

MSU football legend passes away at 62

By Ernie Boone

We always called him "Dog." Not "Mad Dog," just "Dog."

"Mad Dog," looked impressive in print, and sounded intimidating rolling off the tongue of a sportscaster during the play-by-play or the 11:00 p.m. news, but somehow it didn't fit the soft-spoken good natured Charles Thornhill we knew and loved.

Perhaps it fit on the football field where as a linebacker on two of the finest college teams ever he roamed sideline to sideline tracking down opposing ball carriers and administering bone-crushing hits the sound of which reverberated in stands and in the press box.

But Mad Dog didn't fit the quite, almost shy Thornhill you saw at a dance at the American Legion Hall or in a bull session in the dormitory rooms.

Nor did Mad Dog fit the highly respected sergeant-at-arms in the Michigan Senate he became in recent years.

So, while we'll never forget the role he played on those national championship teams, it's Dog Thornhill involved community member that the Lansing community will remember most.

Dog worked at General Motors for 25 years before retiring.

One of his first jobs after college was as a youth worker at Boys Training School. He learned to use his ready smile and willingness to listen to help troubled youth work through difficulties.

He applied those lessons in later years to help countless kids while volunteering as a youth football league coach. He was always willing to listen, and served as a father figure, often counseling youth helping them to deal

with athletic issues and life.

He volunteered at the City Rescue Mission, and was avid MSU supporter. Thornhill died of heart failure on Thursday, December 21 at Ingham Regional Medical Center. He was 62 years old.

A native of Roanoke, Va., he earned football letters in 1964, 65 and 66.

He earned the nickname "Mad Dog," as a member of defenses that lifted the Spartans to a pair of national titles.

"Dog was a natural born leader," said Ernie Pasteur, a member of the 1965 and 1966 teams. "Bubba (Smith) and Mickey (George Webster) got the notice. They were the big guys."

"Dog was small in stature, but he had the biggest heart on the team. He was the one who got in people's butts when we needed it."

In '65 and '66 Thornhill helped MSU compile a record of 19-1-1 including a pair of Big 10 championships.

The 65 team led the nation in rushing and scoring defense, allowing just 45.6 rushing yards and 6.2 points per game.

He was named first team All-Big Ten as a senior after leading the Spartans in tackles with 102 (35 solos and 67 assists).

The defensive unit ranked third against the rush, allowing just 51.4 yards per game.

Thornhill played with a passion and hit like he loved it.

"Mad Dog is one of the hardest hitting guys I've ever come across," said MSU halfback Dwight Lee after a scrimmage in 1966. "I hate to scrimmage against him; he hits hard every time, and he's in on every tackle."

"In many ways," his playing career has been overlooked because of headlines like



Charles "Mad Dog" Thornhill

George Webster, Bubba Smith, Gene Washington and my self (All Spartan All-Americans and NFL first round draft choices)," said Clinton Jones, another teammate.

"Believe me, 'Mad Dog' was the unsung hero because he helped provide the backbone and foundation of those championship teams..."

Despite being undersized, 'Mad Dog' was one of the strongest guys on the team. He was an awesome player who played with great energy and passion, and we naturally fed off of him. He

played a remarkable game against Notre Dame in the 1966 10-10 tie, finishing with 16 tackles.

"He will be sorely missed by his teammates, but he will always be in our hearts."

His performance in that historic 10-10 tie provided lots of memories for those Spartan teammates.

"I remember in that Notre Dame game they had scored a touchdown and we came back on the field," said Pasteur. "Things were a little tense. The crowd was yelling, 'Kill Bubba Kill! Kill Bubba Kill!'"

"Dog walked over to Bubba, got in his face and said, 'They're calling your name...do something!'"

"To this day Bubba says that Dog inspired him to play his best."

