



The Carentan Causeway

Arve Robert Pisani

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Normandy 1944

In the early days of the Normandy Campaign, the link up of the Omaha and Utah beachheads, along with the capture of Carentan, was essential. The main obstacle to an attack on Carentan was the swamped lowland of the Douve Valley.

At about 2100 on June 9th, Lieutenant Colonel Robert G. Cole, a 1939 graduate of West Point, received the order to lead the attack toward Carentan across the swamped area on an exposed causeway with four bridges. The 29 year old battalion commander was a large, rugged officer both feared and loved by his men. If anyone could lead men in such a dangerous mission it was Lieutenant Colonel Cole.

The causeway over which the 502nd Parachute Regiment was to attack was banked six to nine feet above the marshlands and crossed four bridges. The complete exposure of the causeway threatened the approach of Cole's men the most. Running straight as a die and standing boldly above the marsh, it was a high-perfect target to the enemy from three directions.

Snipers hiding in reeds on either side, artillery firing for the entire length of the causeway, automatic guns being disposed along the crests and hedgerows 20 feet above the level of the causeway...

This was the battleground Lieutenant Colonel Robert G. Cole was to meet.

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