



# PASS IN REVIEW

“Shedding Light On Idaho’s Military History”

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

June 2002

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

It was with deep regret that the Board accepted the resignation of Robert Benbough as its Executive Director. We are very sorry to lose him but under his guidance, the Museum has made a great deal of progress.

As a result of his resignation, we will begin accepting applications for a new Executive Director. We wanted to give you, our membership, the first opportunity to apply for the position.

If you are interested in the position, please send a resume or letter of interest to me, in care of the IMHS, at 4040 W. Guard St., Boise, ID 83705 by **1 July 2002**.

Bob will be available to help the new director learn the job for the first two weeks of July so time is of the essence.

In addition to the new Executive Director position, we are also looking for volunteers for a number of projects. I know you have seen this request made repeatedly in the newsletters but our need is very real. We have projects large and small that we need your help with. Any time that you have available; we have a project you can help us with. - *Dawana Edwards*

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This will be my last article written to you as your Executive Director. Effective in July, I will be resigning from the position I’ve held since August of 1996. I do believe that the Idaho Military Historical Society has come a long way in the last eight years

since we incorporated and the Museum continues to draw many favorable comments.

Donations continue to come in and there are many items waiting to be catalogued and put on exhibit. Unfortunately, we have a shortage of volunteers to process them and develop exhibits from the material.

The Distinctive Unit Insignia display I mentioned in the March issue of *Pass In Review* has been completed and is up for public viewing. We continue our upgrading of the military aircraft model and U.S. military firearms exhibits and on a happy note, we held a fund raising breakfast recently and made a couple hundred dollars.

We have been invited to the Twin Falls bi-annual air show on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June. We are looking for folks interested in helping run a booth. This will be an excellent way to let others know about our organization and Museum as well as help replenish our coppers with some gift shop sales. Give us a call if you can help!

We will also be sponsoring another breakfast on July 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. Please give us a call at the Museum, 422-4841 and tell us which day you are able to help cover.

I have truly enjoyed my tenure as Executive Director but feel that it is time for someone else to take over the responsibility and hopefully provide

some new ideas on how to keep the Society and Museum growing in the right direction.

Thanks to all the volunteers who have made our organization and Museum, what they are today. - *Bob Benbough*

## IDAHO HISTORY DAY WINNERS

Idaho History Day 2002 was April 12th. The theme this year – “*Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History*”. This year there were many more entries than ‘usual’, 30 in the Military History Category alone. The judges had quite a challenge on their hands. After careful consideration and deliberation we are pleased to announce their decision.

...And The Winners Are....



1st Place - \$100 Scholarship. **Ian Marshall** of Canyon Elementary/Cataldo. His project was titled, *Pearl Harbor: An American*



*Revolution, Reaction and Reform*. Ian's project was a documentary; we are working on obtaining a copy for viewing at the Museum.

2nd Place - \$50 Scholarship. **David Phenis** of Lowell Scott MS. His project was titled,



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*The Atomic Bomb: A Revolution in Warfare or the End of the World.* David's project was also a documentary and a copy is now available for viewing at the Museum.



**3rd Place - \$25 Scholarship.**  
Chelsey Parkin of Burley JH. Her project was titled, *German POW Camp/Camp*

*Rupert.* Chelsey's project is on display at the Museum. {Camp Rupert will be a subject in a future edition of *Pass In Review.*}

In addition to their Scholarships, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place winners were given a one year Honorary Membership in the Society.

The judges also chose two **HONORABLE MENTIONS:**



**Spenser Rikhoff & Eric Clausen** of Lowell Scott MS. Their project was titled, *The Gatling*

*Gun.* Their project was a documentary; we are working on obtaining a copy for viewing at the Museum.



**Dan Royle** of Lowell Scott MS. His project is titled, *Navajo Code Talkers.* Dan's project is on display

at the Museum.

{If you have seen or are contemplating seeing the movie *Windtalkers*, stop by and see this exhibit! He has photos of some of the *actual Code Talkers.*}

Spenser, Eric and Dan were presented with Certificates of Achievement in addition to the recognition they received at the Idaho History Day Event.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL; GREAT WORK!!!**

And thank you to the IMHS judges as well. ☆

**VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER**



Please meet Kay Benbough (on right)

Kay began volunteering in the Museum in 1996 and joined the IMHS in 1998. She took over the duties of Librarian when the library moved to the Museum's annex in Bldg 302, and handled the ENORMOUS task of setting up and re-organizing the library when the Museum moved to Bldg 924.

