



Thomas "Tom" Schwartz

April 13, 1913 - June 28, 2014

Thomas Albert "Tom" Schwartz, 101, Topeka, noted businessman and author, passed away Saturday, June 28, 2014. Tom was born April 13, 1913, in Paola, Kansas, the son of Thomas and Margaret Vohs Schwartz. Graduating from high school in 1931, Tom went to Rockhurst College in Kansas City and then on to Georgetown University School of Law. Tom started his business career mowing lawns and then in the seventh grade, went to work in a grocery store on Saturdays. He worked from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. and felt well compensated at \$2 per day. After three years in the grocery business he got a job in a clothing store where he continued into his college days. His first job in Washington D.C., while attending law school, was as a government clerk on the midnight shift. Upon graduation from Georgetown, Tom passed the bar in Missouri and practiced law in Kansas City with an older brother for a year. He didn't care much for private practice and returned to Washington to work for the Securities and Exchange Commission where he served until the outbreak of WWII. Tom immediately applied and was commissioned a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy working in the Office of Naval Intelligence as a counter-intelligence agent. Tom received his wings as a naval aviator and was a lieutenant commander when he completed his service as a flight instructor, crash investigator and safety promotion officer. Tom came to Topeka in 1945 to join his brother and another partner in two companies in which he had invested earlier. In 1948, Kansas legalized the sale of liquor in the state. Tom and his partners decided to enter the new Kansas business with Tom in charge. They

named their company, Famous Brands Distributors. Tom eventually bought out his partners and built his company into the largest distributor in Kansas with its headquarters and warehouse in Topeka and branch warehouses in six other cities. Tom took wonderful care of his employees and his customers. He sold the company in 2002. On December 28, 1954, Tom married Helen Behne in Topeka. They enjoyed over 51 years together. She preceded him in death in 2006. Tom was very civic minded, serving as a Director of the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce and in 1968 as the President of the Chamber and Chairman of the Board of Directors. He was a fund raiser for a wide variety of worthy causes raising millions of dollars and was a very generous contributor to worthy Topeka charities. In 1988, he and his wife, Helen, were honored by the Topeka Community Foundation as the Philanthropists of the Year. In 1997 he was given the Capper Award by the Capper Foundation for his distinguished public service and in 1998 was named the Sales and Marketing Executive of the Year by that organization. On his 90th birthday, Governor Sebelius issued a citation honoring Tom as a Distinguished Kansan and in 2005 he was inducted into the Topeka Business Hall of Fame. The author of five books, Tom's purpose in writing was helping others. Survivors include Tom's children, Kathy Broxterman and Tom E. Schwartz; grandchildren, Lauren Schwartz, Lindsay Schwartz, Justin Broxterman, Brett Broxterman and Joel Broxterman; and his faithful caregivers of the last ten years. He was also preceded in death by a son, Timothy Schwartz. Tom's service was private as was his wish. Memorial contributions are suggested to Easter Seals Capper Foundation, 3500 SW10th Ave, Topeka KS 66604, Marian Clinic, 1001 SW Garfield Ave, Topeka KS 66604 or to Hayden Catholic High School, 401 SW Gage Blvd, Topeka, KS 66606

Tribute Wall



“ *Thomas "Tom" Schwartz*

January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM



“ *To the Schwartz family,*

I just wanted to express my condolences in the passing of your father. I knew Tom the son from lake Perry when we use to ski together. Then I realized the family house was just over the green on number 4 at TCC. Those were such fun times. I especially remember when they did a special on the Americana, the 52 foot yacht at lake Perry. I know it's been since 2014 now but I for some reason I was looking at boats today and just wondered about your father who I was lucky enough to meet. 101 years is amazing in itself and I'm sure you all still think about the great man as a dad and grandfather. I wish everyone peace and happiness.

Sincerely, Sam Chapman

Sam Chapman - June 08, 2019 at 03:06 PM



“ *Tom and Kathy,*

*I just heard about the passing of your father. You and your families are in my thoughts and prayers. Your father was a generous man and his continued support of Let's Help for many years was a blessing to many in the community. God Bless- take care
Rosie*

Rosie Roberts - July 17, 2014 at 05:07 PM

GH

“ *Kathy, I am so sorry to hear of your dad passing. I know you are so sad and your heart is breaking. Please know you and your entire family are in my thoughts and prayers.*

Gina Herman - July 09, 2014 at 12:19 AM

MT

“ *A few years ago Tom was regaling me with his tales of investigating naval aviator miscreants and serving Douglas MacArthur on an Army transport ship. He seemed to be following current events well from his easy chair.*

Tom and Helen were best buddies with my parents, who lived across the street.

I hope Tom told you the story of his infatuation with Helen at the cafe!

There are permanent memorials for Tom and Helen on the library outdoor benches.

Au Revoir

michael thomas - July 08, 2014 at 04:22 PM

RS

“ *Dear Kathy and the Schwartz family,
We are saddened at the passing of your father, Tom. He (and your Mom) were always great supporters of our mission and the students at Hayden Catholic High School. You will be in my prayers.
God Bless,*

Rick Strecker - July 07, 2014 at 10:26 AM

CD

“ *Kathy and family,
I'm sorry to hear about your Dad. You will be in my thoughts and
prayers.*
Cheryl (Martin) Dew

Cheryl (Martin) Dew - July 07, 2014 at 10:03 AM