

Comedy Legend James Gregory Dead at 78

NASHVILLE, TN, USA, May 9, 2024

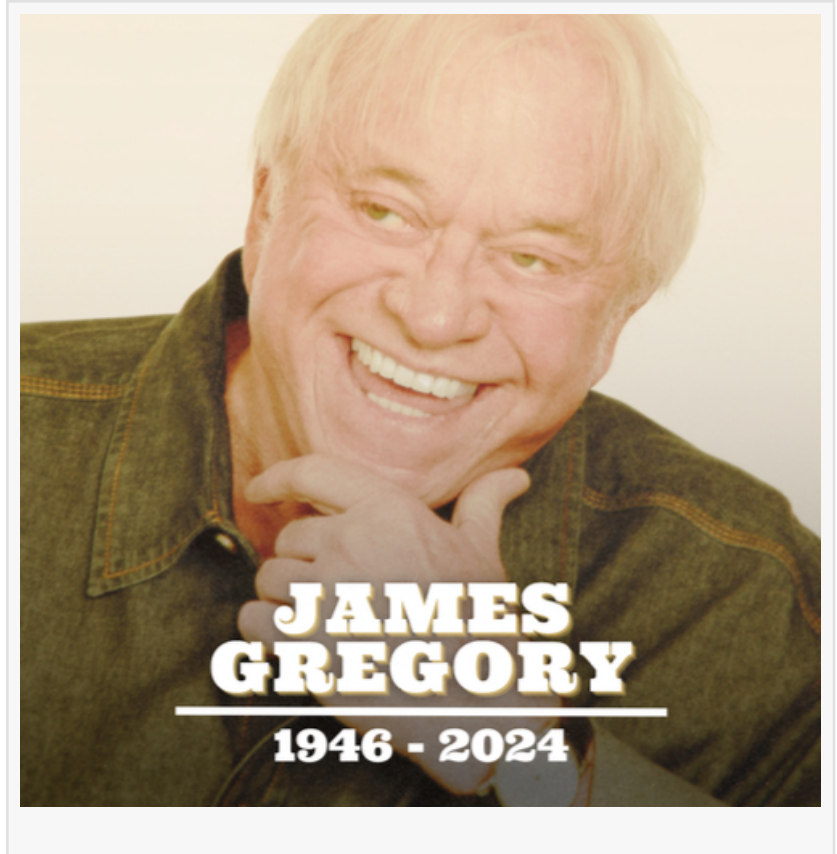
/EINPresswire.com/ -- James Harold Gregory, Jr., acclaimed comedian known since the 1980s among fans as "The Funniest Man in America," passed away today (May 9, 2024) from cardiac complications. He was 78.

James was born in his parents' kitchen in tiny Lithonia, Georgia on the afternoon of May 6, 1946. He was proud to be the first member of his family to graduate high school, though he had been employed since age 11 in a tiny grocery. At age 18 he took a civil service exam for employment with the United States Postal Service. He soon joined the Marines, only to be sidelined within weeks due to health issues.

James then entered sales, soon proudly working entirely on commissions. "It was a turning point in my life," he said. "I would never again be anybody's full-time employee."

In 1981, at the age of 36, James answered an ad to participate in a comedy night in the basement of the Atlanta-area restaurant, Excelsior Mill. As a successful salesman with a knack for entertaining audiences, he believed he might have the makings of a comedian. Within a year, he was the first performer to take the stage at the new Punchline comedy club in Atlanta. As the comedy boom of the 1980s expanded, James quickly worked his way to headliner status.

Though often considered a "southern" comedian, in large part due to his deep Georgia accent, he never used the word "South" or "Southerner" in his performances, and in fact, worked frequently across North America doing what he called "down home, common sense" humor. He was also committed to treating comedy as a professional business endeavor, a rare approach in the early days of nightclub comedy. As he wrote in his forthcoming autobiography, "The way I see it, you're not just my audience. You're my customers." His trailblazing efforts in marketing, business, and merchandising provided the model literally thousands of comedians would copy in the following



decades.

James was especially popular in the southeastern United States, working comedy clubs and, later, theaters, especially in smaller towns near major cities. He chose those venues from experience growing up: he believed that the people who wanted to see him perform often didn't care to drive into the city but would come out for a local show, a strategy he first observed in professional wrestling and adopted for his own.

James was also a radio icon with thousands of appearances on local broadcasts and hundreds more on popular syndicated programs, including John Boy & Billy, Rick & Bubba, and Bob & Tom. He turned down an appearance on The Tonight Show when he refused to "speed up" his delivery, and instead found a home as one of the most frequent guests ever on The Nashville Network (TNN), where he was a favorite of radio and TV personality Ralph Emery on his nightly talk show Nashville Now. Though he did not talk much about it in public, James was a friend and comedy favorite of some of the biggest names in the country music industry including George Jones, "Whispering Bill" Anderson, and Ray Stevens.

James Gregory was a patriot who proudly performed for our troops on several overseas tours. During Operation Enduring Freedom, he entertained soldiers on ships and aircraft carriers in Bahrain, and throughout Spain, Italy and Germany. James often said the most memorable times in his career were those spent performing for our troops and visiting wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Hospital. He was both honored and humbled by the experiences.

James' followers were addicted to seeing him live as many "customers" attended his shows dozens of times over his forty-one plus years in comedy.

Just before his passing, he completed work on his first and only autobiography, A Bushel of Beans and a Peck of Tomatoes: The Life and Times of "The Funniest Man in America," James Gregory (Post Hill Press), which will be published in November 2024.

James' three nieces who referred to him as "Uncle Bubba," Martha Anne, Mary Jane, and Candie, along with their families, were instrumental in caring for him through his last days and weeks. The family asks for privacy at this time.

Funeral services are to be determined.

Official updates to be supplied via channels below:

www.funniestman.com

<https://www.facebook.com/funniestman>

Brian Mayes

Nashville Publicity Group

+1 615-771-2040

[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/710316454>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2024 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.