



W. Lynn Thomas

February 11, 1925 - May 23, 2015

W. Lynn Thomas, 90, of Kearney, died Saturday, May 23, 2015 at CHI Health Good Samaritan Hospital. Funeral Services will be 10:30 a.m. Monday, June 1, 2015 at Kearney E-Free Church with the Rev. Brian Klein officiating. Interment will follow at Riverside Cemetery in Gibbon. Visitation will be 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Sunday with a time of sharing from 4:00 to 5:00 at O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Home. Memorials are suggested to Kearney Rotary for Polio eradication, Salvation Army, Crossroads Mission or the Kearney Volunteer Fire Department. Condolences may be shared online at www.osrfh.com or at www.facebook.com/pages/W-Lynn-Thomas. O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Walter Lynn Thomas was born on a farm outside of Gibbon, Nebraska to O. Verner and Anna (Piper) Thomas on February 11, 1925. He was the 9th of 11 children. He is affectionately known to some as "Bub."

At five years old, he contracted polio, and he spent much of his youth in and out of the Orthopedic Hospital in Lincoln. The polio caused a lot of physical problems, so he had to spend his life on crutches and in a wheel chair. But he never let his physical limitations stand in the way of his dreams.

Lynn graduated in 1944 from Kearney Public Schools, and later attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

He was united in marriage to Beverly Jean Nelson, and they had four children: Lynda, Michael, LeAnn and Richard.

Lynn worked a number of jobs in Kearney until he worked at and then bought

a little storefront business named Ace Irrigation Equipment. His primary interests and activities throughout his adult life involved Ace Irrigation, a company he grew into the thriving irrigation and culvert business Ace Eaton Metals located at the Kearney Airbase.

For the past ten years, Lynn has been married to Mary Ann deNeveu Shanahan.

In these later years, Lynn had an apartment connected to the business office, so he was able to remain active at the company by wheeling his wheel chair over to the office every day. Less than a week before his passing, Lynn wheeled out into the plant for a look at the present activities and chat with employees. Lynn thought of his employees like family.

Lynn had a beautiful voice and loved singing the popular songs of his youth. Lynn learned to play chess during his college days, and over the years he collected many unusual chess sets. Lynn enjoyed watching sports on TV, and he enjoyed documentaries and history. He grew cat tails in the ditches around the office, and he loved watching the red wing black birds nest there.

Lynn possessed an incredible memory for everything, including that he could still remember all of his classmates names from third grade.

Through Ace Irrigation and personally, Lynn supported with his membership, time and funds hundreds of organizations, groups, charities, teams, schools, universities and individuals. These include Rotary, 4-H, Kearney and Gibbon Fire Departments, Law Enforcement of Buffalo County, Special Olympics, Lions, Eagles, Republican Party, Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, Crossroads Mission and many many others.

In 1967 Lynn was presented the Small Businessman of the Year Award by the United States of America Small Business Administration. He was also awarded the key to the city of Kearney. In 1975 the Kearney Volunteer Fire Department selected Lynn as an Honorary Fireman. In the 1970s Lynn was elected and served as a Buffalo County Board of Supervisor.

Lynn and his daughter LeAnn captured much of his inspiring life story and published it in a book titled "Pipe Dreams". During his life he overcame many

obstacles to achieve his dreams, and he would encourage you to pursue your dreams as well.

Survivors include his wife, Mary Ann of Kearney; daughters, Lynda Frye (Mike) Brookes of Kearney, LeAnn Thomas of Kearney; sons, Michael (Sue Ann) Thomas of Gibbon, Richard (Monica) Thomas of Kearney; step-daughter, Ryan deNeveu of Omaha; grandchildren, Kasey (Karen) Frye, Jenae Frye Curtis, Bryan Frye, Jesse (Chelsea) McNew, Heather (Lucas) Wright, Dustin McNew, Chancey Thomas and significant other, Ryan West, Laura Ritterbush, Kimber (Todd) Kinstler, Nicole Ritterbush, Justice deNeveu and Rowan Norman; great grandchildren, Serenity, Quincy, Damien, Huxley, Saber, Savannah, Dylan, Rylan and Hailey; as well as, many nieces and nephews and a host of friends. Preceded in death by his parents; brothers and sisters, Lloyd, Loren, Merle, Lucile (Musil), Dorothy (Musil), David, Roy, Edith (Cure), Arthur, and Beverly; son-in-law, Patrick Frye; first wife and mother of his children, Beverly (Nelson) Thomas.

