



## Joseph "Joe" G. Cimenski

March 9, 1925 - January 18, 2023

Joseph G. Cimenski, 97 year old resident of Royalton, MN passed away Wednesday, January 18, 2023 at the St. Cloud Hospital. A Mass of Christian Burial will be 11:00 AM on Tuesday, January 24, 2023, at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Royalton, MN with Father Gregory Sauer officiating. Burial will be in the Parish Cemetery. Visitation will be on Monday from 5 to 7 PM and on Tuesday one hour prior to the service all at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Royalton. Caring for Joe and his family is the Shelley Funeral Chapel in Little Falls, MN.

Joe was born on March 9, 1925 to John and Helen (Zilka) Cimenski. He grew up on a farm in Pike Creek Township, the 7th of 10 children. His family endured hardships during Joe's formative years. When he was 11, his father died after a prolonged illness which was thought to be tuberculosis, which isolated and severely stigmatized the family. Later, his family home burned to the ground. Joe was the last one out of the house and the stairs were crumbling under his feet as he fled. The family refurbished the chicken coop for the girls to stay in while the boys slept in an old army tent until they were able to move an abandoned log house to the property to live in. Despite – or maybe because of those hardships, Joe developed lifelong characteristics of resilience, determination, loyalty and faith. Joe graduated from Little Falls High School in 1943 where his performance on the varsity football team won him State Honorable Mention. He was drafted in 1944 at the age of 19, served

in the US Navy during WWII, and was honorably discharged in 1945.

He met his wife, Auralia Kahlhamer at a dance in Flensburg, and they went on to marry on June 19, 1945 at Seven Dolors Catholic Church in Albany, MN. They were inseparable for over 75 years until he lost the love of his life during the COVID pandemic on November 18, 2020. For the first year of their marriage, they traveled in a small trailer house as he worked various construction sites all across northern MN. He then went to work at a Pontiac garage in Minneapolis where he drove his wife to a Swedish hospital in a wrecker truck for delivery of their first child. The budding family then moved their trailer back to the farm where he and his brothers set up a sawmill, harvested trees and built a new house for his mother, who was still living in the log house with the younger siblings. That house, lovingly referred to as “the farm”, was frequently filled with guests from the large extended family, and still stands today.

In 1948, Joe moved his family to Royalton where he rented a shop and started his own business, taking over the Royalton Garage. In 1960 he moved Royalton Garage to a new building which he constructed, and he worked there 6 days/week until age 90, when he retired to help care for his wife, who was in declining health at the time. Joe and Auralia bought their first home on Maple St in 1954 which had been hit by lightning and was half burned down. The family moved in anyway and boarded off the burnt parts to get through the first winter. He then acquired, on auction, a retired railroad station in Pillager MN and used the high-quality salvaged lumber to rebuild his home. As his family grew, so did the house, and there were add-ons and rebuilds in every possible direction including a basement and a cold war bomb shelter (later converted to a root cellar) that were dug under and adjacent to the house. Aah, Indoor plumbing; at last.

Joe was very involved in the Royalton American Legion and was honored with a membership in the Forty and Eight Society. He served as the Legion

Commander and was highly instrumental in the construction and relocation to its current site. He recently received a certificate of recognition from the National Commander for loyal membership for 75 years. He believed in being a good citizen; he served on the Royalton Fire Board for a number of years and was also interested and active in politics, serving as a delegate to district and state conventions.

Joe was a gifted musician. When he was 12, his mother bought him a used accordion and he taught himself to play it. As a young adult, he would often pull out his accordion to liven up a gathering and prided himself on being able to get people out on the dance floor. He played with various bands, including "Sirs of Swing" in the 1950s. Subsequently, he formed his own three-piece band, "Musicians 3", which played almost every week for 25 years. Later, "Papa Joe's Family Dance Band" included two sons (Bob and Tony), two daughters (Mary and Connie), and two sons-in-law (Keith Hartman and Jim Anderson). They played and sang together for 15 years, traveling everywhere from Baudette to Rochester to Wisconsin; even being invited to play at a polka-fest in Nebraska. Although he owned his own business, made his living and raised a large family as a mechanic for over 60 years, he said he preferred to be known and remembered as a musician. He loved to see people dancing, laughing and having fun.

