

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Proudly Honors



THOMAS HARRISON KEENEY

UNITED STATES ARMY AIR CORPS

PHOTOGRAPHER'S MATE

SECOND LIEUTENANT (O-1)

JANUARY 1943 – JUNE 1945

WOUNDED IN ACTION, OCTOBER 16, 1944

as

PURPLE HEART PATRIOT

AUGUST 2025

Bill Keeney, Honoring His Father's Service and Sacrifice

Sponsored by: Mary Sibley Chapter, NSDAR



Thomas Harrison Keeney enlisted in the Army Air Corps Reserve for pilot training in September 1942, but was not called for active duty until January 31, 1943. He was sent to Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa, for 9 weeks. Primary flight training was done in Uvalde, Texas. For his Basic flight training, he went to Waco, Texas. He was then trained to fly the B-24 at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona.

The following story was written by Tom Keeney:

"As a co-pilot along with nine other crew members, I left Topeka, Kansas, on July 8, 1944, bound for the 15th Air Force in Italy. On July 15th flew my first mission over Linz, Austria, with a crew of strangers. It was a common procedure to switch a new co-pilot to an experienced crew for a mission or two.

On October 16, 1944, I was shot down on my 24th mission, which was over Linz, Austria, the same as my first mission. After spending a hectic two weeks being transported by various means, going through the degrading delousing, interrogation,

and solitary confinement, I entered the West Compound or Stalag III at Sagan, Germany. We were to spend the next 10 weeks during the worst winter in 25 years in large crude wooden barracks that were heated by a small wood or coal-fired King Heater in each room. The coal we were supplied had to be shared for our cooking needs. We were never really warm.

The last of January, in the middle of the night, the whole camp was called out, and they left on a march in a blizzard. Besides the cold and six or so inches of snow, there was anxiety caused by the threats of the guards for everyone to keep up. Very few had adequate clothing, and most wore leaky shoes. At Spremberg, after five days of miserable conditions, we were crowded in "40 & 8" box cars. We were so jammed in that we could not all sit at the same time. For two days, we received only a little bread and almost no water. We were let out of the cars for relief once each day, which made for horrible, unsanitary conditions in the cars.

We arrived at Nurnberg and were put in large tar-paper-covered wooden barracks. While in Nurnberg, we were without Red Cross parcels for seven weeks due to a lack of German transportation. The German fare was mostly dehydrated soup, occasionally barley or potatoes. While there, the threat of being hit by friendly bombing was constant day and night. It was very near the railroad marshalling yards.

Right after the first of April, we started a march south to Moosberg, where our group was housed in large 50-man tents. We slept on the ground. This all took place in warmer conditions, with the Americans really in control of the march. On the 29th of April, we were liberated when General Patton's Third Army arrived in tanks. What a sight, the answer to our prayers!

We were flown to Camp Lucky Strike in Paris. We later boarded a ship at Le Havre and spent the next two weeks trying to eat all the food the Navy had. At last, we were no longer *cold, wet, hungry, or subject to the anxiety of that unknown future!*

The Statue of Liberty is the greatest sight anyone could wish to see. **God Bless America!!"**

Thomas Keeney's Medals

Purple Heart

Air Medal with 1 cluster

ETO, 4 Bronze Stars

Prisoner of War Medal

Presidential Unit Citation (4 Campaigns)