Kay also helps out wherever she can both at the Museum and at fundraising events. She can be found doing everything from answering the phone at the Museum, to serving at one of our fundraising breakfasts, to helping run a gift shop booth at a public event.

As you may have guessed by her last name, she is married to our own Bob Benbough. When she isn't at the Museum, Kay is running her Massage Therapy business in Mountain Home, gardening, or painting a watercolor.

Kay can be found at the Museum on Mondays. Stop by and say hello; she'll be glad to show you how you can become a *librarian's assistant.* ☆

**NEW MEMBERS**

*Special Welcome to:*

- ★ Karlyn Brown
- ★ Thomas E. Gilbertz
- ★ Ian Marshall
- ★ David Phenis
- ★ Chelsey Parkin

**MOST WANTED**

**Viet Nam Artifacts.** We would like to build an exhibit commemorating the Viet Nam Conflict but our artifacts are limited. If you are looking for a home for your Viet Nam memorabilia, we can help. ☆

**MUSEUM HOSTS WWII 10<sup>TH</sup> MTN. DIVISION VETERAN**

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002, the Idaho Military



History Museum hosted **Wally Sterling**, a veteran of the **10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.**

Over 50 people, approximately 28 of who were Civil Air Patrol Cadets, heard his remarkable story.

At the start of World War II, neither the US, Great Britain, nor the Soviet Union, had any troops with specialized mountain training. Germany and Italy however, both had divisions of what they termed Alpine troops.



The US decided it must produce at least one division of mountain soldiers trained to fight in sub zero weather, in rugged mountain terrain, and at extremely high altitudes. The National Ski Patrol volunteered to recruit men who were capable of this type of training. They figured that *it would be easier to take a trained skier and make him into a soldier than it would be to take a soldier and turn him into a skier.*

The Nat'l Ski Patrol contacted the colleges throughout the northern states looking for experienced skiers, down hill racers, winter sports instructors, mountain climbers, and the like, who were outdoor oriented and could handle the rigorous training. By the winter of 1944, the division was nearly full strength and composed almost entirely of volunteers.

They met their first test when the 87<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team (RCT) was sent to clear the Japanese out of the Aleutian Islands and in February, 1945, they took on several divisions of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's crack

**IDAHO FILE INTO HISTORY**

german troops in the mountains of Italy. At the battle of Mt. Belvedere, several assaults made by General Mark Clark's 5th Army had failed. The 10<sup>th</sup> Mtn. Division attacked at night, scaling the sheer walls of Riva Ridge using climbing rope and steel pitons. The Germans, never expecting an assault from the rear, and at night, were completely surprised.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Mtn. Division participated in 3 major campaigns and in 9 major battles. They successfully completed every mission that was assigned to them and they earned more decorations than any other division in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations. They also paid a heavy price; 1,000 men killed and 4,500 wounded. This represents a casualty rate of over 50%.



**Wally's medals and ribbons**

Wally Sterling, a long time Boise resident, was a member of the 87th RCT, one of the few units in the American army to fight against both the Japanese and the Germans. Wally was wounded and received the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, and the Combat Infantry Badge.

Following Mr. Sterling's presentation, visitors had the privilege of meeting two of the Idaho History Day winners and viewing their projects.



The video produced by **David Phenis**, *The Atomic Bomb: A Revolution in*

*Warfare or the End of the World* was shown **and**



**Dan Royle** presented his project *Navajo Code Talkers* to the Museum.

If the movie *Windtalkers* peaked your curiosity, stop by and see this exhibit. Along with photos of some of the *actual Code Talkers*, there is a

sentence using the *actual Navajo Code* you can try to decipher.

It was a very educational and interesting evening. Thank you to everyone who made it possible. ★

**AN ENDOWMENT UPDATE**

Since our last update, we have received additional donations to our endowment from:

- Ms Dawana Edwards
- Mr. Garth Holmes
- Ms Caroline Kreiger

This brings our Endowment balance up to \$24,598.68. We have also received updated letters of support from General Kane, Adjutant General of the Idaho National Guard, Attorney General Lance, Governor Kempthorne and Mr. Richard Jones, the new Administrator of the Division of Veterans Affairs.

