

Evan Harlan Engber

October 10, 1937 - June 2, 2024

Evan Harlan Engber passed peacefully at home on June 2, 2024, after a life full of adventure, family, and love. Evan was born October 10th, 1937 in Brooklyn, NY to parents Natalie and Morris Mechanic. As a young teen, Evan's father was killed in a train accident, and Evan's mother remarried Herman Engber. The family moved to sunny Los Angeles, where Evan loved racing cars in the LA river, and where he attended Hollywood High School, though they delayed his diploma after he drove a motorcycle through the halls of the school. Evan enrolled at USC, and in 1959 married his first wife, actress Yvette Mimieux, though the relationship was kept secret from the press. Years later he married his second wife, Bonnie Zee Wallach, and together, along with Jack Carrington and Norman Greenbaum, they formed the band Dr. West's Medicine Show and Junk Band. The band's song "The Eggplant That Ate Chicago" peaked at #52 on the Billboard Top 100 chart in 1966. Evan maintained a longtime love of music, particularly percussion, and could be found playing drums at every family gathering. Evan left academic life to become one of the early members of what is now the longest running commune in the United States, the Hog Farm.

Evan's early adventures are too numerous to name, but some of note include attending Woodstock, traveling from the US to Europe on a bus, becoming the mayor of Earth People's Park in Vermont, assisting Navajo women in forming a weavers' cooperative, and starting the first food cooperative in the East Bay.

In 1978 Evan was working on an organic grape farm in Desert Center, CA, when he met his greatest and longest love, Irene Conaty Engber. In 1982 the Hog Farm purchased a ranch in Laytonville, CA, where Evan and Irene made their home. That same year, El Nino floods decimated the two rivers that run through the ranch, and thus began Evan's love of river restoration.



Evan founded Bioengineering Associates, Inc., restoring streams and rivers across northern California and becoming the father of what became the gold standard in river restoration. He authored the chapter on bioengineering in the Fish and Game manual, and in 2015, the Salmonid Restoration Federation awarded him a lifetime achievement award. Evan also served on the Laytonville School Board for eight years.



Evan spent his final days at home with his wife, children, grandchildren, and communal family, surrounded by love, on the land he called home, with the sound of the birds and the flowing streams nearby. Evan is survived by his wife Irene, four children—Nick, Max, Eamon, and Natalie—and their partners, 5 grandchildren, and 4 great grandchildren. As one of Evan’s long-time friends and land partners, Red Dog, wrote in a haiku, “The rivers in Heaven, they might also need some care. So, that explains it.”

This obituary was provided by Evan’s family