

John Beasley, son of Grace V. Beasley and John Beasley, Sr., was born on June 26, 1943 in Omaha, Nebraska. He attended Howard Mann Elementary School and Omaha Technical High School. He graduated in 1961. It was while he was at Tech that he became interested in dramatic arts and oral interpretation of prose and literature. After high school, John joined the Army as a nuclear weapon specialist and was a member of the U.S. Army European Football championship team. After his tour of duty, John enrolled at Omaha University (O. U.) on a football scholarship. John lettered in football as a freshman and captain of the defensive unit as a monster back and middle linebacker.

He met a young lady named Judith in 1964, and they were married in July 1965. They have enjoyed 57 beautiful years of marriage together. On their 25th anniversary, they renewed their vows in a ceremony at Hope Lutheran Church. They have two sons Tyrone and Michael, seven grandchildren, three great grandchildren, and five godchildren.

John was a member of Hope Lutheran Church for many years. He served as an Elder as well as President of Hope Men's Club, and he was a member of Hope Choir. When requested, he preached many sermonettes during his years of membership when the Pastor was away from the city.

Another ability of John's was being very adept in the kitchen. This led him to open up a steak sandwich restaurant in North Omaha on 38th and Ames, which was appropriately named "Beasley's," and featured Philly cheese steak sandwiches, sliders, and cheese fries.

He was employed at Union Pacific Railroad for 5 years. He decided to pursue acting on a professional level at the age of 45 after appearing in a variety of local theater productions. Since then, he has been cast in productions and many notable guest star appearances. In his first year of professional acting, John was cast in the television series "Brewster Place," alongside Oprah Winfrey. He has appeared in additional productions including, "Walking Tall," "The Sum of All Fears," "The Journeyman," and "The Apostle." In 2002, he began starring as Irv Harper on the WB series "Everwood." He has had notable roles on "CSI," "Millennium," "The Pretender," "Early Edition," and "EZ Streets, in addition to guest appearances on "Judging Amy" and "The Untouchables." He worked with Cedric the Entertainer portraying his father in the television series, "The Soul Man." Other notable films were "Rudy," and "The Mandalorian." In 2019, he and his wife were blessed to be able to travel to Cape Town, South Africa for the filming of "Spell," acting alongside Loretta Divine and Omari Hardwick.

His last big hire came in 2022, when he was cast as a lead in "The Notebook – A New Musical." This is a stage theater production that premiered at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater. He was especially excited with this role of "older Noah" because the next stop for this production was set to open later this year on Broadway! Sadly, his journey stopped short of that goal on Tuesday, May 30th. However, he is now on a much bigger and better stage with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

In 1999, he founded **The John Beasley Theater (JBT)** in Omaha, which strived to promote live theater with a focus on works featuring or written by African Americans. Due to a lack of much needed funding, the JBT had its last performance in 2012. The JBT remains the only theater in Omaha to have performed all ten of August Wilson's 20th century cycle. John went on to perform in many of these same August Wilson plays around the country including: The Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre and the Alliance Theatre both in Atlanta, the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, and the Huntington Theatre in Boston.

He also devoted time in his career to junior golf and tennis programs, along with fundraisers for the American Heart Association.

Honors conferred: John is the recipient of many awards:

Mary Reipma Ross Award, Great Plains Film Festival 2001 awarded to John for **Best Actor**. (*University of Nebraska at Lincoln*.)

The Omaha Press Club honored him with the prestigious award, **Faces on the Barroom Floor** in 2005.

Two **Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters Degree:** one from the *University of Nebraska at Omaha* in August 2005, and the other from *Midland Lutheran College* in May 2008.

CSI Hero Award from the Child Saving Institute in 2006.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "**Living The Dream**" Award was presented to John in January 2007, for outstanding service to the Omaha Community.

Excellence in Education Award in recognition and honor of his years of dedicated devotion and educational contributions to children. Presented to John by the *Old School Breakfast Club*, May 2008.

He received the **IRNE Award for Best Actor** for his performance in "Fences" at the Huntington Theatre in Boston.

Awarded the **Key to the City** for his civic participation for the City of Bellevue, February 2009.

Omaha Entertainment and Arts Awards for Best Actor in a play (*Jitney*) in 2010 – (John Beasley Theater).

You Make a Difference, NE Hometown History Maker Award presented to John by *The Nebraska Black History Art Contest & Hyatt* in 2017.

Omaha Entertainment and Arts Awards for Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020.

He received the honor of having a Street Naming Ceremony at 30th & Grant in August 2022.

African American Legends Award, honoring his exemplary example of African American Excellence in 2020 – by the Empowerment Network. (In celebration of his commitment to North Omaha and social justice; investments in youth, talent development and the local arts community; and outstanding accomplishments in theater, television and the motion picture industry.)

His parents: John and Grace Beasley, brother: Anthony Beasley, stepbrother: Michael Coleman Beasley, nephew: Brian Beasley, aunts and uncles, preceded John in death. He is survived by his wife: Judy Beasley; sons: Tyrone (Katie) Beasley, Michael (Deena) Beasley; brothers: Gary (Diane) Beasley, Steven Beasley, Leon (Susan) Beasley; grandchildren: Evan, Miles, Olivia, Darius, Malik, Micah, Noah; 3 great grandchildren; god-children: Brandy Chappell, Stephlynn Mitchell, Aleasia Webster, LeDarius Webster, Calvin Webster III.

*God saw the road was getting rough.
The hills were hard to climb.
He gently closed those loving eyes
And whispered, "Peace be thine."
The weary hours, the days of pain,
The sleepless nights are passed.
The ever-present worn out frame,
Has found sweet rest at last.*

We love you, so much!