



James Thomas Cleveland

October 9, 1941 - September 2, 2023

James Thomas Cleveland, 81, of Staten Island, New York, died on September 2, 2023, in Staten Island following a series of illnesses. Born in Muncie and raised in nearby New Castle, Indiana, Jim played football for all 4 years of high school. With his gregarious personality he excelled on the stage, where he won the award for Humorous Interpretation and acted in high school plays. He had an early and lifelong interest in civic activities and was a member of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of New Castle. Jim went on to enjoy a lengthy career in theatre and performing arts as an actor, director and administrator in community, regional, professional and university level theatres. He was a political science graduate from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio and trained at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City. He furthered his studies at Ball State University and Michigan State University.

Jim's many theatrical roles ranged from leading men such as Colonel Brady in *Inherit the Wind* and Tesman in *Hedda Gabler* to the character roles of the amusing M. Cot in *Hotel Paradiso* and the hilarious T. Snout (the Wall) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Jim returned to Wittenberg in the late 60's as a professor in the Theatre Department to teach acting and direct plays. He also co-sponsored and produced the first All-Night One-Act Festival of Plays at Wittenberg. These were short plays directed and performed by students from 7pm-6am in different locations in and around the theatre building with the

audience moving from one to the next. A full breakfast was cooked and happily served to everyone who made it through the night. It was a full house! Jim was a natural at encouraging and training young people to listen carefully when onstage, to always be in focus with the action and most importantly, to enjoy their role, whatever it might be. Jim became a favorite with the students, many of whom went on to have their own theatre careers, including one student from New York, Carol Sansom. Some years later, Jim and Carol reconnected in Michigan. They married in 1975 and settled in Lansing, Michigan. Jim continued acting and directing at Boarshead Theatre, Okemos Theatre and Lansing Community College, where he joined their academic Theatre Program and in 1986 became the Director of the Theatre Program. He had the pleasure to perform (and sing!) the endearing Dolittle in My Fair Lady, and to direct the musicals Pirates of Penzance and Cabaret. After 10 busy arts years in Lansing, Jim and Carol returned to New York City, settling in nearby Jersey City, New Jersey.

Jim took a hiatus from theatre to manage the restoration of a Victorian row house in the downtown residential historic district. Jim's love of arts and craftsmanship led him to find and engage skilled artists in the field of scenic design, carpentry and plasterwork to treat and restore the original details throughout the house. As Jim became aware of a plan to run a modern commuter train line through the center of the residential/business district, he shared his neighbors' outrage and felt his sense of civic responsibilities kick in. With much preparation and teamwork, Jim travelled to the state capital and testified to successfully move the route elsewhere. Although Jim returned once again to teaching theatre to college students as an adjunct professor in New York City, his big surprise was in becoming the chaperone/tutor aka wrangler for the child actors performing in Les Miserables from 1988-2003. This was a job he loved as it combined all the elements of his dedication to theatre, teaching, occasional backstage politics and encouraging young talent. One of the talented young actresses, Christiana, became part of the

Cleveland household. She remained with them for several years until leaving for college and continues to be a treasured member of the Cleveland Family.

Jim leaves behind his wife of 48 years, Carol and two brothers, John W (Joan) Cleveland and J Edward Cleveland, a niece Jennifer (Chris) Cassidy and nephew Jason (Jill) Cleveland and Christiana DeSautel.

Arrangements are pending.

Cemetery Details

Huntington Rural Cemetery

555 New York Avenue
Huntington, NY 11743

Previous Events

Graveside Service

SEP 8. 10:30 AM (ET)

Huntington Rural Cemetery
555 New York Avenue
Huntington, NY 11743

Tribute Wall

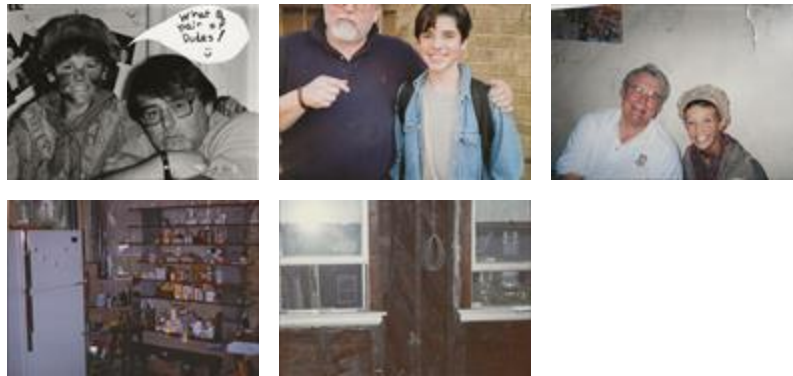
RR

“ With the loss of Jim, I feel for Carol. Carol was the pillar for Jim during his illnesses. This deep caring and love was evident every time that I engaged with Jim (and Carol) as Jim's physician. Jim had a huge heart. A lovely, caring and generous man. He will be remembered in my thoughts as a truly special person. Robert Rosenson, MD

