



## Gail L. Houlihan

September 15, 1936 - June 3, 2022

Gail L. Houlihan, age 85, passed away on June 3 at her home in Columbus, NJ after an extended period of illness.

Gail was born September 15, 1936 in Mount Vernon, NY to Fred and Burniece Cordes, later Phillips, and was raised by Burniece and her husband and Gail's beloved stepfather, Bill Phillips, in Westmont, NJ. She was a longtime New Jersey resident, having lived in Columbus since 2013, and before that in Bordentown and Beach Haven. She owned a summer home on Long Island, Maine - a place she loved dearly ever since first visiting with family there as a young girl.

Gail attended Haddonfield Memorial High School (Class of '54) and was a 1958 graduate of Douglass College, where she majored in English.

After college she worked for Doubleday Publishing in the Executive Management Trainee Program in New York City and later as a fourth-grade teacher in the Pennsauken, NJ school system.

In 1959 she married the late Raymond D. Houlihan, Jr. and in relatively short order found herself happily raising five children and, ultimately embarking on a lifetime of service to her community and beyond, with a particular devotion to child advocacy.

Gail achieved much in her life, but was most proud of raising her five children and, in later years, being a doting "Grammy Gail" to eight grandchildren.

She was president of the Peter Muschal School PTA, president of the Junior League of Greater Princeton, a League of Women Voters leader and was an

active Douglass College alumna, having received the Margaret T. Corwin Award for Service in 2013. She was elected to the Bordentown Township Committee from 1983 to 1988 and served as the town's first woman Mayor in 1986.

Gail then gravitated toward what would become her major focus: advocacy for children in foster care.

One of her signature achievements occurred in 1978, when she helped establish New Jersey's Child Placement Review (CPR) system, which relies on volunteers in the Family Courts to ensure that children in foster care find a permanent home in which they can grow and thrive.

Gail's service to CPR continued through the years, as she was a longtime member of the Burlington County CPR and an emeritus member of the statewide CPR Advisory Board, which she chaired for two terms.

Gail was recipient of the prestigious New Jersey Governor's Jefferson Award for her service to youth in 2016. In 2016 she was also honored with the Haddonfield Memorial High School Alumni Society Lifetime Achievement Award.

Among Gail's many other accomplishments and honors: Member & District Representative - Long Island (Maine) Civic Association; Founder, Chair and Co-Chair, Board of Trustees Member - Community Service Board of Morris Hall/St. Lawrence Rehabilitation Center (Trenton, NJ); Governor's Committee for Children, Youth and Families (1978- 1982); Governor's Health Planning Board Member (1994 - 2003); Charter Study Commission (elected) - Beach Haven, NJ (2008 - 2009); Junior League NJ State Public Affairs Committee (1978 - 1980), Vice-Chair (1978); Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), Board Member (1978 - 2015), Treasurer (1989 - 1991, Administrative Vice President (1995 - 1997), Chair, Development and Board Secretary (2006 - 2011).

She is survived by her longtime companion, Ernest Dorisio, four sons, Jeffrey J. Houlihan, R. D'Arsey (Jill Granat) Houlihan, Michael W. (Yvette) Houlihan and Sean P. Houlihan; a daughter, Pamela L. Firestone and her partner, José

Alcala; and eight grandchildren: Jake, Bradford, Andrew, Madeline, Nate, Will, Garrett and Brendan - as well as countless friends, including close family friend Peter M. (Alison) Dolan.

Burial will take place in Portland, ME later this summer.

A celebration of Gail's life is planned for October 8 at St. Mary's Church in Bordentown.

In lieu of flowers, it is respectfully requested that donations be made in Gail's name to:

Advocates for Children of New Jersey

35 Halsey Street

Newark, NJ 07102

<https://acnj.org/donate/>

Long Island Civic Association

PO Box 307

Long Island, Me, 04050

<https://www.longislandcivicassociation.org/>

Associate Alumnae of Douglass College

181 Ryders Lane

New Brunswick, NJ 08901

<https://www.douglassalumnae.org/MakeAGift/>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Gail L. Houlihan*

October 29, 2022 at 11:57 AM

MT

*I heard about Gayle's passing from my mothers cousin who knew her. For a short time when I was a child I was friends with her youngest Sean. I remember attending a birthday party for Sean at the Houlihan residence in Bordentown, NJ and Gayle met me at the door and handed me a matchbox toy. I still have it. My sympathies to the entire family.*

**Marc Trackman** - December 05, 2022 at 03:04 PM



“ *Gail L. Houlihan*

October 29, 2022 at 09:53 AM

CS

“ *I just found out about Gail. What a wonderful woman, she will be truly missed. Now she and my Mom can have a laugh up in heaven. This photo is from early 70s when you all came to Ocracoke. Please accept my deep condolences on your loss.  
Claudia Wall Stacey*



**Claudis Wall Stacey** - August 29, 2022 at 03:16 PM

NN

“ To Gail's family - I just found out about Gail. I am so sad! She was one of my favorite islanders. I always loved going to your island home for "Happy Hour with Gail" (often under the guise of a LICA meeting). We also had some great e-mail correspondence. I will miss her greatly and think warm thoughts of her when I see your island home overlooking Fowler's Beach.

