



Thomas "Tommy" Hillard Free, III

DEC 1, 1942 - AUG 29, 2024



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Thomas "Tommy" Hillard Free, III

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It was shortly before kick-off on Thursday, August 29, 2024, when Thomas "Tommy" Hillard Free, III, age 81, of Fayetteville, Arkansas, passed away at his home. Tommy was born on December 1, 1942, in Dumas, Arkansas, to Thomas H. Free, II and Cassie Bernice Puryear Free. Tommy graduated from Dumas High School in 1960, a true "Ding-Dong Daddy" from Dumas. Tommy attended and graduated from the University of Arkansas (where he met his wife, Rebecca Blewster) with a bachelor's degree in business management and began his career in banking shortly thereafter. Tommy married Rebecca Blewster on August 24, 1963, at the Central Baptist Church in Magnolia, Arkansas and began his banking career in 1965 working for First National Bank in Crossett, where he was also a member of the Jaycees and the President of the local Razorback booster club. The family moved to Monticello in early 1970 where Tommy worked at First Commercial Bank, and then moved across town to First Union Bank. Tommy became a member of the Kiwanis Club in Monticello in 1970 and served as their president 1975-1976.

On October 2, 1976, the family moved to Siloam Springs, where Tommy went to work for Arkansas State Bank and joined the Siloam Springs Kiwanis Club. Tommy served his family, the community of Siloam Springs, and his banking customers many years in Siloam Springs, not just as your home-town banker but was involved in the local booster club, serving in various capacities in the local Kiwanis Club [(President 1997-1998), (Lieutenant Governor of the Moark District 2000-2001)], officiating track and field at the University of Arkansas (41 years), serving on the Board of the local library, the Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce Board, Chairman of the United Way Drive, Planning and Zoning Commission of Siloam Springs, and also as a trustee for one of the local churches. Tommy Free received the Siloam Springs Pioneer Citizen Award in 2015 for his numerous contributions of civic duty and shared service.

Tommy's enthusiasm for service mirrored his enthusiasm for people and of course, the Razorbacks. Arkansas State Bank was sold to Centennial and Tommy continued to serve by



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opening and operating the branch in Tontitown. Tommy and Becky moved to Fayetteville in 2013, where Tommy continued to serve his banking family, and his community through his various civic endeavors. Tommy worked with the Arkansas Support Network (2016 – 2022) and served on the board of NTI (Northwest Technical Institute) from 2015 through 2020 in various capacities, including Chairman of the Board, while still working as a Senior Vice President of Customer Relations at Centennial Bank, from which he officially retired in September of 2022.

Tommy Free is survived by his wife, Rebecca Free; children, Thomas K. Free and fiancée Allyson Roy of Fayetteville, Matthew Free and wife Cindy of Ft. Worth, Texas, and Jamey R. Sims and husband Mike of Fayetteville; grandchildren, Mitchell Free and wife Marisa, Phillip Free and wife Destinee, and Claire Monroe Sims; great grandchildren, Celine, Karsyn and Kinzley; and brother, John Phillip Free of Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Funeral services will be 1:00 p.m., Friday, September 6, 2024, at First Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Visitation will be prior to the service from 11:00 a.m., to 1:00 p.m., at First Baptist Church in Fayetteville. Please wear a touch of red for the visitation and/or services on Friday, September 6, 2024. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Kiwanis Club of Siloam Springs, P.O. Box 392, Siloam Springs, AR 72761 or First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1324, Fayetteville, AR 72702. To leave a tribute, please visit www.bernafuneralhomes.com. Arrangements are by Nelson-Berna Funeral Home in Fayetteville.



Events


Thomas "Tommy" Hillard Free, III

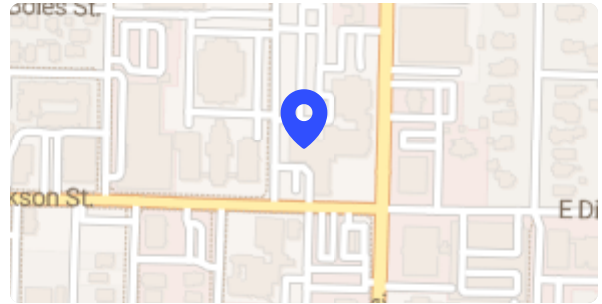
DEC 1, 1942 - AUG 29, 2024

Visitation


 **Friday**, September 6, 2024

 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM CT


 **First Baptist Church**
20 E. Dickson Street, Fayetteville AR 72701

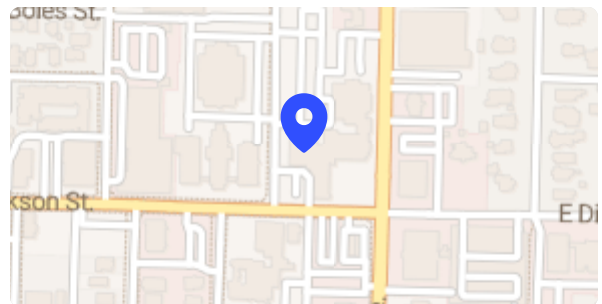


Funeral Service

 **Friday**, September 6, 2024

 1:00 PM CT

 **First Baptist Church**
20 E. Dickson Street, Fayetteville AR 72701





Tribute Wall

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Berna Funeral Homes shared a **Video**.



