

# Julia (Lacouage) Pon

1926-2023



## JULIA PON OBITUARY

Julia Juanita Pon died peacefully at home on January 4 after a very long life filled with the love of family and friends. Born to Basque immigrants Bonifacia (Mujica) and Pierre Lacouage, Julia was raised on the family's orange grove in San Juan Capistrano, alongside her brother Jean-Pierre and sister Grace. At age 4, Julia enrolled in the Mission school, speaking only Basque. After high school, she attended San Francisco College for Women—Lone Mountain, graduating in 1947 with a degree in Spanish. Junior year, while home on break, she was delivering eggs to a local family and met a young Joseph Pon in town visiting his aunt. This led to Joe making many drives up El Camino Real from rural Cupertino to San Francisco. In June 1947, they married at Mission San Juan Capistrano and Julia joined the French-speaking Pon household, mastering her fourth language. Her widower father-in-law and Joe grew mainly apricots, prunes and cherries, and Julia quickly settled in to help run the Prospect Road ranch. Julia was part of a generation who made Santa Clara the "Valley of Heart's Delight". On the Pon ranch, they welcomed Japanese back from wartime internment, created jobs for longtime workers from Mexico, and offered housing for their families. Amid the harvest of their hard work, Julia and Joe raised nine children—Margaret (d. 2017), Jacqueline, John (d. 2015), Annette, Mary Louise, Andrew, Janet, Joseph and Michael. Eventually, new Saratoga neighborhoods emerged from the orchards and a portion of the ranch was set aside for a Catholic parish, the Church of the Ascension, which held services in the Pon hay barn until the church was built. After moving to a small farm and vineyard in the hills of Saratoga, Julia and Joe joined Sacred Heart Catholic Church where both children and grandchildren attended school, and Julia faithfully served on Altar Duty for over 40 years. They supported all nine children to graduate from California colleges and establish their own families. In 1986, after 39 years of marriage, Julia lost her beloved husband, Joe, to cancer. She became the respected matriarch, lovingly welcoming every new baby and in-law as the family grew and extended to 19 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren, and she answered to an Americanized version of the Basque word for grandmother – "Machi". Julia woke every morning with a drive to accomplish a list of what needed to be done, whether it was a homemade dinner for 30, a prom dress to be sewn or a peach tree that needed thinning—though in later years it was more likely to be a needlepoint Christmas stocking or a crossword. An accomplished pianist, she enjoyed an old Spanish dance or mariachi song and attended Opera San Jose for many years. She lived a life of deep faith, sharing unconditional love—often through a Basque meal—and demonstrating a gift for soothing any baby or new mother. With natural warmth and grace, Julia expressed a genuine interest in others, greeting each person with a big smile, and exhibiting dignity and poise in every circumstance. It's no wonder that she became a role model for so many in the family and beyond. At age 86, she made the decision to move to Saratoga Retirement Community, among friends new and old, where she was a fixture at water aerobics and hikes and served as hospitality committee chair. Thank you to all at SRC for your kindness and fellowship. And a special thank you to Julia's caregivers, especially Annette Petty, who allowed her to fulfill her life with independence and dignity. As they say in the Basque country, "Goian bego" – Rest in peace. On January 28, a funeral Mass will be held at Sacred Heart Church in Saratoga followed by a private family interment at Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma. Contributions in her honor may be made to Sacred Heart Community Service, San Jose.