



## Thomas Brett

October 2, 1931 - February 6, 2021

Thomas Rutherford Brett, Classen High School's class of 1949's "Prince of Friendship" went home to the Lord peacefully, at home, with his family present on February 6th. He was born in Oklahoma City in 1931. In the fourth grade, he met Mary Jean James, who would later become his wife of 69 years and mother of his four children.

He is remembered by his many friends for his kindness, humility, self-discipline, wit, wisdom, and good humor.

At Classen, he was starting guard on the 1948 state championship basketball team - beating Tulsa Central 32 to 31. He retired as a full Colonel from US Army JAG and served two years active service as an artillery officer at Fort Sill. While in the Army, he was an eyewitness to eight atomic bomb explosions.

A proud Sooner, he attended Oklahoma University as an undergraduate and graduated from its School of Law. He served on the OU's Board of Regents from 1971-1977, and as Board President from 1977-1978. While on the Board he was instrumental in creation of OU's medical center in Oklahoma City, served on two presidential search committees, and chaired the committee that hired Barry Switzer as the head football coach.

Tom was an avid (Mary says 'rabid') golfer who once held a six handicap.

Tom began his legal career in Tulsa as an assistant district attorney, and afterwards continued in private practice as a trial lawyer. In 1979, President Carter appointed him to be a United States District Judge for the Northern District of Oklahoma, where he served until 2003. He was known for his commitment to ethics and to upholding the highest standards of the legal profession. Notably he presided over the trial of leading drug king pin Jose Abello and worked to systematically reduce cost and delay in the justice system through administrative improvements and alternative methods of dispute resolution.

He said he was most honored by the recognition of his fellow attorneys, including being elected as Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, receiving the American Inns of Court Professionalism Award (recognizing those 'whose life and practice display sterling character and unquestioned integrity'), receiving both the Ethics and Judicial Excellence awards from the Oklahoma Bar Association, and both the Golden Rule and the Outstanding Senior Lawyer Awards from the Tulsa Bar. He was inducted into both the Oklahoma and Tulsa Halls of Fame.

He was active in Kirk of the Hills church, where he (with Mary) co-taught the Sr. High Sunday school class at the Kirk of the Hills for some 15 years, and also served as an Elder.

Notable among his many charitable activities were serving on the Board of Literacy and Evangelism International, as Trustee the JE and LE Mabee Foundation, and on the advisory board of the Salvation army.

The good news (and it is the Gospel Truth) is that, by the grace of a Loving God, Classen High School's "Prince of Friendship" has now met the Prince of Peace face to face.

He is survived by his Wife, Mary, four children Laura Brett Tribble, Ford Brett (Kathy), Susan Brett Hughes (Bob), Maricarolyn Brett Swab (Brett), 11 grandchildren and 17 great grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers please consider donations to: The Salvation Army, Box 3367 Tulsa, 74101 /// Kirk of the Hills, 4102 3 61st, Tulsa 74136 /// St Francis Hospice 6600 S Yale #350, Tulsa, 74136 /// University of Oklahoma Law School scholarships, 100 Temberdell Rd, Norman 73019.

Regrettably, due to Covid, his service is limited to family only. Everyone is invited and welcome to stream the service 11:00 Friday the 12th at [thekirk.online.church](http://thekirk.online.church) (be careful, notice the TWO "dots").

# Comments

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“ I am a current United States Magistrate Judge in the Northern District of Oklahoma. Although I did not know Judge Brett personally or work with him, I am writing to tell Judge Brett's family that his legacy lives on in the Northern District of Oklahoma. As a newer magistrate judge, I have received the benefit of mentorship by Judge Brett's former law clerks and colleagues. They have been known to begin advice with the phrase, "as Judge Brett said..." Please know that his wisdom continues to be passed along, and we are all better judges for it.  
Sincerely, U.S. Magistrate Judge Jodi Jayne

**Jodi Jayne** - February 15 at 03:03 PM

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“ Mary -  
Very sorry to hear of Tom's passing. We always enjoyed being around him, especially on the trip to Israel. We will miss his humor and hope to see you soon..  
Mike and Dianne Rodehaver

**Mike Rodehaver** - February 11 at 08:44 AM

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“ I was a deputy U.S. marshal in Tulsa from 1989-1995. I had the honor and privilege of serving Judge Brett in his courtroom and I was part of his protection detail in 1990 during the Jose Abello Silva trial. Judge Brett was an outstanding jurist and he always treated those of us in the USMS with dignity and respect. He allowed us into his home as “part of the family” during his protection detail. When we approached him with security recommendations he was always very accommodating. As a Judge, he was exceptionally fair to defendants. I enjoyed him immensely and I'll never forget him. Tulsa was well served by this man. He leaves large shoes to be filled, if ever. Rest In Peace Judge.

**Paul Thielen** - February 10 at 03:17 PM

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“ My sincere condolences to the family of Judge Brett. I knew Tom from the many judges' meetings we attended together. He was a fine man and a top-notch judge dedicated to the ideals of his profession. Not only the Northern District of Oklahoma but the entire Tenth Circuit benefited greatly from his service. And personally I truly enjoyed his fellowship as a judicial colleague. With sympathy,

Hon. Sam A. Crow  
U.S. District Judge, District of Kansas

**Sam A. Crow** - February 10 at 12:01 PM

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“ I was privileged as a law student of the University of Tulsa to serve as an intern to Judge Brett. He was all of the qualities described in the press accounts. I was also pleased to have attended his induction into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. Dick Risk, dickrisk@yahoo.com.

**Richard Risk** - February 10 at 11:54 AM