

James Gregory – Master Storyteller

By Jim Harris, Writer for The Southern Voice

When you've been a comedian entertaining sold out audiences for 40 years, it's a balancing act to include the classic material that your fans love, yet add new contemporary humor as well. James Gregory is a master of that balance.

On November 26th, James Gregory played to a packed house at the Anderson, S.C. Civic Center. Those who skipped Black Friday shopping for a good laugh were very glad they did. The crowd was a mix of long-term fans and first-timers - who may have gotten a recommendation about James Gregory. I imagine that some of the millions of fans that check out his videos online were also in attendance.

James entered the stage and got right to it. A James Gregory show isn't only a 90-minute laugh fest, it's also a series of life lessons for the modern Southerner. James started out by sharing the story of how he pulled a groin muscle trying to get in front of a busload of hungry church ladies at a Golden Corral. Who among us hasn't lived that nightmare?

There was a section about travel that also included some tips and quips: "Did you know that La Quinta is Spanish for 'All the other hotels are full?'"

James also covered his well-documented fear of flying, wondering why airlines place so much emphasis on seat cushions as flotation devices and much less effort into preparing for bouncing in a cornfield. As he says, "I've never seen an ocean between Atlanta and Kentucky."

For the intellectuals in the audience, he took a deep dive into analyzing why alien life, if they possess the technology to visit Earth, bypass New York, LA and other cosmopolitan cities to always land near a hog farm in Arkansas. "How is it they miss engineers, doctors and the like, yet manage to find a guy with three pounds of keys on his belt?"

Of course, he touches on social skills, and handling oneself properly in a delicate situation. For example, "How long should you wait after a friend passes away to inquire of his widow what she plans to do with his truck? If it has really low miles, you don't want someone else to beat you to it, but you may choose not to ask during the funeral service."

To attend one of his shows is like being invited to be an extended member of James Gregory's family. Honestly, you'll feel like you know these people, and they'll come home with you in your memories. I was anxiously awaiting an update on his cousin who "has a Crockpot on layaway." And about that relative that always manages to eat too much and then turn her misery into the center of conversation - we got an update on her as well. "She's thinking of starting a new diet. Just not tomorrow, as she has plans to go to the Cracker Barrel."

Another of his cousins figured out, in only a few episodes, that the voice on Knight Rider did not actually belong to the car. The same with Miss Piggy, as it turns out.

In spite of having all these upscale relatives, James remains very down-to-earth.

Food always makes it into the routine, with deep, philosophical questions like, "How can Popeye's have chicken *breasts* but be out of *drumsticks*?" He also seems to be deeply disturbed by artificial butter spray and the increasing scarcity of white bread.

In his love/hate relationship with political correctness and environmentalists, James struggles with recycling - and things like the exorbitant cost of rerouting a highway to preserve the mating grounds of the long-tailed kangaroo rat.

All in all, a James Gregory show is not only a series of "good for the soul" laughs, but a delightful experience for long-term fans and first-timers as well. His ability to find the funny in everyday experiences and deliver a hilarious and clean show gives us a much-needed break from politics and the stress of today's world. If you get the chance, go see him! I promise you'll be very glad you did.