

Good morning and thank you so much for being here to celebrate our Mother's life.

Although I have tried to prepare myself for many years for this eventual moment, I don't think one is ever prepared enough. It is so hard to lose a loved one especially when it is your mother. I would like to share with all of you our Mom's story, many of our wonderful memories and some of the things we are thankful for.

Mom's father was Jean Biscaichipy, who was born at Salaria in Esterencuby, France. Due to anti-immigrant sentiments, he Americanized his name and became John Biscay. Mom's mother, our Amatchi, Marie Maitia was born at Ahadokoborda also in the village of Esterencuby. Amatchi came to the US in 1926 and they were married in 1927. Grace Louise Biscay was born in Hanford, California on June 7, 1928.

Mom grew up in Lemoore CA where her father ran a sheep shearing business and Amatchi took care of Mom. Mom was an only child, so Amatchi devoted all her attention to her little girl. Amatchi walked Mom to school every day and even came back to have lunch with her. From the earliest years it was impossible to separate this mother-daughter combination and Mom would always affectionately refer to her mother as "Mama". They spent their summers together either in the mountains at Shaver Lake or by the ocean at Pismo Beach. Her father passed away in 1945 when she was 16 years old. She graduated from Lemoore High School in 1947.

A few years later, Amatchi met Domingo Mendionde, a native of Urepele who was running sheep in the La Puente and Chino areas. They married in 1950 and Amatchi moved to Chino. Mom didn't like Domingo at first because he was taking the place of her father. She remained in Lemoore and moved in with the Ahado family. They were also from Esterencuby and they had two daughters, Flora and Louise, who always remained very close with Amatchi and Mom. Mom learned to love bowling in Lemoore, she traveled around to various tournaments with her friends Flora Ahado, Juanita and Mary Louise Zubeldia and others.

Mom began to visit her Mama in Southern California and came to know some of the Basque families here. She especially became close with Amalia Itcea and the Changala sisters. They would go to the dances wherever they might be in Chino, La Puente, Brea, El Toro or wherever the gang was getting together. She soon softened up to Domingo, falling for his kind heart and humor and began calling him Domi. Eventually, she joined her Mama and Domi in Chino. She went to work initially for Chino Lumber and later got her first banking job at what was then called First National Bank in Chino. She joined the Basque dance group and met many Basque families who we still close with today. It was while dancing in this group that she also met her future husband, Jean Baptiste Gariador.

Grace Louise Gariador
June 7, 1928 † June 16, 2006

Jean Baptiste, our Aita, was born in Martinea at Aldude, France. After working as a shepherd in Buffalo, Wyoming, he headed for Los

Angeles where he worked in the construction industry. Mom called Aita, Jean and they were married in Las Vegas on November 6, 1956. They initially lived in an apartment on Macy St in East LA but soon bought a house in Buena Park while Aita drove a catering truck. It was here that they began their family. Randall Martin was born in 1957, myself Mitchell Dominic in 1958, Robert John in 1959, Anne Marie in 1962 and Noreen Yvette in 1963. They were rather busy having 5 babies in 7 years. Unfortunately, her babies Bobby and Yvette as she chose to call them would die as infants.

One side effect of Mom's marriage to Aita was that she inherited siblings. Aita had four sisters and a brother and his family became her family. Two of his sisters, Maite and Jeaninne, along with their husbands Jeannot and Bernard also came to California. I can't remember a time when our three families weren't getting together for some occasion and you know that good food was always involved. Our family has always gotten along well and now that all of us cousins have grown older we continue to get together with our spouses, kids and in-laws, the parties are just larger. Our family Christmas at Mom's house each year has always been an extremely important event for all of us. Mom loved this extended family of hers dearly including the relatives in France especially our Amatchi Anna and Tati Katy.

In 1963 they decided to go into business for themselves and leased the Centro Basco Hotel from Ben & Melanie Sallaberry. I remember these years at the Hotel with fondness. This was back when there was an old garage where the dances took place, they called it the "blue room", there were grape arbors with picnic benches and a barbecue underneath and the cancha was always full of handball players and spectators. In 1970 when the lease was up they decided to move on and the lease was sold to Peyo & Monique Berterretche.

They then opened a butcher shop called Basque Brand Sausage and later they created a partnership with Henri Arrambide to open the The Basque Restaurant in Montclair. Henri ran the bar, Aita did the cooking and Mom was the hostess. The main feature of this restaurant was the beautiful banquet room that became the location of many Basque weddings. There were two ladies who helped them at both restaurants that always remained very dear friends: Angele Goaliard and Marie Idiart.

After the restaurant business, she returned to work for First National Bank or later First Trust Bank. Mom was always a hard worker but she really seemed to enjoy the numbers business. She also made long-term friendships with people at the bank that continued to today. After 20 years with the bank, she retired in 1995 after the data processing department was sold to Systematics Inc. If there was one thing she taught us, it was to work hard. She really enjoyed being busy. After she became ill, I think the inability to

work was one of the most difficult issues for her to deal with.

