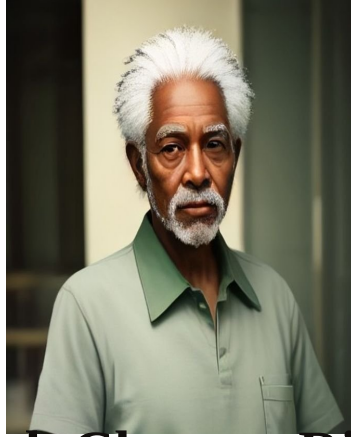




Isaiah Clement Rivers

August 6, 1947 - August 29, 2026

Columbia, South Carolina

Isaiah Clement Rivers died in Columbia on August 29, 2026. He was seventy-nine. Born there on August 6, 1947, he grew up knowing the capitol as someone else's furniture and a schoolhouse as a clock. He learned a mop closet before he learned a necktie. A clean hall, he said, is a kind of promise: it has to hold or the whole story is a trip.

He spent thirty-three years as a school custodian, first as a helper, later as the man who could hear a boiler before the gauge admitted it. He arrived early. He did not advertise. Principals called him because he would tell the truth about a unit even when the truth postponed a Monday. He charged a fair hour on the side when a church van needed a lift more than a sermon. He kept a notebook of rooms, not clients.

He married Inez Rivers in 1969. They raised three children in a brick house that needed a new porch every twenty years. Inez taught Sunday school. Isaiah 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 hall, 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 plant that had decided to live. He died in Columbia, in the city whose brick had written his calendar. The school still opens. Someone else will hear the sound that means trouble.

Services

Visitation in Columbia, then a simple service. A gift to a school custodial fund or a neighborhood pantry is

welcome.

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