

James Linsy Riggs, 88, passed away on November 26, 2025, in Houston, TX.

James was born on August 20, 1937, in Oklahoma to James Linsy Riggs and Ruby Lee (Lewis) Riggs. From a young age, he discovered a passion for aviation. At just 16 years old, he completed his first solo flight in a Cessna 140 in October 1953. He grew up in Pierre, SD, earning his private pilot's license at 17 and his commercial license at 18. James graduated from T.F. Riggs High School in Pierre.

He went on to become a flight instructor at South Dakota State College in Brookings and also instructed within the ROTC program. At 21, James joined the military, where he logged 3,392 hours in various military aircraft. During his distinguished service, he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and nineteen Air Medals. After retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel from the United States Marine Corps, he flew for Air West Airlines. In 1971 he joined Remote Sensing in Brookings, participating in aerial photography, and later became a pilot for United Airlines, where he flew for more than 20 years before retiring in 1997. Over the course of his lifetime, James logged nearly 22,000 flight hours.

His lifelong dedication to aviation earned him induction into both the South Dakota Aviation Hall of Fame and the Combat Air Crew Memorial.

In retirement, James enjoyed traveling the country in his RV and flying his Cherokee Piper throughout the United States with his dear friend, Shirley Lowrie.

James was preceded in death by his parents, James and Ruby Riggs, and his siblings Robert Riggs, Wayne Riggs, and Karen Riggs. He is survived by his daughters, Trish Riggs and Lori Johnson, both of Colorado; his siblings Cathy and Arlynn Anderson of Utah, Christine and Carl Hawkinson of South Dakota, Monte and Janet Riggs of South Dakota, Jane and Terry Tousley of South Dakota, and JoLinn and Steve Powell of Florida; and his special friend, Shirley Lowrie.

Burial with military honors at Black Hills National Cemetery in Sturgis, SD, will be held at a later date.

Thank you for your presence and condolences.

In Loving Memory



James Linsy Riggs

August 20, 1937 ~ November 26, 2025



"Once a Marine, always a Marine"

In Loving Memory Of
James linsy Riggs

Date of Birth
August 20, 1937

Date of Death
November 26, 2025

Graveside Service
Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 2:30pm

Final Resting Place
Black Hills National Cemetery
Sturgis, South Dakota



MARINES
THE FEW. THE PROUD.

Fair winds, Lt. Col. James Riggs,
Your flight was long, your aim was true.
Through cloud and storm, through sunlit skies,
You soared with courage in your eyes.

The runway fades, the engines rest,
You've reached the heights where souls are blessed.
Beyond the blue, where stars align,
You've found a peace both pure, divine.

We'll watch below and guard your flame,
Till we take wing to join your name.
In heaven's squadron, you've found your berth—
A pilot's soul of priceless worth.