Joe was a fiercely independent and resourceful man. Other than High School and Navy Gunners School, he had no formal training or education. No schooling in business, mechanics, carpentry, plumbing, electricity, masonry or music. He did it the hard way. His way. He told the story of his one and only music lesson, when the instructor spent half the time asking him to demonstrate how he played the chords on the accordion. So that was it.

Joe had a strong work ethic, and for most of his life, vacation meant gone

fishing or gone hunting. It wasn't until his later years that he and Auralia would take road trips to the four corners of the US, stopping to visit numerous friends and family members along the way. In retirement he continued gardening, reducing garden size from 1 full acre when children were home, to 1/3 acre, growing grapes and a variety of vegetables including enough potatoes to last through the winters. Joe and Auralia had 13 children, 48 grandchildren, 82 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great-grandchild.

Joe is survived by his children, Joe with Melanie, Dan with Kathie, daughter-in-law, Mary Jane (Czech) Thielges with Randy, Mary, Jeanette with Gary Benusa, Connie with Jim Anderson, Elynn with Chet Welle, Steve with Shelley, Bob with Lori, Ginny with Leon Duschner, Tony with Pam, Patti Hoff, and Tom with Hyonchu, as well as their offspring; He is also survived by in-laws, Pat Olson, Verda Reinke, Mary Mueller, Rick Kahlhamer , Fred Piekarski and Ray Hansen.

He was preceded in death by Auralia, his wife of 75 years; his parents; his brothers, Leo, Frank, Ambrose and Harry, and sisters, Beatrice Grimes, Ann Frisk, Hedy, Jeanne Piekarski, and Mary Lou Hansen; his son, Greg Cimenski and his grandson, Jacob Cimenski and his mother, Joyce Cimenski.

# Cemetery Details

## Holy Trinity Catholic Cemetery

Royalton, MN

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN **23**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Holy Trinity Catholic Church  
216 North 2nd Street  
Royalton, MN

## Visitation

JAN **24**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Holy Trinity Catholic Church  
216 North 2nd Street  
Royalton, MN

## Mass of Christian Burial

JAN **24**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Holy Trinity Catholic Church  
216 North 2nd Street  
Royalton, MN

# Tribute Wall



“ *Lemieur Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Joseph "Joe" G. Cimenski*



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**Lemieur Funeral Homes** - January 20, 2023 at 03:07 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joseph "Joe" G. Cimenski.*



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January 22, 2023 at 01:37 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Joseph "Joe" G. Cimenski.*



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January 21, 2023 at 12:08 PM



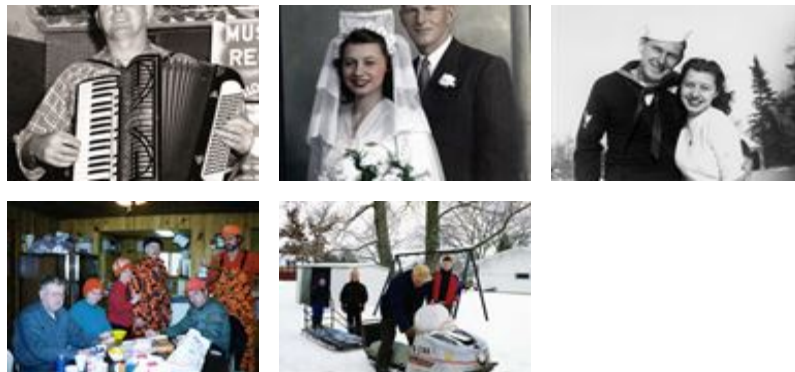
“ *Joseph "Joe" G. Cimenski*

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January 21, 2023 at 11:59 AM



“ 276 files added to the album *LifeTributes*



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**Lemieur Funeral Homes** - January 20, 2023 at 02:59 PM

DJ

“ Our deepest sympathy to the family. Joe you as very nice man, kind and friendly. He will be missed.



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**Don & Lorraine Janski** - January 20, 2023 at 02:59 PM

EH

“ Ernie And Denise Hegna sent a virtual gift in memory of Joseph "Joe" G. Cimenski



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**Ernie and Denise Hegna** - January 19, 2023 at 10:27 PM



“ *Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Joseph "Joe" G. Cimenski.*



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January 19, 2023 at 07:26 PM