

Thomas



Thomas Hall is named for **Sgt. Herbert J. Thomas**. Born in 1918, Thomas was a native of Charleston, West Virginia, and a graduate of South Charleston High School. He studied business administration at Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute. Thomas, a member of Virginia Tech's Athletic Hall of Fame, was a legendary football player. During his senior year he was the second highest scorer in the Southern Conference and received All-American honors. He never graduated with the class of 1941 because he went to war two months before commencement.

A member of the U.S. Marine Corps, Thomas was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism during World War II for action against enemy Japanese forces during the battle at the Koromokina River, Bougainville Island, Solomon Islands, on November 7, 1943. Although several of his men were struck by enemy bullets as he led his squad through dense jungle undergrowth in the face of severe hostile machine gun fire, he was successful in destroying two enemy machine gun positions. Halted by a third enemy machine gun, he positioned his men to rush the enemy after he threw a hand grenade. But when he threw the grenade, it reflected off the jungle vines and dropped back among his men. Thomas deliberately flung himself upon the grenade to smother the explosion, valiantly sacrificing his life for his comrades. Inspired by his selfless action, his men unhesitatingly charged the enemy machine gun, and with fierce determination, killed the crew and several other nearby defenders.

Residence hall built: Thomas Hall was first occupied in the fall of 1949. The building was closed for renovation after the fall 1969 and reopened in fall 1970. It was renovated a second time in summer 2004.

Construction firm: Carneal & Johnston

Thomas Hall Today

Community: Upper Quad

Type: Single-sex (male), traditional-style

Number of residents: 227

Staff: Undergraduate hall director: 1
Resident advisors: 4



References:

Gridiron, Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets.

"Heroes and Heroines Set in Stone," by Su Clauson-Wickerand Netta Smith, in the fall 1995 issue of *Virginia Tech Magazine*.

University Archives of Virginia Tech, *Historical Data Book*, Section 6.5.

Photo Credits:

"Thomas, Sgt. Herbert J." Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets.

Residence Hall photograph courtesy Visual and Broadcast Communications.