



James Clarence Thomas

January 6, 1929 - January 6, 2019

JAMES C. THOMAS OBITUARY

Our beloved father, James C. Thomas passed away January 6, 2019, in Tulsa, Oklahoma on his 90th birthday. He was born in Alva, Oklahoma on January 6, 1929. Jim was preceded in death by his son Steven Ross Thomas. He was survived by son Michael C. Thomas (wife Laurie Phillips), daughter Cassandra T. Funderburk, son Doug Thomas (wife Kim Thomas), grandsons Michael S. Thomas (wife Caitlyn Thomas), Tyler Funderburk (wife Aimee Funderburk), Joshua Funderburk, Andrew Funderburk (wife Christina Funderburk), granddaughters Tiffany Phillips, Amber Thomas, great granddaughter Birdi Lynn Thomas, and great grandson Benjamin Thomas.

Services will be held on Friday, January 11, 2019 at 3:00pm at Greenwood Cultural Center, 322 North Greenwood Ave. Plenty of parking is available.

Donations to Mental Health Association Oklahoma in lieu of flowers.

5330 East 31st Street, Suite 1000, Tulsa, OK 74135

918-585-1213

Jim Thomas grew up in Birmingham, Alabama in an orphanage. At age 13 he moved into a foster home where he lived until he dropped out of high school to enlist in the Army. He completed his GED and used the GI Bill to attend the University of Alabama. He dropped out of college for a short time. where he experienced hitch-hiking across the USA, buying his first car, working as an accountant for the IRS, working as a draftsman, then canning fruit on an assembly line. Falling asleep under a shade tree at the canning assembly line job got him fired which is what encouraged his reentry back to university! He took an exam when considering getting his MBA, he did really well on the Law portion. This was his deciding factor to go to Law School at the University of Alabama. Jim received a Fellowship to get his master's degree at New York University after graduating from Law School. As part of his Fellowship, he taught classes. He knew quickly that he was meant to teach. He moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1963 where he became a professor of Law for 48 wonderful years. He described his profession as a privilege.

Jim Thomas was a Democrat, had been the Chairman of the Democratic Party, and led

many successful campaigns in the state of Oklahoma. Jim championed causes for equality, inclusion, acceptance, and truth to power. During his early tenure as a TU professor, he led a demonstration against the Vietnam War. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, that was not a popular position to undertake, however, Jim knew that the United States intervention in Vietnam was wrong and he was not afraid to let it be known. He worked tirelessly on research and writing regarding the Vietnam War.

Jim fought for the bargaining rights of labor unions and represented workers and their Unions in too numerous lawsuits to mention. In 2009, he challenged the constitutionality of HB 1804. HB 1804 targeted Latinos in an effort to curtail their ability to find housing. HB 1804, among other provisions, would have put the burden on a landlord to determine the immigration status of renters. He had nothing to gain personally, he knew that there was everything to gain for that brown person to have the ability to obtain housing. More recently, Jim challenged the constitutionality of Oklahoma's voter i.d. law. He knew that it would be a difficult undertaking but took on the challenge. He believed in the integrity of our constitutional right to vote, that there should be no impediment placed in the way. Jim loved his family more than his causes. His life goal was to see each of his children and grandchildren educated. He proudly saw that occur! He made sure that he spent quality time with his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. He enjoyed taking road trips. He would go individually with his children so he was able to spend quality time with each one. Great memories were made.

Jim Thomas, our Dad, Grandpa, Papa, Friend touched the lives of many through his generosity, humor, strong work ethic, advocacy, resilience, positive attitude, love for teaching, rich experiences, and strong love for family, he will greatly be missed. He enjoyed watching the sky. He asked once, "How can people be so busy that they don't look at the sky? Look at the beauty they are missing." He helped each of us see greatness and beauty all around us. Next time you see a beautiful sky, think of Jim Thomas and smile.

Moore's Rosewood Chapel
918-744-1202

Comments



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



WILLIAM D THOMAS - January 12 at 08:10 AM



“ Professor Thomas was an amazing human being. I worked at the University of Tulsa's law library from 1991-2003 and would see him every morning when I delivered mail. I had both of my children while working there and Prof. Thomas always asked about them. When my then husband suffered from a traumatic brain injury, he and many others at TU blessed my young family with money to help while we were down to just my income. He then put us in touch with his daughter to try to assist my husband with advice for securing a teaching job after graduating from TU a few years later. Prof. Thomas once told me that family is the most important thing in this life. I am thankful to have known Professor Thomas and I am thankful for the wise advice and kindness he often shared with me. My thoughts are with his family.

Christy Ryan - January 11 at 11:17 PM



“ I have missed Jim Thomas since his retirement. He was a man of principle, a staunch defender of those without power in the system. He was also kind and patient. And he loved the University of Alabama! I will always think of Jim in his Alabama sweatshirt. The world was better off with Jim in it. He will be missed.

Judy Royster

Judy Royster - January 11 at 12:38 PM



“ Thank you for your very kind words. He definitely was a Bama fan. Our family misses him greatly.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:30 PM



“ Jim Thomas was a man of strong principle as both a citizen and a professor. Like Ray Yasser, I first met Jim during my job interview, where I learned that one of his children was named after Justice William O. Douglas. That told me something about Jim's principles. As I worked with him in the decades that followed and observed him

articulate his views at law school faculty meetings, within the University community, or, out in public, I observed a man of strong principle who was willing to take a public stand on them. Our law school society, the University society, the local Tulsa society, and, the greater Oklahoma society were all strengthened by the character of his principled actions. Jim Thomas represents the best of what being a professor of law is all about. Great job, Jim!

