

## Beatrice M. Thomas

January 23, 1912 - December 30, 2014

Dover - Beatrice M. (Mattison) Thomas, 102, passed into the hereafter on December 30, 2014.

She had a larger-than-life personality as an athlete, teacher, coach, mother and wife.

B was born in Philadelphia, PA to Finnish immigrant parents, graduated from high school knowing she wanted to be a physical education teacher. She earned Temple University Women's Athletic Association's highest female award as a sophomore. After graduating Temple U in 1933, she earned a Masters Degree in Physical Education from the University of Pennsylvania and began her career as an educator and coach in Palmyra and Moorestown, NJ high schools.

Teaching in her early years she was smitten by a young teacher/coach/athlete, Albert F. Thomas and they were married shortly after before he served in the US Army during WWII.

Bea's coaching record in girls' sports included 95 consecutive swimming victories in Moorestown with a total of 250 wins and 26 losses in 27 years and in lacrosse and field hockey, won 222, lost 112, ties 44. She was the goalie coach for 14 NJ State Championship girls' field hockey teams. When she learned that the Board of Education in Moorestown had set a policy that

coaches retire at age 70, she confronted the AD who defensively assured her she could coach as long as she wanted-- she chose to retire from coaching at 92!

She was an over-the-top advocate for women's sports and helped set the stage for Title IX that assured female athletes equal treatment. She received numerous awards from athletic and educational organizations in New Jersey, and in 1997 was selected by the US Olympic Committee as Developmental Coach of the Year for girls' field hockey.

In her own athletic career she played goalie in field hockey was selected for the US Team twice, West Jersey All-stars 13 times and New Atlantic team 17 times-- retiring from the field in her 60's.

She was a founding member of St Matthew's Lutheran Church in Moorestown. She and her late husband Albert raised two children, Peter, a dentist practicing in Hampton, and the late Christine who was also a physical educator. She has two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

A celebration of her life will be held at 3 P.M. Friday, January 9, 2015 at Maple Suites, 30 Holiday Drive, Dover. In lieu of flowers, please donate to SolAmor Hospice Foundation, 65

Lafayette Road, North Hampton, NH 03862. Assistance with the arrangements was by the Remick & Gendron Funeral Home-Crematory, Hampton.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JAN 9. 3:00 PM (ET)

Maple Suites  
30 Holiday Drive  
Dover, NH 03820

# Tribute Wall



“ *Beatrice M. Thomas*

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September 18, 2022 at 12:49 AM

ND

“ I had just moved to Moorestown from Wellesley MA, and missed Massachusetts terribly. I was a 12 years old and entered the Moorestown Junior High, an old funky school for which I could not wait to leave and go away. I was expecting to escape to Virginia in three years, but something magical happened and I entered Mrs. Thomas's world of gym class. Then girls told me about the Field Hockey try outs and I was really too late, but she let me come in regardless. No one has touched me so much. She saw that I was an athlete with various talents and she extended to me extra special attention. You can not imagine how much that meant to me, being the youngest of 3, with 2 older brothers, who put me on ignore. Mrs. Thomas always picked me out and showed me how much I could do. She always wanted to show me that I could beat the timing in everything and break the previous record. She made me hang from bars for minutes on end, and taught me gymnastics, parallel bars, dancing and track. She made me a sprinter and put me on the track team to run the 50 yard dash and the relay. I could never imagine why she picked a 5' 3" girl for the broad jump, but I came in third against giants and we won the Gold Cup and the Championship in 1967. Then there was Field Hockey and Lacrosse and she graced me with being a Center Forward, the sprinter in me, and a position I am still proud of to this day. We were a great team when I was in the ninth grade when I finally got to play varsity, and I think we were undefeated. Most of all, I never shall forget how excited I was every time the bell rang in school when it was time to go to gym class. There was no class that I can ever remember that I would just leap out of my seat to go to with so much enthusiasm. I loved every second of gym class, and thinking back on it, what was it that drew me so passionately to gym class? Was it really all the calisthenics and the rope climbing?, or was it the attention she bestowed on me and the warm affectionate special magical feeling that I received from her. The latter I am sure. I shall never forget her special warm smile when I was in a hockey line up and being a little impish. She was okay with my little mischief. I never saw her as a tough coach, but as a loving and doting one. When my dream finally came true to go away to school in Richmond, and when I joined the field hockey

