



Jeannie Seely Ward

AUG 1, 2025



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Jeannie Seely Ward

AUG 1, 2025

Grand Ole Opry star and country music legend Jeannie Seely has passed at age 85. Seely died peacefully today at 5:00 p.m. CT at Summit Medical Center in Hermitage, Tennessee, as a result of complications from an intestinal infection.

Seely had battled health issues since last fall, which escalated in December following the passing of her husband, Gene Ward. She'd undergone multiple back surgeries this spring for vertebrae repairs, as well as two emergency abdominal surgeries.

As of her last Grand Ole Opry show on February 22, Seely had made 5,397 Opry performances, more than any other artist in the Opry's 100-year history. In 2018 Seely began hosting her own weekly "Sundays with Seely" show on the Willie's Roadhouse on SiriusXM, and her most recent show aired this past Sunday, July 27. A trailblazer and an icon, Seely was considered to be the oldest actively working female entertainer in country music at the time of her death.

Music industry professionals early on praised Seely's soul-inspired vocals which resulted in her being nicknamed "Miss Country Soul," a title used throughout her career spanning seven decades. In 2019, Dr. Jeannie Seely was awarded an honorary Doctor of Arts from Lincoln Memorial University for her many groundbreaking accomplishments in the music industry.

Born on July 6, 1940, in Titusville, Pennsylvania, Seely was raised on a farm along a dirt road outside of nearby Townville. A year ago this week, Seely returned to her roots when new "Home of Jeannie Seely" signs were unveiled in Townville. The ceremony was held at the Townville Fire Station where decades earlier Seely had first performed in front of a live audience.



When she was barely tall enough to reach the dial on her family's big Philco console radio, Seely was tuning in the Grand Ole Opry on radio station WSM 650. At age 11, she began singing for a Saturday morning radio show on Meadville station WMGW, and by age 16 she was performing on TV station WICU in Erie. At Hillbilly Park near Franklin, Pennsylvania, Seely had the opportunity to see and meet performers like Bill Monroe, Ralph Stanley, Jean Shepard, Little Jimmy Dickens, and Wilma Lee & Stony Cooper, never imagining that one day she'd share the Grand Ole Opry stage with them.

Seely was a cheerleader, majorette, and honor student while attending Townville High School, and she sang at local amateur contests and began performing at weekend dances throughout northwestern Pennsylvania. Following high school graduation in 1958, Seely worked for three years at the Titusville Trust Company and continued her education by completing night classes that were conducted by the American Institute of Banking in Oil City, Pennsylvania.

At age 21, Seely packed everything she could into her car, shipped the rest to "General Delivery, Los Angeles" and headed west. She initially took a job at a Beverly Hills bank but left it after a year to take a secretarial position for half the money at Liberty and Imperial Records in Hollywood. With a foot in the door of the music business, she began writing songs for Four Star Music and became a regular act, along with an unknown Glen Campbell, on the Hollywood Jamboree television series. Her songwriting led to her own recording contract on Challenge Records, and a couple regional hits and a West Coast tour resulted.

Seely received the "Most Promising Female Artist" award in 1964 from the Country and Western Academy which later became the Academy of Country Music. A year later upon the encouragement of friend Dottie West who'd recorded one of her songs, Seely moved to Nashville where she signed with Monument Records. Her chart-topping hit "Don't Touch Me" resulted in Seely becoming only the third female



country artist to receive a Grammy Award. After receiving the “Most Promising New Artist” awards from Cashbox, Record World, and Billboard, Seely subsequently went on to appear on Billboard’s country singles chart for 13 consecutive years.

On September 16, 1967, Seely was inducted as a member of the world-famous Grand Ole Opry. She was the first Pennsylvania native to become an Opry member, and then later became the first female to regularly host Opry segments. Widely recognized for changing the image of female country performers, Seely became the first person to wear a mini-skirt on the Opry stage. With fellow Opry member Jack Greene, she formed one of the most successful duets and road shows in country music history. In 2022 the Grand Ole Opry honored Seely for her 5,000+ performances, a record which will likely remain intact forever.

A BMI-awarded songwriter, Seely’s songs were recorded by Country Music Hall of Fame members including Dottie West, Merle Haggard, Connie Smith, Ray Price, Willie Nelson, Faron Young, Ernest Tubb, Little Jimmy Dickens, and Hank Williams Jr. – as well as by artists ranging from Irma Thomas (the “Soul Queen of New Orleans”) to Rhonda Vincent (the “Queen of Bluegrass”), from Chris LeDoux to Moe Bandy, and from Boys II Men to Seal. Seely’s composition “Yours” was named “Song of the Year” at the 2022 Arkansas Country Music Awards.

The star of major stage productions including Always, Patsy Cline, The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas, Could It Be Love, and several others, Seely served as a radio disc jockey on her own Armed Forces Network, traveled on military tours throughout Europe and Asia, and published her own book titled Pieces Of A Puzzled Mind. Recordings by Seely have spanned seven decades from her Top 10 Billboard album The Seely Style to her Curb Records album An American Classic which includes her third duet with friend Willie Nelson. Seely appeared in Nelson’s movie Honeysuckle Rose and sang on the platinum soundtrack album.

