



Clella Kay Thomas

December 5, 1946 - December 10, 2023

The family and friends of Clella Kay Thomas mourn her death this month at the age of 77. Her life was marked by fierce affection for her family, friends, food, France, education and the causes that she believed made things better. She loved to help people, plants, and our community to grow and flourish.

Clella was born in Corvallis, Oregon to Carlyn and Florence Winger, who instilled a tireless work ethic through their example. Her mother operated a family horticultural business, and her father was a professor of Speech at OSU. They nurtured Clella's love of education, an area in which she excelled personally and advocated for others continuously.

She began exploring the world at 16 as an American Foreign Exchange student to Denmark, inspiring her interest in foreign language. She received a Bachelors of Arts in Romance Languages from University of Oregon, graduating Phi Beta Kappa. In 1969 she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Grenoble, France and went on to earn a Master's of Arts in French at the University of Wisconsin in 1970.

Clella married Bob Thomas in 1970 and accompanied him to Camp Pendleton, CA where she taught French and Spanish at a nearby junior high. By 1973, the couple settled in Bend, where Mark and Whitney, were born. Clella continued to teach French, first at Redmond High school and later at

Central Oregon Community College. She brought France to Bend, creating a Tour des Chutes bicycle ride, offering escargot in her children's elementary school classrooms, and evoking the streets of Paris at the Meal of the Year. Her four grandchildren all knew her as Mémé.

Renowned for her delicious kitchen creations, Clella's homemade French baguettes, pecan pies and hot sweet mustard were especially treasured. She was equally gifted in the garden, having inherited her parents' green thumbs. She even operated an "orchid hospital," restoring many ailing plants back to health.

Clella was a prolific activist for causes to improve the community: Start Making a Reader Today (SMART), numerous school bond measures, COCC, the Bloom Project, Bend Community Center, Tower Theater, OSU Cascades, University of Oregon, United Way, St. Charles Foundation, Education Foundation (for Bend schools) and Partners in Care hospice house. She was a proud member of Campfire Girls, Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, PEO, and Allied Arts. The family invites contributions in her honor to any of these causes she championed, and if you listen carefully, you might well hear Clella asking you to give one more time!

Clella is survived by her loyal husband Bob, her children, Mark and Whitney, her grandchildren, Rosie, Ian, Andrew and Alex and her brother, Bob Winger.

A Celebration of her life will be held on January 27, 2024 at 2pm, First Presbyterian Church, 230 NE 9th St, Bend, OR 97701. Services will be live streamed at: <https://hihprod.com/clellathomasmemorial>

Previous Events

Celebration

JAN 27. 2:00 PM (PT)

First Presbyterian Church of Bend
230 NE 9th St, Bend, OR 97701
Bend, OR 97701

Tribute Wall



“ *Niswonger Reynolds Funeral Home & Greenwood Cemetery created a Webcast in memory of Clella Kay Thomas*



Niswonger Reynolds Funeral Home & Greenwood Cemetery - December 19, 2023 at 12:27 PM

KT

“ *I was saddened to receive the Christmas letter that Clella had passed away. Thanks to media I was able to watch the celebration on her behalf- thanks so much. Condolences to all the family, Karen Thomas*

Karen Thomas - January 29, 2024 at 04:36 PM

LS

“ *Love, Sheri, Russ, Frankie & Saxon planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Clella Kay Thomas.*

Love, Sheri, Russ, Frankie & Saxon - January 24, 2024 at 08:33 AM



“ *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Clella Kay Thomas.*



January 24, 2024 at 08:33 AM



“ We were so sorry to hear of Clella's passing. We knew she was special even before meeting her for the first time, because of the high regard Helene had for her...of course Helene was right! We are honored to have known her and are so impressed with all her accomplishments while she was with us. We're sorry our paths haven't crossed in recent years, but so glad we "touched base" at least once a year. Randy was just about to text her about the north Vancouver commercial property because we now live in that neighborhood and use Happy's! I'm sorry he didn't reach out when he thought of this....we hope you are all doing okay but this is a huge loss for your family... You are in our thoughts and prayers.....love to you all, Kam and Randy

Kameon Clark Garner - January 04, 2024 at 07:33 PM

RH

“ What a lovely photo!

Condolences to Bob and the rest of the family on Clella's passing. I regret that I had no chance to meet her since we left high school. She is one of the classmates who helped create a strong and wonderful memory of our days at CHS.



Rodney Hoiseth - December 30, 2023 at 05:32 AM

RH

FTR I was referring to the lovely photo at the upper left of the tribute page, not the yearbook one above. Rod

Rodney A. Hoiseth - December 30, 2023 at 05:42 AM

KH

“ When I first started at COCC, Clella was one of my kindest colleagues. My strongest memory from way back in the early 90s was Clella bringing Bob to a Christmas party and thinking they were two of the nicest and most attractive people I had ever met. Though I haven't seen either in years, I remember her with warmth.

Kake Huck - December 24, 2023 at 08:33 AM

MJ

“ To know Clella was to be inspired to serve. Our children were in the same classes at Mountain View High School, and I had the privilege of serving on committees with Clella. She was an example of tireless advocacy for children and the community. I extend condolences to Bob, Mark and Whitney. I pray God will comfort you as you adjust to the loss of wife and mother.
Marsha Johnson

Marsha Johnson - December 22, 2023 at 06:16 PM

ES

“ Bob-
I want you to know how sorry I was to read in *The Bulletin* that Clella had passed. I feel fortunate to have known her. Clella and I didn't bump into each other often. But, she was always so friendly and kind when we did. This really stuck out to me and made me appreciate her. I also felt lucky to have conducted some work on behalf of Clella and you. It was an absolute pleasure.

My thoughts are with you and your family.

Erich Schultz

Erich Schultz - December 19, 2023 at 06:14 PM