

The St. Mary's Toilet Seat Auction

Tay and Lowell Thomas, who lent their support and their name to the Thomas Center for Senior Leadership, were beloved members of St. Mary's for many decades until their deaths in 2014 and 2016 respectively. Over the years, they contributed much to our church family. But their most... *distinctive* ...legacy may be the St. Mary's Toilet Seat of Honor.

Once upon a time, the story goes, Tay and Lowell were building a vacation home on Maui, Hawai'i, out past Hana and its notoriously long and winding highway. Among other necessities, Tay had procured a toilet seat on sale here in Anchorage, and she planned to install it at the house on Maui the next time they visited Hawai'i. So when the time came, she and Lowell packed their bags and prepared to fly – but the toilet seat would not fit in their luggage. Tay, undeterred, decided to bring it as carry-on baggage. When it wouldn't fit in the overhead bin, she carried it on her lap all the way to Hawai'i.

But when they got to Maui, the toilet seat turned out to be the wrong shape for the toilet at the vacation house. So Tay, unwilling to let a perfectly good toilet seat go to waste, carried it all the way *back* to Anchorage on their return flight – presumably *still* on her lap. Goodness knows what the other passengers on the flight made of the situation.

So now the Thomases were home, with a nice, never-used, and extremely well-traveled toilet seat that they couldn't use in Hawai'i and had no use for in Anchorage. What to do with it?

Well, back in the 1980s, St. Mary's used to hold an annual garage sale fundraiser. So Tay decided to donate the toilet seat to the garage sale. Her mistake was in telling the sale organizers *why* she was donating a toilet seat, of all things. As soon as the story came out, the seat was grabbed. It had too good a tale to simply be sold. It needed a higher purpose. It would be auctioned off at the Annual Meeting!

And so it came to pass that a toilet seat was put up for auction at the Annual Meeting, to benefit various projects and causes. But the story does not end there; for in the general hilarity of bidding on a humble bathroom accessory the congregation decided that the toilet seat should be made a permanent auction item, with each year's winning bidder's name to be mounted upon the "throne", and the throne itself mounted in a place of honor at St. Mary's...the wall by the bathrooms, of course.

Over the years, the Toilet Seat of Honor has raised thousands of dollars for causes ranging from women's shelters to children's programs. Who will it benefit this year? Come to the Annual Meeting and see!