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OFFICIAL OPRY PICTURE-HISTORY BOOK

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Vice President George Bush smiles approvingly as Roy welcomes him to the Opry stage.



“For many years our biggest drawing card was Uncle Dave Macon. However from the Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee there descended upon us in 1937 a young man who was destined to become a leader in his field of entertainment. His head and heart joined the fingers which handled his fiddle and bow and it was not long before he started to burn up the countryside like a forest fire.”—George D. Hay, the Solemn Old Judge, founder of the Grand Ole Opry, Circa 1945.

Country Music Hall of Famer, King of Country Music, highly successful business man, philosopher, singer, fiddler, Flea Market Expert, Roy Acuff is one of the most beloved men ever to walk on stage of WSM’s Grand Ole Opry. Yet the man who is perhaps most famous for such monumentally important country song standards as “Wabash Cannonball” and “The Great Speckled Bird,” never even sang professionally until he was almost 30 years old.

Born in Maynardsville, Union County, Tennessee, Roy grew up with sports very much on his mind both as recreation and as a potential career. A three-letter man in high school in Knoxville, Roy was a follower of the exploits of such heroes as Ruth and Gehrig, and dreamed fondly of the day when he too would be running basepaths for pay. The day never came, for Roy, while on try-outs for a professional ball club, fell victim on three separate occasions to sunstroke. Roy later commented on this turning point in his life, I reckon the good Man up above said, ‘Roy, you’re not gonna play baseball—you’re gonna do something else,’ so he knocked me down with a sunstroke.”

The “something else” was inspired by his father, a missionary Baptist minister, and local Knox and Union County lawyer, who also played fiddle and collected records of the great mountain fiddle songs. Roy began learning the fiddle himself by trying to play the songs on the records his father brought.

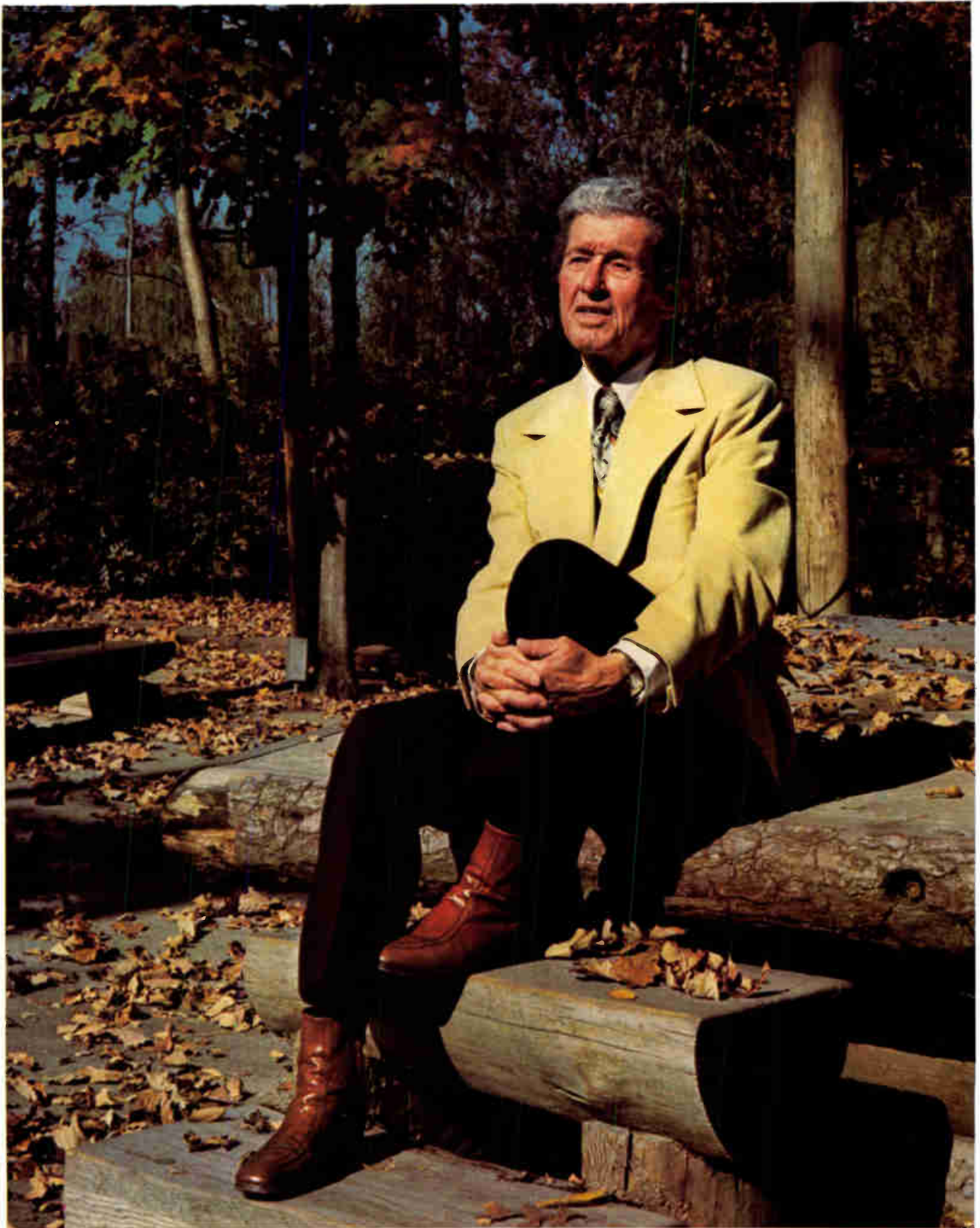
Roy joined a medicine show that was traveling through the mountains of Virginia and East Tennessee, where he did his first professional entertaining, as fiddler and singer. This, he vaguely remembers, was “about 1932.”

The medicine show experience led to his first recording in 1934, about the same time he began singing on WNOX and WROL in Knoxville. Three years later, he moved to Nashville to join the Grand Ole Opry, where he’s been a regular ever since.

Several years later Acuff became acquainted with Fred Rose a featured singer on WSM Radio. In 1942, the pair formed Acuff-Rose Publications, one of the first and most successful publishing firms in Country Music.

The title, “King of Country Music,” was bestowed on Roy by baseball-great and long-time friend, the late Dizzy Dean. Still an avid baseball fan, Roy spends many summer evenings at Greer Stadium, home of the local Nashville Sounds minor league baseball team.

The vision of Roy Acuff, cavorting on stage of the Grand Ole Opry House remains undimmed. There, the fans will find him on many Saturday nights of the year, singing the great strains of “Wabash Cannonball,” and the other country classics with which he is so closely identified.



BILL ANDERSON

Within the broad expanse of Country Music there is a core of songwriters who are constantly aware of new ideas and trends but who, at the same time, remain consistent to the roots of Country Music. Bill Anderson is among that core. If it's new and innovative in Country Music, Bill Anderson is aware of it . . . and in many cases responsible for it.

Anderson is a singer, but he is foremost a songwriter. His first hits like "Where Have All The Heroes Gone" are as timely today as when they were first written. Bill's writing has been the terra firma of Country Music greats from Waylon Jennings and David Allen Coe to Connie Smith and The Statler Brothers. Aretha Franklin, Bing Crosby, Wayne Newton and Glen Campbell are among the Superstars who have recorded Bill Anderson songs. He is one of the "Three All-Time Greatest Country Music Songwriters" according to a Billboard poll. His road show has been described as "the wave of the future," incorporating multimedia effects as well as state of the art sound and lighting.

As a songwriter, Bill has few peers. He has written literally hundreds of songs, many of which have become hit records for himself and for other country music stars. He has received 49 BMI awards (more than any other country music composer), and has been honored as Male Vocalist of the Year, Songwriter of the Year (five times), and with Jan Howard, Top Duet of the Year.

A member of the Country Music Songwriters Hall of Fame, Bill has composed such hit songs as "City Lights," "Still," "Tips of My Fingers," "Po' Folks," "I Love You Drops," "If You Can Live With It," "Quits," and scores of others. He has to his credit over 50 hit singles, 36 albums, and 15 trade paper awards.

An entertainer in every sense of the word, Bill was the first country artist to host a network game show, appearing on ABC-TV's "The Better Sex." Bill has also appeared on ABC-TV's Daytime Soap Opera "One Life To Live" on several occasions, one of which was the network's reconstruction of the Grand Ole Opry. Of his television highlights, Bill's hosting of the nationally syndicated TV show, "Backstage At The Grand Ole Opry," may be the greatest. As a member of the Grand Ole Opry, having joined in 1962, hosting the "Backstage" show involves Bill in the first regular TV show to ever feature the Opry.



Jeanne Pruett and Bill as they appeared on the popular ABC daytime soap opera, "One Life to Live." Taped in New York, the network spent over \$20,000 to build an exact replica of the Grand Ole Opry stage for Jeanne & Bill's performance.

Personable and soft-spoken, the South Carolina-born entertainer is a former newspaperman who broke into the music business as a disc jockey at a small radio station in Georgia. He is a graduate of the University of Georgia with a degree in journalism.

During the past 17 years, Bill has never lost his love for radio. As if he did not have enough to occupy his time, Bill purchased several radio stations. Quite naturally, the stations program country music, but also place important emphasis on community service with local news and sports. Bill is now the chief spokesman and best customer of the national Po' Folks Restaurant chain. If there's a Po' Folks Restaurant in your area, stop in for a tasty meal and tell them Bill sent you.

Despite the demands of his career, Bill always finds an ample amount of time to spend at home in Lebanon, Tenn., with his wife Becky and son Jamey. Although hard work is something Bill thrives on, he acknowledges, "I like the serenity and quiet of home."



I'M PO
BUT
I'M PROUD

ERNIE ASHWORTH

Ernie joins friends and business associates Jim Tungate and J.R. "Bug" Albert, right, as they watch the early construction of a family/amusement theme park named Country World Amusement and located in Nokomis, Ala.



It's a long way from the cotton fields of Huntsville, Alabama to the stage of the world famous Grand Ole Opry, but Ernie Ashworth has proved that with enough determination, ambition and hard work, it can be done. Ernie became an Opry fan at an early age and dreamed that someday he could become a part of this great show. He came to Nashville in the early fifties and joined a band as their vocalist doing night club work in the Nashville area. He always had a talent for writing songs and admits that he could write songs before he could play music.

Once he arrived in Nashville, he had the chance to play his songs for some of the music publishing companies and his songs were recorded by some of the top country artists including Carl Smith, Little Jimmy Dickens, Johnny Horton, Wilma Lee Cooper and others. During this time he met Wesley Rose who took Ernie under his wing and signed him as an exclusive writer for Acuff-Rose Publishing Company and recorded him on M.G.M. But recording success was to evade him at this time so, in 1957, Ernie went back to his home town of Huntsville, Alabama and started work at Redstone Arsenal in guided missile work.

In 1960 he was again contacted by Wesley Rose who told him Decca records wanted to record him and this time he was on his way. His first record, "Each Moment" went into the top 10 national

charts. His next record, "You Can't Pick A Rose In December," was another top 10. He had two other top 20 records for Decca before changing to Hickory records, a label owned by Acuff-Rose. His string of top 10 records continued including "Everybody But Me," and "I Take The Chance." In 1963 came the smash hit he had been waiting for, "Talk Back Trembling Lips." This one went to #1 and stayed on the national charts for 36 weeks. It did quite well in the pop charts also. It was one of the nations first crossover records.

In March of 1964 Ernie saw his lifelong dream come true when he was invited to join the Grand Ole Opry. After this came more top 10 records, "A Week In The Country," "I Love to Dance With Annie," "The D.J. Cried," "At Ease Heart" and more. From 1960 to 1970 every record recorded by Ernie hit the national charts. Twelve of these were top 10. Quite an accomplishment for any artist.

Ernie owns radio station WPIK in Flomaton, Alabama. He now records for O'Brien records and hopes you will soon be seeing more top 10 records by Ole Ern. He is married and has four children. His wife's name is Bettye and his children are Rebecca, Mike, Mark and Paul. Mike plays rhythm guitar with him on the Opry and Mark and Paul work at his radio station. When someone asked Ernie what drew him to the entertainment field, he just smiled and said, "It's more fun than the cotton field."

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GRAND OLE OPRY STAR

Ernie Ashworth

OWNER



BOXCAR WILLIE

Actor John Ritter and Boxcar Willie are all thumbs backstage at the Opry.



Boxcar Willie is a relatively new name to Country Music fans, but one that is fast becoming known and loved around the world.

Until a few short years ago, Boxcar Willie was an unknown singer and disc jockey in Texas named Lecil Travis Martin. For years, he sang and played around Texas and the upper Midwest with little success until his decision to incorporate a hobo image into his act. Since then, he has had a rush of successes.

"My Dad hoboed before he was married," Boxcar relates. "And after my Dad retired from the railroad and went to tenant farming, I used to hop the boxcars into Waxahatchie, Texas to pick up supplies for the family."

Young Lecil grew up to the sight of hoboes chopping wood, washing dishes, sharpening kitchen knives with a whetstone and carrying out ashes from the wood stove in exchange for a meal. He also learned to play guitar.

And that's where Boxcar Willie, conceived in a shack in the Depression days, was finally born.

Now, shuffling out on stage in pin-striped overalls, old jacket, brown hobo hat and tattered shoes, Boxcar thrills audiences everywhere with his spirited renditions of "Daddy Was A Railroad Man," "Wabash Cannonball," and "The Lord Made a Hobo Out of Me."

Boxcar Willie has been a European favorite since

his first appearance at the Wembley Festival of Country Music in England several years ago. Over one million albums have been sold by Boxcar in Great Britain alone, and with his American TV album ads going strong, this quiet, unassuming gentleman is becoming one of the hottest Country Music attractions in the U.S.

Boxcar has played most of the nation's auditoriums and appeared on scores of TV and Radio shows. But the highlight of his career came on February 21, 1981 when Boxcar Willie joined the Grand Ole Opry Family.

That night Roy Acuff introduced him to the packed Opry House audience. "Mr. Acuff, I had been practicing and dreaming for 40 years of being on the Grand Ole Opry," he said. "I'd been rehearsing my speech for that long. And now, I'm speechless." So rather than talk, Boxcar broke into a spirited medley of train songs and hobo ditties, highlighted by a rendition of Acuff's own trademark, "Wabash Cannonball."

"Sure, I've always had my sights on the Opry," Boxcar recalled. "But after my mother died and my dad wasn't able to cope with it, I moved back to Dallas. I was married by then and I had to think more seriously about making a living."

Well, he's making a good living now for his wife and three children, and Country Music fans around the world are happier for it.



JIM ED BROWN

Jim Ed Brown describes himself and his career in one word—consistent. He is a 25-year show business veteran with a consistent string of hit records and his star continues to shine.

Music has always been important in the life of Jim Ed. On Saturday nights the family listened to the Grand Ole Opry over a battery operated radio in Sparkman, Arkansas. Sister Maxine would order song books advertised on the Opry so they could sit and sing along with the Opry stars as the announcer called out the page.

All that practice paid handsome dividends, when in 1954, Jim Ed and Maxine had their first opportunity to record in Shreveport, Louisiana on the Fabor Label. The road to fame was wide open when the two wrote the ditty, "Looking Back To See," but nobody realized it at that time. The pair submitted the song to RCA Victor and to King Records, and to most of the other major labels, but the tune was rejected. Meanwhile, Jim Ed and Maxine went to Nashville to appear on Ernest Tubbs Show which was broadcast from his world-famous record shop. Don Law of Columbia Records heard the pair and liked their songs. They signed a recording contract with Fabor and their first recording session included Jim Reeves playing rhythm guitar and Floyd Cramer on the piano, "Looking Back To See" was a hit record. Sister Bonnie joined the group in 1955 and from then on they were billed as The Browns.

The Browns joined the Ozark Jubilee with Red Foley in 1955, and signed with RCA Victor in 1956. Then in 1959, they recorded "The Three Bells" and it made an explosion in the music industry, selling over a million copies. They subsequently appeared on all the big network TV shows and became members of WSM's Grand Ole Opry. After the Browns joined the Opry, the trio became internationally famous and traveled all over the world . . . to Europe several times and to the Far East where Jim Ed later recorded in Japanese. They won all the awards a vocal group could win at that time.

In 1965, Bonnie and Maxine persuaded Chet Atkins to record Jim Ed as a single. His first recording as a soloist was "I Heard From A



Jim Ed shares a back stage joke with Opry Manager Hal Durham.

Memory." Following this, Jim Ed began touring as a single artist, and in the late sixties the sisters decided to retire from the music business to stay at home with their families.

Jim Ed continued to grow as a star in his own right with hits like "Southern Loving," "Pop-A-Top Again," "Sometime Sunshine" and "Morning". Every song he has recorded since has made the charts, up to and including the back-to-back number one smash hits "I Don't Want To Have To Marry You," "Saying Hello, Saying I Love You, Saying Goodbye," and "Born Believer."

A lot of things and a lot of people have influenced Jim Ed Brown; people such as the great singer Jim Reeves, and Chet Atkins at RCA. Jim Ed has a determination to do the very best possible job he can do . . . a determination that is evident in every performance he gives. His easy-listening voice and professional poise shine through whether he is entertaining at a county fair, as he did when he was first starting out, or an appearance before millions of viewers on network television. Brown continues to be consistent, and along the way has built a strong following of fans who remain loyal to the balladeer from Arkansas.



ARCHIE CAMPBELL

Hall of Famer, Pee Wee King, and Archie reminisce about the good ole days during the annual "Grand Ole Opry Homecoming Show."



An artist can fall into one or more of many categories; Archie Campbell is an artist who fits several.

This native of Greene County in East Tennessee is first and foremost an entertainer excelling in both music and comedy. Secondly, he is a songwriter, and authors virtually all of his material. Finally, he is a painter of note, a man capable of capturing on canvas anything from serious landscapes to humorous caricatures.

In fact, Archie painted the beautiful 6 X 10 foot mural, shown on the next page, that hangs in the artists' lounge backstage at the Grand Ole Opry House.

Perhaps Archie's earthy humor and love of mankind stems from his childhood days in Bulls Gap, Tenn. (Today, he's known as the "Mayor of Bulls Gap.") There, he, his brother and two sisters enjoyed a hilarious and happy rearing. He later studied art at Mars Hill College, (Mars Hill, N. C.), but found the entertainment field was more lucrative than art. He moved to near-by Knoxville and began concentrating on it.

After a Navy stint, Archie returned to Knoxville, where he had a radio show on WNOX, featuring guests like Chet Atkins and Carl Smith. "Would you believe that was so long ago, Chet was appearing as a fiddle player," quips Archie.

Moving to Nashville in 1958, he became a Grand

Ole Opry member, signed an RCA recording contact and has spent the subsequent years wallowing in radio, TV, movie, personal appearances, hit records and script writing success.

Archie is well known as a comic and writer on the famous television series, "Hee Haw." The Campbell wit has also sparkled on several hit records, including "Rindercella," "Beeping Sleauty," "Pee Little Thrigs," "Trouble in the Amen Corner," and "Rojo." Archie has that rare ability to combine comedy with music, and he can handle the guitar, ukulele and bass with self-taught proficiency. In 1969 he was honored by the Country Music Association as "Comedian of the Year."

