

Sixty Days in Combat: An Infantryman's Memoir of World War II in Europe

By Dean Joy

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"The infantryman's war is . . . without the slightest doubt the dirtiest, roughest job of them all."

He went in as a military history buff, a virgin, and a teetotaler. He came out with a war bride, a taste for German beer, and intimate knowledge of one of the darkest parts of history. His name is Dean Joy, and this was his war.

For two months in 1945, Joy endured and survived the everyday deprivations and dangers of being a frontline infantryman. His amazingly detailed memoir, self-illustrated with numerous scenes Joy remembers from his time in Europe, brings back the sights, sounds, and smells of the experience as few books ever have. Here is the story of a young man who dreamed of flying fighter aircraft and instead was chosen to be cannon fodder in France and Germany . . . who witnessed the brutality of Nazis killing Allied medics by using the cross on their helmets as targets . . . and who narrowly escaped being wounded or killed in several "near miss" episodes, the last of which occurred on his last day of combat.

Sixty Days in Combat re-creates all the drama of the "dogface's" fight, a time that changed one young man in a war that changed the world.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
When author Joy joined the army in 1943, he hoped to avoid "the dreaded infantry—in his mind the dirtiest, least glamorous military service imaginable," and instead win the glorious mission of flying P-51 Mustang fighter aircraft. But like so many other young men, he ended up on solid ground, as a mortarman in the 71st Infantry Division. This modest and clear account follows his reluctant entry to the war, his stateside service and thrilling but brief 60 days of combat in the European Theater. After conversion from a "Light" to a regular division, the 71st joined Patton’s Third Army and carved a frontline across Europe from March 1945 to V-E Day. Joy provides a vivid account of the unsung mortarmen, operators of the infantry’s pocket artillery, and details their 60-mm short range, muzzle-loading cannons—able weapons for inflicting harm on friend or foe. In the field, he also encountered the famous all African-American 761st Tank Battalion and eccentric characters such as the macho Wilson, who rammed his bare fist through a window to impress his comrades, and a full-blooded Cherokee Indian, Willie Burns, who, in a champagne rage, nearly shot a German boy to avenge his company’s heavy casualties. The author’s 50 pencil sketches add immediacy and drama even if they lack sophistication or technical detail. Altogether, this personal history enriches the memory of the WWII infantryman—the average man, or boy, who did his duty and came home to tell about it.
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From Booklist
Joy's memoir, with sketches by the author, is an original contribution to the literature of World War II remembrance. He soldiered in the U.S. Army's 71st Infantry Division, which fought from Alsace through Bavaria to Austria. Following preliminaries about his relegation to the infantry, the author settles into his account of war, fixing upon the reader the role chance played in determining who got hit and who didn't. Joy was in a mortar squad that, from a blasted French town in March 1945, fired its first combat rounds. Joy's drawings, himself identifiable in curly hair and glasses, of that and numerous ensuing small-unit battles (in the course of which he was promoted to lead a rifle platoon) are a powerful asset to his text. Remarkably free of irony, image and word record Joy's discomforts, the capriciousness of bullet and shell, an atrocity he witnessed, and sundry surprises such as bumping into the divisional general while under fire. Joy will score big with WWII readers, reminding them of the infantryman's frightening, lonely lot. *Gilbert Taylor*
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From the Inside Flap
""The infantryman's war is . . . without the slightest doubt the dirtiest, roughest job of them all."
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jean McFerren:

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Michael Collins:

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Gloria Todd:

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