For those who knew Tom Moses well, it will probably come as no surprise to hear that Tom's legacy lives on in a significant way in a small branch of a public library almost 1,000 miles away. In 1995, Maria Thomas set up a Memorial Fund in memory of her beloved husband, Wilbur (Bill) Thomas. The fund was to benefit this small library, the South Madison Branch Library, in an ethnically rich but economically poor neighborhood -- a library which Bill had fought to keep open during more than one funding crisis.

The Thomas's generously donated funds and materials to the library, as did the many friends of Bill and his family. However, no friend was more generous with his gifts than this kind man I was to get to know through his many letters to us, Tom Moses.

His generous donations included funds for purchasing needed resources, such as a multimedia computer for the children to use in the library. In addition, over the next several years, Tom sent the library hundreds of materials to add to our collection. Many of these materials were music cds, as Tom and Bill shared a love of music. What is incredible to me is that a large percentage of these were not owned by the entire Madison Public Library system -- meaning that without Tom's donations, our public may not have had access to this wide array of music. The music ranged from opera to jazz to country, and included many famous African American musicians. Tom also sent many brand-new books to our library, including a beautiful book, Red Tails Black Wings, about the African American pilots who so gallantly served our country in WWII. This, of course, is just one example of many, many similar gifts.

Tom always sent a letter with the materials he donated, so that eventually, I got to think of him as a friend. And indeed he was: a friend to Maria and Bill and family, a friend to me, a friend of the library, and a friend to the South Madison neighborhood that is much richer today because of his generosity.

Chris Wagner, Librarian
South Madison Branch Library