

William Lee Golden & The Goldens

Official Bio (2021)

William Lee Golden is a shining example of a life well-lived. A true American original, the longtime Oak Ridge Boy is also a solo recording artist, painter, and photographer. He is a member of both the Country and Gospel Music Halls of Fame as well as a member of the legendary Grand Ole Opry. These days the 82-year-old icon enjoys the contentment that comes from a balanced life. He's won nearly every possible award for music as well as the love of a good woman and revels in sharing life in his historic Tennessee home with his wife, Simone.

When many people were pressing the pause button during the pandemic, Golden was at his most creative, writing his biography *Behind the Beard* with Scot England, recording a new album with The Oak Ridge Boys, *Front Porch Singin'*, and recording three new albums with his family. Golden gathered his sons Rusty, Craig, and Chris, his grandchildren Elizabeth, Rebekah, and Elijah, and friend Aaron McCune to record *Country Roads: Vintage Country Classics*, *Old Country Church Gospel*, and *Southern Accents: Pop & Country Rock*.

"I feel like these recording projects and videos with my sons will ultimately be my greatest legacy in music," William Lee says. "I'm baring my heart and soul."

Golden's musical journey began in tiny Brewton, Alabama where he grew up on his family farm. Surrounded by music, he started singing at the age of seven and began performing regularly on his grandfather's weekly radio show along with his sister, Lanette. It was there that his love of harmony came alive and by his teenage years, Golden grew to appreciate the country Gospel, doo-wop, and pop quartets. "The first time I sang in a quartet was in high school. I was in the 11th grade and I sang with the Future Farmers of America, FFA Quartet," he recalls. "Each chapter would compete with the other chapters and the school that I went to presented me with a big banner when we won the district in 1956. I knew I wanted to pursue music. It was one thing that took my mind away from any problems, lifted me up, and filled me with joy and happiness."

In January 1965 he landed his dream job when he became a member of The Oak Ridge Boys. Golden's rich baritone not only helped define the group's distinctive sound, but he was also a savvy leader who recruited Duane Allen, Joe Bonsall and Richard Sterban, the current members who have now been with the group for decades. Golden was also instrumental in shepherding the Oaks' transition from a successful gospel quartet to one of the most award-winning groups in country music. The beloved quartet has sold over 40 million records and scored more than a dozen No. 1 singles and over 30 Top Ten hits. Their numerous Gold and Platinum recordings include "Ozark Mountain Jubilee," "Elvira" and "Thank God for Kids," which has become a signature song for William Lee. The Oaks have won numerous accolades, including five Grammy Awards, one American Music Award, four Country Music Association (CMA) Awards, four Academy of Country Music (ACM) Awards, the 2008 ACM Pioneer Award, ten Dove Awards, and the 2010 President's Honor.

In addition to his accomplishments as an Oak Ridge Boy, Golden has also recorded and released such critically acclaimed solo projects as 1986's *American Vagabond* and 2000's *My Life's Work*. He has received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Alabama Music Hall of Fame and has received the Entertainer of the Year Award from the Cherokee Indian Association, which is comprised of 21 tribes from across America.

But for as much success as he's had as a recording artist, Golden is no one-dimensional talent. He's found considerable success with his paintings and he's finding even more acclaim with his new visual medium, photography, where he often focuses on landscape portraits and scenes. "I've always had an interest in the arts," Golden says. "I started taking stuff to paint on the road and began doing landscapes. So that's what I've done, and I still have most all of my paintings."

Golden's creativity knows no bounds and that extends to his iconic style. Known for his "Mountain Man" look, Golden has sported waist-length hair and beard for decades and is one of the most instantly recognizable entertainers in the world. "With all the success came a very fast-paced agenda," he shares. "The mountain man look and Indian way of life appealed to me because it brought me back to my childhood where the simple things in life meant the most. I wanted to stop and see myself as God made me."

Family has long held a special meaning to Golden. In addition to his wife Simone, Golden has four sons in Rusty, Chris, Craig, and Solomon. Golden

also has six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Also, through his marriage to Simone, Golden has a stepdaughter Megan and another grandchild.

All his life, Golden has bravely pursued his visions and lived life on his own terms. "Throughout life, you've got to keep your focus," he says. "A lot of people will try to take you down side roads that you don't want to go, but you've still got to keep your focus on who you are, what brought you to the game, and what game you are playing to win. I want to be able to sing what's in my heart. It's certainly a mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual release to get it out of me. It's been such a stimulating experience to do all of this. I've been deep into exactly what I love and not allowing myself to get distracted and pulled away from finishing these projects. It's been a daily thing. Move that ball. It's got to move forward every day."

Golden has been moving forward every day for more than eight decades and shows no sign of slowing down. After all, how many octogenarians record four albums and write a book during a pandemic? That's William Lee Golden—always on the move, always creating and always turning visions into reality.