Warm, personable and always equipped with his familiar cigar, Archie devotes a tremendous amount of his time to worthy causes—like spearheading a statewide March of Dimes campaign, where he covered Tennessee in a helicopter in efforts to raise money for the unfortunate. He's been cited on many occasions by organizations like the American Cancer Society and is currently serving on the board of directors for the Southeastern Indian Antiquities Survey Inc., a research and educational project under construction near Nashville.

Archie is a man who doesn't sweat life or "get all ulcered up" as he puts it about making money. He's having too much fun.



Shelia Carlisle is surrounded by the rest of the "Carlises." Left to right: Bill, Bill, Jr. and Marshal Barnes.



When it comes to country comedy hit records, Bill Carlisle has always hit the right spot at the right time. Like an archer with his bow drawn and ready, Bill has shot to the top in country humor with such records as "Too Old To Cut The Mustard," "What Kinda Deal Is This?" and "Poke Salat Annie."

The story behind Bill Carlisle demonstrates the endurance of a solid musical background, a family background that spirited Bill on his way to the top.

"When I was growing up, our family'd get together for a good old-fashioned sing-along every Sunday," recalls Bill. "We had quite a chorus with Mom, Dad, my four brothers, two sisters and me. Those were great days back in Wakefield, Kentucky, and I'm sure they had a lot to do with my becoming a musician and entertainer."

Indeed they did, for Bill never once ventured away from his want to be a country star. He continued singing at home, and then organized his own group, The Carlises and headed for the big time.

On his first big radio engagement in Cincinnati, Bill and The Carlises recorded a song that brings memories to many country fans: "Rainbow At Midnight." That song was the initial success that started Bill and The Carlises on their long, highly-successful journey into the country music spotlight.

"Knoxville was the country music center in the early '50's," explains the broad-grinning Bill, "so we packed up our show and moved from Ohio to Tennessee." The talented group joined such famed performers as Don Gibson, Chet Atkins, The Carter

Family, Homer and Jethro, Carl Butler and Archie Campbell, and that is company enough to play to standing ovations for months on end.

Naturally, talent such as the Carlises was not left unnoticed and, in 1953, Bill and his group received an invitation to join the Grand Ole Opry. In addition to "Too Old To Cut The Mustard" and "What Kinda Deal Is This?", "No Help Wanted" and "Poke Salat Annie" have been such tremendous hits that numerous other artists have recorded them.

Some artists kick one foot up as they finish a song, some throw their guitar to their side, some wiggle, some bend way over their mike, and then there is Bill—he jumps. "I just do it, always have," Bill replies candidly. That is the end of a very important question.

Still, "jumping" is not the only adjective to pounce upon this beloved country star. Wise would be another. Bill was wise enough when he began his career to know that comic songs were his bag of tricks, and he has never disappointed his fans.

Another adjective for Bill Carlisle is enduring. His style, his manner, his personal touch in country music have carried on steadily through the years.

The Carlises consist of his children, Shelia and Billy, plus, the "best undiscovered country singer in the world," Marshal Barnes, who plays bass fiddle for the group.

Bill and his crew have been crowd pleasers for over 25 years and no doubt will remain favorites for years to come.



JERRY CLOWER

Jerry, a noted sports enthusiast, and Talent Manager Tandy Rice pose with Jerry's very own baseball team, a group of energetic 15 to 17 year olds.



"I am convinced that there is only one place where there is no laughter and that's Hell. I have made arrangements to miss Hell, 'Praise God,' I won't ever have to be anywhere that there ain't no laughter."

Jerry Clower is his real name. The stories he tells really happened. The laughter that greets these stories is the real thing. Not canned. Jerry Clower is a humorist with albums which tickle the nation's funnybone. He's made guest appearances on top shows in television and radio, and requests pour in for engagements as speaker and professional entertainer. But there's more. Listening to Jerry is not merely listening, because Jerry does more than tell a story funny: he carries his audience along with him, on that coon hunt or whatever. The locale may be regional, but the humor is universal.

What is it that makes Jerry a good entertainer? What it is can be seen surfacing in his background: His mother says that he was always talking. It's as natural for Jerry to tell a story as it is for a politician to make a promise. And Jerry is not delivering material conjured up by a staff of writers. The basic part of every story is, to quote him, "something real that has happened to me or almost happened!"

Jerry's growing up was typical of country boys all over America. He loved sports; and, with his friends, sat glued to the battery radio listening to ballgames. His favorite food was french fries with molasses, but home-raised groceries included hog meat, biscuits, chicken, sweet potatoes, and don't knock it if you've never played tackle in the line.

At home Jerry and an older brother, Bill (Sonny), shared the chores. Jerry did the milking and 'tended

to the cattle and took his turn building the fire each morning—one in the summertime (in the kitchen stove), two in the winter.

The fertile imagination received early cultivation: Jerry and his friends were resourceful at developing their own entertainment. A Saturday afternoon when they were not working would find them in the pasture having a rodeo, which meant rounding up a bunch of calves and riding them. Or down at the creek playing 'gator. Or Tarzan. Or they might go coon or rabbit hunting. They didn't sit around waiting for a recreation director to come and organize a game.

In addition to the staggering number of speaking engagements, guest spots include: The David Frost Show, the Charley Pride personal appearances, Mike Douglas Show, Country Crossroads Radio Show, the Bill Anderson and Wilburn Brothers TV Shows, and as a regular member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1973. Jerry has sold millions of record albums, has taped radio and television commercials, both local and national, and his apt ad libs are the joy of all talk show hosts. He has written two books: "Ain't God Good!" and "Let the Hammer Down."

Jerry's show business career is based on one thing, being natural, being himself. Roy Clark has remarked, "he brought back some memories that I cherish, but I was about to forget them." Jerry Clower sells the really good life—laughter, remembering the fun you've had, the friends, the simple things you enjoyed, the humorous side of even the bad time.



John, one of the Opry's newest members, gets some sage advice from veteran Bill Carlisle while pretty Connie Smith looks on.



"JOHN CONLEE ARRIVES IN COUNTRY MUSIC" read the headline in the entertainment section of the Denver Post. Indeed. He's been called the "phenomenal new voice in Country Music" by the Cleveland Plain Dealer. *Cash Box Magazine* named him, "The best singer to come along in Country Music in a long time." The Academy of Country Music voted John 'Best New Male Vocalist' in 1979 plus the Country Music Association has twice nominated him as 'Best Male Vocalist' and "Rose Colored Glasses" was up for 'Album of the Year.' A spectacular achievement for a relatively new artist.

At the bottom of all this excitement is a sincere and sensitive man who can translate lyrics into feelings as well as anyone. John is also an accomplished songwriter having penned two of his biggest hits: "Rose Colored Glasses" which is on its way to becoming a standard, and "Backside of Thirty," a gutsy ballad about the emotions of divorce and loneliness. His riveting live performance of Micky Newbury's "American Trilogy" always holds concert audiences spellbound.

He's appeared on many network and syndicated television and radio shows including Dinah!, The Mike Douglas Show, The John Davidson Show, Hee Haw, Pop Goes the Country, That Nashville Music,

Backstage at the Opry, and more. In addition, John performed in an ABC-TV movie titled "The Girls in the Office." His concert appearances from Knott's Berry Farm in Los Angeles to Gilley's in Houston to New York's Lone Star Cafe are consistent successes. John joined the Grand Ole Opry in February 1981.

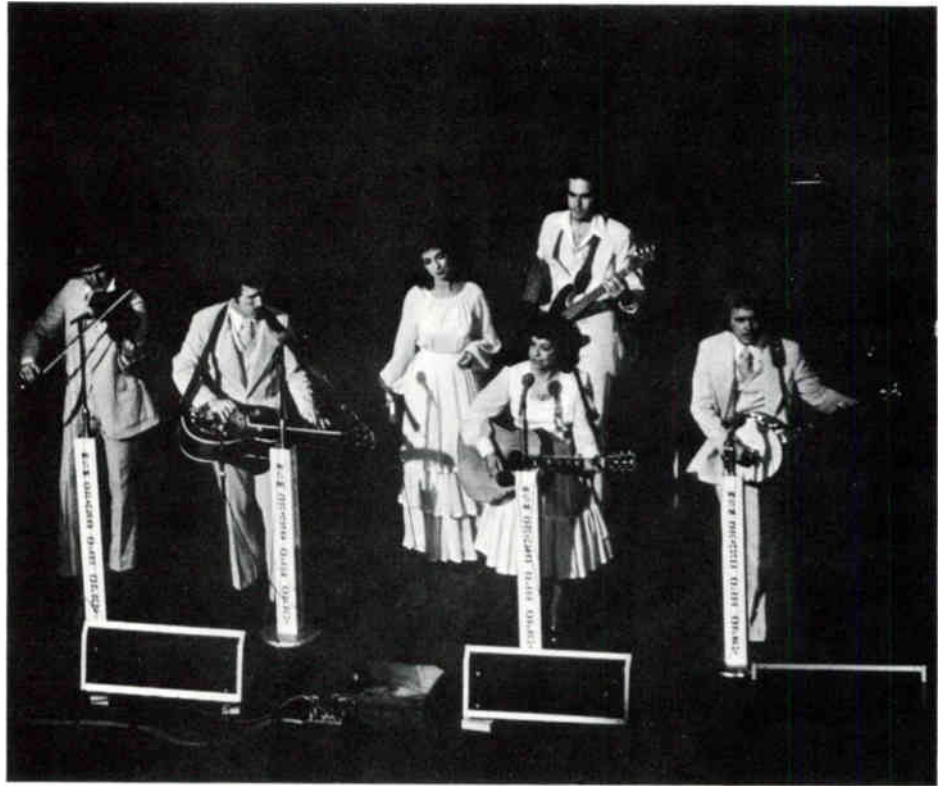
John began perfecting his musical skills at the age of eight by taking guitar lessons in Lexington near hometown Versailles, Kentucky. Valuable experience was gained during nine years as a radio announcer. In that period, John learned a rapport with audience as well as an understanding of the music business. That, combined with his unquestioned natural talent, add up to today's accomplished entertainer. His group, known as Carolina Fever, consists of some of Nashville's finest musicians.

John Conlee's attitudes lend themselves to career longevity. He insists on the finest material for his albums. More and more of Nashville's prominent songwriters are obliging. At his insistence, there will never be what is known as 'filler' on a John Conlee Album. This same meticulous selection process applies to his concert music. As John says, "The song is what's important. You get that and build from there." John Conlee continues to build a name that already signifies quality.



WILMA LEE COOPER

Wilma Lee, daughter Carol Lee, and the entire Clinch Mountain Clan perform a traditional old time mountain favorite for a packed Opry House crowd.



Wilma Lee Cooper is just now approaching the pinnacle of her musical career. A featured member of the Grand Ole Opry cast since 1957, Wilma Lee is one of it's most respected artists. She and her Clinch Mountain Clan are the finest practitioners of authentic traditional mountain music.

Wilma Leigh Leary grew up in the wild and beautiful mountains of West Virginia. Her marriage to Dale T. Cooper created a team that was to make an important place for itself in the history of Country Music. "Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper and The Clinch Mountain Clan" recorded for Columbia Records such classics as "Tramp On The Street," "Walking My Lord Up Calvary's Hill" and "The Legend Of The Dogwood Tree." Successful chart records on the Hickory label followed, including "Come Walk With Me," "Big Midnight Special" and "There's A Big Wheel."

Country Music has no better trouper than Wilma Lee Cooper. Through the years she's worked virtually every important regular Saturday night radio-stage presentation in the country and she remembers fondly the days of traveling two lane highways between one night stands, sometimes with very little sleep. Her "dues" are paid in full.

Following "Stoney's" death on March 22, 1977, Wilma Lee assembled a talented group of young musicians to comprise "The Clinch Mountain Clan." She exhibits intense pride in their character and integrity as well as in their musicianship and never fails to introduce them on a show by name, adding emphatically ". . . I'm proud of every one of 'em!"

As the first and foremost lady in Bluegrass Music, Wilma Lee is a rarity in a practically all male form of music. But hardly so rare and so unique as her powerful, clear and true singing voice, backed by her big D-45 Martin Guitar, the fiddle, five string banjo, dobro guitar and bass. The fascinated promoter of an outdoor Bluegrass Music festival, listening to her performance over the large sound system, summed up his assessment in a few words, "she's a thoroughbred."

Wilma Lee Cooper is indeed a "thoroughbred" and her music is fully as authoritative and original as is her voice. Alternately sad, happy and plaintive, her songs seem to suggest the clean mountain air, the rugged slopes and lush meadows of the best of West Virginia.



THE CROOK BROTHERS

KIRK MCGEE

Herman and Lewis Crook—better known as the Crook Brothers—help make up one of the oldest groups on the Grand Ole Opry. They have been bringing their old time country style music to the Opry since its beginning in 1925.

“Back in the early days—before the Opry was actually started,” says Herman, a harmonica player, “we used to get two or three together and go around to different houses to play for folks. We didn’t charge anything. It was just for fun.

“We had gathered at a certain home one Sunday afternoon and the people told us about a young lady down the street who played the piano. I suggested they invite her to join the playing, and they did.” The young lady became Herman’s wife, and has since played with the Brothers on many occasions.

Groups such as this made up the original Grand Ole Opry. There were the Crook Brothers, the Possum Hunters, the Gully Jumpers, Sam and Kirk McGee and the Fruit Jar Drinkers. In those days most of the Opry people were instrumentalists. Singers were rare and the real heroes were the banjoists, guitarists and the fiddle players.

Since then many of the original groups have combined or swapped members until it is hard to tell who is who any more. Some of the Gully Jumpers and Possum Hunters have even become part of the Crook Brothers.

Every Saturday night these grand old men still bring their instruments to the Opry House and perform in the same fine tradition that built the Grand Ole Opry so many years ago. And they seem to be getting better with age.



David Kirkland McGee was born November 4, 1899 on a farm in Williamson County, Tennessee near Franklin. He is one of the oldest Opry members. At the age of thirteen he began learning to play the banjo. And by his twentieth year, Kirk started out on his own, joining a medicine show which was traveling through Alabama.

In early 1925, Kirk joined brother Sam and Uncle Dave Macon making personal appearances throughout the South. In May of the same year they recorded in New York City for Vocalion Record Company.

A band called “The Dixie Liners” was formed in 1927 and consisted of Kirk, Sam and fiddler-singer Arthur Smith. “The Dixie Liners” were the first act to be booked from WSM Radio Station for personal appearances. Their first booking was in the small mining town of Clintwood, Virginia. For seven years, “The Dixie Liners” toured Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina; coming home only about every two weeks for a visit with their families and to appear at the Grand Ole Opry.

When Arthur Smith left the group and went to the west coast, Sam and Kirk became known as “Sam and Kirk McGee, the Boys from Sunny Tennessee.” “The Boys from Sunny Tennessee” traveled with Roy Acuff’s tent show, Bill Monroe, Hank Williams, Grandpa Jones and many other greats covering most of the forty-eight states, Canada and Nova Scotia.

One of the highest honors bestowed on Kirk and Sam was an invitation in 1968 from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., to appear at their Folk Festival. Here they were acclaimed as true pioneers of Country Music.

Sam and Kirk performed as a duo until Sam’s accidental death in August 1975, while working on his Tennessee farm. Since then Kirk has continued to entertain with Hubert Gregory and the “Fruit Jar Drinkers” each Saturday evening, bringing the Opry fans authentic ole time country music.

Representing over 200 years of Country Music, the Grand Ole Men of the Opry are: left, Herman Crook, Hubert Gregory, and Kirk McGee.



The Crook Brothers—Lewis and Herman Crook with Earl White



"The Fruit Jar Drinkers," Kirk McGee and Hubert Gregory.

SKEETER DAVIS

Skeeter Davis spent her growing-up years as the oldest of seven children on a farm in Dry Ridge, Kentucky. In high school she and her best friend, Betty Jack Davis, joined voices in harmony to perform as the "Davis Sisters." Their local performances led to a regular show on Radio Station WLEX in Lexington, Kentucky and from there they moved to WJR in Detroit. Soon they were signed to a recording contract with RCA Records. In 1953, their first effort, "I Forgot More Than You'll Ever Know" was a number one best selling record and the Davis Sisters were on their way to the top when a tragic auto accident took the life of Betty Jack and critically injured Skeeter.

During her slow recovery from the accident, Skeeter was encouraged by her many friends, both in and out of the music business, to continue performing and recording as a solo artist. In 1954, she resumed her career by touring with the RCA Caravan of Stars, and for the next few years, she traveled and performed with Hank Snow, Eddy Arnold, and Elvis Presley.

Between 1953 and 1973, Skeeter has recorded and released over sixty single records and thirty albums, all of them for RCA Records, including occasional duets with such fine male singers as Porter Wagoner, Bobby Bare, and George Hamilton IV. Skeeter has received five "Grammy" award nominations for the following hit records: 1959—"Set Him Free," 1964—"He Says The Same Things To Me," 1965—"Sunglasses," 1967—"What Does It Take (To Keep A Man Like You Satisfied)," 1972—"One Tin Soldier."

She was the first pure-country female artist to sell over one million records when, in 1963, her release of "The End Of The World" earned a gold record for her and became the Number One "Pop" record of the year as well as the Top Country Record. This proved to be a great contributing factor in opening the doors of pop music radio stations to many other country artists who have enjoyed the benefits of crossing over to a larger audience.

In 1958, Skeeter received the Cash Box Magazine Award as The Most Promising Female Country Vocalist. In 1960, she received the Music Reporter Magazine Award for her disc of "(I Can't Help You) I'm Falling Too." In 1963, she won the Music Vendor Award for "The End Of The World" and their Citation Award as the Top Female Vocalist of

Skeeter Davis, with her father, William Penick, accepts birthday greetings backstage at the Opry.

