

# Henry S. Fuller



Henry S. Fuller was born in Akron, Ohio on September 14, 1922, the youngest of ten children. His mother died when he was only four years old and Henry spent much of his childhood in the Summit County Children's Home.

As a young man, he worked at the Phillips Paper Bag Factory in downtown Akron. It was there that he worked with a woman named Zota Mitchell. She was the mother of a young woman whom he later wrote to when he was stationed overseas.

Fuller's brother, Robert, was a pilot and that is what Fuller thought he wanted to do in the service but they were not taking any new recruits, so he opted for being a paratrooper instead. His date of entry into the military was February 5, 1942 at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana. He attended Parachute School in Fort Benning, Georgia and received his "Parachute Badge" in 1942 and his Combat Infantry Badge in 1944. He was a member of Company E, 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division.

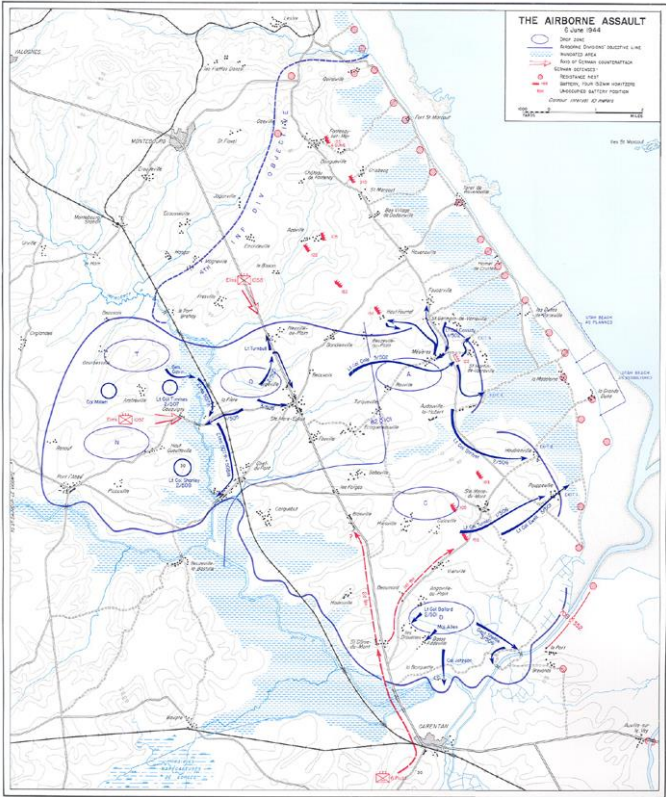
Fuller left for England in September of 1943 and arrived there in October. After extensive training in England, Fuller, along with 791 men in his Regiment, flew out of Greenham Common Airfield on the evening of June 5, 1944. They were headed for the coast of France to participate in the allied invasion of France at Normandy. As part of the preparation for this jump, they had been confined to their “tent city” assembly area for the past few days as part of the security blackout prior to the invasion. Their faces had been blackened to “blend in with the darkness and prevent reflection from the moon” according the Wallace C. Strobel, the young Lieutenant who was in charge of Company E.

As the men stood there waiting for their orders to leave for their aircraft, word was passed that “Eisenhower is in the area”. As he came toward a group of men, he stopped and looked at Lt. Stobel and asked him his name and where he was from. The encounter turned out to be one of the most famous photos taken during World War II and included PFC Henry Fuller. Many years after the war Fuller said that he didn’t remember seeing or hearing Eisenhower that evening but he did remember a pretty woman standing near the General’s car. He assumed that she was Eisenhower’s driver Kay Summersby.



Men from company E of 2/502nd PIR (101st US Airborne Division) surround General Eisenhower who addresses Lieutenant Wallace C. Strobel of this unit. Left on the right around the General Eisenhower Pfc. W. Boyle, Cpl. Hans Sannes, Pfc. Edwin S. Persons, Pfc. Ralph Pombano, Sgt. Delbert Williams, Pvt. Schuyler W. Jackson, Cpl. William E. Hayes, Pfc. Carl Vickers, 1st Lt. Strobel, Pfc. Henry Fuller, Pfc. Michael Babich, and Pfc. W. Noll. At the evening of June 5, 1944.

Flying out of Membury and Greenham Common in the first wave to depart, the 502<sup>nd</sup> PIR headed for Drop Zone (DZ) Alpha. Their mission was to secure two northern causeways leading inland from Utah Beach and to destroy a German Coast Artillery (122 mm Howitzer) Battery. In the pre-dawn hours of “D-Day” (June 6, 1944), a combination of low clouds and enemy anti-aircraft fire caused the break-up of the troop carrier formations. The scattering of the air armada was such that some troopers jumped while still over the English Channel and drown. Consequently, the sporadic jump patterns caused most of the 502<sup>nd</sup>'s Battalions to land far from their primary objectives – some as far as 5-miles from the designated area.



Fuller survived battles, not only in Normandy, but the Rhineland, Ardennes and Central Europe. He was wounded in Belgium on January 17, 1945. The deadly Battle of the Bulge, fought around the town of Bastogne in Belgium would end eight days later on January 25, 1945.

Fuller's total length of service was one year, seven months and eight days of training and serving in the United States Army which included two years of service overseas.

Fuller was honorably discharged on September 22, 1945 and returned to Akron. On New Year's Eve of that year, he married Arline Mitchell, the young woman whose mother he had worked for with before the war. They had three children: Sandra, Ronald and Timothy.

Fuller worked as a letter carrier for the United States Post Office for over thirty years. He passed away on Sunday, March 23, 2003 in Wadsworth, Ohio at the age of 80.