

Ed Freeman

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November 20, 1927 – August 20, 2008 (aged 80)



Ed Freeman (left) is congratulated by President George W. Bush after receiving his award.

Nickname	Too Tall
Place of birth	Neely, Mississippi
Place of death	Boise, Idaho
Resting place	Idaho State Veterans Cemetery, Boise, Idaho
Allegiance	United States of America
Service/branch	United States Navy United States Army
Years of service	1944 - 1946 (Navy) 1946 - 1967 (Army) ^[1]
Rank	Major
Unit	229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)
Battles/wars	World War II Korean War <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Battle of Pork Chop Hill Vietnam War <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Battle of Ia Drang
Awards	Medal of Honor

Ed W. "Too Tall" Freeman (November 20, 1927 - August 20, 2008) was a [United States Army](#) helicopter pilot who received the U.S. military's highest decoration, the [Medal of Honor](#), for his actions in the [Battle of Ia Drang](#) during the [Vietnam War](#). During the battle, he flew through gunfire numerous times, bringing supplies to a trapped American battalion and flying dozens of wounded soldiers to safety. Freeman was a wing-man for Major [Bruce Crandall](#) who also received the Medal of Honor for the same missions.

Early life

Freeman was born in Neely, [Greene County, Mississippi](#), the sixth of nine children.^[2] When he was 13 years old, he saw thousands of men on maneuvers pass by his home in Mississippi. He knew then that he would become a soldier.^[3]

He grew up in nearby [McLain](#)^[4] and graduated from Washington High School.^[2] At age 17, before graduating from high school, Ed enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served, during World War II, on the [USS Cacapon \(AO-52\)](#) for two years. Once the war was over, he returned to his hometown and graduated high school. Immediately afterwards, he joined the Army. On April 30, 1954, he married Barbara Morgan. They had two sons, Mike, born in 1956 and Doug, born in 1962.

Military service

Beyond his service in the Navy in [World War II](#),^[4] he reached the Army rank of [first sergeant](#) by the time of the [Korean War](#). Although he was in the [Corps of Engineers](#), he fought as an infantry soldier in Korea. He participated in the [Battle of Pork Chop Hill](#) and earned a [battlefield commission](#) as one of only 14 survivors out of 257 men who made it through the opening stages of the battle. His [second lieutenant](#) bars were pinned on by General [James Van Fleet](#) personally. He then assumed command of B Company and led them back up Pork Chop Hill.

The commission made him eligible to become a pilot, a childhood dream of his. However, when he applied for pilot training he was told that, at six feet four inches, he was "too tall" for pilot duty. The phrase stuck, and he was known by the nickname of "Too Tall" for the rest of his career.^[5]

In 1955, the height limit for pilots was raised and Freeman was accepted into flying school. He first flew fixed-wing Army airplanes before switching to helicopters. After the Korean War, he flew the world on mapping missions. By the time he was sent to Vietnam in

1965, he was an experienced helicopter pilot and was placed second-in-command of his sixteen-craft unit.^[5] He served as a [captain](#) in Company A, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, [1st Cavalry Division \(Airmobile\)](#).^[6]

Vietnam service

On November 14, 1965, Freeman and his unit transported a battalion of American soldiers to the [Ia Drang Valley](#). Later, after arriving back at base, they learned that the soldiers had come under intense fire and had taken heavy casualties. Enemy fire around the landing zones was so heavy that the medical evacuation helicopters refused to fly in to the landing zone. Freeman and his commander, Major [Bruce Crandall](#), volunteered to fly their unarmed, lightly armored [UH-1 Huey](#) in support of the embattled troops. Freeman made a total of fourteen trips to the battlefield, bringing in water and ammunition and taking out wounded soldiers under heavy enemy fire in what was later named the [Battle of Ia Drang](#). By the time they landed their heavily damaged Huey, Captain Freeman had been wounded four times by ground fire.^[5]

Retirement

Freeman was subsequently promoted to the rank of [Major](#), designated as a Master Army Aviator, and was sent home from Vietnam in 1966. He retired from the military the next year.^[5] Freeman and his family settled in the [Treasure Valley](#) area of [Idaho](#), his wife Barbara's home state,^[4] and continued to work as a pilot. He flew helicopters for another 20 years, fighting wildfires, conducting animal censuses, and herding wild horses for the [Department of the Interior](#).^[5] until his second retirement in 1991.^[2] By then, he had 17,000 flight hours in helicopters and 8,000 in fixed-wing aircraft.

