



## Gail (Gustafson) Thomas

October 26, 2020

It is with the deepest of sorrow that we announce the passing of our beloved mother, Gail (Gustafson) Thomas, known by some as Gigi (Grandma Gail). A profoundly loving human being, she was a devoted daughter, sibling, mother, grandmother, and friend. Gail was born in Sarasota and attended local schools, graduating from Sarasota High in the 1960s. The oldest of five, she adored her parents, recalled her childhood fondly, and cherished memories of holiday celebrations with family. Gail's maternal grandparents, Burleigh and Charlotte Brooks, were early members of the Sarasota community and owned the historic residence, The Acacias. Being part of Sarasota's historic past was a source of pride for Gail, and she had a strong interest in preserving it.

Gail enjoyed exploring new places. Married to a member of the armed forces, she moved often, living overseas and for a time in Hawaii. She remained forever enamored of the Hawaiian Islands and its culture. While a single parent, Gail attended college, graduating from Hillsborough Community College as a Radiologic Technologist and later Manatee Community College as an Ultrasound Sonographer. Work took her to Atlanta, a place she lived and enjoyed for many years. Before retirement, Gail served as a traveling ultrasound sonographer, taking full advantage of extended stays in many different parts of the country. She explored communities from Alaska and the Pacific Northwest to Maine and the New England states. Wherever Gail went, she appreciated living like a local. She took in the sights, attended local

events, participated in educational opportunities, learned a new craft, and made another lifelong friend. If staying within close proximity to a family member or friend, she always made the effort to connect.

To Gail, relationships meant everything. I found a photo on her phone with the following quote by Pablo Picasso, “The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” Gail’s gift was to love on people, and she did so by serving others. She spent her time and energy preparing food to share with others, doing things that were helpful, and making gifts for the people for whom she cared deeply. She even made gifts for the loved ones of people she knew, but who were not personally known to her. For us, it was common to come home and find that she had cleaned our refrigerator or put fresh sheets on our bed.

She enjoyed cooking. For a family dinner, where everyone pitched in to bring one dish, mom brought four. Some of our favorites include stuffing, gravy, biscuits, beef stroganoff, “green cake,” and innumerable baked goods.

She was a talented sewer, and relished making handmade gifts. Adding to treasured memories of times spent together, those who knew her have precious reminders of her love such as wall hangings, table runners, hand towels, pillowcases, ornaments, baby blankets, quilts, clothing, and countless other items made with love by Gail. She was a caregiver, a volunteer, and a charter member of Sarasota East Kiwanis Club.

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the caring and kind-hearted professionals who work at Emory University Hospital. They provided excellent medical care and left no stone unturned. We are also thankful for the invaluable support of our mom’s family and friends during this difficult time. We are honoring our mother, Gail Gustafson Thomas, by making contributions in her name to the Sarasota Alliance for Historic Preservation.

Gail was preceded in death by her loving parents, Kenneth Gustafson and Dorothy (Brooks) Gustafson. She is survived by her adult children, Kimberly Thomas-Cain (husband Darrell) and Kevin Thomas (wife Louisa), as well as the granddaughters she called "my girls": Amber, Olivia, Emily, and Eleanor. She is also survived by her siblings Gary Gustafson (wife Kathy), Steve Gustafson (wife Vicki), David Gustafson (wife Kathi), and Judi Coppola (husband John), as well as many much-loved nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends. We all have evidence of her unfailing love.

We, her children, believe we were given the best of moms and feel fortunate to have had the gift of this exceptional and truly selfless human being in our lives. Though we are grieving, we are also comforted by the knowledge that she lives on in our hearts. Our mom, a Christian, was a hopeful person. Her hope came from the faith that God has plans for her. In the last weeks, mom shared that she dreamed of being with her parents and that she felt a physical hug from each of them. She was comforted and said, "They gave the best hugs." Mom's last request was to leave the hospital and get a hug from us. We will be forever grateful that we got to give her those hugs.

