

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF TONY LAMAIR BURKS by Michael Daub

October 26, 1952 — August 3, 2024

MUSICAL BEGINNING: AMAZING GRACE

INTRO: Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma. Don't let the opinions of others stifle your inner voice. Most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. Everything else is secondary. In the words of Apple founder and entrepreneur Steve Jobs, I would like to welcome you to Tony Burks' funeral and memorial service. We are here today at the cemetery in Sembach to say goodbye to him and also to say goodbye to him ourselves. Tony Burks was a good man! Anyone who knew Tony saw a great strong man. The rock in the surf. Who had a soft and kind heart. Who was popular and whose likable charisma will remain in your memory. Someone whose 71 years of life we want to celebrate today. Someone we want to honor once again. Yes, even though we are saying goodbye to Tony today, we are celebrating his time together. His life here on earth, his lifetime in our midst. This will be an afternoon in which we hear how Tony lived. But it will also be an afternoon where we will have him with us. In our midst. Where he would surely, if he could, throw a delicious, unique steak on the grill and be happy that so many have come. And where his music would perhaps be playing in the background. Songs that he liked and that somehow belonged to him. And some of which we will hear this afternoon. Like this one.

MUSIC: THE TEMPTATIONS - PAPA WAS A ROLLING STONE

READING: THROUGH THE YEAR BY FRANK MAIBAUM

MUSIC: UB40 - RED RED WINE

BIOGRAPHY: Dothan, Alabama. Tony was born there on October 26, 1952. He is the baby of the family. He grew up with his three older sisters. He was an open and curious person from an early age. Someone who was quick to strike up conversations with other people. As a child, he often went out on the children's tractor and explored his home. The years in which he grew up with his parents were sheltered. In any case, he has a special relationship with his mom and dad. It is his mother who teaches him to cook, and he continues to learn and develop. When it came to American cuisine, Tony Burks was a man to be reckoned with. He received an award for this in 2011. Tony finished high school in Ashford, Alabama, in 1970. And walked down the aisle in the same year. He marries Janice and becomes a father in the same year. His son Tony is born.

An eventful and varied life awaits Tony Burks, which we want to celebrate here today. In his private life, he tried again and again with marriage and was not discouraged when a relationship failed. He looks optimistically to the future and accepts the challenge of new beginnings. His professional life also brings a lot of change. He often has to move, his life for the US Air Force takes him to many corners of the world. But first he is a specialist for the Air Force security police in Indiana, later also in Alabama. He made it to the rank of sergeant in the Air Force at the end of the 1970s. Attends several US Air Force academies and continues his education. He also used this knowledge in his private life. In civilian life, he worked for the Montgomery Police Department in Alabama at the end of the 1970s and made a career there well into the 1980s. He specialized in crime victims and was appointed to the Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission in the late 1980s. He works his way up. He ended up as the crime victims' manager for this commission. Respected and with his knowledge, he carries out this job. His military career continued at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. At the end of the 1980s, he became a non-commissioned officer in charge of medical supplies and also rose through the ranks there. In the end, he was in charge of the medical readiness of his evacuation squadron at Maxwell Air Reserve Base in Alabama. He was honorably discharged from there in 2006.

I have already said that his military career took him to many corners of the world and so he finally arrived here in 2006 and worked for the Air Force in Sembach. In the end, he even got to pursue his great passion, cooking - at the Sembach Community Activity Center, he loves to cook on a grand scale for those in attendance. And when he wasn't cooking, whether at work or at home, Tony Burks was at the barbecue. He was a master of his trade. What he prepared on the grill was art. He was an expert in what could be thrown on the grill. Tony's military career earned him numerous awards over the years. There is the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Force Achievement Medal, the Good Conduct Award, to name just a few of the many medals he was privileged to receive. The Armed Forces Reserve Medal should also be mentioned. He was also recognized for his service in the Air Force Overseas Band. He had these awards, but in his own words, he didn't really need them. For him, the things he did were a matter of course. Yes, we haven't even talked

about his passion for music at this point. He was an enthusiastic drummer and band leader. He had rhythm in his blood and his sense of rhythm accompanied many concerts. It was a deep passion for him when he could sit down at his drums and the sticks made their sound.

