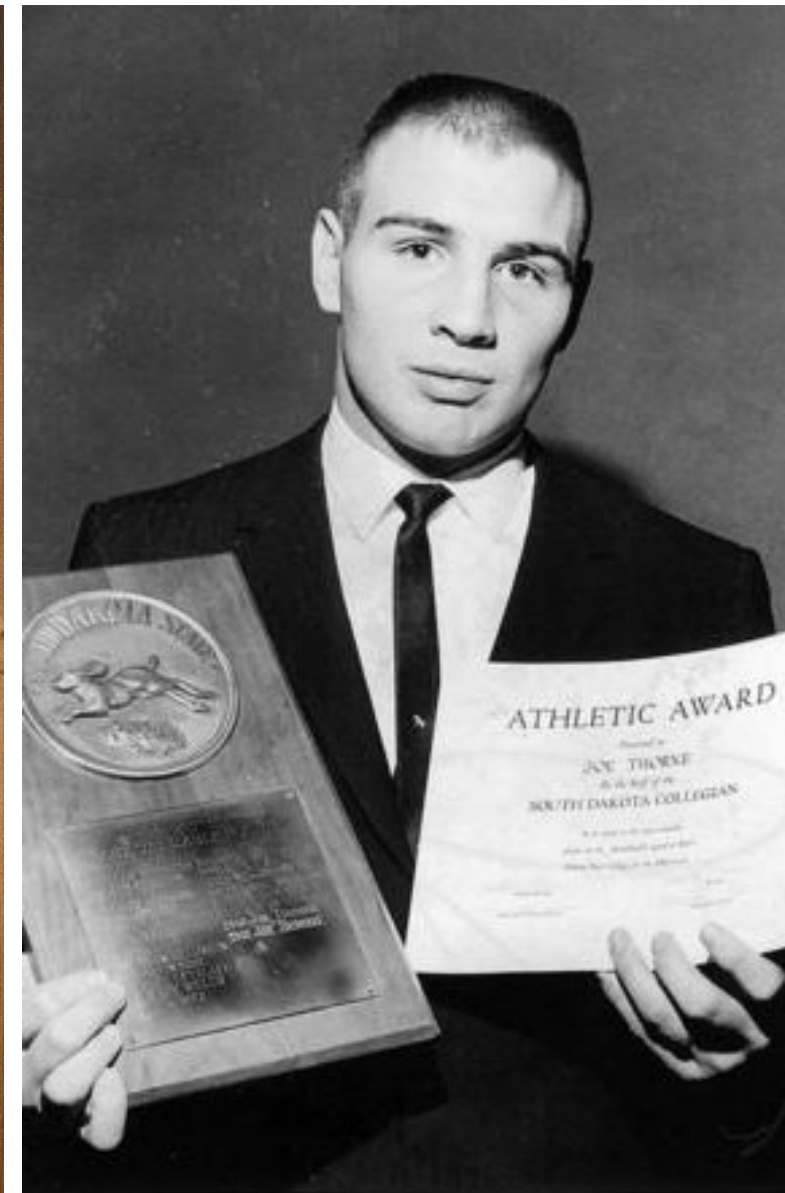
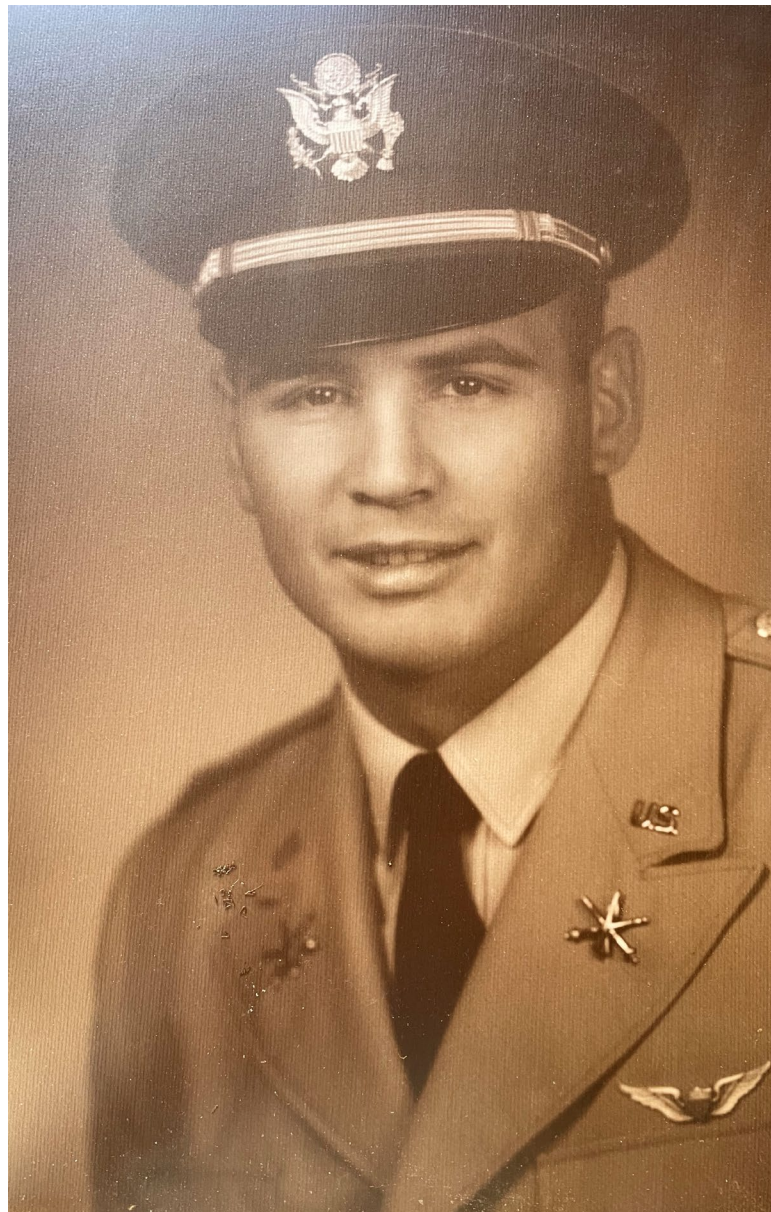


U.S. ARMY
FIRST LIEUTENANT
JOSEF L. THORNE

NOVEMBER 11, 2024

BERESFORD, SD





- On November 26, 2019, South Dakota launched the Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program. The program dedicates state bridges to South Dakota heroes who died while in active service, were a prisoner of war or were missing in action.
- SD HWY 46 bridge over the Vermillion River, west of Beresford, is dedicated to U.S. Army 1LT Josef L. Thorne.
- On Sept. 18, 1963, he was assigned to active duty with the U.S. Army. He was sent overseas to Vietnam in November 1964 for a one-year tour of duty. He was stationed at Phan Thiet and served with the 145th Aviator Airlift Platoon. He was originally assigned to fly mail but instead volunteered for combat missions to fly assault helicopters in Vietnam. He served as commander of a UH-18 (Huey) helicopter.
- Josef was given an assignment to fly a combat mission in the region near Qui Nhon, Vietnam. He was flying a Huey helicopter when the enemy began to fire on him and another plane from the ground. The plane and Huey helicopter Thorne was flying were shot down on Sunday, April 19, 1965. Nine men were killed, including Thorne. He was just 24 years old, and he was the first South Dakotan killed in action during the Vietnam War - 41 days after combat forces arrived in Vietnam. His name has the 21st place on the Vietnam War Memorial (Panel 01E - Line 105) in Washington, D.C.
- For his service and sacrifice, Thorne received many medals and citations. Among them were the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Service Medal and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.