



Mayor James Brinkley Chapman

January 18, 1926 - March 19, 2022

Born on January 18, 1926, to the late James Emit and Annie Maude Parker Chapman, James Brinkley Chapman was a lifetime resident of Smithfield, Virginia in Isle of Wight County.

After graduating from Isle of Wight Training School, James Chapman joined the United States Navy, selected by the Great lakes Naval Training Center and proudly served his country during WW II in the Pacific for two years including bases in San Diego, CA, Hawaii, Japan and Southeast Asia. James was a founding organizer of the V.F.W. Post 8545.

James Chapman was preceded in death by his father, "Emit", his mother "Emma"; his five sisters; Gladys Marilyn, Pauline Ruth, Telia Maud, Bruce Carolyn, Rosemary "May Rose", as well as his nephew, Brock Lawrence Jr. He leaves to cherish his love and memory, his nephews, Kevin Powell and Dr. Ranya Alexander and his family. Mayor Chapman never had any biological children, but he has several Godchildren: John Yeoman, Norma Hairston, Selden Haverty, Troy Seaborne, Stacey Blount, James Davis, III, Benzie Seaborne and Michelle Seaborne.

Mayor Chapman was like a fifth child to Jeremiah and Ira Cuffey. As the only boy, with five sisters, he was delighted with his extended "family" because not only did he gain two more sisters, Delvin and Jerrene, but he also finally had two brothers, Sonnie and Jeremiah.

A graduate of the New York City's School of Mortuary Science, Chapman returned home and began working with Pretlow Funeral Home in Smithfield at

an early age. In 1965, he bought the funeral home and in honor of its beginnings, renamed the establishment Pretlow and Chapman Funeral Home. Chapman retired from the business in 2017, but he couldn't let it go completely! Once again, the business was renamed and is presently known as Chapman-J.T. Fisher Funeral Services.

In 1978, Chapman was elected to the Smithfield Town Council. At that time, it was a rule that the elected member with the most votes would be appointed mayor. Chapman received the most votes but instead of appointing him outright, the rule was abruptly changed giving the members of the council the duty of appointing the mayor. Despite setbacks, James continued to serve and in 1990, twelve years later, The Honorable James B. Chapman became the first Black mayor of the Town of Smithfield and remained in office to become the longest serving mayor (19 years) of the Town of Smithfield! After 30 years of service to the Town of Smithfield and its constituents, Chapman retired in 2008.

Among Mr. Chapman's most rewarding accomplishments is the annexation of the Rising Star community off Battery Park Road in the 1980s. At the time, the council had voted to extend water and sewer services to the emerging Gatling Pointe community while by passing, and therefore denying, those services to Rising Star. He opposed this maneuver. Mr. Chapman also successfully lobbied to obtain Community Development Block Grants to pave streets and provide sewer and water services for Jersey Park Village, Riverview, and Lakeside Heights.

Mayor Chapman started both the Pinewood Heights and the Church Street Projects. He was part of the Windsor Castle Park Development. Construction of the Smithfield Center was also completed during his tenure. Town Council meetings are held at the Smithfield Center where the meeting room is named "The James B. Chapman Chambers" in his honor.

Mayor Chapman was not in office when former Smithfield Chief of Police, Mark Marshall, was scheduled to be pinned as International Police Chief during a ceremony in Orlando, FL, but Chapman was the citizen that Chief

Marshall invited to pin him.

Thanks to James Chapman's selflessness, many area children attended and completed college.

Until recently when his health began to fail, Mayor Chapman remained active in the Smithfield and Isle of Wight communities. He was an active member of Main Street Baptist Church, having served 5 years as president of the Usher Board; served on the Board of Directors for Covenant Place Apartments (Smithfield); a Life Member of the NAACP; served as President of Virginia State Elks (19 years); he was a member of the Smithfield Elks Lodge #65, served as President of Dochiki Civic & Social Club, Newport News (2 years); served as Past President and life member of the Virginia Morticians' Association, Incorporated; served as Past President, member and former Treasurer of the Peninsula Funeral Directors' Association and was a member of the Isle of Wight Planning Commission from 1972-1978.

