



Curtis Shipley

JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025



Scan to Visit

Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Events	Page 9
Tribute Wall	Page 10
Media	Page 11



Curtis Shipley

JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025

William Curtis Shipley died peacefully on Sunday, November 9th, at Butterfield Trail Village. While Parkinson's and time may have slowed his body, neither the disease nor advancing years ever changed his love of family, his sense of purpose, or his desire for the company of his many friends.

Curtis' love of family began almost from the moment of his birth on July 30, 1933, in Fort Smith, AR, to Benjamin Harrison (BH) and Maud Curtis Shipley. Throughout his life, he demonstrated an unending love and respect for his parents through his attitude, actions, faith, traditions, and remembrances.

The third of four siblings, Curtis loved and admired his older brother Harry and was especially devoted to his sisters. His older sister Juda was his compass, helping lead and guide him all her life, while his younger sister Sally adored her bubby and always set him up for fun. Both were cheerleaders and encouragers whenever that was called for. Curtis was never far from either Juda or Sally or their families, visiting often, calling or writing at least once a week, and marking every important milestone with them.

Curtis attended Fort Smith Public Schools, graduating in 1951. He then enrolled at the University of Arkansas. While a student, he became a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon. Curtis was the embodiment of a True Gentleman, later influencing his sons, grandson, and great-nephews to become SAEs as well.

Upon graduating with a bachelor's degree in business in 1955, Curtis joined the Army, serving on the General Staff for the Pacific Theater Command at the Presidio. After two years of active duty, he continued his commitment as an Army Reservist until 1961.

On returning from California, Curtis joined his family's business in Fort Smith, The Shipley Baking Company. In 1962, Curtis married Ellen Compton of Bentonville. They then moved to Fayetteville, with Curtis taking over the bakery there while Ellen



Obituary

Curtis Shipley

JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025

took graduate classes at, and then was employed by, the University. The couple had a busy life together, raising two boys and enjoying small-town life. It was during this time they met other young Fayetteville families, many of whom became life-long friends.

Together with his brother Harry and many devoted employees, Curtis grew the Shipley Baking Company, expanding the sales territory and product offerings while operating bakeries in Fort Smith, Fayetteville, and McAlester, OK. An excellent businessman, Curtis never forgot to lead with integrity and care, honoring his commitments to employees, vendors, and customers, and doing his best in all things. The brothers eventually sold the Shipley Baking Company to Flowers Foods. Until 1996, residents and visitors to downtown Fayetteville were treated to the delightful aroma of freshly baking bread, creating memories so vivid they are recalled decades later. The Bakery Buildings on Dickson Street and The Bakery District in Fort Smith stand as lasting, tangible legacies of the Shipley family's impact on both communities.

Beyond his management of the bakeries, Curtis cultivated a life of service to the community of Fayetteville, honoring the heritage of his parents and his Methodist faith.

In February 1980, the Arkansas Times published an issue on leadership, naming 80 people to watch in the coming decade. Curtis was one of them. Leading with, "As yeast is to bread, Curtis Shipley is to Fayetteville." The Times aptly described him as "a doer, known for handling large-scale challenges...Seemingly immune to discouragement, Shipley can be expected to extend his regional leadership well into the next decade." The only thing the writers got wrong was the timeline.

A member of Central United Methodist Church since 1961, he served on countless boards and committees, including Head of the Administrative Board.

Curtis served 28 years on the Board of Directors of Washington Regional Medical Center, including multiple terms as Chairman, and was integral in the development of the hospital at North Hills. He served as President of the Arkansas Association of Hospital Trustees from 1996 to 1998.

Originally a board member of First National Bank, Curtis was instrumental in re-



Obituary

Curtis Shipley

JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025

developing the east side of the Fayetteville Square. Later, he became a founding board member and shareholder of The Bank of Fayetteville.

Curtis provided 28 years of service to the Beaver Water District; he was also a member and President of the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, he was a founder and board member of the Fayetteville Community Foundation, now an affiliate of the Arkansas Community Foundation. Working as a board member for the Fayetteville Salvation Army, he was instrumental in raising funds for the facility in south Fayetteville.

Curtis' commitment to the University of Arkansas was unwavering. He was a member of the National Development Council, the Alumni Association Board of Directors, the Chancellors Society, and the Old Main Society. Curtis was an early and life-long supporter of the Razorback Foundation and loved attending football, baseball, and basketball games with his family.

