



## Gail Leonard Evans

October 28, 1925 - September 22, 2025

Gail Evans died at home in Quartz Valley on the first day of fall, 2025. Certain of his future, he had been ready all summer.

In the summer of 1935, after his mom and dad died, Gail moved from Anaheim, California to Anaheim landing, 15 miles away, on a peninsula in Seal Beach. He was nine. He lived with his aunt, Orilla Bigelow, his dad's younger sister. Tough misfortune led to a life of outdoor adventure with his quirky and steadfast aunt. Their home featured the Pacific in front and Anaheim Bay, out the back door. The ocean gave waves to ride, fish to hook, and clams to dig. The bay offered duck hunting and more fishing.

Clams gave him his first entrepreneurial experience. Surf fishermen, casting for corbina, needed bait. Gail developed a wholesale business delivering his catch to bait shops in Seal Beach and along Pacific Coast Highway.

Aunt Orilla was strict yet attentive and full of fun. She swam beyond the waves or in the bay most days and encouraged Gail to do the same. They were surrounded by sand, so at home, they rarely wore shoes. For him, "swimming" grew to mean body surfing. (Many years later, he often drove PCH with his kids, looking for good waves to ride.)

Orilla trained as an osteopathic doctor at USC. She also taught piano and guitar, read everything, and loved crosswords. Gail hankered to little of that. Her influence molded him, nevertheless. She affirmed his honesty and firm handshake while adding hard work and ready laughter. Also came, his way, especially in business, of making a right turn when most others were heading

left-like swimming perpendicular out of a rip tide.

She worked to include men in his life and widen his experience. So, they made many trips to her brothers's inland ranches where Gail would ride and work. In 1939, She and Gail drove to New York for the World's Fair. They also visited national parks and returned by way of San Francisco; it was a month-long road trip.

Nevertheless, through a couple of years of youthful rebelliousness, which included a run of broken streetlights, they butted heads. Fortunately, that ended with help from a couple of Seal Beach men, widow watchers, who kept an eye out for Mrs. Bigelow. A final disagreement ended with a deal that kept Gail at home till graduating high school (He had wanted to join the war.). Over time, her faith and love won out; she reared him well. His desire that his kids spend a weekend or so every month at Aunt Orilla's, with their Wahlberg cousins, marked that fact.

Gail rode the bus to Huntington Beach High, all four years. For him, one event there overshadowed everything else-the day in late spring of 1942 when students realized their many Japanese friends were missing. (They were heading for temporary quarters at Santa Anita race track and then to permanent internment camps across a few, inland states.) Gail later joined the fight against Japan, but never agreed with the treatment of Japanese-Americans, many of whom, he continued to fish and hunt with, every year, till moving to Scott Valley.

After graduating in 1943, planning on being a pilot, he drove to Los Angeles with a buddy to join the Army Air Corps. His friend got in, but a doctor rejected Gail due to his high blood pressure. They let him try two more times, but no go. He joined the navy instead and headed for boot camp. His friend switched and went with him.

In WWII Gail crewed on a crash boat stationed on Guam. (Crash boats were PT boats without torpedoes.) He said they neither fired a shot nor had a chance to save a single downed pilot. So in idle hours his crew "surfed" their boat's wakes-in tow-atop homemade boards.

Late in his Guam tour, Gail crossed paths in a mess hall with a friend from Seal Beach. The guy was awestruck by his height, six foot seven. He had grown nearly 11 inches in the navy. The friend beat him back to Seal Beach, after the war, and warned Orilla, "Better get a new bed for Gail."

During the war, in 1944, The federal government claimed Anaheim Landing, Anaheim Bay, and over 5,000 other acres to establish a port for small ships and a depot for netting buoys and armaments. When Gail came home, the peninsula was gone. Orilla's house had been moved a mile north, up the beach. There, he soon noticed the family next door included a beautiful young woman, Joan Collins. They got to know each other, and married in 1951. The next year their son, Mark, came along-and soon, Lynn, in 1953. The family lived in Seal Beach for a few years, then moved inland to Garden Grove near the small sporting goods store Gail had established. Evans Sporting Goods was a little bigger than a typical barber shop. It had so little inventory that nearly every shelf featured items spaced feet apart.

Gail's youthful hunting and fishing interests became the main focus of Evans Sporting Goods, yet early on, he adjusted his store's business model and set a new course. Guns and ammo, rods and tackle-and bait-would occupy less floor and shelf space every year. He could make more money in athletic gear and clothing. There would be twenty times more baby boomers playing sports, from little league through high school, than men of his generation, hunting and fishing. And, nearly every one of those kids would need a bigger pair of shoes, every year.

Also important, Gail tried buying as much as he could from local (LA) specialty and upstart companies. He wanted their quality and needed their competitive pricing; and, they needed his business. With them and a few, willing, west-coast reps of large, national companies, he built strong relationships in which loyalty and honor mattered and lasted. With this foundation, he could hit good prices for his customers and go beyond normal to make good on his promises to get their special orders, quickly.

Gail developed a system, yet he was also blessed with many hardworking employees. They, along with his long hours, enabled the business to flourish in a very competitive environment. With every big box and chain store that popped up through the years, there were family fears of losing customers, but he would say, "I wish every sporting goods store in Orange County were right here next to us." He believed friendliness and great service would win. He carved out a niche and filled it confidently. The store moved to larger quarters twice. And, in time, he and a partner opened a second store in Orange and another in Mission Viejo.

