

Edward Freeman

Edward Freeman, in addition to being a Medal of Honor recipient for his actions in Viet Nam was also a long-time check pilot for the OAS. Some of you still flying fires probably were carded by him.

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Medal of Honor veteran dies in Idaho

By JESSIE L. BONNER - Associated Press Writer
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BOISE, Idaho - Edward Freeman, a former Army helicopter pilot awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroics during the Vietnam War and portrayed in the Mel Gibson movie "We Were Soldiers," has died. He was 80.

Doug Freeman said his father died Wednesday in Boise from health complications due to Parkinson's Disease after spending several weeks undergoing treatment.

The Mississippi native braved intense enemy fire in the Ia Drang Valley as he carried out rescue missions on Nov. 14, 1965, during what was considered one of the fiercest battles of the Vietnam war.

After an Army battalion was surrounded by enemy forces, Freeman flew his unarmed helicopter through enemy fire to evacuate 30 seriously wounded soldiers and bring them to safety. He also delivered water, ammunition and supplies.

Actor Mark McCracken portrayed Freeman in the 2002 film.

Freeman was 73 years old when President George W. Bush awarded him the Congressional Medal of Honor at a White House ceremony in 2001.

During the ceremony, Bush said Freeman initially won the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions, but his commanding officer and other witnesses believed he deserved an even higher honor.

In a statement, Doug Freeman described his father, who lived in Idaho for the last 30 years, as a "humorous person with a lot of integrity."

"People could relate to him," Doug Freeman said. "He made an impression on people."

Lt. Col. Tim Marsano, with the Idaho National Guard, said funeral services have been scheduled for Saturday. Freeman will be buried at the Idaho Veterans Cemetery in Boise.

Freeman was born in Neely, Miss., in Perry County, in 1927 and was a graduate of Washington High School. He was the sixth of nine children.

After his retirement from the Army, Freeman served as a pilot for the U.S. Interior Department and retired a second time in 1991.

He also flew as a civilian pilot with the National Interagency Fire Center, which is located in Boise.

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