



Joan Petersilia Thomas

January 2, 1951 - September 23, 2019

Joan was a loving wife, mother, sister, friend, researcher, teacher and mentor who passed away from ovarian cancer at age 68. Her loss is deeply felt by her family, many close friends, cherished colleagues, and former students. Joan's outgoing, enthusiastic personality served her well as she enjoyed frequently hosting family and friends. Joan especially cherished the opportunity to get to know her students on a personal level.

Joan was born in Pittsburgh, PA. to Ernest Lester Ramme and Ann Marie Zapponi Ramme. Joan was the third of four daughters born to this Air Force family. She moved frequently throughout her childhood before settling in California.

Joan earned her BA degree in sociology from Loyola University of Los Angeles in 1972, her MA in sociology from The Ohio State University in 1974, and her PhD in criminology, law and society at the University of California, Irvine in 1990.

In 1974, Joan began her career as director of the Criminal Justice Program at the RAND Corporation. From 1992 to 2009, she served as Professor of Criminology, Law and Society at the University of California, Irvine

Joan spent the last decade of her life as the Albert H. Sweet Professor of Law at Stanford University. The outstanding students she mentored there continued to inspire her teaching and research.

Joan produced award-winning criminological research that addressed problems in sentencing and corrections. Her body of work and sustained commitment to bringing social science research to bear on crime policy was heralded by scholars, government officials, and practitioners alike, and it earned her the 2014 Stockholm Prize in Criminology, arguably the most prestigious award in criminology. Joan also served as president of the American Society of Criminology in 1990.

Joan was also passionate about helping people with developmental disabilities. In addition

to research on how the criminal justice system impacts people with developmental disabilities, she actively supported organizations such as the Alpha Resource Center, Special Olympics, Fragile X Foundation, Path Point, and the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara.

Above all, Joan was a devoted wife and mother. In Steve Thomas, she found a loving, supportive, faith-filled spouse and devoted stepfather to Jeff and Kyle. Her three “boys” were the light of her life.

Joan is survived by her husband, Stephen Richard Thomas, her sons Jeffrey Ramme Petersilia and Kyle Gregory Petersilia, her two sisters Margaret (Peggy) Ann Johnson (Douglas), Jeanne Ramme Sydenstricker (Robert Michael), nephews Stephen Michael Sydenstricker and Brent Ramme Sydentstricker, nieces Lindsay Rosewater Sacco, Andrea Michelle Johnson and Stacy Johnson Kassoover. Her sister, Patty Ramme Rosewater Kelly, preceded her in passing. She is also survived by her step-children, Rebecca Lynn Dunningway, Matthew Erech Thomas (Yesenia) and step-grandchildren Eric William Dunningway, Todd Stephen Dunningway, Sierra Kathryn Thomas, and Aidan Christopher Thomas.

Joan was an active member of St. Athanasius Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara for many years. A private funeral will be held for immediate family.

Remembrances may be made to Santa Barbara Special Olympics (281 Magnolia Ave Suite #200, Goleta, CA 93117), a group which held a special place in Joan’s heart.

Tribute Wall

JT

“ Dear Steve, Jeff, Kyle and the entire family of Joan,

There are no words to capture the sorrow in my heart for your great loss. May you find comfort in memories which will never fade and in the solemn knowledge that Joan's spirit and legacy live on in the millions of lives she changed through her policy making and body of research. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for sharing your beloved wife and mom with the world. Joan advised governors and she advised a then 18-year-old girl at UCI who sat in an auditorium marveling at how her professor could be so brilliant yet so humble, strong yet so warm and compassionate. She guided me and countless others in our professional endeavors and was my greatest inspiration. Over the past 30 years, Joan and I stayed in touch and I cherished her wisdom, warmth and generosity of spirit. I am forever proud to be a student of Joan's. An honor of a lifetime.

Wishing each of you strength and faith and much support during this difficult time.

With great sorrow,

Dr. Jasmine Tehrani

UCI 1991-1995

Jasmine Tehrani - September 27, 2019 at 07:24 PM