



## Thomas Robert Bland Sr.

July 2, 1937 - March 8, 2021

Thomas Robert Bland, Sr., age 83, of Casselberry, Florida, passed away on March 8, 2021. He is survived by his wife Jane F. (Kreuzberg) Bland, son Thomas Robert Bland, Jr., and daughter Sydney Bland (Ronald) Jones.

Funeral Mass at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, April 17, 2021 at St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church, 861 Maitland Ave, Altamonte Springs, FL 32701.

Observance of CDC Guidelines to avoid Covid-19 transmission are to be practiced.

Reception to follow Mass from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Maitland Civic Center, 641 Maitland Ave S, Maitland, FL 32751.

In lieu of flowers a donation in Tom's memory may be given to Vitas Hospice: <https://vitascommunityconnection.org/> or to the University of Central Florida Foundation and choose the Knights Athletics Program: <https://www.ucffoundation.org/givenow> or to West Liberty University, West Liberty, West Virginia Football program here: <https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E168444&id=1>

Tom was born and raised in Wheeling, WV. After graduating from Wheeling High School in 1956, he joined the United States Marine Corps. Upon the completion of his service, he entered West Liberty State College, Wheeling.

He married his college sweetheart, Jane and began a highly successful pro-football career with the legendary Wheeling Ironmen of the United Football League (1962-1964). The speedy wide receiver was chosen "MVP" for 1963. He joined the Fort Wayne (IN) Warriors of the Continental Football League in 1965 and made an immediate impact leading the league in receiving and earning yet another team "MVP Award".

His football journey took him to Orlando in 1966 where he was player-coach for the Orlando Panthers of the Continental Football League. He was all CFL Selection during each four of his seasons with the Panthers and was twice selected as "Team MVP". He was the number one receiver in the history of the Continental Football League which earned Tom a chance at the Canadian Football League where he was signed by the Toronto Argonauts (1970-1971). There he was selected as CFL "Import Rookie of the Year" for 1970.

After hanging up his cleats for the final time he and his family returned home to Orlando 1971. He served as a teacher and football coach for Lakeview, Lake Brantley, and Evans High Schools. In 1979 and 1980 he was the offensive coach for the newly begun University of Central Florida football program.

During the years of 1982-1984 he joined the Tampa Bay Bandits (Steve Spurrier) of the United States Football League where he served as player personnel. In 1985 he was again in player personnel for the Orlando Renegades (Lee Corso) USFL.

With Perry Moss as head coach of the Orlando Predators in the Arena Football League, Tom served as receivers coach for 1991 and 1992 all the while being a successful businessman in Orlando, and a competitive scratch golfer!

His success on the pro-football circuit was recognized in 1982 when he was inducted into the Minor League Football Hall of Fame. He was inducted into West Liberty University's Hall of Fame in 1992.

A life well-lived is worth remembering!!

"The Man with the Golden Hands"

You have heard the roar of the crowd,  
You have given your fans joy,  
That roar is a memory now,  
But what memories they are!

Moving down the field,  
Spectacular catches in flight.  
The valley boys remember well;  
Tom Bland's exploits on Sunday evening.

Pound for pound, as they say,  
You were the best at your position.  
God granted you talent and drive;  
you wasted neither.

You have a beautiful wife  
And lovely children, too.  
They know they are fortunate  
To have you as a husband and father.

We, your friends and fans, are pleased  
To see you honored this day.

For we will always remember,  
The man with the golden hands.  
by Larry Williams 10/3/1992

The family of Thomas Robert Bland, Sr. invites you to leave a message of  
condolence on the Tribute Wall created in his loving memory.

# Previous Events

## Reception to Follow Funeral Mass

APR 17. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Maitland Civic Center  
641 South Maitland Avenue  
Maitland, FL 32751

# Tribute Wall

BB

“ I was 11 years old when Tom played for the Wheeling Ironmen No 40. He was my hero. I would always go to the games with my Dad and was fortunate to get to meet him a few times. I was in awe. As a adult a few years back at the same field he played on he was in town visiting i spotted him and went over and said your Tom Bland . He didn't have a clue who i was until I told him i was the 11 year old who use to always cheer for him at the games and my dad had Brooks Restaurant. He was with his wife and they probably thought i was crazy, but hey he was my hero. Condolences to his wife and family. RIP NO 40.

