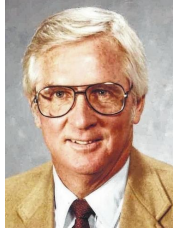


John Thomas



John Tillman "Bud" Thomas

SEDALIA — John Tillman "Bud" Thomas died Saturday, August 15, 2015 at Bothwell Regional Hospital. He was 86. Born in Sedalia on March 10, 1929, he was the oldest of two children for John A. and Ruth Thomas of Sedalia. He is survived by his wife Janet Shelby Thomas, and preceded in death by Beryl Leigh Thomas whom he married on January 1, 1950.

Everyone knew him as "Bud." In his youth, he lived, ate and breathed baseball as a kid. He quickly became a standout in American Legion baseball. He was known for flawless field play at shortstop and having a rocket right arm. Others took notice outside Sedalia. He was selected for the East West American Legion Charity Classic in 1947 where those selected played one game in Yankee Stadium. The two celebrity managers for the game were Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb. Being from Missouri, he played for Cobb on the West team but got tutoring from both legends.

Exposure from that game caught the eye of legendary baseball promoter Bill Veeck. He signed a contract after graduating from Sedalia Smith Cotton High School in 1947 to play for Veeck's St. Louis Browns organization. From 1947 to 1951, he played for several minor league teams before being called up to the majors in September, 1951. He was called up for his defensive play, but ended up with a major league batting average of .350 and one home run – off the Philadelphia Athletics. He played behind Hall of Fame pitcher Satchel Paige and was in the game with Eddie Gaedel, a dwarf used as a promotion by Veeck. He never got called up again and decided when the St. Louis Browns moved to become the Baltimore Orioles, it was time to return to his native Sedalia.

Thomas rarely talked about baseball after that because he was more proud of his work as a teacher, principal and school administrator. After baseball, Bud earned his Bachelor and Masters degrees from Central Missouri State University. He became a teacher in Whittier then moved on to be Principal at Horace Mann. He moved to Smith Cotton High School and became a counselor in 1961. When Heber U. Hunt Elementary School was opened in 1962, he was selected as Principal. It was an honor he always cherished since he considered Heber Hunt as one of his primary mentors. In 1972, Thomas was promoted to assistant superintendent as Director of Elementary Education. He was in charge of personnel and building and grounds. He retired from the school system in 1986.

As a child of the depression, he grew a passion for hunting, fishing and being outdoors as a source for food and relaxation. He loved being outdoors so much he worked as an insurance crop adjuster something he did for over 35 years. Many knew him as an avid, competitive golfer and long-time member of the Sedalia Country Club. He also gained notoriety as a professional woodcarver as his works were highlighted at Silver Dollar City in the early 60s and he taught woodcarving classes for several years at State Fair Community College in Sedalia. One of his best works is a full-scale carving of Jesus Christ housed in the prayer chapel still today at First Christian Church in Sedalia where he was a member for over 75 years.

He is survived by two sons, John Larry Thomas (Pam S. Thomas), of Olathe, KS and Mark Evan Thomas (Pamela Leigh Thomas), of New Milford, CT; one step-son, Jason Shelby (Kristie), of San Diego, CA; two step-daughters, Stephanie Johanning (Pat), of Glasgow, MO and Jessica Klassen (Jon), of Lee's Summit; a sister, Rebecca Katherine Garst (Donald), of Marshall; ten grandchildren, John Collin Thomas (Ashley), of Olathe, KS, Michelle Leigh Hinkle (Steve), of St. Louis, Zane, Jillian and Hayden Johanning, Jack, Jason and Abigail Klassen, Beckham and Bodhi Shelby; and five great-grandchildren, Adelaide Rose Thomas, Reagan Elizabeth Hinkle, Margaret Mary Hinkle, Olivia Catherine Hinkle and Benedict James Hinkle.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, August 19, 2015 at McLaughlin Funeral Chapel with the Rev. Chad McMullin officiating. Burial will be in Memorial Park Cemetery. Pallbearers will be Collin Thomas, Todd Garst, Jason Shelby, Jon Klassen, Patrick Johanning, Ken Weller and Dennis Eding. Honorary pallbearers will be Bob Edmundson, Lou Temple, Ned Postels, Jack Hawkins, Earl Finley and James Cooney. Visitation will be from 9 a.m. until service time at the funeral chapel. Memorial contributions are suggested to the Children's Therapy Center, or the ALS Association in care of McLaughlin Funeral Chapel.

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