*and lacrosse teams in the tenth grade away from home, finally, I missed her like crazy. My coach in Richmond knew Mrs. Thomas very well as they were contemporaries and All American's together, but it was not the same without Mrs. Thomas, that extra special spark that she gave to me. I went on score many goals and we were undefeated Virginia champions in 1970. Mrs. Thomas was always a continual inspiration, but I sorely missed her. She was an angel that I was blessed have in my life for three years, and her inspiration still shines forth in all things. My father died at 102 two weeks after her, so it was quite a coincidence, and probably why I did not see this sooner.*

*NvD, New York*

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**Nina van Dyke** - July 08, 2015 at 09:10 PM

JS

*Remember where you were on July 20th, 1969? I was with you in your parent's house in Ramblewood watching the first man on the Moon. Jay Schade checking in from Palm Coast, Florida. Summer of 1969 was a fun time filled with fond memories. If you want to correspond, e-mail me at: [schadejay@gmail.com](mailto:schadejay@gmail.com)*

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**Jay Schade** - June 20, 2023 at 12:45 PM

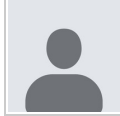


“ *Kathy Willis lit a candle in memory of Beatrice M. Thomas*



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**Kathy Willis** - February 10, 2015 at 03:56 PM



*I was not a real sports person, she knew that, but she was able to encourage me to be the best non athlete I could be. Gave me every opportunity I ask her for and I pushed to show her what I was capable of doing. A skill that has allowed me to walk with some very impressive people during this life. Thanks Bea.*

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**Kathy Willis** - February 10, 2015 at 04:00 PM

BM

“*Barbi Develin McNulty here. Bea Thomas, my first role model (but i didn't know it at the time). You taught me to treasure athletics. You taught me it was ok to be good in sport and be damn proud of it. You taught me to fight to the finish, stay in the game, there is no opponent worthy of beating us. We were 13 years old and believed every word and I still do. I think you were meant to be part of my growing up....if we all are here for a short time with a special errand....I was meant to be in your class and on your fields. I have always known I am a better person because of you. And to your AI, thanks for history. I can still recite "these are the times that try men's souls....." and it still gives me shivers knowing I have to stand up in front of you and the class. What a lucky person I have been to be able to touch you two. God Bless. Barbi Develin McNulty*

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**Barbara McNulty** - January 13, 2015 at 07:01 PM

CL

“ I have many memories of Bea Thomas having swum for her in high school for four years and having her as my gym teacher since 7th grade. But two of my topmost recollections of her were from junior high days – one relates to swimming and the other to gym class. In gym, she was ALWAYS cajoling me to do things I either didn't want to do or couldn't. My most hated thing was gymnastics....and the mats were the worst! She always pushed me to do head stands – hand stands I could muster – but never head stands...Finally, one day after months of insisting I do a head stand with me refusing yet again, she threw up her hands and said, “Claudia, it's a good thing you're a good swimmer because you sure as heck aren't good at anything else.” (Pretty much true!) The other incident involved a 9th grade sports award assembly. Debbie Bottomley (MHS '70) and I had been 'allowed' – against the rules – to swim for the high school team a year early...which meant we were the only two athletes with four years of varsity letters (and 4 years as state champions), not three. Anyway, she loved to make fun of me for how I used my hands to express myself and nicknamed me ZaSu Pitts – who was a famous silent movie comedienne – who did the same thing. (Had to I guess.) I had no idea who she was...but I secretly liked the name ZaSu. So Mrs. Thomas introduces me – on stage – in front of the whole school -- it might have actually been at the high school, not the junior high which was even worse...to receive my varsity letter, my first - as ZaSu Pitts - complete with waving her arms and hands around in the air!! I was mortified! Looking back and in light of her obituary - where so many huge accomplishments are in evidence - I can see how she showed me her fun side...It was quite remarkable that she noticed that personality trait in me as well. Whatever embarrassment I may have felt at the time has been eclipsed by the passage of time. Our time with her was but a drop in the bucket compared to all the girls she coached across three sports in all those years!! Being instrumental in Title IX is nothing to sneeze at...I will always remember her – and her husband Al who coached all three of my brothers – fondly and with reverence. RIP Beatrice Mattison Thomas, ZaSu...! [Claudia Logan - MHS '70]

