



Mrs. Myrtle Gebrella Downs

May 19, 1923 - October 29, 2018

Her Story:

Myrtle Gebrella Shavers Downs was born on May 19, 1923 to Robert and Laura Shavers, a few minutes before her twin sister Mildred, in DeKalb, Texas. She was the ninth of eleven children. Myrtle received her early education at the Garland Community School in DeKalb, Texas. She received Christ during her childhood years at Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, also in DeKalb, Texas. She graduated from Texarkana High School. After high school, Myrtle attended Wiley College in Marshall, Texas. While a student at Wiley College, Myrtle roomed with a family friend. Unbeknownst to her, she was living across the street from Bernard Downs, the man who was to become her husband. Family lore tells us that the family friend was Bernard's aunt and that she was a staunch guardian of the virtue of all the young women in her charge.

During their early time in college, Myrtle and Mildred both worked at the Red River Defense Plant. Being the adventurous duo that they were, they left Texas to move to Detroit, Michigan and work in defense plants located there as the pay was much better. During this time, World War II generated much work through the defense plants which were automobile factories that had been diverted to production of ammunitions, tanks and weaponry needed to further the war effort. During the war, Myrtle and Mildred were two real life "Rosie the Riveters" and Bernard was in the U.S. Army. Myrtle and Bernard

corresponded during the war years.

In 1945, shortly after Bernard shipped out to France, the war ended and Bernard came home to find the girl he had fallen in love with, the girl who had lived across the street in his Aunt's house. Now discharged from the Army, he followed her to Detroit. They were married in February 1946. They joined Second Baptist Church. They had three children, Wayne, Myra and Lauretta. While her husband worked at various jobs and used his "G.I." benefits to further his education at Wayne State University, Myrtle stayed home and raised her children. Soon, it became evident that they needed to modify their plan in order for Bernard to finish school. Myrtle went to work in the steno pool at the Veterans Administration in Allen Park, Michigan.

After Bernard earned a degree in Pharmacy from Wayne State, Myrtle began exploring ways to advance at the V.A. She took classes, honing her clerical abilities. She became a highly skilled typist and stenographer. She was promoted to Ward Secretary. Eventually, in between working full time and helping to raise her three children, she decided to complete her college degree. She began taking night classes at the University of Detroit. She chose to go into social work and in 1972, earned her Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Wayne State University. She used her degree to become a case worker in the Social Services Department at the V.A. Hospital.

Bernard retired in 1983 and they enjoyed traveling together until 1986, when she lost Bernard to a heart attack. She continued working and retired from the Veterans Administration in 1997, a career totaling almost forty-four years.

Myrtle continued to travel and also enjoyed working with the Detroit Chapter of the Wiley College Alumni Association. In keeping with her strong belief in the value of education and to honor her husband, she created a scholarship at the Wayne State University School of Pharmacy. As a result, she was recognized

by the University when she was inducted into the Anthony Wayne Society. She also enjoyed spending time with family. She faithfully attended the family reunions in the town where she grew up and decided to buy a house there so she could become a "Snowbird."

Myrtle Downs passed away peacefully at home on Monday, October 29, 2018 with family at her side.

Previous Events

Family Hour

Friday, Nov. **9**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Second Baptist Church of Detroit
441 Monroe Ave
Detroit, MI 48226
(313) 961-0920

Funeral Service

Friday, Nov. **9**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Second Baptist Church of Detroit
441 Monroe
Detroit, MI 48226
(313) 961-0920
news@secondbaptistdetroit.org
<http://www.secondbaptistdetroit.org>

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Myrtle Gebrella Downs*

January 21, 2023 at 09:34 PM



“ *Lauretta,
Deepest sympathy and condolences in the passing of your mother.
We will keep you and your family in our prayers.
Augustine and Daisy (Dr. E) Dupas*

Dr. Daisy Dupas - November 05, 2018 at 05:35 PM



“ *Myra, Lauretta and Wayne, paying honor to
your mother, Mrs. Myrtle Downs as she joins
the other elders in Heavenly peace. May you
find strength and joy in the memory of the
beautiful life she lived.*

Debra McIntosh Rhodes

Debra Rhodes - November 04, 2018 at 05:19 PM

