

FUNERAL NOTICE

Robert Branscomb Keeton



crossed over to his heavenly father, at his home, family by his side in, Austin, Texas, Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2011. Robert Keeton is survived by nephews, Paul Jenkins, Johnson City, Texas, Robert Kline, Goose Creek, S.C., Richard Kline, Loveland, Colo.; nieces, Dixie Boone, Austin, Texas, and Judy Barnes, Bombay Beach, Calif.; his AVG family, numerous other family members and friends. Robert Branscomb Keeton was born on April 7, 1915, in Manzanola, Colo., to Jacob Clarence Keeton and Minnie Branscomb Keeton. Robert attended school in Manzanola, where he was active in athletics. He graduated from Colorado College, where he played football. He entered the Navy for flight training in September 1938. He received his Navy Gold Pilot Wings in the summer of 1939, at Pensacola, Fla. Two years later, he was one of the 100 pilots hand-picked from the Army, Navy and Marines to form the American Volunteer Group. This group went to Burma to fly and fight for the Chinese government before the United States entered World War II. "Buster" Keeton resigned his Navy commission in 1941 to join the American Volunteer Group (AVG) under the command of Colonel Claire Chennault. He departed the United States on Sept. 1, 1941. He spent one year to the day with the Flying Tigers. He arrived in Rangoon on Nov. 12, 1941, with a group of 30 volunteers on the Dutch ship M.S. Bosch Fontein. Upon arrival, he ferried planes until he was fully trained on the P-40. "Buster" was a member of the AVG's Second Pursuit Squadron (Panda Bears). He had a confirmed 2.5 victories in air combat. The Flying Tigers racked up a 15-1 kill ratio and likely stopped the Japanese from conquering and threatening British-held India. Robert Keeton flew for 38 years, logging enough hours to have circled the Earth 27 times, including the Berlin Airlift and the last flights from Vietnam at the close of the war.

When the AVG, better known as the "Flying Tigers," was disbanded in 1942, he was discharged from the AVG as Flight Leader on Sept. 1, 1942, at Kunming, China. He returned to the United States in Dec. 1942. Robert "Buster" Keeton joined the Flying Tigers Overseas Airline. On May 23, 1943, Robert Branscomb Keeton from Manzanola married Metha Holm of Rocky Ford, Colo., at Raton, N.M. The love of his life was by his side until her death on Feb. 25, 1997. She never left his mind. "Bus" Keeton, as he was fondly known, flew for Pan American Airlines until he was 60 years old (mandatory retirement age). When not flying, golf, golf and golf. He and Metha attended air shows, Flying Tigers reunions and shared a life one might only dream of. Awarded First, Second and Seventh Chinese Cloud Banner, British Distinguished Flying Cross, United States of American Distinguished Flying Cross. The AVG was inducted into the Airman Hall of Fame in 1998, in Midland, Texas. The AVG was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio, in July 1999. In Oct. 8, 2010, "Buster" was inducted into the Airman Hall of Fame in Midland, Texas. The family of Robert "Buster" Keeton extends a special thank you to Dr. Richard Helmer, his nurse, Laura Wendlandt (Texas Oncology), and The Pavilion at Great Hills for the love and respect given to their loved one. Robert Branscomb Keeton, "Bus" Keeton or "Buster" Keeton all the same, a "true gentlemen." He was highly regarded as a man with high moral standards, integrity and generosity. His legacy includes words like compassion, kindness, truth, honesty and toughness. His stories never got old, precious memories like yesterday, his infatuating smile. God blessed him with his dream and us with him. Memorials maybe made to the hospice of your choice. Memorial service, 2 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18, 2011, The Pavilion at Great Hills, 11809 Pavilion Blvd., Austin, Texas. Service and reception, Monday, May 23, 2011, time to be announced, Manzanola Cemetery, Manzanola, Colo.

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