Brian w Brookes - May 30, 2022 at 09:43 PM

BB

“ I was like 11 years old when he played for the Wheeling Ironmen. He was my favorite player on the team. My dad took me to all the games. I also got to meet him a few times. Something funny a few years ago i was at a Wheeling Park football game on the same field he played on and I spotted him and went over to say Hi to him and his wife. What a thrill to see him again. My condolences to his wife and family. No 40 forever RIP.

Brian w Brookes - May 30, 2022 at 09:22 PM



“ Delightful Dieffenbachia was purchased for the family of Thomas Robert Bland Sr..



April 15, 2021 at 09:02 PM

WG

“ Tommy was a great guy. Many good times were had at the Predator games and the NFL Former Players meetings.  
Tommy was respected and liked by all. He will be missed dearly.  
Our sincere condolences,  
Wendy Grabe and The Predheads

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Wendy Grabe - April 15, 2021 at 03:36 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for  
the family of Thomas Robert Bland Sr..



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April 14, 2021 at 11:45 AM



“ Heart's Companion Bouquet was purchased for  
the family of Thomas Robert Bland Sr..



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April 12, 2021 at 11:01 AM

LL

“ Tom Bland will forever be special to me. . . He was a valley legend and never lost his love for the valley. In 1985 I signed a free agent contract with the Orlando Renegades of the USFL because he found me at West Liberty and believed in me. He was buddies with the likes of Lee Corso & Steve Mariucci and I'm sure tons of other big names in the sport. I only wish I could have seen him play. I'm proud to say I knew him. Please accept my condolences.  
Lance LaFollette

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**Lance LaFollette** - April 01, 2021 at 12:18 PM

 David Rogers

“ Coach Bland was a great guy. I remember him when he was a t Lakeview HS in Winter Garden and also as a member of the Orlando Panthers. I did not see him for many many years until he began to substitute teach at Seminole High in Sanford. I was coaching and teaching Phys Ed and we talked quite often. I also would see him at Tusawilla Country Club. I had some great talks with him about coaching and life. He was a very good golfer also. I send prayers to the family and wish them well.

David Rogers

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**David Rogers** - March 31, 2021 at 11:39 AM

SR

“ Wow!!! Quite the legacy. I am 68 years old and was born and raised in Central Florida. I went Edgewater High School. I noticed Tommy's obit and quickly recalled some fond memories. What an athlete, What a Coach. We need more men like Tommy. From one Tommy to another...

Tommy Randolph  
Pastor of BibleThinkTank.com

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**Samuel Thomas Randolph** - March 27, 2021 at 08:07 AM

DJ

“ Coach T.....

*After UF, Tommy was my receivers coach with the Orlando Americans (AFL) here in Orlando as well as he and Bugsy brought me to the Tampa Bay Bandits. Here in O-town, Tommy took me to the Malcolm's Hungry Bear for "all I could eat" on a regular basis. He was definitely a great coach, a winner, and a great motivator but his best gift was that of a great story teller. He could talk some serious smack!! I wish I would have kept in touch with Coach T. God Bless You Coach Tommy Bland, Play Ball young Tommy.....It's first and 10.....*

*Darrell Jones*

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**Darrell Jones** - March 24, 2021 at 11:05 AM

