



## Craig James Nichols

June 4, 1953 - November 26, 2025

Craig James Nichols, known affectionately as "Nick" to his loved ones, passed away peacefully surrounded by family on the evening of November 26, 2025, at Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids, MN. Born on June 4, 1953, to Jack Frank Nichols and Blanche Jean Warriner Nichols at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hospital in Wellsboro, PA, Craig lived a life marked by distinguished service, unwavering love, and an enduring spirit.

Craig's journey through life was characterized by courage, determination, and adventure. His passion for motorcycles and loyalty to his friends were sparked while still in high school. Some of his fondest memories and stories were about riding with friends and taking on projects and challenges with them. He loved walking the hills on the farm, the peace of the hills was something that lived in his heart and he always longed to return there.

He graduated from Wellsboro Area High School in 1973 and promptly joined the military via a delayed entry program. His commendable service to his country was evident in his time spent as a crew chief on a Huey helicopter in the Army from 1973 to 1976.

Upon his honorable discharge from the military, Craig attended Emery School of Aviation from 1978 to 1979, using his GI bill to earn his civilian pilot ratings. It was there that he met his wife and best friend, Teresa Vaughn Books, or

"Terry." They married 12/22/1979 and their enduring relationship is one of mutual respect, deep affection, and unwavering companionship.

Craig's love for flying led him to Arrowhead Airways at Anoka County Airport, Janes Field in Blaine, MN, where he worked as a flight instructor and charter pilot from 1979 to 1989. He truly loved flight instructing and "hangar-flying" with friends. He appreciated the good humor, storytelling, and experiences shared by other pilots. And his avid enthusiasm for aviation was nurtured as he discovered the many vintage aircraft hiding in the hangars on the field and connected with the owners , pilots, and mechanics who shared his passion.

He later piloted a King Air for the University of MN, transporting doctors to smaller communities as part of the U's Medical Outreach program, a position he found gratifying and interesting. He built lasting friendships with the doctors and community members he met along the way. Even when the University closed their flight department, he continued flying those Outreach flights as a charter pilot with Jetways for another two years.

In 1998, he joined S.T. Specialty Foods, flying a Citation II out of Flying Cloud Airport, where he transported staff and clients for business and pleasure across the country, including fishing trips to Canada and Alaska and pheasant hunting trips to South Dakota. His experience as a pilot was enriched by these people and places, fostering in him a deep appreciation for the positive impact aviation could have on individuals' lives.

Throughout their years in aviation Craig and Terry embraced their love for aviation in their personal lives as well. They shared many wonderful days with each other and with friends rebuilding two Aeronca Champs and their own 1947 taildragger, a PA12 Supercruiser; and earning their float ratings and balloon ratings.

Upon retiring from flying, Craig maintained his interest in hunting and firearms while working part-time at Cabela's. He delighted in interacting with customers and coworkers, building a network of friends who shared his interest.

When Craig retired from Cabela's, he spent more time on family history research, another strong interest he'd had since high school. In between trips to places of interest and cemeteries, he used Ancestry to trace multiple lines back to England, Germany, Scotland, Ireland and more.

Craig was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Kevin Morrell Nichols. Their memories remain a treasured part of his life story. He is survived by his beloved wife, Terry, their two sons, John Thomas (Marna) Nichols and a cherished granddaughter, Zara Mae of Dunedin, New Zealand, and Joshua William (Sage) Nichols of Eden Prairie, MN; as well as his sister-in-law, Nancy Nichols, his nephews, Michael Thomas Nichols and Jared Craig Nichols, and their mother Barb Nichols.

Craig's unique sense of humor and loyalty to family and friends will be deeply missed but always remembered. In his memory, we share his favorite poem, "High Flight" by John Gillespie Magee, Jr.," which follows this obituary.

A Celebration of life will be scheduled for a future date.

In lieu of flowers, donations to EAA Young Eagles or the Humane Society (ASPCA) will be appreciated.

High Flight

By John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;  
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth  
of sun-split clouds, - and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,  
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air....

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue  
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace.  
Where never lark, or even eagle flew -  
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
- Put out my hand, and touched the face of God."

# Tribute Wall

RB

“ I was only informed of Craig's passing 3/25/26, I'm so sorry to hear this Terry and to the rest of his family, my heart reaches out for you. It has left me beside myself as I know it has with all of the others who knew this wonderful Gentleman. All of the flight crew of Arrowhead were a tightly knit group while we were all there. All of those memories still provide me a warm feeling of camaraderie, that has NEVER existed for me in any other professional environment. Craig was my friend, my Commercial Flight Instructor, Multiengine instructor, and CFI, CFII, and CFI-ME Instructor. We flew many charters of various types together. All of us trusted each other with our lives on so many occasions, how do you say Thank You to someone who meant so much? I now know he knows. Bonner

RB Bonner - March 25 at 01:34 PM

TN

“ 9 files added to the album Craig's Treasures



ig James Nichols  
1953 - November 26, 2025



Terry Nichols - December 17, 2025 at 01:55 AM

JG

*I first met Craig at Arrowhead Airways flight school in '79. He finished up my pilot training, and we hit it off right away. We were like twins when it came to the kinds of planes we both loved. He was a very good instructor and taught me so much about flying.*

*We flew charter together and were in a plane on fire at 14,000' over NM once. He had a great memory for people's names and so many details about planes.*

*I was always impressed by his values and honesty. Something both he and Terry instilled in John and Josh. I'm very proud but not surprised at how his sons grew up with those same values.*

*As he would always say about someone who was a good person, "he's a good egg", well Craig was a good egg.*

*He was my instructor, and he was my friend.*

*Clear skies my friend; we'll fly together again someday.*

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**james gevay** - January 22 at 02:51 PM