

# Twelve Things About Thomas

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1	<p><a href="#">Thomas</a> is a multiple award-winning advocate specializing in <a href="#">autism</a>. This advocacy has taken him to every state in the union with the exceptions of Vermont, Alaska, and Wyoming, and to several places across the country of Canada. Thomas has traveled extensively, has spoken at local, state, regional, national and international conferences, has done a lot private consulting for families and school systems, and he has consulted on multiple educational IEPs.</p> <p>Thomas served on the <a href="#">Autism Society of America</a>'s national board of directors from 1992 to 1994, and again from 1997 to 2000. He has since served on several other non-profit advocacy boards, currently serving on the board of the <a href="#">Autism Society of Ohio</a>. Thomas has spoken to members of the Senate and Congress regarding autism awareness and funding for awareness and research. Thomas and his friends and fellow advocates <a href="#">Temple Grandin</a>, <a href="#">Sean Barron</a>, and the late <a href="#">Donna Williams</a> had a large part in the creation of autism awareness.</p>
2	<p>Before Thomas was an award-winning advocate, he was an award-winning writer of prose, poetry, and song.</p>
3	<p>Thomas carries a legal and valid <a href="#">Title of Honor</a>. The title was awarded to him in 1997 for his work in advocacy.</p>
4	<p>Thomas was diagnosed with autism in 1979, a seizure disorder (non-epileptic) in 1995, and Fibromyalgia in 1997. Twenty years after the Fibromyalgia diagnosis, that diagnosis was found to be incorrect. Thomas was then diagnosed with a further neurological disorder in 2017. In his case the disorder is progressive and is slowly eating away at him. He spends most of his time away from home in a <a href="#">titanium Tilita TRA</a> wheelchair, custom built to his own measurements, specifications, and needs. It cost a little over \$12,000.00 and was covered by insurance. Unlike the <a href="#">generic hospital wheelchairs</a>, it is extremely comfortable and maneuverable. He can still climb out of the chair and walk, but not long and not far. He is constantly in pain. He tries not to let that stop him from having a life.</p>
5	<p>His award-winning autobiography, <a href="#">Soon Will Come the Light</a>, was published in 1994. It is still in print and is still available for <a href="#">purchase on Amazon</a>. A second book, <a href="#">Light on the Horizon</a>, was published in 1996 and is now out of print. Thomas has published many other articles and essays on his life and on autism in general in various journals and magazines over the years. He is currently writing for <a href="#">Autism Parenting Magazine</a> and the <a href="#">Autism Digest</a>, among others.</p>
6	<p>Thomas was a featured speaker at the the <i>Hear Their Silence</i> autism rally held on the Mall in Washington in 2001 where he shared a stage with <a href="#">Maya Angelou</a>. The rally was attended by over 5,000 people. He was in the room at the first congressional vaccine hearings following the rally. Later that same year, he appeared as a guest on the <i>Oprah Winfrey Show</i>.</p>
7	<p>Thomas was engaged in 1991, and nearly engaged in 1996. He has never married. He still has the rings from those relationships, each one different from the other and each one beautiful, just like the women who wore them.</p>

8	<p>Thomas was 14 years old when he was diagnosed with autism. Soon after this he was admitted to a local psychiatric facility. But because much of autism awareness had not yet occurred and no one knew anything about it, they were not really able to do much to help him. He was released to his family three years later at the age of 17. He has often said his adolescence was taken from him and he has been trying to make up for it ever since.</p> <p>Thomas was brought out of the autism (to the extent that he has been) shortly after he was released. This happened mostly with a princess he met while attending a <a href="#">small community college</a> in Illinois, studying computer science. She did what all the doctors and all the therapists were unable to do, she found her way inside and gently brought him out.</p> <p>They remain friends over 30 years later and Thomas is thankful for that continuing friendship, the years of work she has invested in him, and the positive influence she has had on his life.</p>
9	<p>Thomas currently carries an extra class <a href="#">amateur radio</a> license (K4XIO) and a valid <a href="#">GMRS radio</a> license (WQPK331).</p> <p>After jumping through all those hoops to get the extra class amateur license, he found he prefers just to listen. But he does key the mic and talk every once in a while. Thomas prefers talking locally, both simplex and repeater. He also enjoys talking across the pond to Ireland. He can sometimes be found hanging out on the <a href="#">Echolink</a> where he uses a <a href="#">wireless over the ears headset with a PTT button</a> to talk. His current radios are a <a href="#">Kenwood TH-D74A</a>, a <a href="#">Kenwood TM-D710A</a>, and a <a href="#">Yaesu FT-991A</a>, among others.</p>
10	<p>Thomas usually has a police scanner going during the day and while he writes or does other things. In addition to police/fire/rescue, he listens to things like aviation, railroads, public transportation, businesses, government, military, zoos, colleges, news media, taxis, malls, corporations, parking detail, country clubs, security, etc.</p>
11	<p>Thomas helped to create the annual <a href="#">Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month</a> held every April, as well as the <a href="#">puzzle piece awareness ribbon</a>. He was also involved in crafting some of the words in the current <a href="#">ASA Options Policy</a>.</p>
12	<p>Thomas was raised on the North end of <a href="#">Columbus, OH</a>. Except for that brief time at the college mentioned above, he lived there until 1999 when he moved to the beautiful small mountain town of <a href="#">Bedford, VA</a>, located between Lynchburg and Roanoke. When the illness caught up to him 17 years later, he moved back to the area. He is now living in <a href="#">Hilliard, OH</a>, a city just West of Columbus. He lives with his sister, her husband, and a purebred <a href="#">pomeranian</a> that loves to bark and eat the treats Thomas gives her. Thomas is happy here. You will be able to find Thomas here and there around the web at the following: <a href="mailto:tmckean@aol.com">tmckean@aol.com</a>, <a href="https://www.facebook.com/thomasamckean">https://www.facebook.com/thomasamckean</a>, and <a href="http://www.thomasamckean.com">http://www.thomasamckean.com</a>.</p>