



Effie "Cheena" Gutierrez

April 6, 1936 - November 29, 2025

Effie "Cheena" Gutierrez, 89, passed away peacefully on Saturday, November 29, after a courageous battle with lung cancer. Surrounded by the love of her family, she left this world with the same grace and strength she carried throughout her life.

Born on April 6, 1936, in Vallejo, California, to John and Olga Maroulas, Cheena spent the majority of her life making Benicia her home and her heart, only leaving when stationed away with her husband. A proud graduate of Benicia High School's Class of 1955, she grew into a beloved fixture of the community. Whether as a supportive military wife or as a cherished waitress at Tia Theresa and Sandoval's, Cheena had an extraordinary gift for making every person feel welcome, seen, and cared for.

Cheena found joy in life's simple comforts—cooking, doing word search, watching her daytime programs, playing dice, which earned her the nickname as "Mean Cheen", and chatting on the phone with loved ones. Her home was a gathering place filled with warmth, stories, and the kind of love that leaves an imprint. She was also a passionate sports fan, cheering enthusiastically—and often loudly—for her Bay Area sports teams.

Cheena recently said goodbye to her beloved husband, Rod Gutierrez, with whom she shared an incredible 69-year marriage. Their love was the

foundation of a large and close-knit family who will carry forward their legacy of humor and togetherness. She was also preceded in death by her brother, Mike Maroulas, and sister, Elaine Melendez.

Cheena is survived by her four sons: Rod (Holly), John (Connie), Mike, and Billy (Carolyn); her grandchildren: Brad, Katie, Allison, Stephen (Marianne), Sarah (Amir), Eric (Anna), Morgan, Nicholas, Nathan (Valeria), and Matthew; and her great-grandchildren: Maria, Maci, Madison, Lea, Eli, Dylan, and Lily. Each of them carries a piece of her spirit—her kindness, her feistiness, her deep love for family, and her endless generosity.

A vigil service will be held at 6 PM on Friday, January 2, at Passalacqua Funeral Chapel, 901 W. 2nd St., Benicia. A memorial Mass will follow at 11 AM on Saturday, January 3, at St. Dominic's Church, 475 East I St., Benicia. Inurnment will be private at Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon, CA.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial contributions be made to the American Lung Association or to a charity of your choice.

Previous Events

Vigil Service

JAN 2. 6:00 PM (PT)

Passalacqua Funeral Chapel
901 W Second Street
Benicia, CA 94510
(707) 745-3130
info@passalacquafuneralchapel.com
<https://www.passalacquafuneralchapel.com>

Memorial Mass

JAN 3. 11:00 AM (PT)

St Dominic's Catholic Church
475 E I St
Benicia, CA 94510
(707) 747-7220

Tribute Wall

RW

“ *The one and only Mean Cheena her memory and our friendship will last forever in my mind and heart. The nights after her shift working at Tia Theresa and coming into The Brewery for our dice games was the beginning of...Mean Cheena, her and I always picked on one another there and also when she went to work with Deanna at Sandoval's. RIP my friend Mean Cheena*

Rich Wilkerson - January 02 at 07:21 PM

JP

“ *Jimmy & Deanne Ponder purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Effie "Cheena" Gutierrez.*



Jimmy & Deanne Ponder - January 02 at 07:19 AM

JP

“ *Jimmy & Deanne Ponder planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Effie "Cheena" Gutierrez.*

Jimmy & Deanne Ponder - January 02 at 07:19 AM

TA

“ My one of kind beautiful and unique Aunt Cheena ! You know you meant the world to me , Victoria and your dearest late friend Shirley! You , Rod and each one of your wonderful boys have been apart of our lives since the 60's ...
We are family!! I've never called you anything thing but , Aunt Cheena, and forever you will be !! I will always cherished you like no other!!!
Your love for your husband, your unbelievable boys and your blessed grandchildren was the thing of legend!!! Every family learned through that love!
I will miss, but never forget, our conversations and laughter!!! Your spirit is one of a kind!! And without a doubt our lord has chosen you to come home now...
We all will look forward to being in your loving grace again!!! I love you my sweet Aunt Cheena!!
Give every one a hug...
You lived a long full life on your terms!!
You touched so many people's lives, including mine, and every single one of your family and friends....In my eyes you will always be perfection!!! I eternally love you my Sweet Aunt Cheena
Tony Ables

Tony Ables - December 24, 2025 at 09:30 PM

PC

“ She was a wonderful,loving,and all of us will never forget her.There wasn't anyone in this town that didn't love her.she sure was one of the people no one could ever forget.RIP.Cheena you name should be remembered in the Benicia's oldtimers that all Benicia will remember. Say hi to mom for me she loved you but who didn't.

Patty Carvalho - December 19, 2025 at 01:54 PM

MG

“ Mom,
You may not realize this, but you change the world and made it a better place, at least for your family you did. I can't think of one single person who is touched more lives and is made more friends than you. Everything we know about love and family and commitment, you and dad taught us. Together you were the greatest team.. you were the heartbeat of this family and the glue that kept us together and strong. Not a day will go by that I don't think of you and try with all my might to muster a smile. Someday I will smile again although right now it doesn't seem possible as your loss is ginormous! I thank you for a lifetime of memories and more importantly love. Please give Dad a giant hug for me until we meet again. I love you with all my heart. Your son Michael

Michael Gutierrez - December 10, 2025 at 10:08 PM

NL

“ Cheena called me her step sister because of my friendship with Elaine. Her family, sons and grandchildren were her world. She was a special lady at Tia Teresa, loved to see her there and at the bar for change or orders. There was one night Elaine and I were in a booth at the Brewery, Cheena joined us after work. Here comes Kim, thru the doors like the exorcist. Telling her mother to “get home”, looked at her aunt Cheena, “what are you doing here? You get home too”! They both asked where she came from! Lots of fun times and memories, way back with Olga..
RIP sweet Cheena, you will be missed.

Nancy Lewis - December 10, 2025 at 01:47 AM

LH

“ *Lou and Lisa Holland purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Effie "Cheena" Gutierrez.*



Lou and Lisa Holland - December 07, 2025 at 12:19 PM

PG

“ *Cheena was not your shy violet; she said it as she saw it! Bless her for being feisty, fearless, and true to herself and others. Mike, Cheena, and Lainey...wonderful Maroulas family. Patty Long Galvan*

patty long galvan - December 06, 2025 at 01:21 PM

BG

“ *I love you mom, you are the absolute heartbeat of your beautiful family. Enjoy your eternal life with Dad and please know that there won't be a single day in my life that I don't think of you!* 🙏❤️😊



Billy Gutierrez - December 05, 2025 at 09:32 PM