

Josephine (Arostegui) Breen

1924-2021



Born April 7, 1924, to James Second Yglesias and Marguerite Arostegui Yglesias, Jo passed away peacefully of natural causes on January 2, 2021. She was born in Calexico, CA, the second of three sisters, but moved often as Daddy, an engineer, built roads, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure in Mexico and in border towns often at cost depending on the finances and needs of the town. Because of her Spanish/Basque heritage, and as a result of her living on the US/Mexico border through high school, Jo spoke fluent Spanish throughout her life. The (usually) blonde-haired, blue-eyed lady would often startle people with her perfect accent and wide vocabulary, and she used this skill to endear herself to others. Her grandchildren called her "Cita," a diminutive of "Mamacita," a Spanish term of endearment for grandmothers. Jo attended Brownsville (TX) High School then moved on to Stanford University where for one year she majored in having fun – until her mom and dad saw her grades. After some discussion with her parents about the relative merits of school and parties, she flourished academically for the next three years, graduating in 1946. She then began working in Downtown Los Angeles, but shortly thereafter met a man who had known her sister Marylyn (aka Moo). From then on, Ned Breen was Jo's one and only. They married on May 19, 1951 and welcomed their first son, Greg, a year later, followed by five more children: Pat, Jamie, Tom, John, and Kelly. Jo was the consummate mother and wife: overseeing homework, attending her kids' events and programs, cooking meals ("I haven't been out of this kitchen all day!"), and making sure she took care of her family's every need. She highly valued education and shepherded her four boys through Loyola High and her two girls through Marlborough School. After that, she saw three of her boys through Santa Clara University; for the other three who did not make it off the Santa Clara waiting list, she saw them through Claremont McKenna, Harvard, and Stanford, proud beyond all measure of each and every of her kids' accomplishments, some real and some imagined, but ready to talk about them all day long. While raising her six kids, Jo also was significantly involved in numerous charitable organizations, among them: the Social Service Auxiliary (which assists women and children, especially regarding human rights violations), Las Floristas (which assists special needs children), Sandpipers (which serves the needy in the South Bay), and every school her kids attended. Jo played an integral role in Loyola High's ascendancy as one of the premier college prep schools in California. She served as President of the Mother's Club and as an adviser to the school's presidents. She co-founded the St. Ignatius Guild, a club for alumni mothers. She received numerous honors and accolades from the school, including the dedication of a school facility to her and Ned. But above all, Jo Mama was fun. She loved to entertain, she loved to talk, she loved to make people feel good about themselves. Her Sunday night dinners at the Beach House were famous, where people just showed up when they wanted to, and enjoyed a meal that usually included some meat, a salad, and corn on the cob, and always included a stiff drink, a cold beer, and lots of fun and laughing. When the crowds grew beyond expectations, as they occasionally did, she would whisper to her kids, "FHB," which stood for Family Hold Back, and meant that the kids could not eat until everyone else had finished. Some guests came to these dinners for over 50 years. Jo Baby was a dedicated golfer and bridge player at Wilshire Country Club where she and Ned were members for over 50 years. She had two holes-in-one and many "oh shitinskis" for missed putts. Until recently, she played bridge at Wilshire with her friends from Cathedral Chapel and St.

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Brendan. She sat on Wilshire committees for many years and assisted on many of the Club's capital improvements. Jo was a devout, life-long Catholic who faithfully attended Mass, often daily, at the San Gabriel Mission (where she was married), American Martyrs (where she once posed among the statues of the martyrs with a mop and a broom, hoping that her kids would take the hint), Cathedral Chapel, and St. Brendan. As expected, she became close friends with all the pastors at those institutions, frequently offering advice (solicited and unsolicited), and outlasted most of them. She loved the beauty and majesty of her religion and loved the fact that, for the last few years of her life, she could walk across the hall to attend Mass at her care facility, Nazareth House. Jo loved her kids, their spouses, and her grandchildren. She could not wait to see them, and she begged them to stay once they arrived to see her. Jo always considered their friends as part of her family too. Since Jo's passing, we have received heartfelt condolences from people spanning seven decades, all of whom have remarked how she made them feel welcome in her home and into her family. Jo was predeceased by her husband, Ned; her parents; her sister Marguerite; and her brothers-in-law, Ed and Bill. She is survived by her six children: Greg (Cindy), Pat (Peggy), Jamie (Cam), Tom (Linda), John (Justine), and Kelly (Rick); her 16 grandchildren: Bryan, Jimmy, Brigid, Brendan, Mathew, Michael, Erin, Hazen, Amelia, Nellie, Luisa, and Willow Breen as well as Pat, Mary, Jo (her namesake), and Lizzie Rielly; her sister Moo; six nieces and one nephew; many grandnieces and grandnephews; her friend and helper for over 50 years, Reina Mendoza; her caregivers at Nazareth House; and many, many friends. In lieu of flowers, Jo would say to hug a parent, grandparent, son or daughter, or grandchild and let them know you love them. If you'd like to donate in her memory, please consider the Jo and Ned Breen Scholarship Fund at Loyola High, a fund that assists students in need, or Homeboy/Homegirl Industries, an organization founded by the son of Jo's longtime friend, Kay Boyle, that seeks to help gang members turn their lives around. She was the best; she will be greatly and forever missed. "La muerte no existe, la gente solo muere cuando la olvidan; si puedes recordarme siempre estaré contigo." Due to COVID-19 health restrictions, the funeral Mass and burial will be private. We hope to have a celebration of her life when health and safety conditions permit.

To Plant Memorial Trees in memory, please visit our Sympathy Store.

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