In Garden Grove, the kids started school and Joan worked at a local bank, to make ends meet. The arrival of Judy in 1960 ended her banking career, but by then, the store was sailing steadily. In time, as Judy moved through a few grades, Joan joined Gail to keep accounts and help organize.

A significant change in the Evans family occurred when Gail met the pastor of the church around the corner. He and Joan became Christians. That act changed him immensely. He became devout, and his kids noticed.

After the move to Garden Grove, the Evans family would migrate back to Seal Beach every June, living in the basement apartment next door to Aunt Orilla. Here, they spent a dozen memorable summers riding waves and eating breakfast around Orilla's iron fire pit, under the eucalyptus trees, with the Wahlbergs, Stevensons, and many other friends.

In his last decade down south, Gail bought a couple of small sailboats the family hauled by pickup to sail at Alamitos Bay. On their second excursion, Gail and Joan realized that old acquaintances, Pat and Win Knowlton, lived and ran a boatyard adjacent to the Evans's spot on the sand. This happenstance led to lasting friendships among the parents and kids of the Knowlton and Evans families-sailing, hunting, and fishing together. (All five Evanses and all six Knowltons would eventually reside in Scott Valley.)

So, at 52 and 49, Gail and Joan moved to Quartz Valley. He missed the ocean, and his friends, but he loved the mountains and his fields-and quickly made many new friends. In a big career change, he farmed a couple hundred

acres of hay and grain, plowing and what-not with his old International, and moving wheel lines in summer, except Sundays. For enjoyment he cut firewood, burned slash, and continued to fish and hunt. He fished in Alaska and Costa Rica with Win Knowlton, and sat in dozens of duck blinds across Siskiyou County, shooting with Pete Morrill. Progressive blindness ended the hunting, but Gail continued working on the home ranch, into his nineties, getting here and there, riding sidesaddle, on a four-wheeler.

While he moved north for beauty and solitude, he came to say the best thing about Scott Valley is the wonderful people who make it home.

Gail Evans lived a good life, made much better by Joan, and made secure by his belief that Jesus Christ, Son of God, gave up His own life so that Gail (and every believer) could live with guidance from the Holy Spirit and assurance from his Heavenly Father that he would join Him one day, in heaven.

Joan, Gail's wife of 71 years, passed in 2022. His nephew, Rick Dickson, died in 2017. Gail is survived by his children Mark Evans (Joanne) of Fort Jones, Lynn Fain (Steve) of Ashland OR, and Judy Baughman (David) of Danville CA; grandchildren Jacob Evans (Emily) of Snohomish WA, Joseph Evans of Fort Jones, Jennifer Josephson (Ben) of Austin TX, Sarah Evans (Travis Dooley) of Fort Jones, Will Fain (Kim Birch) of Ashland OR, Nick Baughman of Monroe WA, Woody Fain (Lizzy) of Ashland OR, and Clara Fain of Talent OR; and, great grandchildren Zach Evans, Luke Jenner, Levi Evans, Jess Jenner, Gwen Evans, Clint Jenner, Ellie Jenner, Cooper Josephson, Zeke Josephson, Gracie Josephson, Serua Fain, Ezra Fain, Jethro Fain, and Judah Evans.

The celebration of life service for Gail will begin at 1 PM on 1 November 2025 at the Scott Valley Berean Church, in Etna. A reception, there, will follow.

# Tribute Wall



“ 2 files added to the album *Obituary Wall*



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**Girdner Funeral Chapel** - April 27 at 03:20 PM

NB

“ *One of my favorite photos of Grandpa Gail*

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**Nick Baughman** - February 18 at 12:00 AM

SF

“ *Gail always had a great joy and wonderful smile as he welcomed us to church each Sunday, back at the old Berean church. I loved his great advice on fishing trips from San Diego into Mexico. Any time spent with Gail, was time well spent! He always left a smile on my face.*

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**Scott Frick** - November 03, 2025 at 12:00 AM

KF

“ *What a beautiful obituary! I was lucky enough to be tangentially related to Gail and Joan through the marriage of my brother Steve to their daughter Lynn. Since my parents lived nearby we often got to visit the Evans when we were in town for the holidays, those were special warm and welcoming visits. I remember Gail as a lovely, friendly, vibrant person. My love to the family for their loss. I know he will be missed. The picture is Gail and my dad celebrating his 90th birthday.*

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**Kathe Fain** - October 30, 2025 at 12:00 AM

KJ

“ I love this as a memorial for the nature loving Gail. Say Hi to my Mom and Dad. In loving memory.

Kathe, Dave, Dylan and Joe - October 30, 2025 at 12:00 AM

LD

“ Cherished memory of a wonderful person ❤️ 🙏

Lisa Merrifield Dunn - October 28, 2025 at 12:00 AM

AE

“ We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Girdner Funeral Chapel

A Memorial Tree was planted for Gail Leonard Evans - October 27, 2025 at 12:00 AM

HD

“ Gail was a truly fine human and a wonderful man of God. Condolences to the Evan's family.

Heather Davis - October 27, 2025 at 12:00 AM

KN

“ RIP. I'm so very sorry for your loss. 🙏 🙏

Kristen Naylor - October 27, 2025 at 12:00 AM

PG

“ What a wonderful full life he lived .

Patricia Schott Goss - October 27, 2025 at 12:00 AM