

IN LOVING
Memory



Diane Saunders

December 10, 1956 - November 18, 2020



Obituary

Diane Smith Saunders



Diane Smith Saunders passed away unexpectedly on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. On that day, we lost a beloved daughter, mother, sister, aunt, family member, friend and colleague.

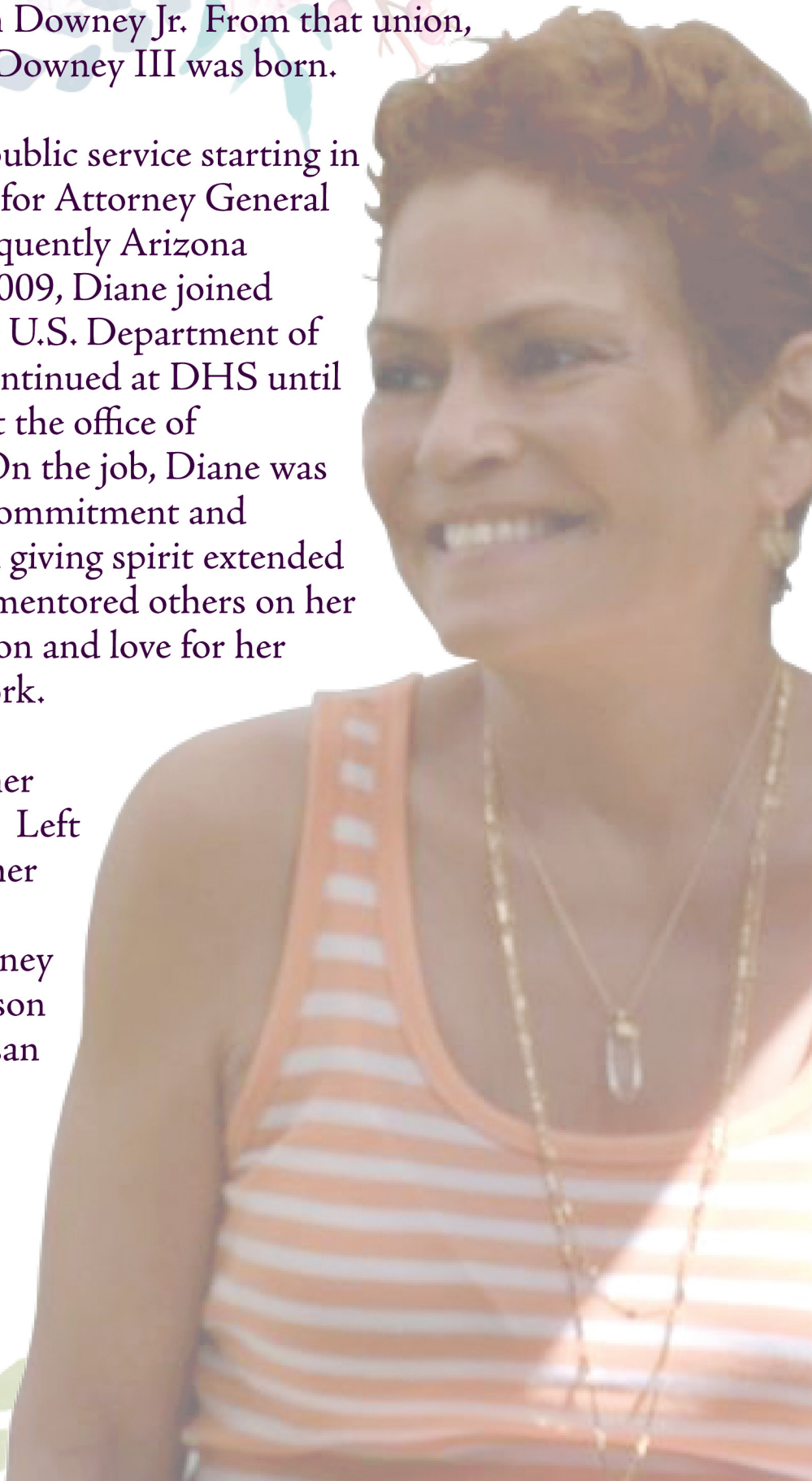
Diane was born on December 10, 1956 to Dr. Francis L. Smith and Maureen Tapscott Smith in Washington D.C. The first of five daughters, Diane secured her place as the eldest sister and the leader of the Smith girls. From a young age, Diane was full of life and made friends easily. She loved to have fun and in the early years this meant that she could be a bit mischievous. She learned early how to take charge of any situation and her dutiful sisters went along with whatever instructions she dispensed. Her love for her family was fierce and unconditional. Her son, Joseph Downey III, was the love of her life. She proudly served as the head of the family reunion committee (we called her the Poobah). Everyone knew that if you needed anything, Diane was only a phone call away.

