literally hanging by a thread. The message she delivered saved the lives of 194 men.

Cher Ami was the hero of the 77th division. Medics saved her life but were unable to save her leg. Instead, they fashioned a wooden prosthetic for her to use. When Cher Ami had recovered enough to travel, she was put on a boat to the US, and was personally seen off by General John J. Pershing.

For her hard work and determination, Cher Ami became the mascot of the Department of Service and was awarded the Croix de Guerre medal with an Oak Leaf Cluster for heroic service in delivering 12 important messages.

Cher Ami passed away eight months after the battle as a result of her wounds. She was mounted by a taxidermist and now is displayed proudly in the Smithsonian in the "Price of Freedom" exhibit. *To learn more about pigeon rescue & adopting pigeons, please visit www.PigeonRescue.org.*