



Mary Gail Tumlin

June 6, 1937 - January 31, 2025

Mary Gail Tumlin, age 87, of Scottsboro formerly of Huntsville and Rainsville, AL passed on Friday, January 31, 2025 at Southern Estates, Scottsboro, AL. A private family service will be held officiated by Elder Ricky Harcrow. There will be no visitation and the family requests no flowers. Memorials can be made to the National Children's Advocacy Center, 210 Pratt Avenue NE, Huntsville, AL 35801. Rainsville Funeral Home, Inc. directing.

Mary was born June 6, 1937 in Rainsville, AL, to the late Hubert Roy Tumlin and Flora Downey Tumlin. She entered Plainview School in 1943 and finished junior high in 1952. Gail grew up loving life to the fullest. She was a "tom boy" and collaborated with her life time buddy, Linda Parker, and they both got into lots of mischievous trouble. They were known as the "Holy Terrors" in Broadway Church's Primary Sunday School Class. She later joined Broadway Baptist Church in 1951. Gail then went to DeKalb County High School in Fort Payne and graduated in 1955. Gail loved sports and played every sport that females were allowed to participate in during that time. Soon after graduation, a cousin persuaded her to apply to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in Washington, D.C. She was employed as a fingerprint technician until later 1962. At that time, she applied to the Huntsville Police Department and became the first female police officer ever hired by the city and broke the glass ceiling. "I was the only female around a bunch of men. I had to prove myself every step of the way. I was treated respectfully but they were wary.

They sat back and watched to see if I could take care of myself and my partner.” And she did.

Because of her gender, Mary became a specialist in juvenile crime and abuse of women and children. She ended her police career in those fields after 26 years of service in 1989. While serving in these areas, her division created the first D.A.R.E. program in Alabama. Also, the division started a children’s advocacy center, the first in the nation. The division was honored with an award ceremony at the White House by President Ronald Reagan. She helped develop other advocacy centers in the United States. At the time of her retirement, her division was in charge of Juvenile Squad, Hostage Negotiations, D.A.R.E. Programs, the Arson and Bom Squad, Felony Warrants, and the General Squad. Mary was honored as the state of Alabama’s Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer, and Huntsville’s Outstanding Law Enforcement officer. In 2017, Mary was honored by Mayor Tommy Battle and the city Council of Huntsville for being the first female police officer by permanently displaying her dress uniform at Police Headquarters. This ceremony was arranged by the late Dr. Mary Jane Caylor, a longtime friend. She has always been a loyal fan of Alabama Football.

While working full time, she accomplished a dream of graduating from the University of Alabama in Huntsville with a B.A. and a M.A. in history under the guidance of her beloved friend the late Dr. Frances Roberts, an early leader at UAH. For a while, she was an adjunct professor at UAH teaching courses in criminal justice.

Mary is survived by her brother, Hubert Paul Tumlin of Rainsville; special friends including her God daughter Sandy Parker Norman, and her family of Fairhope, the Brooks family of Huntsville, the Linda Parker Robertson family of Rainsville, and Randy and Patty Tumlin of Rainsville. She is also survived by first cousins Randy Tumlin and Anita Tumlin Machen. She is predeceased

by her parents, Roy and Flora Tumlin, and grandparents Mr. and Mrs. C.A. Tumlin and Mr. and Mrs. E.J. Downey.