



James A. Brown

February 29, 1940 - July 29, 2015

James A. Brown, age 75, of Waite Hill, Ohio, passed away at home, after a short illness, on July 29, 2015, surrounded by his loving family. Born in Canton, Ohio on February 29, 1940, to John T. and Annabelle Mitchell Brown, both deceased, he is survived by his wife of 48 years, Darlene (Franklin) Brown, two children, James A. (Kate) Brown, Jr. of Hunting Valley, Ohio and Lauri (Gary) (Brown) Corrigan Novato, California, four grandchildren, Katherine Rose and James Augustus Brown, and Maris Evelyn and Annie June Corrigan, three brothers, John T. (Gerry) Brown of Sarasota, FL, Walter E. Brown of Mentor, OH, and Thomas H. Brown of Slidell, LA, and sister, Carol E. (Bruce) Beynon of Covington, LA.

A high school graduate from Hoover High in North Canton, Ohio, Jim obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in business from Kent State University. In 1979 he opened his first automobile dealership, Classic Chevrolet in Mentor, Ohio, and ultimately grew the Classic Auto Group to include fifteen additional automobile dealerships with approximately 1,000 employees. Jim was also an advocate for aviation in Lake County and was very involved with making improvements at Lost Nation Airport. He supported the Lake County Captains minor league baseball team by obtaining the naming rights for the Eastlake ballpark known as "Classic Park."

Jim served on the Board of the Cleveland Clinic Wellness Institute; Lake

County Port Authority; and Lake Erie College, having been awarded an Honorary Doctorate degree from the college. He served on multiple automobile dealer advisory boards and numerous civic and charitable committees.

He was a highly regarded and well-respected business leader who gave much to his community. He received the Mentor Area Chamber of Commerce Business Leader of the Year Award in 2014; the Salvation Army William Booth Award in 2013; and was named NAACP Citizen of the Year in 2008. He was a supporter of the Mentor and Willoughby Fine Arts Associations, and a donor and sponsor to numerous charitable organizations and scholarship programs throughout Northeast Ohio, including local children's and seniors' sports teams and programs.

Jim was a loving husband, father, grandfather and brother. He was also a great friend, mentor, innovator and role model to many more. He will be greatly missed.

A private memorial service was held with burial on August 3, 2015.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions in memory be made to the Lake Humane Society.

A public celebration of his life will be held at a date to follow.

Arrangements Entrusted to Brunner Sanden Deitrick Funeral Home & Cremation Center, 8466 Mentor Ave., Mentor, OH 44060.

Offer Condolences at www.brunners.com

Tribute Wall



Jim
Welty

“ *It just came to my intention of Mr Browns passing...Darlene,Jimmy..I'm very sorry for your and the communities loss.Flying occasionally with Mike for Mr Brown for many years I've always bragged about him and that he was the kind of owner I really enjoyed the company of. I Loved his humor and was fortunate to have known him.
A stellar man and legacy .My sincere condolences*

Jim Welty

Jim Welty - August 31, 2015 at 08:38 AM



DT

“ *My deepest sympathy to the entire Brown family and Classic Organization. Jim Brown was always an extremely caring, person who would as everyone has said " go the extra mile" to help others. His soft spoken demeanor, kind heart, quick sense of humor and strong business sense touched so many people over the years. He always wanted to see others succeed. I knew Jim Brown from the very beginning - when he opened his very first dealership at Chevrolet, Mentor. I remember meeting him and working with his staff those first few months the dealership originally opened. I saw him inspire others around him to grow with Mr. Brown sharing his vast knowledge of the dealership world. My relationship with Mr. Brown and his Classic team lasted the majority of my personal career with GMAC. He was truly one of the greatest dealer owners I ever had the privilege to work with and will be very much missed.
Debbie (Palfy) Taylor*

Debbie Taylor - August 11, 2015 at 08:17 PM

WV

“ I will never forget calling Jim Brown to let him know I needed a car. He met me in Mentor and drove me to the Chrysler dealer in Madison. On the way out there, I told him I had just declared bankruptcy and wondered how I would finance the purchase. He told me not to worry. Long story short, I left the dealership with a new Chrysler Minivan, a loan, and this lead to my getting my good credit rating back. I subsequently bought about 5 vehicles since then and intend to stay with this fantastic organization for future purchases.. He was a "Class" guy and always acted like he wanted to help me get the best car in his stable of cars for my needs. I will always remember my ride to Madison and how he helped me buy a car when it didn't seem possible. I feel very blessed to have known and done business with this man. He was truly God's angel to me. May his memory continue to be an inspiration to all the people who knew him.

Victor S. Voinovich, Sr.