Diane was generous and kind - always willing to lend a helping hand. She regularly hosted friends and family for a delicious meal or grabbed the restaurant bill when no one was looking. Cooking was her passion. She was an amazing chef and loved to entertain. Everywhere Diane lived - whether in Swampscott, Massachusetts; Phoenix, Arizona; Silver Spring, Maryland or Washington, D.C. - she embraced her community and neighbors and made lifelong friends. She took part in community celebrations, often volunteering to run events like neighborhood block parties. Each year Diane looked forward to the family vacation (usually at a beach resort with her sisters and their families) and the Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival with her sister, her brother-in-law and several dear friends. Diane lit up a room. She had a big heart, a contagious smile and warm personality.

Diane attended Shepard Elementary School and Sidwell Friends School. She graduated from Wilson High School in 1974. From there she spent a few years at Howard University. In the late 1970's Diane married her now former husband Joseph Downey Jr. From that union, Diane's beloved son Joseph Downey III was born.

Diane had a long career in public service starting in Arizona, where she worked for Attorney General Janet Napolitano and subsequently Arizona Governor Napolitano. In 2009, Diane joined Secretary Napolitano at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. She continued at DHS until her passing, most recently at the office of Intelligence and Analysis. On the job, Diane was known for her dedication, commitment and integrity. Her generous and giving spirit extended to her work life. She often mentored others on her team. She spoke with passion and love for her friends and colleagues at work.

Diane was predeceased by her father Dr. Francis L. Smith. Left to cherish her memory are her mother Maureen Tapscott Smith; her son Joseph Downey III; her sisters Pamela Johnson (Bruce), Patricia Smith, Susan Holt (Harry) and Jennifer Boss (Mark); her nieces Brandon Johnson, Sage Johnson, Kimberly Johnson and Gabriella Boss; her nephew Jacob Boss; and many other loving relatives and friends.



Order of Service

Welcome and Opening Prayer Rev. Bernice Powell Jackson
Pastor, First United Church of Tampa

Musical Prelude *Aleluya*

Tributes Michael Hairston
Kemble Garrett
Jennifer Boss
(reading a tribute from Janet Napolitano)

Quiet Reflections Maureen Smith
Tanya Leonard
Brandon Johnson
Sage Johnson
Kimberly Johnson
Jacob Boss
Gabriella Boss

Tributes Nathaniel Buss
Adam Luke
Susan Holt

Musical Interlude *Amazing Grace*
Marshall Keys

Eulogy Rev. Bernice Powell Jackson

Shared Remembrances

Photo Memories

A Letter from Mom

How I miss you.

*My first girl. My beautiful girl. Your beauty was bright.
You looked like an angel on the day of your
First Holy Communion.*



*My first girl. My talented girl. At the tender age of 7,
you started the tradition of cooking Mother's Day
breakfast for me, and your culinary skills only got better
with time. I will miss those delicious dishes you prepared.*



*My first girl. My clever girl. Always so smart. You
beat me in Scrabble almost every time. Oh my,
those games were competitive!*



*My first girl. My loving girl. Your love of family was
deep. You walked through life led by your kind, generous,
giving spirit. I think that is what I will miss the most,
my dearest Diane.*

How I miss you.



The immediate family would like to share a heartfelt thank you with our extended family and friends for their love and support during this difficult time. If you would like to offer personal reflections or a tribute to Diane, please visit Diane's obituary page at Adventfuneral.com