



One Grand Day

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What: Grand Celebration of 150th Anniversary of the O'Keefe Family Funeral Business and the O'Keefe Family on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, coinciding with the Award to Jeremiah J. ('Jerry') O'Keefe, III of the Congressional Gold Medal for heroism as a World War II Fighter Ace.

When: June 5, 2015. 3 pm to 8 pm.

Where: the O'Keefe Mansion, refurbished and recast as the flagship of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes. Corner of Jackson and Porter Avenues. Ocean Springs, MS.

Who: Jerry J. O'Keefe III, sons Jeffrey and Justin, grandsons Jeffrey, Jr. and Jules, Jerry's wife Martha, many other O'Keefe family and friends, federal and local officials, and community from across the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Bradford O'Keefe
Funeral Homes
150th Anniversary Celebration



June 5th, 2015
Open House & Book Signing 3:00-6:00P.M.
Program 4:00 P.M.
911 Porter Avenue
Ocean Springs, Mississippi



Jeremiah "Jerry" O'Keefe, III



American Fighter Aces Congressional Gold

This Congressional Gold Medal is awarded to the American Fighter Aces in recognition of their heroic service to the United States throughout the history of aviation warfare. American Fighter Aces are military pilots credited with destroying five or more confirmed enemy aircraft in aerial combat during a war or conflict in which the U.S. Armed Forces have participated. Aces have served in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. More than 60,000 fighter pilots have flown since World War I, but fewer than 1,500 are called Fighter Aces.



President Jeffrey H. O'Keefe has meticulously planned a joyous celebration to commemorate the 150 years of the family's presence and business on the Mississippi Gulf Coast -- and a new award to patriarch Jerry J. O'Keefe.



The stage is set inside and out -- featuring a bronze bust of Jeremiah J. O'Keefe III as a young fighter pilot and a beautiful cake to celebrate the anniversary.



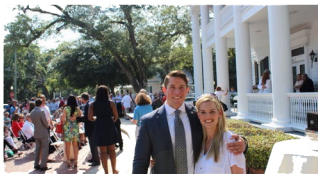




Shari Pol and Dave Jones provide beautiful music and vocals for the Anniversary. Guests begin to trickle in.

To the left, Matthew and Kimi Langlinais, as well as Carol Carpenter and her granddaughter Bryson.

To the right, various family members: Jeffrey O'Keefe, Jr., Justice O'Keefe Duhon & Jules O'Keefe. Susan O'Keefe Snyder & grandson Jackson Sukiennik. Susan, with Justin O'Keefe. Martha Peterson O'Keefe, Steve & Kyle Peterson.





Buggies, old and new, and widespread media attract a crowd to the old O'Keefe Mansion, now serving as the flagship of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes.



BRADFORD-O'KEEFE

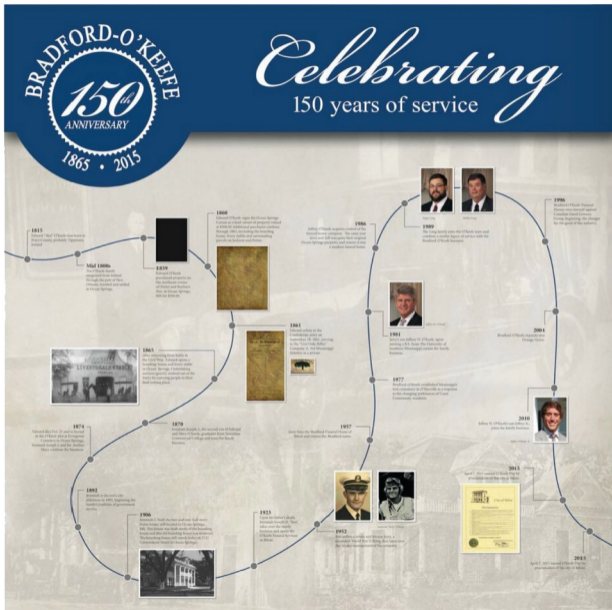
150th

ANNIVERSARY

O'KEEFE
UNDERTAKER

Jeff had commissioned an elegant timeline depicting the history of the family and key business milestones.

He also commissioned and published an extensive photo/history book to illustrate the family history and the family's gratitude to the peoples of the Mississippi Gulf Coast who have supported it for over a century and a half.



