

MEDAL OF HONOR: FREEMAN V. HORNER

Medal of Honor Series

Our "Medal of Honor" series explores the stories behind the courageous Pennsylvania veterans who have been awarded the prestigious Medal of Honor for their exemplary service in the United States military. In this entry, we recognize the achievements of Freeman V. Horner, who received the Medal of Honor on October 30, 1945.



Freeman Victor Horner (June 7, 1922 – December 1, 2005) was a United States Army officer and a recipient of the United States military's highest decoration—the Medal of Honor—for his actions in World War II. Horner joined the Army from Shamokin, Pennsylvania in January 1941, and by November 16, 1944 was serving as a Staff Sergeant in Company K, 119th Infantry Regiment, 30th Infantry Division. On that day, in Würselen, Germany, he single-handedly attacked three German machine gun positions and killed or captured the soldiers manning them. Horner reached the commissioned officer rank of major and served in the Korean War before leaving the Army. He died at age 83 in Columbus, Georgia. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington County, Virginia.

S/Sgt. Horner and other members of his company were attacking Würselen, Germany, against stubborn resistance on 16 November 1944, when machinegun fire from houses on the edge of the town pinned the attackers in flat, open terrain 100 yards from their objective. As they lay in the field, enemy artillery observers directed fire upon them, causing serious casualties. Realizing that the machine guns must be eliminated in order to permit the company to advance from its precarious position, S/Sgt. Horner voluntarily stood up with his

submachine gun and rushed into the teeth of concentrated fire, burdened by a heavy load of ammunition and hand grenades. Just as he reached a position of seeming safety, he was fired on by a machine gun which had remained silent up until that time. He coolly wheeled in his fully exposed position while bullets barely missed him and killed two hostile gunners with a single, devastating burst. He turned to face the fire of the other two machine guns, and dodging fire as he ran, charged the two positions 50 yards away. Demoralized by their inability to hit the intrepid infantryman, the enemy abandoned their guns and took cover in the cellar of the house they occupied. S/Sgt. Horner burst into the building, hurled two grenades down the cellar stairs, and called for the Germans to surrender. Four men gave up to him. By his extraordinary courage, S/Sgt. Horner destroyed three enemy machine gun positions, killed or captured seven enemy, and cleared the path for his company's successful assault on Wurselen.