Mom & Aita purchased their home in Chino in 1965 and Mom lived there for 41 years this past April. Mom was always there when we had school events and sports activities. We got together often with the Bachocs and Iriarts to bowl, play cards or wherever else our Moms wanted to take us.

Unfortunately, Aita would pass away in 1982 and left her a widow at the age of 54. She continued to devote her life to her family and work. She enjoyed watching us grow and become adults. She began to help care for her Mama and Domi as they began to age. She went to their house everyday after work to check on them and prepared Basque breakfast for all of us every weekend. When Amatchi died, I think a portion of Mom died with her.

However, this was also a time of great joy because she was becoming a mother-in-law and grandmother. She has taught Debbie, Delora and Lucy many things over the years and she loved them all dearly. Her face always lit up when she saw her grandchildren. First there was BJ, Kimberlee and Marty then came Lauren and John Baptiste and later she added Paul, Scott and Robert. They were all her angels.

Just before Mom retired at the age of 65, she began to experience chest pains, had surgery and in 1996, she had a major stroke that left her completely paralyzed on her left side. In the last ten years, she has had many ups and downs but the one thing I will always remember, like our Amatchi she was a fighter. She would never give up. She would battle back in order to regain some normalcy in her life. Unfortunately, the last stroke was complete, however, it appeared as if she didn't suffer and she died with her family surrounding her.

This story of her life doesn't begin to convey all the many good things and happiness that she extended to her family and friends during her life. I am sad to lose my mother but I am truly thankful for the gifts that she has left us with. Among the things that I am thankful for is that she was my mother. She didn't have all the sources for good parenting that we have today but somehow she knew how to do it. Parents of her generation didn't rely on books and the latest trend to raise children, they just gave them love. We always knew we were loved.

Another thing I am thankful for is all the extra years I got to spend with my mother. After she had her major stroke in 1996, I wasn't sure she would make her 70th birthday. I am so glad she proved me wrong. Her ability to continually battle back and live as best as she could with her disabilities was always amazing and inspiring. Mom never gave up, she was always ready to go to shopping, gambling, visit her friends in Fresno or go to our Aunts' houses for lunch. She continued to read her novels, watch her movies and you didn't interrupt her at 10:00 am each morning as she watched "The Price

is Right". I was thankful for everyday that we had with her.

I am very thankful for the last week of her life. On Wednesday, June 7th we were able to celebrate her 78th birthday together at the Centro Basco. On that Friday, she joined us at our house as we gathered to celebrate my sister-in-law Terri's graduation from Cal Poly. She also got to have lunch that weekend with her friends from the bank, attend my son's soccer game, go to the movies and shopping. She also came over one last time for dinner on Sunday night, as I was trying out a new dish. She was my best customer and biggest critic, I will sorely miss making meals for her. Her favorites were always patatak 'ta arotziak and badachudi salda (potatoes and eggs and garlic soup). In her last shopping spree, she even thought ahead to purchase a Fathers Day gift for Randy and I. This was her very special last gift to us that Anne Marie presented to us on Fathers Day.

I always worried how her final days might play out considering all the different ways she had suffered during her illnesses. However, God was very merciful to Mom by allowing her to spend that beautiful week among family, doing the things she loved, then letting her go to sleep peacefully that Tuesday night to quietly die 2 ½ days later. He knew that she had suffered plenty and that it was time to bring her home.

One more thing that Randy and I are both thankful for is the presence of Anne Marie in Mom's life. Mom had two very special relationships, one with her Mama and the other with her daughter. When Mom got sick Anne Marie certainly did not know that she would become her caregiver for over 10 years. But this was the role that was chosen for her and one that she never backed down from. She gave tirelessly and wholeheartedly to ensuring that Mom lived as good a life as possible. Life certainly wasn't always without obstacles, like most mothers and daughters; it was a battle of wills. However, in spite of the battles, any time they were separated for a few days, the moment they were reunited brought the biggest smile to each of them. It was clear they loved each other deeply. Anne Marie, there is no amount of money or words that Randy or I can give you to thank you so very much for all that you have done over these years. I truly believe there is a special place in heaven for caregiver's like yourself who give so selflessly to help their loved ones.

After the death of my brother-in-law, Adair, two months ago today, Mom surprised us by telling us a story about Adair standing in a beautiful garden. He was met by a little blond boy who led him to a beautiful couple. Mom's version was rather elaborate and she was so proud to tell us the story. The boy was our little nephew Dakota and the couple were his parents George and Virginia. In the end, they all walked off hand-in-hand into heaven. I can only imagine now that Mom has also entered that heavenly garden and been greeted by her babies Bobby and Yvette, her Jean, her Mama, her father, her Domi, Flora and Louise and all the other friends and family that have gone to heaven before her.

Ikus Arte, Mom, we love you.