Nancy Noble  
Long Island, Maine



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**Nancy Noble** - July 22, 2022 at 02:48 PM

ND

“ My deepest sympathy to Gail's family. We shared a cottage at Douglas College, NJC, at the time in 1954. She was a special person and the memories of that Freshman year has always stayed with me. We lost contact through the years, but kept up with our life experiences through the class columns.

May she Rest In Peace after a life well lived.  
Nancy (Nikki) Mockridge Dietel

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**Nancy Mockridge Dietel** - June 21, 2022 at 04:02 PM

PF

Nancy, Thank you so much for your note, it means so much to us. She was the absolute best and will be missed.

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**Pamela Firestone** - June 26, 2022 at 02:46 PM

SH

Thank you Nancy

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**Sean Houlihan** - June 27, 2022 at 11:04 AM

SS

“ I met Gail when we matriculated at Douglass College. I admired her crisp, starched and ironed Oxford cloth blouses, which she often wore with knee-length Bermuda shorts, the fashion rage at that time. Gail was a born leader, always with a positive attitude. She inspired those around her to always do their best. Although our beloved friend left us way too soon, she accomplished more in her lifetime than most people could aspire to.

To Gail's beloved children ... she was devoted to you. You were blessed with a fantastic mother, and I hope that you will always make her proud.

Love, Sherry Weissberg Spiezle '58

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**Sherry Spiezle** - June 21, 2022 at 01:48 AM

PF

Thank you for sharing this memory, Sherry. It's great to hear about her Douglass days - she loved the school dearly and supported it throughout her life.

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**Pamela Firestone** - June 26, 2022 at 02:48 PM

SH

Thank you Sherry. Interesting to hear about that fashion 50's fashion statement. She was a special person and a wonderful Mother.

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**Sean Houlihan** - June 27, 2022 at 11:09 AM

JF

“ As the current President of the Associate Alumnae of Douglass College, I want Gail's family and Ernest to know how highly we all regard Gail. She did so much over her entire life for the College and for the AADC. In fact, she was awarded the highest recognition for alumnae - The Corwin Award - of which only one is given out per year. Gail was an active member of the Class of 1958 and her classmates love her energy, intelligence, and spirit so much. Gail had a wonderful life and for many decades helped children throughout New Jersey. The AADC is so proud of all she has accomplished for this State on behalf of our children. You were blessed to have been her family.

Sincerely,  
Jeanne Fox '75

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**Jeanne Fox** - June 20, 2022 at 04:45 PM

PF

Thank you for your kind words Jeanne -- my mother loved the Douglass community.

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**Pamela Firestone** - June 26, 2022 at 02:51 PM

SH

Jeanne, Thanks so much for this note. She loved Douglass and she kept it in her heart all her life. She was a wonderful Mother and will be missed tremendously.

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**Sean Houlihan** - June 27, 2022 at 11:21 AM

JT

“ Gail was my best friend. While the friendship developed from our work in child advocacy, it encompassed all of our lives. One memory: I was scheduled for cataract surgery. Because of a traumatic experience when I had eye surgery as a child, I was panicked. So Gail got up very bright and early to drive over to take me to the surgery and hold my hand. I was and am incredibly grateful for her helping me get through this difficult time.

Julie Turner - June 20, 2022 at 01:49 PM

PF

xoxo thanks for sharing this story Julie!

Pamela Firestone - June 26, 2022 at 02:52 PM

SH

That was my Mom. Always looking out for others, her friends and her children!

Sean Houlihan - June 27, 2022 at 11:26 AM

JT

“ Gail was proud to be a "Rogue Elephant." Several members of the executive committee of the Child Placement Review Council testified before a NJ Supreme Court Committee which had asked for testimony on how the Family Court was doing. While giving some positives, we (to the total shock of the judges who had NEVER had volunteers be critical), identified several problems on how Child Placement was operating in many of the counties. The court appointed a judge to "work with us" (meaning to stifle the criticism.) When the judge met with us, he informed us that the Supreme Court judges said that we were ROGUE ELEPHANTS!!! We took great pride in this and for about forty years, the Rogue Elephants developed a deep lasting friendship. We met regularly, zoomed when we couldn't and exchanged many elephant tokens. Corinne, Sue and Julie miss out much loved rogue elephant Gail.

Julie Turner - June 20, 2022 at 01:46 PM

SH

*Thanks Julie - That's the greatest story, love it!*

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**Sean Houlihan** - June 27, 2022 at 11:24 AM

TG

*I believe that I sent a picture of Gail and our close group at Douglass to the family some weeks ago ... Did you receive at her address? Cheers,  
Tam Martinides Gray*

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**Tam Martinides Gray** - July 21, 2022 at 03:21 PM