



## John Carroll Butts

July 19, 1933 - January 19, 2019

John Carroll Butts, age 85, passed away on January 19, 2019 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was born in Boynton, Oklahoma to Rev. Silas Union "Cal" Butts and Maggie E. Day Butts on July 19, 1933, the youngest of six children. John graduated from Coweta High School in Coweta, Oklahoma in 1951 and earned a B.A. in education in 1955 from Northeastern State College in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. He returned to Northeastern and got his M.A. degree in education in 1967.

In August of 1963, Mr. Butts married Ava Joyce Bilbrey in Lawton, Oklahoma. They were married 51 years, until Ava's death in 2015. John and Ava's long marriage was blessed with a mutual love of music - John sang and Ava played the piano - and a dedication to spiritual life through their church. They were longtime members of First Baptist Church of Tulsa, where John was a deacon, and were eager participants in any and all church musical endeavors: choir and solos and the occasional play. They also regularly visited homebound members and those in the hospital. John's service to the Lord was through his music ministry. He sang as Ava accompanied him for almost every family wedding and funeral as well as those for others. At the extended family's annual Thanksgiving reunion, he sang a moving rendition of "The Lord's Prayer" each year for over 40 years. In later years, John and Ava enjoyed singing and playing with The Hyechka Club of Tulsa.

John and Ava regularly attended performances of the Tulsa Opera for many years, and visited the Santa Fe Opera for several summer seasons. Later, John never missed the regular Saturday afternoon live radio broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera in New York. He shared this love of opera with several friends who sometimes listened with him on Saturdays, and one niece who he mentored in the musical hobby. Everyone knew not to call him during the opera on Saturday afternoons. He felt enriched and derived much pleasure through listening to this music.

John did his military service in the Army from 1957 - 1959. He worked for the Board of Education in Valliant, Oklahoma as an English teacher in 1956 - 1957. He worked for Edison Junior High School in Tulsa as an English teacher from 1959 - 1960, and taught English at Edison Senior High School from 1960 - 1970. Mr. Butts began his work as an Academic Counselor and Student Advisor at Edison High in 1970 and continued until 1985. He also taught evening classes to adults for ten years during this period.

John had a profound devotion to his family. He became a cohesive force who gathered family news and communicated it to those who needed to know. Everyone received a greeting card and a phone call on his birthday. When his sister Madeline became homebound with slowly declining health, John visited her every week. She looked forward to these visits, as he was a wonderful conversationalist as well as being warm, full of stories, loving, and funny. When all other visitors had faded away, John still came. He grew up in a time, place, and family where there wasn't much in the way of material goods. Service to others was valued and entertainment was centered around the funny anecdote, or other clever narrative. Family and friends could relax in the evening on the front porch and regale each other with tales both true and embellished. John was a master of storytelling, and knew which was the best choice for each person. He was adored by his nieces and nephews and their children and grandchildren.

This cultivated gentleman ended every phone call with, "Now what can I do for you?" And he really wanted to know.

Visitation will be at Moore's Southlawn Funeral Home, 9350 E. 51st Street in Tulsa, on Tuesday, January 22 from 12noon-8pm. A memorial service will be at 10am on Wednesday, January 23 at Moore's Southlawn Chapel. Interment will follow at Floral Haven Cemetery in Broken Arrow. Moore's Southlawn 918-663-2233 Share memories at [www.moorefuneral.com](http://www.moorefuneral.com)

# Events

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**JAN** **Viewing** 12:00PM - 08:00PM

**22**

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Moore's Southlawn

9350 E. 51st, Tulsa, OK, US, 74145

**JAN** **Funeral** 10:00AM

**23**

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Moore's Southlawn Chapel

9350 E. 51st, Tulsa, OK, US, 74145

# Comments

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“ John came into my life in Tahlequah when John was a student, and my Mother was recently widowed, and brought much cheer and a positive outlook to our agony. Mother returned to college for two years to complete a degree so that she could become employable as a teacher once again, and her rigorous schedule of studying and attending classes was enhanced by John’s company for evening meals with Mother and me at local restaurants, and during the walk home. John kept my life in Tahlequah from being one of misery to one of disaster, and I am unbelievably grateful for him.

