

Obituary for Kathryn A. Thomas (died March 10, 2010)

by Susan Szalewski (*Omaha World-Herald*, March 15, 2010)

Kathryn Thomas was the person to go to if you ever needed an ancient recipe, a translation of a Roman tomb inscription or a tour of Grecian antiquities.

Thomas, an associate professor at Creighton University, spent a lifetime studying and teaching the classics to students young and old.

She died of cancer Wednesday at a hospice home, said her friend Rita Ryan, a Latin teacher at Central High School. Thomas was 62.

A service will be at 1 p.m. Monday at the Greek Orthodox Church of Greater Omaha, 9012 Q St.

Thomas, who received her bachelor's degree from Creighton, had been teaching there since 1974. She was known for taking groups of students on overseas trips, especially to Greece, said Rose Hill, assistant dean of the university's College of Arts & Sciences.

"Alumni will come back and talk about 'the year I went to Greece with Dr. Thomas,'" Hill said.

William J. Napiwocki, an adjunct professor of Latin at St. Joseph College Seminary in Illinois and a longtime friend of Thomas', said she had wanted to retire in Greece. "It was just a shame she died so young," Napiwocki said.

Ryan said Thomas was diagnosed with cancer in May 2009 and had to stop teaching last fall.

Thomas, who grew up in Omaha, earned her master's degree and doctorate from Loyola University in Chicago.

She was associate vice president of academic affairs at Creighton from 1993 to 1996. Thomas was active in numerous national organizations related to the study of classics and received many fellowships, honors and grants for her studies.

Omaha schools and organizations often tapped her expertise. She taught minicourses on subjects like ancient foods and medicine for the Catholic Archdiocese of Omaha, helped high school classes with the nuances of Latin, organized state high school Latin conventions and hosted prominent archaeologists who visited Nebraska for speaking engagements.

Her broad knowledge allowed her to teach world literature at Creighton and medical terminology to pre-med students there.

Thomas had been active at her Greek Orthodox church, running the church's bookstore after services, Ryan said.

Survivors include her brothers, Joseph Thomas of Hancock, Iowa, and John Thomas of Verdigre, Neb.