

PHILLIP THOMAS. CELEBRATING 50 YEARS IN REAL ESTATE AND THE PRESERVATION OF LAND AND HISTORIC PROPERTIES IN HUNT COUNTRY.

Phil Thomas sits in his beautifully appointed office surrounded by shelves of wonderful mementos and memorabilia collected through the fifty years of success his company has realized in the real estate business. “Each object,” he says, “has meaning for me. Each has a story and is part of my history.” There’s even an original, framed contract that hangs just outside his door, with the signatures of John and Jacqueline Kennedy.



When asked what he thinks about the real estate market today, he smiles and says, “I’ve seen a number of recessions in my fifty years in business. It goes up and it goes down. And by the way, as the market starts to move again with these low interest rates, there’s never been a better time to buy or sell in Hunt Country. You see, real estate in this neck of the woods is unlike any in the D.C. area. You aren’t just buying a home, you are buying into a unique landscape and a special way of life. This real estate tends to retain its value because it offers so much more than a house.”

Phil Thomas and his agents have invested much time and energy into the preservation of the countryside and the cultivation of long-term relationships with homeowners and homebuyers here. And Phil is proud of the fact that, over the years, his firm has bought and sold nearly every notable property in the area — many of them more than once. He’s also been instrumental in the protection of land. Phil worked hand-in-hand with the early champions of land preservation like Eve Fout, the Honorable Bruce Sundlun, James Rowley, George Horkan, Esq., the Honorable Charles Whitehouse and William Backer, among others.

A bill was passed in Congress in the 70’s establishing a state’s ability to create and hold easements. These efforts helped establish organizations like the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Piedmont Environmental Council and the Goose Creek Association. “My father, Reed Thomas, assembled many small parcels of land over many years around Paris, Virginia. He loved the land and it gave me enormous pleasure to fulfill his dream and convey the 1,250 acres of Ovoka Farm to the Piedmont Environmental Council for permanent conservation.” This resulted in Phil being the recipient of the Piedmont Environmental Council’s Land Conservation Award in 2001.

Phil was raised in the Middleburg area. Fifth generation. In the late 1950’s, after prep school, college and the Marine Corps, his first job was pulling a surveyor’s chain across a huge cleared field that today is Dulles Airport. A general contractor that had a quarry nearby approached him one day with knowledge that Phil had recently gotten his real estate license. He asked Phil if he would initiate the purchase of some very rocky land near the airport site to be quarried and turned into gravel for the miles of runways that were about to be laid down. Phil’s response was, “Sure, no problem.” Phil also had no problem cashing that commission check for \$14,000. Especially when, at the time, his surveyor’s salary was only \$8,500.



Phil's first sales office 1964

Phil reflects on those times and laughs. “Real estate looked pretty good to me, even though my first year of business was conducted either in my car or in my hat.” He goes on to say, “It wasn’t long before I started hanging out with a real estate guy located in Middleburg, named John Talbot. We’d meet up at the Coach Stop restaurant, which was the local social hub in Middleburg at the time. I’d sit across from John and sponge up everything I could about real estate. One day, slightly



annoyed, John Talbot told me, as I scanned his big pile of papers on the table, ‘Hey, Phil, you see that guy across the street, headed towards the Red Fox? His name is Raymond Bates and he’s looking to buy a weekend house in the country. Get out there. He’s your client. Go find him something.’”



With that, Phil headed up the street. He introduced himself and told Bates that Talbot had referred him. It turned out that Bates didn’t just want to buy a house, he actually wanted to buy several properties for a new business venture with James Abrams of Allen & Company of New York. He had significant stock in a new pharmaceutical that had just been approved by the FDA, and he wanted to buy as many properties as he could, to fix up and resell. So within six weeks, Phil had him under contract on five area estates. Grateful for the contact, Phil approached a then dismayed John Talbot about formalizing their relationship. They were highly competitive with each other, back when land was going for three to five hundred dollars an acre, and joining forces made good sense.

