



## Larry "Duke" Stephenson Jr.

December 5, 1956 - June 22, 2025

In Loving Memory of Larry "Duke" Stephenson, Jr. Born in Nashville and raised in Madison, Tennessee, Duke lived a life filled with rhythm, heart, and connection. From an early age, he was immersed in the family's music entertainment business — playing drums, singing harmony, and even driving the tour bus while traveling and performing with his grandparents, the legendary Johnny Wright and the Queen of Country Music, Kitty Wells. Music wasn't just part of his life; it was in his blood — a language he spoke fluently and passionately. For many years, Larry was the proud co-owner of the Nashville Nightlife Dinner Theater, where he helped bring live music and joy to countless visitors and locals. His deep love for entertainment and hospitality made him a natural in creating memorable experiences for all who walked through the doors. Beyond music, Larry built a remarkable career in the hotel and tourism industry. Over more than two decades, he served as a Director of Sales, Sales Manager, and General Manager at various hotels and entertainment venues, earning numerous accolades and industry awards along the way. Whether with colleagues, clients, or guests, Larry never met a stranger. His gift for conversation — rooted in his church upbringing — made him not only a persuasive salesman, but a genuinely warm and unforgettable person. An avid sports fan and gifted athlete, Duke earned a college sports scholarship and remained passionate about all things sports, especially college and pro football. Go Vandy! His competitive spirit, quick wit, and love of the game made every season one to look forward to. With striking blue

eyes and a smile to match, Larry's presence lit up every room. He was a man of deep passion — for music, for people, and for the work he loved. His legacy lives on in the countless lives he touched through kindness, conversation, and an unwavering enthusiasm for life. Duke was preceded in death by his parents, Larry Stephenson, Sr., and Ruby Jean Wright Taylor; and maternal grandparents, Johnny Wright and Kitty Wells. He is survived by his husband of 23 years, Jason Pitkin; sisters, Kitty Ervin, and Corrie (Brad) Cluck; nieces, Kourtney Wingert and Katie Ervin; nephew, Brandon Ervin; uncle, Bobby Wright; aunt, Sue Sturdivant; mother-in-law, Jacquie Billings; father-in-law, William Pitkin, Jr.; and several great nieces, nephews and cousins.

A Receiving of Family and Friends for Duke will be from 1:30 pm until 2:30 pm. on Saturday, August 16, 2025 with a Celebration of Life to follow from 2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. at the Nashville Nightlife Dinner Theater, 2416 Music Valley Village, Nashville, TN 37214.

Austin & Bell Funeral Home in Springfield is in charge of these arrangements.

AUSTIN & BELL FUNERAL HOME-  
509 WALNUT STREET, SPRINGFIELD, TN (615) 384-1000

# Previous Events

## Receive Friends

AUG 16. 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM (CT)

Nashville Dinner Theater  
2416 Music Valley Village  
Nashville, TN 37214

## Celebration of Life Service

AUG 16. 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM (CT)

Nashville Dinner Theater  
2416 Music Valley Village  
Nashville, TN 37214

# Tribute Wall



“ Jason,  
*I was deeply saddened to hear of your loss. Please know my thoughts and prayers are with you during this time. I hope you can feel the support and care of your work family and that all of the family find some comfort in the extended love being offered.*

*Jay Gutierrez  
Bindtech-Roswell*

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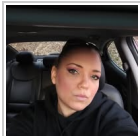
**Jay Gutierrez** - August 19, 2025 at 06:49 PM



“ Jason,  
*Sorry to hear of your loss. Thoughts and prayers for you.*  
*Steve Kindle*

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**Steve Kindle** - August 12, 2025 at 02:06 PM



“ Jason, my heart goes out to you during this difficult time. Please know that you are in my thoughts and that I am here to support you in any way I can. Wishing you comfort and peace in the days ahead.

*With deepest sympathy,*

*Stacey McClanahan  
Bindtech, Human Resources*

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**Stacey McClanahan** - August 12, 2025 at 01:56 PM

KH

“ Jason,  
I am so, so sorry for your loss. Please know you are in my thoughts and prayers for comfort and peace. May the memories of happier times fill your heart and soul.  
Blessing to you and your family,  
Kim Hodgson  
BindTech Phoenix

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**Kim Hodgson** - August 12, 2025 at 01:50 PM

DP

“ Larry was just a good guy. Many memories of playing football at Goodpasture. Was absolutely shocked when I saw this. He will be missed by many. David Proctor

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**David R Proctor** - August 11, 2025 at 04:54 PM

BB

“ Larry was a real friend who loved everyone. I'll never forget several times that we went swimming in his grandparents' pool when they were on the road touring. I am sorry for another member of the class of 1974 passing, but I am happy he has been released from his pain. Sending my prayers & regrets to his family.

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**B. J. BRICKA** - July 12, 2025 at 12:09 AM

BE

“ Larry (Duke) was a gem! Traveled many miles all over Canada with Duke, Kitty, Johnny and Bobby. 100's of shows from Newfoundland to the Yukon. There was never a dull moment! My sincere condolences to Duke's entire family. Brian Edwards

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**Brian Edwards** - July 11, 2025 at 08:16 PM

DB

“ It was my joy to know Duke and call him a friend for many years, I was privileged to entertain with him, Johnny, Kitty and Bobby. I have known the Wright clan for many years and can truly say they are some of the finest people on earth. So sorry that I can't make it to Dukes celebration, much love to all the family. The Singing Mountaineer

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**Danny Bell** - July 11, 2025 at 06:14 PM

BR

“ He was a therapy patient of mine- I got to work with him for about 2 months and I always enjoyed our conversations and seeing his bright smile.

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**Bryan** - June 26, 2025 at 05:06 PM