The crowd continues to gather in the cool air-conditioning prior to the ceremony and enjoy the time line banner, along with proclamations by Cities, Counties, State Legislative Branches. Refreshments were plentiful.





bust and cake +:

WORDS:

Guests sign the register and receive greetings from family and staff. Former Mayor of Gulfport, Honorable Leroy Urie and his lovely wife, Trixie Mullin Urie, sign in.



Jeff escorts Jerry into the celebration.



The meet-and-greet begins



Jerry O'Keefe
greeting Arthur
"Bubba"
Lang and
his companion
Janice Pickich.

Jerry greets
Gulfport
staff member Ray
Gustafson.



He also greets staff members Garland Moran, Guy B. Roberts and Donnie Keen, along with longtime friend Cleo Meaut.



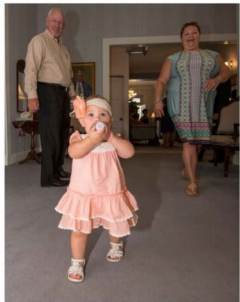
Jerry takes his seat in the front parlor (the very room in which he and his brothers Johnny and Ben were born).

He is pictured flanked by a replica of the bronze bust commissioned by the Mississippi Aviation Museum, depicting Jerry's days as a Marine pilot.

The guests start queuing to congratulate him and have him personalize their copies of the family history books.

Also visible is the basket of wooden nickels or 'tuit's, which Jeff had ordered as souvenirs of the historic event.





The line grows -- and grows -- and grows.
And keeps filing past at a steady
pace until the appointed 4 p.m. hour
for the formal ceremony. Jerry is pleased
to personalize books for those
who honored the family by their
attendance.





Many are reluctant to move outside until their book is personalized.

Jerry pledges to return following the ceremony and continue signing books.



The crowd ultimately gives way and gathers on the front grounds of the property where the business originated.

It is a hot afternoon with temperatures in the low 90's.





Jeff asks his dad if he wants to have the ceremony in the air-conditioned Chapel, but Jerry opts to have it on the front porch of the home, as planned.

Wife Martha and son Jeff escort Jerry onto the porch.

Quite a gathering!





Program

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Jeffrey O'Keefe, Sr.

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

Marine Detachment KAFB

"GOD BLESS AMERICA"

Shari Pol

INVOCATION

Bishop Roger P. Moran, Bishop of Biloxi

REMARKS

Mayor Connie Moran

HISTORICAL REMARKS

Jeffrey O'Keefe, Sr.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL PRESENTATION

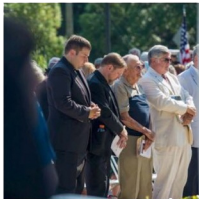
T.J. Moran, Office of Congressman Steven Palazzo

CLOSING REMARKS

Jeffrey O'Keefe, Sr.

RETIRE THE COLORS





Jeff O'Keefe extends a formal welcome to the guests and recognizes the dignitaries in attendance.

The Colors are presented by the United States Marine Color Guard Team.

Bishop Roger P. Morin – Third Bishop of the Diocese of Biloxi, gives the Invocation.







Shari Pol, a Bradford-O'Keefe employee, sings God Bless America.



Mayor Connie Moran of Ocean Springs shares heart-warming remarks about the long presence and many contributions of the O'Keefe Family to the City.

She presents a
proclamation and a
key to the City.



Myrtis Frank, Field Agent
from the office of
United State Senator Thad
Cochran presents
the O'Keefe Family
with a framed copy of
the tribute read into
The Congressional
Record
in Washington D. C.
on June 2, 2015.





T. J. Moran, Field Agent for Congressman Steven Palazzo (and coincidentally, the great great grandson of George Ohr), presents Jerry J. O'Keefe with the Plaque and Certificate that had been read into the Congressional Record. Also presented is a shadowbox containing a flag flown over the United States Capitol.



The highlight of the day is the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal awarded by the U.S. Congress to Jerry and other surviving World War II Ace Fighter Pilots. Jerry had not been able to attend the award ceremony in Washington, so the medal was presented locally.



Guests rise to express their congratulations to Jerry for the honor.



With wife Martha
at his side,
Jerry
approaches the
lecturn
to express his
appreciation
for the honor.





Jerry makes brief remarks, beginning with a touch of his trademark humor, indicating that at age 92, his voice is stronger than his legs!

Jerry warmly thanks those in attendance for being there and expresses sincere appreciation for the special recognition.





Jeff O'Keefe Sr. delivers brief remarks about the history of the family and Ocean Springs, the community which became its home.