In 2018 Seely was inducted into the Music City Walk of Fame which represents all



genres of music. At the inaugural Influencing Women Awards Gala in 2019, the first “Standing Ovation Award” was presented to Seely – and then her name was added to the annual award. In 2022, Seely was the honored recipient of the Legacy Award at The Nashville Women in Film & Television WIFT ALICE Awards Ceremony and Gala Dinner. In 2022 Seely was recognized on the nationally televised Country Music Association (CMA) Awards Show, in 2023 she received the CMA’s prestigious Joe Talbot Award, and in 2024 she was honored by SOURCE with the esteemed Jo Walker-Meador Lifetime Achievement Award.

With the release of her single “Suffertime” in 2024 accompanied by a music video and short documentary, Seely established a new record as the vocalist with the longest timespan (60 years) between recording sessions at historic RCA Studio B on Music Row. Following Seely’s 5,381st performance on the Grand Ole Opry in September 2024, the “Jeannie Seely Interchange” was dedicated at the Briley Parkway exit to the Grand Ole Opry House. In March of 2025, Sony Music Publishing Nashville celebrated Seely during Women’s History Month by releasing three reimagined versions of her songs as collaborations with rising female artists.

In late 2024, a display honoring Seely was added to the “Sing Me Back Home” permanent exhibit on the second floor of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and in November Seely visited her display in person. Seely’s Billboard Most Promising Female Vocalist Award trophy is also on display in a special exhibit located in the museum’s concourse to the Omni Hotel.

Seely’s last public appearance was on March 1, 2025, when she attended the rebranded opening of the Legends of Country Music Museum located in Nashville’s Music Valley area. Her image appears on the outside of the building, and she is honored inside with an updated exhibit. In April 2025, the Studio Space at the SAG-AFTRA office on Music Row was named in Seely’s honor and she was scheduled to attend the formal dedication. Until the time of her death, Seely proudly served as the producer for the bluegrass group Cutter & Cash and The Kentucky Grass and she was



planning to produce their next recording session.

Throughout her career, Seely spearheaded efforts to support and enhance artist, musician, and songwriter roles in the music industry, especially paving the way for females who followed. Instrumental in instilling an atmosphere of fellowship and camaraderie at the Grand Ole Opry – and in any music circle she entered – Seely connected with artists, musicians, songwriters, and industry personnel from all generations and backgrounds.


Seely is survived by numerous friends, family members and her special cat, Corrie. In addition to her husband Gene Ward and her parents Leo and Irene Seely, she was preceded in death by siblings Donald Seely, Bernard Seely, and Mary Lou Seely Lang.


“Jeannie Seely's 5,398th Opry Show” (Celebration of Life) has been scheduled for Thursday, August 14, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. CT at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville.

The Celebration of Life service for Seely will be open to the public. In lieu of flowers, donations in her name are suggested to a charitable organization that benefits pets and/or to the Opry Trust Fund (opry.com/about/opry-trust-fund).

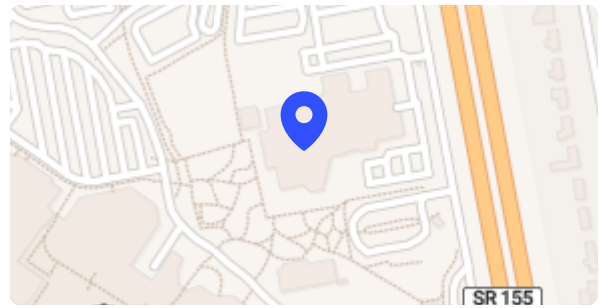


Celebration of Life

 **Thursday**, August 14, 2025

 10:00 AM CT

 **Grand Ole Opry**
2804 Opryland Drive, Nashville TN 37214





Tribute Wall

Jeannie Seely Ward



Verna Knight posted:

Jeannie was always happy and smiling on the Grand Ol Opry show. Loved her voice.

November 19 at 5:06 AM



Verna Knight lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

I am so very sorry to know that Jeannie has passed. I send sincere condolences to all her family and friends. I enjoyed seeing her on the Grand Ol Opry. She had a wonderful voice and the personality of an angel. Rest in Peace JeannieVerna Knight, Strathmore, Alberta Canada



November 19 at 5:04 AM



Donald Mchale lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

The light will always be on at the Grand Ole Opry. You were one of my favorites and you will be missed by so many. Your song and music will live on for years. May you RIP and your memories be a blessing.



