

## Horton, KS



Bill Thomas never met a stranger. With a friendly “how do” and a bob of his bald head that was always adorned by a cap, he greeted everyone. He could and did, strike up a conversation with anyone. He also loved a good joke and always had one at the ready. He loved to tell people it was nice of people to create Cinco de Mayo, just to celebrate his birthday.

Bill passed away Thursday, May 7th, 2020, just two days after his 84th birthday. William Harley Thomas was born May 5, 1936 in Horton, KS. He was the oldest son of Harley and Dorcas (Peden) Thomas. Bill was always a sickly child, and he and his disabled older sister Claudine were raised by their paternal grandparents, W.O. “Tutes” and Ada (Whetstine) Thomas. He received his education through a correspondence school.

On August 4th, 1961, Bill married Judi Hedrick in Horton. They settled into a mobile home on the same property he had been raised on, so he could look after his grandmother and sister. Bill and Judi became the parents of a daughter, Lorelei “Lori” and a son, Matthew.

Around the time of their marriage, both Bill and Judi worked at the Horton Headlight. In 1968, Bill got a job at the University Daily Kansan at KU. He drove back and forth to Lawrence daily for over thirty years before his retirement.

He loved working with the college kids and they loved him as well, dubbing him “Willie”. Not long after he retired from KU, Bill decided that the leisurely life of retirement was not for him. He got a job at the Golden Eagle Casino as a slot tech, and later went to the Sac and Fox where he started as a slot tech until he was promoted to security. Even after retiring from the casino, he visited there nearly every day until his failing health no longer permitted it. He would spend a couple of hours every day there, visiting with friends and strangers and playing penny slots.

Bill was a jack of all trades. For many years he worked at the Liberty Theatre as a projectionist. He apprenticed as a photographer with John Radford in the 1960’s and went out on his own in the 70’s, taking photos at hundreds of weddings all over northeastern Kansas. When CB radios were the in thing, Bill installed many of them in cars, trucks and homes. He was an avid CB radio user and was known as “Picture Man” on the Sunset Base. Bill and Judi

became EMT's in 1978 and volunteered for the Horton Ambulance Service for 16 years.

Bill lived on the Fifth Avenue West property in Horton for almost all of his life, until the house burned in 2007. After that he lived on West 8th until 2017 when he and Judi moved to Concordia to live with their daughter. Horton was always home to him and he missed it. Bill was a lover of animals of all kinds. He fed neighborhood strays and was always befriending furry babies. Up until 2008, he was never without a dog.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents, his grandparents who raised him, his older sister Claudine, and an infant brother Gerry.

He is survived by his wife Judi of Concordia; daughter Lori (Scott) Halfhide of Concordia, and son Matt (Tina) Thomas of Horton; three grandsons, Kody and Kasey Halfhide of Concordia, and Connor Thomas of Horton; sisters Jean (Gary) Thoma of Perry, KS, Joan (Charlie) Dannenberg of Holton, KS, Joyce (Harold) Martin of Valley Falls, KS, and Mary (Steve) Thompson of Valley Falls; and one brother Larry (Pat) Thomas of Greenwood, MO.

A Celebration of Bill's life will be held at a later time. The family suggests donations in his memory to be made to Heart of Jackson Humane Society, Inc in Holton and may be sent in care of the mortuary. Friends may sign the register book at the Dishon-Maple-Chaney Mortuary in Horton, Kansas. A special message may be sent to the family at [www.dishon-maple-chaney.com](http://www.dishon-maple-chaney.com)