



Thomas Claude Cox

APR 7, 1935 - DEC 31, 2017



Scan to Visit



Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
-----------------------	--------



Thomas Claude Cox

APR 7, 1935 - DEC 31, 2017

Thomas Claude Cox, 82, a native of Arkansas, but a Texan since college days, died Sunday, December 31, in hospice care at Presbyterian Hospital, Dallas, Texas. He was born April 7, 1935, in Prescott, Arkansas, to Thomas Claude and Mildred Wuertz Cox. As he saw it, small town Arkansas in the 1930's was a different world, and he liked to talk about that life to his sons, Christopher Quinn and Thomas Cameron. At his death, he still owned part of the 600-acre cotton farm where he grew up. During high school in Prescott, Arkansas, Tom worked all kinds of jobs – delivering bread for the baker, pastries to stores, bread pudding to schools. He delivered milk and ice, and competed in selling the most subscriptions to the Prescott paper to win a car – a Chevrolet Bel-Air, a “beautiful car.” He came in second. His senior year, he was class president and managed a graduation trip to New Orleans, where they worked all sorts of jobs all year, to make it possible for every classmate to go on that “trip of a lifetime.” And from about age 12 he was in charge of milking 60 or 70 cows every morning, getting up early to attach the milking machines, and discovering that the cows really liked “Slim” Whitman’s country music! They gave more milk with the radio on. Tom spent 2 or 3 college summers on the pipeline near Canada, working sun-up to sundown with no break. He went with a Baylor friend from Hope, Arkansas, who was studying to be a Baptist minister. They made \$5/hour and time and a half for overtime, worked 80 hours a week welding. They were thrilled by the money – and later found out nobody in Michigan would do it for \$5/hour! At Baylor – Tom liked to say “Arkansas is a great state if you’ve got a car” – he lived briefly at a big dormitory. A friend from Prescott came for a weekend visit from A&M and brought a case of beer, and unfortunately, came through the dorm lobby while they were having a prayer meeting. Tom and friends were asked to leave the dorm, and took up residence at a nearby boarding house run by “Sweet Mama Verona.” Highlights at Baylor: a psychology major, he



Obituary

Thomas Claude Cox

APR 7, 1935 - DEC 31, 2017

flunked Spanish language classes but excelled in a drama class led by the famous director Paul Baker, and turned out to be quite a good writer. After college, he enlisted in the United States Army and spent unforgettable winters in Colorado and Massachusetts, where the snow blew into the windows. Invited to join the Army Security Agency, he finished high in his class (number 5), and had a choice of posts. He chose Germany, the country of his Wuertz relatives. Based in Frankfurt at the huge former factory, the I.G. Farben Building, he later lived “on the economy” in a nearby apartment, acquiring a colorful former driver training vehicle with the words “student driver” on it in German (Farrschule). People cleared the way for him all over Europe! He and his buddies loved catching a military flight to England on an old C-47 (running up and down to keep warm in the unheated plane and warming their feet under each others’ armpits), and going to plays in London in the afternoon, enjoying matinees with “ladies who drank tea.” And he flew the Atlantic to Frankfurt when first posted, on a MATS (Military Air Transport System) long-haul flight, seated backwards across the Atlantic. It was going to be the best time of his life. Except, of course, when he came to Dallas – his second home – joined KRLD radio as promotions manager and went on to public relations jobs with Lone Star Gas and an oil company. He considered moving to California with friends from his days in Germany, but chose Dallas instead and made a life here, marrying Gayle Krompart. Their wedding took up full pages in the Dallas Times Herald, in a nationally award-winning article with photos, written by fashion editor Graydon Hartsill. They had two sons, Christopher and Cameron. Later he wrote a weekly column for the paper for Lone Star Gas and took a noted photo of an oil field roughneck slinging the chain on a drilling pipe while a bumble bee landed on his nose. The photo – enlarged to accent the bee – anchored the company’s display at the State Fair of Texas that year. Job-wise, Tom decided in 1977 that he wanted to work for himself. He opened a “plant shack” on Broadway in Garland, Texas, where he could look after the plants he loved and share all that with his boys. He became a noted cook – with tacos and “slumgullion” for the boys on weekend nights. After his first marriage ended, Tom married Betty Taylor Cox (“BJ”) May 10, 1986, and since both of them loved travel and exploring the world, set out to do that. Their many – mostly annual – trips took