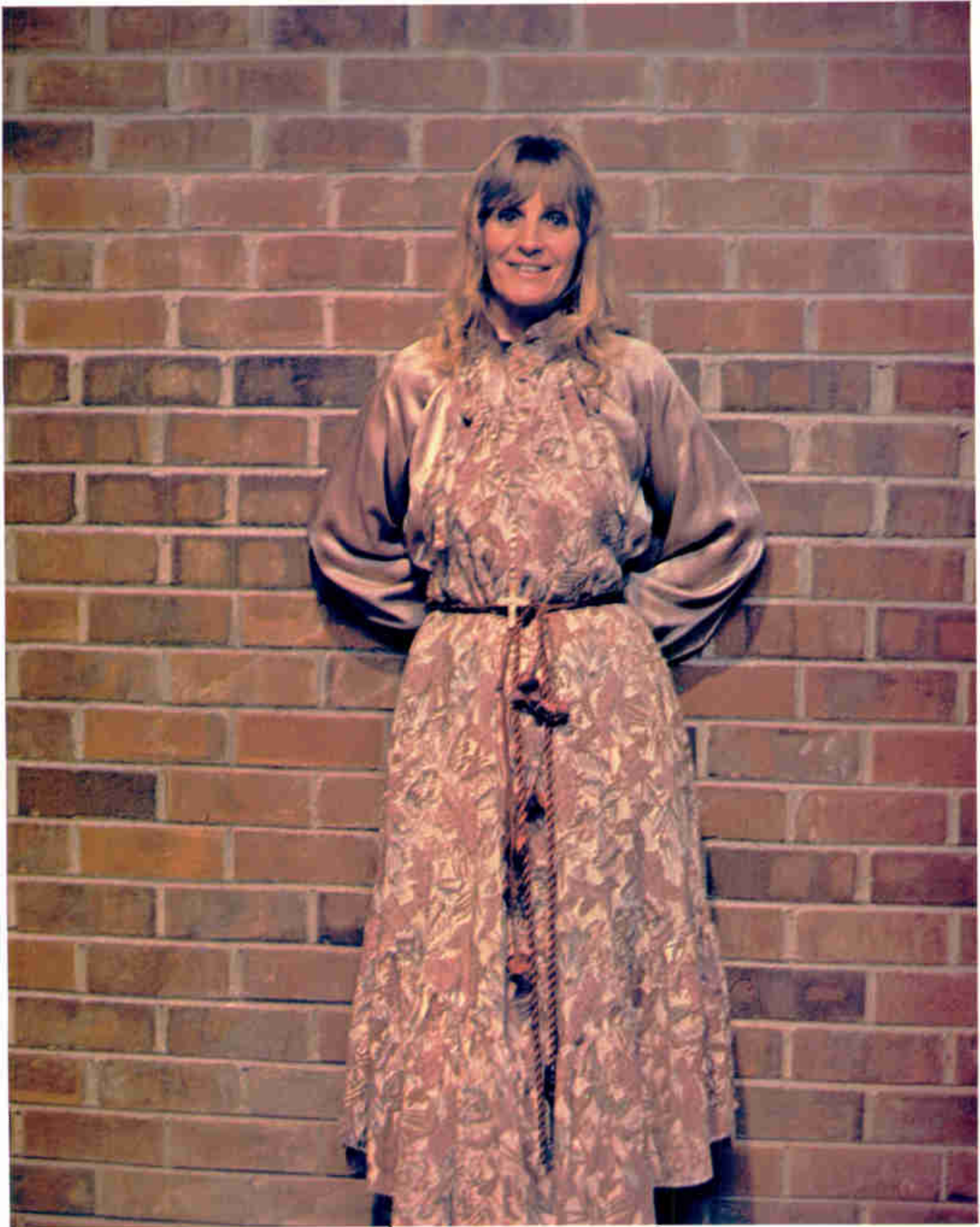


the Year. The Bill Gavin Award for having the Number One record of the year, "The End Of The World." And the Music Reporter Award for Entertainer Of The Year. In 1965, the Peter DeRose Memorial Award was presented to Skeeter for her recording of "Somebody Loves You."

As a songwriter and/or as a music publisher, Skeeter's den wall is lined with awards from BMI and ASCAP for such songs as "Set Him Free," "My Last Date (With You)," "There's A Fool Born Every Minute," and "Bus Fare To Kentucky." Skeeter's accomplishments have included world-wide acceptance from such distant shores as Indonesia and Japan to the Virgin Islands. She has received Platinum Record trophies from South Africa and Norway to celebrate the outstanding sales of her records there.

Skeeter first became familiar with country music listening to radio broadcasts by the Carter Family when she was just a little girl in Dry Ridge. Later, she would stay up at night to hear the Grand Ole Opry broadcasts and dreamed of someday singing on the Opry herself and meeting some of the great stars like Ernest Tubb. Both dreams came true in 1959 when she became a permanent member of the Grand Ole Opry and a part of Ernest Tubb's road show.

It would seem that anyone as busy as Skeeter would have no time for a private life at all, but Skeeter enjoys relaxing at her home in Brentwood, Tennessee or her 300 acre farm in nearby Thompson Station with friends and family dropping in to visit with her and her constantly growing collection of exotic pets (including an ocelot named Fred).



JIMMY DICKENS

Little Jimmy and wife, Mona, share a few moments together in the dressing room just before Jimmy's next Opry appearance.



When Jimmy Dickens was in his teens, he decided coal mining wasn't for him. It was a wise decision for Jimmy and a lucky one for his millions of fans.

Jimmy, the youngest member of a family of 13 children was born in Bolt, West Virginia. His initial start in radio was at a local radio station WOLS, at Beckley, West Virginia, where he opened the station's program "crowing like a rooster". Though he had to walk to and from the station, he loved being in radio, and set his aim for the entertainment field.

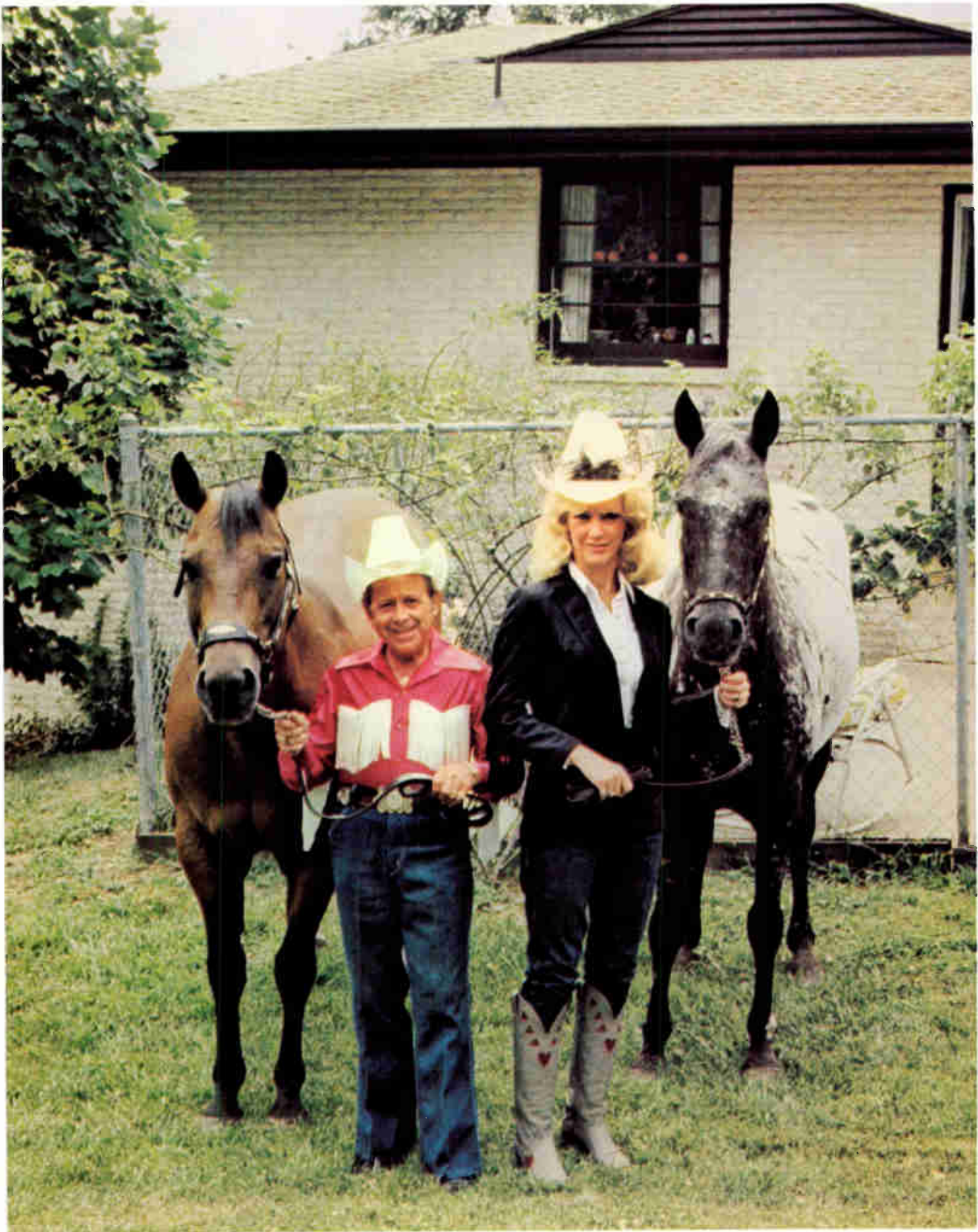
After winning local acclaim, he moved to such other places as WIBC in Indianapolis and WLW in Cincinnati. It was later, at Saginaw, Michigan that Roy Acuff offered "Little Jimmy" his big opportunity—to join the Grand Ole Opry. Jimmy immediately organized his own band, and the resulting success led to personal appearances throughout the world.

In the spring of 1964, Jimmy became the first Country Music artist to completely circle the globe on a world tour. After many years of world-wide popularity in the Country Music field he also won a

place in the Pop Music spotlight with his recording of "May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose." Because of this hit, Jimmy appeared before millions on six major network television shows: "Hullabaloo," "The Jimmy Dean Show," "The Lloyd Thaxton Show," "The Johnny Carson Show," "Ninth Street, West," and "Hollywood A-Go-Go." The latter show was seen not only in the United States, but in seven foreign countries as well. In addition to the frequently-traveled European circuit, he is also a big favorite in the Orient.

Jimmy has a long string of record hits including: "Ole Cold Tater," "Country Boy," "A-Sleepin' At The Foot Of The Bed," "Out Behind The Barn," "We Lived It Up, Now We've Got To Live It Down," "I'm Just Blue Enough," "Life Turned Her That Way," "We Could," "Raggedy Ann," and many others.

Although small in stature, Little Jimmy Dickens is recognized as one of the most dynamic performers ever to grace a stage, and is a giant among his fans and friends.



ROY DRUSKY

Roy Drusky presents the famed Carol Lawrence to the Opry audience.



From the time when he was five years old Roy Drusky dreamed of becoming a professional baseball player. “I ate, slept and breathed baseball,” he admits. But baseball was not to be a part of his professional life. The switch did not occur because of lack of talent—he was offered a tryout with the Cleveland Indians—but because music became the dominating factor in Roy’s life.

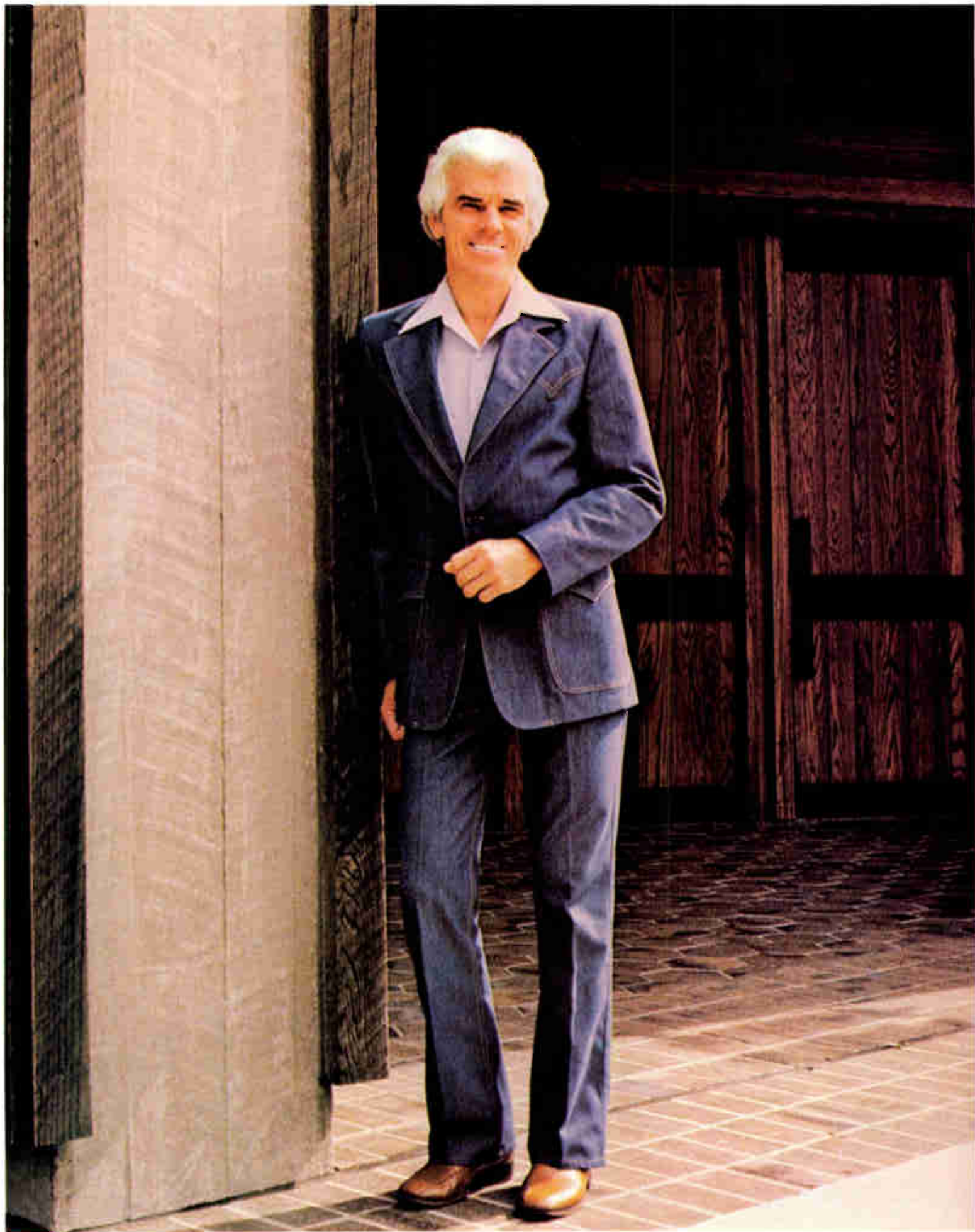
If anyone had asked Roy’s mother about her son’s ambition when he was still a youngster, chances are she would never have answered “music.” Mrs. Drusky was a church pianist for twenty years and, of course, it was a natural thing for her to want Roy to obtain some musical training. However, baseball practice and piano lessons were not compatible, and the result was that the piano never held any appeal for him. Singing was a different matter. The Young People’s Choir at the Moreland Baptist Church offered Roy the opportunity to express his musical ability and yet allowed plenty of time for athletics. No one realized, then, including Roy, that his church singing would be laying the foundation for a career later in life.

Music took over Roy’s life once he began performing regularly over WEAS Radio in Decatur, Georgia. There was no doubt in Roy’s mind but what music should be his occupation. He was offered and accepted a job announcing on WEAS in addition to performing. Soon he added two weekly television shows in Atlanta to his activities and many “live” shows all round that section of the country. He was contacted by Radio Station KEVE in Minneapolis with an offer to work at the station and

to perform regularly at one of the top clubs in the country. Though he regretted having to leave his hometown, Roy felt the offer was too good to refuse and was soon on his way to the far north. “My time in Minneapolis proved to be both pleasant and invaluable,” says Roy. “I didn’t realize what devoted country fans those people were in the upper Midwest. I got a boost to my career and my ego during my eighteen-month stay.”

Songwriting, as well as singing, was the eventual cause that brought Roy to Nashville. While working in Minnesota he had made several trips to Music City to record. Finally he got the break he needed with “Alone With You,” which jumped into hit territory. Faron Young, who was on the Capitol label at the time, was also having good luck with the song at the same time. Realizing that he must take advantage of the success generated by his song, Roy moved to Nashville where he could have the opportunity of employing all his talents. After a relatively brief period of time, the Grand Ole Opry beckoned him in 1958 and Roy’s name went on the roster of the world’s most renowned country music show. Roy has had over 50 chart records—10 of which were Number One. He has over 35 albums to his credit and over two dozen music awards.

When Roy is in town you can expect to find him at home with wife, Bobbye or out with the boys, who share his enthusiasm about sports. Remembering his childhood, he understands what is needed for strengthening family ties and encouraging youngsters to follow the better ways to manhood.



THE 4 GUYS

The wonderful world of music has warmed the hearts of many people over the years. From the early '40's, harmony has played a major role in creating musical avenues for many vocal groups, one giving way to another, but none ever forgotten. The Ames Brothers gave us their style in the '40's. The Sons Of The Pioneers saw us through the years of western movies, and The Platters brought in a fine new touch in harmony that carried on throughout the '50's. The Beach Boys and Beatles claimed the spotlight in the '60's; the Eagles updated the group sound with several hits in the '70's. Fantastic sounds.

In the late '60's, another very special group was born, and unlike their predecessors, they weren't labeled as "easy listening," "western" or "pop". Unlike their contemporaries, their appeal is to a much broader audience and they capture a following of children and grandparents alike. Drawing from a country background, their ability to create a unique sound by blending easy western and pop music is unequalled today. Country music, which has gained a vast audience in the last few years, is a combination of many sounds drawn from other areas in music, a blend of feelings, of melodies . . . and quite appropriately has catapulted The Four Guys as one of today's finest vocal groups.

The Four Guys, now individually Sam Wellington, Brent Burkett, Laddie Cain and John Frost, began drawing critical acclaim in West Virginia while working on WWVA's Jamboree USA. A move to Nashville was inevitable. The Guys were in Music City just three short months before making a guest appearance on the world-famous Grand Ole Opry, where they introduced their beautiful arrangement of "Shenandoah." Subsequently, they became the first vocal group in Grand Ole Opry history to become regular members without a hit recording, and today still hold the unbelievable record of 33 consecutive "encore" appearances.

Masters of harmony they are, for few other groups can sing "I Believe in Music," "Tumbling Tumbleweeds," "Rhinstone Cowboy" and "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" and leave their audience believing these songs are theirs and theirs alone. Intricate arrangements are, in part, responsible for the sound that belongs to The Four Guys. Any one of them can take the lead in a song, as they often do, showcasing each individual voice. As Sam puts it,



Left to right: Brent Burkett, Laddie Cain, John Frost, and Sam Wellington hold a last minute rehearsal at their Harmony House Restaurant prior to another exciting dinner show.

"We let the song itself dictate as to who will take the lead. We're also getting back to each of us taking a couple of lines, keeping the low, easy blend; the close harmony with western overtones."

The Guys are more than master musicians; they are artists in the field of sound. And they have interesting views on everything from The Grand Ole Opry to how to work all together as a group. They feel that The Grand Ole Opry is the greatest thing to ever happen to country music and will live on long after they are gone; that there's no such thing as a bad audience . . . only a bad performance; and that signing autographs is a lasting thing, something they can leave with their fans over and above just a moment or two on stage. Probably the most important feeling with a vocal group is aptly expressed by Brent, "We all have very high opinions of each other . . . we like each other, and that's rare."

In August of 1975, The Four Guys opened their tremendously successful Harmony House Theatre-Restaurant in Nashville. And when The Guys go on the road, entertainers such as Larry Gatlin, The Drifters, Barbara Mandrell, Jerry Wallace, and Donna Fargo can be seen, thus maintaining the club's high performance standard.