As recognition for his commitment to the community, Curtis received numerous awards. Among his most treasured were the Washington Regional Hospital Eagle Award, the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce Wes Gordon Award, the Arkansas Community Development Program Award of Excellence, the Andrew Lucas Alumni Association Service Award, the University of Arkansas Outstanding Volunteer, the Walton College - Curtis Shipley Endowed Chancellor Scholarship, and the UA SAE Guy Belew and Alumni Memorial Awards.

While Curtis' impact on the Northwest Arkansas community will continue long past his death, his proudest accomplishments were those of father, grandfather, uncle, friend, and husband.

As father to David and Neil, he continued the Shipley tradition of family first. Curtis instilled within his sons a code of ethics and morality that is easily apparent. Not quite as successfully, he tried to influence their musical choices, frequently singing his favorite hymns and fraternity songs to them, especially in the car where they had no means of escape. While they might have questioned his abilities as a singer, neither David nor Neil ever doubted their father's love, and his example of loyalty, positivity, and confidence provided guidance as they grew into men with families of their own.



Obituary

Curtis Shipley

JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025

Also known as “Poppy,” Curtis found tremendous joy in his grandchildren. His warm heart and generosity were on frequent display, and he demonstrated his affection easily and often. With a twinkle in his eye, he shared kisses and special finger waves whenever possible and never missed an opportunity to say, “I love you.” Poppy’s childlike spirit made holidays and birthdays magical. From Christmas poppers to birthday treasure hunts, these memories are gifts to Sarah, Harry, Rhys, and Braden. Each of his grandchildren returned Curtis’ love and affection easily. Their presence at Ridgeway Drive for weekend getaways, regular Sunday dinners, and every holiday provided him with special permission to over-indulge his notorious sweet tooth with cakes, cookies, and ice cream. They also showered him with longer-lasting gifts of cards, letters, photos, and handmade art.

Curtis worried about his grandchildren and prayed daily for happy, healthy, productive futures for each of them. He also did the same for his many nieces and nephews. Uncle Curtis, proud and loyal, was their confidant and sometimes co-conspirator. As an admired and respected family leader and self-appointed family historian, he seized every opportunity to share family legacies, traditions, and treasures with them, and later with their children, embedding those ever-important values as he did so.

Curtis met others where they were and accepted them for who they were. His kindness was not dependent on one’s ability to do something for him in return. While a friend and confidant of governors, senators, and presidents, his lifelong friendships were born from life on 25th Street in Fort Smith and his college and adult life in Fayetteville. These friends were central to his identity. From playing tennis, hiking the Buffalo National Forest, canoeing as “King of the River,” even after his crown was tarnished on the shoals of Grey Rock, traveling the US and abroad, celebrating births, marriages, and professional successes to sharing quiet meals as couples or joining raucous gatherings with his friend circle and all their children, Curtis never took these men and women for granted, wanting the best for each of them and lending an ear or a hand whenever needed.

Curtis also enjoyed the certainty of regular group gatherings. Many years ago, he joined “The Old Men’s Breakfast Club,” aka the OMBC. He may have been young



Obituary

Curtis Shipley

JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025

when he first joined, but in later years, he took great pride in being the most senior member of the group. He especially relished his membership in the “Men’s Sewing Club,” a source of great camaraderie, gossip, prognosticating, and hijinks.

In 2001, Curtis met his neighbor on the hill, Jane Boyer, wisely marrying her within a year. Jane brought renewed life to Curtis, filling his days with joy, fun, and companionship. She eagerly joined him in his commitment to service. His friends became hers, and hers his. Those who knew the couple best describe them as perfectly suited for one another. Curtis’ courtship of Jane did not stop at the altar but continued throughout their marriage, and their deep, abiding love for one another will live on.

Curtis was preceded in death by his grandparents, William & Judith Shipley and WL & Hattie (Harrison) Curtis; his parents, Benjamin Harrison & Maud (Curtis) Shipley; his mothers-in-law, Laurene (Putman) Compton and Irma (Little) Boyer, and fathers-in-law, Neil Compton and Paul Boyer; his siblings, Harry Shipley, Jr, Juda Holder, and Sally Bowers; his sisters-in-law, Janice (Hawkins) Shipley and Mary (Couch) Shipley, and brothers-in-law, James Holder, Bob Powell, Don Bowers, Bill David Compton, and Bill Boyer; his niece, Maude Powell Mulvaney; and his former wife and mother of his children, Ellen Compton.

