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## RS-obit; 2017-03-01; Mathis, Roy (b)

The Royal Serenaders Male Chorus

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## *Obituary*

*Roy A. Mathis June 7, 1926- March 9, 2017*

Roy A. Mathis was born June 7, 1926 to Eli Mathis and Daisy Hunt in Chattanooga Tennessee. He was the youngest of 10 children, all of whom have preceded him in death.

He attended Howard High School where he met Mildred Brooks whom he married in 1943. From this union six children were born, Cecilia, Yvonne, Roy Jr., Gladys, Deborah, and Tammy.

Seeking employment and a better life, he moved to Buffalo NY in 1945 where he found a job working for the Railroad. Years later, he was employed as a mail carrier by the United States Postal Service. He retired in 1984.

Through it all, Roy's true passion was his music. In high school he was a protégé of Edmonia Simmons, his dedicated teacher. Upon arriving in Buffalo, Roy organized The Mathis Brothers Quartet with his brothers Cecil, James and Ted. After singing together for a while, friends expressed their desire to join in with them, thus the birth of the Royal Serenaders Male Chorus which was established in 1946. Roy was not only the Founder, but its Director, a title he held for 70 years and a distinction that earned him a reputation as one of the area's longest continuous-serving Choral Directors. The Serenaders performed several times a year to packed houses performing Old Negro Spirituals, Hymns, Gospel, Pop, and Opera most of which were transcribed for male voices by Roy himself.

With Roy as their leader, the Serenaders have performed with Amherst Bel Canto, under the direction of SueFaye Allen, and the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus, under the direction of Barbara Wagner. One of his many accomplishments was bringing together both white and black Shriner Chanter groups for a concert at Kleinhan's Music Hall. The Serenaders, once also a Shriner Chanter group competed nationally against other Shriner Chanter groups across the country. Under Roy's masterful guidance, they often came in first place.

His love of music and the Royal Serenaders led him to his wife, Joyce Cameron Mathis, who was the accompanist for the Royal Serenaders. Roy and Joyce were married in 1986 and together attended music conferences every year. Roy was a member of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) and the National Association of Negro Musicians (NAMM). Roy applied the musical techniques he learned at these conferences to his arrangements. In addition to their shared passion for music, Roy and Joyce enjoyed traveling. They visited many places throughout the United States and Europe including several cruises, one of them with his children and their families.

After singing in St. Peters United Church of Christ quartet for seven years, Roy was asked to organize a choir by the late Rev. Phillip A. Smith. In 1981 when the Choir Director position became available at Pilgrim St. Luke Church of Christ, Roy was appointed to the position, a post he held until his death, ministering alongside Rev. Smith, Rev. Bruce McKay, and now the Rev. Justo González II. In 2016, Roy celebrated 35 years of service to the church.

Roy has been recognized with numerous awards and accolades from various organizations including The Distinguished Citizen's Award from Sadoo Enterprises, The Black Achievers Award from 1490 Enterprises, and the Community Leader Award from the National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York. Roy and the Royal Serenaders have been featured in articles in both the old Buffalo Evening News, as well as the current Buffalo News.

On March 9, 2017, Roy transitioned this life at age 90 leaving behind his loving family Joyce Cameron Mathis, his wife of 30 years, his loving daughters Yvonne (James) Darden, Deborah Watkins, Tammy Mathis (Boston, MA) and stepdaughter Rene Petties-Jones. Also left to mourn his passing and celebrate his life are his five grandchildren Nicole Whitfield, Amber Watkins, and Damon Hall and Leon Martin (Baltimore, MD), and Ali Abdullahi (Frankfurt, Germany); step-grandchildren Jennifer, Joshua and Jacquelynn Jones; seven great grandchildren, a step-great grandchild, and a great-great grandchild, as well as a host of nieces, nephews, and many friends and relatives. He was preceded in death by his son Roy A. Mathis Jr., and two daughters Cecilia Henderson, and Gladys Mathis.