Undeniably, total talent is what qualifies Sam, Brent, Laddie, and John as one of our country's finest vocal groups. Harmony is the key work, both personally and professionally, when you think of The Four Guys.



LARRY GATLIN & GATLIN BROS.

William Jennings Bryan once said that “destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.” Larry Gatlin is fulfilling his destiny.

Within the past few years, Larry Gatlin has moved from a position as a great songwriter to his current status as one of America’s fastest rising singing stars.

There is no question but that Larry is gifted. What must also be stated is that he’s been working on perfecting his gifts by preparing for the big opportunities.

Born May 2 in Seminole, Texas, Larry has been performing in public for nearly 20 years. When he was six years of age, he sang with his young brothers Steve and Rudy in a gospel group that appeared at family and church gatherings.

Their father was an oil driller who moved from job to job taking his family to eight different towns in one year alone. Through all their travels, music and religion were their mainstays. They settled in Odessa, Texas, and whenever such gospel groups as the Blackwood Brothers or the Statesmen came to town, The Gatlin family went to see them.

While attending the University of Houston on a scholarship, Larry heard that the Imperials, a gospel group, would be backing Elvis Presley at Las Vegas and they needed a baritone. Although he didn’t get that job, Larry had the opportunity to work with the Imperials for a month during a later engagement in Las Vegas with Jimmy Dean. Also on the bill was singer Dottie West.

“Dottie offered to help me,” recalls Larry. “She said I looked enough like Mickey Newbury that maybe I could write a song. I sent her eight songs and a month later she sent me an airplane ticket to Nashville. This was in May of 1971.”

Dottie recorded two of those eight songs, “Once You Were Mine” and “You’re The Other Half Of Me,” and helped get others recorded. She also played one of Larry’s tapes for Kris Kristofferson, who alerted Fred Foster, President of Monument Records. Fred signed Larry, as well as the Gatlins, and he produced Larry’s first album, “The Pilgrim,” which was released in January of 1974.

“Songwriting is my craft and I’ve really worked hard at it. I used to listen to Kristofferson and try to express myself as well as he does. I’ve also studied writers like Roger Miller, Mickey Newbury, and Red Lane, but you can’t copy anyone. You have to find



The Gatlin Brothers Band are always Opry favorites. Pictured are left to right: Steve, Larry, and Rudy.

your own way of expressing your own ideas,” he says.

One of the key ingredients in Gatlin’s success is the active participation of Larry’s brothers Steve and Rudy. Not only are the three great friends, but both Steve’s and Rudy’s contribution is a major reason for the act’s popularity worldwide.

“Larry Gatlin’s Greatest Hits” showcases all of his major singles during the past five years with Monument Records. The album vividly shows Larry’s progression over the years both as a singer and a songwriter. His concert performances, anchored by the steady playing and vocals of his brothers Steve and Rudy, are constantly improving. Recently, he has been garnering rave reviews from hosting the Midnight Special and appearances on the Johnny Carson and Dinah Shore shows. He has also been the subject of two BBC-TV specials in England, and prompted a movie based on his song, “Penny Annie.”

These new realities indicate that Larry, as Billboard Magazine once stated, is “the superstar of the future . . . the most in-demand new performer in the music world.”

Larry Gatlin is indeed fulfilling his destiny.



When considering great Country Music talents, Don Gibson's name has to be high on the list. As a song writer/artist Don has composed such classic standards as "Oh, Lonesome Me" and "I Can't Stop Loving You." More than 150 artists have recorded the later classic (Elvis Presley three times, for example) and Don's dividends from the song even include a gold record for the Ray Charles version.

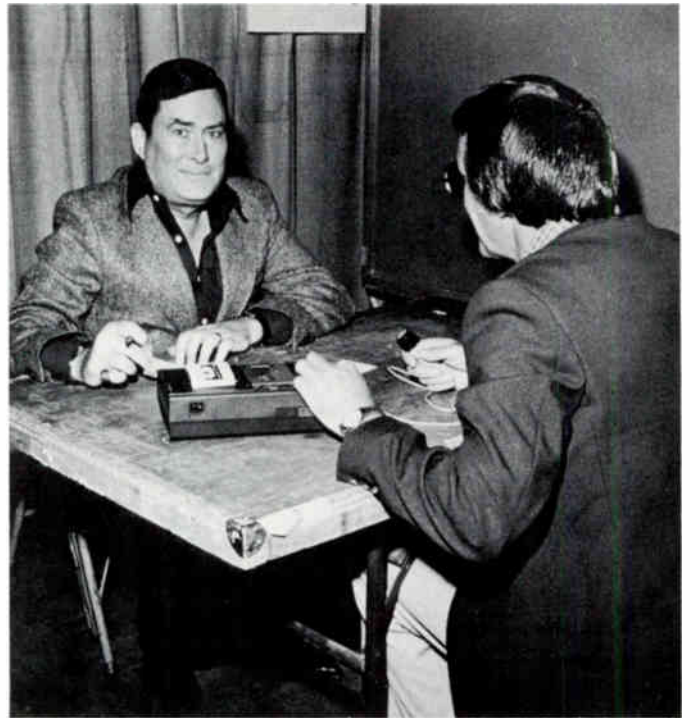
Don knew he had something special the day he composed "I Can't Stop Loving You." He thought less of "Oh, Lonesome Me," written the same afternoon. "I thought it was nothing at all, so I sent it to Nashville and said, 'Give it to George Jones. It might make him a good number.' I had no idea I'd ever cut it, but Chet Atkins and Wesley Rose said that was the one they wanted me to record. I said, 'I don't want to do that junk. I thought you'd give it to George.' Well they insisted, so I said, 'I'll do it if you let me put 'I Can't Stop Loving You' on the back. I think it's the best song.' They didn't want to. Then they said they would but they weren't going to push it, and they didn't."

And to prove that it wasn't a fluke Gibson also wrote "Blue Blue Day," "Legend in My Time," "Sweet Dreams," "Too Soon To Know," "Guess Away the Blues," "Country Green," "Who Cares," and scores of others.

Yet you can't separate Don Gibson the songwriter and Don Gibson the singer and musician. In recent months Don Gibson the singer has taken center stage with a greatly expanded personal appearance schedule and a continuous flow of fine, hit recordings from Hickory. "The songwriting and the performing are entwined," Gibson said recently. "And I thoroughly enjoy both."

As a teenager he worked at a variety of jobs, in the textile mills in his native North Carolina, "hopping curbs and even delivering baby diapers," he recalled. And all to make enough money to finance his efforts to be an entertainer and songwriter. Don's father was a railroad man and there were three brothers and two sisters so at an early age Don was on his own.

He was still a youngster when he moved to Knoxville to perform on the WNOX "Tennessee Barndance" and "Midday Merry-Go-Round." He soon organized his first band and a busy schedule of one-nighters and club dates in the area followed. And then he met Wesley Rose, president of



Don Gibson ponders a question during the Artist/D.J. Tape Session at the recent Opry Birthday Celebration.

Acuff-Rose Publications in Nashville. Rose heard some of Don's songs and sought him out. And just as Rose's father, Fred, discovered Hank Williams, Wesley discovered Don Gibson.

Don signed a song writing contract with Rose and a recording contract with RCA Victor followed in short order. His first single was "Too Soon To Know," and it was a good recording. But the second one was the smash hit. It was "Oh, Lonesome Me," which swept every major award in the country music field in 1958. During this period Don joined The Grand Ole Opry as a regular. He rejoined the Opry in 1975.

But the nicest thing that ever happened to him, in his own words, "is her," his wife, Bobbi, a beautiful, charming girl from his home town, Shelby, N. C. Don's current hobby revolves around sport cars.

With all his many successes—including one movie, "From Nashville With Music"—what goals are there left for this giant of the country music industry? Don Gibson stops to think a moment when asked that sort of question. "To top myself," he will answer, finally. "I'd like to write another hit as big or bigger than, 'I Can't Stop Loving You,' and I think I can do it, too."



BILLY GRAMMER

Billy generously shares his birthday cake with friends backstage at the Opry. From left: Debbie Logue, secretary to Opry General Manager Hal Durham, standing beside Debbie, Jean Shepard, and Roy Acuff.



Success did not come easy for the son of a farmer and coal miner who was one of 13 children born on a farm in Illinois. And it couldn't happen to a nicer guy. Billy's quiet but confident manner, whether it be a radio, TV or stage performance, is a refreshing experience.

Billy was born at Benton, Ill., and spent the most memorable part of his childhood fishing on a trot line in the Wabash River, where he dreamed of becoming a mechanical engineer. But he had developed a love for the guitar early in life. His father was an exceptionally fine fiddler and taught him to accompany him at playing for pie suppers and various local functions.

Billy graduated from high school, was briefly in the Army, and spent an apprenticeship as a tool maker. Following the war, Billy, along with thousands of others, found himself without work. He got word of a possible opening with Connie B. Gay, at that time a Disc Jockey, with WARL, Arlington, Virginia, who was promoting Grand Ole Opry acts

in that three-state area. He hitchhiked to Arlington, auditioned, and got the job.

In 1958, shortly after "Gotta Travel On" crested as a million-seller, Billy was signed as a regular cast member on the Grand Ole Opry. Billy was an instant hit, due in part to his professional experience with Jimmy Dean, Grandpa Jones, and Hawkshaw Hawkins during his pre-Opry days.

Although he travels many miles a year, Billy says the most difficult part of his work is selecting the right song for recording sessions.

Billy and his wife, Ruth, who were married in 1944, live with their children in the Nashville area. As is the case with most Opry performers, Billy Grammer has very few free days. When they come though, he's out on some river or lake with the trot line, or checking over his guitars.

And he continues that painstaking search for great songs—such as "Gotta Travel On," and "Bonaparte Retreat."



JACK GREENE

“Lord, Is That Me?” was a number one song for Jack Greene, but it is also a question he occasionally asks himself in glancing over his very distinguished career.

Jack’s career—unparalleled in many ways—began when he was 14 years old in his native East Tennessee. It is still being written as he continues to be one of the most popular entertainers in country music and one of the favorites with the Grand Ole Opry audiences.

The tall, talented Jolly Giant is one of the most affable fellows around, always with a grin creasing his face and a story to tell. His stories characteristically deal with his years on the road as a drummer for Ernest Tubb’s Texas Troubadours or as leader of the highly successful Jack Green Show. One thing is certain, Jack’s talk always centers around country music. Country music is his life and he’s proud to tell the world about it.

One of the high points in Jack’s colorful career was in 1967. This is the 12 month period that folks in the entertainment world still refer to as “The Jack Greene Year.” What a year it was!

It was the year that Jack recorded the monstrous hit, “There Goes My Everything.” The single held the number one position on the national charts for seven weeks, dropped to number two for two weeks and then hit number one again for another two weeks. The album, by the same title stayed at the top of the charts for a year.

It was also the year that Jack completely dominated the Country Music Association Awards, garnering wins in the categories of Single of The Year, Album of The Year, Song of The Year and Male vocalist of The Year. Jack went straight from being a drummer and singer with Ernest to being the top male vocalist of the year . . . a feat still unmatched in country music.

This was just the beginning. He followed that with eight other number one hits including, “All The Time,” “What Locks The Door,” “You Are My Treasure,” “Until My Dreams Comes True,” “Back In The Arms Of Love,” “Lord, Is That Me?,” “Love Takes Care Of Me” and “Statue Of A Fool.” Jack



Jack Greene welcomes the enchanting Carol Channing to the Opry stage.

also had two number one hit albums, a hit single with Jeannie Seely and many award nominations including several for the prestigious Grammy Award.

“The awards are nice and I like to get them, but they are not the reason I sing. Music is my life and it is more important to me to please my audiences,” Jack says seriously. “Nothing can take the place of those special feelings when you have played your best and the audience realizes this and shows their approval. I perform my music for me and for the people. If I can continue doing this, I am happy.”

Jack is a modest man who will talk about himself or his career only when he is prodded. He had rather keep you spellbound with colorful road stories or talk about his beautiful farm located north of Nashville where he spends his free time tending cattle and working the soil.

He doesn’t glance backwards often, but when he does the impact of his achievements startle him. It is times like these that he softly asks “Lord, Is That Me?”



It has been said that Tom T. Hall is to modern country music what Ernest Hemingway is to modern American literature. To be sure, Tom T. is one of America's great balladeers, capturing in song the time-old story of the human condition. Like Hemingway's novels, there is an honest simplicity to Tom T.'s songs which blends realism with sentimentality.

In a professional career spanning some 16 years, Tom T. has written a variety of songs on such topics as sneaky snakes and old dogs to beer and miracles. Appropriately nicknamed "The Story teller," he writes and sings about subjects and people he has experienced in his life. As is the case with any truly gifted writer, Tom T.'s work contains all the elements of universal truth. It is his ability to convey the essence of life that attracts throngs of people to his concerts no matter where he performs.

Following an eight-year stint with the United States Army where he was stationed in Germany, Tom T. began his career as a disc jockey in Roanoke, Virginia. By this time the urge to write began to manifest itself and he started forwarding songs to publisher Jimmy Key in Nashville. Impressed with Tom T.'s songs, Key urged him to move to Music City. Tom T.'s salary as a writer was \$50 per week, and he lived on this sum until his songwriting royalties started flowing in.

A member of the Songwriters Hall of Fame, Tom T. has earned one or more BMI awards each year since Jimmy C. Newman recorded "DJ For A Day," the first Tom T. Hall song ever recorded.

Tom T.'s solo recording career began in 1967 when he signed with Mercury Records. Since then he has had eleven number one records and has eight albums to his credit, including two very successful lps for children.

Some of Tom T.'s best known tunes include: "Ballad of Forty Dollars," "I Love," "The Year Clayton Delaney Died," "Old Dogs, Children and Watermelon Wine," "Sneaky Snake," "I Like Beer," "Your Old Man Loves You Honey," and "Country Is," among many others.

In addition, in 1968 Tom T. and Jeannie C. Riley became a famous team when the Hall-penned classic, "Harper Valley PTA" swept the national country charts. It sold over six million records and



Opry announcer, Tony Lyons and Tom T. watch the camera and await their cue before going on the air during the live telecast of the Opry over the national PBS network.

was the basis for a movie of the same name. So respected as a writer Tom T., at one time, had six songs in the charts recorded by other artists.

Tom T. has also authored two books, "How I Write Songs, Why You Can," and "The Storyteller's Nashville," which is not only an autobiography of his own life, but also chronicles the growth of the Nashville music industry. A writer in the truest sense, he is presently working on his first novel for Doubleday.

Tom T. rejoined the Grand Ole Opry in March 1980, he also hosts the syndicated television show, "Pop! Goes The Country," filmed at Opryland featuring country music's top talent.

An early morning riser when not turning or performing, Tom T. is usually hard at work writing before most people have had their first cup of coffee. Uniquely honest and earthy, Tom T. admits he has an insurmountable urge to ask why things happen. "I write songs so I can depict the inside workings of people," he says.

Despite fame and the increasing demands of his career, Tom T. is still a very private person. He leads a quiet life with his wife Dixie on their 60-acre farm, "Fox Hollow," south of Nashville.



GEORGE HAMILTON IV

George Hamilton IV signs hundreds of autographs during the exciting Fan Fair each June in Nashville.



George Hamilton IV had always wanted to work in country music and—although side-tracked by pop success with “A Rose and A Baby Ruth,” and its follow-up teenage laments like “High School Romance” and “Why Don’t They Understand” (the last named making Britain’s Top 20 during March 1958)—made the move to Nashville in 1959.

The transition went smoothly and, during the opening years in town, George made his presence felt with a succession of country hits that included “If You Don’t Know I Ain’t Gonna Tell You,” “Before This Day Ends,” “Fort Worth, Dallas Or Houston,” “Truck Driving Man” and—the biggest country smash of them all—“Abilene.”

Moreover, he realized one of his life’s ambitions and was invited to join the select cast of the Grand Ole Opry in 1960, country music’s longest running “live” radio show.

But George Hamilton IV had always been an innovator and possessed an inquiring mind eager to investigate other musical realms. Around the time of his “Abilene” success he began to fall under the influence of the American Folk Revival and began to listen attentively to the songs of many of its leading exponents. Soon the material of Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Ian and Sylvia and—later—Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen all began to play a featured role in his recording schedules. It was a move, as George titled it, into ‘thinking man’s country’ . . . and it met with public appeal as titles like “Steel Rail Blues,” “Take My Hand For A While,” “Canadian Pacific,” “She’s

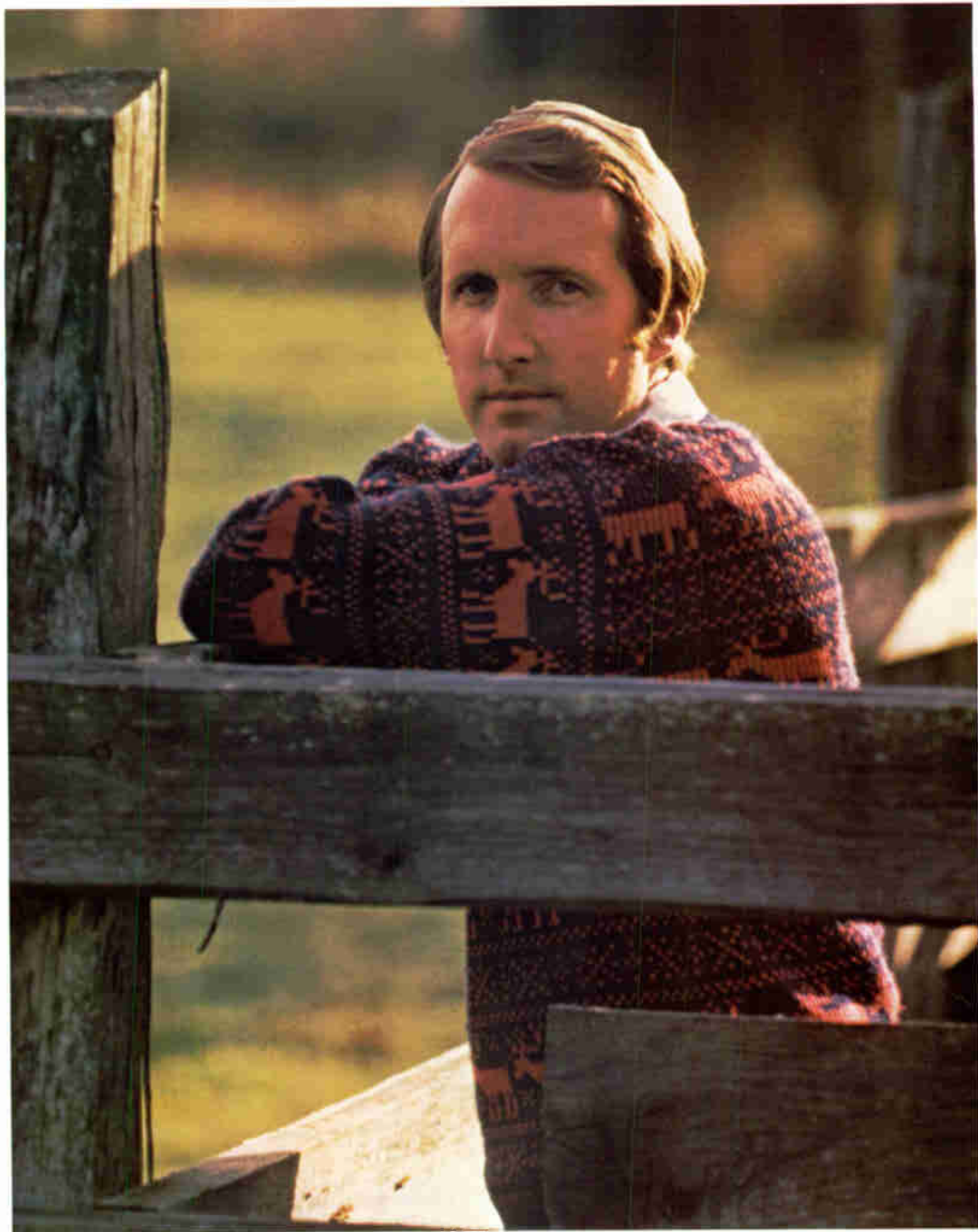
A Little Bit Country” and “Anyway” all maintained the chart impetus.