Please consider making a donation to our Endowment and tell your friends and relatives who may be thinking of their estates or are looking for ways to make tax deductible donations.

If you would like a form, there is one on the back on this newsletter and there is also one you can download on our website. If you desire to remain anonymous, we will honor your request.

This endowment will allow us to operate the museum with one full-time staff member and provide adequate funds for development and enhancement of our exhibits, Reference Library, and Educational Outreach programs.

Contact any Board member and we will help you plan a gift to the IMHS' Endowment Fund.

*"I strongly encourage your support of the Idaho Military History Museum by contributing to the endowment fund. Your generosity will make it possible to preserve and properly display Idaho's military heritage while ensuring that the sacrifices of those Idahoans who have served so faithfully are never forgotten."*

- Dirk Kempthorne, Governor



**Ed W. Freeman**

**Rank:** Captain  
**Service:** U.S. Army  
**Unit:** Company A, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)  
**Served as:** Flight Leader  
**Battle or Place of Action:** Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley, Republic of Vietnam  
**Date of Action:** 14 November 1965

**Citation:** 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 infantry 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 experienced a 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. <sup>End of Citation</sup>

Ed W. Freeman was born 20 November 1927, in Neely, Mississippi. At the age of 13, he saw thousands of men on maneuvers pass by his home in Mississippi. He knew then and there that he wanted to be a soldier.

When WWII broke out, two of Ed's brothers joined the service and Ed followed suit. He interrupted his high-school education and enlisted in the Navy. It was a two-year hitch and he spent most of the time in the South Pacific. He was discharged in Long Beach California, returned to his hometown, Neely, Miss., and finished his last year of high school. The Navy wasn't as glamorous as Ed had thought it would be so he enlisted in the Army in 1948.

He served in Germany for 4 years and when hostilities broke out in Korea, the Army sent him to Korea. He rose to the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant of Bravo Company, 36<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion. Then came that day in April 1953 and a place called Pork Chop Hill. He was "one of 14 men in his 257-man company who survived the opening stages of the fight for Pork Chop Hill. His lieutenant's bars were pinned on by General James Van Fleet and, at Freeman's request; his first assignment was as commander of Bravo Company. Freeman reconstituted the unit and led it back up Pork Chop Hill."<sup>1</sup>

After the Korean conflict ended in 1953, he applied for flight training school. After witnessing the war on the sea and on the ground, he wanted to get up in the air. However, at 6 feet 4 inches, the Army told him that at he was 4 inches too tall to be a pilot. In 1955 the Army changed its rules. They needed more pilots and the height limit was raised to 6' 4". Ed learned to fly helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. He also picked up the nicknames "Too Tall to Fly" and "Big Ed."

One class ahead of him in flight school was an individual by the name of Bruce Crandall. Ed and Bruce 'chased each other' across the globe and became very good friends. Together they flew "the deserts of the Middle East and North Africa, and the jungles of Central and South America on mapping missions for the Army."<sup>2</sup> Their assignments even took them to Iran.

While Ed was stationed at Ft. Benning Georgia, he met a lady on a blind date by the name of Barbara. She was from Glens Ferry, Idaho and was visiting her brother. They later married.

In 1963, Ed's assignment brought him to Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho as an Aviation and Engineer Advisor to the Idaho Army National Guard. This was to be his retirement assignment but world events changed everything. A Police Action in an obscure country called Viet Nam was heating up.

President Johnson committed over 500,000 troops and in July 1965, Ed Freeman joined the effort.

A new fighting force had been developed. The brain-child of LTG James M. Gavin, a veteran of WWII's 82 Airborne. His idea was to utilize the helicopter and develop a "bigger, faster, and better" helicopter "that could carry the infantry into battle, forever freeing it of the tyranny of terrain and permitting war to proceed at a pace considerably faster than that of a man walking.