James loved to socialize, eat, help others and he loved to travel. There were not too many states left for him to visit! He especially enjoyed visiting his nephew and his family in CA.

There are too many friends, neighbors and family members who looked out for James Chapman in his later years to name them all, but a few include Gopher and Sabrina Batten, Sherrie McDowell, Valerie Butler, and Larry and Joahn Brown.

James touched most of the residents of the Smithfield area in some capacity either as the Mayor, church member, mortician, friend or family! Surviving members of the family, wish to thank you all for making Isle of Wight County and Smithfield in particular such a beloved home for the Chapman family.

Cemetery Details

Albert G Horton Jr. Veterans Memorial Cemetery

5310 Milner's Road
Suffolk, VA

Previous Events

Wake Service

MAR 25. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Main Street Baptist Church
517 Main Street
Smithfield, VA 23430

Service

MAR 26. 12:00 PM (ET)

Main Street Baptist Church
517 Main Street
Smithfield, VA 23430

Tribute Wall



“ J.T. Fisher Funeral Services created a Webcast in memory of Mayor James Brinkley Chapman

**CLICK HERE TO
VIEW SERVICE**

J. T. Fisher Funeral Services - March 26, 2022 at 11:35 AM

DG

James, you have taken a part of your Cousin Ju and family hearts with you. You will be so missed, the jokes, laughter, the replimands, just you. You have done so much for the people of Isle of Wight, Smithfield and surrounding areas; many things people can't imagine. Kenny and I will miss dropping off the collards; yes you did love to cook! You have worked so hard at all you did, Rest dear friend; we Love and will miss you but we will never forget!!😭😭❤️

Deloise Gwaltney - March 26, 2022 at 11:49 AM

JB

“ 2 files added to the album HONORABLE JAMES B. CHAPMAN



Joahn Brown - March 27, 2022 at 01:52 PM

GB

“ *Mr. Chapman was such an accomplished man. Very kind, outgoing and caring. He was one of a kind and has always been a special person in my family (Cuffey) He will be missed. 🌸 Gina L. Batts Stone Mountain GA*

Gina L. Batts - March 26, 2022 at 04:31 PM

EF

“ *"My deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Mayor James Brinkley Chapman. James, you were a true gentleman in every sense and will be greatly missed by everyone in the Town of Smithfield and surrounding communities who knew you. What a kind and caring person you were. My husband and I always enjoyed speaking with you every time we came back home. You have lived a wonderful life, now take your rest."*

Evelyn H. Blount, Jacksonville, FL - March 25, 2022 at 10:03 PM

LS

“ *There is a pic of Chapman & I @ about 3 or 4 AM (53 yrs ago) w/ him on the flute & me on the drums @ my Nawna house. (Ira Cuffey) Everytime I was around him he embodied the spirit of that moment for me & many. "Chapman" Thank you for your Service & your contributions to the Town of Smithfield as Mayor James I'll have some Burnetts gin in your friend's high ball glass (my Aunt Debo) thinking of you...In fact, I can use some Burnetts & a cigar now.. Tell everyone under the "walnut tree" that they & you are greatly missed!*

Little Sonnie - March 25, 2022 at 05:04 PM

BR

“ *In Deepest Sympathy--With each new day may peace find a place in your heart.To the family of the late James Chapman.Sharing your sorrow--Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Robinson*

