



Jesse Franklin Thomas

July 18, 1922 - November 23, 2013

Jesse (Jess) Franklin Thomas 91, beloved husband, father, stepfather, uncle, brother, grandfather and great-grandfather passed peacefully from this life on November 23, 2013. Jess was born on July 18, 1922 in Remer, Minnesota to Curtis and Ruth (Mix) Thomas. Born prematurely at home, he was often placed in a shoebox next to the family cookstove to keep warm. In 1923, for health reasons, the young family of seven traveled westward in a Model T Ford, stopping to work in several states and ending in Arizona permanently in 1937. As a teen, he was a paper carrier for the Arizona Republic, contributing his earnings to help the struggling family during the depression. During this time, two more children were born into the family. Jess briefly attended Monroe Elementary School and graduated from Phoenix Union High School on May 30, 1941. On March 5, 1942, Jess enlisted in the US Navy. He was stationed in the South Pacific at Munda, New Georgia as an aviation radioman. In 1944, he accepted an opening in the V-12 program at Columbia University in NYC. Completing two years there, he was discharged from the Navy in 1946 and returned to Phoenix. Later that year while attending a dance at Sciots Auditorium on Central Avenue, he met Gloria Kwiatkoski. They were married in 1947 and moved to Tucson to finish his degree in Electrical Engineering at the University of Arizona. Upon graduation in 1949, he took a job with Arizona Power Company (APS) in Prescott and the then family of three, moved to Prescott. During the next six years, he and Gloria added two more daughters to the mix. In 1955, he was transferred to Phoenix as a sales

representative for Arizona Public Service Company. Working his way up the ladder, he was manager of Metro Engineering until 1972 when he was transferred back to his beloved Prescott as Manager of Yavapai Division. He retired in 1982 after thirty-three years of service. After retirement, he was encouraged to run for a seat in Arizona House of Representatives. Not letting defeat stop him, he next formed an electrical engineering energy management company, Thomas & Associates, with his long time friend Henry Dahlberg. The two partners traveled the state offering their experience and expertise to all that requested it. After forty-eight wonderful years of marriage, Gloria passed away in January 1995, On October 19, 1996; Jess married the new love of his life, Nitaray Smith, “the lady with the beautiful smile” as he often shared with others. He also gained a new stepson and stepdaughter to add to the family. Together they had seventeen wonderful years of marriage.

Jess was actively involved in community and civic activities. While living in Prescott in the early fifties, he was a member of Smoki, participating in the yearly ceremonial dances every August. He and Gloria in addition to raising three young daughters loved square dancing with friends in the Downtown Plaza. While living in Phoenix, his activities included: member and President of Encanto Kiwanis, PTA president and member of Toastmasters International. After returning to Prescott in 1972, he was active in the Sheriff’s Air Group, President and board member of Prescott Chamber of Commerce, President and board member of Prescott Town Hall and on the board of directors of Salvation Army. In addition, he never wanted to miss a weekly meeting of the well-respected Prescott Monday Mafia in the backroom of Murphy’s Restaurant.

Jess had a full and active life with many interests and hobbies. He loved to travel and often boasted he’d been to every state in the union. With Gloria, he ventured to Europe several times as well as to Canada and Mexico. And he was never happier when he and Nitaray took off with their travel trailer

zigzagging here and there across the country. Boating was another one of his passions. One of his favorite treks was the yearly trip to Lake Powell. He spent many years introducing family and friends to the beauty of the area. He was an avid woodworker with a state of the art workshop. He enjoyed playing bridge, golf and snow skiing with friends. He took his last run down a snowy hill at the age of seventy-five. Jess was never happier than when surrounded by family. Even in later years, he would sit smiling in his chair with a Manhattan in hand, watching the chaos of children grandchildren and great-grandchildren reign around him.

Jess was preceded in death by his parents Curtis and Ruth Thomas, sister Lorraine Challis, brother Curtis Thomas and first wife Gloria Kwiatkoski Thomas. He is survived by wife, Nitaray Thomas, sisters, Irene Jameson, Mildred Cox, Mary Benson and Carolyn Searfoss, daughters Sherry Richey, Dianne Bauman and Lois Hoskinson, stepson Steve Smith (Cheryl), stepdaughter Shelly Yeck, "adopted" daughter Ginny Duckworth (Jim) grandchildren Brian Richey (Carrie), Blake Richey (Billie Jo), Dan Bauman (Louella), Jodi Wetzstein (Kurt), Amy McGehean (Brian), Tom Hoskinson (Sara), Heidi Hammond (Travis) Justin Yeck, Tanner Yeck, Alexander Smith, Kathlyn Smith, and twelve great-grandchildren.

Jess has left a wonderful legacy and great example for others to follow. He was a very wise compassionate man with a wonderful sense of humor. A man loved and respected by all who came to know him. He will be deeply missed. A memorial mass and celebration of his life will be held at 11:00 a.m. Thursday, December 5, 2013 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 150 Fleury Ave. Prescott, 86301. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to Hospice Family Care Inc., 100 E. Sheldon, Suite 100, Prescott 86301 or Prescott Charities Inc. 1230 E Valley View Rd, Prescott, AZ 86303-5253. Hampton Funeral Home was entrusted with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

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“ We shared many wonderful times with Jess and Gloria over the years. And we know how important and loving Nitaray was to Jess. Jess lived a full life and will be remembered fondly by all who knew him. We are unable to attend the funeral but send sincere condolences and prayers to all the family. May he rest in peace and may his family treasure his presence in their lives. Peter and Evelyn Groff

Peter and Evelyn Groff - December 05, 2013 at 10:34 AM

MP

“ Jess was a true gentleman and an example to all who knew him. His kind and gentle manner drew everyone's respect. I had the pleasure of being active with him in the Chamber of Commerce. He was the experienced hand while I was the rookie. He continued his involvement with the Chamber long after his tenure as an officer were past. As he told me one time, "I have too much pride of authorship to step aside now."
I was sorry that he was not elected to the Legislature. He would have made a great contribution. He has left a shining legacy - one that we all are proud to follow. There aren't enough people like him who pass our way.

Marvin Pitts

Marvin Pitts - December 01, 2013 at 03:19 PM

DP

Jess was a wonderful man with a great sense of humor. I was fortunate to know both of his wonderful wives. He was such fun to be around. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.
De Pitts

De Pitts - December 04, 2013 at 05:43 PM