'This is a fantastic story of ordinary men, from ordinary places, doing extraordinary things far from home'

French village prepares to honor American liberators, including a farmboy from northeastern Ozark County

By Sue Ann Jones,
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A Dora farmboy, the late John L. Freeman, will be honored next month in a small French village 4,000 miles away from Ozark County.

On June 22 and 23, St. Pierre Eglise in Normandy, France, will commemorate the day 80 years ago when Freeman and his 131 fellow soldiers in Troop A of the 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, rolled into the town to end its four long years of German occupation during World War II.

John L. Freeman, 1919-1944

That glorious day of liberation, Wednesday, June 21, 1944, must have been an extraordinary occasion for the 23-year-old Ozark County man who had grown up on a small family farm in the Blanche community northwest of Dora. He and his fellow warriors in the 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had landed on Utah Beach just a week earlier, on June 15, nine days after the Allies' massive D-Day invasion.

Freeman was wounded two days later, on June 17, as American forces valiantly fought their way inland, but he quickly returned to service.

It's fun to imagine the American soldiers, including Freeman, we assume (probably sporting a bandage somewhere on his body), being welcomed into the little French town by its war-weary but joyful residents – maybe like those happy scenes recreated in many war movies. Yet as we smile, imagining our Ozark County farmboy enjoying such a thrilling and rewarding experience, we're also saddened, knowing what's to come.

On that day in June 1944, as John Freeman rolled down the streets of St. Pierre Eglise with his fellow Troop A soldiers, he had just six more weeks to live.

Soon the squadron moved on, and the fighting continued. Freeman was wounded again on Aug. 2, 1944, at La Denisiere, France, this time more seriously. He endured what must have been a grueling 35-mile ride to the 45th Evacuation Hospital at La Cambe. Normandy, where he died the next day.

Cpl. John L. Freeman was two weeks away from his 25th birthday.

'What a job they make of it'

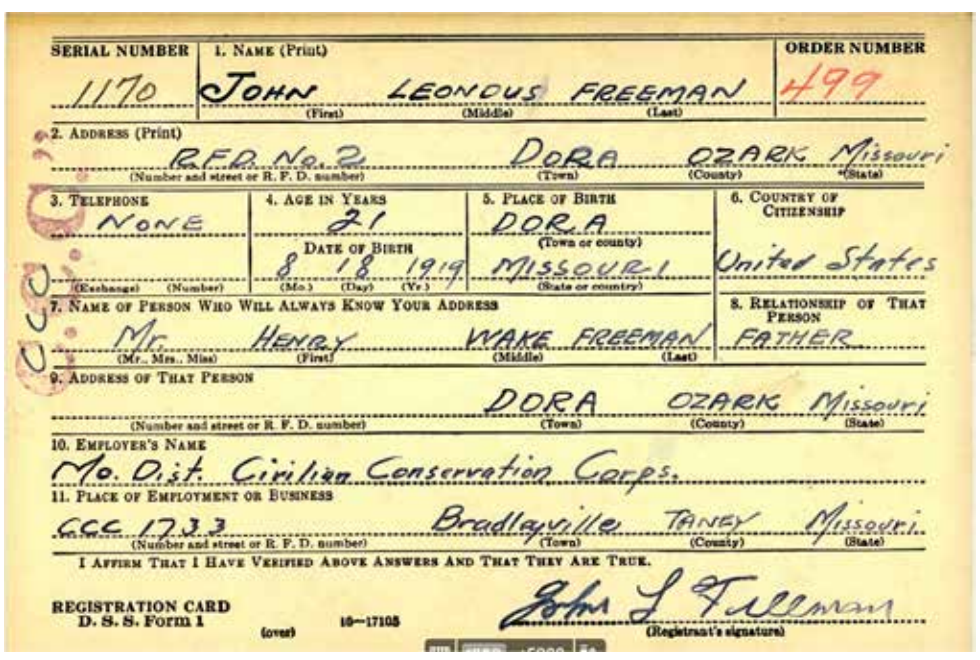
This information about the last few weeks of John Freeman's life has been respectfully assembled by Mike Hind, 62, a former British investigative journalist now living in St. Pierre Eglise, the French town John Freeman's squadron helped liberate. With other volunteers in France, Great Britain and the U.S., Hind is building a website and also hopes to publish a book that will recount the actions of the 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, especially Freeman's Troop A, the unit that liberated St. Pierre Eglise. He has also created a related podcast, "D-Day and after, for rookies," and, in addition to all that, he's helping his town create its June 22-23 commemorative celebration.

