

# ARIZONA LAW REVIEW

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## IN MEMORIAM: FLOYD E. THOMAS

On March 22, 1966, The University of Arizona and the Arizona Bar suffered a great loss when Colonel Floyd E. Thomas died following a stroke. Colonel Thomas had been a Professor of Law at The University of Arizona from 1929 until his retirement in 1955 as a Professor Emeritus. His passing is mourned by a host of former students and colleagues and his vigorous participation in the legal community of Arizona will be sorely missed.

Born September 7, 1889 in What Cheer, Iowa, he was 76 years of age at the time of his death. He attended grade and high schools in Ottumwa, Iowa, and in 1911 graduated from the University of Iowa with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Colonel Thomas attended Harvard Law School in 1911 and 1912 and received his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Iowa, in 1914.

Colonel Thomas' legal career, however, was interrupted by the advent of the first World War. He answered his country's call to duty and attended Officers' Training Camp at Ft. Snelling, Minnesota, and served as a first lieutenant of infantry in France. During officers' training he met and married Beth Brainerd in Iowa City, Iowa.

After the termination of hostilities the young officer returned to the United States where he first engaged in newspaper work. Later he returned to the practice of law having been admitted to the Iowa Bar prior to the war. Colonel Thomas served as county attorney for Jackson County, Iowa for two terms. Thereafter he continued in private practice in Davenport, Iowa, until his appointment as a Professor of Law at The University of Arizona in 1929. He was also admitted to the practice of Law in California and Arizona.

While at the University of Iowa, he participated in intercollegiate athletics and retained his interest in sports throughout his life. At one time he coached freshman football, varsity basketball and track at

Penn College, Oskaloosa, Iowa. Colonel Thomas was chairman of The University of Arizona Intercollegiate Athletic Committee from 1931 until his retirement in 1955, with the exception of the World War II years.

He was again called to active military duty during World War II and attended the Battalion Commander's and Staff Officer Schools at Ft. Benning, Georgia, in 1941. After graduating from the School of Military Government at the University of Virginia, Colonel Floyd Thomas was sent to Italy to serve first as provincial commissioner, Province of Trapani in Sicily, and later as regional commander of the region of Emilia which consisted of ten provinces in northern Italy and contained a population of 3,500,000 people.

For his outstanding administration of these exacting tasks he was honored by the United States Government with the presentation of the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Clusters and letters of commendation for duty well done. The citation for his meritorious service read in part as follows:

By his high professional attainments in planning and administration at a time of critical unrest and shortage for civilian life, together with his tireless personal industry and leadership, Colonel Thomas materially increased the prestige of the United States in its military efforts and enhanced its reputation for fair dealing and justice.

Recognition of Colonel Thomas' ability was not limited to the United States, however. For his service, he was given one of the highest honors awarded by the Italian Government, the Grande Cross of the Order of the Crown, which was presented to him by Prince Umberto. He was also made an honorary citizen of the City of Bologna and a marble bust of Colonel Thomas was made by the people of Trapani, Sicily, to show the citizens' gratitude for his efforts in rebuilding their war-devastated community after German military forces were driven out.

Returning to the United States, Colonel Thomas' combination of legal and military experience was again called upon when he became a member of the court-martial review board in Washington, D. C. Again he was honored for his service by the award of the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Clusters.

Upon returning to The University of Arizona campus in 1946, he again took up his law teaching and his active interest in community affairs. He was a past commander of Morgan McDermott American Legion Post in Tucson, and a member of the Arizona Veterans Compensation Review Board. He served a term as president of the Pima County Bar Association. From 1952 to 1959, Colonel Thomas was a

member of the City of Tucson Planning and Zoning Commission and served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind from 1959 through 1965. He was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon and Phi Delta Phi fraternities. Colonel Thomas was also a member of the Masonic Lodge and the Tucson Corral of the Westerners.

During his academic career he wrote a number of book reviews and articles for legal journals. In 1965 The University of Arizona presented Colonel Thomas with an award of merit for his services to the University. Dr. Richard A. Harvill, President of The University of Arizona, has stated that Colonel Thomas was one of the most outstanding teachers to serve in the College of Law since its founding.

Left sorrowing his death are his widow, Mrs. Beth Brainerd Thomas; two sons, Dr. Berwyn Thomas, of Shelton, Washington, and Lt. Col. Alan Thomas, of the United States Air Force. Also surviving Colonel Thomas is his sister, Mrs. True M. Avery of Glens Falls, New York, and six grandchildren.

The death of Colonel Floyd E. Thomas has brought to a close a fruitful and courageous life as a distinguished soldier, lawyer, teacher and civic leader. He will be remembered by his former students and his colleagues for his great interest in the quality of legal education and as a friend with many interests in other fields.