

Fourteen Things About Thomas

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1	<p>Thomas is a multiple award-winning advocate specializing in autism. This advocacy has taken him to every state in the <u>union</u> 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, he has consulted on multiple educational IEPs, and he has trained parents, educators, doctors, therapists, advocates, and first responders, among others.</p> <p>Thomas served on the Autism Society of America'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. (He currently serves on the board of the Autism Society of Ohio.) 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 Temple Grandin, Sean Barron, and the late Donna Williams 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 Title of Honor (making him <i>The Honorable Thomas A. McKean</i>) which was awarded to him in 1997 for his work in the international advocacy field.</p>
4	<p>Thomas was diagnosed with autism in 1979, a PNES 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. He is constantly in pain. He tries not to let that stop him from having a life.</p>
5	<p>His award-winning autobiography, Soon Will Come the Light, was published in 1994. It is still in print and is still available for purchase on Amazon. A second book, Light on the Horizon, was published in 1996 and is now out of print. Thomas has published many other articles and essays in various journals and magazines over the years.</p>
6	<p>Thomas was a featured speaker at the <i>Hear Their Silence</i> autism rally held on the Mall in Washington in 2001 where he shared a stage with Maya Angelou among others. It was attended by thousands of 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 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 sent to a local institution. But because 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>

9	<p>Thomas was brought out of the autism, to the extent that he has been, shortly after he was released from the institution. This happened mostly with a princess he met while attending a small community college in Illinois, studying computer science. She did what all the doctors and all the therapists were unable to do, over time she quietly found her way into his world and gently brought him out into this one. They remain friends over 40 years later.</p>
10	<p>Thomas currently carries an extra class amateur radio license (K4XIO) and a GMRS radio license (WQPK331).</p> <p>After jumping through all the 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 also sometimes be found hanging out on the Echolink where he uses a wireless over the ears headset with a PTT button to talk. He also uses a Kenwood TH-D74A, a Kenwood TM-D710A, and a Yaesu FT-991A with a Buddipole that includes a lot of extra gadgets and parts.</p>
11	<p>Thomas is co-creator of the annual National Autism Awareness Month held every April, as well as co-creator of the current autism puzzle piece awareness symbol. He had input and a vote on both.</p>
12	<p>Thomas has done time in a wheelchair. Diagnosed with a severe neurological disorder and falling down steps, he was given a red Tilite TRA which he used for just over five years. Today the illness is in a kind of remission and he is able to spend more time on his feet. This experience has made Thomas much more understanding of those with mobility disorders.</p>
13	<p>Thomas has recently joined the Unitarian Universalists and so he does not subscribe to any of the #actuallyautistic ideology. He does not hate ABA, Asperger's, Autism Speaks, Parents, or the Puzzle Piece. He does not believe, as some do, that the puzzle piece is a hate symbol, or that Autism Speaks is a hate group, or that parents hate or abuse their kids with autism, or that anyone diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome is either a Nazi or that they support the Nazis. Thomas has successfully worked with parents from around the world, training them in how to better care for their children with autism.</p>
14	<p>Thomas was raised on the North end of Columbus, OH. 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 Bedford, VA, 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 somewhat of a cave in Hilliard, OH, a city just West of Columbus. He is with family who is helping him day to day. He lives with his sister, her husband and Thomas is happy here. Find Thomas online and on the web at tmckean@aol.com, https://www.facebook.com/thomasamckean, and http://gallery.thomasamckean.com.</p>