



John Thomas

November 20, 1915 - June 25, 2011

John D. Thomas, 95, was born Nov. 20, 1915, on a ranch near Fort Rock. His family soon moved to Brush Prairie, Wash., and, when John was 6, to north Portland. He attended Portsmouth Grade School and Roosevelt High School, where he excelled in the classroom and on the baseball field as a catcher.

A Roosevelt student body president and class president, he attended the University of Oregon, where he earned a law degree in 1938.

He was a three-year letterman catcher, and was not chosen by Coach Howard Hobson to be All-Northern Division because, as Hobson told the Oregon Journal, "Johnnie Thomas missed practices and parts of games to attend class. He was the best handler of pitchers in the division, and a good hitter, a good defensive player."

He worked for Zellerbach Paper, the FBI, and Oregon Title and Trust before exercising his U.S. Army Reserve commission in November 1941. He married Mayro Lauersen of Corvallis that week; they moved to Minter Field, Calif., and back to Corvallis in 1947, with two boys in tow. John Jr. and Robert were joined by sister Kristy in 1952. By then John had become a law partner with first Oehler and Huston, and then LaVerne Johnson.

Thomas and Johnson became a longstanding law firm, and John worked hard for Corvallis by serving United Way and heading the fund drive one year. He was a founder of the Benton County Foundation, which began as an attempt to get jobs for high school kids in summer. He was a founding director of

Citizens Bank. He was an Elk, a dedicated Rotarian and a Corvallis Country Club member, and was active in other community events.

He had season tickets for Beaver sports, and supported U of O athletics through the Letterman's Club.

John and Mayro retired in 1981 and moved to Sun City, Ariz., where they lived until 2000, returning to Corvallis to buy a house and live out their lives. Mayro died in 2004, and John moved to California to live with son Robert until his health failed, and he moved back to Oregon.

He is survived by three children, eight grandchildren, 10 nieces and nephews, and four brothers and sisters-in-law. His two brothers and his sister preceded him in death.

A memorial service will take place at 2 p.m. Saturday, July 16, at McHenry Funeral Home. Memorial donations in John's name can be directed to the Benton County Foundation in care of McHenry Funeral Home 206 NW 5th St., Corvallis, OR 97330.