Victor Voinovich - August 11, 2015 at 08:35 AM

JH

“ Jim was a terrific dealer and great friend of all of us at Chevrolet. Darlene, our deepest sympathy to you and your family on Jim's passing. Jeff Hurlbert

Jeff Hurlbert - August 10, 2015 at 06:53 PM

 Kelly Kozlevcar

“ Dear Darlene, Walt, Jimmy and the rest of your family: so sorry for your loss. You are wonderful people who give your heart and soul in all you do. I am blessed to have met you and thank you so much for all your kindness to me and others.

Kelly Kozlevcar - August 09, 2015 at 04:17 PM

DI

“ Dearest Darlene, Jim, Lauri & the rest
of your precious Brown family ~

I am deeply saddened by your loss & our loss...I had the utmost pleasure of working for Mr. Brown for almost 7 years & had I not moved to Phoenix, Arizona, back in 2004, I believe it was, I would have undoubtedly still worked there & retired there someday...

Mr. Brown was such an endearing, kind-hearted man, whose personality shined through in all he did & I loved working for him more than words can say!!! He had a way about him, that even though, at the time I left, having 21 franchises, he made us all feel like extended family!!! I not only admired him in so many ways, but I also always felt like he really & truly cared about us employees, which made us all the more dedicated to him!!!! At Classic's 20th anniversary, I had the honor of taking my own precious Daddy as my date & my father, too, was so thoroughly impressed by Mr. Brown

& how well he celebrated the 20th anniversary, that he joked with Mr. Brown & said, "Boy, if this is how you celebrate your 20th anniversary, I'd like to see what you do for your 25th & so on!" & they both laughed together! Unfortunately, I had to move out of state & was unable to continue to be a part of my Classic family that I still hold dear to my heart today!!!! I lost my own precious Daddy in May of '14; so, I know how deeply broken hearted you all are, as I still am myself & I am praying that The Lord brings you all peace & comfort in this most difficult time! I was just thinking about Mr.

Brown a week or so ago, just wondering how he'd be doing, as it's been so long since I've left & now I just can't believe he's gone..my heart just aches for all our loss, especially Mrs. Brown, as I recall her being such a beautiful, sweet, eloquent and soft-spoken woman & I know Mr. Brown just adored her as much as she does him!!!!

Please draw close to The Lord, now more than ever, as He is the great Comforter & He can help you find joy once again!!! My heart truly believes that Mr. Brown is still with you in spirit & his legacy will live on forever!!!!💕

Love & Prayers, Diana Chapes

(formerly Brown, Case).

Diana - August 08, 2015 at 10:25 PM

TF

“ *I have worked for Mr. Brown since 1995 and want to express my deepest condolences to the entire Brown family for their loss. I have so many fond memories since starting at Classic. Mr. Brown was such a caring and most thoughtful person to everyone that has worked at Classic, he truly lit up the room when he would come in. It has been an honor to work for him and the Classic Organization. Rest peacefully, Mr. Brown!*

Tracy Frank and Family

Tracy Frank - August 07, 2015 at 09:46 AM

NB

“ *I was lucky enough to go thru the Lifestyle 180 program with Jim and Darlene. We had a great time together.....laughing and joking with each other. I would run into Jim and Darlene at different restaurants and we would always check to see what the other was eating. then Jim met my sister at Corky and Lenny's and we would always send each other regards thru her. Very sad to hear about his passing. I will always remember Jim and his big heart. Norman Barr*

norman barr - August 04, 2015 at 02:14 PM

LP

“ *Jim was a great client since 1978 and I am going to miss my friend. He was a great person.*

LUD PUGEL

lud pugel - August 04, 2015 at 08:16 AM

GF

“ *RIP Jim. Mentor and Lake County are better places because of you. Your legacy will live on.*

George Ferguson - August 04, 2015 at 06:57 AM

TV

“ *I was always honored whenever I got to meet with Mr. Brown personally in business meetings. Truly a " classic" gentleman and icon for northeast Ohio. My best to the family for the loss of someone so special too soon. Terry VLK, American Express Corporate, Cleveland, OH*

Terry Vlk - August 04, 2015 at 06:20 AM

CB

“ *A very nice man, who was very kind.*

Cindy Burger - August 03, 2015 at 10:49 PM

JC

“ *Our deepest sympathy to the Brown Family, Jim was such a friendly and caring man with a great sense of humor. We will miss his visits. Classic was a great name for his dealerships because Mr. Brown was pure Class in all of his endeavors. Oh well I guess all of the Angels in Heaven will be driving new cars now.*

*John and Danielle
Waite Hill*

John Creadon - August 03, 2015 at 09:50 PM

ML

“ *To the Brown Family,*

What an incredible loss of an inspiring, warm, and loving man. Mr. Brown meant so much to so many. I want to express my most sincere and respectful condolences to your family in their time of loss. Mr. Brown gave me a job when I was 15 years old in 1979 and taught me work ethics and the "how to's on running a successful business" by caring about his employees and customers. He treated everyone with respect and dignity. The idea of "people have to think you care, before they care what you think" would summarize all of my experiences with Mr. Brown. I loved him and will never forget him.