**Claudia Logan** - January 09, 2015 at 06:11 PM

RS

“ *Dear Pete,*

*Dear Pete - We were so moved by the article you wrote for the Obituary of your wonderful mom, Beatrice, & all the beautiful comments submitted by so many that benefited from her leadership example. Our loss is, not knowing her personally; however, her name has special significance in our lives that we hope to share with you in the very near future. - Beatrice means: "Messenger Of Happiness" or "Blessed". We were privileged to learn this while on a Flight, going from Kansas City to Boston in 2010.*

*We struck up a conversation with the World Class Opera Singer, Sandra Piques Eddy. She was in the seat beside us, holding her 9 month old daughter, Beatrice, in her arms.*

*Warmest Love - Rick and Rachel Sparkowich*

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**Richard Sparkowich** - January 08, 2015 at 01:50 PM

CM

“ *Dear Peter, Emily and Aston my thoughts and prayers are with you all as you say good bye to your amazing mom and grandmother. As her neighbor for many years we celebrated many joyful occasions with the Thomas family. And they had many wonderful events to celebrate.*

*Bea will bring a smile to many faces for years to come as she is mentioned in conversations both on and off fields everywhere. What a great role model for good health, as well as showing us all how to live life to its fullest.*

*I am extending a huge hug to you all today. With love, Carol Pearsall McLarney*

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**Carol McLarney** - January 08, 2015 at 11:50 AM

D1

“ *Bea Thomas was an amazing and positive force for women (not just in sports), and both she and Al were wonderful friends to the Kennedy family. My mother played field hockey with her on a club team in the 50s and early 60s, and my father could tease her (and get a lot of laughs). Bea coached me and at least one of my sisters in field hockey and lacrosse in junior high, and she coached us in swimming in high school. (Who could forget Gertie Goose and the 'o-wa-tagoo-siam' chant? Start saying it slowly and then speed up to get it.) Al coached my brother in swimming and got several of us to memorize and recite the Gettysburg Address in history.*

*We in Moorestown were so very fortunate to have Bea and Al teach and coach us. They influenced many of us over a long time period, and although they were very successful coaches with great win records, they were more interested in helping us develop into people with outstanding character.*

*Many fond memories of you, Bea (including riding all around town on your bike with the orange flag on the back).*

*Dale Kennedy*

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**Dale Kennedy (MHS 1971)** - January 07, 2015 at 02:02 PM

CL

*Hi Dale, saddened by this news. Your comments and all the familiar names here really takes me back. I left a comment above if you care to look. Hope you are well, Claudia*

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**Claudia Logan** - January 09, 2015 at 06:13 PM

AD

“ *Bea Thomas was an exceptional woman. The lessons she taught have stayed with me all my life. ( Hard work produces results, love what you do and do it joyfully, move and use your body, get outside, and be respectful and polite to everybody.) Even though I knew Bea beyond school (go Pecans!), what makes her amazing is the fact that her most influential years in regard to me was when I was in 7th and 8th grade! and still I think about her many many times a year!*

*One of those memories, (which is sort of out there) is her whistling. She would whistle tunes as we walked along Church St. to and from gym class at Memorial Field. My gosh she could whistle! Anyone who can whistle like that is amazing in my book. I asked her once why she could whistle so good and of course she said with a smile.....Practice.*

*Moorestown owes great thanks to Bea for bringing Lacrosse to Moorestown! My father said once that at one time a decision had to be made about a girls spring sport. The school would only support one sport, softball or lacrosse. Well, Bea was adamant that it would be lacrosse! I think that proved to be a good thing. Thank you, Bea!*

*God Bless you, Bea. Cheers to a life well and fully lived!*

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**Ann Clapperton Davis** - January 07, 2015 at 09:08 AM

DG

“ *What a legendary coach. Few coaches put in the tears Mrs. Thomas did. U attended MHS just one year- 70-71- ( my jr year) and had Mrs. Thomas as a swim coach in the old pool of course in the basement of the community center. Twenty years ago I asked about her and was astonished to learn she was still coaching. As a woman swim coach myself i wish I could ask her what it was like to be in the coaching profession over so many decades. What an icon she was! Deni Gillespie*

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**deni gillespie** - January 06, 2015 at 11:17 PM

MS

“ Peter, I am so very sorry for your loss - she coached me and later my own daughter in Field Hockey. I have some very fond memories of her and know that you have wonderful memories as well - may they bring you some measure of comfort.