BB

“ *Bob and Arlene Boyles. We met Tom in 1959 at West Liberty State College. Tom and I majored in Education and Arlene in Dental Hygiene. Jane came to WL in 1960 in Dental Hygiene and she was Arlene's little Sis in Lambda sorority. After graduation, we kept in contact with Christmas cards, phone calls, and WL Homecoming. After retiring from teaching and coaching, Arlene and I for the last 20 years, visited with Tom and Jane in Florida. We enjoyed their kind hospitality at their home. We toured various areas of Florida with them and other WL friends. Tom was a great guy who loved to tell and hear a good story. We had many fun times with much laughter. Tom and Jane were a great couple with Chip and Sydney who completed a tight knit family. We will miss Tommy. We will always remember the good times. We love Tom, Jane, Chip and Sydney. God Bless the family. Rest in peace, T Bird Bland*

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**Bob and Arlene Boyles** - March 23, 2021 at 12:28 PM

WG

“ I met Tom through Art Ryder and golf in the early 80's. He was an excellent golfer and competitor, but even better friend. My memories of our 1986 Scotland trip will be with me forever. His befriending of my son Taylor really warmed me to his real nature. I offer my entire family's condolences in your loss. He will be missed by many he touched.  
Will Garner

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**will Garner** - March 22, 2021 at 10:29 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Thomas Robert Bland Sr..



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March 22, 2021 at 08:35 AM

CB

“ My WR coach at UCF '79. He's the reason I ended up on that team and ultimately met many friends for life and graduated from UCF which was the springboard and foundation for a successful life to date. I'll always be grateful for that as life's direction is often predicated upon a mere decision or influence here, or there. He influenced mine. I also remember clearly his passion for showing his receivers proper route running, i.e., his focus on a hard foot plant before a cut into the route that he loved to personally demonstrate on the practice field. His exact words to me..."you better not disappoint me Blair"!!!! At the time I thought he was referring to football; now I know it was in life. Hope I didn't Coach.

Cole Blair

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**Cole Blair** - March 22, 2021 at 08:31 AM

SE

“ Tom was such a great friend to Bugsy, myself and the boys. My prayers and love to you Jane, Syd and Chip. I know that Tom and Bugsy are together again “coaching” and telling stories.

Stephanie Engelberg - March 21, 2021 at 08:42 PM

LO

“ I watched Tommy play for the Wheeling Ironmen and also play catch with him when he lived on Cherry Hill Rd. in Warwood. Being 10 years younger he still had the time to toss the football to me and my friend Joe B. who lived across the street from Tommy. RIP Tommy and thanks.

Larry O’Leary - March 21, 2021 at 03:04 PM

FC

“ RIP Coach Bland! You and Coach Cuddy can again meet and play football and golf in heaven! Frances Cuddy Grubbs

FRANCES GRUBBS (formerly Cuddy) - March 21, 2021 at 02:02 PM

FF

“ Sincere condolences to the family and friends of tommy. i met tom at tuskawilla golf course many years ago, became friends and always enjoyed his golf and stories. you will be missed. Semper Fi brother RIP love you, Frank Franze and family.

frank franze - March 21, 2021 at 11:26 AM

ML

“ Jane, I offer my condolences to you and your family. I never knew Tom, but the tributes here and his background are amazing. My thoughts and prayers are with you all at this time.

Mike LaPorte - March 21, 2021 at 08:22 AM

GG

“ Tommy was a regular at the Hungry Bear on West Colonial which is where I met him. He was always energetic, interesting, and kind. His work with the UCF program laid the groundwork for the successes we have seen in more recent years. I would like to offer my condolences to Tommy's family.

*Greg Gentleman*

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**Greg Gentleman** - March 21, 2021 at 06:54 AM

DA

“ I wish to offer my sincere and humble condolences to the family and friends of Tom. He was one of my football coaches at Wheeling High School my senior year. He and I played golf together. I spent time with Tom and his coach(Snyder)on several occasions. I went with Tom to visit his dad. Tom involved me in his life,and he was a very humble person. I used to hook up with Tom at the Italian Festival with Nick,and Sam Visnic,and Phil Shapaka every year. I last saw him when his brother, Frank,passed away. We kept in touch on FB. I am deeply saddened. He was a big influence in my life,and I shall cherish my memories of him and his friendship.Denny Albaugh

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**Dennis R Albaugh** - March 20, 2021 at 02:22 PM

DA

“ I wish to offer my sincere and humble condolences to the family and friends of Tom. He was one of my football coaches at Wheeling High School my senior year. He and I played golf together. I spent time with Tom and his coach(Snyder)on several occasions. I went with Tom to visit his dad. Tom involved me in his life,and he was a very humble person. I used to hook up with Tom at the Italian Festival with Nick and Sam Visnic,and Phil Shapaka every year. I last saw his when his brother, Frank,passed away. We kept in touch on FB. I am deeply saddened. He was a big influence in my life,and I shall cherish my memories of him and his friendship.

