



Patricia J. Thomas

November 24, 1960 - May 22, 2022

Patricia “Patti” Jean Thomas, 61, passed away May 22, 2022 at her home in Fairfield, California. Patti was born to the late Milton and Barbara Johnson in Tracy, California and was raised in Modesto California, where she graduated from Downey High School, following her year as a German foreign exchange student. Patti earned her BA and teaching certificate from Brigham Young University, graduating magna cum laude and as valedictorian of the College of Geography. During college, Patti married Brad Thomas and moved to the Vallejo/Benicia area in 1984 where she immersed herself in two of her greatest passions – her children and education.

Patti was a passionate, dedicated, and exceptional high school teacher in both the Vallejo Unified School District and Benicia Unified School District. Over her more than 30-year career, Patti shared her infectious love of education with thousands of students, studying German, US History, World History, and World Geography among other subjects. She took exceptional joy and pleasure from her years of coaching the Academic Decathlon team. It was during the latter part of her career, Patti combined her love of education and her love of art to develop Benicia’s AP Art History program. Students, colleagues, and the community benefited from her passionate enthusiasm – resulting in a full Art History schedule, every class filled to the brim, and one of the highest AP test passage rates in the State.

Patti was immensely proud of her children and leaves behind nothing but beautiful memories. She dedicated herself to assuring her children had the

confidence and independence, and were afforded every opportunity, to chase their respective passions and dreams. Patti was excited to witness their personal successes and happiness. She was beyond all excitement with the recent birth of her first grandchild, Joanna Jean Valerio.

Patti is survived by her daughter, Natalie Jean Valerio, her son-in-law Jesse Valerio, and granddaughter, Joanna Jean Valerio, her son, Ethan Alexander Thomas, the Ward and Cremin families, and many loving, long-term friends.

Patti was exceptionally blessed to have enjoyed such supportive and rewarding relationships with family, friends, and professional colleagues.

A celebration of Patti's life will be held on May 20, 2023 at 12 pm at Passalacqua Funeral Chapel at 901 W Second Street in Benicia. All are welcome to join in the celebration.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAY 20. 12:00 PM (PT)

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

Tribute Wall

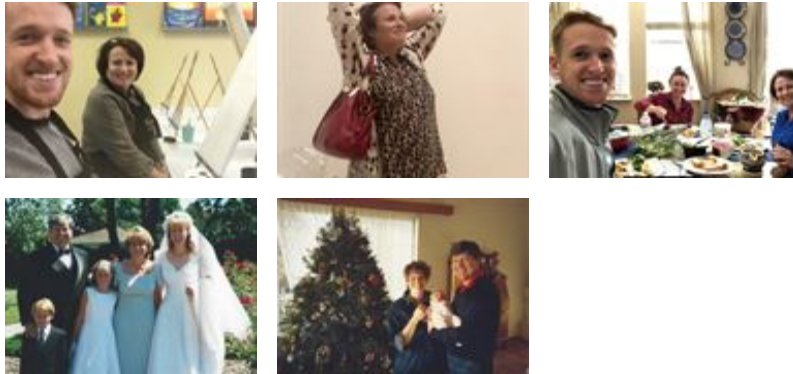


“ [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was purchased for the family of Patricia J. Thomas.

May 18, 2023 at 09:42 AM



“ 182 files added to the album *Life Tributes*

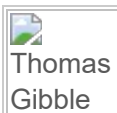


Passalacqua Funeral Chapel - May 08, 2023 at 06:29 PM



“ *Patricia J. Thomas*

November 29, 2022 at 08:20 PM



Thomas Gibble

“ *I have been a friend of Pat's when we were both exchange students in Germany. She was an amazing individual and touched so many lives. The world is a little darker without her light!*

Thomas Gibble - August 01, 2022 at 10:33 AM

AW

“ Patricia was in our Green Valley Ladies Book Club for the last 4 years. She was a joy to get to know and such a kind person. She loved to read and her knowledge of history added so much insight and perspectives to our discussions. We will miss her dearly.

Amy Whorrall - June 16, 2022 at 09:28 AM

KR

“ We can only echo all those who praise Pat's stellar teaching. She taught Art History to most our kids and they've all said, over the years, that they appreciate museum visits so much more because she taught them what to look for, ways to interpret paintings and sculpture. She gave them the history and context and vocabulary to make sense of it and to understand deeply. What a treasure she was, and what life-enhancing gifts she passed along to her students! But in addition to her talents in the classroom, she was a great dancer at weddings and street parties, and a lovely companion over shared pots of afternoon tea.

Oh Pat, you are gone too soon! To your family we extend our deepest sympathy. We will miss you. Thank you for being a bright light.

xo

Kathryn Reiss and Tom Strychacz

Kathryn Reiss - June 08, 2022 at 01:58 AM

WK

“ Ms. Thomas, You rearranged my DNA as my AP Art History teacher. I'd seen art, visited galleries, knew a Picasso from a Monet, but you taught me how to understand and feel what a painting or sculpture was saying, on the surface and deep down. You did that for so many generations of BHS students who went on to tour the grand museums of Europe, hang favorite prints in their homes or, in some cases, devote their lives to fine art.

There's not a week that goes by where I don't use something I learned in your course (yesterday I introduced a colleague to the term diptych). Next to me now is the "body book" from your class that I intend to show my toddler daughter and get her started on her own appreciation of bodies and art. Your work as a teacher will last generations.

I'm glad to have seen you so many times as adult and to tell you what you and your course meant to me. I will miss seeing you and hearing you call out "Will! How's Ruth?!" with that enthusiastic voice of yours. What a loss. I am so glad to have had you in my life.