The helicopter, Gavin believed, held the possibility of making the battlefield truly a three-dimensional nightmare for an enemy commander."<sup>3</sup>



**CPT Ed Freeman** <sup>4</sup>

Captain Freeman became a part of that force as a member of the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Traveling aboard an aircraft carrier for 29 days, Ed, the other members of the unit, and the helicopters arrived in Viet Nam. Ed was also reunited with his friend Bruce Crandall.

The North Vietnamese commanders wanted their foot soldiers to learn how the American weaponry worked and find ways to neutralize them. "Their orders were to draw the newly arrived Americans into battle and search for the flaws in their thinking {and weaponry}"<sup>5</sup>

They got their chance at a place called Ia Drang in November 1965. Captain Freeman was one of many helicopter pilots who ferried men, ammunition, water and other supplies into the area known as Landing Zone X-Ray, LZ X-Ray for short. The entire area was about the size of the BSU stadium.

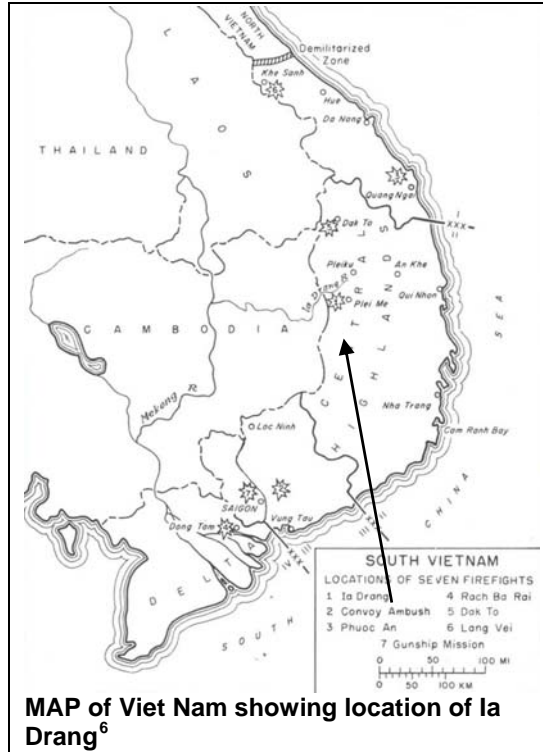
The fighting very quickly became desperate. The American commander LTC Harold G. Moore believed he was

engaged with at least two People's Army battalions. The reality was, there were three. "The soldiers ran into about 10 to 1 odds of Regular Army North Vietnamese attacking them from 3 sides."<sup>7</sup> The medivac pilots refused to fly in to evacuate the wounded, it was too 'hot' for them. It was hot all right; it was also around 100°.

LTC Moore had to close the landing zone. Freeman's commander, MAJ Bruce Crandall "called his pilots together and briefly discussed the situation. He outlined his plan to take back into the LZ two ships loaded with ammunition and asked for volunteers. ...Captain Ed Freeman, my friend for a dozen years who had been leading my second flight all morning, said he was taking that flight. Big Ed misunderstood. I only wanted a volunteer crew for the second bird. I intended to lead the flight myself. I planned to leave Ed behind in charge of resuming the troop lift as soon as Colonel Moore opened the door to the LZ."<sup>8</sup>

What Crandall didn't understand is that Big Ed did understand. Ed had been listening to the radio and had heard the desperate call for help. "I had about 30-40 pilots standing around, wide eyed of course 'cause they had just been there, and I said 'we need a volunteer to go into Landing Zone X-Ray to take in ammunition, water, supplies and haul some wounded out.' They all kind of turned and kicked rocks down the dirt strip runway we had there, which I didn't blame 'em, and I said, 'well, I guess that leaves me.'<sup>9</sup> "I put them there, and I wasn't about to let them die."<sup>10</sup>

MAJ Crandall: "Big Ed and I discussed the mission for a few seconds, and knowing that arguing with him was a waste of time, I decided we both would fly the mission."<sup>11</sup> "Big Ed and I took off and headed for the LZ. We picked up radio traffic and knew things hadn't improved. About five minutes out I contacted Colonel Moore, explained



**MAP of Viet Nam showing location of Ia Drang<sup>6</sup>**

what I had on board, and he acknowledged they needed the ammo. *That made it mandatory for us to go in, no matter the consequences ...*

We started receiving heavy fire on our approach. I notified Big Ed and he calmly came back with: 'Roger. What do you want me to do about it, Snake? I kind of thought this might happen.'<sup>12</sup>

