



Rex James Cleveland

March 4, 1939 - September 14, 2016

Rex Cleveland was born in Manhattan New York but called Chicago Illinois his home town, where he grew up from age 3. His mother, Martha Doheny Cleveland, a single-parent, a teacher and later a principal for the Chicago Public Schools, taught him how to learn on his own and to explore his environment. Rex enjoyed being a free-range child.

No surprise he grew up to become a free-range adult. Rex traveled coast to coast in the United States and in Canada and north to south in Mexico, either on his bright red Harley Davidson or in his Volkswagan Van. Interested in anyone he met, anywhere, Rex picked up hitchhikers along the way. While recovering from a serious motorcycle accident, he learned the Morse Code and from his bedside communicated with people from around the globe.

In 1967 Rex married Mae Evelyn Zigler in Chicago and the two began their adventurous life together by hitchhiking around Europe for three months. Over their 49 years together their favorite times were the lengthy road trips throughout the U.S. and around Canada and Mexico. They traveled many backroads, music blaring from the tapes and CDs of Rex's extensive music collection. When Mae was behind the wheel, Rex often would play his harmonica on those long stretches on the road.

Among their favorite places were the National Parks, particularly Canyonlands, Zion, Canyon de Chelly, and the Grand Canyon, some of the places his mother took him on her summers off from teaching.

A graduate of Loyola University in Chicago with a degree in English, Rex

taught in the Chicago Public Schools.

He worked with the Juvenile Court system as a probation officer in Chicago and in Atlanta Ga. Working with underprivileged young people was one of his passions. After earning his graduate degree in school psychology at Illinois State University, Rex worked in that capacity for the Chicago Public Schools. In 1970 Rex was accepted into the psychology program at Florida State University in Tallahassee Florida. The university turned out not to be a good fit for Rex, but Tallahassee was for him and Mae. They loved the natural setting of this small town and wasted no time canoeing the many rivers, swimming in the sinks, and joining the running community.

Rex worked as a journalist and editor for various publications. He loved writing about people. It is no wonder his stint as Gulf Winds Track Club newsletter editor from 1983 to 2000 was so popular. He told stories of club members, reported on all levels of road and track athletes, and celebrated local runners of all caliber.

These Club members were Rex and Mae's support crew as he battled first Alzheimer's disease and then pancreatic cancer.

The Big Bend Hospice gave superlative care and support during Rex's final months and fully deserve any contributions in Rex J. Cleveland's memory. A more peaceful final days could not have been better provided.

Rex Cleveland died September 14, 2016, age 77.

A service will be held at a later date. Todd Wahlquist with Bevis Funeral Home is assisting the family with their arrangements. 850-385-2193, www.bevisfh.com

Tribute Wall



“ *Sending my condolences to you Mae, may you treasure all the memories of your life together. I remember Rex from our days as classmates at HOC. There are far too many now in heaven, may our special angels watch over us all.*

Marilynn Salerno Sieradzki - September 21, 2016 at 01:30 PM



“ *Dear Mae,*

I am so sorry to hear about this. Rex always seemed like a brother to all of the Dohenys. He was the cool one in the family! Thinking of him always makes me smile.

Sending love, hugs and prayers.

Ritz Zaluzec

Rita Zaluzec - September 21, 2016 at 12:00 PM



“ *Dear Mae,*

So sorry to hear about Rex. I always loved your visits, stories, and shared meals. As a kid, I treasured all the race shirts and admired you both so much for all you've achieved. Keeping you in my thoughts and prayers.

*Love,
Ali*

Alison Lani - September 19, 2016 at 09:02 PM



“ *Fruits and Blooms Basket was purchased for the family of Rex James Cleveland.*



September 19, 2016 at 01:33 PM



“ *Mae, We just learned about Rex and we're so sorry. I loved going to Aunt Martha's house because Rex was there and though I'm sure we drove him crazy, he was always great with us!*

Thinking and praying for you in your loss.

*Love,
Jill and Bob Nale*

Jill Nale - September 18, 2016 at 10:18 AM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rex James Cleveland.*



September 16, 2016 at 09:48 AM

SO

“ *Please accept my sincere condolences for your loss of Rex. Please know that God understands how you feel and he deeply cares about you, and fully understands what you’re going through. (Psalm 103:14; 1 Peter 5:7) You can trust him with your innermost feelings, Pray to Almighty God for comfort and he will sustain you. May sweet memories continue to surround you and bring you comfort.*

With deepest Sympathy.

Sonia - September 16, 2016 at 05:28 AM

BD

“ Dear Mae,

The world is a little less kinder and gentler place with Rex passing away. He went way too soon and we know you will miss him dearly. So glad you shared the past few weeks with us and that we got to talk on Sunday.

I will always remember our Boy Scout campouts with bacon breakfasts, and our times together at HOC Grammar School & St Mel High School & Loyola University. Rex and another friend who died way too young, were the only guys I went through all 3 schools together with. Rex' collaboration...or rather I should say collusion...with me on a history term paper that I was late turning in, is a classic story!

Life goes by too fast and it seems there is never enough time to stay in regular touch with old friends. It is times like this that remind us we should take time to be with life long friends and renew old memories and continue to make new ones with them. Regrettably, with Rex it is too late for us to make new memories but we will treasure the ones we have.

With love and prayers.

Bob & Pat

Bob Donnelly - September 15, 2016 at 11:05 PM

TK

“ *Rex and Mae have been an inspiration to me since we met sometime around 1975, during the time that the GTC began to grow into an institution of running.*

Many runs, and post race briefings have been shared over the years with Rex and his bride. Thank you Rex for your friendship over the years.

Tony Kronenburg

Tony Kronenburg - September 14, 2016 at 08:35 PM