

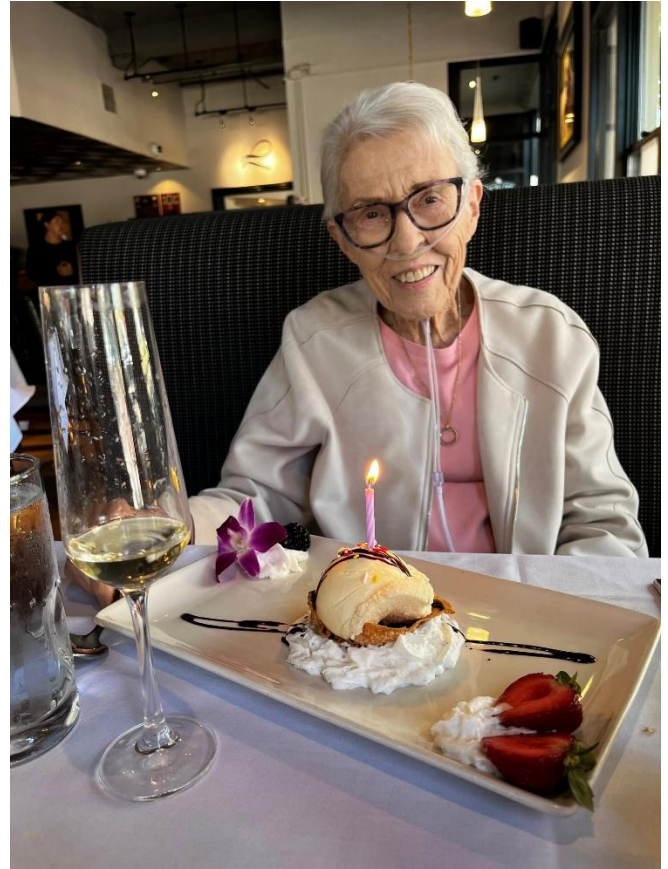
Joanne Rife Obituary

April 24, 1932 – October 16, 2026

The adjective most frequently applied to Joanne Rife, especially in the last years of her life, was “amazing.”

Over her lifetime, she bicycled across the country, put in countless miles on High Sierra trails, including the John Muir Trail (trail name: Bad Ass Mountain Mama), skied countless runs at Sierra ski resorts, logged many miles camping solo in her RV, and made trips to her Bear Valley condo for winter snowshoeing, summer hiking and attending the Bear Valley Music Festival. As recently as last spring, she was volunteering at Henry Coe State Park. She was a voracious reader, endlessly curious about the world around her, staying engaged with the news and with politics until the end of her life.

She died Oct. 16, 2026, at home in Morgan Hill surrounded by friends and family. She was 94.



She was born April 24, 1932, in Glendale, California, to Austin I. Teasley, a CPA, and Luella Ashton Teasley, a homemaker. The family lived in Fresno and San Francisco before returning to Glendale, where Joanne made lifelong friendships. She chose Occidental College in Los Angeles where she pledged the Gamma Kappa Theta sorority, and majored in psychology. She met her future husband, Edward, during Easter vacation at Balboa Island, where she was struggling along the beach wearing a cast after she'd broken her ankle skiing that winter. Ed carried her piggyback around the island. She ditched her high school beau and shortly after completing her bachelor's degree at Oxy in 1954 married the young Air Force officer.

The newlyweds drove cross country to Langley Air Force Base in Virginia for Ed's service as a jet fighter pilot.

Their first child, Susan, was born in Virginia. Upon completing military service, they returned to California, where two sons, Christopher and Daniel, were born.



But rural California life with three small children made Joanne “berserk,” and she applied for a job as a freelance “stringer” for the Santa Ynez Valley News, a weekly newspaper. She eventually became the first female editor of the paper, where she won several awards for community journalism, and went on to become editor of the twice-weekly Delano Record in the Central Valley. She also was the first female member of the Santa Ynez Valley Union High School board of education.

Ed's career in aerospace brought them to Morgan Hill in 1979 and after some freelance jobs in the area, she joined the university relations office at San Jose State University.

She retired in 1992, and she and Ed celebrated their retirement by riding their 21-gear touring bicycles across the United States, from "Cape Disappointment (in Washington state) to Dismal Swamp (in Virginia)" over a three-month period, a trip that she recreated 30 years later, driving her RV "Troublefoot" solo along the same route.

She loved the Sierra Nevada and spent many happy hours camping, hiking and fishing and skiing in the High Sierra. Between 2011 and 2014, she hiked the 211-mile John Muir Trail over four summers, accompanied by her son, "Sherpa Dan," and other family members. She summited Mt. Whitney several times.

A lifelong reader and writer, she kept a book journal cataloging her reading experiences for decades. Her



personal archive contains dozens of unpublished manuscripts and two published books, "Where the Light Turns Gold: The Story of the Santa Ynez Valley" and "Bicycling Country Roads."

In Morgan Hill she was a member of the American Association of University Women, where she was active in interest groups from hiking, cycling and ukulele to book group and public policy issues.

She loved classical music and was an enthusiastic audience member and supporter of Symphony San Jose, the South Valley Symphony and the Bear Valley Music Festival. Despite having a tin ear and no evident musical ability, she played harmonica and ukulele, but rarely tried to sing.

Throughout her life, she formed and maintained strong friendships, and stayed in touch with classmates from elementary, high school and college. She traveled to China, the Netherlands, England and Mexico with fellow AAUW members, and to Greece, Canada, France, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, and Scotland with family members.



She is survived by her daughter, Susan Rife (Steve Kreidler), who shared her home in Morgan Hill and served as “staff” and caretakers for the last ten years of her life; son Christopher Rife (Dorinda) of Tucson, Ariz.; son Daniel Rife (Robin) of Bend, Ore.; grandchildren Sarah Cox of Dallas, Tex., Christina Cox (Jack McLean) of Coburg, Australia, Alexis Rife (Ivan Martinez Tovar) of Portland, Ore., Erica Rife (Asad Butt) of Portland, Ore., Aaron Rife of Bend, Ore., and Ethan Rife of Austin, Tex.; great-grandchildren Isha Jo Rife Butt and Maaz Rife Butt of Portland, Ore.; and her brother, Jerry Teasley (Jan) of Laughlin., Nev. She was preceded in death by her husband in 2009.

A celebration of life will be observed in January. Donations in Joanne’s memory may be made to the Yosemite Conservancy (yosemite.org) or the scholarship fund of the Morgan Hill branch of AAUW (www.aauwmh.org).