Cemetery Details

Riverside Cemetery

45400 85th Road
Gibbon, NE

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 31. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Homes and Cremations
4115 Ave N
Kearney, NE 68847
(308) 234-3500
info@osrfh.com
<https://www.osrfh.com>

Time of Sharing

MAY 31. 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM (CT)

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Funeral Service

JUN 1. 10:30 AM (CT)

Kearney E-Free Church
4010 7th Ave
Kearney, NE 68845
<http://www.kearneyefree.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *W. Lynn Thomas*

January 28, 2023 at 08:01 AM



“ *My condolences to Lynn's family. It has been 45 years since I left the bank in Gibbon. I was there when SBA presented the Small Businessman of the Year award to Lynn. It was my pleasure to be able to work with Lynn and Ace Irrigation while I was there.*
Don Harms

Donald E. Harms - June 01, 2015 at 02:37 PM



“ *On behalf of the Kearney Noon Rotary Club, we wish to extend our prayers to the family at this difficult time. Lynn was such a great friend of Rotary and soldier in our fight to end Polio. A disease experienced first-hand by Lynn that robbed so much from him. It's a testament to his character that he was able to accomplish so much despite of this. With Lynn's help, we are able to provide countless immunizations and support to eradicate Polio. I am proud to report, that at our District conference held this week, it was reported that only 25 cases of Polio have been reported worldwide so far in 2015 and no new cases of Polio have been reported worldwide for the last 90 days. Lynn truly made a difference in helping to achieve this success and bring attention to this effort.*

*R. Andrew Hanson, President
Rotary Club of Kearney, Nebraska*

Andy Hanson - June 01, 2015 at 08:57 AM

 Jay
Isaac

“ Lynn hired me back in 1979. He saw value in me at a time I didn't know where my future would lead. Little did I know what a blessing He and his family would be to me and mine. I'll miss him as a friend and adviser. I pray the Lord bless him. Thanks Lynn ,

Jay Isaac

Jay Isaac - May 31, 2015 at 10:22 PM

FH

“ The Hanks families send their thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of Lynn. My father Gerald Hanks worked for him years ago. He will be missed and my God bless you and help keep you strong.

Fonda Hanks - May 30, 2015 at 04:11 PM

KW

“ I always admired Lynn for all his accomplishments. He will be missed.
Kermit Wilke

Kermit Wilke - May 29, 2015 at 08:41 PM

MD

“ Lynn was a great man whom I had the privilege to know over the years. Lynn was so smart and remembered so many things about Kearney I always enjoyed talking with him.

Mike Mc Dowell

Michael MC Dowell - May 29, 2015 at 06:45 PM



SB

“ *My condolences to Lynn's family in thier lose. He was a good friend of 4-H.*

Steve Beadle

Steve Beadle - May 28, 2015 at 05:19 PM

 Toby Tollefsen

“ *Lynn was a true friend to Kearney. Employed so many family's He had a giant heart. He will be missed by all who knew him.*

Toby Tollefsen - May 28, 2015 at 01:32 PM



“ *Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses was purchased for the family of W. Lynn Thomas.*



May 28, 2015 at 09:39 AM

LK

“ *Lisa Musil Shields, Doug, and kids purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of W. Lynn Thomas.*



Lisa Musil Shields, Doug, and kids - May 27, 2015 at 09:46 PM

JM

“ *Jan Miller lit a candle in memory of W. Lynn Thomas*



Jan Miller - May 27, 2015 at 06:11 PM

JM

My husband, Vern knew-admired and respected Lynn. Quote, "We lost a winner, folks."

Jan Miller - May 27, 2015 at 06:16 PM



“ *Lynn Thomas,blessed my life ,and he strengthened me,he gave me and my daughter many wonderful memories.I was blessed to be a part of your family,though the years were brief.They are treasured in my heart forever.I want your kids to know we share in your sorrow .I'm happy LeAnn was able to help him write his book,I will treasure my copy forever.He lived a good life,he treasured and valued life.He was a great role model.And inspired those around him to go the distance.That was why he was so easy to love.He also had great character. He remembered more things than anyone I had ever met. He believed in service,and he was the one that encouraged me to vote for the first time. I'm a better person for knowing you.R.I.P. A piece of my heart goes with you,we have another Angel looking out for us.The best in you remains in us.Hugs and prayers are sent to your wife and family.*



Lynda Batten - May 27, 2015 at 02:58 PM

MT

“ My condolences to the family of Lynn. I grew up with you in Kearney and I am sending my love and prayers to all of you! I always thought your dad was awesome and so much fun to be around.
Marcy Kuhnel Thompson



Marcy Kuhnel Thompson - May 27, 2015 at 01:07 PM

JW

“ When my cousins and I were little and visiting grandma & Grandpa, we would run in one door and out the other. Uncle Bub was always sitting by the front door trying to catch us.
Also, he was a great singer and we would delight in hearing him sing: "Oh Lord it's hard to be humble" He was my favorite uncle. He will be greatly missed.
Love you Uncle Bub!

Janet Musil Winder

Janet Winder - May 26, 2015 at 04:59 PM

CC

“ Bubbie always had a smile for everyone. He loved his family and will be missed.

Cathie Cure

Catherine Cure - May 26, 2015 at 04:43 PM

LeAnn
Thomas

“ *LeAnn Thomas lit a candle in memory of W.
Lynn Thomas*



LeAnn Thomas - May 26, 2015 at 02:55 PM

DR

LeAnn, my father Edward worked at Ace Irrigation. He remembers your father very well.

Dan Reese - May 30, 2015 at 09:32 AM