

# MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

*Proudly Honors*



**BIRNEY T. HAVEY, JR.**

UNITED STATES ARMY  
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS (E-3)

1944 – 1945

WOUNDED IN ACTION

as

**PURPLE HEART PATRIOT**

**APRIL 2025**

*Ann Brooks, Honoring her Uncle's service and Sacrifice*  
Sponsored by: **Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR**



Birney T. Havey, Jr., was assigned to the 42nd Division, 222nd Infantry Regiment. He helped halt the Nazi offensive in the Battle of the Bulge. Outnumbered and attacked by five German regiments, his anti-tank company held the line in the Bois d'Ohlungen. They received a Presidential Unit Citation for Extraordinary Heroism. In another battle, Birney was shot in the hand. He participated in the crossing of the Rhine River into Germany.

But nothing prepared Birney for the morning of April 29, 1945. That is when his unit entered Dachau and liberated the concentration camp. About 30 kilometers north of Munich, Dachau first opened as a camp for political prisoners in March 1933, the same month the Nazis officially took power in the state of Bavaria. By 1936, Dachau had become the model for the development of the concentration camp system. This model camp was initially used to house prominent public figures Christian clergy and Jews. By 1939, the first crematorium was in operation. This expanded into a four-oven crematorium with eight incineration chambers by 1942.

Beginning in 1944 as the Allies advanced from the east and the west, the Nazis ordered the evacuation of concentration camps outside Germany. This was done to eradicate any evidence of their atrocities. Dachau became one of the destinations for the evacuees from other camps. By the time Americans and British troops closed in approximately 4,000 inmates per month were dying in Dachau. An estimated 35,000 inmates were still alive.

Twenty-four hours from liberation, chaos reigned at Dachau. Most of the camp guards and German SS troops withdrew. Thousands of corpses were stacked in and around the crematoria and the sickbay. Some 40 boxcars with thousands of dead and dying evacuees from Buchenwald were left sitting at the camp unloading platform. When Birney's regiment arrived on the morning of April 29, these boxcars full of starved corpses were the first thing the American soldiers saw.

Birney's unit had not been told anything about Dachau before arriving there. "We knew nothing. All we knew was that a prison camp was in our way on our route." Birney told the interviewer. "We had just captured Dachau, the city. We were riding tanks with six men, half a squad, on each tank. We ran into a roadblock. The Germans had planted timbers in the road, and they fired on us from there, both mortar and rifle fire. They hit two men on the lead tank. I was on the second tank. We tumbled off the tanks and went down the ditch after them. They did not see us coming. They were in a slit trench. We flanked them. And we had a clear shot at them. We opened fire and killed all three of them."

The morning after the firefight, Birney's unit of 12 to 14 tanks continued down the road that led to the camp.

"We came to the entrance. There was a long row of double train tracks to our right. We ran into railroad cars as far as the eye could see. We started opening the boxcars. They were loaded with dead people. The corpses were dressed in their prison stripes. They all looked the same; their face starved and emaciated."

"There were some warehouses at the camp entrance. The barbed wire ran up to them. They had this electrified barbed wire. The prisoners were inside, yelling and screaming. It was just a mess. We opened the gate to the warehouse, to the railroad, and that was our entrance to the camp. Our order was to advance and secure the camp. We did not know how to secure a camp. And the prisoners would not quiet down. Our platoon, about 80-90 men, carried K-rations in our pockets. And we began giving the prisoners any food that we had."

He said that some of the prisoners brought the few remaining camp guards to the American soldiers. Some of the guards were still in uniform. The prisoners beat two of the guards to death with clubs. The American shot two of the other guards. Birney said



*This helmet was worn by me during the capture and liberation of the Nazi Death Camp Dachau.*

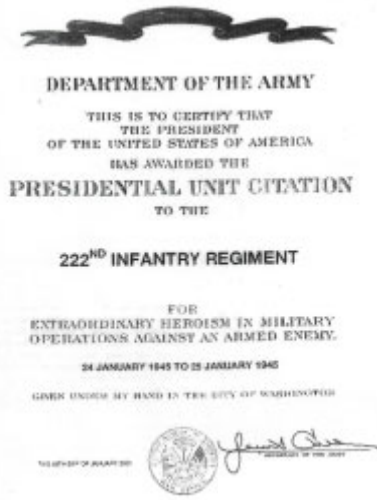
*My unwashed helmet still contains a direct D.N.A. link, to that battle. It is still caked with the filth, stench and corrosion from those two days of senseless killing & bedlam. During the first few hours thousands of dead prisoners some barely alive mostly poor Jewish souls begging & crying for food & water, not yet realizing their liberation.*

*The "White Glove" caressing my helmet represents the spirits of those tortured souls pass on. The devil was indeed there 70 years ago. I can still feel his presence when I go back there.*

*God Bless you, I wish you a Merry Christmas.*

*Birney Hawley  
US, Army WWII*

that there were all types of emotions from the prisoners: joy, cheering, crying and anger.



During his time in battle, Birney earned the following medals: Purple Heart, Silver Star, 3 Bronze stars with V device for Valor, Army Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 3 battle stars, the Victory Europe Medal, Army of Occupation Medal with Germany Clasp, and the Combat Infantrymen Badge. In 1915, he was awarded the French Legion of Honor medal at a ceremony on the Battleship Texas. He spent his later years in life working as a restaurant engineer, selling, and installing restaurant equipment in and around the Galveston area. Birney also owned a restaurant, "The Shrimp House" on the Strand in Galveston.

Birney T. Havey, Jr., passed away at the age of 99 on October 3, 2021. He was survived by two daughters and their husbands and six grandchildren.



The Daughters of the Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR, are proud to nominate Private First Class Birney Havey, Jr., as a Purple Heart Patriot and extend their gratitude for his patriotic service and commitment to our great nation.

