

It is always the bagpipes that get me. That unique and mournful sound playing out "Amazing Grace" during services to honor a departed member of the law enforcement family brings a lump to my throat and a tear to my eye each time it is delivered. For those unfamiliar, a bagpiper performance is a tradition at funerals for fallen members of law enforcement and the fire service that dates to the late 1800s. The centerpiece of the bagpipe hymn ties together all the elements honoring the life of a public servant during their final arrangements.

Most recently, this centerpiece was featured at the funeral of Ted Dingmann of Foley. Ted passed away on March 5th, 2025 peacefully at his home at the age of 77 following a life of service to both his country and his community. Ted served his country in the US Army for two years during the Vietnam conflict. Following his discharge from the Army, Ted served the city of Foley as a police officer and firefighter. Ted's 32 years of service in the Foley Police Department included 28 years as the chief of police. Likewise, during Ted's 30 years as a Foley firefighter, he spent 10 of those as the city's fire chief. Upon retiring from the Foley Police and Fire Departments, Ted continued serving his community for 14 more years as a bailiff for the Benton County Sheriff's Office. Ted's life and times are remarkable not only for the length of time he devoted to service but also for how deeply he cared for his community and others who sought to join him in making this community a better place.

Fortunately, Ted's life of service is a life shared by thousands of others in our community and across our state. Generations of people have looked to those willing to place the interest of their neighbor above their own and create the foundation of our collective prosperity. We all stand upon the shoulders of those who have gone before us and worked to build a better life for the next generation. The roll call of those who have lifted us up is exhaustive and any attempt I'd make to name them all would certainly be incomplete. These people are the names talked about by retirees reminiscing on their times. These are the names inscribed in plaques on buildings. These are the names recorded in media articles, agency records, and department newsletters. Each of them, like Ted, have left their mark on our life and times whether we are conscious of their contribution or not.

Reflection on these contributions often turns to the question of who will take the place of these public servants now at rest. To be at our best, our communities need fresh faces willing to enlist in public service to carry on and improve upon the foundation laid by those who proceeded us.

If you or someone you know is looking for a future career or considering a career change, I'd ask you to consider one rooted in public service. The defining characteristic of these careers is the opportunity to change a life, a neighborhood, or an agency for the better. Few other professions provide regular opportunities to have a profound and lasting impact on those around us. Your community needs people willing to answer the call of the distressed, aid the sick and injured, bring protection and justice for the peaceful, save lives and property from destruction, and secure those committed to confinement. Your community needs the next generation of public servants take the baton and continue the race.

The peace and safety of our community depend upon people having the courage, compassion, and convictions to forge a career in public service. Ted Dingmann lived his life as a great example of all these characteristics. Be the next generation to build a better life. Be like Ted. For more crime prevention information and safety information visit the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at:

<https://www.co.benton.mn.us/211/Crime-Prevention>. You can also like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @BentonMNSheriff for regular updates and crime prevention messages.