However, chart success was only one side of the story and George began to look at markets and audiences outside of the United States. At first, through the material of writers like Gordon Lightfoot and Buffy Sainte-Marie, Canada loomed on the horizon, and then he began to explore the situations outside of the North American continent.

Since the mid 1960’s George has worked hard at achieving international success, and very often his prime ventures into new territories were financed out of his own pocket. But the rewards have been immensely worthwhile. Today, outside of the United States, his status as an international performer is beyond any dispute. He’s been titled ‘The International Ambassador of Country Music’ . . . and the tag fits with complete justification.

It was, however, this vast amount of international work that caused George to depart from Nashville and the Grand Ole Opry in 1971, and return to his native North Carolina homelands. He wanted to spend more time with his family—his wife, Tinky, and their two sons and daughter—as well as being readily available for television work in both North Carolina and Canada.

But what of the future? In spite of his international popularity, George still wants to keep firm links with the American market. Hence the recent fresh association with Nashville, both as a recording base and as a member of the Grand Ole Opry which he rejoined in 1976.



DAVID HOUSTON

David lends his own special styling and sound to an Opry favorite.



David Houston was destined to be a recording star from the time he was born. With a Godfather like Gene Austin, who sold over 88 million records himself, and David's natural born talent, he made his first major professional appearance at the age of twelve on the famous "Louisiana Hayride" out of Shreveport, Louisiana.

His first big hit was "Mountain Of Love," but it was the song "Almost Persuaded," recorded in the summer of 1966, that made him internationally famous. The year 1967, David virtually walked away with very award accorded a Country and Western artist, including . . . #1-Billboard, #1-Cash Box, #1-Record World and the #1 Country Record and #1 Performance awards at the Grammy Awards. An outstanding follow-up to his 1966 "Most Promising Artist" award in Billboard.

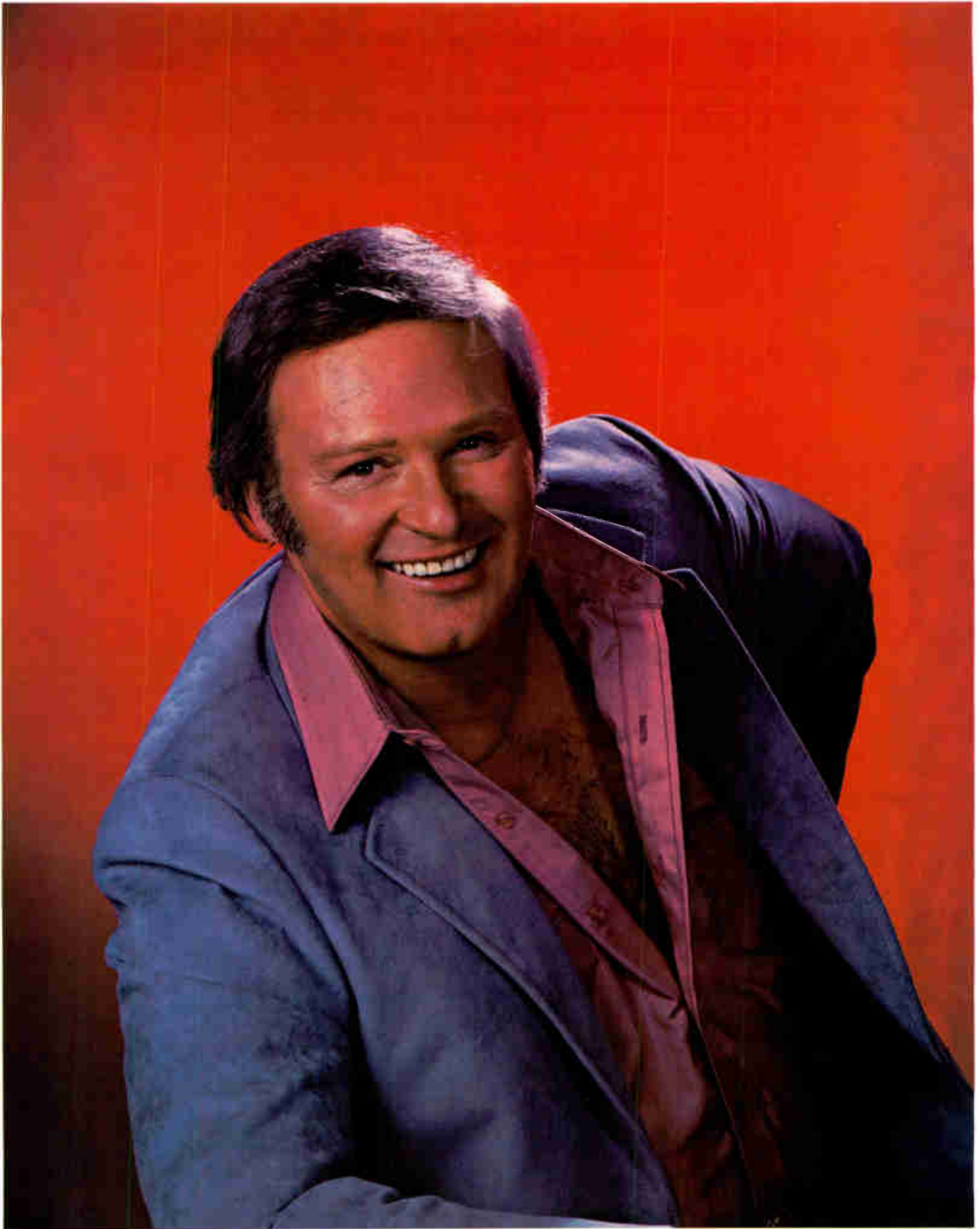
After his hit "Almost Persuaded," came many number one records. Among those hits are: "With One Exception," "You Mean The World To Me," "Have A Little Faith," "Already, It's Heaven," "Baby, Baby (I Know You're A Lady)," "A Woman

Always Knows," "Waltz Of The Angels," and "Best Friends Make The Worst Enemies." David has also had hits with Tammy Wynette, ("My Elusive Dreams"), and with Barbara Mandrell, ("After Closing Time").

The multi-talented, tall, good looking, Bossier City, Louisiana, man has appeared as an excellent representative of Country and Western Music on such top television shows as The Johnny Carson Show, The Merv Griffin Show, The Johnny Cash Show, and The Lawrence Welk Show. David has also appeared in the movies "Cotton Pickin' Chicken Pickers" and "Horse Soldiers," starring John Wayne.

David joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1972 and he and his Persuaders tour all over America, working about 270 days per year and over 350,000 miles.

Aside from the fact he can lay claim to such ancestors as Robert E. Lee and Sam Houston, no one can argue the point David Houston is indeed a uniquely diversified and talented individual.



Although born on Friday the 13th in West Plains, Missouri, as one of 11 children, Jan Howard has surely seen sadness in her life but has been blessed with more good luck than bad.

Jan was one of those lucky people to get a recording contract the first time a record producer heard her sing. She became an integral part of a syndicated television show almost from the beginning of her professional career. And there is a unique quality in her voice that sets her apart from all others. Jan has that warmth, strength, and compassion which comes from experiencing a life filled with highs and lows.

Back in West Plains, an expressway is named in her honor. That gives you some small indication of the esteem in which she is held at home. That love and respect, however, goes well beyond the area which has spawned so many country music greats. She is not only held in close regard by her thousands of fans, but also by those professionals within the music community.

Jan started in Los Angeles; she developed friendships with acquaintances who were beginning to write songs, and because of her obviously cooperative attitude, she was asked to sing one of the demonstration records of a song co-written by Buck Owens, intended for Kitty Wells.

Joe Johnson, a record producer on the West Coast, heard one of the demos, took the song, and this started Jan's recording career. She moved to Nashville in 1960.

Jan signed with Decca Records (now MCA) in 1965 and began cutting records with Owen Bradley. One hit followed another. On her own she cut many singles including "Evil on Your Mind," "Bad Seed," "Rock Me Back to Little Rock," and "Spinning Wheel." She also recorded some #1 duets with Bill Anderson including "Dissatisfied," "If It's All the Same to You," and "For Loving You." She was a part of the Bill Anderson Television Show for many years, and joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1971.

Jan has had more than her share of personal tragedy. Jan lost two of her sons in a short period of time. This almost destroyed her life. Jan had a premonition that one son, Jimmy, once he left for Viet Nam, would never return. That turned into stark reality when Jimmy's tank struck a mine on the battlefields of Southeast Asia, and he lost his life.



Jan and Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker discuss the Vietnam War Veterans Fund in the Tennessee Senator's Washington Office.

This happened just two short weeks after she had written and recorded a song called "My Son." Another son, Corky, was just a few miles away at the time, also in service. The youngest son, David, was still at home. But hardly had Jan had time to recover from this terrible event, than David lost his life. Jan Howard stopped singing. She felt her world was gone.

After an extended period of personal reflections during this incredibly sad time, Jan came back stronger than ever. She began recording, making personal appearances and pouring herself into her career. She also became more involved in social and volunteer work with rehabilitating children, performing for the various branches of the Armed Service and becoming an honorary recruiter for both the Navy and the Air Force. But her pet project is the Vietnam Veteran's cause. Like many Americans, she feels the Vietnam Veteran has not always been given a fair deal by society.

Jan Howard is a most remarkable woman. She is both a beautiful lady and a strong-willed individual. She possesses an inner strength that only someone who has struggled and suffered through adversity can produce. And considering the past, Jan's future can only be bright, productive, and fulfilling.



STONEWALL JACKSON

Stonewall Jackson is one of the recognized super stars of country music. He did it the hard way by recording an almost unbroken string of hit records over an astounding period of 17 years. So no one in the music industry was surprised when his first single on the MGM label, "Herman Schwartz," turned out to be another blockbuster. For 16 years he was one of the brightest stars on the Columbia label. More than 20 of his records ranked number one in the popularity charts and more than 50 of them were in the top ten. His 23 albums were best sellers.

In short, Stonewall Jackson was a hit-maker! and "Herman Schwartz" was just the next hit to follow the hit "House of Bottles and Cans." Over the years "Waterloo" and "Don't Be Angry" are two songs that have become indelibly linked with Stonewall Jackson. Everywhere he goes audiences scream for these songs. He always sings them both. They have been good to him. "Waterloo" was a million-plus seller. And since 1956 Stonewall has been one of the brightest stars of the world-famous Grand Ole Opry.

Born in Tabor City, North Carolina, he was the youngest of three children. His father died when he was only two. Already poor, the family faced a grim future. Mrs. Jackson decided to move to South Georgia to her brother-in-law's farm where the opportunities for work seemed better. All this happened during the depression years. Lacking money for travel, the family hitch hiked to Georgia. "I was plowing at the age of eight and pulling a crosscut saw in the woods by nine," Stonewall recalls, "but with God's help we survived."

"By the time I got out of the Navy in 1954, I wanted to make music my career," Stonewall said. But first he had to save some money. So he went back to South Georgia to work on the farm—and to save. And then everything good happened to Stonewall Jackson all at once. He traveled to Nashville in his new pick-up truck and visited



A wide eyed Stonewall hams it up for the camera before answering a question during the Artist/D. J. Tape Session at the recent Opry Birthday Celebration.

Acuff-Rose Publishing Company in an effort to sell some songs. Wesley Rose listened, liked the songs, and more important, liked the singer. He called his friend, "The Solemn Old Judge," George Hay at the Grand Ole Opry and sent Stonewall down to WSM Radio to Judge Hay. Judge Hay listened to a couple of songs, then he called in Opry executive Dee Kilpatrick and Stonewall was signed to an Opry contract.

Lots of fans ask if Stonewall is a nickname or Jackson's real name, and he proudly tells them it is his real name. He is descended from the famous Confederate General, Thomas J. Jackson, whose bravery in the face of enemy fire earned him the immortal nickname Stonewall. There's a refreshing farm atmosphere to the Brentwood, Tennessee home of Stonewall Jackson and his family. Their comfortable home perches on a hill overlooking a nine-acre lake which Stonewall calls Lake Waterloo. It is a great spot for fishing and song writing, two of Stonewall's favorite activities.



The Virginia Boys welcome their West Virginia neighbor to the Opry. Senator Robert C. Byrd, minority leader of the U. S. Senate—an accomplished mountain fiddler, checks Jim's guitar technique while Jesse looks on.



Jim & Jesse were born in Coeburn, Virginia, to a family well-versed in traditional music. There is something, however, which goes beyond the music itself; something which is the result of growing up singing together, sharing the same musical background and influences, something that makes two voices sound like they belong together. There is no mistaking the harmony of Jim & Jesse McReynolds.

Their professional recording career began in 1952 for Capital Records. Later they moved to Epic Records, back to Capital, then to Opryland Records. Songs like "Are You Missing Me," "Border Ride," "Sweet Little Miss Blue Eyes," "I Wish You Knew," "Drifting and Dreaming Of You," "Ole Slew Foot," "Cotton Mill Man," "Better Times A Coming," "Diesel On My Tail," "Ballad of Thunder Road," "Freight Train" and "Paradise" are just a few of the top songs that have established Jim & Jesse as one of the top duos in the world.

They have recorded some forty albums and in addition to their own "Jim & Jesse Television Show," have appeared on "Good Ole Nashville Music," "The Porter Wagoner Show," "The Wilburn Brothers Show," "The Ralph Emery Show" and other top shows in the United States, Canada and Europe.

From the beginning, they have used bluegrass type accompaniment, and their band, The Virginia Boys, has always featured both five string banjo and fiddle. Jim McReynolds plays guitar and sings a clear, polished tenor that distinguishes Jim & Jesse

vocals from those of most bluegrass groups. Jesse's mandolin playing is likewise a characteristic. "McReynolds" or "cross-picking" is a fast alteration of repeated melodic patterns that few have successfully imitated. Jim & Jesse's music is clean and precise, a unique balance to the drive and force typical of bluegrass music.

Their own early radio and television shows throughout the South, sponsored by Martha White Foods, led them to Nashville and in 1964 they joined the Grand Ole Opry.

The international popularity of Jim & Jesse and The Virginia Boys has really blossomed the past few years. They have had two very successful appearances at the Wembley Festival in London, which prompted DJM Records to release two new albums in England. They also recorded a new, two record album, "Jim & Jesse—Live In Japan," during their recent Far East tour. Another European tour followed, that included concerts at the University of Zurich, the University of Lausanne, Mahogany Hall in Berne and the Festival Folk D'Epalinge 1977, all in Switzerland; the American Centre in Paris and the Hotel Florida in Boskoop, Holland.

Jim (the taller one) and Jesse have many similar tastes—as a matter of fact they married sisters. Jim wed the former Arreta McCoy, while the former Darlene McCoy is Jesse's wife. Both families make their homes on a rambling farm near Old Hickory Lake at Gallatin, Tennessee. Spare moments are devoted to raising cattle on the farm.



GEORGE JONES

*A pensive George Jones
gently strums his
guitar.*



Few performers in any field of entertainment find a life time of commercial success and the respect and adulation of their peers. Some reach the heights of stardom but few truly become the superstar. George Jones has attained those ultimates as an entertainer. His collective successes, his unique stylism and his consistent ability to relate emotion to his fans have made him a true living-legend in country music.

In 1956, his single, "Why, Baby, Why" reached the national top ten charts and virtually every record since has ascended to the same heights. In the last twenty years, George Jones has recorded over 500 songs on over 100 albums, and sold millions of records. Literally no one, including George, knows exactly how many records have been released. He rejoined the Opry in 1973 after a short absence.

The professional music career all started for George as a teenager in the late 1940's, when radio station KTXJ in Jasper, Texas gave him an afternoon show. From there it was on to bigger things—sharing a half hour program with Eddie and Pearl in Beaumont for room and board and \$17.50 a week, and working a little in his free time in

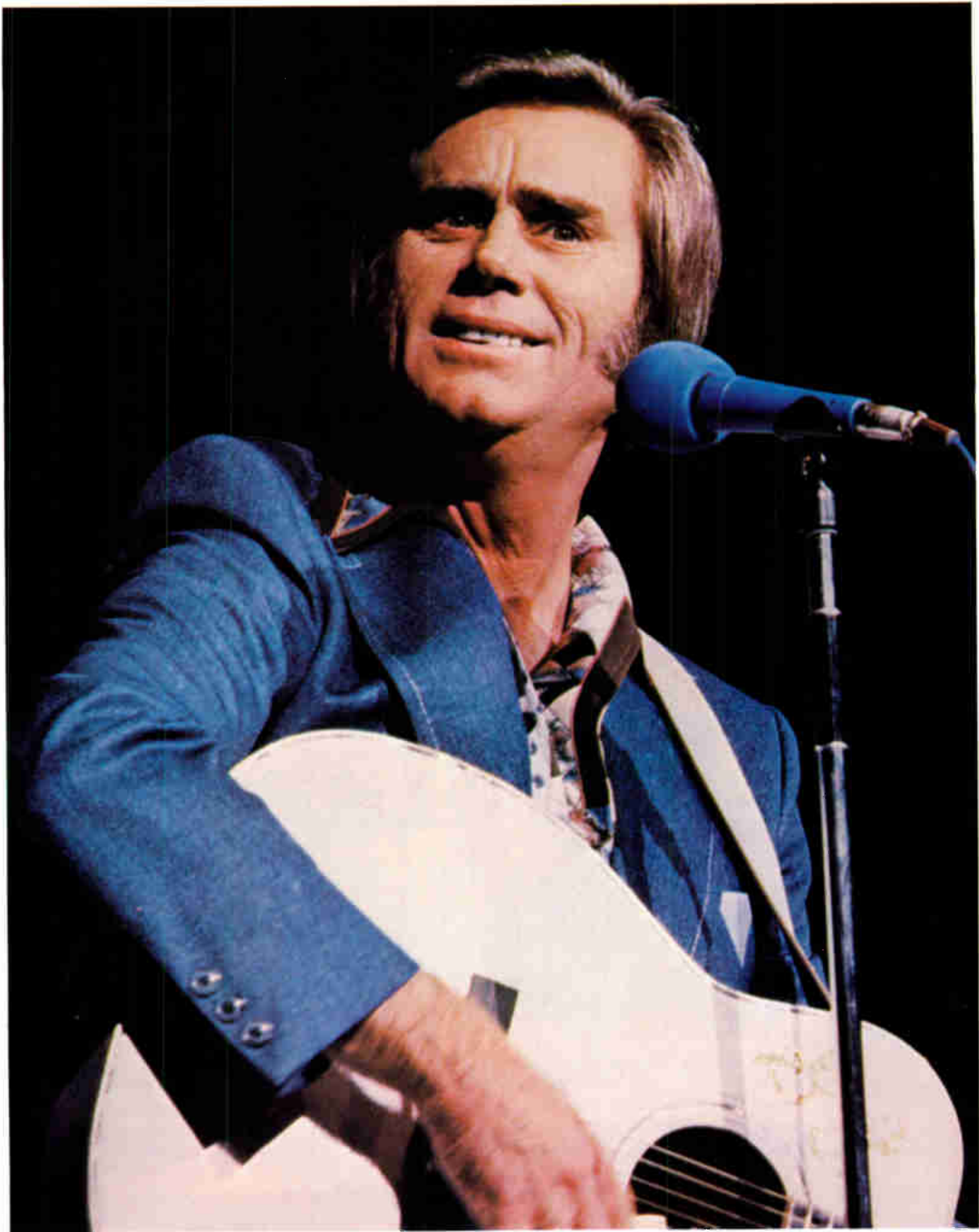
local clubs. In November 1950, he enlisted in the Marines, beginning the only interruption in a career that has shown consistent growth.

