

Legion of Honor Ceremony
For Mr. Charles “Red” Whittington
Kansas City, MO – September 9th, 2017

Dear President Archer and representatives of the 95th Division,

Dear Mr. Whittington,

Honored Veterans,

Distinguished Guests,

It is a great honor and a wonderful privilege to be with you today for the annual meeting of the 95th Division, and to pay tribute to one of the “Iron Men of Metz”, Mr. Charles WHITTINGTON. “Red”, as you may know him, is an exceptional man who was ready to sacrifice his life for France and Western Europe during the Second World War.

Many years have passed since June 6, 1944, when thousands of young soldiers reached the coasts of Normandy under a torrent of enemy gunfire. They belonged to the Army, the Navy, the Air Force or the Coast Guards. On that day, far from their homeland and their loved ones, these young men turned the tide of World War II.

73 years ago, they put their ideals, their might and their courage to the service of democracy and the dignity of humankind.

The journey was long and dangerous, but they fought tirelessly, battle after battle, across France and beyond. They endured the harshest conditions and witnessed the horror of the war. But thanks to their unfailing determination and exemplary bravery, they restored hope to millions of people, hope that had been crushed by intolerance, violence and the tyranny of nazism.

Too many of them did not return home, but they will always remain in our hearts and memories.

France has not forgotten, France will never forget.

Mr. WHITTINGTON was among these men, and he is here today to remind us that peace and freedom are priceless.

In recognition of his heroic actions, and to show the gratitude of the whole country, the President of the French Republic nominated Mr. WHITTINGTON to the prestigious Legion of Honor. Created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, it is the highest honor that France can bestow upon those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France.

Mr. WHITTINGTON entered active duty in August 1942. He was 20 years old. Mr. WHITTINGTON was assigned to the 95th Infantry Division, 377th Infantry Regiment and assigned to the "I" company where he was at first a platoon sergeant, then platoon leader during combat operations.

On September 13th, Mr. WHITTINGTON landed at Omaha Beach, and I can really imagine this arrival, because these beaches are part of the national memory in France and because my parents-in-law are living here. So Sir, the next time I will go on this beach, I will think of you and send you a postcard. After a few weeks spent assisting with trucking supplies on the *Red Ball Express*, he was deployed to the Northeastern part of France, in the Lorraine region.

The Moselle and Seille Rivers, Rombas, Uckange, Maizières-les-Metz, the Forts on the Maginot Line and of course the Fortress of Metz are some of the places where Mr. WHITTINGTON and the men of the 95th Division made history. The enemy counterattacks were fierce, the fighting ferocious, the rain torrential, the terrain unfavorable, the nights bitterly cold, and the victims, countless.

It was a history of blood and steel. It was a history of bravery and heroism, qualities that Mr. WHITTINGTON displayed when he saved the life of one of his superiors, Lieutenant Dan BOULET, during a tunnel clearing operation.

In three different engagements, during the attacks in Chateau Brioux, Maizières-les-Metz, and Saint Julien-les-Metz, Mr. WHITTINGTON was wounded in combat but continued to fight on. Twice, he decided to self-treat and did not go to the aid-station. But on November 26, as his company was attempting to break the Siegfried Line and

capture Teterchen, Mr. WHITTINGTON was wounded a fourth time within 15 days and nearly lost his life. He received multiple shrapnel wounds from a German 88 millimeter artillery round. His injuries were severe and he had to be evacuated. On August 28, 1945, after 9 months of hospitalization, he was honorably discharged from the U.S Army with the rank of Technical Sergeant.

For his actions during the war, Mr. WHITTINGTON has received prestigious American military awards including two Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart with One Oak Leaf cluster, meaning he has been awarded it twice.

Mr. WHITTINGTON has also been awarded the Metz Medal which he has received in France.

Thank you for your service Sir.

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The French people will never forget what they owe to the United States of America, our steadfast friend, partner and ally, and the invaluable contribution of the men of the Greatest Generation to the Freedom of France.

For the French people, all veterans are heroes. Their engagement is an example, an obligation for us and for future generations. It has been an honor to see my children carrying our national flag for today's event.

It is our duty to keep the memory alive, and to remain loyal to the legacy, the sacrifice and the values of the heroes who liberated Western Europe.

Let's also remember, especially during challenging times, that the French-American friendship has deep and long lasting roots that crossed many centuries. The history and the values of freedom and democracy we share are precious and it is our duty to protect them by all means.

Dear Mr. WHITTINGTON,

Thanks to your courage, to France's American friends and allies, France has been living in peace for seven decades –the longest period of continuous peace in modern French history.

I could not be more honored to present the Legion of Honor medal to you today.

So from the bottom of my heart: Thank you.

Now I will continue in French:

Mr. WHITTINGTON, au nom du Président de la République française, et en vertu des pouvoirs qui nous sont conférés, nous vous remettons les insignes de chevalier de la Légion d'honneur".

Félicitations, Congratulations./.