



Joy Elizabeth Thomas

September 20, 1939 - April 28, 2023

Joy Elizabeth Souza Thomas died peacefully on April 28, 2023, surrounded by the love and support of her family.

Joy was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, on September 20, 1939, to Frank and Mildred Souza. She grew up on a dairy farm a short distance from the ocean, leading to a life-long love of being in or around the water.

Joy's parents died when she was young, and she was raised by her maternal aunts, Mabel and Emily Gracie. The family are descendants of Portuguese whalers from the Azore Islands, a remote island chain in the Atlantic Ocean that Joy had the pleasure of visiting in 2004 to explore her family's roots.

Joy graduated from New Bedford High School in 1957, and went on to earn a B.A. in Education from Bridgewater State Teacher's College in 1961. After graduation, Joy moved to Connecticut where she taught elementary education for several years. While at Bridgewater State she met Peter Thomas and began a relationship that would last until his death in 2006. The two married in 1963 and moved to the small New York town of Mohegan Lake, an hour north of New York City. In this idyllic lake community they raised four boys: Peter, Michael, Andy, and Sean.

Joy eventually gave up teaching to devote more time to her children. Both Joy and Peter were active in their kids' lives, coaching baseball and soccer,

leading scout troops, and being vital members of their local Unitarian Universalist Church. Joy had been a Girl Scout and as an adult rediscovered her love of camping. Most summers the family could be found exploring the East Coast in their pop-up camper.

After seeing her boys through college, Joy spent time taking classes and eventually became a certified master-gardener, volunteering her time at Westchester County's Lasdon Park and Arboretum. Joy and Peter also traveled extensively during this period, visiting such varied countries as Turkey, Israel, Jordan, and Japan. After nearly giving up on ever becoming grandparents they were eventually blessed with five grandchildren in a six-year period.

After her husband Peter died in 2006, Joy moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, to be closer to her son Andy and grandkids. Joy had glaucoma that eventually blinded her, but that didn't stop her from living independently for more than a decade in the college-neighborhood of Clifton. Although it was a mighty struggle, Joy displayed a tenacity and bravery in the face of adversity that was inspirational to many who knew her. Joy could be seen around Clifton shopping at the supermarket, taking a bus to the gym, or walking her grandkids down to Graeters for ice cream.

May Joy finally receive the rest she greatly deserved as her children and grandchildren move forward to live full and exciting lives and be the embodiment of her legacy.

Joy is survived by her sons Peter G. Thomas of Warwick, New York, and his children, James Joseph, and Eliza Faye Thomas; Michael Thomas of Denver, Colorado; Andy Thomas and Megan Kelley of Cincinnati, Ohio, and their children, Stella Joy, Laszlo Lee, and Juniper Wren Thomas; Sean and Michelle Thomas of Dover, Tennessee; as well as Norma and Richard,

Mattsson and family of Oviedo, Florida; and the Sylvain family of South Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

Joy opted for a green burial at Heritage Acres Memorial Sanctuary, 796 Locust Corner Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45245. A graveside service will be held there at 1:30 PM on Friday, May 5, 2023, with a celebration of life reception to follow at the home of Don and Maggie Kelley, 3168 Pond Run Road, New Richmond, OH 45157. In lieu of flowers Joy requested that donations be made to the American Glaucoma Society, www.americanglaucomasociety.net.

Cemetery Details

Heritage Acres Memorial Sanctuary

796 Locust Corner Road
Pierce Township, OH 45245

Previous Events

Graveside Service

MAY 5. 1:30 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Heritage Acres Memorial Sanctuary
796 Locust Corner Road
Pierce Township, OH 45245