Robert Rosenson - October 10, 2023 at 09:47 AM

CC

“ 10 files added to the album Carol's Album



Carol Cleveland - September 27, 2023 at 10:04 PM

GM

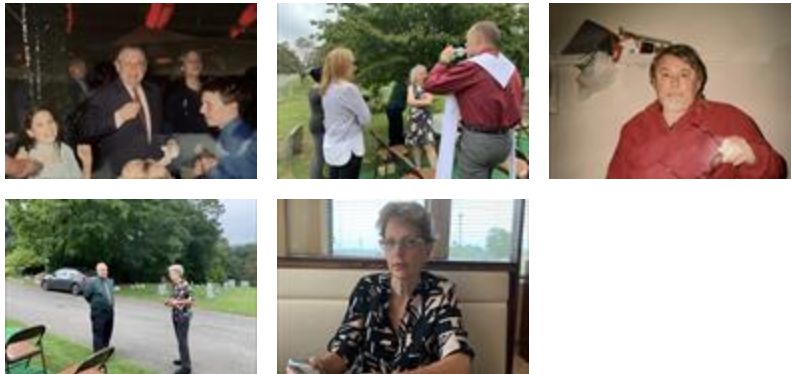
“ I'm so very sorry to hear about Jim's passing. He was always so kind, warm and funny. I loved having him as an acting teacher and a mentor. He hired me to work in the box office at Lansing Community College when I was a student there. Because of that I ended up getting a job in an Off-Broadway theater in NYC - thus changing my life forever. Thank you Jim. Love to you Carol. Gregg Moore



Gregg Moore - September 27, 2023 at 04:47 PM

CC

“ 7 files added to the album Carol's Album



Carol Cleveland - September 18, 2023 at 05:03 PM

DM

“ Doria M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Thomas Cleveland.

Doria M. - September 15, 2023 at 11:39 PM

DM

“ Meeting Carol & Jim has been such a blessing to my life, Mr. Cleveland is one of the sweetest and most caring people I ever met. Jim was so supportive and happy for me when i opened my own business and every time I would see him he would always be interested to ask how everything was going and if i need any help. I connected with the Cleveland's through our love for animals, especially their 3 pups i've had the pleasure of knowing for the past decade. I am going to miss Mr. Cleveland terribly all my love and prayers are with you Carol & Dickens
love always Doria

doria mcgill - September 15, 2023 at 11:34 PM

LC

“ My heart is broken for you and your family to hear of Jim’s passing. He was such a special person who touched my life deeply. He was my chaperone in Les Miz when I was 9-11 years old. The 2 1/2 years that I spent with him backstage at Les Miz are some of my most treasured childhood memories. He always made me feel heard, protected and supported. I’ll never forget during one show I was singing and my voice cracked and I missed all the high notes and I left the stage feeling as though I had failed. Trying to not cry, I walked off stage and there was Jim waiting for me. He hugged me so tight and told me I was wonderful. He reassured me that it didn’t matter if I’d sung it perfectly or not because he said there was magic inside of me that makes you feel something. He said I was going to share that magic with people in my performances in my life and I should never forget that. At the time I knew he was trying to make me feel better of course, but I also somehow believed that he really meant it. He was so kind and genuine. He believed in me and if HE believed in me then maybe I could believe in myself. It had a profound effect on me as a 10 year old and it’s a memory that has helped me through so many challenging times of self-doubt, even as an adult. I’m forever thankful for that. When I spoke with him about five years ago I shared this memory with him. I’m so thankful I had the chance to tell him what he’s meant to me all these years.

I’ll never forgot how he would take us kids to meals in between shows or buy us croissants and milkshakes from the deli across the street at intermission.

We’d go to the art store and he’d buy us all stickers and erasers. He’d give us quarters to use the pay phone. He’d read the comics from the newspaper to us and do funny voices. He helped us get out of trouble once when we accidentally flooded our dressing room. He made us laugh so much and made us feel so loved. I’ve always felt such gratitude for his presence in my life as a kid. I loved him very much. I wish I could tell him that once more. 💔

I have always carried him in my heart and I forever will.

My deepest condolences to the entire family.

I’m so sorry.

