

## HEMSLEY



Sherman Hemsley, the American pop-culture icon whose comedic television persona "George Jefferson" captured the hearts of

the time in American television where a black man was portrayed as wealthy and successful.

The relationship between characters George and Louise Jefferson is still regarded as one of the most-loved television marriages. The couple was ranked as one of television's most dynamic duos this year by ABC and Paley Center.

audiences across the world, will be laid to rest Wednesday afternoon.

Though most well known for his role as the sharp-tongued East Side Millionaire in *The Jeffersons* in life, Hemsley was quite the opposite.

The always down-to-earth actor was at most times quiet and reserved, even shy. Deeply spiritual, Hemsley never allowed for fame to distract from what he believed to be life's gift-true friendship and love.

Sherman Hemsley was born in Philadelphia to a single mother in 1938. A "love child", Hemsley never knew his father and was given his mother's last name. Hemsley worked from the time he was young, scrubbing porches, carry groceries and as a dishwasher for a bakery in South Philadelphia.

Hemsley left high school to join the U. S. Air Force. He served four years in Korea and Japan.

Hemsley got a day job with the U. S. Postal Service when his military career ended, but in his free time he pursued his true passion, acting. He transferred to New York where he continued to work for the postal service and acted at night.

In early 1970s Hemsley got his first break on stage, starring as Gitlow in the Broadway play *Purlie*.

Television producer Norman Lear saw one of Hemsley's performances in *Purlie* and convinced him to leave the stage for a recurring role in Lear's sitcom *All in the Family*.

After Hemsley's well-received response from audiences, Lear developed *The Jeffersons*, co-starring Hemsley's on-screen wife Isabela Sanford in 1975. The sitcom ran for more than a decade, garnering Hemsley Emmy and Golden Globe nominations.

*The Jeffersons* is considered ground breaking by entertainment historians and academics for the fact that it was

*The Jeffersons* is still the longest-running television sitcom with a predominately black cast.

After the sitcom ended, Hemsley continued to appear in various movie roles, and was later cast in the television series *Amen*, where portrayed Deacon Ernest Frye.

In later years, Hemsley continued to act on stage, in advertising campaigns and in movies.

Hemsley left Hollywood for El Paso, Texas in the later years of his life, where he enjoyed the privacy and slower-paced lifestyle, and beloved companions.

Sherman Hemsley died on July 24, at his home, due to complications from lung cancer.

Though he never married or had children, Hemsley's legacy is carried by his family and managers Flora Enchinton and Kenneth Johnston.

Hemsley leave behind beloved friends and millions of adored fans. By Matt Dougherty.

Visitation will be Wednesday, November 21, 2012 from 9:30 am to 11:30 am at San Jose Funeral Home 10950 Pellicano Dr. Funeral services for Mr. Hemsley will be Wednesday at 12:00 noon at Cielo Vista Church 3585 Lee Trevino Dr. with Chaplin Sam Ferone delivering the eulogy and Pastor Rod Smith Officiating. Interment will take place at Fort Bliss National Cemetery Wednesday at 2:30 pm East Pavillion with military honors. Services Directed by San Jose Funeral Home 10950 Pellicano Dr. (915) 590-8700.