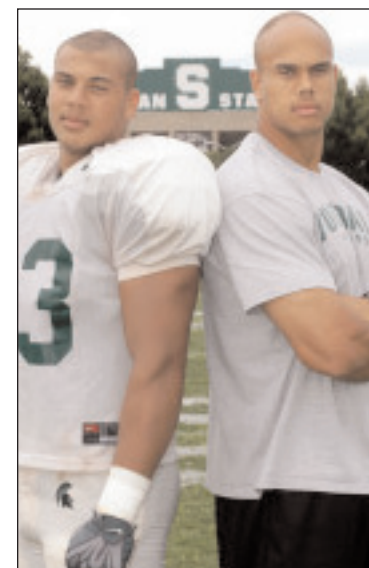
He was selected in the ninth round by the Boston Patriots, but had his NFL career shortened by injuries. He joined a number of former Spartans on the Lansing All-Stars of the Mid-West Football League and helped them to three straight league championships.

Thornhill's two sons both earned MSU football letters. Josh earned four playing linebacker from 1998-2001 and Kaleb recently earned his third, completing his junior season this year.

Josh was twice named to the All Big Ten first team as a linebacker. Kaleb finished third in tackles on the team with 68 this season. He has twice been named to the Big Ten All-Academic team.

Thornhill is survived by his wife, Laureen and two sons.

The Thornhill legacy



Kaleb (L) and Josh Thornhill both followed in their father's footsteps, playing linebacker for Michigan State.
Photos by MSU Sports Deot.



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Celebration Announcements

By Mr. Party,
The Ambassador of
Celebration



Birthdays in December and January

- Mr. Justin Morgan celebrated his 25th birthday on December 14th, 2006.
- Mr. Justin Gonzales celebrated his 34th birthday on December 14th, 2006 with his friends Ramon' and J Money.
- Ms. Rach\$ Schieberl celebrated her 21st birthday on December 17th, 2006 with friends in Detroit.
- Ms. Jessica Hunt celebrated her 20th birthday on December 21st, 2006 at The Dollar Nightclub in Lansing, MI.
- Ms. Mary B. Foster celebrated her 80th birthday on December 21st, 2006 with friends at a Christmas party, at The Southside Coalition Community Center in Lansing, MI.
- Mr. Rick "The Ruler" Strong celebrated his birthday on December 22nd, with a party at The Firm Restaurant and Lounge, and on December 23rd, 2006 at Auggies Pub & Grill in Lansing
- Mr. D J Jaye Duane celebrated his 28th birthday on December 22nd, 2006 at Rum Runners Piano Bar in Lansing, MI.
- Mr. William Carter celebrates his birthday on January 1st, 2007
- Ms. Michelle Chapman AKA "Lexy" on January 3rd, 2007, celebrates 40 beautiful years of life.
- Ms. Kathy Cena celebrates her 57th birthday on January 3rd, 2007. She will celebrate her birthday with family and friends at the Colonial Bar & Grill in Lansing, MI.
- Ms. Dora Raye celebrates her birthday on January 4th, 2007 with family and friends.
- Ms. Joyce Robinson celebrates her birthday on January 6th, 2007. She will spend a quiet evening with her friend.
- Ms. Georgia Lee Brown celebrates her 94th birthday on January 7th, 2007 with family and friends. Ms. Brown stated; "I think God for every moment of my life!"
- Mr. Jeffery Brown celebrates his birthday on January 9th, 2007.
- Ms. Lori Robinson celebrates her 13th birthday on January 12th, 2007. She stated; "I'm going out with my friends!"

Congratulations

Mr. & Mrs. Michael and Flora Boles became Grandparents for the first time. Their granddaughter, Ms. Madeline Danay Boles (7lbs), was born on December 18th, 2006. Madeline's parents are Mike and Dione Boles, Jr. of Grand Rapids, MI.

Please send us the information about you, your family or friends celebrating the Events of Life, by email: mrpartyserv@aol.com, or call our office at 1-517-482-9782.