*Martha Vandegrift Sowers  
Moorestown High School Class of 1962*

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**Martha Vandegrift Sowers** - January 06, 2015 at 08:59 PM

DD

“ Oh Peter, I can only say that I loved Beatrice . In the short time I knew her she was the epitome of perseverance and dignity. And her wit kept me on my toes! I am truly sorry for your loss and for her caregivers' loss. I know they loved her as well. Love and blessings to you and your family. Dawn Daize.

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**Dawn Daize** - January 06, 2015 at 04:33 PM

TR

“ Mrs. Thomas was truly one of a kind! She taught me, and countless others, so many lessons applicable both on and off the field hockey and lacrosse fields: winning and losing with grace and dignity, being a team player, setting high standards and meeting them, and living life to the fullest. I called her "Bea" not out of disrespect but because it made her, and my teammates, laugh! I know her dear husband (and Moorestown's best cheerleader!), Al, sounded the air horn when she arrived at the pearly gates! May you both rest in peace. Thank you for being such an incredible role model.

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**Tracy Neugold Relle** - January 06, 2015 at 10:11 AM

NB

“Pete, your mother was an amazing person and role model. What an inspirational life she led. I had her for health, swimming, field hockey, and LaCrosse. I wish I had taken more of her teachings to heart. Of course I played the same positions as Chrissy, so I had a formidable player to emulate. My prayer for you is for peace in your heart as your precious mom has entered the kingdom of heaven (and is probably coaching the Angels). I am sorry I can't be there for her " Celebration of Life"...Blessings!

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**Nancy Shivelhood Baumann** - January 06, 2015 at 08:58 AM

NB

*Nancy Shivelhood Baumann*

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**Nancy Shivelhood Baumann** - January 06, 2015 at 08:59 AM

CC

“Words cannot express what an amazing woman Mrs. Thomas was. She was our Freshman field hockey coach in '78 and at every practice she never hesitated to let you know if you were below her standard!! While we didn't realize it at the time, Mrs. Thomas taught us how to work hard, fight hard and win! She instilled those important life characteristics of dedication, determination, resilience and grit that not only made us NJ State Champions in 1981, but made us champions in life. I am truly blessed in my life because of Mrs. Thomas. I now you won't rest in Heaven, Bea, so keep your smile reigning down on Moorestown Field Hockey. - Carol McLoughlin Cowhey- Moorestown 1982

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**Carol McLoughlin Cowhey** - January 06, 2015 at 08:44 AM

DW

“ Mrs. Thomas shaped my life helping mold me into the best FH and LAX goalie I could be...which got me to the Univ. Of Maryland! She also started my career as a college field hockey and lacrosse coach because I wanted to follow in her footsteps!! She blazed a path for so many players at Moorestown...we have lost an icon!! Denise Wescott

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**denise wescott** - January 05, 2015 at 10:37 PM

QU

“ Mrs. Thomas was my next door neighbor growing up, more importantly she was a mentor and role model. All of my jewelry growing up came out of one of Bea Thomas' treasure boxes. She would sneakily sign me up for sports without my knowledge in attempt to turn me into a jock.

*You will forever be in my heart Mrs. Thomas.*

*Quinn Hanlon*

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**quinn** - January 05, 2015 at 09:38 PM

JW

“ Bea and Al were two of my favorites. What great teachers, coaches and humans. Lives well lived.

*John Willis, Moorestown Men's Swim Team, 62-64*

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**John Willis** - January 05, 2015 at 01:47 PM

FG

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Fred Gratson** - January 05, 2015 at 11:40 AM

FG

*An amazing woman. A force of Nature. Raised a pair of extraordinary kids (Pete and Chris). Brought out the best in her students. And kicked butt until the end. She will obviously be solely missed. All love to the family. Fred Gratson, Moorestown Class of 1964.*

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**Fred Gratson** - January 05, 2015 at 11:45 AM

CL

*This is a fabulous photo - quintessential Bea!*

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**Claudia Logan** - January 09, 2015 at 06:14 PM