And it was his passion for music that ultimately brought Alexandra into his life. In 2012, she attended a concert at which he was playing. They start talking and see each other at concerts in the area from time to time. But Alexandra doesn't want more at first. But Tony kept at it. His patience paid off. In 2014, Tony and Alexandra became a couple. At first they still lived in separate apartments. At least more or less, because Alexandra increasingly finds Tony's things and clothes in her apartment. In the end, they move into a house with a garden together in Sembach and settle in. Alexandra has also already gained her life experience, bringing children into the relationship who have long since gone their own ways. And it is precisely these children that Tony asks Alexandra to marry him in October 2019. They agree and he proposes shortly afterwards. The two then say "I do" in June 2020. They both enjoy their time together and travel a lot. Tony had already seen a lot of the world through the US Air Force, but with Alexandra they can now also enjoy city breaks and cruises together. They also visited her family in the USA twice. Tony has kept in touch with her, even since he left the States. But a reunion like this is really something special. His serious illness was discovered in 2023. What follows is a gauntlet, a time of hope and fear, full of treatments and setbacks. Tony fights. Until the very end. But in the end, the disease gets the upper hand. He is too weak to fight it any longer. On August 3, Tony Burks fell asleep peacefully at home in Sembach. In the presence of the people who were important to him. Even his son Tony had come from the USA to say goodbye. The eventful life of this unique man had come to an end.

MUSIC LIVE - MY WAY

Dear Alexandra, dear family, friends and companions. With Tony, you have lost a great person. Someone who was always there. Helpful, cheerful and optimistic. Who, like few others, made the concept of a rock in the surf recognizable. Someone who was given a multifaceted and fulfilling life that we want to celebrate and pay tribute to here and now. To pay tribute once again, to say goodbye once more. This is an important step on the path to accepting grief. And they have each other. Together they carry the burden of grief and pain. Many people think they have to overcome their grief. But that is not the case. Grief is always within you. Like a small mental scar. It reminds us of wonderful people we have lost. Grief comes from the same place as love. This moment means saying goodbye. Letting go. Letting go of everything you have built up in your life and everything that has become dear and important to you. Letting go is always difficult. Even if it is less an act of strength and more an act of consent. And yet we know that everything that does not simply pass away is by no means wiped out when we die. It lives on. Only in a different way. The notes may fade away, but the song continues to exist. With this in mind, I would like to conclude my tribute to the life of Tony Burks with a word from the English writer Henry Scott Holland, which I think beautifully expresses the connections I have just alluded to:

*'Death is nothing, / I have only gone into the next room. / I am me, you are you.....
The thread is not cut. / Why should I no longer be in your thoughts,
just because I am no longer in your field of vision? / I am not far away,
just on the other side of the road. / All is well.*

MUSIC: JEROME ALLEN - BE GRATEFUL

Have you ever asked yourself whether things go on for us after death? Well, Tony had also thought about it. And he was firmly convinced that yes - there is something after that. Perhaps he found the answer for himself in faith. Tony Burks was a very devout person. He never shied away from praying at home or going to church. His faith gave him strength and support in life and certainly also during his serious illness. And so we want to remember his faith, honor this part of his life and also offer words of comfort to those who are left behind as we all pray the Our Father together. May I ask you to rise from your seats.

MUSIC: BEN E.KING - STAND BY ME

Dear family members, friends and companions - I wish you much strength for the upcoming time of change and that you will find support in the memory of Tony and in the shared memory in the circles of those who mourn with you. At some point, we will also be carried along this last path; then people will accompany us; but there is still time until then. Today WE are walking this path back to life; you will then go on into eternity.

MUSIC: LYNRYD SKYNYRD - SWEET HOME ALABAMA