

# Shirley Murl Mitchell

APRIL 6, 1934 – APRIL 22, 2022



Shirley Murl “Mitch” Mitchell was born near Carlinville, Ill., on April 6, 1934. He was the only son of Murl and Virgie Mitchell (nee Hart) and grew up with four sisters: Ruth, Reba, Bula, and Brenda.

Shirley graduated from Carlinville High School in Illinois in 1951 and then completed his Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry at the University of Illinois. During high school, Shirley met Mary Ellen Garrett from the nearby town of Gillespie. They were wed in 1955, beginning a 61-year marriage.

The newly married couple settled in Southern California, raising their daughters, Cynthia and Lissa, in Garden Grove. In 1974, Shirley and Mary moved to Westminster, Calif., where they resided for nearly 50 years.

Shirley worked for Shell Oil (where he picked up his nickname “Mitch”) but soon found his niche with North American Rockwell (later Rockwell and Boeing) aerospace in Downey, Calif., where he would remain for his entire professional career. His career as a chemist provided him with a wide range of experience in the U.S. Space Program, spanning the Gemini, Apollo, Space Shuttle, and Skylab programs. He and his team provided pivotal chemical analyses of various spacecraft components.

Shirley’s passion was travelling. Throughout his many travels—both before and after retirement—he managed to visit all seven continents and at least 76 countries. He shared his love of travel with his wife, children, grandchildren, siblings, nieces, nephews, and their families, often inviting family members to accompany him on once-in-a-lifetime adventures.

On April 22, 2022, at the age of 88, Shirley passed away suddenly after a long struggle with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. He was always grateful for his loving nuclear and extended families, and his eventful and rewarding life.

Shirley was preceded in death by his wife, Mary; parents Murl and Virgie Mitchell; and sisters Ruth Weatherford, Reba Reynolds, Bula Cortino, and Brenda Thomas.

He is survived by his two daughters and their spouses, Cynthia and Michael Wildermuth, and Lissa and Francois Posbic; grandchildren Kevin Wildermuth, James Wildermuth, and Brenda Flanagan; great-grandchildren Brianna, Joshua, Isaiah, and Jaden; and many beloved cousins, nieces, and nephews and their families.

Shirley’s family extends its gratitude to St. Joseph’s hospital and especially the palliative care and hospice teams at St. Jude’s hospital for their loving care.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation ([www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org](http://www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org)) or your favorite charity in his memory.

Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at [www.westminstermemorial.net](http://www.westminstermemorial.net) for the Mitchell family.