



Shirley .D. Cunningham

April 16, 1939 - April 14, 2025

Shirley D'Pal Cunningham, born Shirley D'Pal Downing, on April 16, 1939, in Pocomoke City on Maryland's Eastern Shore, to Mae "Nannie" Downing and Frank Wilson. She was the youngest of seven siblings and grew up surrounded by her loving brothers and sisters: Geraldine Jester, David Downing, Moena Armstrong, Levin Downing, Susan Taylor, and Celestine Wilson — all of whom preceded her in death.

Shirley attended Stephen Long Elementary and Junior High School in Pocomoke City and attended Worcester High School in Newark, Maryland as the Class of 1957. Life's journey brought her to Baltimore, where she later attended Essex Community College to obtain her GED.

After moving to Baltimore, Shirley built a life dedicated to service and compassion. She began working at Rosewood Center and then at Johns Hopkins Hospital in the Quarter Café. Recognizing her hard work and potential, Johns Hopkins offered her the opportunity to further her education at the Community College of Baltimore, leading to her career as a Nurse's Assistant in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Shirley later trained as part of the EMT staff and ultimately retired after 36 dedicated years at Johns Hopkins Hospital, working as a GYN/OB Clinical Associate.

Faith was the foundation of Shirley's life. She was a member of Wayland

Baptist Church for over 40 years and an active usher. In her younger years, she sang with the Macedonia Choir under Reverend Jackson, traveling and performing with well-known gospel groups—always with her mother by her side. She was also a longtime, proud member of the Steven Long Guild, Inc., Lodge.

Family was Shirley's greatest joy. She was a devoted mom, and there wasn't anything she wouldn't do for her kids. She leaves behind her beloved children: Melvin Downing (Annie), Kimberli Joyner (Leon Sr.), and Maurice Downing. She was a proud grandmother to Leon Joyner Jr., Rosalynn Joyner, Crystal Joyner, Shaiquahnn Downing, Marcus Downing, and Christian Downing, and a cherished great-grandmother to Dwayne Harvey Jr., Mason Peace, Dymond Harvey, and Camdyn Harvey. Shirley's memory will also be carried on by a host of nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

Shirley had a zest for life that touched everyone she met. She loved cooking, traveling with her grandchildren to the country in their younger years, watching her favorite TV shows—Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, Family Feud, and Judge Judy (though she often “fussed out” the judge)—and cheering on her favorite basketball and football teams. She was faithfully dedicated to attending all of her class reunions and was often the family historian, being the go-to person for any family facts or stories—some of which were, affectionately, a little far-fetched.

Shirley D'Pal Cunningham passed peacefully on April 14, 2025, just two days shy of her 86th birthday. One of her favorite songs was “Lead Me, Guide Me,” a fitting reflection of the way she lived her life—with faith, love, and resilience guiding every step. She leaves behind a legacy of love, strength, and community that will live on in all who knew her.

Cemetery Details

King Memorial Park

8710 Dogwood Road
Baltimore, MD 21244

Previous Events

Public Viewing

MAY 3. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home - East
1101 E. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

Wake

MAY 5. 11:30 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home - East
1101 E. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

Celebration of Life

MAY 5. 12:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home - East
1101 E. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

Tribute Wall



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Shirley .D. Cunningham.*



May 04, 2025 at 11:54 AM



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

May 04, 2025 at 11:54 AM



“ *Beloved Grandson, Shaiquahn Downing purchased the Lily and Rose Tribute Spray for the family of Shirley .D. Cunningham.*



Beloved Grandson, Shaiquahn Downing - April 30, 2025 at 02:27 PM



“ *Melvin Downing sent a virtual gift in memory of Shirley .D. Cunningham*



Melvin Downing - April 25, 2025 at 05:08 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Shirley .D. Cunningham.



April 24, 2025 at 08:30 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Shirley .D. Cunningham.



April 23, 2025 at 12:59 PM



“ Faye, KJ, Sydney, Lit Al & Spencer purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Shirley .D. Cunningham.



Faye, KJ, Sydney, Lit Al & Spencer - April 23, 2025 at 10:41 AM



“ Melvin Downing lit a candle in memory of Shirley .D. Cunningham



Melvin Downing - April 22, 2025 at 07:43 PM

CR

“ I love you Grampsy!

Crystal - April 19, 2025 at 09:07 PM

RO

“ I love you Granny!!



Rosalynn - April 18, 2025 at 06:50 AM

LS

I love you grandma , I'll always have the memory of how nice you were when we met , smiling and so beautiful, we had a good day at the park for your family reunion 🥹 Love grand daughter LaBreya Smith Mrs & Mr Downing grand daughter ❤️

labreya smith - April 18, 2025 at 11:00 AM

JP

“ Jorge Padilla-Morales purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Shirley .D. Cunningham.



Jorge Padilla-Morales - April 17, 2025 at 05:25 PM

JP

“ Jorge Padilla-Morales planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Shirley .D. Cunningham.

Jorge Padilla-Morales - April 17, 2025 at 05:25 PM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

March Funeral Homes - April 17, 2025 at 12:18 PM

AT

The sweetest mother-in-law . I was blessed to have you in my life for a little while . I will truly miss you you will always be in my heart. But a little while you've known each other you put joy and laughter into my life and love. Rest in peace your daughter-in-law Annie Downing.

Annie N Thomas - April 30, 2025 at 11:18 AM