*I will be praying for you all.
Much love,
Lacey Chabert*

Lacey Chabert - September 14, 2023 at 10:56 PM

LG

“ *Oh Carol, I am so saddened to hear of Jim's passing. He was such a kind and gentle man. Your marriage was always an inspiration to me. Sending good thoughts for you both.*

Lindsay Gambini - September 12, 2023 at 07:24 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of James Thomas Cleveland.*



September 12, 2023 at 03:02 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Thomas Cleveland.*

September 12, 2023 at 03:02 PM

AM

“ On our morning meditation walk in the park that was very much needed this morning. I can't really find the exact words to say, but here goes. I've felt a strong spiritual presence in my life for the past several days beginning on the first of the month. My time as a child in NYC and working professionally has been a time that has been very hard to process. During that time, my mom relapsed, my father died, and my career blossomed into my dream that I always wanted. My mom wasn't able to truly take full care of me due to her addiction and my dad was in Louisiana with my brother and ultimately got cancer again and passed away about a year and half into my career on Broadway in Les Miserables. There was a chaperone for the kids at the theatre. His name was Jim. Jim and I became very close and he knew everything about me and my life in Louisiana prior to NYC. He was my best friend. I was only 8 years old when I met him and Jim was in his 50's, but we had a very special bond that I can't fully describe. He was not only a best friend, but also the father figure that I never had and always wanted. I found out yesterday that he passed away on the 2nd.....WOW. I've been trying to contact him several times this year to tell him thank you for helping shape my life at an early age when my family could not. I didn't get to tell him while he was in this dimension, but I'm grateful that I can give gratitude and thanks to him now on the other side. RIP Jim.....I will always love you and you will always hold a special place in my heart. Fly high and tell everyone I said hello!!! Thanks to everyone for reading. ❤️❤️❤️🙏🙏🙏

Alicia Morton - September 12, 2023 at 08:53 AM

CS

“ Heads up- This is long.

This photo is how I'll remember my safety net. Robe, slippers, with his puppy & the TV on full-blast.

Or maybe he's reading a book in the hallway of the Imperial Theater. With his legs up on that old green corduroy ottoman, as we listen to the same songs echo through the stairwell over and over again.

In a polo with the collar popped and some new balances on the floor next to him.

I could talk about our drive(s) home from from the show, where I'd put the heat on full blast, fall asleep, and he never once complained.

Or the time he made me pull out of that spot in an NYC underground parking garage and I bumped into the wall with the white Lincoln, leaving a nice dent on the bumper.

Getting my license (despite the rocky start).

How I cracked my head open while he was making soup.

And when he drove me to college.

But it wouldn't begin to scratch the surface. There's just so much.

Jim made sure my life was full. Of all the things I needed, and all the things I didn't know I needed. As Carol would probably say- some bonus things I probably didn't need at all.

Jim opened my world up to a life of safety, care and a love I couldn't have imagined. From the age of 6 Jim helped mold my life. He took me under his wing and protected me. 27 years. My life would have been very different without him. Grateful doesn't quite fit it.

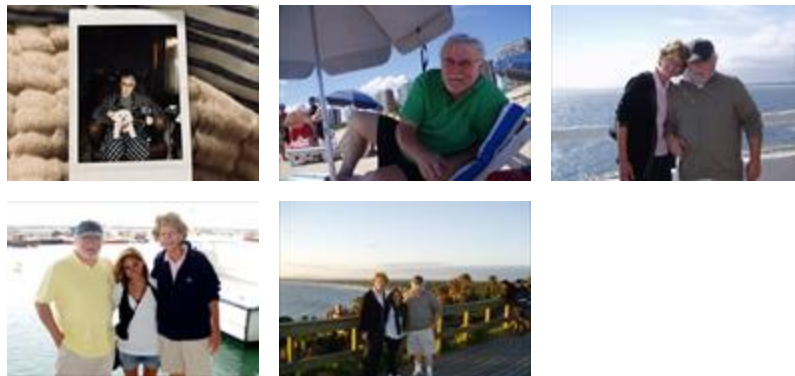
For some reason I had never fully prepared myself for his loss. It was Jim. Strong as hell. Stubborn, boisterous, imaginative, caring, persistent, animated, passionate, understanding and so damn full of love.

One of the people I care about most is not in this physical world anymore and it feels unreal.

It's taken time to digest, & I haven't even begun.

No amount of time, will ever be enough time.

I'd do anything for one more family dinner. ❤️



Christiana De Sautel - September 11, 2023 at 11:58 AM

LF

“ *I was one of his acting class students. He taught exercises in focus and relaxation. I used one of them with a friend who could not sleep due to headaches caused by a brain tumor. It worked for her, and I really wanted to thank him for that someday. RIP, Jim. Condolences to Carol and family.*

Linda (Hodges) Forest - September 10, 2023 at 04:24 PM

LD

“ Love, Diane Dowling purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of James Thomas Cleveland.



Love, Diane Dowling - September 08, 2023 at 01:57 PM

LD

“ Love, Diane Dowling planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Thomas Cleveland.

Love, Diane Dowling - September 08, 2023 at 01:57 PM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of James Thomas Cleveland.



September 06, 2023 at 07:34 PM



“ 20 files added to the album Carol's Album



Carol Cleveland - September 06, 2023 at 04:22 PM