They cut a deal and opened Thomas & Talbot Real Estate together in 1967. When Talbot moved on in 1979, it became Phil’s company, as he already owned the building.

Today, Phil reminisces. “In the early days, it was the era of the grandes dames of Hunt Country — Theo Randolph, Dorothy Jackson, Alice Mills, Mrs. Iselin, Mrs. Furness and others. I love all the characters of yesterday in this part of the world. You know, my father was a Master of Foxhounds in the 20’s and 30’s. Fox hunting was, and continues to be, an important part of this culture. The fox hunters of yesterday were actually the forerunners to today’s conservationists. It was vital to the fox hunting community to maintain large unspoiled tracts of land for fox hunting. Families such as the Phipps, the Warburgs, the Harrimans, the Guests and the like had the wherewithal to protect and promote Hunt Country. It’s all about this glorious landscape. “It’s why we love where we live.”



C. Reed Thomas, M.F.H.

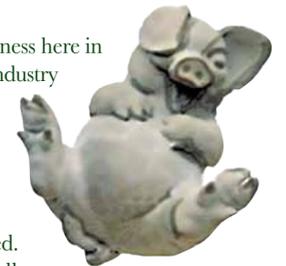
Phil Thomas’ approach to buying and selling over the years hinges on the ethical and the practical. He insists, “I’m not going to tell a seller just anything they want to hear to get a listing. We’re going to establish a realistic price they can get today or we’re just wasting each other’s time. Same kind of approach goes for buyers, as well.

A buyer needs to have a budget that’s realistic to what they’re looking for. I’m not going to try and upsell them on something that’s out of their range. I certainly wouldn’t be in business fifty years operating like that.”

When Phil reflects on where things are today, he has this to say, “Many who settle in this community have no idea what it has taken to preserve it. We take it upon ourselves, here at Thomas &

Talbot, to give everyone a little background, and encourage those who buy property here to continue the effort, to protect open land and this place that is so treasured.”

Phil is proud of his years in the real estate business here in Virginia’s Hunt Country. He has dealt with industry leaders, politicians, football players, new money, old money and just plain hard-working people who have earned a piece of this spectacular landscape. “I work for fun,” he says emphatically. He loves his life here and values the great relationships he has maintained. Phil’s quite serious when he says, “It’s actually taken fifty years to assemble my team of twenty agents, all of whom are recognized as among the best in the business. They share my ideals and love for this landscape and community. Maybe that’s why we’ve established a sales record of historic proportion.”



PHILLIP THOMAS – A HIGH PROFILE REALTOR & COMMUNITY STEWARD

Phil is a member of the Greater Piedmont Area Association of Realtors (GPAAR), Virginia Association of Realtors (VAR), National Association of Realtors (NAR), Metropolitan Regional Information System (MRIS) and Northern Virginia Realtors Association (NVAR). Phil was named Top Residential Producer of the Year by the Loudoun Association of Realtors in 1987 and has received numerous other awards over the years.

Phil’s lineage in Fauquier and Loudoun Counties spans five generations and he has long been active in the civic, business and social affairs of southwest Loudoun County. Phil’s role in the Hunt Country community includes the following: member of the Board of Directors of the Middleburg Community Center, past Co-Chairman of the Middleburg Spring Races, sanctioned by the National Steeplechase Association of America (NSA) and held for the benefit of Loudoun County Hospital.

He is a past member of the Board of Directors of Grafton School for special education students in adjacent Clarke County. Phil served as board member of the Goose Creek Association, a watch committee for environmental issues affecting our area, a member of the Middleburg Business and Professional Association, and the Washington Dulles Task Force, an organization of business and community leaders dedicated to accommodating the economic and residential expansion centering on Washington Dulles International Airport. He has also served as a member of the Dulles South Advisory Planning Committee, and is a former member of the Clarke County Mountain Land Committee. Phil is a past Director of the Long Branch Foundation and a founding member of the Great Meadow Foundation.


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