



Joseph H. "Joe" Thomas

March 15, 1960 - January 15, 2026

Dodgeville / Ridgeway – Joseph H. “Joe” Thomas, a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and respected community leader, passed away on Thursday after a courageous battle with cancer at the age of 65. Born in Dodgeville, Wisconsin, to Bob and Twila Thomas, Joe was raised with a strong work ethic and a deep commitment to community, values he carried throughout his life.

Joe’s passion for farming and public service was evident to all who knew him. As the fifth generation to operate the Thomas family farm, alongside his wife Diane, he cultivated not only the land but also a love for rural America. After his father’s passing in 2017, Joe continued the legacy of Tom’s Campground, welcoming campers from near and far and sharing his father’s joy for meeting new people. He served as an elected official as the Ridgeway town chair since May 2011 serving 14 years, as well as serving on several other committees.

A dedicated member of the Ridgeway Volunteer Fire Department since 1979, Joe served as assistant fire chief from 1995 to 2002, then as chief until 2024, before stepping back into the assistant chief role. His 47 years of service and three decades of leadership left a lasting impact on the members of Ridgeway Fire Department and the broader community.

Joe is preceded in death by his parents, Bob and Twila Thomas; his daughter, Hannah; and his mother- and father-in-law, Robert and Berniece Aurit.

He is survived by his devoted wife, Diane; his children, Kyle, Josiah and his daughter Olivia, and Allison (Kyle) Spease and their children Clark, Meredith, Walker, and Stetson. He is also survived by his beloved nephew, CJ (Danielle) Ihm; his best friend and sister, Mary (Jeff) Rohlinger; sisters Katie (Pat) Ihm, Nancy (Dave) Bradshaw, Sarah (Mark) Weier; brother David; and many other nieces, nephews, and family members who will cherish his memory.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, January 23, 2026 at ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH in Dodgeville. Burial will be held in East Side Cemetery. Visitation will be held from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. on Thursday at the GORGEN-McGINLEY & AYERS FUNERAL HOME in Dodgeville and from 10:00 a.m. until 10:50 a.m. on Friday at the church.

In lieu of Flowers contributions to the Ridgeway Fire Department or Agrace would be appreciate.

The Thomas family would like to thank Agrace Hospice, Susie and John Husom, The Ridgeway Fire Department and All Friends, Family, and Neighbors for all the love and support in this difficult time.

Joe's legacy of service and dedication to family and community will be remembered by all who had the privilege to know him.

Cemetery Details

East Side Cemetery

601 E. Division Street
Dodgeville, WI

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 22. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Gorgen-McGinley & Ayers Funeral Home
400 East Grace Street
Dodgeville, WI 53533
(608) 935-5222
gorgenfh@mhtc.net

Visitation

JAN 23. 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM (CT)

St. Joseph's Catholic Church
405 S. Dacotah Street
Dodgeville, WI 53533

Mass of Christian Burial

JAN 23. 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Joseph's Catholic Church
405 S. Dacotah Street
Dodgeville, WI 53533

Tribute Wall

DP

“ Joe was a well known person in the area and was known to do anything possible to assist anyone in need. I was lucky enough to be with the Ridgeway Fire Department for a short while but learned so much from Joe not only as a fireman and as a board member but as a person. He was always there when needed. The night our house was struck by lighting he was the first on the scene. Joe words when I was making the 911 call as he pulled in the driveway "Saw the lighting hit and I knew right away whose house it was!" He was there within minutes after the lighting struck and the fire crew was there in less then 10 minutes. He was a jack of all trades and master of all. I have not seen Joe in while as I have moved out of the area but I know he will be sadly missed and a huge hole to fill. I know he is smiling down at us now knowing he made his time here a better place. Thank you Joe for everything you have done and you have inspired you so many people throughout the years, we hope your legacy continues.

David Phillips

David Phillips - January 23 at 02:04 PM

DN

“ Joe's presence on the Iowa County Board will be missed. His dedication and commitment were outstanding. Prayers and sympathy to the family. Hugs to Sarah and Mark. Dan & Lois Nankee

Daniel/Lois Nankee - January 23 at 11:38 AM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Joseph H. "Joe" Thomas.



January 21 at 04:53 PM



“ Mark and cindy bender planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph H. "Joe" Thomas.

Mark and cindy bender - January 21 at 04:53 PM



“ Mineral Point Fire Department purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Joseph H. "Joe" Thomas.



Mineral Point Fire Department - January 21 at 11:19 AM



“ Walmart Neenah Family purchased the Sacred Duty Spray for the family of Joseph H. "Joe" Thomas.



Walmart Neenah Family - January 20 at 05:11 PM

WF

“ Walmart Neenah Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph H. "Joe" Thomas.

Walmart Neenah Family - January 20 at 05:11 PM

RB

“ Diane & Family: On behalf of the Wisconsin Fire Service members, our sincere sympathy to all of you on the loss of your beloved Joe. We share in your sorrow. We wish you many fond memories of him, and the good times that you all shared together as a family. Through Chief Thomas, you are all members of the Fire Service Family. We loved Chief Thomas as a "Brother" firefighter, and he GAVE IT RIGHT BACK! To our Brothers and Sisters on the Ridgeway VFD, know that your fellow firefighters have "got your back". Honor Chief Thomas' memory by doing your job to the best of your ability every time you roll out the door on a call. God Bless Our Fallen Brother, Chief Thomas. I

In Sadness, Rich "Bo" Bosanko-Battalion Chief-Retired; Kenosha Fire Dept., Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin Honor Guard

Richard "BO" Bosanko - January 20 at 06:05 AM



“ Tender Tribute was purchased for the family of Joseph H. "Joe" Thomas.



January 19 at 02:50 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Joseph H. "Joe" Thomas.*



January 19 at 10:46 AM



“ *My condolences to Joe s family, I spent many nights with Joe at Midway Lanes discussing many issues, always enjoyable*

Paul Schwartz - January 17 at 11:08 PM



“ *Sorry for your loss. My husband spoke often about Joe when He, Marvel, served on the Board of Adjustments. My prayers are with your family. Joe will be missed by many. Mrs. Marvel Nelson*

Barbara Nelson - January 17 at 03:22 PM