John F. Hicks

John F. Hicks - January 11 at 08:52 AM



“ Thank you so much for this recognition of our father. He was so honored to serve as a professor of law for so many years.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:34 PM



“ I first met Jim Thomas when i started working at the law school back in 1970. He will always be one of my favorite professors. I admired him and loved the way he was always so proud of his family. In the years since his retirement my husband and I would run into him and Cassandra once in awhile. He never seemed to age and was always the same warm and friendly person I remembered from his years at TU. I will miss him.

Rosemarie Spaulding

Rosemarie Spaulding - January 10 at 03:42 PM



“ You brought a smile to his face Rosemarie. He enjoyed serving with you at the Law School. We also miss him dearly. Thanks for your kind words.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:36 PM



“ I worked for Mr. Thomas weekly in his house for over 15 years. His passion for his family, his work, his writings, and his dog showed throughout his home. He was a very special man and was so generous to me through the years. He often left me in tears on how he showed appreciation to my work which by most may go unnoticed. He always told me how he valued "the working man" and he lived by that. He will be missed. Bless his family!

megan - January 09 at 05:31 PM



“ He loved you like family. I am so glad you got to know him so well. Your description of our Dad was right on. Thanks Megan for supporting Dad for so many years.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:38 PM



“ I have such fond memories of Professor Jim Thomas. Working as a Law Reference Librarian for many years at the University of Tulsa Law School Mabee Legal Information Center, I had many conversations with Jim at the reference desk and offered assistance to him in locating materials for his research projects. He was unfailingly courteous, kind, and appreciative. I had great admiration for this man. I know Jim will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege to know him.

Kathy Kane, Retired Law Reference Librarian

Kathy Kane - January 09 at 04:33 PM



“ I started working at TU Law in 1993 as a Faculty Assistant. Right away, I was greeted and welcomed by Jim Thomas! Since my workday began at 7:30am, many times, Jim was already in the building, preparing for a class or writing a chapter in a book he was working on. As luck would have it, Jim would bring a work assignment to me, and after discussing what he needed done, the subject would always turn to family - his and mine. And, it didn't take long for me to see how much his family meant to him. Even better, if a family member stopped by the law school, Jim would bring them to my office for introductions!

Other priorities in Jim's life were education, good government, speaking up for yourself as well as speaking for those whose cause(s) only fell on deaf ears. On a personal note: I remember one day at the law school when my daughter Erin was working as an undergrad student worker, Jim challenged Erin to a foot race down the hall to his office, this was just one instance of how well Jim related to people of all ages. In fact, Jim told me that he rarely attended undergraduate graduation ceremonies - well the year of Erin's graduation, guess who marched in with other faculty members? Yes, James C. Thomas! What a great man he was to so many during his time on earth! We are all better for having had him in our lives!

Cyndee Jones - January 09 at 04:17 PM



“ He adored you Cyndee! Thanks for these kind words. We are so proud of our Dad and miss him greatly.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:41 PM



“ When I interviewed for a position at TU, Jim was on the hiring committee. During the interview, Jim occasionally excused himself to check on the score of the Alabama game.

I immediately thought, I like this guy. He has things in perspective. As has been noted, Jim spoke truth to power and believed that tenure carried with a responsibility to be fearless in confronting abuse of power. And he was always truly decent. Quite a legacy.

Ray Yasser

ray yasser - January 09 at 11:00 AM



“ Legacy and Alabama fan are certainly themes to the memory of our Dad. Thanks for your kind words Professor Yasser.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:43 PM



“ Jim had a great influence on me. Over the years I learned from him important social mores that changed my whole outlook on life and politics. He was a great friend and I know the world will miss his presence. My deepest sympathy to his children and grandchildren. He was a wonderful person

Orley Lilly, Professor Emeritus of Law, The University of Tulsa
now retired and living in Sedona, Arizona.

Orley Lilly - January 08 at 06:41 PM



“ Thank you Professor Lilly. Our Dad enjoyed working with you. We appreciate your words in his honor so very much.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:45 PM



“ Jim fearlessly spoke truth to power and championed the cause of both economic and racial justice. It was an honor -- and a delight -- to have him as a colleague. All of us who knew him are much the richer for it.

Pat joins me in sending our sincere sympathy to his loved ones.

Bill Hollingsworth
Prof. Emeritus
U. of Tulsa College of Law

Bill Hollingsworth - January 08 at 06:02 PM



“ Thank you so much.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:46 PM



“ Jim was an incredibly kind and generous colleague, and he will be deeply missed by all of us who taught with Jim over the years at TU. His commitment to social justice was inspiring, and he touched many lives through his work in Oklahoma and nationally throughout the decades. I will always count myself lucky to have served with Jim in the faculty and on various University committees. He taught junior faculty

by example, and his patience and logical approach to so many issues made a deep impression on me.

I will miss him as a colleague and as a fellow Panera friend, as it was always a joy to see him in the mornings, enjoying the company of his Panera friends.

Marianne Blair

Marianne Blair - January 08 at 04:51 PM



“ Our family appreciates the outpouring of kind words from the TU Law Schoom faculty in honor of our Dad.

cassandra Funderburk - February 08 at 03:48 PM