Obituary

Thomas Claude Cox

APR 7, 1935 - DEC 31, 2017

them to England, to places like London (finding a tiny hotel in Hampstead near the Heath, where they fell in love with England). They visited 4 times, and on their honeymoon explored the Cornish coast, from a tiny hotel on the coastal rocks in Mousehole (pronounced Mou'zul). Other trips over the years took them back to England, Ireland, Portugal, visiting the ancient walled towns at Obidos and Evora, Greece, with days in Athens and Delphi and a bus tour to Olympus, where the original Olympic games began, Epidaurus – the ancient Greek amphitheatre, and Istanbul, Turkey. In 1994, they explored the Valley of Virginia, Blue Ridge Parkway, the River Road in Richmand, home of Tom's first American "Cocke" ancestors, and actually found – and took a photo of – a marker at the site of Richard Cocke's brick home on Virginia's River Road, which became the site of a major Civil War battle at Richmond. Later trips took them to Italy, northern Italy and Rome, staying in a Roman Catholic hostel, Casa Kolbe, living right beside the Capitoline and Palatine Hills in the old city center, then to the south of France, where BJ's first American ancestors came from. In 2001 when the "war on terror" began with the plane crashes into New York's World Trade Towers, BJ and Tom were in Poland, visiting Auschwitz, coming back to their room to see it reported by the BBC on their room television. In downtown Budapest on the same trip, BJ sees a passing demonstration with people bearing banners, "No more war!" and in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, families and children bringing flowers to memorialize the dead. Many trips to New York City made them feel like residents. They went back to England and France in 2002 to find the birthplace of BJ's cello in the tiny town of Mirecourt, in the wine road hills along the German border near Strasbourg. And they explored upstate New York along the Hudson, and later BJ's first American ancestor's homes at Bath, near the Finger lakes. In 2009, Tom and BJ won a trip to Egypt, in the Dallas Museum of Art's online drawing in connection with their King Tut exhibition. And in 2010 they took their last overseas trip with a trip to Sicily, the only part of Italy they hadn't explored. What Tom loved throughout his life was history. He gave BJ a well-worn paperback copy of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" when they met, and that book travelled with her and her film crew all over the country – the truth is, she never finished reading it. He gave the same book to his sons. He became fascinated



Obituary

Thomas Claude Cox

APR 7, 1935 - DEC 31, 2017

with “Jerusalem,” a book that caught up the history of Rome with the religions of the Middle East, and recommended it to all of us for background on what’s happening today. He was a Republican – mostly. He was a storyteller, a man who looked at the world through its characters. When he went to the grocery store, he met the men behind the meat and fish counters, called them by name, had them choose the cuts, and looked forward to chatting with the older man who “greeted” at the door. He learned their stories if he could – and he knew who they were, what else they’d done for a living. He greeted the postman by name, and cheered the yard man whose business had grown to the point he could buy a house. When he told a story, people listened and usually laughed, because he saw a twist of humor in each situation. In the hospital when the head nurse and the hospice liaison came to talk about his going into hospice, in the last week of his life, he learned that Kate, the head nurse, had served in the Army in Germany, as he had. He began telling some of his best stories of that time – how he drove the driving school Volkswagen across Germany and everyone would stay out of his way – and Tom and Kate laughed about their time in the Army in Germany. The hospice liaison, Carla, he discovered, was from Lucca, where Bj and Tom had taken a day-trip to visit when they were in Italy, and together they remembered the pizza on the ancient central “circus.” He loved music – particularly opera – “La Traviata,” a real tear-jerker, was his favorite – and Frank Sinatra. He was different – an independent thinker, interested in history, politics, the stock market – and enjoyed reading three newspapers each day, the Dallas Morning News, Wall Street Journal and the New York Times. He also read Barron’s and Value Line to check on stock purchases. He made life more interesting and told tales worth hearing. His family will miss him dearly. They include his wife, Betty Taylor Cox of Dallas, two sons – Thomas Cameron Cox and his wife Shawna of Los Angeles, Christopher Quinn Cox of Dallas – and his dear Aunt Helen Marie Wuertz of Laurel, MS, nieces Dana Craiglow and Laurie Gassman of Little Rock and cousins “DeeDee” Wuertz Long of Hattiesburg, MS, Barbara Wuertz Ellzey of Laurel, MS, Elsie Wuertz Cole of Marietta, GA, and their families. He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother John Robert Cox. Memorial service and celebration of life will be held at Highland Park Presbyterian Church’s Wynne Chapel at 1:30 p.m.



Obituary

Thomas Claude Cox

APR 7, 1935 - DEC 31, 2017

Friday, January 12, with a reception afterward. In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to Baylor University for Student Foundation scholarships, The Stewpot, a ministry of Dallas's First Presbyterian Church, Salvation Army or other charitable organization.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Thomas by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



Scan to Visit

