



Blake Mitchell Vines

February 11, 1925 - July 27, 2023

Blake Mitchell Vines was a caring wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and friend. She passed away on July 27, 2023, at age 98 in San Antonio, Texas. Blake was born to Forrest and Maude (Young) Mitchell on February 11, 1925, in Cragford, Alabama. The family moved to Bessemer when she was a teenager, and Blake began working at a local mine store and later at Alabama Power Company. After graduating from Bessemer High School in 1944, she married William J. Vines on October 21, 1945, then had daughter, Billie Lynn, one day shy of their first anniversary in 1946. Their son, Barry, was born in 1949 with Downs syndrome. Blake made it her life's mission to advocate for him and care for him at home since so many Downs children were institutionalized at that time. She was instrumental in founding the Bessemer Aid to Retarded Children and served as its first president. She was also involved at the state level in advocacy for people with disabilities. She was given an award by President Lyndon B. Johnson for this work. Barry died in 2004 at the age of 56. Blake served as a homeroom mother at Arlington Elementary and Jonesboro Annex. She volunteered often, notably by answering the hotline at the Crisis Center in Birmingham and later by working as a pink lady at UAB Medical West Hospital. She was also a skilled piano player and enjoyed singing, sometimes in the choir at First United Methodist Church. In 1966, when she, Bill, and Barry relocated to "the farm," she moved her letter to Pleasant Hill UMC, where she stayed until she moved to San Antonio in 2015 to be closer to her daughter, grandchildren, and great-

grandchild. She loved gardening, painting, and cooking. Anyone who's eaten at her table will tell you what a wonderful cook she was, always creating delicious meals for her family and friends. She was a member of a garden club in Bessemer for many years. Dressing well, shopping, and eating at The Bright Star were some of Blake's other favorite activities, and she was an avid traveler as well. Her best-loved vacations were to Colorado, Colonial Williamsburg, and Maui. At age 40, she started working out at the Fitness Center in Birmingham, then moved to the YMCA when it opened near her home. She made many friends there and attended exercise classes till she was 90. She also was a devoted Alabama football fan, watching every Crimson Tide game and learning about each player. Blake was preceded in death by her husband and son; her parents; her siblings, sisters Thelma Smith, Grace Hanson, and Paula McMurray, and brothers Jack and Fred Mitchell; and her first son-in-law, Harris Smithson. She is survived by her daughter, Billie Smithson (Gary Coulton); her grandson, Blake Smithson (Jenny O'Brien); her granddaughter Shannon Oelrich (David Oelrich); her great-granddaughter, Greta Oelrich; her sister-in-law, Shirley Troilus (John Troilus), and Shirley's children and grandchildren; her nieces Paula Malone (Earle Malone) and Kathy Hanson (John Krol); and her nephew Johnny Smith (Lassie Smith); as well as numerous other nieces, nephews, and cousins. A funeral service is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on Monday, August 14, 2023, at Bessemer Brown Service Funeral Home, 1300 4th Avenue N, with a viewing before the service starting at 1:00 p.m. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation in her name to the Crisis Center, 3620 8th Ave S, Ste 110, Birmingham, AL 35222, www.crisiscenterbham.org.

Cemetery Details

Cedar Hill Cemetery

650 Circle Heights Cir
Bessemer, AL 35020

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 14. 1:00 PM (CT)

Bessemer Brown Service Funeral Home
1300 4th Avenue N
Bessemer, AL 35020
(205) 425-2424
bessemer-brown@hotmail.com
<https://www.bessemerbrownfh.com/>

Funeral Service

AUG 14. 2:00 PM (CT)

Bessemer Brown Service Funeral Home
1300 4th Avenue N
Bessemer, AL 35020
(205) 425-2424
bessemer-brown@hotmail.com
<https://www.bessemerbrownfh.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Blake Mitchell Vines.*



August 08, 2023 at 10:43 AM



“ *Blake lived a wonderful life in service to Friends, Family & people she didn't even know. Her kindness and compassion will be missed by many!*

Sincere condolences to all who loved Her- Prayers for comfort & peace- Kevin & Hayley

Hayley Fassnidge - August 04, 2023 at 08:52 PM