**Priscilla Harper** - February 07, 2019 at 11:53 AM

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“ John and Ava were special. I cannot remember John ever uttering a discouraging word, but rather consistently offered many moments of encouragement and humor. It was a pleasure to participate with him in music ministry at FBC. From encourager and mentor to friend in later years he impacted our lives and enriched us at Edison HS.  
Larry O'Reilly

**Larry** - February 02, 2019 at 09:04 PM

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“ John, Ava, and I were long-time friends at Tulsa First Baptist Church back in the 1960s in the Single Adult Department, before they married. John subsequently sang at my sister's wedding and later at her funeral in 2000. We've maintained contact all these years and I would visit them when I returned to Tulsa to see my family nearby. I visited with John at the Tulsa Jewish Community Center last year and wrote several letters to him after he could no longer correspond himself. He was a very kind, loving person who had a great talent and I will miss him. Heaven has received a new, lovely voice.  
Delores Ann (Housman) Safford

**Delores Safford** - January 26, 2019 at 10:57 PM

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“ Mr Butts was my counsellor at Edison 1970 - 1972. During my sophomore year I was a major challenge as a student . . . cut classes a lot and barely finished with a D average. Mr Butts was majorly instrumental in my turning things around! He believed in me and focused on my gifts and talents rather than the things I did wrong (and there were a lot of those!). The upshot of it all was that I made a 4.0 all the way through my Junior and senior years. Who knows what my life would look like now had Mr Butts not taken his time and talents to hep me re-focus.

## Thank you Mr. Butts . . . Rest in Peace!

**Pat Larkin** - January 26, 2019 at 07:45 PM



“ I loved me butts! He was a really funny man and great teacher! He is the reason for my expanded vocabulary- Rest In Peace

**brian pribil** - October 09, 2019 at 03:24 AM

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“ I was a student of Mr Butts at Edison in 1966. He was one of the teachers that left a lasting impression on me. He could read Shakespeare and make it mean something!  
Rest in Peace Mr Butts.

Sally Steiner Lane

**SALLY steiner LANE** - January 25, 2019 at 04:14 PM

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“ I was a funeral director for many years in Tulsa. I worked for Stanleys and Moores. John sang on many services that I was on. He was a wonderful to know. Kenneth Jennings

**kenneth Jennings** - January 24, 2019 at 05:08 PM

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“ I was happy to call Mr. Butts both my English teacher and class counselor when I was in Edison Senior High back 1964-1966. I was in school when he married our favorite music teacher Miss Bilbrey, who introduced me to so many great sounds! They were a great team and the teaching institution has lost yet another wonderful mentor.

God Bless John C Butts!

Sue Wiedemann

**Sue Wiedemann** - January 24, 2019 at 11:34 AM

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“ I had the great pleasure of being a student of Mr. Butts at Edison Junior and Senior high! He was definitely one of every student's favorite! I also had Miss Bilbrey at Patrick Henry Elementary ! One of my favorite classes! I remember when they married, I thought what a perfect pair! I now have grandchildren at Edison and a daughter who works there!

With love and sympathy, Jeanne McGinnis Lee, Edison grad, 1963.

**Jeanne Lee** - January 24, 2019 at 09:29 AM



“ One of my favorite teachers. He provided a good learning environment for our class and was considerate to everyone. Thank you Mr. Butts.

Jan Pennock Ehrle

Janice Ehrle - January 24, 2019 at 08:46 AM

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“ What a wonderful teacher and kind soul! His lessons more than 50 yrs ago still serve me well. Thank you, Mr. Butts.

Diane Misenheimer Lee - January 24, 2019 at 12:47 AM

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“ I worked with Mr. Butts as a counselor's aide at Edison High School. We had many fun conversations and he made a huge impact on my life. John was a very kind man and I enjoyed seeing him around First Baptist Church for years after high school.

Jeri Hunter - January 23, 2019 at 11:01 AM

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“ What a man! I loved caring for John during his time at Zarrow Pointe. My favorite memories were of us playing hymns on the piano. I loved that his obituary/memories mentions his coined phrase “what can I do for you?” because I can hear him saying it like it was just yesterday! Prayers to his precious family!