# Tribute Wall

KA

“ *In everything significant in my life, Gail was there to celebrate my accomplishments with me. We became friends when it was discovered that her mother and my aunt were good friends in high school. And from that, a lifelong friendship was born. Gail was so important to me and my sisters that she became our "adopted sister" and through the good and bad times, Gail was always by our side. Gail will be so missed not only by her family, but by the people she encouraged and celebrated. To me, a part of my heart has forever been broken but I try to focus on the good times we shared with each other. My life was deeply enriched the day Gail walked into my life. I will love her infinitely, Karen Henderson Russell and sisters*

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**Karen** - December 28, 2023 at 06:11 PM

CA

“ *I'm heart broken. Just heartbroken.*

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**Connie Ambrecht** - July 17, 2021 at 02:16 PM



“ I met Gail in the 2nd grade when she lived on Goldenrod St. and even visited her at that house. I didn't see her again until junior high school where we again became best

We shared many good times. She was always so welcoming. I remember once several years after high school I was in Maas Brothers and I heard this person say a little loud "Betsy McConnell!" and there was Gail! We had so much fun going downtown and eating at the Plaza. We would go to the movies and eat at Morrison's Cafeteria and felt so grownup and sophisticated. Hanging out at her house was always good. There was so much activity and joy. As time went on our contact became less frequent, but when we saw each other we slipped right back into our old friendship. We went to the "Waffle House" sometime last year and sat across from each other had a soulful talk. I knew she had myasthenia gravis. But I didn't know how very sick she was. Once in junior high we were at Maas Brothers (the hangout!) with our other friend Lauren. She bought a book about a medical researcher that initiated the understanding of the need of sterile procedures and she was hooked on health care. Her warm and wide smile and her beautiful voice were priceless.

We (Lauren and Gail and I) planned on meeting in Hawaii and we even picked out a date. Neither Lauren nor I ever got there but she sure did and loved it.

A picture Christmas card she sent me once when she was in Alaska showed her in a dog sled with that great smile. I keep it on my refrigerator because it is such a happy picture.

I didn't realize there was a memorial service for her in June. I regret very much missing it. I would love to donate some money to her church. Such a lovely person who raised two great kids and then that greatness was passed on to her grandchildren. She is a tough act to follow. It's all about family and friends and I have learned that from her.

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**Betsy Baird** - July 13, 2021 at 11:07 AM



*Thank you, Betsy, for your unwavering friendship and love for my mother. She treasured her memories of both childhood friendship and the adult friendship you shared.*

**Kimberly Cain** - August 15, 2022 at 05:33 PM

LD

*“ Gail was such a sweet woman and such a servant! I remember her stepping in at Church and helping with coffee clean up and always having such a smile on her face! She served the elderly women that she helped with so well... I know Miss Bee cared for her deeply. I found out one time from her daughter that she served women in pregnancy centers by being an ultrasound tech... and I know from first hand experience that is a priceless moment that she shared with many women! Gail, your family rose up and called you blessed. That is the Proverbs 31 woman. Your granddaughters loved you deeply, Emily always spoke so highly of her Gigi. God bless your family as they grieve you..... Gail, you were so loved and deeply appreciated. Your legacy is living on in them! You are with the angels and worshipping your God. Your beautiful faith legacy will continue... Thank you God for Gail! Bless you all as you grieve such a wonderful person.*

**Laura Davisson** - November 12, 2020 at 11:41 AM



*I love you, Laura! Thankful for you!*

**Kimberly Cain** - November 12, 2020 at 08:01 PM

CM

*“ This is such a beautiful description of a beautiful person. It's obvious that Gail wasted no time and none of her gifts, and that all who knew her benefited in some way because of kind, generous, and loving spirit. May God continue to comfort and soothe your hearts during this time of sorrow.*

**Che-Che Mobley** - November 11, 2020 at 10:20 PM



*Thankful for you, Che-Che ❤️*

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**Kimberly Cain** - November 12, 2020 at 07:32 AM