September 5 at 11:04 AM



Joyce Bailey posted:

I worked with Tommy for many years at Arkansas State Bank. He never met a stranger. He will be missed by many. Prayers for his family.

September 6 at 2:19 AM



Arkansas Support Network sent a Beautiful Dreams to the Free, III family.



September 5 at 11:48 AM



Arkansas Support Network planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Thomas "Tommy".



September 5 at 11:48 AM



Stacy Shankle posted:

So thankful for the example of men like Tommy Free in my life. (Seems like Siloam Springs had more than most of these type of men, so I didn't appreciate the rarity that it was)—Men who consistently looked for ways to serve others, pour into younger generations, and make their communities better places. Tommy Free did all of these with a smile on his face and twinkle in his eye. Prayers for the Free family.

September 5 at 7:27 AM



Thompson Family sent a Blue Caribbean Bouquet to the Free, III family.



September 5 at 7:12 AM



Tribute Wall

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AM

Art Morris posted:

So sorry about Tommy, enjoyed 27 years of working together and years long friendship. Our prayers are with you. Art & Diane Morris

September 5 at 6:44 AM

KL

Kevin Lee posted:

Tommy, you were larger than life man. I sure enjoyed knowing you for the last 20 plus years. I will cherish the time I was able to spend with during my visits to Arkansas. You will always be "Head Hog" to me and I will continue to carry the AR flag here in Colorado and will continue to be Junior Hog. Look forward to seeing you in heaven.

September 5 at 5:33 AM

KH

Kristin H. sent a Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum to the Free, III family.



September 5 at 5:07 AM

GW

George Wheatley posted:

Tommy Free...what a great guy and a great friend! Every time Kathy and I would be with Tommy and Becky for dinner, it would take Tommy 10 to 15 minutes to get to our table...he was visiting with everyone in the restaurant that he knew...and that was almost EVERYONE. Such a beautiful personality, such a true gentleman, such a caring friend. We pray comfort and reassurance for Tommy's family and the large community of their friends.

September 5 at 4:12 AM

RK

Ron Knight posted:

I feel sad that we have lost another schoolmate. I pray for the family's peace and rest with this terrible loss. Pray to meet you in Heaven Tommy.

September 4 at 1:49 PM



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MB

Matt, Tina, Blaize And Paxton Battaglia sent a Sentiments of Serenity Spray to the Free, III family.

September 4 at 6:02 AM



LM

Love Eric, Danyelle & Mariah Musselman sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Free, III family.

September 3 at 7:39 PM



LM

Love Eric, Danyelle & Mariah Musselman planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Thomas "Tommy".

September 3 at 7:39 PM



Anonymous sent a Country Basket Blooms to the Free, III family.

September 3 at 12:04 PM



VC

Vertical Community Church sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Free, III family.

September 3 at 7:13 AM

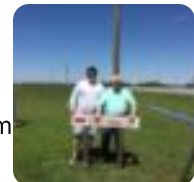


PS

Preston Smith shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

Tommy was a great man with a wonderful presence about him. I never knew I could have such good friend that was 40 years older. When you're a "Ding Dong Daddy from Dumas," a legendary Razorbacks fan, or as personable and welcoming as Tommy, you're a top-notch dude. He's the kinda guy that I'll always remember how he made me feel, and that's one hell of a legacy. "It's not what you take when you leave this world behind you, it's what you leave behind you when you go." Rest in Peace Tommy Free. Preston Smith

September 3 at 6:29 AM





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Anonymous sent a Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses to the Free, III family.

September 3 at 5:10 AM



Razorback Foundation Staff planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Thomas "Tommy".

September 3 at 5:10 AM



Cat Mcvey lit a candle in honor of Thomas "Tommy".

My deepest condolences to all of the family. Y'all are in my prayers as each of y'all begin your new journey without Tommy. Cathy Holston McVey 🙏

September 2 at 5:45 AM



James & Linda Melton posted:

We always knew when Tommy was around, that voice, that smile, that laugh! Thank you for being our friend. Love & prayers to Becky and all of your family. James & Linda Melton

September 1 at 10:19 AM



Reagan Russell posted:

My condolences to the Free family. Tommy was larger than life and I have a lot of great memories of him growing up. A true Siloam legend. Your family is in my prayers.

September 1 at 9:22 AM



Jim McClelland posted:

Tommy was a good sigma nu member at the University of Arkansas. I enjoyed knowing him in college and ran into him many times over the years. Rest his soul. Jim McClelland.

September 1 at 4:15 AM



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Karolyn And Don Farrell posted:

We loved Tommy and Becky! We know he is enjoying the old time hymns he so loved now in heaven. We are thankful we shared so many happy times and meals with them. Among those times was their 61 anniversary dinner. Love to Becky and family.

August 31 at 4:42 PM



Don And Diane White September 1 at 3:26 AM

Our hearts were broken when we lost our friend Tommy , we met him and Becky at FBC and enjoyed many lunches together after Sunday services. Tommy was truly a people person, and had many friends who loved him. We are grateful to have been able to share a few memories together and to have him in our lives...sending our love and prayers to Becky and all his family . Don & Diane White



Media

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Berna Funeral Homes shared a Video.

September 5 at 11:04 AM





Media

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Preston Smith shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

September 3 at 6:29 AM



Tommy! Pull over! There's a Free farm!



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Thomas "Tommy" by
contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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