



## Thomas Gilbert O'Dell

October 31, 1931 - August 7, 2021

Tom O'Dell passed away Saturday evening August 7, 2021. After several recent health issues, and as a twelve year pancreatic cancer survivor, he is finally at peace. A private family celebration of life will take place at a later date, to be determined.

Tom was born in Kansas City, Kansas on October 31, 1931, to Marie and John O'Dell. Marie would remarry Harry Luth on September 30, 1933, and together they raised Tom in the Armourdale Community. Tom was an only child and their pride and joy.

As a youngster, Tom was known to most of his friends and family as Tommy. He became a standout athlete in football, basketball, and baseball. He was a KC All Metro running back at Argentine High School, an All Conference basketball player at McPherson College, and played some semi-professional baseball. To those that knew Tommy O'Dell, he was a tenacious competitor, that would later carry over into his career in coaching. His nickname in college was "Digger" O'Dell.

After graduating from college, on August 14, 1954, Tom married the love of his life Janice Nance. He met Jan at McPherson College. They would have two sons, Mark Thomas O'Dell and Kelly Patrick O'Dell.

Shortly after marriage, Tom was drafted into the military and qualified for officer training school at Fort Leavenworth. He graduated as a Military Intelligence Officer, and was stationed in Baltimore and the Washington D.C. area.

Following military service, Tom pursued his passion to teach high school students, and became a life long social studies teacher and coach, especially basketball. Starting out at Solomon and Ellsworth, and then later as a highly regarded basketball coach in the state of Kansas at Washburn Rural High School /Topeka through the 1960's. Tom would eventually move his family to Olathe in 1969, which became their home up to Tom's retirement in 1994. In retirement Tom and Jan would live in Bonita Springs, Florida, Highland Woods Country Club.

Tom taught American Government and was the Head Basketball Coach at Olathe High School in the 1970's, and helped open Olathe South High School as an Athletic Director in 1982, and later returned to coaching basketball at South up to his retirement. He provided valuable leadership and support through tremendous change and growth in the Olathe District during that period.

Other accolades for Tom O'Dell: He was a contributing member of the Kansas State High School Activities Association, and an active member of the National Council of Social Studies, and obtained his Master's Degree in Social Studies at Emporia State University. In 1998, Tom was inducted into the Kansas Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame, and the KC Metro Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame in 2000. In his his career he can take pride in the fact that he helped a countless number of young men earn college basketball scholarships.

To Tom, family was everything! He cherished family gatherings, and all the children. He was greatly loved by all and will be missed.

Surviving Relatives:

Wife Jan O'Dell, Longwood, Florida

Son Mark O'Dell and wife Radonna, Olathe, Kansas

Grandchildren:

Marissa (O'Dell) Osenbaugh, Piedmont, Oklahoma

Ky O'Dell and wife Yari, San Antonio, Texas

Trey O'Dell and wife Shannen, Olathe, Kansas

Great Grandchildren:

Marley and Lennin Osenbaugh, Oklahoma

Zayla and Kyrie O'Dell, Texas

Asher and Grey O'Dell, Kansas

Sister-in-law , Carolyn Porter, Longwood, Florida

Brother-in-law, Larry Nance, Des Moines , Iowa

Half Sister, Jackie O'Dell, Cheyenne, Wyoming

A large number of Nephews, Nieces, and Cousins who all reside in:

Florida, Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas

Preceded in Death:

Mother, Marie Luth

Father, Harry Luth

Son, Kelly O'Dell

Brother-in-law, Norman Nance

Mother-in-law, Mildred Nance

Father-in-law, Leonard Nance

Grandmother, Bina Sympson

Grandfather, Robert Sympson

# Tribute Wall

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“ We are so sorry to hear of Tom’s passing. So many fond memories of crazy Thanksgivings together. Tom was always quick with a joke and lively conversation. “Digger” as dad used to call him, will be sorely missed, but I’m sure dad and Aunt Marie were there to welcome him home. God bless you all... Melinda, Darold and Catherine.

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**Melinda Stagner** - August 15, 2021 at 02:44 PM

BV

“ Coach O’Dell was a great teacher and coach. I was blessed to have had him as a teacher. His smile always made one’s day. He stories were great. He cared about all his students and players. God bless him. God bless his family.

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**Becky Vrbas** - August 12, 2021 at 10:00 PM

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“ As a young basketball coach, Coach O’Dell invited me to watch his practices. He shared his knowledge and he emphasized the his attention to the little things. He taught me to demand a certain level of intensity from everyone in the program. His tutelage made me a better coach.  
When I became AD at East, my first call was to Tom. He gave me a copy of his August check list. He gave me excellent advise in how to deal with many high school coaches who have very big ego’s. Finally, he coached my son Chad. He help shape that young mans character. He will be missed. Rest In Peace my friend.

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**Ryan Ralston** - August 11, 2021 at 06:31 PM

MA

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



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**marktodell** - August 11, 2021 at 02:10 PM