AD

“ *Gail was a very patient and gentle soul, who gave from the heart. I so appreciated her relationship with my mom. She knew how to engage my mother with gentle kindness. She gave me peace of mind knowing Gail was there with love and a watchful eye.*

*We so do miss her.*

*Love,  
Adine and Harriet*

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**Adine** - November 11, 2020 at 04:14 PM

ML

*She was a wonderful friend for 47 years. She was the first friend I really got to know in Tampa. I will miss her so much. I can't stop thinking of her. I hope when it's my turn to leave this earth she is there to meet me. She and her beautiful children will always be in my heart. Kim and Kevin know that I love you and will be there for you if ever you need me. God Bless you and your families.*

*Love you*

*Mary Ann and Paul*

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**Mary Ann Ledbetter** - November 11, 2020 at 06:11 PM



*I love you, Mary Ann. My mom loved you so much. You are family.*

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**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 06:34 PM



*Adine, mom adored your mother and felt so very appreciated by her family. You were all a bright spot in her life. Thank you for being so wonderful!*

**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 06:35 PM

TL

“ *I only knew Gale for a short time, but it was a blessing to know her for the time that I did. She was always kind & so welcoming to me and others. Seeing her smiling face at church was such an encouragement. She will be greatly missed. She had such a peaceful presence. Her legacy will live on! Praise God for the hope of heaven!*

**Tina Lipps** - November 11, 2020 at 02:42 PM



*Thank you, Tina! My mom so enjoyed you and other church family from Church of God Sarasota. Thankful for you*

**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 06:39 PM

TF

“ *The world has lost such a true, loving soul. Those beautiful Gail-Made pillowcases produce even more beautiful dreams as we miss her and feel her loss. Thinking nothing but lots of light and love to her beautiful family.*



**The Chintapalli Family** - November 11, 2020 at 02:13 PM



*Thank you, Laura, Satish and family. ❤️*

**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 06:36 PM



“ *Gigi loved her girls.*



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**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 02:11 PM

CE

“ *So sorry for the loss of your mother. Love and prayers to you and your family.  
The Emmett's*

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**Cathy Emmett** - November 11, 2020 at 01:23 PM



*Thank you, Cathy, David, and the Emmett family.*

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**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 06:37 PM

AM

“ *So glad I met her and shared taking care of some of the same people. Going to miss Gail. Hugs to you all!*

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**Annette Moore** - November 11, 2020 at 12:25 PM



*Annette, you and mom shared a love for your people.*

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**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 06:37 PM



“ *Kimberly Cain lit a candle in memory of Gail (Gustafson) Thomas*



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**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 11:42 AM



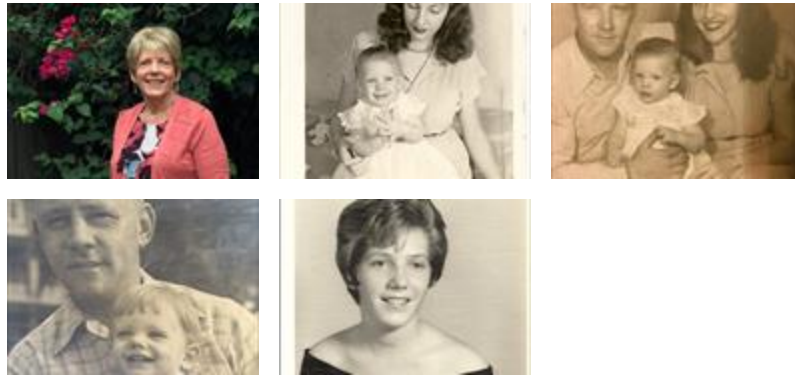
“ *<https://preservesrq.org/>*

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**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 11:00 AM



“ *10 files added to the album Gail*



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**Kimberly Cain** - November 11, 2020 at 10:55 AM