Hind is doing this work to recognize and honor what he describes as "a fantastic story of ordinary men, from ordinary places, doing extraordinary things far from home to destroy a vile project to subjugate a whole continent to the whims of a psychopathic occasional genius. And what a job they make of it."

Surely it should make us Ozark Countians proud to know that one of our own was part of that "fantastic story" – and gave his life doing it.

From official military records, newspaper clippings and other sources, Hind has gleaned information about the Army experiences and wartime actions of Freeman and the other men in Troop A. He has seen the military records that say Freeman's first, apparently minor, wound occurred on June 17, 1944, "in the area of the Quineville ridge, where the squadron were first stationed after landing on Utah Beach, nearby." In the combat report, Freeman's commanding officer "speaks of enemy patrols infiltrating American lines on that date, with several resulting skirmishes," Hind said, adding that, whatever Freeman's injury was, "he was quickly back on duty."

See **DORA FARMBOY,** Page C3



SERIAL NUMBER 1170 | 1. NAME (Print) JOHN (First) LEONOUS (Middle) FREEMAN (Last) | ORDER NUMBER 499

2. ADDRESS (Print) RFD No. 2 (Number and street or R. F. D. number) DORA (Town) OZARK (County) Missouri (State)

3. TELEPHONE NONE (Exchange) (Number)

4. AGE IN YEARS 21 DATE OF BIRTH 8 (Mo.) 18 (Day) 1919 (Yr.)

5. PLACE OF BIRTH DORA (Town or county) MISSOURI (State or country)

6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP United States

7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mr. (Mr., Mrs., Miss) HENRY (First) WAKE (Middle) FREEMAN (Last)

8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON FATHER

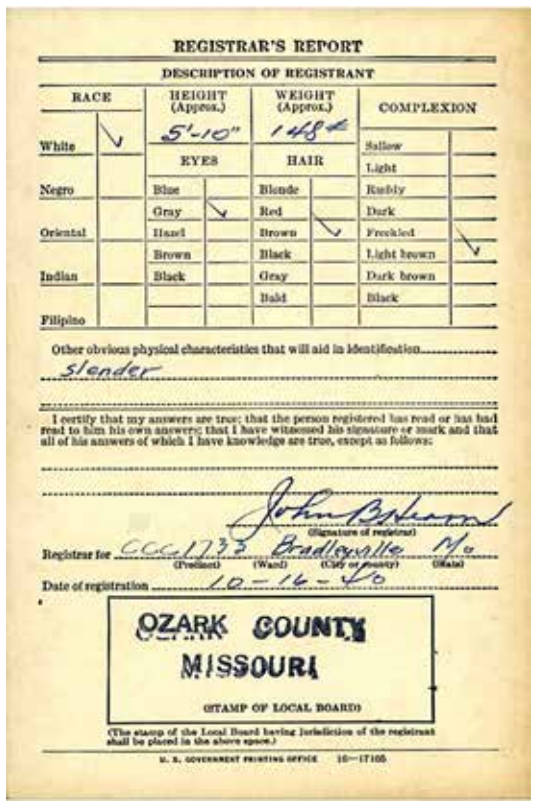
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON (Number and street or R. F. D. number) DORA (Town) OZARK (County) Missouri (State)

10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Mo. Dist. Civilian Conservation Corps.

11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS CCC 1733 (Number and street or R. F. D. number) Bradleyville (Town) TANEY (County) Missouri (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE. John L Freeman (Registrant's signature)

REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. Form 1 (over) 10—17105



REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

RACE	HEIGHT (Approx.)	WEIGHT (Approx.)	COMPLEXION
White ↘	5'-10"	148	Sallow
Negro	EYES	HAIR	Light
Oriental	Blue	Blonde	Ruddy
Indian	Gray ↘	Red	Dark
Filipino	Hazel	Brown ↘	Freckled
	Brown	Black	Light brown ↘
	Black	Gray	Dark brown
		Bald	Black

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification: slender

I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

(Signature of registrar)

Registrar for CCC 1733 (Precinct) Bradleyville (Ward) Mo. (City or county) (State)

Date of registration 10-16-40

OZARK COUNTY MISSOURI

(STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)

(The stamp of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the registrant shall be placed in the above space.)

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 16—17105

Dora resident John L. Freeman registered with the Ozark County Draft Board in October 1940 and enlisted on July 15, 1941. Three years later, he would land on Utah Beach nine days after the D-Day invasion of France during World War II.

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