

Good morning, I am James Thomassen -- seventh of Joan Thomassen's ten children.

Joan Marilyn Chambers was born on June 22, 1931 in Arcadia, CA. She took up the violin at fourteen, but soon turned to the cello, a life-long pursuit that led to her becoming a professional cellist and classical musician. I have decided to focus on this aspect of our mother's full and meaningful life. Being a musician meant a lot to her, and I think it tells a lot about who she was to all who knew her and loved her.

Mom told me that at the age of twenty, having just married my father, Elmer Henry Thomassen, she was soon pregnant with her first child, William -- we know him as Bill. Mom thought she was not supposed to play cello while pregnant, due to the awkwardness of holding the instrument. But after a short while discovered that not playing was silly and that she could still play comfortably even with the larger belly of a mom-to-be. She then proceeded to have nine more children in similar fashion, all of us enjoying the "front row seats" to beautiful concerts even before we were born. This probably tells you something about my mom's sense of pragmatism and determination. It may also explain why we all love music -- classical and other kinds. All of us ten children took up musical instruments at one time or another. Interestingly, my father --- to my knowledge -- never played a musical instrument, but he supported my mom and her musical career throughout their 50+ year marriage, even if he did sleep through a concert or two. Not to mention paying for (and enduring) all the years in a house full of music lessons for ten children!

Bill, the oldest, studied trumpet and is a great connoisseur of many kinds of music, especially

live performance. Second child Michael also studied trumpet and has been a life-long fan of jazz. Mike also studied classical guitar. Both influenced the musical tastes of us younger siblings. Marilyn played piano and became an accomplished flautist, often performing chamber music with Mom in quartets and orchestras. John also performed with Mom in the local symphony; he and Mark both played drums during high school and college years. Cathy played flute, piano, and sang in choirs, musicals, and at weddings over the years. Anne played violin and sang in choirs, and she was one of the reasons I also began singing after brief stints at trumpet, French horn and piano. I sang in choir in high school, college, and still sing today. Singing bass is the same clef or range as the cello, so I often feel I am doing my mom's part. Christine played violin and became an accomplished dancer. Dan played recorder before getting into athletics, where he has excelled.

I'm sure we all love music because of my mom. Whenever there was a familiar -- or not so familiar -- composer on the car radio -- from the likes of Bach, Beethoven, or Mozart to Pachelbel, Brahms, Mahler and Handel..... Mom would tell us who wrote it without fail. She helped us see the beauty in the world through music. Like many musicians, she saw and heard the world differently. Musicians hear a universal language in the rhythm in the clackity-clack of a street car or bicycle wheel spinning. A bird singing is not just idle chatter but really an aria performed for us by God or Nature.

I think the only thing Mom loved more than music was her family, was us. Of course, she always managed to connect the two, and mostly we were willing participants. I know everyone in the family remembers being involved at one time or another in the "Pageant of the Masters" in

Laguna Beach, where Mom played cello in the (mostly) warm summer evenings for 19 years. Most of us performed on stage in one guise or another. Once I remember helping to carry one of my mom's infamous cellos -- she named them Boris and Charlie -- up and down the hills of Laguna Beach on summer nights for our musical and cultural pilgrimage. Mom seemed to be able to perform without ever practicing. I don't think she had time to practice, being the mother of ten kids and often working at my dad's medical office. When Mom went out to perform with her cello, she always had a nice time with her follow and musicians. She built up a collection of musician stories and jokes to tell during long drives up the Pacific Coast Highway. Those were some of the most enjoyable and enriching times for me, and I think the whole family as well. Those stories and jokes and her music were her way of reminding us never to lose track of the joy of life.

All of us kids got a turn at attending Mom's performances in places far and wide: from a Saturday concert to a Sunday brunch to a Jewish wedding. And, yes, she performed an occasional funeral too. Mom played beautifully, and her music brought joy and meaning to many people throughout her long life. It was one of the ways that she loved people and she loved life. I will miss her encyclopedic knowledge of the music she lived and breathed. And even though she has taken her last breath here on earth, still she remains with us. The music lives on.

We love you, Mom.

Joan's family would like to express our gratitude to the caregivers and medical personnel who lovingly cared for Mom in the last days of her life. We are indebted to all of you. Thank you.