"Moore's people laid down covering fire for us, and as we broke over the trees into the clearing I could see Hal Moore standing up at the far end of the LZ, exposing himself to enemy fire in order to get us into the safest position possible in the LZ. I landed where he directed and our crews and his people began pitching the ammo boxes off the aircraft as fast as they could. At the same time, the wounded were moved up and loaded aboard."<sup>13</sup>

LTC Moore: "The Huey crews performed magnificently, running a gauntlet of enemy fire time and time again. They never refused to come when called. In turn, we did our best to call them in only when fire was lightest, and we tried to have teams standing by to unload supplies and load the wounded in record time, to reduce

the aircraft's exposure on the ground."<sup>14</sup>

CPT Freeman logged 14 1/2 flight hours that day without shutting down the engine. "We landed, off-loaded the wounded, then refueled with our engine still running."<sup>15</sup> Using what is referred to as hot refueling, which saves considerable time, 1400 pounds of fuel was pumped into the helicopter. Freeman explained: "We'd park, shut the helicopter down to a flight idle and turn the radios off." Once while ground crews serviced his Huey, he remembers a partial meal of a C-ration can of beans & franks. He doesn't recall being concerned about his Huey malfunctioning during those long hours. If it had, Freeman said his attitude had been, "That's the way it is."<sup>16</sup> "Death was everywhere."

The sound of the enemy bullets hitting his chopper was akin to being in a hail storm with a metal wash tub over your head. Ed doesn't know how many times his chopper was hit during the 14 hours; in fact he wound up flying two helicopters that day. Even with self-sealing fuel tanks, which are designed



**Photo of Landing Zone X-Ray, taken by CWO "Pop" Jekel as he was flying into X-Ray on 14 Nov 65.<sup>17</sup>**

to allow the pilot to retain 1/3 of a tank of fuel so he can make it back to base, there comes a time when the helicopter just can't take any more damage and the pilot has to switch to a different ship.

To Ed, the entire 14 hours was a blur. "The whole day was on fast forward", and it was a very long day. But there was one event that stands out in his

mind. One of the men who help take the dead and wounded off of the choppers was "a huge black enlisted man, clad only in G.I. shorts and boots, hands bigger than dinner plates."<sup>18</sup> "He looked kind of like the guy in *The Green Mile*. He reached into the helicopter and picked up one of the dead soldiers and cradled him like a young child. He looked into his face the entire time as he carried him away and laid him out and covered him up. I was never so moved."<sup>19</sup>

Ed had been flying nonstop since 6 a.m. through the lights, mortar fire and everything else that takes place during a battle. The last trip was made at 10:30 at night. "The Colonel told me he had adequate ammunition and supplies to last him until daylight. He said, 'Don't come back.'"<sup>20</sup>

Crandall and Freeman finally shut down their Hueys at a large helicopter pad referred to as the Turkey Farm. Crandall: "The aviation unit had quite a day. We had not suffered a single fatality and we had not left a mission undone. When our infantry brothers called, we hauled. The standard for combat assaults with helicopters had been set."<sup>21</sup> The battle at LZ X-Ray lasted 3 days & 2 nights and claimed the lives of 79 servicemen.<sup>22</sup> The battle of Ia Drang lasted a total of 34 days and claimed the lives of 305 American service men.<sup>23</sup>

Ed Freeman saved nearly 30 men that day. A photo of his and Crandall's helicopter flying into LZ X-Ray hangs in his house over his stairwell. Ed says he never passes by without looking at it.

For his efforts that day in Landing Zone X-Ray, Ed was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. His commanding officer and other witnesses always believed he deserved an even higher honor.

Ed continued his service in Viet Nam until 1966. After Viet Nam, he went to Mineral Wells, Texas, as a flight instructor. He served in Texas for 18 months and then the army ordered him



**The photo above Ed's stairwell. That's his chopper in the foreground.** <sup>24</sup>

back to Vietnam. "I'd figured out early on that it was another Korea...I had two kids and a wife from Glenns Ferry, ...I decided to come home."<sup>25</sup>

And so it was, in 1967 with the rank of Major, and a combined service of 23 years; twenty-one years in the Army and two years in the Navy, Ed Freeman retired. He had 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 1 Bronze Star, and 1 Purple Heart to his credit. He also received the South Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and 15 Air Medals. All of these he earned in Viet Nam. "The only thing I received in Korea was frost bite." (And a Battlefield Commission!)