Dennis R Albaugh - March 20, 2021 at 01:41 PM

RO

“ I remember watching him play many times. RIP Mr. Bland.

Russell Osmianski - March 20, 2021 at 11:42 AM

BJ

“ Thoughts, prayers and peaceful wishes to you all. Many good memories on and off the ball field. If we can ever do anything for you please don't hesitate to ask. --Bill Jenkins

Bill Jenkins - March 18, 2021 at 03:01 PM



“ Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the family of Thomas Robert Bland Sr..



March 18, 2021 at 01:46 PM

CB

“ Jane, Sidney and Chip  
Your in my thoughts and prayers.  
It was a pleasure to meet Tom at the office. He always managed to  
have a nice gesture to share to make a smile. He will be greatly  
missed...  
Cheryl Bourgoin

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**Cheryl Bourgoin** - March 17, 2021 at 08:00 PM

TS

“ I first met Tom on the football field in high school. He a Wheeling  
Wildcat and me a Little Red from Triadelphia. He was tough as  
nails. But I came to appreciate that toughness more when he and I,  
and 10 other Wheeling boys joined the Marine Corps together in  
1956. While Parris Island was difficult for many. Tom reveled in it.  
He loved to compete, which is why he was a success. Whatever  
Tom gained in life, he certainly earned. I am told that he was a role  
model and mentor to many. Semper Fi brother. Say hello to ‘Pickles’  
and Gus.  
My condolences to his family and friends.  
Tom Seamon

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**tom seamon** - March 17, 2021 at 01:20 PM

 Tina  
Adessa

“ Jane, my condolences and prayers to you and your family. I never  
met Tom, I wish I had with all the great things said about him. My  
thought are with you and family. Love, Tina Adessa

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**Tina Adessa** - March 16, 2021 at 08:30 PM

RL

“ Tom was my coach at Lake Brantley High in the mid seventies. He had a way of beating you up when you needed it and you knew he cared at the same time . I can still hear his voice and see him with that white terry cloth hat . Thanks for the memories coach I hope you will have me on your team in heaven .  
Ross Lishen

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**Ross Lishen** - March 16, 2021 at 07:23 PM

MO

“ One of the great coaches form the inaugural UCF football season 1979, and one of the original athletes in Orlando Florida where Tom Payed for the Orlando Panthers - well liked but feared as it should be , heart of gold behind that stern look , you will be missed Tom Bland by all . RIP

UCF # 44  
Michael O'Shaughnessy

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**Michael oshaughnessy** - March 16, 2021 at 09:40 AM

AR

“ I got to know Tom in the early 1980's. We played golf together weekly. Any of you who have played golf with Tom know what a fine golfer and tough competitor he is. He was also so much fun to have in your foursome. Tom was funny and a tremendous story teller. No matter the occurrence, Tom always had a "one time I was playing" story that fit the situation. I am sure we all remember the "I always play a Tommy Bland" story.  
Although we stopped playing weekly golf in the mid 1990's, Tom has stayed a true and loyal friend. Because once you have Tom Bland as a friend, you have a friend for life. That is what Tom is to me, a great friend. I am lucky to have been able to call him that. Art Ryder

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**art ryder** - March 16, 2021 at 07:02 AM

LP

*Tom was an Legend and inspiration to me as a West Liberty graduate and a Head Coach Bob Roe product. His Legacy as a professional ball player made playing at the next level very real for us that followed! I only met him once or twice! A very kind man and straight shooter. A good word and sound advice that you shared with many that you touched with your wisdom went a long way.  
RIP TOMMY*

