



**Wayne  
Thurman**  
*Army Air Corps*

# Wayne Thurman

**Oct 11, 1910 - Jul 25, 2008**

**BIRTHPLACE: Oconto, NE**

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## SOLDIER DETAILS

**HIGHEST RANK: Colonel**

**DIVISION: Army Air Corps, 15th Air Force, War Department**

**THEATER OF OPERATION: European**

**SERVED: Oct 5, 1938 - Apr 1, 1968**

**HONORED BY: Nieces and Nephews**

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## BIOGRAPHY

Wayne Thurman graduated from the University of Nebraska with a degree in Agricultural Engineering in January 1936. Two years later he entered U.S. Army pilot training in San Antonio, earning his wings and a commission as 2nd Lt. Wayne was privileged to fly 38 types of military aircrafts at several different bases of assignment before flying overseas to Europe in September 1942. The over-the-Atlantic-ocean flight to Prestwick, Scotland was accomplished in a combat ready B - 17 Flying Fortress with 12 crew members, loaded machine guns and all the baggage needed in the European Theater of operations. Wayne successfully completed 50 air combat missions over Europe as a Pilot in a P - 38 and B - 17 during his 18 months in Europe and Africa in World War II. In this time he photographically mapped the air route from West to East in Central Africa; commanded a heavy Bombardment Group of B-17's (2500 officers and enlisted men), including acres of support equipment, gasoline and bombs. He was pilot of the lead Bomber of several 15th Air Force missions over Europe. One of the largest formations of B-17's and B-24's he led on a bombing target (an enemy aircraft factory) was 98 Bombers and 50 Fighter aircrafts. After completing 50 missions and before leaving for the U.S.A., he had been promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel which was awarded in September 1943. Lt. Col. Thurman was assigned to General Marshal's Chef of Staff Office as assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff, General Thomas T. Handy, where he was promoted to full Colonel. He remained in this position after the war when General Eisenhower was Chief of Staff. Col. Thurman was the Senior Pilot on General and Mrs. Eisenhower's South American Goodwill Tour, August 1-19, 1946. He was also in General Eisenhower's official party when General Eisenhower spoke at the Nebraska State Fair on 30 August, 1946. A command pilot for 22 years, Col. Thurman logged over 6,000 hours of pilot time, 1,000 hours of which he piloted subsonic and supersonic fighter aircrafts. He flew supersonic F-101, F-102, F-104, and the F-106 beyond the speed of sound. (The F-104 flies twice the speed of sound, 1400 miles-per-hour.) Col. Thurman's career decorations are the Silver Star, Legion of Merit,

Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with 9 Oak Leaf Clusters, Presidential Unit Citation, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 7 Battle Stars, American Theater Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Medal; The Air Force Longevity Service Medal with one silver oak leaf cluster, and the War Service Medal, presented by the Brazilian Government. The photo shows Col. Thurman with General Eisenhower, as well as a portion of the War Department organizational charts. Wayne Thurman passed away in 2008 in McPherson, Kansas, at the age of 97.