

Mary-Alice Downing, 92, of Miller, passed away Tuesday, August 14, 2012 at the Good Samaritan Society, Miller.

Mary-Alice was born October 16, 1919 to Ralph and Edith Belle (Leadbetter) Speirs on the "Prairie Home" farm located near Ree Heights which was owned by Ralph's parents, John and Mary Speirs. Mary-Alice attended grade school in Ree Heights and St. Lawrence. In 1938, she graduated from Miller High School. Upon her graduation, she attended Methodist Hospital Nursing program in Mitchell. "World War II came along and changed all sorts of plans." After completing two years of training, Mary-Alice eloped on August 24 1940 and married Donald Everett Downing in Aberdeen, SD.

Mary-Alice and Donald farmed near Orient and later purchased land in Holden Township north of St. Lawrence. As a farm wife she loved to bake. Her fresh cinnamon rolls were a favorite after school snack for her children. Her baking and decorating skills turned into a business making specialty cakes for Hand County residents. Mary-Alice often gave the wedding cake as a gift to her nieces and nephews.

Mary-Alice had a passion for making pretty clothes. It was evident when she sewed for her five children. Her children wore many outfits lovingly sewed by their mother. When one visited Mrs. Downing's Barbie Doll Clothing Shop, her passion for pretty dresses was evident. The pretty petite clothes brought joy to many area children who purchased the clothing for as little as a quarter. The shop burned down just before Christmas of 1966.

In 1967, Mary-Alice and Donald purchased the Laundromat in Miller. The Laundromat brought about another opportunity to learn and grow. Mary-Alice began repairing sewing machines and mending as well as helping make repairs to the washers, dryers and water softeners. As a part of the business, she began picking up dirty laundry and later delivering baskets of freshly laundered clothing for resident in Miller – especially shut ins.

Mary-Alice continued in her enterprising ways and began purchasing one and two bedroom houses in Miller. She would fix them up, furnish the houses, and turn them into houses for those who needed them. In 1994, she sold the Laundromat, began selling the homes and apartment buildings she acquired over the years and "retired".

Mary-Alice enjoyed playing cards and dancing at the Miller Senior Center. She will be remembered as a kind and loving woman who enjoyed spending time with her children and grandchildren and as well as a pioneering business woman.

She is survived by her five children: Mary (Donald) Hague of Box Elder, Jean (Harlan) Gortmaker of St. Lawrence, Terry (Jean) Downing of Redfield, Glenda (Robert) Blom of Madison, and Joey (Erlinda) Downing of the Philippines; 20 grandchildren; 31 great grandchildren; three great-great grandchildren; three sisters: Blanche McClellon of Pennsylvania, Dorothy (Leonard) Fawcett of Ree Heights, and Harriet Kopplin of Miller; and two brothers: Willis (Audrey) Speirs of New Jersey and Keith Speirs of Miller.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Donald in 1990; three children: Fred Ralph and twins, Donald and Donna; four brothers: Waldo, Leonard "Lefty", Glen and Kenneth; two sisters: Delila and Florence; and one granddaughter, Angel.

*Arrangements Entrusted To*



*Miller, South Dakota*  
*www.familyfuneralhome.net*

*In Loving Memory*



*Mary-Alice Downing*

*October 16, 1919 --- August 14, 2012*



## *23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm*

*The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.*

*He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the  
paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death, I will fear no evil,  
for Thou art with me;  
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

*Thou preparest a table before me in the  
presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my  
head with oil; my cup runneth over*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all  
the days of my life and I will dwell in the  
house of the Lord forever.*

*In Loving Memory*

# *Mary-Alice Downing*

October 16, 1919  
Ree Heights, South Dakota

August 14, 2012  
Miller, South Dakota

## *PRAYER SERVICE*

7:00 p.m., Thursday, August 16, 2012  
First United Methodist Church ~ Miller, South Dakota

## *FUNERAL SERVICE*

10:00 a.m., Friday, August 17, 2012  
First United Methodist Church ~ Miller, South Dakota

## *OFFICIATING*

Pastor Mark Johnsen

## *PALLBEARERS*

Vikki Kelner – Carla Schumacher – David Hague  
Jennifer Johnson – Travis Downing – Tracy Thompson  
Trisha Westberg – Nick Gortmaker – Nancy Chisham  
Jon Gortmaker – Jana Wilson – Jeff Gortmaker – Jed Blom  
Nate Blom – Eric Bobeldyk – Laura Blom – Jaziel Downing  
Janelle Downing – Jarelle Downing – Jade Downing

## *USHERS*

Merle Jenner                      Eugene Moncur

## *VOCALIST*

Derla Simons

*“Whispering Hope” – “Peace In The Valley”*

Jon Gortmaker

*“What A Friend We Have In Jesus” – “Glorious Day”*

## *ORGANIST*

Darlene Hammer

## *MUSIC SELECTIONS*

*“I Can Only Imagine” – “Jesus Loves Me” – “I Will Rise”*

## *INTERMENT*

G.A.R. Cemetery – Miller, South Dakota