



Finis Dale Shelnutt

October 1, 1951 - October 16, 2025

Finis Shelnutt, 74, of New Orleans Louisiana, left this world to return home on October 16, 2025.

Finis was born on October 1, 1951, in Benton, Arkansas, to Doyle and Emma Shelnutt. He was the youngest of four brothers - hence the name his mother chose for him: she was finished! Emma loved all of her children, but Finis prided himself on always being her baby.

Finis was a character and true fixture in the French Quarter, known by nearly all locals. His experiences and impact however span far beyond those lively blocks. Attempting to describe the life and lifestyle of Finis Shelnutt in written word is a truly impossible task - he lived an extraordinary life with stories that most would find hard to believe true - but for those closest to him, those stories were all but a very small glimpse at the man he really was.

Finis started Taekwondo at the age of 15 and earned his black belt in only 12 months. In 1973 he received his instructor certification, and on April 12, 1975, received his 3rd Degree Black Belt. He was one of three on the American Taekwondo Association's (ATA) first Black Belt Team and won numerous National Black Belt championships. Tammy (Harvey) Strauder described him as, "a fierce competitor, extraordinary technician, and a very gifted instructor."

In 1976, Finis married Sally (Ward) Smith. Finis never knew that he had a passion for horseback riding until he laid eyes upon Sally, who had grown up riding and showing horses. His competitive focus immediately shifted to catching up to Sally's horseback riding level. Anyone who knew Finis will tell you that absolutely nothing motivated him more than a beautiful woman! By 1980 Finis won the Arkansas State Horse Show against 66 other riders on "Miss Hankalia," who he trained. Finis and Sally shared 14 rich years together and brought two daughters into this world, Maria and Jennifer. Though their marriage ended in 1989 their friendship never did.

Finis was introduced to singer Gennifer Flowers in 1989 and the two married in 1996. Over the years, they built a life that took them from Little Rock to Denver, Las Vegas, and finally New Orleans in 1999. For 25 years, Finis thrived in stocks and bonds with Prudential Securities, earning his place among the firm's Top 100 producers in the 1990s. After moving to New Orleans, he shifted from finance to entrepreneurship, and launched the Gennifer Flowers Kelsto Club, a piano bar that he managed and she performed in. True to form, success followed him once again when he turned his focus to real estate and eventually founded Shelnut Real Estate.

Finis loved all those in his family fiercely, and in his protective way, took under his wing his niece Chandra and his nephew Doyle when their fathers, his brothers, left this worldly life. He was as proud of them as he was either of his own children.

He always loved his daughters no matter what. When they were young, he would ask Maria to go out on the deck with him when grilling steaks so that they they could wave the lid to the grill in the air and blow "steak smoke signals" towards the neighbor's house to make them jealous. After all, his steaks were the best! He had such a spitfire in Jennifer when she was a toddler that he was once rendered defenseless while threatening to discipline

her when she looked up and replied, "Not you, Cowboy!" Finis treated his daughters like they were his little buddies when they were young - riding 4 wheelers, horses, building lofts for them in the barn, and giggling as he chased them with cattle prods.

Finis had 3 grandchildren and adored them deeply. He was incredibly proud of his oldest granddaughter Kaelyn, for not only her accomplishments in life, but for her character, strength, and determination. He said that he'd never known a prettier red head. He often laughed as he imagined the sounds his parents would enjoy when he gave Matthew his first drum set for Christmas. He was absolutely enthralled by Ellie and her love of spaghetti & meatballs. His favorite story to share is about Ellie eating spaghetti - with her hands - "with no shame," he said.

He is survived by his two daughters, Maria Gray and Jennifer (David) Saltaformaggio; and his grandchildren, Kaelyn, Matthew, and Ellie.

He is preceded by his mother, Nancy Emogene "Emma" Shelnutt; his father, Doyle Alfred Shelnutt; and his four brothers, Alfred, Gary, and Tommy.

The family will have a private service, followed by a Celebration of Life Second Line to honor Finis and the life he lived. The Second Line will begin at 1:30 PM on Tuesday, October 28th in front of the Omni Royal Orleans at 621 St Louis Street in New Orleans, Louisiana 70130.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Louisiana SPCA (<https://donate.louisianaspca.org/campaign/716598/donate>) or the Humane Society of Saline County, Arkansas (<https://www.hssaline.org/donate>) on behalf of Finis Shelnutt.

Arrangements have been entrusted to McLin Funeral Home. Online condolences may be shared at www.mclinfuneralhome.com

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Second Line

OCT **28**. 1:30 PM (CT)

Omni Royal Orleans
621 St. Louis St.
New Orleans, LA 70130

Tribute Wall

CN

“*Finis was my closest friend, like a brother. A few nights before his passing, during his last call to me, he asked what I thought heaven would be like. While we always said "I love you" before hanging up, this time was different: he kept telling my wife and me how much he loved us. I shared a link to a YouTube video with him about people who had near-death experiences and saw heaven. He told me he was going to watch it as soon as we hung up, leading me to believe that he knew he was about to pass.*

I am going to miss our crabbing trips together and just hanging out talking. Finis held a very special place in his heart for his grandchild Matthew; he would beam with joy as he laughed telling me about his experiences with him.

My wife and I spent our honeymoon in Hot Springs. Finis made a call to one of his friends who owns a very old historic bank building, and we were given the red-carpet treatment by his old friend as we toured the historic building.