Three years after retiring, Ed and his family moved to Boise and Ed went to work for the Department of the Interior and became the Northwest Area Director of Aircraft Services. Ed retired from that job on January 3, 1991. He hasn't flown since but between the Army and the Interior Department, Ed logged about 18,500 hours of flying time in helicopters and 8,000 hours in fixed wing. Over 1,000 of those hours were in Viet Nam.

Ed and his wife Barbara live in Boise, Idaho. They have two sons, one of whom served with the Air Force in Desert Storm. Ed and Barbara also have 4 grandchildren. End of the story? Not even close!

A statute of limitations had been imposed on awards of the Medal of Honor but in 1995, Congress lifted it. Bruce Crandall told Ed he was going to nominate him for the Medal and began work on the nomination. By the time it

was submitted, the package was 2 inches thick.

On June 13, 2000, the Senate passed Senate Bill S. 2722. Ed received a phone call. The wife of a fishing buddy told him, "Ed, you're on television". "What am I doing?" "Congress just awarded you the Medal of Honor!" It was C-Span that had broadcast the news. By the time Ed got the T.V. turned on, the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress had moved on to another piece of legislation. As it turned out, the award ceremony was not immediately scheduled.



In 1976 LTC Moore, the ground commander at Ia Drang, and Joe Galloway, the UPI reporter covering the battle, agreed to write a book about Ia Drang. In

1992 now LTG (Ret) Moore & Joe Galloway published the book entitled *We Were Soldiers Once...And Young*. The book became the 1993 Marine Corps Commandants Choice book and spent 17 weeks on the New York Times Bestsellers list.

Hollywood took an interest in the story and began work on a movie called *We Were Soldiers*, scheduling it for release in the spring of 2002. Mel Gibson was cast as LTC Moore, and an individual by the name of Mark McCracken who is 6' 5" was cast as CPT Freeman. In preparation for the role, Mark spent several hours talking to Ed picking his brain and learning more about the man he was to portray. They became good friends.

Because of political differences, scheduling conflicts and a change in Presidential Administrations, it began to look like the movie would be released before Ed received his medal. Fortunately, that turned out not to be the case. In June 2001, Ed finally received word that the long awaited presentation would be made.

To aid MAJ Freeman for that most momentous of occasions, the Army sent MSG Eric Godbolt to escort MAJ

Freeman to Washington DC. On July 15, 2001, they flew out of Boise.

As MAJ Freeman put on his Dress Blues in preparation for the presentation, he commented that "It's going to be along day; I didn't get much sleep last night...It's been a long time since I stood inspection."<sup>26</sup> He passed his first inspection with flying colors; his wife Barbara asked him if he wanted to get married again. "That's how he looked when I married him."<sup>27</sup>



**President Bush Presenting the Medal of Honor To MAJ Freeman<sup>28</sup>**

Before the ceremony, MAJ Freeman was able to spend about 30 minutes with President Bush and even met members of his cabinet. Ed was very impressed with President Bush and calls him "a tremendous human being." Then, the moment came. On July 16, 2001, in the East Room of the White House, with over 50 of his fellow Medal of Honor Recipients looking on, President George W. Bush, placed the Medal of Honor around his neck.

*"Today, for the first time, I will present the Medal of Honor. It's a unique privilege to present the nation's highest military distinction to Ed Freeman, of Boise, Idaho. This moment is well-deserved and it's been long in coming...Years pass, even decades, but the memory of what happened on November 14, 1965 has always stayed with them."<sup>29</sup>*

President Bush credited Sen. John McCain, also a decorated Vietnam veteran, with persuading Congress to approve the award. Ed also credits Idaho's Senator Craig

One of the individuals who attended the presentation was Mark McCracken. "This is fantastic; this is the icing on the cake! To be able to be invited to the ceremony, it's wonderful!"<sup>30</sup> Then, White House security closed off Pennsylvania Avenue and President Bush, MAJ Freeman and the other 50 Medal of Honor recipients posed for a photograph in front of the White House.

