



**Newsletter Issue 58, January 2023**

***Hollywood inspiration in the Big Red One***



Samuel M. Fuller was a famous and prolific Hollywood director, screenwriter, novelist, journalist, and actor. Born in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1912, he moved to New York City upon the death of his father when he was eleven years old. He worked as a newspaper copyboy, crime reporter, and novelist before the war. He enlisted in the Army and served in the 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the First Infantry Division. He was with the Big Red One for some of the heaviest fighting of the war, landing in North Africa, Sicily, and Normandy. He fought with them across France, Belgium, Germany, and into the Czech Republic. He rose to the rank of Corporal and was awarded both the Silver Star and Bronze Star. On May 6, 1945, the 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment liberated the concentration camp at Falkenau (German) or Sokolov (Czech) in what is now the Czech Republic. Fuller filmed the liberation and his 16mm footage was later released in the French documentary *Falkenau: The Impossible*. He clearly used his wartime experiences in his later films, including especially *The Big Red One*. He even co-authored a history of the 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. Today his name appears on a monument at the site of the Falkenau concentration camp, honoring the 2000+ prisoners who perished there and Fuller for his filming of the liberation.

**American Dead in the El Salvador Civil War**

El Salvador suffered a brutal civil war from 1979 until 1992 between its government and the FMLN, a grouping of left-wing guerilla organizations. The US provided \$4.5 billion in aid as well as military training and support of the Salvadoran armed forces. Today there are two memorials on the grounds of the US Embassy in San Salvador which honor Americans killed in the conflict. There are 29 names on one monument and 22 on the other, although some names are on both. The list is sobering. It includes many soldiers and Marines, but also journalists, a middle school teacher, nuns, businessmen, a police advisor, and embassy workers. They were killed in helicopter crashes, a helicopter shoot down, terrorist actions and assassinations. See our website to read their tragic stories.



**How does this happen?**

On January 15, 1945 1LT William W. Patton took off from Wormingford in the UK on a scouting mission over Germany in his fighter aircraft. He lost contact with his flight leader in the fog and was never seen or heard from again. On February 22, 2001, fifty-six years later, a French farmer was digging a drainage ditch near a train station in La Longueville, when he discovered a P-51 Mustang. Upon excavation, the body of a WWII pilot wearing dog tags of Wm. W. Patton was found. A DNA analysis was performed and the body, formally identified, returned to the family. It seems incredible that an airplane and pilot can disappear for over 50 years in a populated country. The US is the only country that still spends considerable resources researching all of our missing. Today LT Patton is honored on a monument in the town where his remains were found.



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