



Joan Ruth Gathercoal

March 23, 1932 - September 24, 2017

Joan Gathercoal

March 23, 1932 - September 24, 2017

Joan passed away peacefully in her sleep on September 24, after a short illness from cancer. She was 85.

Joan and her twin sister Jean were born on March 23, 1932 in Salem, Oregon, to Ruth Gillmore and John Reining Baines. She was raised in Portland and Albany and graduated from Albany High School in 1950. Joan then attended Oregon State College where she and Jean were majorettes for the marching band. Joan met her future husband, Forrest "Spike" Gathercoal in a music theory class at OSC where she was impressed by his "big booming voice." She graduated with a bachelor's degree in business in 1955.

Joan married Spike in a double ceremony with her twin sister Jean on April 25, 1953. Shortly after their marriage, Joan and Spike moved to Amarillo, Texas where Spike was a member of the United States Air Force band. Joan first began to give piano lessons in Amarillo, which she would continue as a lifelong career.

In 1957, Joan and Spike moved to Junction City, Oregon. Joan was the accompanist at the Lutheran Church and continued to teach piano lessons. In 1961, they helped organize the Scandinavian Festival.

After moving to Corvallis, in addition to teaching piano, Joan and her sister opened a bakery called JeanJoan Homemade Desserts where they tempted Corvallis with their shortbread cookies, "Good For You Cookies," and ice

cream cookie pies for four years.

Joan and Spike's home was a gathering place and home to many, and was filled with the tinkling of piano keys, wafting smell of cookies, a roaring fire, and hundreds of Mickey Mouses. Her kitchen was always open and her cookie jars always full. She loved to cook for her family, friends, and students and never made one batch of anything when she could make ten.

Joan estimated she taught thousands of piano students over the course of her 63 year career. She was a loving teacher and mentor who truly cared about her students and gave them the confidence to succeed. Joan inspired in her students a love of music and served as an example of a life lived joyfully to the fullest, dedicated to loving and serving others.

Joan was a highly respected leader within the piano teacher community. She was a member of the National Music Teachers Association and a lifetime member of Oregon Music Teachers Association. She was also a past president of OMTA and in 2016 received the OMTA Nellie Tholen Excellence in Teaching award. Joan traveled to Khabarovsk, Russia in 1998 with other OMTA members and again in 2001 with her student, Amy Wu, who performed a piano concerto with the Khabarovsk Symphony Orchestra.

Joan will be dearly missed by her students, colleagues, friends, and large extended family.

Joan is survived by her daughter Susan Jean Gathercoal Thayer, sister Judy Uchytel of Beaverton, brothers Jack Baines of Green Valley, Arizona, Art Baines of Corvallis, and Matt Baines of Portland, as well as 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband Forrest Gathercoal, son Bob Gathercoal, and sister Jean Proctor.

A celebration of life will be at 11 a.m. on Saturday, October 14, at the First United Methodist Church in Corvallis. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions in the name of Joan Gathercoal be sent to the OSU Foundation, 850 S.W. 35th St., Corvallis, OR 97333-4014, for the OSU Memorial Fund for Piano Activities.

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP 30. 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM (PT)

McHenry Funeral Home
206 NW 5th St.
Corvallis, OR

Graveside Service

SEP 30. 11:00 AM (PT)

Oak Lawn Cemetery
2245 SW Whiteside Drive
Corvallis, OR 97333
(541) 753-4532

Tribute Wall

SO

“*Joan was so sweet and supportive. Any day Joan came by it was a better day, no matter what else was happening. She will be missed by all that knew her. I wish I could be there today but I'm out of town.*”

Sharon Oefelein - October 14, 2017 at 01:41 PM

KL

“*Both Jean & Joan attempted to teach me piano. I never really mastered that art. I remember fondly of the recitals in their home studio's and the incredible cookies following each recital. My heart goes out to all the family may you find comfort in knowing she was loved and respected by so many.*”

Kristy Nordling Leighty

Kristy Nordling Leighty - October 13, 2017 at 08:16 PM

NH

“*Joan was my piano teacher while she lived in Junction City. She introduced me to concert piano and provided a beautiful mix of determination and inspiration...depending on how much I wanted to practice at the moment. From the age of 7 in 1960 until 16 Joan was my teacher, mentor, cookie maker and task master. And I have appreciated the gifts she taught me throughout my life. I will miss you Joan, most of all because so many will miss out on learning from you. But know you are remembered, with the fondest of memories.*”

Nancy Mikkelsen Hawkins

Nancy Mikkelsen Hawkins - October 12, 2017 at 10:18 PM

TS

“Joan was a kind, generous woman, who treated me like family. I am grateful to her. She created special Easter dinners and Easter egg hunts. Her yummy meals and her frosted cookies were something I always looked forward to. I have a feeling Joan is playing beautiful music in heaven - how lucky they are!

Tammy Skubinna - October 10, 2017 at 05:24 PM

RW

“Joan’s spirit remains with us. We hear piano music, smell cookies baking, and feel the warmth of her personality. Our two children took lessons from Joan and looked forward to performing, with the treat of cookies ever in their minds. That was a long time ago, but such memories are shared among all of Joan’s students and their parents. What a wonderful legacy she left to Corvallis.
With condolences,

Dick and Doris Waring

Richard and Doris Waring - October 05, 2017 at 03:05 PM

RM

“I count myself fortunate to have known Joan and spent time in her company over the years. Her devotion to music and to her students remains inspirational to me. She is now a member of George Eliot's 'Choir Invisible,' I will miss her dearly.

Robin McCabe - October 04, 2017 at 03:53 PM