



Thomas James Friel

November 5, 1963 - July 26, 2025

Thomas James Friel, age 61, of the Grand Lake area of Oklahoma, passed away on July 26, 2025, surrounded by family at Freeman Health System in Joplin, Missouri. Born in Laguna Beach, California, on November 5, 1963, Tom lived a full and vibrant life, calling many places home- including Las Vegas- before settling in Northeast Oklahoma in the 1990s.

Tom was a man of many talents and an unforgettable personality. He proudly worked as an “executive chef,” as he liked to say, at Island Joes Cantina for many years. After that, he worked at Souper Sweets in Miami, Oklahoma, continuing to share his love for food and connection. Most recently, he was employed at Walmart, where he worked in the bakery. Whether behind a grill or in front of an oven, Tom’s gift for cooking fed the bellies and hearts of all who knew him. He was the one you could always count on to bring people together through food and laughter.

Music was a cornerstone of Tom’s life. He had a deep love for playing the drums and singing, and his passion for music filled every room he was in. He was a jokester through and through-never one to take life too seriously, and always ready with a quick one-liner or a perfectly timed joke. His ability to lift spirits and make others smile, even on their worst days, was his gift.

Tom was a simple man who worked incredibly hard and loved deeply. Even when life was hard, he never stopped doing everything he could to take care of the people he loved. One of his favorite sayings was, “We’ll figure it out,” and that perfectly summed up his calm, steady nature and the quiet strength

he brought to every situation.

He was a member of C3 Worship Center in Commerce, Oklahoma where he found both spiritual connection and community.

We will miss him dearly.

Tom was preceded in death by his biological father, Ronald Friel. He is survived by his mother, Dorothy Christ, and stepfather, Albert Christ, of Rancho Santa Margarita, California; his children, Joseph Friel and Zachery Friel, both of Colorado Springs, Colorado, and River Friel of Miami, Oklahoma; his grandchildren, Oddie Friel, Jenee Friel, Aiden Friel, Maverick Friel, and Declan Friel, all of Colorado Springs, Colorado; and his siblings, Charlene Nyce and Carolyn Kerrigan of Rancho Santa Margarita, California, and Anthony Christ of Orange, California.

He is also lovingly remembered by Shawna Ellick, of Miami, Oklahoma, the mother of his daughter, who remained part of his life; by Eva Murphy, who was like a mother and dear friend to him, along with her husband, Daniel Murphy, of Joplin, Missouri; and by Chandler Wilson, of Miami, Oklahoma, his future son-in-law, whom he loved like a son. He leaves behind many more friends, coworkers, and extended family who will carry his memory forward with love.

There will be a Celebration of Life for Mr. Freil at 2:00 P.M., Thursday, August 7, 2025, at C3 Worship Center in Commerce, Oklahoma.

Friends and family may send the family notes of encouragement by viewing Thomas' Tribute Page at www.brown-winters.com.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

AUG 7. 2:00 PM (CT)

C3 Worship Center

100 Midway

Commerce, OK 74339

<https://www.c3worshipcenter.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Brown-Winters Funeral Home and Cremation Service created a Tribute Video in memory of Thomas James Friel*



Brown-Winters Funeral Home and Cremation Service - August 06, 2025 at 11:53 AM

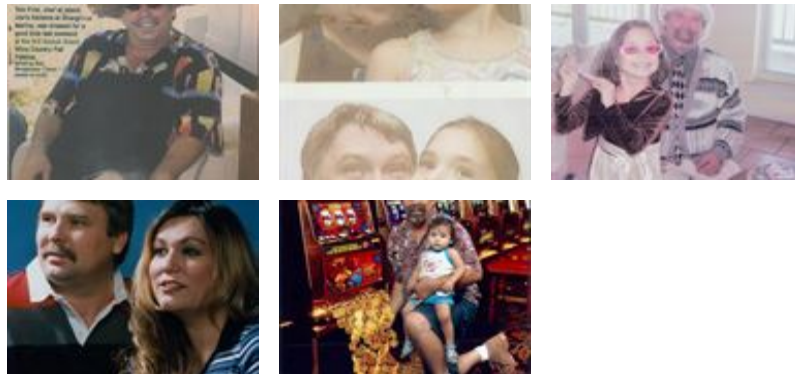


“ *We shared many times together, I will always be known as BIG MAMA ,thanks to you. You were my bro, partner in crime . Thanks for the cooking help and all the humor . But most of all thank you for my River... I will forever miss you.*

Eva Murphy - August 06, 2025 at 08:44 PM



“ *96 files added to the album Life Tributes*



Brown-Winters Funeral Home and Cremation Service - August 06, 2025 at 11:48 AM