



## Fred "Johnny" MacRae

February 15, 1929 - July 3, 2013

MACRAE, Fred A. "Johnny" a long-time resident of the Petway Community in Cheatham County, began his heavenly adventure on July 3, 2013. After an extended illness, Johnny passed away peacefully at home with his wife, Mary, holding his hand and his sons-by-choice - Carl Brown and John Northrup - by his side, as these were Johnny's final wishes. Johnny was preceded in death by his mother, Pearl Allen Foster Cunningham; his father, Fred Aylor MacRae; his brother, David MacRae; and, his sister, Joan Hines. Johnny is survived by his wife, Mary, whom he loved deeply and passionately; his brother, Paul MacRae; his daughter, Gail Blake; his sons-by-birth, Mike MacRae and Mark MacRae; his sons-by-choice: Mike Barton, Carl Brown, Bill and Frank Meadows, John Northrup; his Best Pal, Henry Hurt; and several grandchildren. Johnny came to Nashville in 1963 to follow his dream of being in the country music industry and worked at several publishing companies, including Screen Gems, Mimosa Music, Combine Music, Warner-Chappel, BMG Music and Tennessee Ridge Runner Music. Since that time, Johnny wrote or co-wrote hundreds of songs and became an award-winning, Grammy-nominated songwriter of traditional, country music songs. In 2003 the song Pine Box, co-written by Johnny, was included in "CMT's 100 Greatest Songs of Country Music," an elite list of songs chosen by Country Music Television, industry leaders and CMA members. You can't tell a giant by his size, but Johnny MacRae was a giant - not in stature but in heart and soul. And, he had few equals because Johnny shared that heart and soul with

everyone he met. Many successful songwriters owe much to Johnny as he was a constant and consistent force of encouragement, especially when they were beginning their quest in the music industry. Some people believe the music industry is filled with a lot of hype, which very often makes it hard to know what's actually real. With Johnny, however, if it wasn't real he wanted no part of it, and because of that he became a magnet for songwriters who were searching for what was real. People drawn to this "giant" magnet included many of the songwriters from the sixties, seventies and eighties: Kris Kristofferson, Larry Gatlin, Mickey Newberry, Shel Silverstein, Dennis Linde, Bob Morrison, Debbie Hupp, Steve Clark, Rob Simbeck, John Scott Sherrill, Tim Kreckle, Bob Depiero, Mel McDaniel, Mark Germino, Pat MacManus, Chris Gantry, Mary Francis, Lee Clayton, Donnie Fritts, Gene Dobbins, Tim Menzies, Alan Rush, Marge Barton, Don DeVaney, Mickey Clark, Johnny "Peanuts" Wilson, and many, many more. A 15-year veteran of the Navy, Johnny served most of his enlistment in the South Pacific. Even while serving his country, music was an integral part of Johnny's world, as a songwriter and a performer. Johnny and his band - the Silver Bullets - became very popular with the military men and women and were in high demand at every port-of-call when his ship was docked. Johnny treasured serving in the Navy and became a Lifetime member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW Post 6181). Upon being Honorably Discharged on the West Coast, Johnny immediately became a force in the music scene there. Bob Todd, who served with Johnny in the Navy, became his manager and connected Johnny with Gary Paxton, who in the early sixties had several hits including Alley Oop and Cherry Pie. Paxton's early success was in the novelty field where Johnny's talent also flourished as a writer and performer. He was involved in Paxton's most successful release The Monster Mash, where Johnny sang back-up vocals and created most of the sound effects for this record. When Johnny came to Nashville, he became a significant part of the "glory years" on Music Row. During his music career, Johnny wore many hats: producer, publisher and performer; but his love and passion were grounded in songwriting. His

songs were recorded by many giants in the industry including Ray Charles, Bobby Vinton, BJ Thomas, Conway Twitty, George Jones, Bill Anderson, Brenda Lee, Randy Travis, Loretta Lynn, George Strait, Reba McEntire, The Oak Ridge Boys, Mel McDaniel, Ricky Van Shelton, Dixie Chicks, John Conley, Mel Tillis, Vern Gosdin, Highway 101, Blackhawk, Confederate Railroad, and many more artists. His accomplishments as a songwriter, however, weren't his greatest contribution to the music industry. It was his open door to anybody and everybody wanting to learn about the music industry and songwriting. Johnny's honesty and his help to those who found their way to that door made him more than special. Johnny lived life to the fullest and was known for a huge, often battered, cowboy hat, his quick wit, an infectious laugh and the mischievous gleam in his eyes. He was a prankster without equal. Whether it was a float trip down a Tennessee River or the annual Christmas Party at Combine or BMG Music, Johnny was usually in the center of it all-especially when he was serving his infamous Bloody Mary's. In recent years, Johnny's monthly, fun-filled, laughter-riddled luncheons for a few songwriting buddies but mostly for several Music Row women, whom he worked with over the years and knew that they were the ones who actually ran the business, became THE luncheon everyone in the industry wanted to attend. Johnny was low-profile in everything he did. Perhaps the general public was never aware of who he was or what he did, but insiders on Music Row knew and eventually made their way to his door. The past 33 years were probably his happiest as he and his beloved wife, Mary, worked the land on their Ashland City farm, raised a myriad of farm animals, maintained stocked ponds and toiled in the vineyard to make Johnny's favorite "nectar of the gods" wine. While they no longer worked the land, Johnny and Mary kept it as a sanctuary for numerous furry and feathered critters, and, together, they carved out a portion of their farm and turned it into a park-like setting with fishing ponds, bar-b-que pits, an open shelter, picnic tables and shade trees. They opened their hearts and their farm, free-of-charge, to families, church

groups and at-risk, inner-city youth who wanted to experience the peace and joy of spending a day in the country. Johnny's Music Row friends still found their way to his door, but this time it was his farmhouse door. Johnny leaves a legacy of love, honesty, compassion and genuine friendship. As a result, a Celebration of Life Event has been set for Saturday, October 19 and will be held between two of Johnny's favorite ponds. He loved that farmland and spent many hours there fishing, writing songs, cutting hay, talking to the cows, watching the eagles fly, contemplating life and solving ALL of the world's problems. Details of the event will be sent to family and friends as they are finalized. Well, not ALL of the details as there will be a few unexpected surprises. There will be lots of good food and drinks, great music, tall tales of Johnny MacRae antics - oh my, there are so many-and an abundance of love and laughter; and those unexpected surprises. In honor of Johnny's life, charitable donations can be made to one of his favorite organizations: Cheatham County Animal Control and Shelter, Cheatham County VFW Post 6181, Salvation Army, Nashville Rescue Mission, Heifer International or the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Austin and Bell Funeral Home in Pleasant View was in charge of the cremation and provided compassionate assistance and considerable comfort to Mary. AUSTIN & BELL-Pleasant View, (615)746-4433.