

# Leland E. Thomas

**NAME**

Leland Evan Thomas

**MCSN**

O-9964

**HOME OF RECORD**

Fruitland, ID

**NEXT OF KIN**

Mother, Mrs. B. E. Thomas

**DATE OF BIRTH**

September 20, 1918

**DATE OF ENLISTMENT**

September 10, 1941

**DATE OF LOSS**

September 18, 1942

**REGION**

Solomons

**CAMPAIGN / AREA**

Guadalcanal

**CASUALTY TYPE**

Accidental Death

*Friendly Fire Incident*

**UNIT**

VMSB-232

**CIRCUMSTANCES OF LOSS**

On 18 September 1942, Second Lieutenant Thomas was assigned to fly the regular morning anti-sub patrol out of Guadalcanal's Henderson Field. The flight was uneventful, and at around 1100 hours Thomas began to head back to base. His route took him over a small convoy of American transports unloading reinforcements near Lunga. In the low overcast conditions, Thomas' bomber (SBD-3 #03347) was mistaken for an enemy marauder. Gunners on the transports opened fire, smoking Thomas' engine. He attempted a water landing, but became trapped in his cockpit when the plane hit the water. The gunner, PFC Edward Lee Eades, managed to escape, but was unable to free Lieutenant Thomas before the plane sank.

**INDIVIDUAL DECORATIONS**

[Distinguished Flying Cross](#), Purple Heart

**LAST KNOWN RANK**

Second Lieutenant

**STATUS OF REMAINS**

Not Recovered.

**MEMORIALS**

[USS Leland E. Thomas \(DE-420\)](#)  
[Manila American Cemetery](#)

Edward Lee Eades, recounted his experiences in 1999. He was retroactively awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his attempts to rescue his pilot.