



James Donald Van Cleve

January 16, 1920 - April 19, 2014

J. D. was born January 16, 1920 at Helena, Montana, the fourth of seven children to George Bernice and Fern McWethey Van Cleve. The early years of his life were spent on his father's sheep ranch at Canyon Creek, MT. The family moved to Helena in 1928 where his Father died in 1929. In 1932, his Mother moved the family to Missoula, MT. He attended Hawthorne Grade School and graduated from Missoula County High School in 1939. After graduation, he attended the University of Montana as a Music Major. In 1944, he married Lenore Cole at Darby, MT. She died in 1959. In 1961, he married Helen Johnson at Missoula, MT. He was employed for many years by Westmont Tractor Co. In 1973, he accepted a position with Border Machinery and moved his family to Albuquerque, NM. He retired in 1988 and he and Helen moved back to Albuquerque. After his retirement, he was an Associate with French Mortuary. His whole life was devoted to music as well as gardening. He sang at many weddings and funerals over the years for family members and friends. He was a member of church choirs in Missoula, El Paso and Albuquerque. As a young college student he was part of a church deputized team that traveled Western Montana conducting church services for small, rural communities. He was a charter member and Past President of the Missoula Mendelssohn Club as well as SPEBSQSA (Society for the Prevention & Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in American). He was an active member and Past President of the Missoula Lions Club. He also belonged to the BPOE at Missoula, MT. He became a member of

Harmony Lodge #49, AF & AM at Missoula, MT in 1969. He was initiated into the Algeria Temple of Shriners at Kalispell, MT & affiliated with Ballut Abyad Temple, Albuquerque, in 1975. He was initiated into the Order of the Eastern Star, Electa Chapter #7, by his wife, Helen, who was Conductress at the time. He was a Past National President of Training Directors of International Harvester Construction Dealers. He is a member of St. John's United Methodist Church. He is survived by his wife, Helen, of 53 years; son, Gerald Van Cleve and daughter-in-law, Marsha, Pittsburg, CA; daughter, Deborah and son-in-law, Danal Estes, Fairview, TX; daughter, Marianne Portillo, El Paso, TX. Five grandchildren, Lauren Woerner (Matt), Concord, CA, Jennifer Spaeny (Shawn), Wichita, KS, Sarah Portillo, Helen Portillo, and Andres James Portillo, El Paso, TX; and five great-grandchildren, Alaina, Ashlyn and Ariel Woerner, Juliette Portillo, and Lincoln Spaeny. He is also survived by two sisters, Mary Elizabeth Herbig Sawyer and Berna Louise Clayton; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; his brothers, Ralph, George, and John; one sister, Annis Anderson Olson; and his son-in-law, Raul Ramon (Ray) Portillo. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Gentiva Health Services, 5600 Wyoming Blvd. NE, Suite 10, Albuquerque 87109 or Shriners Hospitals for Children, Fairfax Road at Virginia Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84103. A Celebration of Life will be held at St. John's United Methodist Church, 2626 Arizona NE, 2:00 p.m., on Friday, April 25, 2014, with Rev. Dr. Steven Roberts officiating.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

APR **25**. 2:00 PM (MT)

St. John's United Methodist Church
2626 Arizona St. NE
Albuquerque, NM

Tribute Wall

EB

“ Dear Helen, I'm so sorry to hear about JD. My name is Eileen, the daughter of Cap and Margaret Hammill. They regarded you and JD as dear friends, and missed you when you left for NM. I remember you both well. I send my deepest sympathy. Eileen Hammill Benavidez, SLC, UT

eileen benavidez - September 23, 2014 at 12:04 AM

ER

“ I went to work at BORDER Machinery in 1974, J D was always first to help and give solid advice. He was a strong part of the BMC family and we were tight.
Live every day to the fullest and give of yourself forever.
Eddy Randall

Eddy Randall - May 08, 2014 at 04:30 PM

DE

“Daddy Dee,

Some of my fondest memories are of you . . .

dancing in the living room, my bare feet atop your highly polished shoes, to some great old song on the hi-fi;

reading stories before bed when I was little, and in later years the way we often had a “talk” at the end of the day instead of a story;

dressed up in a suit and tie, ready to go to church or work, or participate in a Shriner or Barbershop event. I was always so proud of the way you looked and carried yourself – and I still am;

providing all your family needed, and then some;

being so sweet – always a gentleman – to my mother;

pointing out fossils and telling me things about rocks and plants while we were hiking, all the while stopping to listen to nature in her glory;

buying replacement bulbs on Christmas Eve and trying to be patient with the string of lights;

pausing to express appreciation of a crackling fire, sizzling steak, or singing of the birds;

bringing a surprise Christmas tree to my apartment because you knew I could not afford one;

writing a poem for me when I was 11, and then again when I became an adult. Ode to a Tree is my favorite;

pulling me on the sled and ice skating with me, us sitting in the warming hut trying to shake the cold; and

dressed up like a character from Hee Haw, with me as your sidekick, our outfits complete with spade and shovel!

And, it was in the garden you made the biggest impression on me.

It was a sunny day and the scent of newly-turned earth filled the air when you showed me how to carefully pat the dirt around a newly sown seed, just so, and explained the seed needs to have firm soil around it, but the soil should not be so tightly packed the seed cannot grow.

I realize now you gave me the greatest gift by raising me in the same manner – giving me a firm base with room enough to grow.

You are my heart.

Debbie Dee

Deborah Van Cleve Estes - April 29, 2014 at 12:00 PM

DD

“ *Oh, Daddy Dee, how I loved you. I will treasure your memory and our love for each other all the days of my life.*

Love, Debbie Dee

Deborah, J. D.'s eldest daughter - April 29, 2014 at 11:54 AM

PM

“ *Dear Helen: Sorry to read of the passing of JD. I still remember JD from days gone by when my father would take me into Westmont Tractor- a long time ago!! You and he have enjoyed many years together and I hope the memories of those will help to comfort you in these emotional times. Take care, Pat McDonald*

Pat McDonald - April 25, 2014 at 08:13 AM

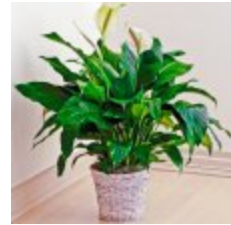
BF

“Helen,
I am so sorry to hear of your loss. My deepest sympathy. I will keep
you and your family in my prayers.
Beth Petaja FitzPatrick

Beth Petaja FitzPatrick - April 24, 2014 at 05:52 PM



“Floor Plant for Sympathy was purchased for the
family of James Donald Van Cleve.



April 24, 2014 at 10:15 AM

JS

“Gone yet not forgotten,
Although we are apart,
Your spirit lives within me,
Forever in my heart.
I love you,
Jennifer Dawn Spaeny

Jennifer Spaeny - April 23, 2014 at 09:54 AM

MK

“Helen, we are so very sorry. We are close by if you need or want
anything.
Much love to you and your family.

Marsha and Tom Krege

Marsha Krege - April 23, 2014 at 07:38 AM

FC

“ *On behalf of the French Family of Companies, we express our deepest condolences.*

FRENCH Funerals - Cremations - April 22, 2014 at 03:20 PM