



Hezekiah James Purnell

June 11, 1948 - August 24, 2026

Georgetown, Delaware

Hezekiah James Purnell died in Georgetown on August 24, 2026. He was seventy-eight. Born there on June 11, 1948, he grew up knowing the poultry plant as a clock that did not sleep, and he learned a line before he learned a necktie. A crate, he said, is a kind of promise: it has to arrive cold or the whole story is late.

For thirty years he kept machines alive that other men only blamed. He arrived early. He did not advertise. Foremen called him because he would tell the truth about a belt even when the truth postponed a shift. He charged a fair hour and a smaller one when a church van needed a lift kit more than a sermon. He kept a notebook of machines, not clients. The notebook had grease on the edges.

He married Inez Purnell in 1970. They raised three children in a brick house that needed a new porch every twenty years. Inez taught Sunday school. Hezekiah grilled on Sundays and considered a plate of smoked chicken a seasonal obligation. After his knees quit the worst catwalks he still came out for a favorite press, moving slower, swearing less, doing the same honest work.

Friends remember a man who wiped his hands before he shook yours, who could stand in a noise without making it a personality, and who left a floor cleaner than he found it. He loved a quiet porch at dusk, a glass of tea he did not finish, and the sound of a motor that had decided to live. He died in Georgetown, in the town whose line had written his calendar. The plant still starts. Someone else will hear the sound that means trouble.

Services

Visitation in Georgetown, then a simple service. A gift to a trade-school scholarship or a plant-town food pantry is welcome.

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