



Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution



Patriot of the Month, April 2008 Thomas Lee Yokley

Tom Yokley enlisted in the US Army at the age of 21. After basic training, he responded to a call for a parachute team. After eight jumps and a sprained foot, Tom took a test that allowed his entrance into the Army-Air Force. He qualified as a navigator and bombardier and was assigned to the 1st Provisional Pathfinder Squadron. The Pathfinders flew missions over the Ardennes in northern France. Flying in a B-26 in a lead place position, Tom flew 55 missions over Germany.

Tom was awarded the European-African-Middle Eastern Theatre Campaign Ribbon, the Air Medal with two Silver Clusters, and the Distinguished Flying Cross. An extract from the orders bestowing the Distinguished Flying Cross reads in part:

Thomas L. Yokley, 1st Lieutenant, Air Corps, 1st Pathfinder Squadron (M) Provisional. For extraordinary achievement while participating in serial flight against the heavily defended railroad bridge at Euskirchen, Germany on 26 January 1945. Lt. Yokley, serving as bombardier of a pathfinder type aircraft, encountered intense and accurate antiaircraft fire several minutes before bombs were released and adverse weather conditions as well as the repeated battle damage sustained by his aircraft, precluded bombing by pathfinder equipment. In the short time that remained, Lt. Yokley completed his visual bombing calculations and dispatched his bombs precisely on the objective. His outstanding airmanship, devotion to duty, and courage under great stress reflect the highest credit to himself and his organization.

After his discharge from the Air Corps in 1945, Tom and a friend borrowed \$5000 to purchase the inventory for a lumberyard in Joplin, Missouri. The loan was paid back the first year. The business continued to flourish and Tom retired from it in 1986.

Tom was married first to Jane Fletcher. They had two daughters, only one of whom is living. Tom married second, Marjorie Z. Wadell Brown. She had four children from a previous marriage. They have six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Tom was active in Big Brothers Association and Boy Scouts. He was recognized with an "Apple award" by the Joplin community for his interest and participation in helping young people. He delivered Meals on Wheels and has been a member of both the Christian Church and the United Methodist Church of Joplin.

Marjorie Yokley and the members of the Joplin Chapter NSDAR are proud to nominate Thomas Lee Yokley as Patriot of the Month.