He is with his sweet bride that he longed to be with for eternity! John, you are home!

Hannah Hill - January 23, 2019 at 10:41 AM

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“ Knowing John taught me that a gentle spirit can be as strong as the mightiest warrior. The pics are John with Derrick, my grandson. He loved the babies!



Eric Kiss - January 22, 2019 at 11:27 PM



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“ I was a Counselor's Aide for Mr. Butts for my Junior and Senior year of high school at Edison. He was a wonderful and very kind man. He would call me on my birthday every year until I was into my early to mid 50's. What a nice man to take the time and effort to do that.. I visited him at Zarrow Pointe Nursing Home last spring and he was unable to talk, but showed emotions that he remembered me. He will be missed.

Craig Murray - class of 1973

Craig Murray - January 22, 2019 at 05:25 PM



“ are you Craig Murray TPD officer? if so, I knew you from TAP , have photos of you, I want to give you. Phone # 9182455103 Alice Johnston' We lived across st, from John & Ava for 25 yrs. they were great friends & neighbors. were like Family to us. Alice & Dan Johnston

Alice Johnston - January 24, 2019 at 04:10 PM



“ I was so very saddened to hear of John's death. As he did for so many others of my family, he sang at my wedding and was accompanied by Ava on the organ! He thanked me for choosing "Jesu, Song of Man's Desiring" for the preparatory song at our Wedding Mass because he loved it! I never hear or sing it without thinking of him and Ava, who made our wedding ceremony so special and blessed. His voice was so very beautiful, and he shared it freely. Love to all who mourn him. Deanna Plunkett Hinterberger

Deanna Hinterberger - January 22, 2019 at 03:43 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of John Carroll Butts.



January 22, 2019 at 03:29 PM



“ Last week, I saw John outside his room. I was pleasantly surprised when he replied in a loud clear, "Hello" when I greeted him. I asked him if he wanted to take a walk. He said that he would like to say hello to everyone. I accompanied him to each of the staff's office as he waved them with a hello! He appeared to be peaceful.

Looking back, this was a poignant moment. I believe he was saying his goodbyes. He was well loved at Zarrow Pointe.

He will be missed. And his absence is fondly felt.

It was an honor to have known him.

Kimgrace Haokip  
Director of Social Services  
Zarrow Pointe

Kimgrace Haokip - January 22, 2019 at 11:49 AM

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“ My fondest memories of Uncle John are of him singing. He sang at our wedding 13 years ago and every holiday since I was little. Uncle John wasn't just spiritual, he was a follower of Jesus Christ and had a desire to serve his Lord. I remember, even from a young age, knowing that Uncle John loved to serve others. He had a genuine heart and although I haven't lived close enough to visit often, I still can hear his voice when I hear the phrase "How great thou art". Although I can't imagine not hearing his voice again, I'm so thankful that he gets to see Aunt Ava and all his family and gets to finally meet his Lord and savior.

Stacy Cook - January 22, 2019 at 11:04 AM

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“ I watched an old video tape of an FBC Christmas program the other night and there was John, in a men's group singing "I Have Seen The Light". As I recall, it was a highlight of the program that year. I also have fond memories of hearing him sing "The Holy City" during the Christmas season. He had a distinctive voice and was a truly kind man whose presence will be missed. Celia Gandee, FBC

Celia Gandee - January 22, 2019 at 09:37 AM

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“ My parents, Orval & Mary May, were good friends of John & Ava Butts. John sang at my sisters wedding twenty-two years ago.  
Ava & my mom enjoyed attending SAI events!  
John will be deeply missed!

In Our Prayers,  
Jim & Sherry (May) Crosby

Sherry Crosby - January 22, 2019 at 07:37 AM



“ He will be welcomed by my parents in heaven. Shauna (May) Bishop

Shauna Bishop - January 22, 2019 at 10:08 AM



“ I loved John & I will miss hearing his voice. He had a beautiful singing voice. I'm sorry he left us but I'll see him again someday. Naomi Lundy

**Naomi Lundy** - January 21, 2019 at 05:44 PM