Will Kane - June 07, 2022 at 12:37 AM

LH

“Patty sparkled – from her beautiful smile, her lovely eyes, her brilliance and her desire to learn and share knowledge. Her shine continues in her family, her many friends and all the students who had the wonderful opportunity to be in her classes. Even so, the world seems a little dimmer without Patty here with us. I can barely fathom that she’s gone – my heart aches for everyone who knew and loved her. I feel so lucky to have had her as a friend and will never forget her sparkle.

-- Lisa Hotchkiss

Lisa Hotchkiss - June 04, 2022 at 05:10 PM



“I was looking forward to learning German from Patty, I understand she was an excellent teacher of Art History as well as many subjects and an inspiration to many students. After traveling to a Berlin, Hamburg, Muenster, and Koln. I hoped to meet with Patty and take advantage of her linguistic skill, after being referred to her by one of her best friends Sharee. I even heard that she called a mutual friend in Germany spontaneously and received praise from a native speaker after conversing with a resident of Ludinghausen. Unfortunately, I did not have chance. For over 25 years since I first met her, I have heard about her reputation as an exceptional teacher, mother, and spouse. Her life did go not perfectly , but she had a heart of gold and always counted her children Natalie & Ethan and her family as her most precious treasure. May God guide her to her eternal place of light & love in heaven. Brandon Brodt

Brandon Brodt - June 02, 2022 at 03:02 PM

LM

“ Unable to put into words the sadness felt from Patty's passing. So many thoughts from our 50 years of friendship keep flowing through my mind, memories that I will cherish forever. From German class at Downey High, trips to Tahoe and Disneyland when the kids were little, to more recently meeting up for birthday lunches and dinners. We all had so much fun sharing great conversation and laughs...just being together. I will miss her intelligence, wit, sense of humor and friendship.

Sending love and hugs to Natalie, Ethan, Joanna and the rest of her family.

-Linda Mitchell



Linda Mitchell - June 01, 2022 at 07:10 PM

DS

I met Patty when I lived in California from 1989 till 1994. I joined Gymboree with my 3 month old Daughter and that's where we met. Lexi and Natalie were best friends and Pat and I were best friends. We did everything together!! I will never forget all the Beautiful times we had together. We kept in touch over the years I came out to California in 2018 and we spent a day together catching up. When Natalie had her baby we shared pictures of our Grandbabies!! I am heartbroken over the passing of Patty. I will miss her so much!!

Sending love and hugs to Natalie, Ethan and Joanna and the rest of her family. Love, Dana Schwartz

Dana Schwartz - June 03, 2022 at 09:05 PM

AS

“ I am so gutted to read this. Mrs. Thomas was my US History teacher at what was then Hogan High School. And to this day if I was to be asked who my favorite teacher was in high school I would easily say Mrs. Thomas. A lovelier person and most awesome teacher you would never find. I send my most sincere condolences to her family. Please know that she left an indelible mark on myself and countless other students who had the blessing of being assigned to her class.

Amy Sifford
Hogan High School c/o 1991

Amy Sifford - June 01, 2022 at 11:13 AM

SE

“ Patty will forever be an inspiration. 52 years of friendship and sisterhood, Sharing secrets and growing older together.

She was so proud of Natalie and Ethan and thrilled about being a grandmother.

Her passion for art, history and current events touched so many people..

She was a wealth of knowledge and enjoyed exchanging good conversation.

Thank you , my chosen sister, for all that you gave to us. You left us to early... You will forever be in my heart. See you on the other side.

♥ Sharee Eisenga



sharee Eisenga - June 01, 2022 at 12:16 AM

SG

“ Pat was my master teacher at Hogan High (USHistory). It was difficult to take her class the kids loved her so much. We got to know each other rather well and years later while I was at Venitia High I called her to say there was a position open. What a great teacher she was.

She used to tell me stories of lil Natalie and how amazed she was at Nats confidence at a very young age. She loved being a Mom And talked about both Nat and Ethan which such admiration and love. I hope you are with beautiful art and still teaching others to look at art. RIP

susan gibbs - May 31, 2022 at 06:08 PM

SG

**Benicia High*

susan gibbs - June 02, 2022 at 06:01 PM

TF

“ Oh Pat - I will miss having you in the world. You were an extraordinary colleague, the best teacher I ever witnessed. Our talks ranged in every direction, travel, genealogy, foreign cinema, literature, art, education, our kids. I always learned something but maybe more than anything I delighted in your laughter and friendship. To my way of thinking, it's not too late to thank you for all of this. My deepest condolences to your beautiful family. Your absence is palpable.

xoxo Teresa Finn

Teresa Finn - May 31, 2022 at 03:22 PM

TF

We were both also AFS exchange students, along w/ Kathryn Reiss -- Germany, Peru, Finland . . . a lucky association that explained why we got on like a house afire.

Teresa Finn - May 31, 2022 at 10:39 PM

JG

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Joe Gonzalez - May 28, 2022 at 03:45 PM

TF

Love the picture Joe!

Teresa Finn - May 31, 2022 at 10:39 PM

DS

Love this picture too!!❤️

Dana Schwartz - June 05, 2022 at 07:06 AM

EL

“ I am so sorry for your loss. Patti was such a kind gentle person who was very knowledgeable on many subjects. It didn't surprise me when she became a teacher. We lived on the the same street in Modesto when she was growing up. She was like a daughter to us, going on vacations with us, swimming in our pool and just hanging out at our house with the family since she was in the 5th grade. You will always be in our hearts Patti! Rest in peace .



Elvera Lucas - May 28, 2022 at 02:17 PM