



## Robert Dwight LaPella

May 14, 1929 - April 13, 2017

Robert D. LaPella, 87, Johnson City, died on Thursday, April 13, 2017 at the James H. Quillen VAMC, Mountain Home. A native of Indianola, Iowa, he was the son of the late George and Eathel LaPella. By his teenage years, he had already embraced his passion and love of music and singing. He began his lifelong pursuit of music education at Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa. After a stint of service in the USAF, he returned to Drake to finish his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Music. There, he met the love of his life, Jane McNeil. They were married in December 1954 and began their life of love, friendship and professional partnership. Robert held faculty positions at Bethany College, West Virginia, while undertaking graduate studies at Indiana University. Next, he taught at College of Emporia, Kansas; then in 1962, he came to East Tennessee State University where he retired after 35 years as Professor Emeritus. He held positions as Chairman of the Voice Department and Director of the Opera Workshop. He not only taught but truly mentored innumerable students in the art of singing. During this time, he served as a member and national officer of the National Association of Teachers of Singing; he and Jane founded the Johnson City Civic Chorale; and he became a member of the ETSU Foundation. Bob found pleasure and accomplishment in many other pursuits. He and Jane were world travelers and opera lovers. He was a creative builder of a harpsichord, playhouses, stage sets, scout projects, and - most treasured - the family log cabin. He loved the mountains and was an avid hiker and horseman. He enjoyed the ETSU Faculty Square Dance Club, and in retirement, was also a loyal volunteer mail carrier at JCMC for nine years. As a long-time member of Munsey Church, he sang in the Chancel Choir, participated in the Philosophers' Sunday School Class, and served on the Administrative Board. Although accomplished, he was humble and loving, influencing all who knew him. He leaves behind his loving wife of 62 years, Jane; his children and their spouses: Claire and David Reagan of Nashville, Chris and Larry Collins of Johnson City, Alex and Lisa LaPella of Unicoi; grandchildren: Emily Reagan Pritchard and husband Brandon, Whitney Reagan Kelley and husband Shawn, Joel Reagan, Ryan Collins and wife Brittany, Evan Collins, Sean Collins and wife Grace, Alden Collins, Freeman LaPella, and Calder LaPella; great-grandchildren: Riley and Kate Pritchard, and Hannah Kelley; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: Burns and Ida McNeil, Carolyn and the late Clarence Bartenhagen,

Kay and Ron Gates; and numerous nieces and nephews. The family extends heartfelt thanks to the staff of Mountain Home VAMC, and especially his caring and competent personal physicians, Dr. Vini Krishnan and Dr. Agnes Hamati. A special thank you also to his faithful and loving Munsey Church family. A Celebration of Life Service for Robert LaPella will be held at 6:30pm on Monday, April 17 in the sanctuary of Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church, Johnson City. A reception and visitation will follow in Munsey's Christian Life Center. The Committal Service will be at 10am Tuesday, April 18 in the Munsey Courtyard Columbarium. Memorial contributions may be made to the Robert D. LaPella Voice Scholarship Fund at ETSU's Music Department, or to Munsey's Music Department or Missions Fund. Order Flowers Service Details Monday, April 17th, 2017 6:30am, Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church

# Comments

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“ His light has not been extinguished. It will continue to shine brightly through his loving family, echoes of his laughter, and the sound of thousands of voices.

**Deborah Eller Nichols** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ A candle was lit by Appalachian Funeral Home & Cremation Service lit a memorial candle

on April 14, 2017 4:25 PM

**Appalachian Funeral Home & Cremation Service lit a memorial candle** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ It was my happy privilege to have known Bob for twenty-five years. He and Jane were the very first musicians my wife and I met when we came to Johnson City. Our world is poorer because Bob has gone Home but we who knew him are richer for having had him in our lives. May his memory be eternal and may Our Compassionate and Loving God give comfort to Jane and all her dear family during these sad days.

**TOM CORUM** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ I was very sorry to see Dr. LaPella's obituary this morning. I knew he had been in the hospital but did not know his passing was imminent. My thoughts are with the family.

**Robert Warden** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Chris , I am so saddened to read about the passing of your daddy. I feel so out of touch since retiring , and becoming a caregiver to my mom . I only knew your dad through compassionate and caring thoughts and comments made by those who thought so much of him . I know he must have been a wonderful father to instill the thoughtfulness and kindness you have always shown me as a neighbor and friend. I just wanted to let you know that you all are in my thoughts and prayers . Much love , Kim .

