

Sports & Entertainment

Joe Bonsall, long-time member of the Oak Ridge Boys, dead at 76; Music community mourns loss with admirable statements

HENDERSONVILLE, Tenn. - Joseph S. Bonsall (76) of Hendersonville, Tennessee passed on to Glory on July 9, 2024, from complications of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. He leaves behind his precious wife, Mary Ann, daughters Jennifer and Sabrina, granddaughter Breanne, grandson Luke, two great grandsons, Chance and Grey, and a sister, Nancy. He is preceded in death by his parents Joseph S. Bonsall Sr. and Lillie Bonsall.

As a 50-year member of the American music group The Oak Ridge Boys, Joe was a member of the Grand Ole Opry and inducted into the Philadelphia Music Hall of Fame, the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, the Vocal Group Hall of Fame, and the prestigious Country Music Hall of Fame.

Joseph is also the author of 11 books including his latest, a memoir entitled I See Myself, which releases in November. Joe loved to sing. He loved to read. He loved to write. He loved to play banjo. He loved working on the farm. And he loved the Philadelphia Phillies. But Jesus and his family always came first—and we will see him again on the Promised Day. At the request of Joe, there will be no funeral. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to The ALS Association or to the Vanderbilt Medical Center ALS and Neuroscience Research Center. The family is requesting privacy.

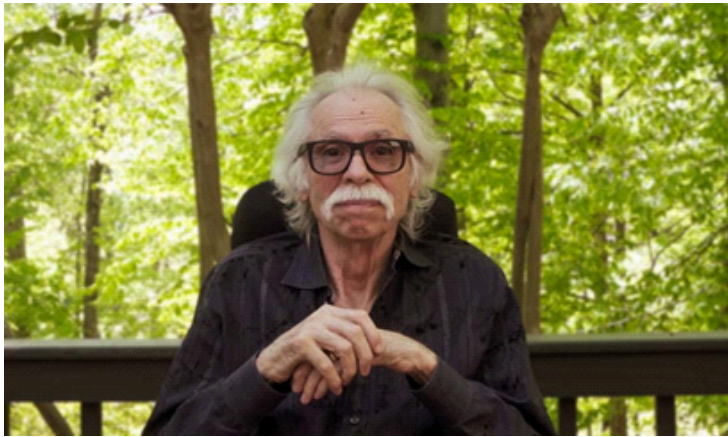
MUSIC COMMUNITY MOURNS THE LOSS OF JOE BONSTALL OF THE OAK RIDGE BOYS

“When I look at Joe Bonsall’s life, I see a life fulfilled. The son of two military veterans, raised to become street-smart in the hood-influenced neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His parents taught him that he could be anything he wished to be if he worked hard, told the truth, and trusted in God. Joe could do anything he set his mind to do, but what impressed me the most was the energy, love, and compassion he put into everything he did and his unique gift to communicate those emotions and feelings into every performance, song, and book. Joe was “that” best friend that every person hopes to have in his life.” – Duane Allen / The Oak Ridge Boys

“This has been a week of sadness with the loss of my son, Rusty Golden, and now the loss of our brother and our partner of over 50 years, Joe Bonsall. Thankfully we have the memories made and the songs that we’ve sang together to get us through. It gives me comfort to know that Joe and Rusty are together again. Our prayers are with his family.” - William Lee Golden / The Oak Ridge Boys

“For many years, Joe was my best friend. We knew each other long before we both became members of The Oak Ridge Boys. He was a special person, who was loved by everyone and was a true inspiration to us all. He was also the best singing partner a person could have. For several years he bravely fought a terrible disease and was a trooper right up until the very end. There is no doubt that today, he is in a much better place - at HOME with Jesus. I will see you soon my dear friend.” - Richard Sterban / The Oak Ridge Boys

“Joe was a true hero to me. His singing is something that I have admired since I was a kid. Nobody could do it like Joe could do it. He was such an encouragement to me. I feel honored that he chose me to sing the tenor line when he decided to come off the road. I try my best for Joe and the Boys every night but only



JOSEPH S. BONSTALL JR (May 18, 1948 – July 9, 2024) (Photo by Jon Mir )

Joe can fill that spot. The legacy he leaves with us is something that is irreplaceable. I am forever thankful I got to know and love one of my all-time heroes that was nothing but good to me. I will miss Joe Bonsall. Thank you for loving everyone you met and making them feel like the most important person in your life when you spoke to them. A true gentleman.” - Ben James / The Oak Ridge Boys

