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Peel History FISHER, Jim

# Paratrooper was in France hours before main invasion began

It was a short drop in the darkness. Scottish paratrooper Jim Fisher landed in a field just outside Lebois de Ranville in France. It was 30 minutes after midnight on D-Day.

"You could hear rifles and machine guns in the distance," says Fisher, 72, a retired oil company employee who lives in Mississauga.

Fisher, then 22, had flown to France in a four-engine Stirling airplane with about 25 other paratroopers, who were sent in advance of Allied British and Canadian troops on the beaches.

Although he had done seven practice jumps before, it was his first in action and he felt tense and nervous at what might lie ahead.

Fisher, a father of three and grandfather of five, says he and the others were each equipped with a parachute, light machine gun,



revolver, dozens of rounds of ammunition, grenades, explosives and a compass. Fisher also carried radio equipment because his task was to set up communications.

Once on the ground the men from the British Army's 6th Airborne division quietly gathered and quickly headed to their assignments. Some of the men captured three bridges over the Orne River and canal to prevent German reinforcements from getting down to the nearby "Sword" and "Gold" beaches by Ouistreham, says Fisher, who was an army corporal.

Fisher went with about 14 paratroopers to a French mansion called Chateau de Ranville where they were greeted by paratroopers who had arrived earlier and captured several Germans in the dwelling.

The mansion was quickly converted to division headquarters. While Fisher helped set up a signal station in a barn on the property, others dug slit trenches outside the buildings to protect against any shell or mortar attacks from the enemy.

"About 6 a.m. we could see aircraft diving down and attacking the beach area," Fisher says. "We couldn't see what was happening. We just saw the aircraft and as the troops came to shore the noise of the battle increased significantly."

Fisher says he believes the first troops reached the beach about 6.30 a.m.

Although Allied soldiers who

invaded the beaches were to have reached the chateau on D-Day, he says only one or two British commandos made it. By the third day, large numbers of troops were pass-

ing through.  
Fisher says his war experiences quickly matured him.  
"I consider it a part of my life I would never want to repeat."

FISHER, Jim Peel Biography Book June 5th, 1994 MN