PC

“ *A pioneer and inspiration; she touched and will be remembered by so many.*

*Philip Clapperton - Moorestown Class of 1972*

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**Philip Clapperton** - January 05, 2015 at 11:20 AM

AL

“ *Dr Thomas, sorry to hear about the loss of your Mother. Sounds like she was quite an amazing woman! Our thoughts and prayers are with you.*

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**Alan Lajoie** - January 05, 2015 at 07:12 AM

VR

“ I heard about Bea long before I met her. She had, the mother of my daughters told me, yelled at her, "Taylor, you could be good if you gave a damn!" She was still coaching when my daughters played, and still attending games, mock-haughtily accepting a kiss on the cheek as the coaching royalty she was, for years after. What a wonderful woman!



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**Vince Robertson** - January 04, 2015 at 08:42 PM

 Linda Sands

“ Mrs. Thomas was always a force to be reckoned with, whether it was in gym class or on the hockey field. But she had a heart that made all her students feel cared for as she was pushing them to do and be their best. RIP, Mrs. Thomas.

*Linda Bitzer Sands, Class of 1970*

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**Linda Sands** - January 04, 2015 at 08:41 PM

MD

“ *This woman was the first person that I came in contact with at my very first field hockey camp. She made us do goalie drills on the black top parking lot...she told us about goaltending and the importance of understanding our jobs... She told us about how we were so lucky to be playing all of these wonderful sports as young women... She told us so many things...she is someone who appeared at many points in my life. I admired her from a far... I coached with her at camp, talked with her every day during my student teaching at Moorestown, and I coached against her when I coached with Cinnaminson. She would smile at me...a smile with a competitive goalie growl behind it. She taught so many girls, so much about field hockey and sports, but more about life...and for that, I am grateful to have been one of her many students. For me, my lessons were learned from age 11 until 30, but you only needed to be around her for five minutes, in order to learn something. Rest pretty lady...I'll do my best to help pass your life lessons on to my students as well.*

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**MELISSA DECLEMENTI** - January 04, 2015 at 08:37 PM

SR

“ *She was my favorite coach and role model of all time. Scared me to death at first, but soon realized her heart of gold. I can only hope to inspire as many people, particularly girls, as a coach and mentor.*

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**Shavaun Carey Roberts** - January 04, 2015 at 07:19 PM

PC

“*Mrs. Thomas was a wonderful coach and person. I have never forgotten her all these years. She was the foundation of the Moorestown girls' sports teams and a testimony to their continued success. You set the bar high, Bea, and your legacy lives on. Deepest condolences to the Thomas family.*

*Pam Roth Capehart, Moorestown Class of 1978*

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**Pam Capehart** - January 04, 2015 at 07:16 PM

DW

*Pam - been many years since basketball and sports at Moorestown. Would love to hear from you, am coaching lacrosse at Monmouth University*

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**Denise Wescott** - January 12, 2015 at 07:11 PM

 Kathy  
Hawkins

“*Mrs. Thomas was a wonderful woman and a great gym teacher for all of us who had the honor of being in her class. I also had Mr. Thomas as a teacher with many fond memories of his class. They will be greatly missed by all who were their students and they set a standard of teaching that all in the education profession should try to reach. My deepest sympathy to the entire Thomas family. Kathy Hawkins Class of 1979*

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**Kathy Hawkins** - January 04, 2015 at 03:52 PM

RO

“ I remember Bea as she was in the 1950's and 60's when I was a student in the Moorestown public school system. Both Bea and Albert were great teachers and were very well liked and respected by the students. Whenever I passed Bea in a school hallway she always acknowledged me with a smile and some kind words, and it was the same way when I visited Pete at home. Over the course of her career, Bea enriched the lives of so many people. She will be fondly remembered by all who knew her.

- Richard Offinger

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Richard Offinger - January 04, 2015 at 03:16 PM

JJ

“ Beatrice, my name is James Lavrentios im 30yrs old and still climbing the ladder of success in life and following GOD the best I can, we have never known eachother but I just wanted to inform you in someway that reading your Amazing, Wonderful Life had inspired me in the most profound way, the life you lived was surely grand . God bless you, and may you rest in peace:) GODSPEED.

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james lavrentios jr - January 04, 2015 at 03:14 PM