



Gary Lee Evans

June 26, 1938 - December 17, 2023

Gary Lee Evans, born on the 26th day of June, 1938, passed gracefully from this life on to his next great adventure a week before Christmas in 2023.

Gary lived life to its fullest, with a radiant smile and a heart nearly bursting with love and kindness (which may explain why the darn thing seemed to have so many problems later in life). He had kind words and genuine respect for everyone he came across, and found something to like in everyone he met.

Ever aware of the harsh nature of our reality, Gary nonetheless cherished life for its own sake, never losing his delight in the things that gave him pleasure: spending time with family, reciting poetry, admiring nature, making new friends, eating ice cream, and sharing awful puns. Full of empathy, he committed himself to being an affirmation of human kindness and a source of perpetual support for others. He cared deeply about both human beings and animals, and felt the pain of others more deeply than he felt his own. He made it his life's mission to ease the way for everyone and everything he encountered, sharing his love, acceptance, and joy as freely and widely as humanly possible.

Gary believed life was a gift and used his love of new experiences to keep his mind and soul youthful, even if that didn't always work out well for him

physically. After trying unsuccessfully to run away to the Yukon as a child, he found adventure in other ways, including taking long excursions on unmarked trails in his Jeep well into his old age; learning to fly; travelling and teaching all over the world; enjoying long-distance bike trips; and waterskiing the day before important surgeries (this last being an example of a 'good for the soul, but really bad for the body' type of adventure).

Gary was the son of Joseph Howard and Annie Annette Evans, and brother of Lary Evans, who he loved and admired tremendously. After leaving home, he spent time learning at several universities, eventually receiving a PhD in Communications from the University of Michigan. He spent nearly five decades teaching at Eastern Michigan University, and he truly loved his job. As a young professor in the mid 60s, he worked as an advisor to Civil Rights groups, and he always held the belief that teaching is a way to connect with others to share compassion and understanding. Throughout his long career he was able to inspire thousands of students, a huge number of whom carry on his message and love.

He married Diane Lynn Evans in 1967, fathering his beloved children Gary James and Aimee Lynn Evans Behrman. Though Gary and Diane parted amicably after many years of marriage, he then married Katie Elizabeth Strand-Evans who remained his loving partner until the end. Through this marriage, he added John Eliot and Maja Kay Holkeboer as children, who he loved as if his own.

Himself a child at heart, Gary felt great love and a deep connection with his grandchildren, Zachary Evans Behrman, Alexander Lennon Evans, Riley Alan Behrman, Kaes Julian Holkeboer, Levi Holkeboer, Aurora Kay Fontichiaro, and Lucas Henry Fontichiaro. Later in life, he added Julian Louis Burdine and Lilah Joy Burdine through the second marriage of his son Gary. He loved all children, and took delight in handing out \$2 bills to them as little gifts,

eventually giving out enough to almost singlehandedly justify the continued production of that particular bank note.

Gary was determined to go out on his own terms, living in his own house, and driving himself wherever he needed to go. And thanks in large part to the endless assistance and incredible patience of his wife Katie, he did so. For as long as can be remembered, he signed emails with a quote by Hunter Thompson which reads, ““Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming "Wow! What a ride!"

That quote tells you pretty much everything you need to know about how he lived his life and how it ended.

A Memorial Service will be held for Gary on Sunday, March 3 from 1:00pm - 3:30pm at the Legacy Theater (formerly the Quirk Theater) in the Judy Sturgis Hill Building (formerly Quirk) on Eastern's campus. The address is 1030 East Circle Dr, Ypsilanti, MI 48197.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks you to consider making a donation to the Nature Conservancy (<https://preserve.nature.org/>).

We encourage you to visit <https://from-sand-to-pearls.com> to read the beautiful insights, life affirming wisdom, and terrible jokes Gary left behind for all who mourn him.

Tribute Wall

CT

“ Dear Katie, I just happened to see the notice for the celebration of Gary's life this morning! I'm so sorry to hear of his passing and yet his obituary and all that was said ring of the true nature of his life and involvement with others! So it really is a sailing on into the future for him! Both of you made my arrival at EMU back in the early 2000's, a little easier, a lot more fun, and definitely memorable. Thank you Katie for your talents and for the love you demonstrated for Gary! Thanks to Gary for his decency and kindness to all of us working together in CMTA at EMU! Love, Christine Tanner

Christine Tanner - February 25, 2024 at 03:57 AM

“ Gary/Doc/Dad, as many of us fondly knew him, was not just a father-in-law; he was an incredible source of inspiration, love, and support to us all.

Little did I know when I met him at the tender age of 16, he would become an integral part of my life, a mentor and a second father figure. His wisdom, kindness, and unwavering support shaped the person I am today, and for that, I will be forever grateful.

To my son, Alex, Doc was more than just a grandfather; he was a hero and a role model. Alex's admiration for his grandpa was evident in the papers and reports he wrote about the profound impact Doc had on his life. The love and respect they shared were truly heartwarming, and it's a bond that will remain unbreakable.

Doc was not only a loving father and grandfather; he was a dedicated professor who touched the lives of countless students during his time at Eastern Michigan University. I was fortunate enough to be one of his students, and the lessons I learned from him extended far beyond the classroom. His passion for teaching, his brilliance, and his ability to inspire were truly exceptional.

Doc had a remarkable ability to touch the lives of everyone he met. His kindness knew no bounds, his love was unconditional, and his support was unwavering. Whether as a father, grandfather, professor, or friend, he left an indelible mark on us all.

I will always remember Doc for the incredible man he was—a source of inspiration, a loving grandfather, a cherished father-in-law, and a remarkable educator. His legacy will live on in our hearts, and his memory will continue to inspire us.

Rest in peace, Dad, knowing that your love and wisdom will forever be a part of us. You will be deeply missed, but your spirit will live on in the countless lives you touched.

~Rachelle





Rachelle McCabe - January 17, 2024 at 04:22 PM

RB

“Grandpa was an amazing person. Every day he inspired others and motivated others to be the best person around. He cared about everyone in his life so deeply and always wanted the best for everyone. He was truly an amazing grandpa. He was the most positive and loving person to everyone he encountered no matter what was going on. I am very grateful to have been able to call him my grandpa. You’ll be truly missed, grandpa. Thanks for everything you have done not just for me but everyone in your life. Love you grandpa. Choose Happy!



Riley Behrman - January 16, 2024 at 01:51 PM

AB

He loved you so so much, Ri! So happy you and Zach shared such a special bond with him. Being your grandpa was one of his favorite things in the world. ❤️

Aimee Behrman - January 16, 2024 at 08:53 PM