



Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs

December 15, 1939 - April 28, 2025

WHITEHOUSE - Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, passed away peacefully at home on the morning of April 28, 2025, at the age of 85.

Born on December 15, 1939, in Smithfield, Pennsylvania, Shirley grew up in a loving family as one of five siblings: James, Larry, Roger, and Sandra. She was raised by her mother, Elsie Collins, and her stepfather, Howard "Howdy" Ridenour, who brought steadfast love and stability into her life.

In her young adulthood, Shirley moved to Texas, where fate intervened when she met William "Bill" Francis Downs, Sr. through her brother Jimmy. A deep friendship quickly blossomed into true love. On October 26, 1962, Shirley and Bill married in an intimate ceremony at his sister's house in Deer Park, Texas — a day they would always describe as the best of their lives.

Together, Shirley and Bill built a family and a lifetime of memories. They raised four children:

- Deborah Lynn Powell Whitmore (born October 2, 1956)
- Terri Lee Powell Warren (born December 15, 1960)
- William Francis Downs Jr. (born September 16, 1964)
- Kimberly Ann Downs (born August 5, 1970)

Their life was filled with joy, laughter, hard work, and profound love, but it was also marked by deep sorrow when their beloved daughter Kimberly passed away tragically at age four in 1975. Even amid unimaginable loss, Shirley's resilience and dedication to her family never wavered.

Throughout her life, Shirley was known as a hard worker, a loyal partner, and a fierce protector of those she loved. She was affectionately called "Scrappy" in her youth — a fitting nickname for a woman whose spirit was marked by determination and quiet strength.

For many years, church was not a central part of Shirley and Bill's life — until their son William Jr.'s faith journey led them to Friendly Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas. In a moving visitation by Brother Dale Perry, Shirley and Bill both accepted Christ as their Savior on the same night, marking a spiritual rebirth that changed their lives forever. Their faith became a central part of their identity, leading them to join the church choir, attend Bible studies, and even travel to Israel three times.

Shirley and Bill shared more than five decades of devoted marriage. They were true companions — traveling, playing cards, sharing hobbies, working side-by-side in their family business, and always remembering to say "I love you" each day. Their bond was unshakable, and even through life's hardships, they found joy simply being together.

Shirley is survived by her children, Deborah Whitmore, Terri Warren, and William Downs Jr. (Angie); her 9 grandchildren; and 16 great-grandchildren — all of whom carry forward her legacy of love, faith, and perseverance.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Bill, in 2015; her daughter, Kimberly; her grandson, Daniel Jones; her sons-in-law, Bud Whitmore and Kenneth Warren; her parents, James Arden Sullivan and Elsie Virginia Collins

Ridenour; her stepfather, Howard Ridenour; and all of her siblings.

The family would like to extend heartfelt thanks to Shirley's devoted caretaker of eight years, Tassie Chalfant, whose compassion and dedication brought peace and comfort during her later years.

Those who knew Shirley will remember her as a loving and loyal wife, a nurturing mother, a proud grandmother and great-grandmother, and a woman whose strength of spirit and steadfast heart left an indelible mark on every life she touched.

Services will be held on Friday, May 2, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at Stewart Family Funeral Home with Dr. Michael Gossett officiating. Interment will follow at Whitehouse Cemetery in Whitehouse. Visitation is scheduled one hour prior to service.

Pallbearers will be Robert Downs, Willie Downs, Braxton Cooper, Cameron Cooper, Alex Broyles, and Zaden Cooper.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Friendly Baptist Church, 1903 E. Front St., Tyler, TX 75702, <https://friendlybaptist.org>.

Cemetery Details

Whitehouse Cemetery

401 Memory Lane
Whitehouse, TX 75791

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 2. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Service

MAY 2. 2:00 PM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Tribute Wall



“ Stewart Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs



Stewart Family Funeral Home - May 01, 2025 at 05:32 PM



“ 100 files added to the album LifeTributes



Stewart Family Funeral Home - May 01, 2025 at 04:57 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs.

May 01, 2025 at 04:42 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs.



May 01, 2025 at 04:42 PM



“ Erin, Tori, & Sydney purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs.



Erin, Tori, & Sydney - May 01, 2025 at 01:36 PM



“ Johnny S. purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs.



Johnny S. - April 30, 2025 at 08:03 PM



“ Johnny S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs.

Johnny S. - April 30, 2025 at 08:03 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs.

April 30, 2025 at 03:17 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Shirley Ann Sullivan Downs.



April 30, 2025 at 03:17 PM