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**Lou Piccone** - March 16, 2021 at 03:55 PM

MP

*“ I first met Tom through "Bugsy" in the late 70s in a business relationship. Bugsy passed a few years later and Tom took over the business. I was aware of Tom's history in football which turned our business relationship into a friendship. Tom Jr. (Chip) joined the business also and the two of them made a great team. I had the utmost confidence in both of them. My wife Linda and I were privileged to have dinner with Tom and Jane on more than one occasion. In the later years I worked more with Tom Jr. who was a chip off the old block as he & Tom were clones the way they conducted business. I really miss that relationship. Jane, Chip and Sydney lost a great husband & father.*

*Rest in peace my friend.*

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**Massey Petty** - March 15, 2021 at 07:04 PM



*“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Thomas Robert Bland Sr..*



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March 15, 2021 at 06:39 PM

DW

“*Jane and Family: Condolences on your loss. I met Tom my freshman year at West Liberty's football camp, where he was an established star and leader. He has been a part of my life every since and I value the time that I, he and our mutual friends spent together.*

*As noted, Tom was an exceptional athlete who later starred in the Continental and Canadian Football League. If he was your friend, he couldn't do enough for you and I will remember and miss him from now on.*

*I was privileged to be a member of Coach Bob Roe's staff at WL and he said that Tom was one of the best athletes to ever come out of the Ohio Valley. That endorsement is a great tribute to Tom. RIP good friend.*

*Dave Waples*

*Kennesaw, Ga.*

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**Dave Waples** - March 13, 2021 at 08:32 PM

DF

“*Tom was a highly skilled receiver on the CFL's Orlando Panthers when we first met in 1966 as football teammates. He was also blessed with great athleticism in golf & off-season basketball, and I was fortunate to team with Tom in those two sports until work location & aging took its toll. Nevertheless, the comrade created many fond memories that will help me to celebrate Tom's life as we grieve his physical loss.*

*Condolences to Jane, her children, other family and friends. Don Fuell*

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**Don Fuell** - March 13, 2021 at 09:21 AM

C'

“ My thoughts and prayers go out to Jane and family. Tommy was one of a kind. He was about 10 years older than me so I did not know him at West Liberty. I got to know Tom & Jane thru our WL Alumni. I enjoyed the few times we played golf at his FL course. He leaves behind quite a Legacy at West Liberty. RIP Tommy...

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**Chuck Jeswilkowski '69** - March 13, 2021 at 09:18 AM

KB

“ Pat isn't able to write this message, but he wanted to say that Tom was the very best guy he ever knew. He was just nice and a lot of fun, especially to play golf with. Pat always looked forward to getting to Florida to see him and the other buddies. We were both very sad to hear of his passing and know that he is now with God.

*Our thoughts are with you Jane, Tom, Jr., and Sydney.*

*Pat and Kathie Batten*

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**Kathie and Pat Batten** - March 12, 2021 at 10:26 PM

JB

“ The first time I ever heard of Tom Bland was when our son, James, came home from the Casselberry golf course with new golf shoes, balls and, I'm not sure, but probably clubs as well. He told us "a nice man saw him practicing at the driving range and liked his swing". Of course that sounded pretty fishy to me so I had James introduce us and what do you know, he was a nice man that took a liking to James and never did like my swing!

He always treated James so well and was generous to him with golf equipment as well as advice. Our son always looked up to Tom and because of that I also looked up to Tom and then I got to know him better and looked up to him for many other reasons as well.

More than once when playing at Casselberry he'd see our garage door open (we lived on #7), come in and grab a couple of beers right out of the fridge that was in the garage and continue on his way.....of course he'd always leave a couple of bucks as well.

Always proud to call him a friend....the kind of friend you always knew had your back.

*Jim Bishop*

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**Jim Bishop** - March 11, 2021 at 04:09 PM