Born in the southeast Texas town of Saratoga, not far from Beaumont, George had been introduced to music early. His church pianist mother and his truck-driver/pipefitter father who played guitar, got him a guitar of his own and he soon was picking, singing, writing and performing with a group of his own.

George was working as a house painter and just getting back into the club circuit in 1953 in Texas when he was discovered by the founders of a new record label in Beaumont. The discovery was looked on as the reincarnation of the spirit the world thought it had lost when Hank Williams died at the beginning of the same year.

In February, George cut his first record "There Ain't No Money In This Deal." There wasn't, in fact, but George was undeterred. "I guess I was fortunate there," recalls George, "I didn't go into this business even thinking about money, what I would do or where I would go. I just wanted my guitar in my hand and to keep going. I just wanted to sing."

And sing he has.



GRANDPA JONES

Country Music Hall of Famers, Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl, Ernest Tubb and Grandpa Jones, sample the Opry's Birthday Cake backstage.



"To say that Grandpa Jones is a swell fellow would be putting it mildly . . . he is all wool and a yard wide. Grandpa has a big heart and shoots straight at the hearts of his audiences always; therefore his work goes over in a big way." George D. Hay, —The Solemn Old Judge, founder of the Grand Ole Opry, Circa 1945.

Grandpa Jones, whose banjo pickin' and humor have made him a legend in his own time, has long been a mainstay in the hearts of young and old alike. Born Louis M. Jones in Niagra, Henderson County, Kentucky, he began playing mandolin and fiddle when he was a youngster. His father played the fiddle. Next, he learned to play a 75-cent guitar, but it was his distinctive banjo playing that helped bring him fame. He uses the near forgotten drop-thumb technique.

His family moved to Akron, Ohio, where in March 1929, Grandpa won first prize, topping more than 450 others in a contest put on by Wendell Hall, the old "Red Headed Music Maker," at the Keith Albee theatre. He used the \$50.00 he won to buy a better guitar. He began singing on radio and soon became a regular on WFJC & WJW in Akron.

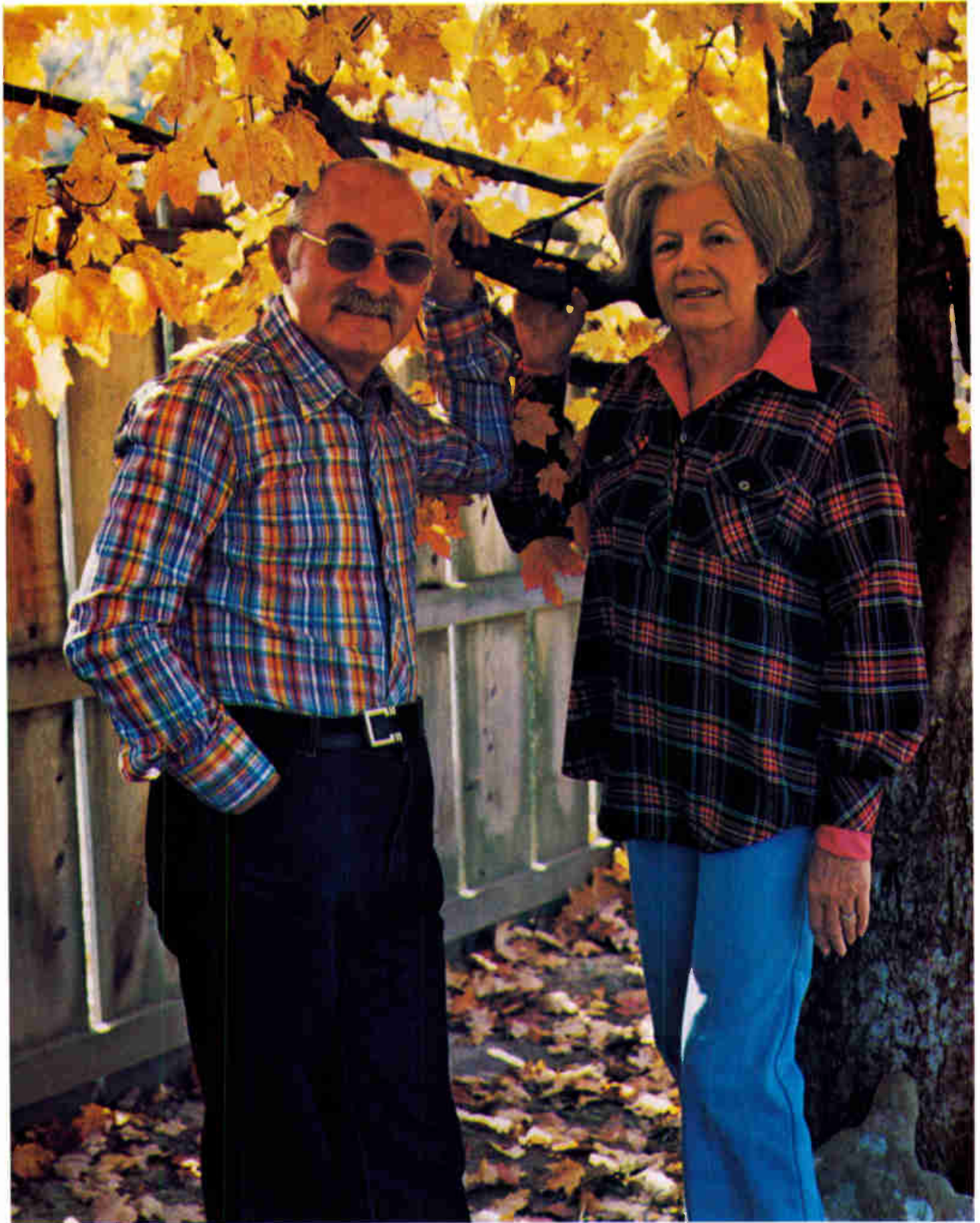
Jones got a job with Bradley Kincaid in Clarksburg, West Virginia, in 1935. They played to packed houses up and down the East Coast. He began playing it straight without "Grandpa" makeup. The idea for the "Grandpa" image probably came when people began writing in asking his age. It seems he sounded older, especially on radio.

The next big stop was Wheeling, West Virginia, where he had his own radio show featuring his act, "Grandpa Jones and the Grandchildren." He entered the army in 1944, where, in addition to his regular duties, he played on the Armed Forces Network out of Munich, Germany, with a group called "The Munich Mountaineers."

He joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1946 when he returned to the United States. And in 1978 he was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame. Grandpa also has gained wide recognition as a star on "Hee-Haw," which he calls a "good show that's giving people the down-to-earth, clean and easy-to-associate-with type of entertainment that the typical TV watcher is looking for after a day of hard work."

Grandpa now makes about 200 personal appearances a year. His wife, Ramona, sometimes joins him on stage, playing the fiddle, for old-time country duets. He treats audiences to his classic version of "Old Rattler" and his famous Jimmie Rodgers-style "Blue Yodeling." Since his great success on "Hee-Haw" audiences are accustomed to yelling, "What's for supper, Grandpa?" to hear him give his rhymed recitation on the glories of ham-hocks and turnip-greens.

An institution in the world of country folk music and humor, Grandpa lives on a farm outside Nashville where he raises registered Charlais "white" cattle. But being an avid hunter & fisherman he always saves a few special days in the fall for the annual Grand Ole Opry Duck Hunt.



The "Mayor of McLellan, Florida," shares a light-hearted moment back stage with "King of Country Music" and Bashful Brother Oswald.



There's leprechauns . . . Londonderry. . . limerick. . . and then there's Locklin. Hank Locklin is the lilt of country music. With a voice that sounds like "a little bit of Heaven," Hank has been the Number One country singer in Ireland for the past five years.

"I've never kissed the Blarney Stone," he'll quickly admit; but Hank doesn't need that added luck of the Irish, for he's the Lucky Irishman.

Hank Locklin is lucky, Irish and has made such a name for himself in Ireland, England and Germany that Pee Wee King calls him 'Europe's Ambassador of Country Music.'

'The Mayor of McLellan' is Hank's other title, and one that he wears proudly, especially when he's tending his McLellan, Florida, 350-acre farm. He raises beef cattle there because, "You can't grow shamrocks anywhere but in Ireland."

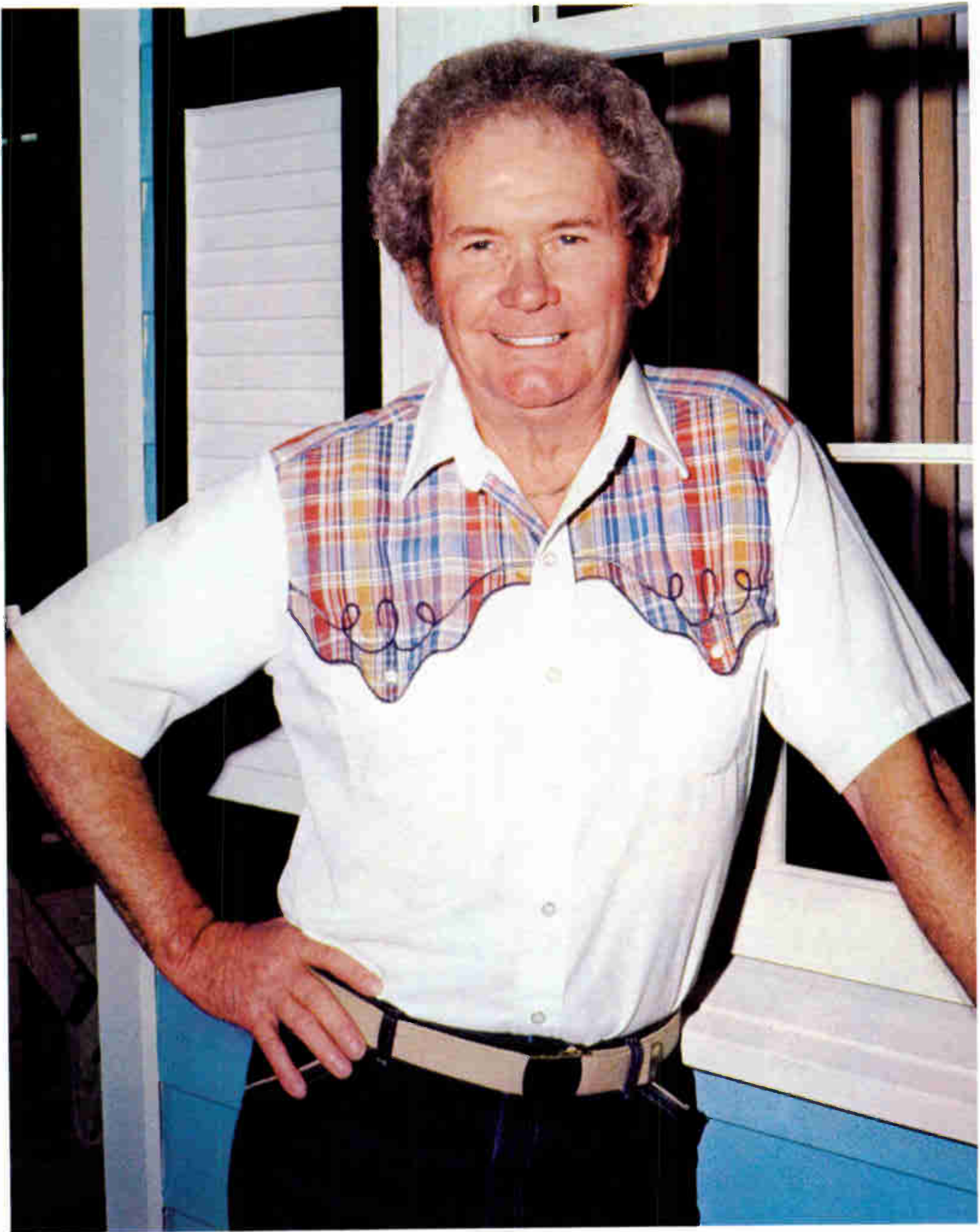
If Hank Locklin wears titles well, it's pride that makes him that way. Born into a family that usually reared doctors, Hank wanted to be an entertainer.

Instead of attaching a Ph.D. to his name, he entered show business as a D.J. Radio naturally led him to stages; and Hank became a professional, playing sometimes for a meager \$2. a night, with expenses of \$5. That was a losing course to take, so Hank picked up a guitar course book and headed for Nashville.

The luck was with Locklin, and he was asked to join the Grand Ole Opry in 1960.

The success of Hank Locklin has become legend since then. In addition to his numerous awards for "Send Me The Pillow That You Dream On," Hank has an ASCAP Award for the LP 'Country Hall of Fame' and "Where The Blue Of The Night Meets The Gold Of The Day" plus Cash Box and Juke Box awards for "Please Help Me I'm Falling" and a NARAS Award for "Locklin Sings Hank Williams."

And Hank Locklin's success continues. It seems the luck and signs are with Locklin . . . but, mostly, the tremor-tenor voice is with him, and that's why Hank is loved by so many fans around the world.



LONZO AND OSCAR

*Funny men Lonzo & Oscar
get set to cut a very small
piece of cake for Little
Jimmy Dickens.*



Rare are the performers who have been able to burlesque or satire country musicians successfully as is the case of Lonzo and Oscar. Born Rollin Sullivan and Dave Hooten, they are the only duo on the Grand Ole Opry who can get by with poking fun at their colleagues and the music they sing seriously.

For Rollin Sullivan and Dave Hooten, the road to stardom was rocky. Originally, the team was composed of Ken Marvin and Oscar (Rollin) and they made their debut on WTJS Radio in Jackson, Tennessee shortly before World War II. Shortly after this, Ken withdrew from the act and Rollin's brother, Johnny Sullivan became a full-time member.

Oscar joined the Opry in 1942, and Lonzo became part of the cast two years later. Once they joined forces, they began to click.

Their first and biggest record was "I'm My Own Grandpa," a song which they frankly admit they didn't think would make it at all.

Tragedy struck in 1967 when Johnny (Lonzo) died of a heart-attack. As agreed before his death. "The show must go on," thereby Dave Hooten was asked to replace the void left by Johnny's death.

Columbia Records accepted the new Lonzo and Oscar team, and their first release, "Did You Have to Bring That Up While I Was Eating?" has started them on a new ladder of fame.

They continued on to new heights as a comedy team making hundreds of television films and records. They have appeared on numerous network telecasts and have worked extensively with many syndicated television shows originating in Nashville. In addition, their comic stylings have graced numerous transcriptions and Armed Forces radio shows.

As comedians, they agree you've got to act fast. "Our motto is you've got to make the guy laugh for the first time in five seconds. Then the second laugh comes easy. You shouldn't give them time to think. You need quick, catchy stuff.

"We've built our comedy on tearing down songs. If someone has a sweet song, we change the words to make it funny."

The future looks bright for this duo, as their schedule is filled with personal appearances throughout the world.



CHARLIE LOUVIN

Charlie and wife, Betty, share a quiet moment at home together.



“Super Charlie” . . . that’s what someone started calling this powerhouse entertainer several years ago. For a guy that doesn’t weigh more than 120 pounds, that’s a heavy title, but Charlie Louvin carries his nickname with the vigor of a volcano and the innocence of a little freckle-faced boy who just discovered Christmas!

“Country Music is the only life I know,” says Charlie with a proud grin. “I guess that’s why I put so much more into my music and stage work.”

What Charlie Louvin puts in a song is the “I’ve been there” kind of emotion that makes listeners and audiences agree with him, whether the score is a broken home, a love gone bad, or the bottom of a bottle. If it’s Country, Charlie’s been there . . . from the Sand Mountain region of Alabama to the foxholes in Korea. He plowed some hard rows in his life, but he always manages to break the way for his continued success. The success that he calls: “Pleasing my fans and friends and family . . . they’re everything to me.”

Charlie and Ira Louvin, two farm boys from Alabama, first tasted the fruits of applause when they topped the competition in a talent contest in Chattanooga. But it was touch and go for quite

awhile, and they thought they would have to give up Country Music. Somehow, he and Ira made it through and became members of the Grand Ole Opry in 1955, just three years after they had signed with Capitol Records. After Ira’s untimely death in 1965, Charlie stayed with the Opry and Capitol, becoming one of the grandest little guys in Country Music. Whatever tears were to be shed were put into the words of such great top ten songs as “See The Big Man Cry”, “Will You Visit Me On Sundays”, “What Are Those Things” and “I Don’t Love You Anymore”, to name a few.

It is not unusual that this country boy and his late brother, Ira, made their great mark in the country field with religious songs. Charlie’s walls are decorated with plaques and awards and gold records for such beloved songs as “Weapon of Prayer” and “Family Who Prays”.

If there were a book big enough for all the adjectives that describe Charlie Louvin and his kind of Country Music, it would read like the headlines for a movie spectacular. If only one adjective had to be used to describe him . . . after some consideration, “Super” would definitely be the best.



LORETTA LYNN

The world has finally discovered that Loretta Lynn is a very special lady, a fact that millions of country music fans have known for over fifteen years. Evidence of this discovery can be found in quiet as well as dramatic fashion almost daily. There was the Greek immigrant couple who wrote a song especially for Loretta which they gave to her on a New York City street a few years ago.

There was the Gallup Poll which listed Loretta as one of the twenty most admired women in the world along with Golda Meir, Rose Kennedy, and Indira Ghandi. And there are three NEWSWEEK feature articles within a two year period, including a cover story in June of 1973.

