

## Stepping the Goose Fantastic

By Doug Hecox, Writer of Wrongs  
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With all the news about our troubles with the Axis of Evil, one thing is clear. Except for the al-Qaeda, the world's villains all have one thing in common – the goosestep. The Nazis used it, the Russians used it and now the North Koreans are using it. For some reason, all the baddies seem bent on stepping the goose fantastic.

Why do such militaries use the goosestep? The true answer is lost in the mists of time but, presumably, it is because the duckwalk never caught on militarily. If it had, Chuck Berry would be the dictator of his own country somewhere. Its national anthem would probably be "Johnny B. Goode" though, in fairness, "My Ding-A-Ling" would be a better choice. Schoolchildren would have an easier time remembering the words to "My Ding-A-Ling" than to a song about some kid they've never met living by the railroad tracks in Louisiana, but I digress.

If you've ever seen professional goose-stepping, it is impressive. Hundreds, if not thousands, of soldiers in military-dress with their legs stiff and their feet slapping at the road as they march. It looks like wave after wave of people in military dress stepping on imaginary bubblewrap, or trying to stamp out an invisible fire. Heaven help Napa Valley if the Italian army ever finds out about goosestepping. By marching through the vineyards of Tuscany each summer, the Italian army could flood the world's wine industry with low-cost chianti that tastes of Florentine leather.



*North Koreans, shown stepping the goose fantastic*

The goosestep has been popularized not only in the military but also in popular culture. For example, the famous "Keep on Truckin'" iron-on – made famous on t-shirts in the 1970s – featured a slouching man in the act of goose-stepping. He was wearing bell-bottoms instead of military britches, but that's just stage dressing. The shirt urged America's thousands of slothful teens to become goose-stepping Nazis. According to some, that is – and, by some, I mean me.

In "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius," author and professional pessimist George Orwell said goose-stepping was meant to intimidate the enemy. According to him, it sends a subliminal message of a boot crushing the face of

anyone who watches it. Dark, depressing comments like this are part of the reason Orwell was no fun at parties.

Similarly, Norman Davies, author of "Europe: A History," wrote that the Prussian army in the 17th century – thought to be the inventors of the goosestep – used the distinctive march to show enemies that their army "would withstand all orders, no matter how painful or ludicrous."

No one is entirely sure how the name "goosestep" came about. Growing up in Wyoming, I haven't seen many geese stepping and even fewer who step like fascists. Most geese sort of shuffle along, angrily flapping their wings, hoping to get into the water where they are more comfortable. It might be fine for a navy but any army walking like geese *actually* walk would immediately be overpowered by a more impressive one – like Chuck Berry's duckwalking Johnnies B. Goode, and especially so in areas that are landlocked.



*A goose, shown North  
Koreasteping*

Some think the term "goose-stepping" refers to walking without bending the knee, since geese don't have knees. Military genius Hannibal, in crossing the Alps centuries ago with elephants, became the first leader to adopt the "Elephant Walk." However, because elephants' knees are on the back of their legs, his troops ended up marching in the wrong direction and only after turning around to march home did Hannibal find himself and his army of elephants crossing the Rubicon into downtown Rome. To date, his was the only attempt at incorporating the Elephant Walk into military strategy.

I'm no podiatrist but goose-stepping can't be good for the feet. If the North Koreans are to be beaten, all our soldiers may have to do is run after them for a while. utrun them, since speed is hard to maintain while goose-stepping. Soon, their North Korean arches would collapse – and nothing good happens to nations with fallen arches. Look at Rome. It is replete with fallen arches and, by all accounts, its civilization fell apart decades ago. Can Pyongyang be far behind?

Given the many weaknesses associated with goose-stepping, it is probably best not to bring it up in case you bump into a North Korean at the store. Once they find out goose-stepping is their Achilles heel, the North Koreans may find another, less harmful way to march – and the more advantages we have over them, the better.

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