Mike Lutes and Family

Mike Lutes - August 03, 2015 at 09:18 PM

SS

“ *Our deepest sympathy to the Brown Family... He was a well respected man who will be truly missed by many.*
Alan and Stacey Steinberg

stacey Steinberg - August 03, 2015 at 07:37 PM

CS

“ *Thoughts and prayers to the entire Brown Family during this difficult time. Thank you, Mr. Brown, for allowing so many of us the privilege to be a small part of your big dream. Rest peacefully, sir.*



Christina Skrout - August 03, 2015 at 07:33 PM

Susan
Gladding

“ *Susan Gladding lit a candle in memory of James A. Brown*



Susan Gladding - August 03, 2015 at 07:25 PM

Susan
Gladding

Thoughts, prayers and my deepest sympathy to the Brown family.

Susan Gladding - August 03, 2015 at 07:27 PM

DR

So sorry to hear of this. A true leader and gentleman. I will remember him always.

Dusty Roberts - August 04, 2015 at 06:22 AM

AD

“ *On behalf of the Mentor Area Chamber of Commerce, my deepest condolences to The family and friends of Mr. Brown. He was a great businessman, tireless advocate for local business and generous supporter of many causes. The world needs more people like him. He will be missed.*

*Sincerely,
Al DiFranco*

Al DiFranco - August 03, 2015 at 07:21 PM

TH

“ *SENDING HEART FILLED PRAYERS TO YOU DARLENE AND YOUR FAMILY.. WHAT A WONDERFUL MAN JIM HAS BEEN TO SO MANY... GOD BLESS, LOVE TRISHA HILLIER AND FAMILY*

TRISHA HILLIER - August 03, 2015 at 06:45 PM

MJ

“ Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to the Brown family. We feel so honored to have been able to get to know Mr. Brown and so proud to work with the great Classic organization. He was an amazing man and we will all miss him a great deal.

Michael and Pam Giarrizzo

Michael Giarrizzo Jr - August 03, 2015 at 05:47 PM

MM

“ Our deepest sympathy to Darlene, Jim , Lauri and all the Brown family. He was the greatest automobile innovator I have ever known. I'm proud to have known Jim and worked with him. He will be greatly missed.

Mike and Nancy Manning

Mike and Nancy Manning - August 03, 2015 at 04:58 PM

TA

“ As a new resident of Lake County in 1979 I bought my first car from Classic Chevrolet. Later when I became Mayor of Eastlake Jim Brown stepped up and helped the City by purchasing the Naming Rights thus taking a big burden off the City. I would see Jim at United Way events, political events etc and he was always polite and courteous to me. My deepest sympathy to the Brown family. He will be missed.

Ted Andrzejewski

Ted Andrzejewski - August 03, 2015 at 04:39 PM

JZ

My thoughts and prayers are with the entire Brown family. Jim was very kind a caring and will be deeply missed.

Joanne Zeroske - August 03, 2015 at 07:24 PM

MW

I am a Classic customer, and met Mr. Brown a couple of times. It struck me that he was a man willing to talk with anyone, and who cared about his customers. No matter how big his business became, he still was able and willing to connect with those who he must have seen as the reason for his success.

A friend of ours desperately needed a new car to replace one that was simply junk. She found herself at the Toyota store when Mr. Brown happened to be there; He talked with her personally about why she was there, and she told him about her severe financial limits. She had weak credit, and was under-employed.

Mr. Brown told her to pick a car she wanted, then told his finance manager to find a way to do it. She got a new Corolla for what she could afford, and she will never buy from another dealership except Classic-- because of what he did.

mike wyatt - August 04, 2015 at 07:14 AM

PR

In 1989, my Chevy Beretta was just out of warranty (by 5 days) when a part (clearly a necessary component!) died and it was going to cost me around \$200.00 for the replacement & repair. Just as I was learning this news from one of the technicians, Jim was walking past and I must have had a look of horror on my face - I was a single mom, going to college and working. Jim asked if there was a problem; I was speechless so the technician informed Jim of my car's critical problem.

Jim started to talk to me about the car, life, kids and then asked where I was going to college and where I worked. When he learned I worked for the American Red Cross - he looked at the technician, told him to fix my car and to not charge me for the part or for labor. What a gift at that time in my life. I thanked him several times and as he walked away, he winked and said, the next car you buy make it a Corvette! Very cute.

Several years later, I saw Jim on the car lot and reminded him of his kind gesture and told him I would always remember what he'd done for me. This time, as he walked away, he said...just pay it forward. Thanks Jim. You made a difference in many lives. Such a professional, such a gentleman.

Sympathies to his family.

*Peggy Rickard
Phoenix, AZ*

Peggy Rickard - August 05, 2015 at 03:01 AM