**Kim Garland-Phipps** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Dearest Aunt Jane , Claire , Chris & Alex ... Our deepest sympathies for your loss . It was my honor to know and love a??i??Uncle Bob through my life's journey . There aren't words to express the love and respect I had for that man . Uncle Bob will live in my heart forever and I am hugging you ALL from Elkridge MD ... Deepest condolences and deeper love ... Always , Your Brian Pennington & Michelle Pennington

**Brian Pennington** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Our prayers are with the family.

**Luann, Bethann, and Sarakay Johnson** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Bob and Jane became parents and grandparents to our son and grandson and gave them, for many years, sustaining love and support when their need was great. We will always hold these two wonderful people in our hearts, and our hearts go out to Jane and the family in their grief, even as we are reminded this weekend of the promise of the Resurrection.

**Bob & Chris Inkster** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ James, so sorry to hear of Bob's passing. I enjoyed the time singing with him in the JCC

**Bill Turpin** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ I was privileged to have studied with Mr. Lapella and to be in the Concert Choir under his direction. He was a fine man, an excellent roll model and an excellent teacher. The world will miss him but heavens choir will be more beautiful.

**Rita Hitechew** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Jane and family, My deepest condolences on your loss of Bob. He was so very influential in my academic life - from 4 years of vocal training and chorus, plus many opera workshops and his wonderful graduate class in vocal pedagogy. He was always kind and patient, as well as inspiring.

**Robert Dean** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Jane, Claire, Chris and Alex. Bob was a very special person whom I know will be dearly missed by all of you. He first came into my life in 1971 when I began my time as a music major at ETSU. In Choir and Opera Theater, he taught me much about being the best I could be. When, a few years after graduation, Bob invited some alumni to once again sing in Opera Theater I was thrilled and jumped at the chance. Through the years our relationship matured and changed. He was a teacher, a mentor, a colleague but most of all he was a friend. I cherish his memory and send to all of you my sincerest condolences. His was a life well lived. I am proud to have known him and to call him friend. I will remember him always. God bless you all.  
Randy

**Randy Bennett Sr.** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ I am so saddened to,hear of Bobs passing, what a wonderful man, full of spirit and a wonderful sense of humor. He will be missed. My love to you Jane and your family.

**Doris Walton** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Claire & David, We are so sorry for your loss, our thoughts are with you.

**Laura, Brent, & Ryan** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Dear Mrs. LaPella, I am so sorry to hear of Mr. LaPella's passing. He was a wonderful teacher and mentor, and such an inspiration to all of us who were blessed to work with him. I appreciate all of his and YOUR support and encouragement. We will hold you all in our prayers. Jane and Whit Morison

**Jane Morison** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Dear Jane, You and Bob were so kind and generous to me during college. I cherish so many memories of vocal lessons, opera workshop, civic chorale, and recitals. Bob was such a great teacher and mentor. He had a way of bringing out the best in everyone because he always gave his best. His inner light, sense of humor, and love of music and people were contagious. I am so grateful to have been blessed by his influence and know it made me a much better person. May God bless you and your family during this time and bring you peace and comfort. Todd Norris

**Todd Norris** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Jane and the entire LaPella family, My heartfelt regret hearing of your lose and pray that God be with you each and every day. We will miss seeing you and Bob walking in the neighborhood. Sue Doss, 1106 Lone Oak Road, Johnson City, TN.

**Sue Doss** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ Dear Jane and Family - You are included in our daily prayers. We abide together in the love of Christ.

**David and Martha Herting** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM

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“ From Bob's last voice student, I leave my deepest condolences and my humblest gratitude for my musical gifts. Bob introduced me to singing, and everywhere I have gone since then has been with his spirit. Thank you for all the lessons, both musically and in life. I love you both. The last interaction I had with Bob, he was so upbeat and only wanted to talk about my music. I sent Jane and Bob recordings of a recital I recently gave just a week before he passed. I only hope he got to hear some, and if not, I'm sure he'll listen to the next one from heaven. -Brennon Nelson

**Brennon Nelson** - August 23, 2019 at 12:14 PM