Barbara Robinson - March 25, 2022 at 04:33 PM

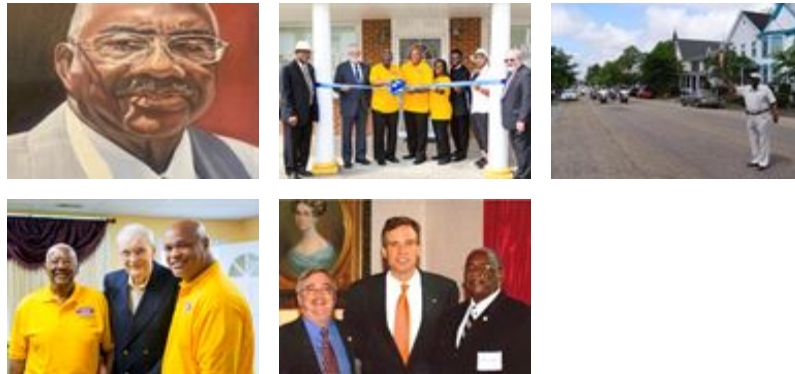
AS

My prayers and condolence; to the family of the late James Chapman. God has called another one of his caring, loving and kindhearted soldiers home. He has fought a good fight and now he is peacefully resting; in "The Almighty Arms of God".

Annie Stringfield - March 26, 2022 at 09:31 PM



“ *45 files added to the album Life Tributes*



J. T. Fisher Funeral Services - March 25, 2022 at 12:57 PM

SJ

Condolences to the family. James Champman was a dear friend to the Joyner family. He will be missed.

Sylvia Joyner James - March 26, 2022 at 10:47 AM

JH

“ My condolence to the family of the late James B. Chapman. James was a loving, caring, giving person. This special man will be missed.

Joyce Hardy - March 25, 2022 at 12:47 PM

EJ

“ Our family will never forget Mr. Chapman, he was a friend to my parents, and he always had a friendly smile to share with everyone. He was the person my son "Kevin Johnson", love to be around. He wanted to be just like Mr. Chapman He started working with him at the age of 10. As he grew older, he drove the limousine and the hearse when needed.
It broke his heart to hear of his death. Thank you, you have earned your heavenly resting place.

Edna Johnson - March 23, 2022 at 12:23 PM



Mr. Chapman was a friend to all who knew him. He funeralized most of my family members including my husband, Melvin. He will be missed by all. He made me laugh when I was covering my husband, I put it over his head and Mr. Chapman said to me don't smother him it made me laugh and at that moment I knew I was going to be alright without my loving husband.

Toni Diggs - March 24, 2022 at 09:38 AM

LW

“ Lisa Williams lit a candle in memory of Mayor James Brinkley Chapman



Lisa Williams - March 23, 2022 at 11:40 AM

BT

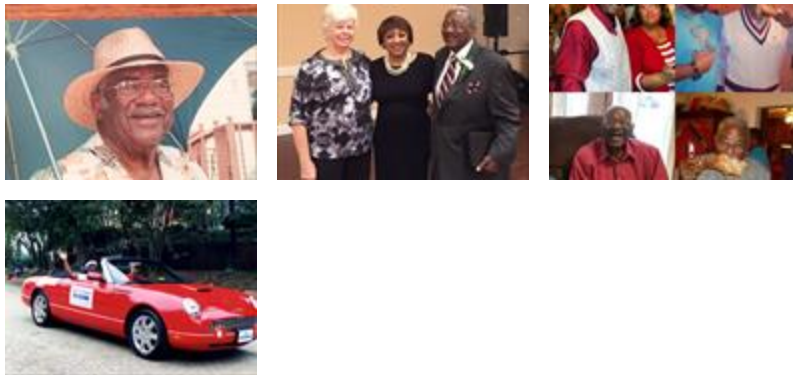
“ Mayor James Chapman was one of the kindest gentlemen I knew when I lived in Smithfield, Virginia. I will always remember his wonderful smile. He was definitely a big part of the fabric of the great citizens in Smithfield, “ a beautiful town that is like living in a post card!” Blessings to the family and friends that will tell his stories regarding his legacy to future generations.



