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**2LT  
MAYNARD C. FREEMOLE**

**NOVEMBER 26, 2019**

HOT SPRINGS, SD

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Tom Parks ([aboxofoldletters.com](http://aboxofoldletters.com))



Maynard C. Freemole grew up in South Dakota. He quit high school after the 10th grade and on February 10th, 1941, he lied about his age and enlisted in the Army. Maynard was seventeen.

When America joined the war, Freemole applied for pilot training and was sent to Maxwell Field in Alabama.

Not having completed high school put the teenager at a severe disadvantage during pilot training. However, Maynard bore down, beat the odds, and graduated from twin engine advanced training in February of 1943.

Freemole did his B-17 transition training at different locations in the States. However, seven months later, on September 25th, 1943, 2nd Lt. Parks and his crew arrived at the 96th Bomb Group's base at Snetterton Heath and were assigned to the 337th Squadron. Three days later, 2nd Lt. Freemole arrived at the same base and was assigned the same squadron.

They flew combat missions together until November 29th, 1943. That day, the 96th Bomb Group flew their second mission to Bremen, Germany in three days.

Over the target, immediately after bombardier Joseph LeBlanc announced "*bombs away*", the Parks' B-17 was hit by anti-aircraft fire and enemy fighters.

A little over two weeks later, on December 16th, the 8th Air Force decided the German naval installation at Bremen needed even more bombing. It is entirely possible this was the Freemole crew's third trip to this target in less than three weeks.







That morning, over 500 B-17s and B-24s from various bomb groups based all over the part of England commonly known as East Anglia, headed for Germany.

By two o'clock in the afternoon, they had hit their assigned objective. Now, under constant attack by enemy fighters, the beleaguered bombers were battling their way back towards the North Sea and home.

Near the Dutch coast, two B-17s from the 96th Bomb Group's 337th Squadron were shot from the sky. Lt. Edwin Smith's plane exploded in mid-air before anyone could bail out. Lt. Freemole's plane went down in flames. There were no survivors.

The demise of the two bombers came so suddenly and simultaneously that they crashed very close to one another near the tiny village of Poppenwier. The remains of the ten airmen of the Smith crew and the ten from Freemole crew were buried in common graves in the village cemetery.

Maynard Freemole was three months shy of his 21st birthday.

In November of 1949, Lt. Freemole's remains and those of several of his crew were returned to the United States. They are buried in a common grave at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.