He is survived by his wife Jane Boyer Shipley; his children David & Jamie Shipley and Neil & Sally Shipley; his grandchildren Sarah & Cole Henderson, and Harry, Rhys, and Braden Shipley; his stepchildren Jeff & Suzanne Fox and John Fox; and his step-grandchildren Cate and Wes Fox; his Shipley nieces and his Compton and Boyer nephews; numerous Shipley and Curtis cousins; and a cadre of friends, some of more than 50 years, others whom he met last week.

After a private interment, a memorial service will be held at 1 pm on Tuesday, November 25th, at Central United Methodist Church. The celebration of his most wonderful life by family and friends will then continue with a reception at the Fayetteville Country Club.

In lieu of flowers, please consider sharing in Curtis’ passion for helping individuals and the community with a donation to any of the following:

Washington Regional Foundation, <https://www.wregional.com/foundation/donate-online>;



Obituary

Curtis Shipley

JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025

Central United Methodist Church, <https://centralumcfay.com/give/>;

Arkansas Community Foundation (Fayetteville affiliate, operational endowment) Fayetteville Area funds and endowments.;

University of Arkansas <https://onlinegiving.uark.edu/campaigns/53930/donations/new?amt=50.00>; or Butterfield Trail Foundation

<https://butterfieldtrailvillage.org/about-us/btv-foundation-donate/donate/?fund=Unrestricted-Fund>

To place an online tribute, please visit www.bernafuneralhomes.com



Events


Curtis Shipley

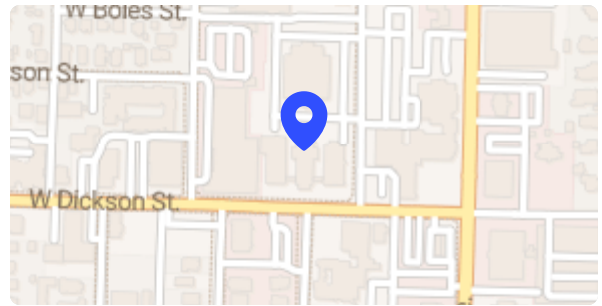
JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025

Memorial Service

 **Tuesday**, November 25, 2025

 1:00 PM CT

 **Central United Methodist Church**
6 W Dickson Street , Fayetteville AR 72701





Tribute Wall

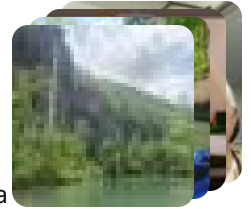
Curtis Shipley

JUL 30, 1933 - NOV 9, 2025



Andy King shared 4 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

Curtis was and will continue to be such a positive influence in my life. His countless contributions and deeds for others have been game-changers. However, it was his positive attitude and ability to be grateful for his many blessings despite the health challenges he faced that humbled me and made me a better person. I'm thankful to have had him as a close friend and will always have nothing but great memories of our time together. My best to his family, Andy

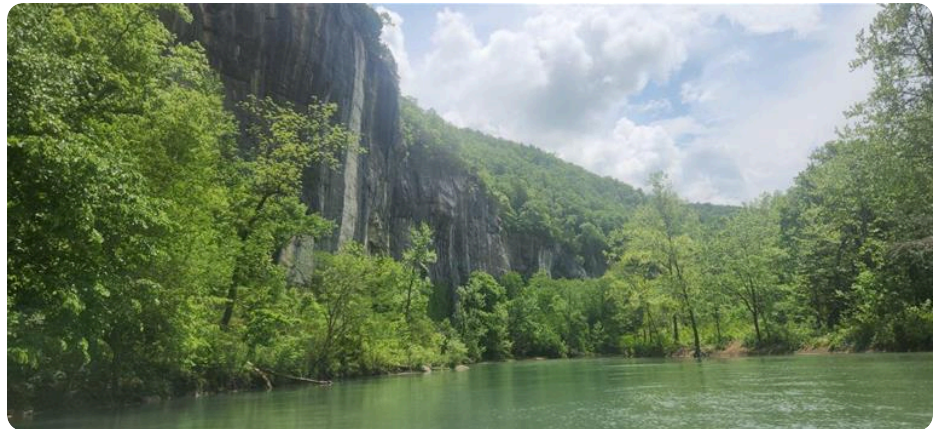
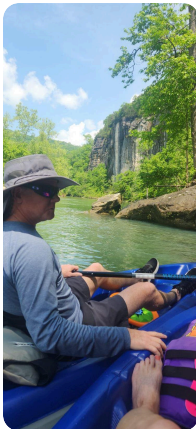


November 24 at 12:58 PM



Andy King shared 4 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

November 24 at 12:58 PM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Curtis by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



Scan to Visit