With the publication in 1976 of her life story, "Coal Miner's Daughter", the public has the opportunity to read Loretta's own recollections on her fabulous success story. The autobiography was co-written by the noted author and NEW YORK TIMES correspondent, George Vecsey. The story was also made into a movie.

Loretta began singing in schoolroom socials at the age of 13, and today gives 125 concerts a year in cities all over the world. When she is not on the road, she is doing guest spots on television, choosing and recording new music, or working on ventures such as the Loretta Lynn Dude Ranch. She grew up in a log cabin on the farm of her grandfather, and today owns a 3,500 acre ranch in Tennessee with an entire town on it, a seaside home in Matzatlan, Mexico and a hunting lodge in British Columbia.

Loretta does not fit the stereotyped image of the typical show business star. Slender and vibrant, she still has a small-town charm and warmth about her despite the fame and wealth. The members of her band call her "Mom," and a real sincerity permeates her every word and action.

That all stems, no doubt, from her simple beginnings in her home town of Butcher Hollow, remote village in the eastern part of Kentucky. Loretta liked singing even then, but no one could ever have guessed that someday she would become the first woman ever selected Entertainer of the Year by the Country Music Association—based on her unprecedented success with both country and general audiences. Or that her native state would ever vote her The Distinguished Kentuckian of the Year. These things seemed a million miles away from Butcher Hollow. Life was difficult for a young



Cissy Spacek, who portrays Loretta Lynn in her "Coal Miner's Daughter" film autobiography makes a surprise visit to the Opry with Loretta and Ernest Tubb.

girl growing up in a large family whose father labored hard and long in a coal mine.

Loretta now so dominates the country music field that nearly every major poll selects her as the top female country singer. She has received more awards than any other performer from the Country Music Association and The Academy of Country Music. Loretta joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1962.

Loretta and her good friend, Conway Twitty, have become the most dynamic and successful vocal duo in the history of country music. "Mississippi Woman-Louisiana Man" and "Before I Hang Up The Phone" were not only major hits, but have become standards as well. Their release, "Feelin's," became a big success and led to the most recent CMA Vocal Duo of the Year Award.

The demand for Loretta's talents is now so great that there does not seem to be enough of her to go around. As if the rigors of recording and television are not demanding enough, Loretta still keeps up with her 125 concerts-a-year grind. She travels from city to city in a luxury bus which racks up as much as 150,000 miles a year. And when she walks onstage and delivers those "down home" songs in her thick Kentuckian accent—well, audiences just go wild with enthusiasm.

There may be other performers who have been as successful as Loretta. But probably there are none who have handled their prosperity as well. She treats people with the same sincerity and open-heartedness that she always has—whether they be fans, friends or family.



BARBARA MANDRELL

As one writer has said of Barbara Mandrell, "the lady is a champ." She has parlayed her talent, determination, and good looks into a winning combination. She has crossed musical styles and bridged entertainment mediums to establish herself as a leader in the field of contemporary entertainment.

Barbara has had bestowed on her virtually every honor and award granted to country music performers, including, the 1980 "Entertainer of the Year Award" from the Country Music Association and the 1981 "Entertainer of the Year Award" from the Academy of Country Music. Also, in 1981, Barbara received the "Music City News Musician of the Year and Female Artist of the Year Awards" by the Academy of Country Music, *Music City News*, The Country Music Association and *Radio & Records*. She received the Female Entertainer of the Year and Female Vocalist of Country Singles from *Cashbox* Magazine in 1979. Also, in 1979, her recording of "Sleeping Single in a Double Bed" was voted Single of the Year by both *Cashbox* and the American Music Awards.

In a fashion similar to her musical success, Barbara has won over the world of television as well. She has guested on, among others, "The Mike Douglas Show" (Which she co-hosted), "The Merv Griffin Show," "The Tonight Show," and the Grammy Awards presentations. Her highest achievement in television has been her own successful series "Barbara Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters" for NBC. It is a revival of the family-oriented variety show format that has been absent from television for some time. The series was voted the "Best Country Music TV Program" of 1981 by the *Music City News*' readers poll and the three Mandrell sisters Barbara, Louise and Irlene were awarded "Best Comedy Act" of the Year. Because family is a big part of Barbara's life, it's no surprise the show has been a success.

Barbara was born in Houston. Her mother, Mary, began teaching Barbara the accordion before she could read. Her father, Irby, sang and played guitar. Her family moved to Oceanside, Ca., while Barbara was still a youngster, where her father bought a music store. By the time Barbara had reached her teens she had learned to play steel guitar, saxophone, banjo, and bass guitar. She made her television debut, at age 11, on a live local show



Film stars Vanessa Redgrave and Joseph Campanella receive an Opry welcome from Barbara.

called "Town Hall Party," and appeared, at age 13, on ABC's "Five Star Jubilee." Her father eventually formed a family musical group, "The Mandrells," with Barbara, her mother and father and two young men on guitar and drums.

In 1967, she married that drummer, Ken Dudney, temporarily gave up her musical aspirations, and became a serviceman's wife. Ken was overseas in the Navy when she moved with her family to Nashville. During a subsequent visit to the Grand Ole Opry she felt the tug of the footlights once again. Halfway through the show Barbara turned to her father and said, "Daddy, if you'll manager me, I'd like to try to get on the other side of the microphone again, I wasn't cut out to be in the audience." She joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1972.

In short order, Barbara began performing in Nashville, caught the ear of producer Billy Sherrill, and was signed to CBS records. She signed with MCA (then ABC records) in 1975 and began working with producer Tom Collins. Collins' sophisticated production techniques and Barbara's mature and eclectic approach to music proved to be a supremely winning combination.

With all of her success, Barbara still has hopes and goals for more. She would like to become involved in acting and broaden her career in general as an entertainer. "I'm watching our business grow and, hopefully, I'm a little part of what's making it grow." She is indeed.



RONNIE MILSAP

Blind since birth, RCA recording star Ronnie Milsap has never felt limited in any area of activity that he has ever undertaken. Says the handsome six-footer, "I believe the Good Lord blesses each of us with some special ability or talent, and I've always tried to make the best of what I have instead of bemoaning over things I don't have." This is proven true by the facts, that at the age of seven, young Milsap was a violin virtuoso; at eight, he played the piano; by twelve, he had mastered the guitar. Now he plays all keyboard instruments, stringed instruments, percussion instruments and all woodwinds.

Ronnie was born in Robbinsville, North Carolina, a small farming community near the Tennessee-North Carolina border. At the age of six, Ronnie was sent to the State School for the Blind in Raleigh. It was at this excellent school that Ronnie's aptitude for music was discovered and developed.

Despite the school's emphasis on the classics, Ronnie never forgot the music he had heard for the first six years of his life—country music. And he was fascinated by the new music he was hearing on the radio. This interest frequently led to trouble with his instructors, when they would find him practicing Jerry Lee Lewis or Elvis or Lefty Frizzell instead of Chopin or Beethoven.

After completing high school in Raleigh, Ronnie attended Young-Harris Junior College near Atlanta, Georgia. There he studied pre-law, planning to go to law school, however, and after finishing the junior college, he stayed on in Atlanta picking up a job here and there as a sideman. His first job there was with J. J. Cole. Then Ronnie formed a band and went to work steadily playing clubs and colleges. In 1969, Ronnie and his group moved to Memphis, Tenn., and started work at T. J.'s, a popular Memphis club.

In 1973, Ronnie, his wife Joyce and their son Todd decided that they should move to Nashville, Tenn., the country music capital. Before you could say "Music City, U.S.A.," Ronnie was signed with RCA Records and had released a two-sided hit, "All Together Now (Let's Fall Apart)" and "I Hate You."



Johnny Cash and Ronnie go over some last minute details before their appearance on the annual Country Music Association Awards television show.

"That Girl Who Waits On Tables" was next, the "Pure Love" and the Country Music Association 1974 Male Vocalist of the Year award. Then "Please Don't Tell Me How The Story Ends," a Grammy winner.

The hits just keep on coming: "A Legend In My Time" (with the album of the same name capturing the 1975 CMA award as Album of the Year), "Too Late To Worry, Too Blue To Cry," "Daydreams About Night Things," "(I'm A) Stand By My Woman Man," and "It Was Almost Like A Song" (with the album of the same name winning the 1977 CMA award for Album of the Year).

1976 was a magic year for Ronnie because he won both the CMA award for Male Vocalist of the Year and the NARAS Grammy award for Best Country Vocal By A Male Artist (for "Stand By My Woman Man"). Ronnie iced the cake in 1977 by once again winning the awards for Best Album of the Year, he also won in 1978, and Male Vocalist of the Year and by winning the most coveted of all country music awards, Entertainer of the Year.

In his spare time, Ronnie is an avid collector of old radio shows. He has several hundred hours of the original transcripts of shows dating back to the 1920's. He loves to bowl and is also a ham radio operator, spending many enjoyable hours talking to people all over the world. His call letters are WB4KCG. Call him up sometime!



BILL MONROE

"One morning in October 1939, a big, goodlooking fellow came to see us. He had his own band with him. His name is Bill Monroe and he gave us a sample of folk music 'as she should be sung and played.' There is that authentic wail in his high pitched voice that one hears in the evening in the country when Mother Nature sighs and retires for the night."—George D. Hay, the Solemn Old Judge, founder of the Grand Ole Opry, Circa 1945.

Bill Monroe was searching for something different—a type of music “for country people”—when he first started playing Bluegrass Music 40 years ago.

In 1938 his style was different and few people had ever heard his type of music. Today his style is still different from any style played by anyone else, but it is now familiar to millions of Bluegrass fans all over the world.

“What I started out to do was to please the people out on the farms. But, with the help of the Grand Ole Opry, it grew, and of course, all the people who ever worked for me helped it too. They all had a part in helping to get it around the world,” Bill says in recalling the bluegrass history. “It’s a music built around my style of mandolin playing and singing. It’s got a hard drive to it, and Scotch bagpipes and old-time fiddle. It has Methodist and Holiness and Baptist church sounds in it, and blues, and jazz. It has a high, lonesome sound. It’s a clean music, and it tells a good story. It’s played from my heart to your heart, and I hope it touches you the way I enjoy it.”

Born the youngest of six boys and two girls of a family in Rosine, Kentucky, Bill and his brothers learned music from their mother, who played the fiddle, and their Uncle Pen Vandervir, who taught him the mandolin.

In 1927, Bill Monroe and two of his brothers (Charlie and Birch) formed a band and played throughout several states. Three years later he began his professional radio career. In 1938 he left the group to form his own band, and originated his



Bill and son, James Monroe, team up for an old time bluegrass favorite.

own Bluegrass style. A year later he joined the Grand Ole Opry.

Bill, who claims to be a direct descendant of James Monroe, fifth President of the United States, began life as a choir boy, and credits this for his ability to hit the high notes.

Bill and the Bluegrass Boys have accumulated quite a few recorded hits. Their records have sold over 25,000,000 copies. Few can match this.

Numerous top Country Music artists have “gone to school” under Bill Monroe, including Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs and Mac Wiseman.

Within the last few years Monroe’s style of Bluegrass Music has experienced phenomenal growth throughout the United States. He and the Bluegrass Boys have been in great demand on major college campuses across the country, in addition to the numerous Bluegrass Festivals that dot the summer months.

Bill lives on a 280 acre farm in Goodlettsville, Tennessee. And he works it the old time way. Even today he does his farming with a horse and a plow.

THE FATHER OF BLUE GRASS



JIMMY C. NEWMAN

Opry General Manager Hal Durham presents Jimmy C. an engraved silver tray on the occasion of his 25th Anniversary with the show.



Louisiana is a study in contrasts . . . the serenity of Spanish moss and cypress trees on the banks of a misty bayou . . . the languid pace of a steamy-hot summer day . . . the lightning speed of an alligator slipping into the river . . . the gentleness and humility in the weather-worn faces of Cajun fishermen . . . the intensity of the energy-charged Cajun music. . . .

Jimmy C. Newman and Cajun Country are a similar study in contrasts. Born in Big Mamou, Louisiana and a member of the world famous Grand Ole Opry since 1956, Jimmy C. has introduced the entire music world to the unique, infectious music of his Louisiana homeland. A versatile entertainer, he combines the centuries-old sounds of a French accordion, fiddle and Cajun French vocals with contemporary influences like the steel guitar, Dobro, and modern English lyrics.

From the ever-demanding, country music loving audiences at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville to the new-fashioned, progressive college crowds, Jimmy C. Newman and Cajun Country have spread the high-gear magic of Cajun music throughout the

country. Their appealing sound breaks the boundaries of age and musical classifications. It's an earthy music . . . hard-driving yet sensuous . . . soulful but spirited . . . modern music deeply rooted in the heritage of the Cajun culture.

The band, Cajun Country, is also a contrast—one that perfectly complements Jimmy C.'s own musical style. Their repertoire is vast and varied. From evergreens like "Jambalaya" and Jimmy's Own "Cry Cry Darling," they'll launch into a swinging version of "In the Mood," followed by a get-up-and-boogie accordion tune like "Bosco Stomp," or a Cajun classic like "Jole Blon," accented by Jimmy's piercing, heart rendering vocals in half-English, half-French. And their red-hot version of "Diggy Liggy Lo," featuring Rufus' fiddling and dancing, consistently brings ovations and encores.

Jimmy C. Newman and Cajun Country have succeeded in blending contrasts . . . musical styles, languages, backgrounds, ages and audiences. The effect is as complementary as a vermillion sunrise over a blue Louisiana bayou.



THE OSBORNE BROTHERS

Sonny and Bobby Osborne make up "The Fabulous Osborne Brothers," together with band members Jim Brock and Robby Osborne they present one of the fastest paced and most dynamic Country Music shows ever to represent Nashville's legendary Grand Ole Opry.

Born in the mountainous coal mining region of Southeastern Kentucky in the little village of Hyden, it came natural for Bobby and Sonny in later years to sing "Nine Pound Hammer," "The Knoxville Girl" and other great coal mining songs and Folk ballads of the Appalachian Mountains.

Because of a six year age difference the brothers did not start out as a team but rather began their careers separately and at different times. Both, however, made their way on pure raw talent, playing and singing the traditional songs, some of which they had learned as boys in Kentucky. Through a succession of towns and radio stations they gained individual recognition, Bobby as a member of the noted "Lonesome Pine Fiddlers" based in Beckley, West Virginia and Sonny as the youngest banjo player at age 13 ever to perform professionally for a Grand Ole Opry group. The brothers got together as a team in 1953, following Bobby's discharge from the U.S. Marine Corps.

Their recording debut on a major label came in 1956 with MGM Records. These recordings today rank among the all time classic examples of Osborne Brothers style, featuring Bobby's distinctive and unequalled natural high lead voice and joined by Sonny's rich baritone. It was on these recordings that they changed the customary arrangement of trio harmony parts to create a new and completely unique sound in voices, thus giving their records a larger and fuller sound. The MGM releases of the late fifties clearly marked The Osborne Brothers as a Country Music group of importance.

In 1963 they signed with Decca Records (now MCA) and during August, 1964 became regular members of WSM's Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. The Decca recording established the successful practice of featuring the Osborne "big voice" sound, while giving greatly increased prominence to the instrumental wizardry of the two Osbornes, Sonny with his five-string banjo and Bobby with his mandolin. Sonny's intricate backup note patterns and clear, strong lead work on the banjo, often in a radically different "single string" fashion are



Bobby and Sonny Osborne thrill the Opry audience with their own distinctive bluegrass harmonies.

featured heavily. At the same time he has accomplished the difficult feat of also bringing out the pulsating and insistent "drive" for which the instrument is justly famous. Bobby's individualistic mandolin stylings have been described as "bluegrass jazz" and to the utter delight of audiences he often lays his mandolin down and demonstrates the fact that he is also an expert "hoedown" fiddler.

The Osborne Brothers were the first bluegrass act to play a college engagement. They were also the first country, or bluegrass group to play in the main room at Harrah's Club in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. In 1977 the Osborne Brothers took their show to Japan, where for a week, 2000 people a night paid approximately \$18.00 per ticket to see their show. Numerous awards have included the Billboard Award in 1958 for the "Most Promising Vocal Group" and in 1971 they were the Country Music Association's "Best Vocal Group." And for eight consecutive years have been the number one bluegrass group in the nation. This award is voted by country music fans in a national poll conducted by *Music City News*.

No group is more sought after or carries more prestige at bluegrass festivals around the country than The Osborne Brothers. They have a way of exciting listeners with powerful vocal harmonies and change-of-pace instrumentals that carries a great impact to any type of audience. While thoroughly professional, their show seems also to convey a refreshing spontaneity and when they're on stage there's never a dull moment for their fans. And anyone who's seen and heard them is more than likely an Osborne Brothers fan.



Dolly and Barbara Mandrell happily announce another deserving winner during the annual Country Music Association Awards Shows.

Dolly Parton left the East Tennessee hills at the age of 18 with a cardboard suitcase full of songs. She had been honing her craft since the age of seven and was determined to build her future on it. Dolly set out bringing songs to Nashville producers and record labels, sometimes singing them accompanying herself on guitar, sometimes presenting demos if she could afford them. Music City was, in her eyes, the city of hope and promise and she set a pace of success that would eventually lift her to the top of her profession.

Dolly's songs have captivated listeners by making them feel and understand slices of life. Emmylou Harris had this to say about the Parton-penned song "To Daddy" that she released as a single. "To me it's like an O'Henry short story. Dolly sets you up and then whammo. . . . she turns it all around. When I first heard it my lips were trembling and I was afraid I was gonna make a scene."

Dolly herself has proven the ability to perform her music in a way that forms legions of fans, from the evolution of her first album to her, "Here You Come Again," for which she earned her first Gold. Dolly was first discovered by the country market with her natural country heritage, but then other music markets became aware of her outstanding compositions and delivery. Universal appeal became highly evident and Dolly Parton was becoming a household name.

People were taken by her outrageous appearance when seeing her for the first time and comments abounded about the size of her hairdo and her proportions. Dolly took it all in stride and said "Let 'em go as long as they're talkin' about me." Her



patience and self-assured attitude proved her a winner. People soon looked past the vision she created with make-up and honey blonde wigs and found that Dolly was all real.

The first professional singing Dolly did at age 10 was for The Cas Walker Radio Show. Prior to that she tuned up in church along with her sisters (her family boasted 12 children). By her early teens she had cut her first record and soon after arriving in Nashville Dolly signed with RCA Records and became a member of Porter Wagoner's syndicated television show. Dolly joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1969.

With a tremendous demand for live appearances Dolly spends a great deal of time touring in addition to numerous television appearances.

Somewhere in a schedule that fits her as tightly as her dresses Dolly squeezes in time to do her favorite thing . . . writing. Both completed and in progress are children's stories and novels that give her great satisfaction, in addition to her songs.

Dolly and her husband, Carl Dean, reside in the Nashville countryside and enjoy whatever time possible quietly at home.



MINNIE PEARL

"Miss Ophelia Colley, as Minnie Pearl, is doing a swell job on the Grand Ole Opry. She has talent and breeding and the ability to get along with people regardless of creed, color, profession or trade, which is a pretty good ticket to give to any conductor. The Opry salutes its queen of comedy, a country gal who is city broke and keeping in the middle of the road."—George D. Hay, the Solemn Old Judge, founder of the Grand Ole Opry, Circa 1945.