September 1 at 6:22 PM



Tammy Delph lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

August 18 at 1:36 PM



Katy Nickerson lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

katy nickerson lit a candle in memory of Jeannie Seely Ward

August 14 at 10:56 PM





Tribute Wall

Jeannie Seely Ward



Katy Nickerson lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

to the family of jeannie seely, my name is katy and i live in nashville with my family. im graduated college from alabama and i was a huge huge jeannie seely fan and always will be. ive enjoyed watching her sing and cracking the most hilariously funny jokes anyone could ever crack on the opry for so so so long. she was so so witty and hilariously funny and i couldnt get enough of her!!!! im so so so sorry for yalls loss of jeannie, my heart hurts for yall as her family and i hope knowing that shes in a better place on the wings of angels in a much better place now with the arms of our lord and savior wrapped around her, that this brings you some sort of peace and comfort in your hard trying days ahead. rip jeannie im gonna miss you as a fan forever, love and hugs to your family!! katy



August 14 at 10:56 PM



Dave Pomeroy posted:

In tribute to her friend Dottie West, Jeannie hosted several fundraising concerts for the Nashville Musicians Emergency Relief Fund, and helped keep our fund going through the pandemic. She was a beautiful person, amazing songwriter, and artist, and I was proud to be on her album "An American Classic" and also to present her with a proclamation thanking her and making her an honorary member of AFM Local 257. She was s excited to be a member. Rest in Peace and Harmony, Dave PomeroyBassist/President, Nashville Musicians Association, AFm Local 257.

August 14 at 3:31 PM



Ruth Bickel shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.



August 12 at 5:42 AM



Ruth Bickel shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

I went to Townville PA to see Jeannie Seely sign unveiling. My mom babysat Jeannie when she was a toddler. My mom was excited when Jeannie became a Nashville star. I love listening to her music. She will be missed 🥹❤️



August 11 at 12:55 PM



Tribute Wall

Jeannie Seely Ward



Stacy Dunn lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

Sending Love and Prayers

August 11 at 4:22 AM



Elaine Lipscomb posted:

All her great music 🎵 and she always was a very sweet lady. Were going to miss her very much.

August 10 at 10:05 AM



Wanda Lawson lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

Wanda Lawson lit a candle in memory of Jeannie Seely Ward

August 9 at 10:05 AM



Lynnae Evans shared 16 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

One of the friendliest and classiest lady's I've ever met! She will be greatly missed. Absolutely love her hit Don't Touch Me. Thank you for the memories ❤️

August 5 at 9:06 PM



Paul Groendes posted:

I enjoyed getting to meet Jeannie Seely several years ago during the Cma Music Fest. It's hard to believe another one is gone.

August 7 at 5:45 PM



Larry Appleby Jr lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

there will never be another jeannie seely or jean shepard still watch country roads reruns all the time those were the good ol days and good country music

August 7 at 8:38 AM





Tribute Wall

Jeannie Seely Ward



Ruth Graham lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

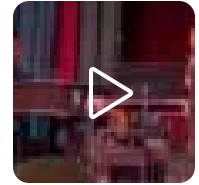
I LOVED Jeannie Seeley's singing,, REST IN PEACE,, YOUR WITH "YOUR LORD' and ANGELS,,, and FAMILY....ruth grahamBluffton Indiana

August 6 at 9:38 PM



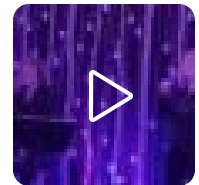
Anonymous shared a video to the **Tribute Wall** album.

August 6 at 6:13 PM



Anonymous shared a video to the **Tribute Wall** album.

August 6 at 6:09 PM



Anonymous lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

Rest in Peace JeannieDesmond Francis McArthur Madras India

August 6 at 3:40 PM



Mary Ann Readnour lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

Beautiful lady

August 6 at 10:41 AM



David Compton lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.

Such a tremendous loss not only to the Grand Ole Opry but to Country Music. Jeannie was a wonderful singer, songwriter, actress and entertainer but more than that she was an amazing person. Deepest sympathies to her family, friends and fans. Rest in Peace

August 6 at 9:53 AM





Tribute Wall

Jeannie Seely Ward



Martin Jensen posted:

I truly loved my Ms Jeannie.....I love all my Christmas cards and a special birthday wish from her one year ...my heart aches so.....will always love my Ms Jeannie....

August 6 at 9:38 AM



Mark Davis lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.



August 5 at 10:12 PM



Mark Davis posted:

Every time I talked to her she was always so cordial and funny. Genuinely sweet lady

August 5 at 10:12 PM



Greg Stephens lit a candle in honor of Jeannie.



August 5 at 9:06 PM



Ruth Bickel shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

August 12 at 5:42 AM





Ruth Bickel shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

August 11 at 12:55 PM





Lynnae Evans shared 16 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

August 7 at 7:30 PM









Media

Jeannie Seely Ward



Anonymous shared a video to the **Tribute Wall** album.

August 6 at 6:13 PM



SCAN TO WATCH



Anonymous shared a video to the **Tribute Wall** album.

August 6 at 6:09 PM



SCAN TO WATCH



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Jeannie by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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