



## Jean V. Thomas

November 16, 1927 - February 28, 2018

Jean V. Thomas was born and raised in Evanston, Illinois to Paul and Lillie Thomas on November 16, 1927. Preceding her in death, in addition to her parents, were her brother, Robert and aunt, Della Christ. Jean recently celebrated her 90th birthday at her home with friends helping in celebrating her special day.

Jean's ambition was to become a chemist from the time she and her brother Bob received a chemistry set while yet in grade school. Jean graduated from Evanston Township High School. Being told that chemistry was not a field for women proved to be her motivation. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Wisconsin and graduated Magna cum Laude in 1949 with a major in chemistry and minors in mathematics and languages. Publications included M. Lyons, J.V. Thomas; J. Amer. Chem. Soc. 72,4506 (1950) "Diffusion Studies on Dilute Aqueous Glycine Solutions at 1 and 25 deg. With Gouy Interference Method".

Her first job was Quality Control Chemist at Armour & Company in Chicago. In 1953, she co-founded PENTEX Incorporated with Trudy Dickinson. PENTEX became a producer of specialized biochemicals located in Kankakee, IL in 1956. Jean was Vice President and Treasurer. She was also Vice President of Midwest Pentex Sales Co. that was founded in Philadelphia in 1961.

Jean was Manager of Sales and Product Development and Controller at Kankakee. Not only was Jean unique in that she was an executive with a

chemical company, she later served as Director of Marketing until PENTEX and Midwest PENTEX was sold to Miles Laboratories. Since business and science were a rare combination for a woman extension courses and night classes were completed at Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois for additional career training.

Jean was promoted to Kankakee Plant Manager when Trudy was promoted to the Division offices in the mid-1970's and remained in charge of the Philadelphia operation. In this position, she succeeded in obtaining the Bureau of Biologics certification for Bovine Albumin 7% as a Laboratory Reference Standard for the National Committee for Clinical Laboratory Standard for the National Institutes of Health for the isolation of Porcine Factor VIII, a treatment agent for a heredity absence of a coagulation factor. Factor VIII then became a Kankakee standard product.

Jean served as Kankakee Plant Manager until being transferred to Elkhart, Indiana in 1978 as Worldwide Manager of Commercial Products and Applications, Miles Research Division. There she organized and directed a worldwide sales and distribution organization with offices in England, Germany, Spain, Australia, and Japan.

After Miles was sold to Bayer Corporation, the German Company known for Aspirin, Jean was transferred to Naperville as Miles Scientific Division Director of Sales and Marketing. She retired in 1995 as Worldwide Director of Sales/Marketing of the Diagnostics Division.

Honors include Who's Who Among American Women (1966), The Woman MBA (1976) published by the Harvard Business School, Boss of the Year (1989) by the Kankakee National Secretaries Association, and Riverside Healthcare Foundation Samaritan of the Year (2008). She is Past President of the Zonta Club of Kankakee and has served on local conference and administrative bodies of her church, St. Mark United Methodist Church. In 2014, she was recognized for Lifetime Achievement by Olivet Nazarene University and the Reed Institute for the Advanced Study of Leadership. She also received The Kankakee Community College 2016 Foundation Visionary

Award.

Until recently, Jean was active in her church, St. Mark United Methodist Church, a member of the Board of the Riverside Healthcare Foundation, and a member of the Board of Melissa Day Care Center.

Jean is survived by her cousin, Christopher Lukens of Virginia Beach, VA and several dear and close friends including John Dickinson of San Diego, Marge and Laura Dickinson of Houston, Lisa Watson, Ron & Judy Golembiewski of Kankakee and West Palm Beach, Paula Robinson, Sylvia Thomas, and Judy Reiniche.

Memorials may be made to St. Mark United Methodist Church, Riverside Healthcare Foundation, or Hospice of Kankakee Valley.

Visitation will be held from 4:30 p.m. until the 5:30 p.m. funeral service Sunday, March 4, 2018 at St. Mark United Methodist Church in Kankakee. Interment will be 10 a.m. Monday, March 5, 2018 at Kankakee Memorial Gardens in Aroma Township.

Arrangements by Clancy-Gernon-Hertz Funeral Home in Kankakee.

# Cemetery Details

## Kankakee Memorial Gardens

15 S. 3000 E. Rd.  
Kankakee, IL 60901

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAR 4. 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM (CT)

St. Mark United Methodist Church  
1200 W. Calista  
Kankakee, IL 60901  
(815) 933-8621

## Funeral Service

MAR 4. 5:30 PM (CT)

St. Mark United Methodist Church  
1200 W. Calista  
Kankakee, IL 60901  
(815) 933-8621

## Graveside Service

MAR 5. 10:00 AM (CT)

Kankakee Memorial Gardens  
15 S. 3000 E. Rd.  
Kankakee, IL 60901



# Tribute Wall

MR

“ I grew up across the street from Trudy and Jean, since the mid-1960s. I am very sorry and sad that I did not know until now of Jean's death. I am glad she got to live in her home the rest of her life. She and Trudy loved their home. As a child and teenager I watched these ladies live their lives as businesswomen in a time when women had few opportunities. They were dedicated to their church, and I recall them hosting the pastor and his family every Sunday for dinner. Women like Trudy and Jean are rare and irreplaceable. Kankakee has been very blessed that they chose to make this town their home. They became my friends when I became an adult, and I appreciate their wisdom that they shared with me every time we visited. I will always remember Trudy and Jean with gratitude and affection. Thanks be to God for the gift of these two dear souls. May both of these dear ladies rest in God's tender care now and always. I am glad they are reunited with each other, with their beloved parents, with Pastor Brusco who they both so loved.

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**Marilyn Keller Rittmeyer** - February 18, 2019 at 04:12 PM

BW

“ Jean was a rare and wonderful soul. She was a pioneer professionally and a community leader. Jean didn't just talk about what needed to be done, she stepped up and made herself part of the solution, recruiting others along the way. For such a tiny little lady, Jean was a force, and she made the world around her a better place. I will always remember her with fond affection, laughter, and admiration.

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**Becky Wilder** - February 13, 2019 at 09:58 AM

MH

“ Jean, a leader among women and men---a quiet contributor to her community to many of the things she loved most....  
I served on boards with Jean, and watched as she guided many women into leadership, and led by example.  
She could be tough or firm, when necessary, but gentle; she kept a low profile, but earned her spotlighted moments in life. Like a soldier, she gave, that others might live.  
As the song goes, "There's one more angel in Heaven...one more star in the sky"....  
and happy to be reunited with her dear friend, Trudy.

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**Marsha Hill** - March 04, 2018 at 12:29 PM

SH

“ This sweet Lady was our neighbor for ten years. We visited and chatted and she always had the most interesting stories! God gained an Angel!!

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**Sheri** - March 03, 2018 at 10:54 AM