He recalls that the pathogen *Phytophthora Infestans* led to the Great Potato Famine in Ireland in the early 1800's, ultimately prompting the family's migration to the United States.

He also recounts a time when Ocean Springs was named Lynchburg Springs after the man who had discovered fresh water springs in the area.

After Mr. Lynch departed the area, the local elders decided to rename the town Ocean Springs, reportedly after a popular downtown hotel.

This bit of history had been little known, even to some of the city's heritage families present at the gathering.



After all remarks are concluded, the Marines retire the Colors. The Sun Herald photographer captured this beautiful photograph of Jerry, framed by the departing flags of his country and branch of service.



Folks return to greeting one another and posing for pictures with the man of the hour.





Everyone is invited in for more fellowship, refreshments and continuation of history book autographing.

Pictured:

Tess O'Keefe Lawrence
& Maria Carney

Connie Moran & Jeff

Jeff with Angie &
Rose Marie Juzang

Jeff & Chris Soldo who
catered the event





Pictured:

Cleo Meaut, Jerry &
Diane Ott

Jerry & Colleen Peterson






And of course everyone
continues to
admire
the special awards.



For the final bit of fun, Jeff takes the reins of the coach and, with son Jordan (back cover), rides off into the afternoon.





A photograph of a sunset or sunrise. The sky is a vibrant orange and yellow, with the sun low on the horizon. In the foreground, there are dark silhouettes of trees and the roof of a house. A semi-transparent white text box is overlaid in the upper right quadrant.

It was a lovely day, which the family will always remember and cherish.

WWII ace pilot O'Keefe honored with Congressional Gold Medal

BY MARY PEREZ

mperez@sunherald.com June 5, 2015

OCEAN SPRINGS – Seventy years ago, when Jerry O'Keefe was a 21-year-old Marine fighter pilot, he shot down seven Japanese planes in one week over Okinawa, Japan, during World War II.

On Friday, at age 91, he was presented with the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor given by the U.S. Congress, during a celebration of the 150th anniversary of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Home.

"Good job," someone in the crowd called out as O'Keefe accepted the medal, a certificate and a flag that had flown over the U.S. Capitol.

"I'm proud and humbled by this recognition," said O'Keefe, who came home from the war and later became president of Bradford-O'Keefe, and served as Biloxi mayor and a state legislator.

Friday's color guard was a Marine detachment from Keester Air Force Base and the members were ages 19 to 25.

In an age when 21-year-olds can shoot down video-game aircraft and get a new life should they falter, O'Keefe's accomplishments at doing the real thing while still so young are that much more amazing.

T.J. Moran, who presented the medal on behalf of U.S. Rep. Steven Palazzo, R-Miss., said the United States has had 60,000 fighter pilots. Only 1,447 were distinguished as fighter "aces" – those who shot down five or more enemy planes.

"Today, there are only 77 living American fighter aces and one of those brave men stands among us today," Moran said.

"Every time I think about the 'Greatest Generation' I think about (O'Keefe)," said Biloxi Mayor Andrew "Fufo" Gluck, who was one of several government officials from across South Mississippi who attended the ceremony.

Dave Dennis of Pass Christian said when O'Keefe shot down those seven planes in April 1945, his father, Lt. Jack Dennis, was also 21 and was aboard a ship off the coast of Okinawa. Four Japanese kamikaze planes targeted the ship. One hit, Dennis said, but "somebody shot two of them."

Nobody knows if those were the planes O'Keefe shot down, but Dennis said O'Keefe's actions saved soldiers and sailors. "You don't know whose life he saved – perhaps my dad's."

The community also saluted the 150-year history of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes, which has operated in Ocean Springs since 1865 and now has six locations across South Mississippi.

Ocean Springs Mayor Connie Moran presented Jeff O'Keefe, the president of the company, with a proclamation and a key to the city.

Myrtle Franks, a representative of U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran, said Cochran read into the Congressional Record that the business is one of the oldest in Mississippi and six generations of O'Keefes "have served with grace and valor."



Jerry O'Keefe received Congressional Gold Medal

Friends, family and officials gathered in front of the Bradford O'Keefe Funeral Home on Friday, June 5, 2015, to witness Jerry O'Keefe receiving the Congressional Gold Medal for his service as a Marine Corps fighter pilot ace during World War II. [View Full Gallery](#) [AMANDA MCCOY — SUN HERALD](#)



BRADFORD-O'KEEFE

150th
ANNIVERSARY

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