



Freeman W. Smith Sr. “Smitty The Clown”

Born: June 24, 1938 / At Rest: August 30, 2025

Freeman W. Smith, 87, of Batavia, Illinois, passed away on Saturday, August 30, 2025. He was born on June 24, 1938, in a log cabin in West Virginia.

In his youth, Freeman attended the Ohio School for the Deaf, before relocating to Illinois. He moved to Chicago, where he met his beautiful wife, Helen Smith (Yankey), to whom he was married for 62 years

While in Chicago, he worked at the Chicago Sun-Times as a typographical printer. However, it was outside his workplace where he earned his reputation.

Also known as “Smitty the Clown,” Freeman was an award-winning clown. Inducted into the inaugural Midwest Clown Association Hall of Fame class in 1986, Freeman remains the only deaf clown in the Hall of Fame.

Freeman was also a proud member of the Medinah Shriners, as he was one of only a few deaf members in the organization. Freeman’s clowning success came through pantomime, which made everyone around him laugh, as his main goal was to put a smile on everyone’s face, a goal he always achieved.

Outside of clowning, Freeman enjoyed being adventurous, as he took flying lessons in his free time. He loved taking vacations and traveling all around the world with his friends and family, especially to Walt Disney World, one of his favorite places. Freeman was also an avid Chicago sports fan.

Freeman loved spending time with his family. He had two children: Rose Rowland (Mark), Freeman W. Smith Jr. (Sean). He also had two grandchildren: Freeman W. Smith III, and Craig Rowland. He was extremely proud of both his grandchildren and made sure everyone he met knew that Freeman III is an engineer and Craig is a lawyer.

Even in his later years, Freeman could complete a 1,000 piece puzzle in just two days. He also loved going to the casino with his family, where he would always show off his luck at the slot machines, seemingly walking out a winner every time. Freeman had many friends and was truly beloved by all.

He is survived by his two children: Rose Rowland (Mark) and Freeman Smith Jr. (Sean); his grandchildren, Craig Rowland and Freeman Smith III; and his siblings, Anabell Oty and Mike Minnick.

In addition to his parents and siblings, he is preceded in death by his wife Helen Smith.

