

Robert Daniel Thomas, PhD.



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July 8, 2022

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Dr. Robert Thomas, 81, of Charlotte, died peacefully at home Friday, July 8, 2022 surrounded by his wife, daughters and sister, his "favorite women." He was born in Charlotte, NC to the late Carl Holland Thomas and Mary Echerd Thomas.

Robert was Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Director of the Master of Public Administration Program at the University of Houston, retired in 2007. His field of study was in public policy and urban development, and he was always a favorite among students. He wrote seven books, including *Pro-Growth Politics: Change and Governance in Houston*, *The Forgotten Governments and Politics*, *Federalism*, and *Water*, each published by UC Berkeley Press. He also wrote more than 50 peer-reviewed articles, published in journals such as the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* and by The Brookings Institution, and delivered at academic conventions. He began his career at Florida Atlantic University and completed a Fellowship with the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C. He earned his master's and doctoral degrees in Political Science from the University of Arizona on full academic scholarship after serving in the Marine Corps. Robert enjoyed athletics, played football in high school and college, was a Marine Corps Golden Gloves boxer and a lifelong member of the YMCA, where he worked out and played competitive handball.

Robert's family will always remember his words of wisdom, generosity, love of learning, humor, and competitive spirit—marked by his selfless love for them. He and his wife Anne met at 18, and she always felt comfortable and safe with him and knew that he would take good care of her as long as he lived. Robert's children and grandchildren knew he would always listen and drop anything to help them, giving even their minor



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Perhaps the best way to describe Robert's loving nature is to quote some of his own words of encouragement, which he shared in letters at life milestones. He wrote, "I've told you before, life is like a marathon. Perhaps it's more appropriate to say life is like an endless string of marathons. That metaphor, I suppose, might seem like a cruel irony: why should one be subjected to such difficulty simply to go through life? I would rather think of life as an endless string of exciting opportunities that offer a number of challenges along the journey. Indeed a strong case might be made for never finishing the marathons. If you did, then you would have to sit on the porch watching other runners move along the path of an endless string of opportunities and challenges."

He also wrote, "I think the best advice I can give you is the same advice my parents gave me. They told me to always 'keep my chin up' and 'do the right thing.'" When I asked what is the right thing—how will I know what it is—they said you will just know. That is certainly true. I have not always done the right thing, but I truly believe I have always known what the right thing was. Your Mother and I aren't perfect, but our love for you and your families is perfect and unqualified. That is for certain."

Robert is survived by his wife of 58 years, Anne Morrison Thomas; daughters, Mrs. Tracey Slauer and husband Pete of Atlanta, GA, and Dr. Laura Davis and husband Bob of Charlotte, NC; sister, Dianne Thomas; four grandchildren, Dr. Ryan Slauer and wife Rachel, Shelby Slauer, Susan Davis and Sarah Davis; and two great-grandchildren, Levi Slauer and Rivers Slauer. He was preceded in death by his brother, Carl Thomas, Jr., and sister, Elizabeth Thomas.

A private funeral service will be held Saturday, July 16, 2022 at Myers Park United Methodist Church. Burial with military honors at Elmwood Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Hospice and Palliative Care, Charlotte Region, by mail at 7845 Little Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28226, or online, at www.hpccr.org/giving.

Arrangements are in the care of Kenneth W. Poe Funeral & Cremation Service, 1321 Berkeley Ave., Charlotte, NC; 28204 (704) 641-7606. Online condolences can be shared at www.kennethpoeservices.com.

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