

## ***Fair Game*** By TOM JOHNSON



### ***Heart to Hart... Evelyn Hart passes Wednesday at 91***

**Evelyn Hart**, one of Newport Beach's most cherished grand dames, passed away Wednesday, Nov. 23, at the age of 91.

Known for a smile that would light up any room, Evelyn served the city for years and her name is now imprinted on the fabric of the community for decades to come. A two-time mayor, who served 16 years on city council, Evelyn was instrumental in many issues, perhaps none bigger than the negotiating of the **John Wayne Airport Settlement Agreement** in 1985.

Her name now is permanently etched on the **OASIS Senior Center's Evelyn Hart Events Center**, where she was instrumental in chairing the senior center's original building capital campaign. The city had determined back in 2007 that raising \$10 million would be needed to rebuild the center, a cost that would eventually grow to \$20 million.

Still, Hart and **Dr. Gwynn Parry**, of **Hoag Hospital**, put together a committee and went to work, getting an initial \$5.6 million for the **Irvine Company**, before going on to raise another \$4.5 million.

Evelyn continued to serve the city in her later years with the **Friends of the Newport Beach Animal Shelter**, **Youth Employment Service** and **Someone Cares Soup Kitchen**.

She was a governor's appointee to the state **Board of Behavioral Sciences** and the **Regional Water Quality Control Board**, worked diligently to enact the **Greenlight Initiative** to manage development and growth in the city, and served on the board of directors of **Airfair**, an organization instrumental in monitoring managed growth of John Wayne Airport.



Courtesy of Robyn Grant

***Evelyn Hart and friend posing next to the sign at OASIS Senior Center, a facility she worked so hard to improve over the years***

Evelyn was also president of the **League of Cities**, vice-president of the **Orange County Sanitation District** and chairwoman of the **Local Agency Formation Commission** and with the **Coast Community College District's** board of trustees.

Evelyn has been a resident of Newport Beach since 1951, moving here shortly after attending Pomona High School.

She was named **Newport Beach Citizen of the Year** in 2007.

Among others, Evelyn leaves behind her husband **John** of 61 years.

Upon news of her passing, many Newport Beach leaders spoke on her behalf:

"I've been blessed to work with Evelyn on the Council and more recently on the Animal Shelter and playing bridge. Her upbeat attitude, always fun loving was a huge asset in my life and I will treasure her always," said **Jean Watt**, former Newport Beach City Councilmember and longtime icon of **SPON** (initially named **Stop Polluting Our Newport**).

New City Council-Elect member **Robyn Grant** was a longtime friend, saying, "Evelyn possessed a rare and inimitable ability to be everyone's best friend. She had a lifetime of experience and instinct that she shared with all who knew her. Purposeful but kind in her approach, she brought together anyone and everyone in her tireless efforts to improve our community. She was the lifeblood of the OASIS building campaign, raising millions to bring the center to fruition and staying at the helm for many years as the President of the Friends of OASIS.

"Evelyn and I shared a great love for animals and worked together in support of the **Newport Beach Animal Shelter**. She will be hugely missed as we open that new city facility but remembered every time a pet finds a new forever home.



Courtesy of Robyn Grant

**(L-R) The three grand dames of Newport Beach: Evelyn Hart, Jean Watt and Marian Bergeson**

“Evelyn was a joy to know. She never wavered from her good nature. I among many, many others feel a huge sadness to have lost such a dear friend, but I am also filled with overwhelming gratitude to have known the truly lovely and venerable Evelyn Hart.”

Assemblywoman-Elect and former Newport Beach Mayor **Diane Dixon** said, “We mourn the loss of a true community servant. Evelyn Hart served our community with selfless determination and dedication. Her vision for a world-class center for seniors became OASIS Senior Center only because of her leadership in rallying the community, the city and the **Irvine Company**.”

“Her next goal remains alive – a community swimming pool to serve all ages, including seniors and people in need of physical rehabilitation.

“Her legacy lives on for all of us to make Newport Beach the best it can be through public and community service. Evelyn, we will miss you, especially your infectious laugh and bright smile.”

City Councilmember **Joy Brenner** added, “The ebullient Evelyn Hart was one of my earliest mentors and a dear friend. When I was first on the Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission, **Ruthelyn Plummer** and Evelyn had **Women in Government** luncheons at her house. They were very encouraging and informative to those of us who would one day follow in their footsteps. Her contagious smile will be tremendously missed!”

Former Mayor and City Councilmember **Will O’Neill** added, “Evelyn always had a smile for every person she met. She was passionate and articulate and enjoyed life. Newport Beach is a better place because Evelyn made sure of it.”

Two former mayors, **Keith Curry** and **Rush Hill**, joined in with accolades. With Curry saying, “Evelyn was the heart and soul of Newport Beach. She was a force of nature getting the OASIS Senior Center rebuilt and was one of the most respected leaders in our city. She left a big contribution to the quality of life and public services in our Newport Beach and she is simply irreplaceable,” said Curry.

Hill said, “Evelyn was a high energy person full of smiles and good ideas. Newport is a better community because of her. Evelyn’s legacy is the gift of OASIS to our seniors. She was loved by all and her sparkle will be missed.”



Photo by Lana Johnson

***Former Mayor and current City Councilmember Will O'Neill was on hand to celebrate Evelyn's 89th birthday, almost two years ago at China Palace***

Former Newport Beach City Manager **Homer Bludau** added, "Evelyn was a huge positive force in this community for so many years both on the City Council and then in all the years afterwards. When she made her mind to do something, it was going to get done! Her commitment to building the OASIS Senior Center is only one of her many legacy achievements."

And finally, former longtime **Daily Pilot** Editor **Tony Dodero** added, "I got to know Evelyn back when I was a reporter covering Newport City Hall for the *Daily Pilot* in the early '90s, and we remained friends as I moved on to become Editor. She was strong in her convictions and always voted in the best interests of the residents she represented. Newport Beach has lost a legend and a very kind person."

There are no funeral plans as of yet, but we will keep you posted.

• • •

You may notice **Newport Beach Firefighters** wearing black badge shrouds, with purple mourning flags displayed in front of all eight local fire stations to honor OCFA Fire Engineer **Mike Tooley**, who recently passed away.

Engineer Tooley, who had been with his department for 25 years, passed away after a courageous battle with occupational cancer, which has been determined to be a Line of Duty Death.