

## GERALD THOMAS

Amherst County native Gerald Thomas was associated with baseball for essentially half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, first as a player, then as a highly successful coach at both the secondary and collegiate levels. A graduate of Madison Heights High School, where he played baseball, he continued playing both in the military and at professional levels. He was considered by many of his generation to be the best baseball player to come out of Amherst County.

His professional career comprised 10 years, spent almost entirely at the AAA level, with affiliations primarily with the Cardinals and Yankees. Almost half of that time was spent in Richmond with the "Virginians", the AAA team for the Yankees. In 1959, Thomas batted .299, while playing 90 games as both an infielder and outfielder.

At the conclusion of his playing career, he completed his bachelor's College and became baseball coach at ACHS. There he served as health teacher, later guidance counselor, while coaching basketball and baseball. He also led teams in the county's youth baseball programs, and officiated basketball and baseball.

Thomas' teams, well-schooled in fundamentals, were noted for playing an aggressive style. He would respectfully be called "old school" in his disciplined approach to the game. Thomas was considered by his peers to be an outstanding teacher in the art of hitting a baseball. His record at ACHS was 65-10, with an undefeated team in the AAA Western District.

Soon after receiving a master's degree from the University of Virginia, he accepted Lynchburg College's offer to teach health and physical education and to coach baseball, a position he held for 27 years.

His collegiate teams consistently competed at the highest levels in their leagues – Dixie Conference, Mason-Dixon Conference, and Old Dominion Athletic Conference. His career record included 579 wins over 27 years. His highest achieving team was a regional finalist and came within two outs of progressing to the Division III College World Series. At least 20 of these players went on to compete in professional baseball.

Gerald Thomas' deep devotion to family and friends extended to many former teammates and players whom he had coached through the years. He could often be seen around Madison Heights in retirement, enjoying life and being called by that familiar name, "Coach".

Gerald Raymond Thomas – October 21, 1930 - May 21, 2012

### Career Highlights

- Madison Heights High School and U.S. Military: baseball star
- 10-year professional baseball career, AA and AAA
- ACHS: 65-10 record; 18-0 Western District Championship, many district all-stars
- LC: 27 seasons, 579 wins; 20 seasons with at least 20 wins; many all-star players; more than 20 players into professional baseball; conference and regional titles.