Medal of Honor nomination

Main article: [Battle of Ia Drang](#)

Freeman's commanding officer nominated him for the Medal of Honor for his actions at Ia Drang, but not in time to meet a two-year deadline then in place.^[5] He was instead awarded the [Distinguished Flying Cross](#).^[2] The Medal of Honor nomination was disregarded until 1995, when the two-year deadline was removed. He was formally presented with the medal on July 16, 2001, in the [East Room](#) of the White House by President [George W. Bush](#).^[5]

Medal of Honor citation



Army version of the Medal of Honor

Freeman's official Medal of Honor citation reads:

















“ Captain Ed W. Freeman, United States Army, distinguished himself by numerous acts of conspicuous gallantry and extraordinary intrepidity on 14 November 1965 while serving with Company A, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). As a flight leader and second in command of a 16-helicopter lift unit, he supported a heavily engaged American infantry battalion at Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley, Republic of Vietnam. The unit was almost out of ammunition after taking some of the heaviest casualties of the war, fighting off a relentless attack from a highly motivated, heavily armed enemy force. When the infantry commander closed the helicopter landing zone due to intense direct enemy fire, Captain Freeman risked his own life by flying his unarmed helicopter through a gauntlet of enemy fire time after time, delivering critically needed ammunition, water and medical supplies to the besieged battalion. His flights had a direct impact on the battle's outcome by providing the engaged units with timely supplies of ammunition critical to their survival, without which they would almost surely have gone down, with much greater loss of life. After medical evacuation helicopters refused to fly into the area due to intense enemy fire, Captain Freeman flew 14 separate rescue missions, providing life-saving evacuation of an estimated 30 seriously wounded soldiers -- some of whom would not have survived had he not acted. All flights were made into a small emergency landing zone within 100 to 200 meters of the defensive perimeter where heavily committed units were perilously holding off the attacking elements. Captain Freeman's selfless acts of great valor, extraordinary perseverance and intrepidity were far above and beyond the call of duty or mission and set a superb example of leadership and courage for all of his peers. Captain Freeman's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.^[6] ”

Military awards

His awards include:



[Master Army Aviator Badge](#)

-  [Medal of Honor](#)
-  [Distinguished Flying Cross](#)
-  [Bronze Star](#) with [Combat "V"](#)
-  [Purple Heart](#)
-  [Air Medal](#) with three silver [oak leaf clusters](#) and one bronze [oak leaf cluster](#)
-  [Army Commendation Medal](#)
-  [Army Good Conduct Medal](#)
-  [American Area Campaign Medal](#)
-  [Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal](#)
-  [World War II Victory Medal](#)
-  [Army of Occupation Medal](#)
-  [National Defense Service Medal](#) with one bronze [oak leaf cluster](#)
-  [Korean Service Medal](#) with three bronze [service stars](#)
-  [Vietnam Service Medal](#) with two bronze [service stars](#)
-  [Armed Forces Reserve Medal](#)
-  [Vietnam Campaign Medal](#)

Death and legacy

Freeman died on August 20, 2008 due to complications from [Parkinson's disease](#).^[2] He was buried with full military honors at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in [Boise](#).^[4]

In the 2002 film *[We Were Soldiers](#)*, which depicted the [Battle of Ia Drang](#), Freeman was portrayed by [Mark McCracken](#).^[2] The post office in Freeman's hometown of [McLain, Mississippi](#), was renamed the "Major Ed W. Freeman Post Office" in March 2009.^[4]

See also



[Biography portal](#)




[United States Army portal](#)

- [List of Medal of Honor recipients for the Vietnam War](#)

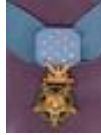
References

1. [^] ["Ed Freeman Obituary: Ed Freeman's Obituary by the Idaho Statesman"](#). Idaho Statesman. August 22, 2008. <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/idahostatesman/obituary.aspx?n=ed-w-freeman&pid=116135560>. Retrieved 15 April 2010.
2. [^] ^a ^b ^c ^d ^e ^f Bonner, Jessie L. (August 20, 2008). "Medal of Honor veteran dies in Idaho". *The Seattle Times*. http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2008127946_apidobitfreeman1stldwritethru.html. Retrieved 2009-03-19.
3. [^] ["President Presents Medal of Honor to Captain Ed W. Freeman"](#). WhiteHouse.gov. July 2001. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/07/20010716-1.html>. Retrieved 15 April 2010.
4. [^] ^a ^b ^c ^d ^e ["Congress names post office for valley Medal of Honor recipient"](#). *The Idaho Press-Tribune*. March 18, 2009. <http://www.idahopress.com/news/?id=21399>. Retrieved 2009-03-19.
5. [^] ^a ^b ^c ^d ^e ^f ^g ["Medal of Honor: Ed W. Freeman"](#). *The Daily Nightly*. July 11, 2007. <http://dailynightly.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2007/07/11/265756.aspx>. Retrieved 2009-03-19.
6. [^] ^a ^b ["Medal of Honor recipients - Vietnam \(A-L\)"](#). [United States Army Center of Military History](#). January 27, 2009. <http://www.history.army.mil/html/moh/vietnam-a-l.html>. Retrieved 2009-03-19.

