



Virgil Downen

January 17, 1934 - February 6, 2025

Reverend Virgil L. Downen passed away peacefully on Thursday, February 6th, 2025, at the age of 91.

Born on Wednesday, January 17th, 1934 in Harvey, Illinois, the son of Olen Downen and Beulah (Ray) Downen. Virgil married the love of his life, Jacqueline D. Gomes, on February 25, 1956 and she survives.

Virgil was a devoted husband to Jacqueline D. Downen, with whom he shared a beautiful marriage spanning 69 years. Together, they created a loving family, cherishing every moment with their four children: Melody Saputo and her husband Vincent of Acworth, Georgia; Mike Downen of Centralia; Dan Downen and his wife Marbie of Olney; and Kim Nation and husband Nathaniel of Ellijay, Georgia. He was the proud grandfather to seven grandchildren—Adrienne Hoyt, Anthony Saputo, Taylor Warren, Madison Brokaw, Dakota Brokaw, Summer Downen, and Natalie Nation—and found immense joy in his five great-grandchildren: Wyatt, Winnie, Joaquin, Gianni, Kate, and T.J. Virgil is also survived by his brother, Michael Downen of DuQuoin, and two sisters, Harriett Taylor and Hollie Hall of Sesser, as well as several beloved nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his parents: Olen and Beulah Downen, step-mother: Aldean Downen, brother: Patrick Downen, and sisters: Dena Lively and Marsha Fox, with whom he is now reunited in eternal peace.

Virgil's commitment to his faith and community shined through his over 60 years of dedicated service as a Pastor. His sermons and leadership were a cornerstone of Diamond Springs Baptist Church, where he inspired countless individuals through his wisdom, kindness, and unwavering faith. A proud veteran, Virgil served in the Navy, exemplifying his deep sense of duty and patriotism. Beyond his spiritual and professional commitments, he was known for his love of fishing, reading, and passion for history, particularly the Civil War. These interests provided him with immense joy and were often shared with friends and family alike. Rev. Virgil L. Downen's life was a testament to the power of love, faith, and service. His memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

In accordance with Virgil's wishes, cremation rites will be accorded, and a Celebration of Life Service will be held Saturday, June 21, 2025 at 4:00pm at Diamond Springs Baptist Church located at 20202 Diamond Springs Rd., Carlyle, IL.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that memorial donations be made to the Diamond Springs Baptist Church. Contributions can be sent to the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home at 235 North Sycamore Street, Centralia, Illinois 62801. For those wishing to share messages of condolence and support, online condolences may be made by visiting www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com or the Funeral Home Facebook page.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

JUN 21. 4:00 PM.

Diamond Springs Baptist Church

Tribute Wall

BS

“ Always loved my uncle Virgil! I'm like Tina, loved when we would be at gma Downen's and all of you would come to visit! Then later always loved going down to the house on the corner that you all lived in. Mom thought the world of her big brother! Love and prayers to all of you!
Becky Sloan

Becky Sloan - February 17, 2025 at 06:37 PM

TN

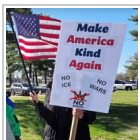
“ I loved Uncle Virgil. He held a special place in my heart. He was a fine Christian man. We were always happy when we would go to grandmas to visit and he would be there. Or we would walk over to his house to visit. What a wonderful father you had. And a wonderful husband to Aunt Jackie. 69 years!!!
Hugs a prayers being sent your way. Love you all!

tina norris - February 17, 2025 at 05:52 PM

TS

“ He baptized. Me when I was 11 years old. I will miss him forever My. Mom and dad send prayers to the family

Trina Schuler - February 10, 2025 at 11:26 AM



“ My condolences to Jackie and family. Sue Williams

Sue Williams - February 08, 2025 at 01:49 PM

TS

Virgil baptized me and was my favorite. For all time Although my mom and dad are gone for them and myself. Prayers are sent. To the family

Trina Schuler - February 08, 2025 at 11:40 PM



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

February 08, 2025 at 09:33 AM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet* was purchased for the family of Virgil Downen.



February 08, 2025 at 09:33 AM