"It's such a great honor, it was just overwhelming and it's humbling. I didn't have any idea it would be like this,"<sup>31</sup> said MAJ Freeman. MAJ Freeman spent about a week in the nations capital. He was inducted into the "Hall of Heroes" in the Pentagon and he helped lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown in Arlington National Cemetery.

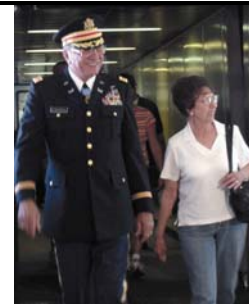


**General Shinseki, MAJ Freeman, and CSM Tilley at the Pentagon's "Hall of Heroes"<sup>32</sup>**

*"...those pilots, God bless them - - meant the world to us. They came in, time after time, under rocket and withering machine-gun fire, providing fire support, bringing in supplies, and taking out our wounded...Many soldiers my age have felt the sting of battle, and we owe a lot to men like Ed Freeman. We understand first-hand what his unblinking, unhesitating acts of courage meant to the men of LZ X-Ray."<sup>33</sup> - General Eric K. Shinseki, The Chief of Staff of the Army at "Hall of Heroes" induction.*

Ed Freeman returned to Boise to a Heroes welcome. A throng of friends and well-wishers met him and cheered as he and Barbara walked down the concourse.

Ed now spends his time as a 'professional grandfather', answering the numerous requests for autographs, attending reunions, fishing and playing an occasional game of poker with his pals.



**MAJ and Mrs. Ed W. Freeman at Boise Airport.<sup>34</sup>**

He even took one of his Washington DC escorts fly-fishing when she personally delivered a White House photo album of Ed's presentation to Ed and his family.

In March 2002, Ed was invited to the White House along with several cast members, the authors of the book, and their wives to a special preview of *We Were Soldiers*. When President Bush spotted Major Freeman in the hallway, he "snapped to attention and saluted."<sup>35</sup> Colin Powell also saluted him. Ed goes on to say, "I had a nice chat with the vice president and his wife, met Donald Rumsfeld and got 30 minutes one-on-one with the President. When the movie ended, the president said 'good show, Too Tall.'<sup>36</sup> "The whole helicopter operation was underplayed," according to Ed, "But you have to remember that the book was written by guys who were on the ground. They wrote it the way they saw it."<sup>37</sup>

Mike Keckler and a news crew from Boise's Channel 2, accompanied MAJ Freeman to Washington DC and filmed much of the story as it unfolded. Many



people who saw the story requested copies.

**MAJ Freeman holding his medal.<sup>38</sup>**

Mike Keckler is in the process of preparing a video; proceeds will be donated to the newly founded Veterans Cemetery in Boise. A release date has not been set; we will keep you posted.

*Editors Note:* A very special thank you to MAJ Ed Freeman for sharing his story with us. Although MAJ Freeman has lived in Idaho for the past 30+ years, was attached to the Idaho National Guard prior to leaving for Viet Nam, and was living in Idaho when he received the award, his medal is officially accredited to Hattiesburg, Mississippi as that is where he entered the service. ☆

(A complete footnote listing will be available on our web page and at the Museum)

<sup>1</sup> Moore, Harold G, Galloway, Joseph L, *We Were Soldiers Once...And Young*, {Paperback edition}

<sup>2</sup> Center of Military History

<sup>3</sup> Mike Keckler, Channel 2 news story

<sup>4</sup> *Idaho Statesman*, 17 Jul 01

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2001/n07232001\\_200107232.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2001/n07232001_200107232.html)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.lzxr.com/24.htm> and CWO "Pop" Jekel. Used by permission.

<sup>7</sup> [www.Idahostatesman.com](http://www.Idahostatesman.com)

<sup>8</sup> HomeofHeroes.com, Article By PETER BOLTZ, Express Staff Writer

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/07/20010716.html>

<sup>10</sup> HomeofHeroes.com, Article By PETER BOLTZ, Express Staff Writer


<sup>11</sup> <http://www.army.mil/leaders/csa/speeches/20010716%20MoH%20Induction.doc>

<sup>12</sup> Photo courtesy of SFC Ric Holmes, Idaho National Guard

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