



Dr. Denise Downs

April 30, 1952 - November 16, 2024

Dr. Denise Downs, 72 of Bluffton, passed away early Saturday morning, November 16, 2024, at her residence.

Denise was born on April 30, 1952, in Washington D.C. and lost her battle with angiosarcoma, but won the victory over death on November 16, 2024. Besides Washington D.C., being an Air Force dependent, she and her family had lived many other places including Fleury-en-biere, France, Madison, WI., Colorado Springs, CO., Montgomery, AL. and Fairborn, OH.

She graduated from Sidney Lanier High School in Montgomery, AL. in 1970 and earned her BA in Latin and Braille in 1973 and a BS in Education in 1975 from The Ohio State University. She taught Latin at Shaw High School in Cleveland, Ohio for three years and then after receiving a Summer Fulbright scholarship to study in Italy, decided to pursue a master's degree in Italian at the University of Perugia in Perugia, Italy.

She returned to the states in 1981, continuing her studies. This time in science courses at Northwestern Oklahoma State University near her parents' home in Buffalo, OK., where she also served as a volunteer EMT. She then decided to attend paramedic school in Tulsa, OK. She was accepted to the University of Oklahoma medical school and received her doctoral degree in 1994.

After her residency at Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis, she began her practice in Pediatrics at Caylor-Nickel Medical Clinic in Bluffton, IN. She loved the community of Bluffton and especially loved the caring of her young

patients and relationships she developed with them and their parents. They were “her children.”

Denise was multi-talented and excelled in music – violin, cello, piano and guitar – and also enjoyed singing and playing handbells.

She developed a passion for creative writing and had several stories published in medical journals.

Traveling with family and friends brought her much joy, including several summers studying French at Coeur de France in Sancerre, France, with her sister Danielle. In 2016, after choosing to finally retire from her lifelong career of caring for children to pursue a degree in music at IPFW, she developed breast cancer. Fighting hard and enduring all treatments, she was diagnosed with the very rare angiosarcoma in 2022.

Unwilling to allow this disease to overcome her, she prayed for peace and faced each day with the most amazing positive attitude and sense of humor! She chose to cherish every moment.

She was preceded in death by her older sister, DeAnne Mitchum and her parents, Eldon and Elyn Downs. She is survived by her sisters, Danielle McKinley (Gene) and DeLys Wapaha (Wesley), four nieces and five nephews, 11 great nieces and 15 great nephews and one great-great niece and three great-great nephews.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held at 11 A.M. on Thursday, (Nov. 21, 2024) at the First United Methodist Church with Rev. Sherrie Drake and Pastor Les Cantrell officiating. A special musical prelude tribute will begin around 10:40 A.M.

Memorials may be made to Angiosarcoma Awareness and can be sent to the funeral home or online at <https://www.cureasc.org/>

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the care of the Lemler family of Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton. Friends can send online condolences to the family at www.thomarich.com.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

NOV **21**. 11:00 AM (ET)

First United Methodist Church
325 West Washington Street
Bluffton, IN

Tribute Wall



“ *Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Denise Downs*



Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home - November 20, 2024 at 09:26 PM



“ *My heartfelt condolences to family and friends!*

I was writing a sermon yesterday and mentioned a Latin word or two. When I woke up in the middle of the night, I searched the internet wondering what ever happened to my beloved Latin teacher from Shaw High School! I still have the Latin Vulgate New Testament she gave me for being such an enthusiastic student. (She also knew how devout I was.) While I am sorry we can't reconnect after all these years, I am heartened to learn she had a wonderful life and did so much good for so many, especially the young. What a gem!

Peace and blessings,

*(Darnell) Maurice Charles, SHS '81
Dean of Rockefeller Memorial Chapel
The University of Chicago*

Maurice Charles - December 22, 2024 at 09:34 PM

PW

“ We met Denise, first time, on a Viking River cruise In Europe. We thought of her as an experienced tourist who had done this many times. She just seemed to enjoy the scenery and historical aspects of our tours. What struck me, she was so humble and just one of us; then I found out she was a doctor. Looking forward to seeing her again in heaven.

PAUL and Norma Weiss

Paul Weiss - November 21, 2024 at 08:50 PM

TF

“ My most memorable meeting with Dr. Downs would have been 11yrs ago. My son had been sick for a week and couldn't keep anything down. She was the on call pediatrician the Saturday I called. My son woke up Grey, and I called to talk to her. If it wasn't for Dr. Downs, my son wouldn't be here. Through her we found out my son had ketotic hypoglycemia. In my book, she is a true hero. Tha k you for saving my son's life.

Trina Fornwalt - November 21, 2024 at 04:13 PM

GB

“ I met Denise the fall of 1970 as a new student at Ohio State. We lived in Paterson Hall(girls dorm back then). I could write a book of our adventures. Denise was a bridesmaid at my wedding and Godmother for my first son. I last visited with her in 2019. Incredible friend, brilliant and talented. We routinely song together with Denise on guitar. A woman of faith,the Lord will welcome her and soon she be entertaining all Souls! Miss you, Dudley Doo-right (my nickname for her) I will never forget you! R.I.P.—“George”. Georgene Bourdeau Bender



Georgene Bender - November 20, 2024 at 04:41 PM



“ 5 files added to the album Life Tributes



Thoma/Rich,Lemler Funeral Home - November 20, 2024 at 03:45 PM



“ I was so sorry to hear about your loss. May the Lord put His comforting arms around your whole family.

Gayla Shuyler - November 19, 2024 at 10:17 PM



“ I enjoyed working with Dr Downs in Peds Clinic and as an OB nurse. She was always learning and sharing what she had learned with us. She had an infectious smile and laugh. What a blessing it was to know her. 🦋

Kymerlee Eisenhut - November 19, 2024 at 10:39 AM



“ 53 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home - November 19, 2024 at 08:33 AM

GB

“ *It was a pleasure to have Denise as a colleague for many years at the Clinic. She was a very competent and compassionate pediatrician who sincerely loved children.*

George Babcock - November 19, 2024 at 08:24 AM

DR

“ *I'm so sorry for your loss. She was the best! I have never met a Dr who went out of their way to give her personal cell number to a patient and the family. She not only took excellent care of our daughter but supported us in the hardest decision in our life for our son. After we were told to plan his funeral. I'm happy to say that he is 13 now and would not be here if it wasn't for her love and support. We are grateful for her. We still talk about her to this day and will for the rest of our lives. She was an amazing person. She will be truly remembered and loved by so many.*

Danelle Raugh - November 17, 2024 at 09:39 AM