Sports & Entertainment

Richard Sterban, bass voice of The Oak Ridge Boys and Country Music Hall of Fame member, dies at 83... from sports-Ent. 1

baseball fan and longtime part owner of Nashville's minor league team, and for more than 50 years a proud resident of Hendersonville, Tennessee.

Richard Anthony Sterban was born April 24, 1943, in Camden, New Jersey, the city where Jimmie Rodgers recorded his first "Blue Yodel," and grew up in nearby Collingswood. He started singing at age six as a soprano in Sunday school and sang tenor in his seventh-grade glee club. By the time he returned to school for eighth grade, his voice had dropped to bass. He loved sports and music but decided his greater talent was singing.

After graduating from Collingswood High School, he studied music at Trenton State College, now The College of New Jersey. He later admitted that he often felt outsung by the other voice students, but he never lost his drive to perform, and before long professional singing pulled him away from the classroom.

Gospel quartets were his first love. In the Philadelphia area, he helped found the Keystones, a gospel quartet in which a young Joe Bonsall would also sing. While singing part-time, he worked in a clothing store. "I developed a real interest in fashion, and it's something that has carried through," he said, and it showed in his carefully tailored stage clothes. The friendship he formed with Bonsall in those years grew into a partnership of some 50 years. In 1994, the two were honored together on the Philadelphia Music Alliance Walk of Fame.

His path then led to J.D. Sumner and the Stamps Quartet, which Elvis Presley hired to sing behind him. For about a year and a half, Sterban sang with Presley onstage night after night, recorded



Richard Sterban ***(Publicity image by Brandon Wood / Indie Bling Studio)***

with him and appeared in the 1972 concert film Elvis on Tour. Sumner had been a boyhood hero of Presley's, and Sterban later wrote about watching Presley greet Sumner with a bear hug the day the Stamps first met him.

Then The Oak Ridge Boys called. The gospel quartet, which had yet to score a country hit, needed a bass singer after the departure of Noel Fox. Sterban had to choose between the biggest stage in show business and his own dream. He chose the dream and joined the Oaks in late 1972. Bonsall followed in 1973, completing the lineup of Allen, Bonsall, Golden and Sterban that would carry the group through most of the next five decades. Years later, Sterban named his memoir for that journey: From Elvis to Elvira: My Life on Stage, written with Steven Robinson and published in 2012, with an updated edition in 2022. The book is filled with stories of his time with Presley and with the Oaks, many of them told there for the first time.

Success did not come overnight. Johnny Cash featured the group in his touring show, had them sing harmony on his single "Praise the Lord and Pass the Soup" and helped them sign with Columbia Records in 1973, but the two albums they made for the label drew little notice. In 1975, while opening shows for Roy Clark, the group caught the attention of Clark's manager, Jim Halsey, who told them they were one hit record away from being a major act and urged them to sing country. They signed with Halsey, toured the Soviet Union with Clark in 1976 as the first country group to perform there, and moved to ABC/Dot Records. "Y'all Come Back Saloon" reached No. 3 on the country chart in 1977, and the hits kept coming: "I'll Be True to You," the group's first No. 1, followed by "Leaving Louisiana in the Broad Daylight," "Trying to Love Two Women" and "(I'm Settin') Fancy Free." In 1978 the Country Music Association named the Oaks Vocal Group of the Year, and the Academy of Country Music named them Top Vocal Group. Their harmonies also turned up on records by other artists, including Paul Simon's pop hit "Slip Slidin' Away."

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Service for The Oak Ridge Boys' longtime bass singer set for Tuesday, November 24, in Hendersonville

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Tuesday, November 17, 2026) — Family, friends and industry colleagues will gather to remember Richard Sterban of The Oak Ridge Boys, who died November 14 at age 83, honoring his life, his faith and the music he shared with generations.

Tuesday, November 24, 2026 • 1:30 p.m. Central
First Baptist Church — Main Worship Center
106 Bluegrass Commons Blvd.
Hendersonville, TN 37075
https://maps.app.goo.gl/QSBWrwimzZLY8LGK8

Richard's unmistakable bass voice anchored The Oak Ridge Boys for more than five decades and gave "Elvira" its beloved refrain. After singing with Elvis Presley as a member of the Stamps Quartet, he joined the Oaks in 1972. With the group, he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Gospel Music Hall of Fame and became a member of the Grand Ole Opry. A devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Richard called Hendersonville home for more than 50 years.

Family, close friends and industry colleagues are encouraged to RSVP by 10 a.m. Central on Tuesday, November 24, for parking and entrance instructions: https://forms.gle/4Q9GMpecApiFiRfF6

A private reception for family and friends will follow the service. There will be no visitation, funeral procession or graveside service.

Seating is limited. Priority will be given to family and invited guests, and the public is welcome as space allows.

In lieu of flowers, and for those unable to attend, memorial gifts may be made to the Champions' Circle for Vanderbilt Baseball. Online gifts can be made at giving.vanderbilt.edu by selecting "Champions' Circle for Vanderbilt Baseball" from the list of gift options. Checks may be made payable to Vanderbilt University, with "Champions' Circle – in memory of Richard Sterban" in the memo line, and mailed to Gift and Donor Services, Vanderbilt University, PMB 407727, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, Nashville, TN 37240-7727.

Marcus Stokes named one of 13 semi-finalists for the Davey O'Brien National QB Award

Of the 13 semifinalists, Stokes is the only quarterback playing for a team outside of the Power 4 and Notre Dame.

FORT WORTH, Texas – University of Memphis quarterback Marcus Stokes was announced as one of 13 semifinalists for the 2026 Davey O'Brien National Quarterback Award, the Davey O'Brien Foundation announced Tuesday afternoon.

Of the 13 semifinalists, Stokes is the only quarterback playing for a team outside of the Power 4 and Notre Dame.

Stokes has shined in his first action at the FBS level, leading the third-ranked total offense in the nation, including the 12th-ranked passing attack and eighth-best scoring offense. Stokes himself also ranks third in passing efficiency, fourth in passing touchdowns and eighth in passing yards.

Going into this weekend's matchup at Navy, Stokes has thrown for at least 300 yards in each of the last four games, throwing for at least three or more in the three most recent games. He also has at least one rushing touchdown in each of Memphis' last three games. With those totals, Stokes has accounted for five touchdowns in back-to-back-to-back games, the first time an FBS player has achieved this feat since Bo Nix in 2023.

For the sixth year, fan voting on social media (Facebook, Instagram and X) will earn players bonus selection committee votes. Second-round fan voting begins immediately following this announcement. To vote, fans must like the official graphic from the @daveyobrien social media account that highlights their favorite quarterback.

The Davey O'Brien Foundation will announce the three finalists Tuesday, Nov. 24. The 2026 Davey O'Brien Award winner will be unveiled live on ESPN on Friday, Dec. 11, during The Home Depot College Football Awards.

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The Davey O'Brien National Quarterback Award is presented annually to the nation's best college quarterback and is the oldest and most prestigious national quarterback award.

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