Finis had a heart of gold and loved to have me boil crabs and cook huge pots of red beans and rice that we would serve to the guests on the walking tour company we started together. It was featured in Forbes magazine, which was no surprise, since everything Finis did, he did with style and put his all into it. Be it karate, real estate, or the stock market, he was a true-to-life King Midas. The memories we made and shared together are golden and will forever remain in my heart. I was truly blessed to know Finis and will miss his late-night calls, but I look forward to seeing him again when God calls me home. Until then, I will cherish the many wonderful memories that we shared.

Casey Nunez - October 26, 2025 at 11:00 AM

CN

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Casey Nunez - October 26, 2025 at 10:59 AM

MA

“Dad and Jennifer... He called her "his little smurf" when she was a baby. This picture makes me smile because she looks so confident with her chin held high while looking at him. The three of us (Dad, Jennifer, and I) spoke for a while on 3-way that last night.... I don't even remember what we laughed about at this moment - I just know that most of the call was spent with him being tickled and giggling. When Jennifer hung up he said, "Well that was nice of her to fit us in!" Before I had a chance to clarify what he meant, he said, "Seriously. I don't think most people understand how hard she works to balance so much. You know, she probably called us on her way home and now is about to walk in the door to make dinner and wrangle the kids and give them baths. Your sister works REAL hard to juggle all that she does between receiving real estate calls around the clock while being involved in Matthew and Ellie's days, taking care of herself, her home, and David. It really meant a lot just then because those minutes she spent with us were probably the only moments to herself after running all day and she called ME. That feels real good... I'm so glad she called while we were already talking. That was fun." - Just so you know what he said when you hung up from that final phone call with him, Jennifer.



maria_gray - October 24, 2025 at 12:41 AM

MA

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



maria_gray - October 24, 2025 at 12:30 AM

MA

“ Two of MooMoo's favorites. As the "baby" of the family, he literally "milked it" for all he could - He fought hard to keep his bottle. They drew the line when they realized he was making his own!

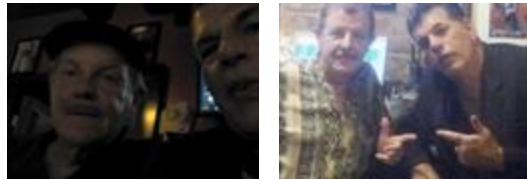


maria_gray - October 24, 2025 at 12:26 AM

CA

“*Finis was my closest friend and like a brother to me I will forever cherish the memories that we made together be it driving down to my childhood hometown of Reggio La crabbing or just hanging out at the office together I am absolutely devastated over his passing. He called me a few weeks ago and was asking me what I thought heaven was like so I believe he knew that he was about to pass my greatest comfort is in knowing that he passed very peacefully in his sleep. Lately whenever he would call me he always raved about his grandchild Matthew who would come up at some point during our conversation and you could hear the excitement in his voice as he laughed telling me what a precious little guy he was and how much he adored Matthew.*

Finis held a very special place in his heart for gods little creatures especially dogs and had a soft side to him that most people never realized he was a gentle kind and caring soul at heart and I already miss him so much more than words could ever express he was so much more than just a friend he was my brother from another mother 🙏❤️



Casey - October 23, 2025 at 09:19 PM



“*Finis was a character. My brother and I first met him years ago after purchasing our first site in NOLA. “Mimi and Finis” were a fixture on each visit to the city. From his outfits to the ever present hat - he was always unique. He was also always trying to work a deal. He is one of those people that if you say their name, multiple images and thoughts immediately arise. A character who with flaws and all will be missed.*

Brett Daniels - October 23, 2025 at 05:17 PM

AO

I met Finis a whim! I was traveling alone, and needed a place to rent. He set that up back in 2008, been friends ever since. He always joked that I was his favorite Buckeye (from Ohio). I'd travel every year to see my friends i made in New Orleans, and always Finis! He was definitely a hoot! Never a dull moment. Wish he had gotten to meet Elvis (iykyk). Fly high my friend.

Amy from Ohio - October 23, 2025 at 07:00 PM

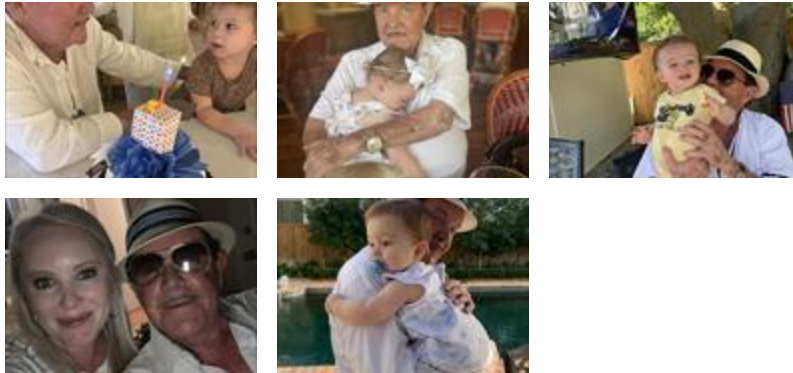
BD

“ Brett D. planted a grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Finis Dale Shelnut.

Brett D. - October 23, 2025 at 05:07 PM

JE

“ 8 files added to the album Memories Album



jenn - October 23, 2025 at 09:36 AM

CA

The top right picture was crabs we caught in Reggio Louisiana that I boiled in the little courtyard and we served to the guest on out walking Tour this was something he loved to do and actually bought several dozen soft shell crabs that he had me fry and we served to our guests I am sure going to miss my crabbing buddy he was like a brother to me I miss him so much already but cherish the memories we made together



Casey - October 23, 2025 at 08:58 PM



“ 5 files added to the album Memories Album



McLin Funeral Home and Cremation Service - October 22, 2025 at 11:56 PM