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# BOB THOMAS

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Member since 1958

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## Background:

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**Birth Date:**

May 12, 1935

**Place of Birth:**

Waynesboro, PA

## Did You Know?

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Bob and Bonnie were the first couple that Rev. Bob Reasey ever married. They were supposed to be married by Dr. Ernst, but he got sick the day of their wedding, and Rev. Reasey had to fill in as the nervous substitute.

## Favorite Hymn:

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Spirit Song



Bob was born the oldest of three sons. The family lived in Fayetteville, and his dad worked for the Chambersburg Engineering Company, eventually working his way up to a position as superintendent of the machine shop. Although his mom was trained as a nurse, she gave up her career in order to stay home to raise her children.

One of Bob's earliest memories is of taking walks with his mother and baby brother down their street; he remembers waiting beside his mom as she stopped frequently to chat with the neighbors. Not surprisingly, many of Bob's later childhood memories relate to baseball. When Bob was a kid, the Little League hadn't yet been established in Chambersburg. Instead, many of the local parks formed teams, and they played informal pick-up games against each other. Bob played on the

Fayetteville Yellow Jackets, coached by Mr. Stout. Each of the boys sported a simple home-made uniform—a t-shirt dyed yellow—and they played against teams from Buchanan Elementary, North End, Franklin Street, Cedar Avenue, and South Second Street.

When he wasn't practicing with his team, Bob was working on plays using a tennis ball against the side of his garage. By the time he was fifteen, Bob and his brother were good enough to play on the adult team in Fayetteville. And after graduation he was recruited to play for the Baltimore Orioles ball club in Americus, GA and Cordele, GA.

But life was not all play. Bob's dad helped him to get a variety of summer jobs, beginning with his first at Dymond's saw mill, where he would stack boards as they came off the planer. Bob remembers it being hard work because it was so repetitive and absolutely non-stop. Bob also worked a similar job in

the Nitterhouse block factory, moving concrete blocks from the conveyor belt onto stacks. He later spent a summer helping to lay macadam, and he worked in the blacksmith shop at Chambersburg Engineering Company during the four summers when he was in college.

After his year in professional baseball convinced him that the major leagues were a bit out of reach, Bob applied to PSU to become a physical education teacher. Unfortunately, the rules at the time automatically eliminated Bob from playing college-level sports because he had already played at the professional level. However, when he and his buddy, Bill Splitch, enrolled in a baseball class, the head baseball coach soon enlisted them as assistant coaches for his freshman team. It was the start of Bob's long and successful coaching career.

After graduation, Bob took a long-term substitute position at Carlisle High School. He then worked at Faust Junior High for four years, before transferring to CASHS, where he worked until his retirement in 2015. One of the things that Bob is most proud of is being successful as a coach, for so many years and with so many winning teams. Under his leadership, Chambersburg won three PIAA state championships, eleven District 3 crowns, and 22 league titles. When asked the secret to his success, Bob says: "A good coach has to have good players and fortunately at Chambersburg High School we had good players. And I was able to instill in them the importance of good grades, being good teammates, and being the best they could be."

In addition to his many years of teaching and coaching in the Chambersburg school district, Bob has also spent many years teaching Sunday School classes here at FUMC. Bob grew up attending Fayetteville United Brethren, but transferred his membership to FUMC when he married Bonnie. He remembers Jenny Kohler first talking him into teaching in the Junior Department. He later helped Dianne Salter, and Carl and Julie Walter with the Junior and Senior High youth group when it met in the basement, and then went on to teach the Men's Bible and Alda Bower classes. Bob says he always enjoyed teaching and feels like he got more out of it than anyone else did.

Bob remembers a time when he clearly felt the presence of God in his life. His dad had been hunting and came home sick. When he ended up having to go into the hospital, Bob remembers asking God, "Why is this happening?" And then he had what he called a "God moment," where he felt God reassuring him that his dad would be okay.

Recently, Bob has started to face some health challenges of his own. In 2010, he had open heart surgery, which he recovered from remarkably well. Bob attributes his fast recuperation to being in good health and following the doctor's rehab instructions closely. But it was probably at least partly due to the fact that it was playoff season and he had someplace he needed to be—on the baseball field, with his team.

Now, Bob struggles with diabetes and a loss of balance. But he is still able to participate in one of his favorite hobbies, due to the kindness of one of his former students, Jared Shelley. For about the last ten years, Jared and his father have been taking Bob with them when they go out hunting. Bob says, "They take me and put me where they want to put me. And then they come back and get me later. Since my balance isn't really good, they take me by the arm and help me." Jared's kindness certainly says something about the impact that Bob has had on the lives of younger generations throughout his coaching career.

The advice he wants to pass on to young people now: "Set goals and have faith that God will provide you with the strength to meet them. And be willing to modify your plans when you need to."