“God love you, Joe Bonsall. You have been an inspiration to fans, friends, and family, especially to me for 52 years. This is a very rough day.” - Jim Halsey, Manager of The Oak Ridge Boys

“When I think of the Oak Ridge Boys and their place in Country Music history, the image of Joe with his huge smile and boundless energy comes to mind so clearly. His commitment to serving others while developing Country Music into a worldwide sensation will never be forgotten and our industry has been made better because of him. Today, we lost an incomparable energy and voice in music. He will be missed greatly by all who were fortunate to know him.” – Sarah Trahern, Country Music Association CEO

“Every single one of us at the Grand Ole Opry absolutely loved Joe Bonsall. The fans in the seats marveling at his on-stage energy. —Those tuned in around the world listening to his unmatched vocals as part of his beloved Oak Ridge Boys. —And all of us backstage laughing out loud at his antics and counting our lucky stars to have been in the orbit of such a loving, talented, wonderful human being. Safe travels, buddy. You are so loved.” - Dan Rogers, Senior VP/Executive Producer of the Grand Ole Opry

“I’m saddened by the loss of my friend, Joe Bonsall. For so many years he was the high voice with The Oak Ridge Boys who I toured with almost every year of my career. Joe and I would have conversations on the road sometimes before a concert and sometimes afterward about the crowd, the music, and who we are as Americans. My family sends prayers to the Bonsall family.” - Lee Greenwood

“Musicians like Joe Bonsall are not able to be replaced because gospel harmony is quite an art form. Unlike 3-part harmony or 4-part harmony is a whole different kind of mathematics. Joe was a true pioneer and original.” - Don McLean

“I have known, worked with, and loved Joe Bonsall and the Oaks for almost 50 years. It’s so hard to say goodbye to old friends, especially a true road warrior like Joe.” - Crystal Gayle

“I’m so terribly saddened and sorry to hear of Joe’s passing. All I can say is from one tenor to another, keep singing in heaven, Joe, that voice of yours, the spirit for the Lord.” - Sam Moore (of Sam & Dave)

“Joe Bonsall helped define har-

monies like no other. His contribution to The Oak Ridge Boys solidified his place in country music. Thank you for the music and memories, Joe!” - Terry McBride / McBride & The Ride

“We just lost one of the world’s greatest human beings and one of music’s greatest voices. Joe was like a brother and made me a better man. I loved him, and he loved Jesus with all of his heart. He was a sweetheart and every room brightened when he walked in. Sheila and I will miss him terribly. Rest in peace, free of pain, my dear friend.” - T. Graham Brown

“Losing a long-time friend in our business is like losing a member of your family. Joe was just that



(Photo by Jarret Gaza )



(Photo by Brandon Wood )

to Kelly and me. From the memories we made with him in the recording studio to working the road and doing television shows together, we will treasure them forever. We were so grateful to have him join us on our wedding day. His passing leaves a huge hole in our hearts. Our deepest sympathy and prayers go out to his family, The Oak Ridge Boys, and his fans. Until we meet

again, dear friend.” - T.G. Sheppard & Kelly Lang

“Sad day for me. The Oaks were family to George and I. So sad another family member is gone.” - Nancy Jones

“Joe Bonsall and I have crossed paths many times through our careers in music and each time, we picked up right where we left off.

Many of us are in our “golden” years now and these times are always particularly difficult. I am thankful for his friendship, the songs he leaves behind, and comfort in the fact that his body isn’t suffering anymore. RIP Joe Bonsall.” – John McEuen

“Joe Bonsall was a true friend who sang on several of my records. What a great talent who entertained so many people with his great voice and showmanship. I am so saddened. We will miss him so much.” - Moe Bandy

“The concerts I worked with The Oak Ridge Boys were amazing, as I heard their great blend of 4 voices - Joe had a unique sound and talent that is timeless and Universally appreciated, may God rest his soul.” - Janie Fricke

“My heart is heavy with the news that we lost Joe Bonsall of The Oak Ridge Boys. He had a kindness that always made you feel welcome! My heart goes out to his family and the boys in the band, they have endured much loss in a short time. But, as we mourn the loss, we can find joy knowing that Joe is in the presence of our loving savior, Jesus Christ.” - John Berry

“Joe was an extraordinary entertainer. His magnificent tenor part with the Oak Ridge Boys will greatly be missed. Fly high, sir, fly high.” - Makenzie Phipps

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