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External links

- ["Ed W. Freeman"](#). *Claim to Fame: Medal of Honor recipients*. [Find a Grave](#). <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29186886>. Retrieved September 2, 2010.



Captain Ed Freeman - November 14, 1965

A Company, 229th Aviation Battalion



Captain Ed Freeman served as Second-in-command of A Company, 229th Aviation Battalion in 1965-66. On November 14, 1965, he flew in support of LTC Hal Moore and the 1/7th Cavalry fighting against three battalions of NVA at LZ X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley. Captain Freeman flew 14 missions into the face of enemy fire over the course of the first day to deliver much needed ammo and water, and to evacuate wounded soldiers. He was eventually awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions at LZ X-Ray on July 16, 2001.

Captain Freeman's Huey displayed the 229th crest on the nose, the A Company blue triangle on the pilots' doors, and a small 1st Cavalry Division emblem on the rear of the tail boom. The 229th's aircraft had "high visibility" markings (yellow and red vertical stripes on the fuselage) at LZ X-Ray. A photo of Captain Freeman's aircraft taken at LZ X-Ray by Joe Galloway shows that there was no M60 gun mount, nor a free-hanging M60 being used on his ship. The cargo bay doors were removed from the aircraft. His ship also sported an antenna strung along the tailboom. There was a small white or yellow placard on the frame post just behind the pilot's door with the number "2" in black. This signified the "second" ship in the combat assault mission. The canvas seat coverings in early Hueys were red in color. Mr. Freeman doesn't remember the a/c number of the ship he flew on the first morning of the battle. Andy Spencer has researched a/c numbers of early 229th Hueys. In 1965 A Company flew 1963 and 1964 manufactured Hueys with a/c numbers that fell in the ranges of 63-08xxx and 64-13xxx. The majority of A Troop's Hueys were built in 1963. Because Ed Freeman flew a Huey with the nose number of "775" on occasion, I've illustrated his ship as 63-08775.

<http://vietnam-hueys.tripod.com/Medal%20of%20Honor%20page.htm>



Winged Assault 229th emblem - Captain Freeman's nose art

You're a 19 year old kid.

You're critically wounded and dying in the jungle somewhere in the Central Highlands of Viet Nam.

It's November 11, 1967.

Your unit is outnumbered 8-1 and the enemy's fire is so intense from 100 yards away, that your commanding officer has ordered the Med-Evac helicopters to stop coming in.

You're lying there, listening to the enemy machine guns and you know you're not getting out.

Your family is half way around the world, 12,000 miles away, and you'll never see them again.

As the world starts to fade in and out, you know this is the day.

Then, over the machine gun noise, you faintly hear the sound of a helicopter.

You look up to see a Huey coming in. But, it doesn't seem real because no Med-Evac markings are on it.

Capt. Ed Freeman is coming in for you.

He's not Med-Evac so it's not his job. But he heard the radio call and decided he's flying his Huey down into the machine gun fire anyway.

Even after the Med-Evac's were ordered not to come, he's coming anyway.

He drops it in and sits there in the machine gun fire, as they load 3 of you at a time on board.

Then he flies you up and out through the gunfire to the doctors and nurses and to safety. And, *he kept coming back!!* 13 more times!!..until all of the wounded were out. No one knew until the mission was over that the Captain had been hit 4 times in the legs and left arm. He took 29 of you and your buddies out that day. Some would not have made it without the Captain and his Huey.

Medal of Honor Recipient, Captain Ed Freeman, United States Army, died Wednesday, August 20, 2008, at the age of 80, in Boise, Idaho.

May God Bless and Rest His Soul.

You probably did not hear about this hero's passing, but we've sure seen a whole bunch about Lindsay Lohan, the Super Bowl, and the bickering of Congress over Health Reform.

Medal of Honor Winner

Captain Ed Freeman

Shame on the American media !!!

Remember and Honor

This real American Hero