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Cowher Story

My Baptism of Fire

After three days with my new Infantry company, we received orders to pack up and prepare for a move. All the old timers were saying well fellows this is it. I didnt know exactly what to expect but I was beginning to feel the strain of knowing that it wont be long before Ill be face to face with the enemy.

Just as it was getting dark, we make a long mounted march to the vicinity of Colmar. I heard that a major attack was in progress to clean the enemy out on this side of the Rhine. We arrived at our assemble area early in the morning, Eat a cold K ration and soon afterwards we were told to prepare for an attack. Then I realized that Ill be in the same boat that the doughboys till now were ~~in~~ so noted for, to flush out the enemy. From the town to our right I could hear the rattling of fife and machine gun fire. I was thinking to myself some GI must be wounded. I was now preparing for the greatest experience of my life. All of us filled up our canteens with water, not mainly for the purpose of having drinking water but we knew that we would have to drink a quart of water in case of being wounded. Then I fully loaded my belt with ammunition and hand grenages, and adjusted my shoulder straps so it fit comfortable, and snug. The platoon gathered around to hear the platoon leader give us the plan for attack. The first platoon is to do a flanking movement around the right side of town, the second platoon which I was a member of to go directly on the main road leading into and through the center of town, while the third platoon was to flank to the left of the town. First an artillery barrage was going to soften up the town, and give us protection as we followed up the pattern of the barrage. Each platoon has three rifle squards, one machine gun and mortar sward. Tanks were suppose to give us support.

Next thing I knew we were lined up along the sides of the road keeping at least five yard interval so that the least number of men would be disabled from one enemy mortar or artillery shell. The order was given to move out, and I said, this is it. Slowly our feet moved forward, keeping our interval and observing to our right and left. After five hundred or so yards each platoon was now on their own, and immediately afterwards I heard our artillery landings short and into the town. Medics Medics was the yell coming from the first platoon as our own short artillery rounds landed upon the leading elements. Gosh I muttered to myself, its terrible being wounded or killed by the enemy but no, not by our own artillery. We kept closing into the town until the leading scout was about two hundred yards from the first houses. Ive been told that once the outskirts of the town was secured the rest would be comparatively easy cause the the enemy builds his defense at the outer houses. Past the word back for the tanks to move forward and then I heard a roaring noise, glanced up to see monster looking machine past me as I laid in the edge of a ditch on the shoulder of the road. We rose to our feet, as the tank fired at the church steaple which makes an excellent observation post. Lets go was the yell, we double timed, destination the first house., but before we barely moved forward, crack, crack enemy rifle and burp gun fire went wizzling by us. Simultaneously we all hit the ground and attempted to bury ourselves deeper in the ground. If their wasnt anything that I learned during my infantry, the one thing that I remembered was to find the slightest grove in the ground which was better than the flat terran. Instantly I surveyed for a better position, dashed over to the tank tracks and fell

HIT THE GROUND