

**James Richard Thomas** was born to Jacob Edgar and Martha (Reinschmidt) Thomas at Wichita, Kansas on October 30, 1922. He was the oldest of eight children; five boys and three girls. The family lived in Kansas until the crash took place in the 1930's. They then moved to South Dakota to the North Riverside Township, in the northwest corner of Potter County. They moved in with Martha's parents, The Reinschmidt's. By spring they were in their own home and at that time had four boys. Eventually three girls and one more boy would grace the family.

James attended and graduated from Fayette Country School and Gettysburg High School. After high school, he worked for farmers doing custom work. In September of 1946, several people around Gettysburg were interested in starting a flying club, which they did and James was one of the members. He started his flight instructions.



James met and married Elaine Kula in December, 1946. Being jobs were scarce they spent the next five or six winters in California. James attended the LA Business School, Los Angeles, California, and then worked as a manager at the Trifty Drug

Store. Their first child born was a daughter, Linda Elaine, followed by son Daniel James, daughter Sandra Mary, son Robert Allen and daughter Rhonda Jean.

After spending winters in California, James and Elaine decided to become full time South Dakota residents and invested in his love of raising crops and livestock.

In 1970, James started to fly again. At this time he received



his pilot's license at Ice Flying Service, Pierre, SD. Once receiving his license he purchased his own 235 Piper Cherokee and hanger. His love of flying allowed him to do so not only for pleasure but for business. Some of the trips took them to Canada, Texas, Kansas, and various spots in South Dakota.



As James' boys got older they became involved in the family farming operation which allowed them to expand into custom harvesting

taking them as far as Texas for eleven years. They still farm and ranch on the original farm, which was acquired in 1946. Along with farming they had a cattle operation with both Black Angus and Red Angus. The Farming Operation is now in its third generation. James was still active in the family operation.



James and Elaine moved into Gettysburg Oahe Villa in October of 2014. He was a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Gettysburg and a Knights of Columbus Honorary Member. James served as a Gettysburg School Board member, was director of Federal Land Bank, and a director of Potter County Grain.

Family was very important to James, and he enjoyed numerous activities with them such as: hunting, fishing, water skiing, snow skiing, and trail rides. He was also active in square dancing and bowling. Other hobbies James enjoyed were wood working and gardening.

James' life will be cherished by his wife of 68 years, Elaine Thomas; his children: Linda Vail, Gettysburg, Daniel (Bev) Thomas, Gettysburg, Sandra (Jay) Hagen, Rapid City, Robert (Carmen) Thomas, Gettysburg, and Rhonda (Dale) Schmutz, Belle Fourche; nine grandchildren; seven great grandchildren; one brother, Joe Thomas, Dayton, Ohio; one sister, Shirley (David) Hill, San Bernardino, California; and brothers-in-law: James Crandall, Rapid City and Chuck Kula, McKinney, Texas.

James was preceded in death by his parents; his sisters: Mary Crandall and Joann Lovgren; brothers: Jacob, George and Donald; half siblings: Helen (Charlie) Gilham, Ruth (Ralph) Gillette, Archie Thomas, Pearl (Henry) Alphin and Ralph Thomas, son-in-law, Dana Vail; sisters-in-law: Phyllis Thomas, Dorothy Thomas, Phyllis Brown and Inez Kula; and brothers-in-law: Larry Lovgren and Wayne Brown.



*God saw he was getting tired  
And a cure was not to be,  
So He put His arms around him  
And whispered "Come with me."*

*With tearful eyes  
We watched him suffer  
And saw him fade away  
Although we loved him dearly,  
We would not make him stay.*

*A golden heart stopped beating,  
Hard working hands to rest.  
God broke our hearts to prove to us  
He only takes the best.*



Gettysburg, South Dakota  
[www.familyfuneralhome.net](http://www.familyfuneralhome.net)

*In Loving Memory*

## *James Richard Thomas*

October 30, 1922  
Wichita, Kansas

July 17, 2015  
Gettysburg, SD

**MASS OF CHRISTIAN BURIAL:**

10:30 a.m., Tuesday, July 21, 2015  
Sacred Heart Catholic Church ~ Gettysburg, SD

**OFFICIATING:** Fr. Jerry Kopel

**EUCCHARISTIC MINISTER:** Suzi Vail

**LECTOR:** Mike Bohnenkamp

**EULOGIST:** Lyle Perman

**PLACING OF THE PALL: "Children"**

Linda Vail, Daniel Thomas, Sandra Hagen,  
Robert Thomas, Rhonda Schmutz

**GIFT BEARERS: "Granddaughters"**

Lisa Stanley, Leah Vail Lowinske, Jordynn Schmutz

**ALTAR SERVERS:** Elliott & Dillon Talks

**USHERS:** Brett Stanley & Daren Lowinske

**CASKETBEARERS: "Grandsons"**

Ryan Thomas, Jason Hagen, Jared Hagen,  
Casey Thomas, Bryant Schmutz, James Thomas

**HONORARY CASKETBEARERS: "Granddaughters"**

Lisa Stanley, Leah Vail Lowinske, Jordynn Schmutz  
All of James' Great Grandchildren

**MUSICIANS:** Lynell Jessen & Cory Niles

**HYMNS:**

*"Come to the River" "Before the Throne of God"*

*"Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery"*

*"I'll Fly Away & This World is Not My Home"*

*"Song of Farewell" "On Eagle's Wings"*

**INTERMENT:** Gettysburg Cemetery ~ Gettysburg, SD

*A Celebration of Life.....*

*A Life Remembered*



*James Richard Thomas*