Betty Thomas - March 23, 2022 at 08:12 AM

JB

“ 4 files added to the album HONORABLE JAMES B. CHAPMAN



Joahn Brown - March 23, 2022 at 12:33 AM



“ LaVerne Davis purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Mayor James Brinkley Chapman.



LaVerne Davis - March 22, 2022 at 07:56 PM

BC

“ Condolences to the Chapman family....I am soo sorry to hear of uncle Chaps passing...whenever I visited my dad, Allie Peoples, uncle Chap came over to visit me and the whole time he was there, he and my dad had me laughing...my dad is at a loss, as I am...I love you uncle Chap and sleep, in Heavenly Peace...

Beverly Peoples Campbell - March 22, 2022 at 07:43 PM

DH

*Mayor James
B.Chapman*

Mayor James B. Chapman,was a One of a kind man.Mr. Chapman loved life and people. He was a true people person loving,caring and treating people like they were family from my two babies,my sister ,and my parents.Now it's time to take your rest,you will never be forgotten.

Denise D. Hilton - March 23, 2022 at 09:06 PM

JS

“ Mr. Chapman was one in a million. He used to come see me when I was Manager at the Smithfield DMV and I looked forward to his visits all the time. He was such a gentle and amazing person. He served with dignity and professionalism as Mayor of Smithfield and will never be forgotten. His smile would light up the room and I will miss his presence in our town. My deepest sympathy goes out to his family.

Jacqueline Powell Smith

Jacqueline P. Smith - March 22, 2022 at 04:39 PM

CR

He will truly be missed. I remember him as a warm, friendly, and gentle man. He knew our family very well, as I believe he knew most residents of Smithfield. Thankful for 96 years of life on this side and now eternity on the other side. Love to family.

Constance Smith Howard and husband Renar - March 23, 2022 at 03:02 PM

JF

“ *James B. Davis III and Family purchased the Ocean Breeze Spray for the family of Mayor James Brinkley Chapman.*



James B. Davis III and Family - March 22, 2022 at 12:48 PM

JJ

“ *Condolences to the Chapman family. I will greatly miss visiting with Mr. Chapman at his home. He would always keep me laughing from the time I came in until the time I left. He would always salute me every time I would leave him and he would give me his approval of the groceries he told me to pick up for him. Rest on dear cousin and friend you will be greatly missed in this community. Joseph A. Spratley III.*

Joseph A. Spratley III - March 20, 2022 at 05:35 PM

AH

Ann Hunt my condolences to the family. I will miss you cuz it was lovely to be around you because you made my family laugh with your jokes. James you will be deeply missed by my family and yours. Rest in peace. God bless you

Ann Hunt - March 21, 2022 at 01:37 AM

PW

What a great legacy Mr. Chapman left! He touched so many lives in this community but thanks be to God he's free, Praise The Lord he's free!

Phyllis J. Wellons - March 21, 2022 at 12:45 PM

EJ

Condolences to the family of Mr. Chapman. He was my friend long before he was mayor. A kind and gentle yet firm man. He leaves a legacy that will be often imitated but seldom duplicated. Rest on, my friend.

Edward Joned - March 21, 2022 at 10:01 PM

MB

I will always remember the comforting words you gave when my mom was eulogized by way of your superb service, love and assistance

michael bailey - March 22, 2022 at 08:08 PM

MH

Uncle James, I am going to miss you. Thank you for always making us feel at home whenever we would come to visit NJ. Rest in Paradise Uncle James. Love you 🙏

Mia Hairston - March 22, 2022 at 11:25 PM

BH

Bishop Nathaniel C. Johnson and the Sweet Haven Holy Church of God would like to extend our heart-felt condolences to the Chapman family. We will forever cherish the fond memories of Mayor James Chapman. Certainly, we thank him for his services to our Country, the Isle of Wight community and the town of Smithfield. He will never be forgotten!

Bishop Nathaniel C. Johnson/Sweet Haven - March 25, 2022 at 04:48 PM