"How-dee! I'm just so proud to be here!" is a familiar greeting to millions of Americans, and immediately prompts the same number of "How-dee" answers from almost everyone within earshot of Minnie Pearl, Queen of Country Comedy.

With her 89 cent organdy dress, white cotton stockings, square black pocketbook, flat-heeled Mary Jane slippers, and wide brimmed straw hat trimmed with flowers and bits of fruit, Minnie Pearl has become living symbol of the Grand Ole Opry.

For more than three decades, she has delighted audiences with her stories about everyday happenings in "Grinders Switch," and her unrelenting efforts to "Ketch a feller."

The lovable character, Minnie Pearl, of radio, television, and stage fame, was born out of the imagination of a young lady named Sarah Ophelia Colley. Sarah was born in Centerville, a small township about 50 miles southwest of Nashville. Possessing an intense interest in the legitimate "stage," and a natural born "play actress," Miss Colley tried teaching dramatics after graduating from Ward Belmont College, a fashionable girl's finishing school in Nashville.

Although the character was well developed in Miss Colley's mind, the name "Minnie Pearl" came later while playing an engagement at Aiken, South



Minnie presents Dallas' famous (or infamous) J. R. Ewing (Larry Hagman) to an excited Opry audience.

Carolina. She says she adopted the name because she thought it had a happy, country flavor. She chose Grinders Switch as Minnie's hometown because there is actually a tiny crossroads community by that name near Centerville. From that point on, her gossip about Grinders Switch and her mythical family has evoked chuckles from fans everywhere. She eventually auditioned for and won a spot on the Grand Ole Opry in 1940. She was an immediate success and has become one of the greatest names in the entertainment world. In 1975, Minnie was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Although she is active in many ways, Minnie Pearl always admits, "My husband is my hobby. It took me 35 years to get him and I want to hang onto him." The husband she refers to is Henry Cannon, who manages the business affairs of Minnie Pearl and, as an expert pilot, used to fly her to all show dates. The happy couple live in a large home next door to the Governor of Tennessee.



Suave, smooth sounding Stu Phillips captivates the Opry audience with a favorite ballad.



When his name was added to the official roster of Grand Ole Opry stars in 1967, Canadian-born Stu Phillips achieved a lifelong ambition. His earliest memories of music are of tuning a crystal set in Calgary to the sounds of the Opry in faraway Nashville, and what he heard set his career and his goal.

"I love the 'Opry'," says Stu, "It's a tradition, a way of life for country music fans; an institution with substance and meaning for its followers. I want my career to have a similar meaning, and that means dedication and hard work."

Stu Phillips was born in Montreal in Canada's French speaking province of Quebec. He ventured west at an early age and settled in Calgary, Alberta in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies, an ideal environment for this creative young man, who wrote many of his early songs in this setting.

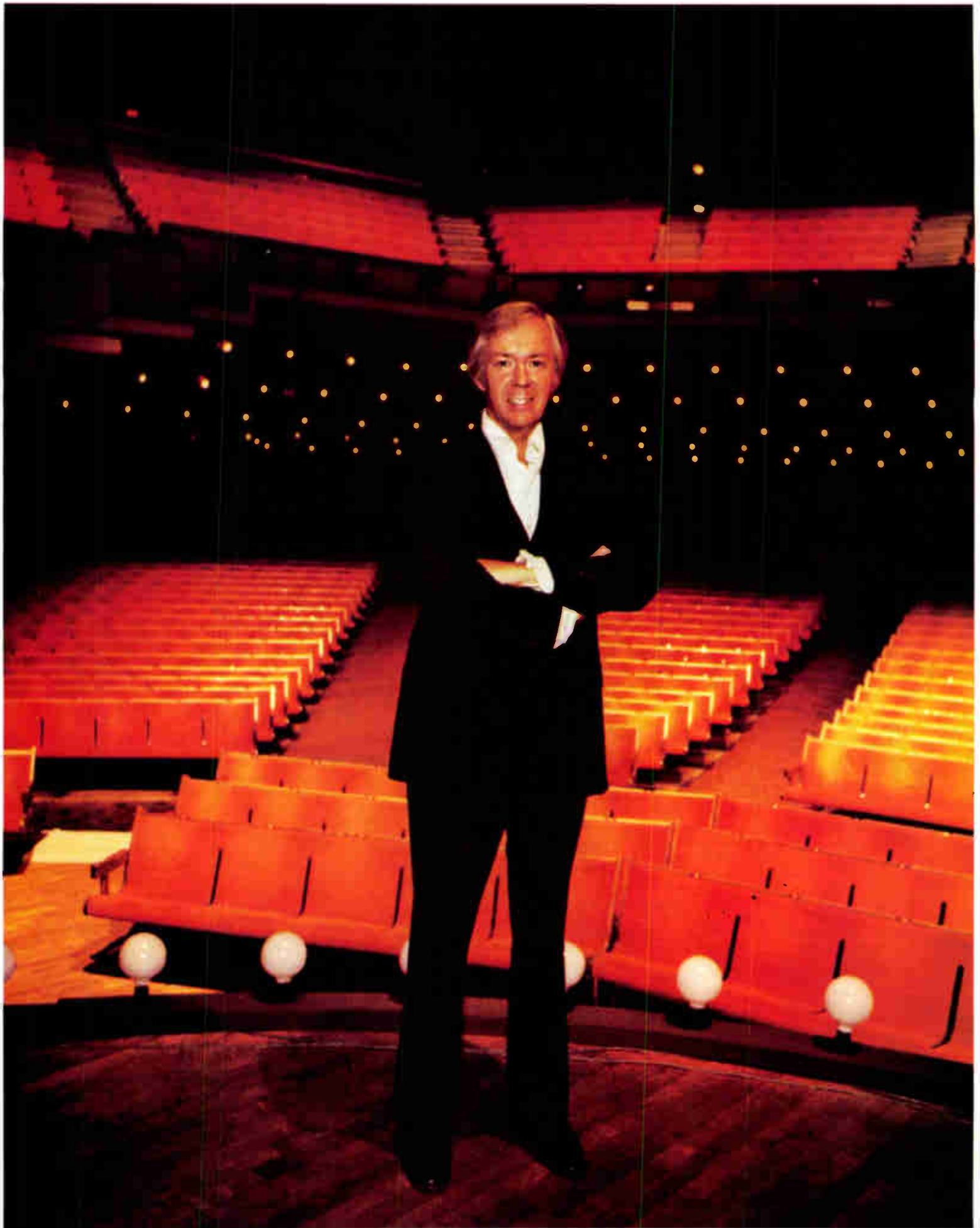
Other than a very brief interest in becoming a lawyer, Stu's one goal all his life has been show business. From performing at social parties in church to various radio shows: the "Noon Specials" and the big "Saturday Night Jamborees," of radio fame just a few years ago. He soon progressed to television and his recordings became favorites. He became an immediate success on TV and has consistently had his own television show. He has

appeared on most of the top syndicated television shows in America and on national TV with stars such as Johnny Cash, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Carol Lawrence, Leslie Uggums and Danny Thomas, in a special, and various other Network shows.

Stu has traveled extensively: to the Far East, the Middle East, Africa (where his records have received the equivalent of gold records), to Europe on three occasions, and the interstates and highways of the U.S. and Canada.

He is married to a beautiful Canadian girl, Aldona, and they have three children. A girl, Leigh, and boys, Joel and Jasson. They live on the outskirts of Nashville, in Brentwood, Tennessee, in an impressive home that Stu helped design.

On the personal side Stu is interested in people, particularly some of the upcoming talent. He truly believes the greatest investment a man can make is in people. "I would have nothing if it had not been for people investing in me—from a 50 cent picture bought by a fan, to much larger investments by those in a position to allocate funds for budgets for recording sessions, TV series and so on" "and I will always be grateful to those who placed their faith in me; I can only repay this debt by passing it on . . . that is, placing my confidence in others."



Ray and his two sons, Daryl, left, and Dale pose backstage in front of the Opry Post Office Boxes where the Opry Stars receive their fan mail.



Ray Pillow is a study in contrasts. He's a country singer born in the city, and now lives on a 65 acre ranch near Nashville. And the picture of excitement and action on stage, but a man devoted to the quiet, family life after the spotlights go out.

Ray is a good example of the so-called "new wave" of contemporary country artists. He is articulate, well in tune with current tastes, and is a college graduate. He attended Lynchburg College in his hometown and graduated with a degree in Business Administration.

Record producers have told Ray he should be a pop singer because he looks like one. "But, I don't want to be a pop singer," Ray says. "A country singer. . . that's all I have ever been. And that's all I'm ever going to be. I sing what I like to sing."

"My first professional appearance was at the VFW Hall in Appomattox, Va.," he recalled. "I sort of got talked into substituting for a sick member of my uncle's band. When I walked out on the stage to the mike, I knew what I wanted to do . . . but I didn't know if I could do it. After I finished and heard the applause, I knew I was doing what I had wanted to do all along."

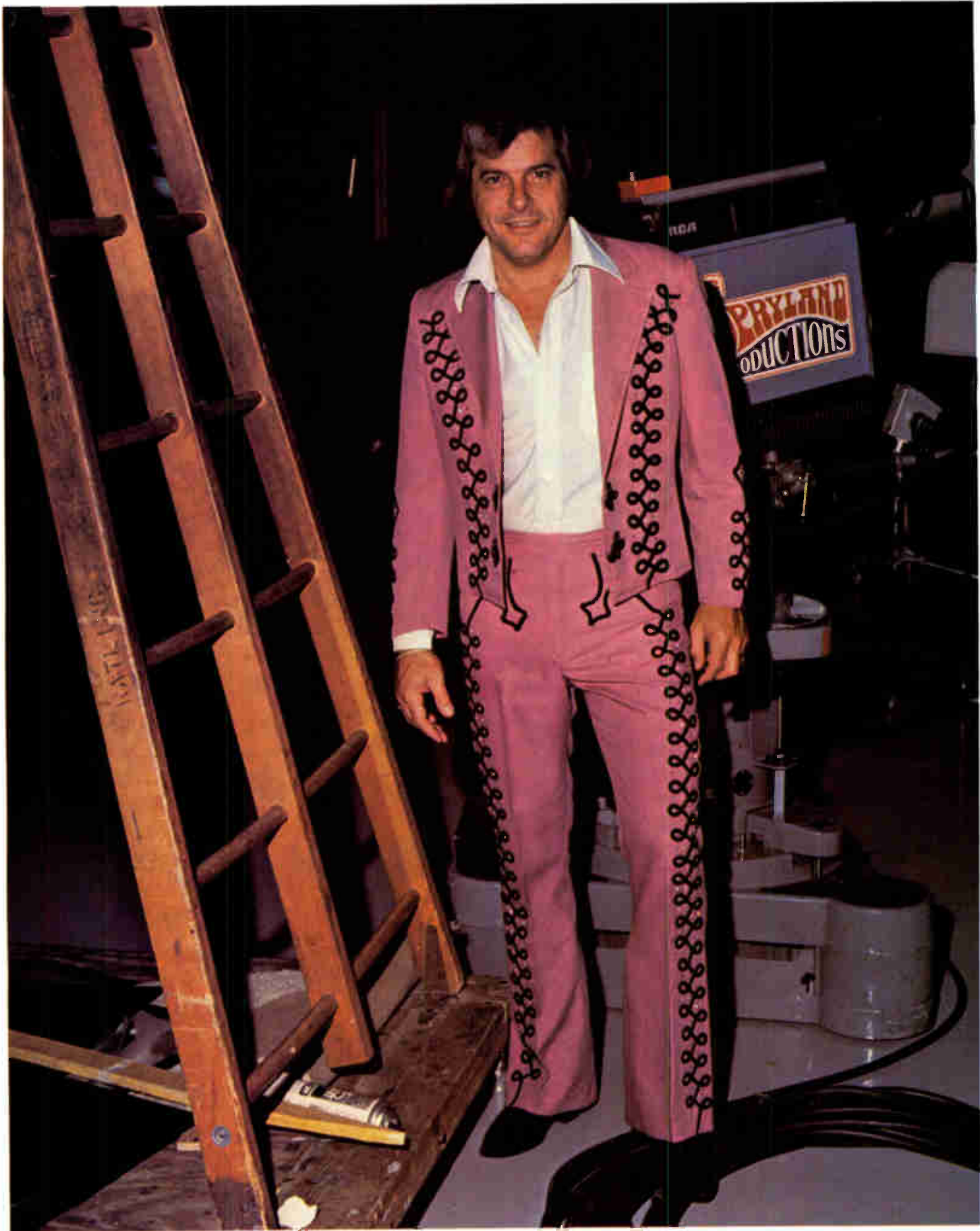
In 1962 Ray entered the Pet Milk Talent Contest conducted by WSM. He was the local winner at

Appomattox and finished as runner-up to the national winner. This experience gave him enough encouragement to tackle Country Music as a full-time professional. Since that time he has parlayed his natural talent, good looks, and winning personality into full-fledged stardom.

In 1966 he was voted "Most Programmed New Artist" by the National D.J. Polls as well as winning Billboard's Most Promising Male Artist Award and Cash Box's "Most Promising New Artist" prize. A leading recording artist, Ray performed on all the nationally syndicated television shows and appeared in a movie. He joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1966.

Ray's songs have hit big with such numbers as: "She's Doing It To Me Again," "Even the Bad Times Are Good," "Countryfied," "Living In The Sunshine Of Your Love," "Simple Things In Life," and "Roll On Trucker."

Ray's quick-witted charm, perfect timing and lively showmanship on stage, insure him an enthusiastic reception everywhere he goes. Maybe that's why the peace and quiet of the country life appeals so much to him. Especially when he can spend it with his wife JoAnne and their children.



JEANNE PRUETT

Jeanne poses with the Saks, Ala. Pony League baseball team she sponsors. Jeanne treated the young ball players to an outing at Opryland after they finished first in their league.



Jeanne Pruett was born and raised in Alabama. But with her string of hits during this decade, she now belongs to the world.

Jeanne's entrance into the recording scene resulted from several years experience as a songwriter. Jeanne was an exclusive writer for Marty Robbins Enterprises. She wrote many hit songs for Robbins, including "Count Me Out," "Waiting In Reno," "Lily Of The Valley," and "Love Me." Her songs also have been recorded by Tammy Wynette, Nat Stuckey, and Conway Twitty, among others. Marty was also instrumental in getting Jeanne her first recording contract.

Jeanne chose the route of songwriter before singer because she feels, "It is easier to be accepted in the music business by your peers as a performer after you have proven yourself as a writer. The acceptance of the fans is another thing. You sell them after you have gone into the studio and come up with the best you have."

Her first hit came in 1971 with "Hold To My Unchanging Love," and was quickly followed by "Love Me." But these songs, in retrospect, merely set the stage for "Satin Sheets," one of the biggest country records of the decade.

The Satin Sheets album was voted by Billboard Magazine as both the Best Country Album and Best

Female Album for 1973. The song and album also earned her nominations by the CMA in 1973 for Top Female Artist, Song of the Year, Album of the Year, and Single of the Year.

An unexpected but nonetheless welcome thrill occurred on July 21, 1973, when Jeanne was announced as a member of the Grand Ole Opry. The honor came just following "Satin Sheets" reaching the number one position on the country music charts.

"Satin Sheets" pushed her to international prominence as well, resulting in Jeanne being voted 1974's Best Female Artist by Music Week Magazine in England.

Since "Satin Sheets," she has had several other hits, including "I'm Your Woman," "You Don't Need To Move A Mountain," "Welcome To The Sunshine (Sweet Baby Jane)," "Just Like Your Daddy," "A Poor Man's Woman," and "I'm A Woman."

Jeanne and her Pure Country Band are constantly touring the U.S. and Overseas, and appear on the Grand Ole Opry as often as possible. When Jeanne isn't recording or touring, she spends time at home, where she lives up to her reputation as one of the best cooks in the country music world.



Del and Grandpa Jones listen attentively to a tall tale by Whitey Ford, "The Duke of Paducah."



"What An Entertainer." That's what people everywhere say after seeing Del Reeves perform. His pleasant personality and unending energy combine to make his stage show one of the most exciting in the business. But that's not all.

Del's records have been solid chartmakers for over a decade, and include seven number ones. His biggest hits were "Girl On The Billboard," "Belles Of Southern Bell," "Philadelphia Phillies," and the best is yet to come.

In addition to making numerous network guest appearances, Del is the star of his own weekly variety show, "The Del Reeves' Country Carnival," which is seen weekly in major markets throughout the United States. Del's program is highly rated with an audience that research shows includes people from every walk of life and an age group running from children to senior citizens.

After college and the airforce, Del became a regular on the Chester Smith television program in California and his career was really on the move. Since his move to Nashville, Del has been one of

Music City's biggest stars, and a member of the Grand Ole Opry since 1966.

The number of Del Reeves fans continues to grow and includes some of music's biggest names. Mel Tillis says, "He's Fan-T-T-T-Tastic." Roy Clark says, "He's the greatest," and Conway Twitty says, "He's the only act he won't follow."

But most important to Del is his family. As busy as his career keeps him, Del always takes time to spend with his wife Ellen, and three daughters at their farm on the outskirts of Nashville.

This year Del Reeves and his band, "The Good Time Charlies," will be traveling and performing throughout the United States and Canada. Next time they're in your area, don't miss the chance to see one of the greatest and most exciting shows in country music.

There are many different Del Reeves—TV star, stage show entertainer, big name recording star and motion picture hero. One thing for sure, is that the public clamor for this fantastic artist is growing so rapidly that there is never enough of him to go around.



MARTY ROBBINS

Police officer Robert Ezell issues Marty Robbins a traffic citation after Marty drove his custom made Panther DeVille onto the Opry House stage! The 12-cylinder automobile is one of only six in the United States and the only white one. It was made in England and flown to this country via a 747.



Whatever the public wants, Marty Robbins supplies it—and has for over a quarter of a century. He is truly a man of many talents: Singer, Composer, Musician, Actor, Race Car Driver, and Businessman.

And the secret to his long-running success is simple, Marty maintains. “Styles change, and new trends come along all the time in this business. You need to go with the changes, and if you’ve got talent you’ll last. Do you know what talent really is? It’s being able to please the people. What I do isn’t anything great, but I have a good time and so does the audience. Knowing how to please people is the only secret for staying in the business.”

Marty has one of the most beautiful singing voices that a man could be blessed with. His range and variety know no bounds. He sings Polynesian, Mexican, Western, Country, and Pop with the authority that only a great singer knows he can do. He sings so well in fact that most people think of him only as a singer. Only a few people outside the music industry realize he is one of the most prolific writers of our time. Marty has written well over 500 songs such as “White Sports Coat,” “Devil Woman,” “Don’t Worry,” “Big Iron,” “You Gave Me A Mountain,” “My Woman, My Woman, My Wife,” and the classic “El Paso,” and has a number of gold

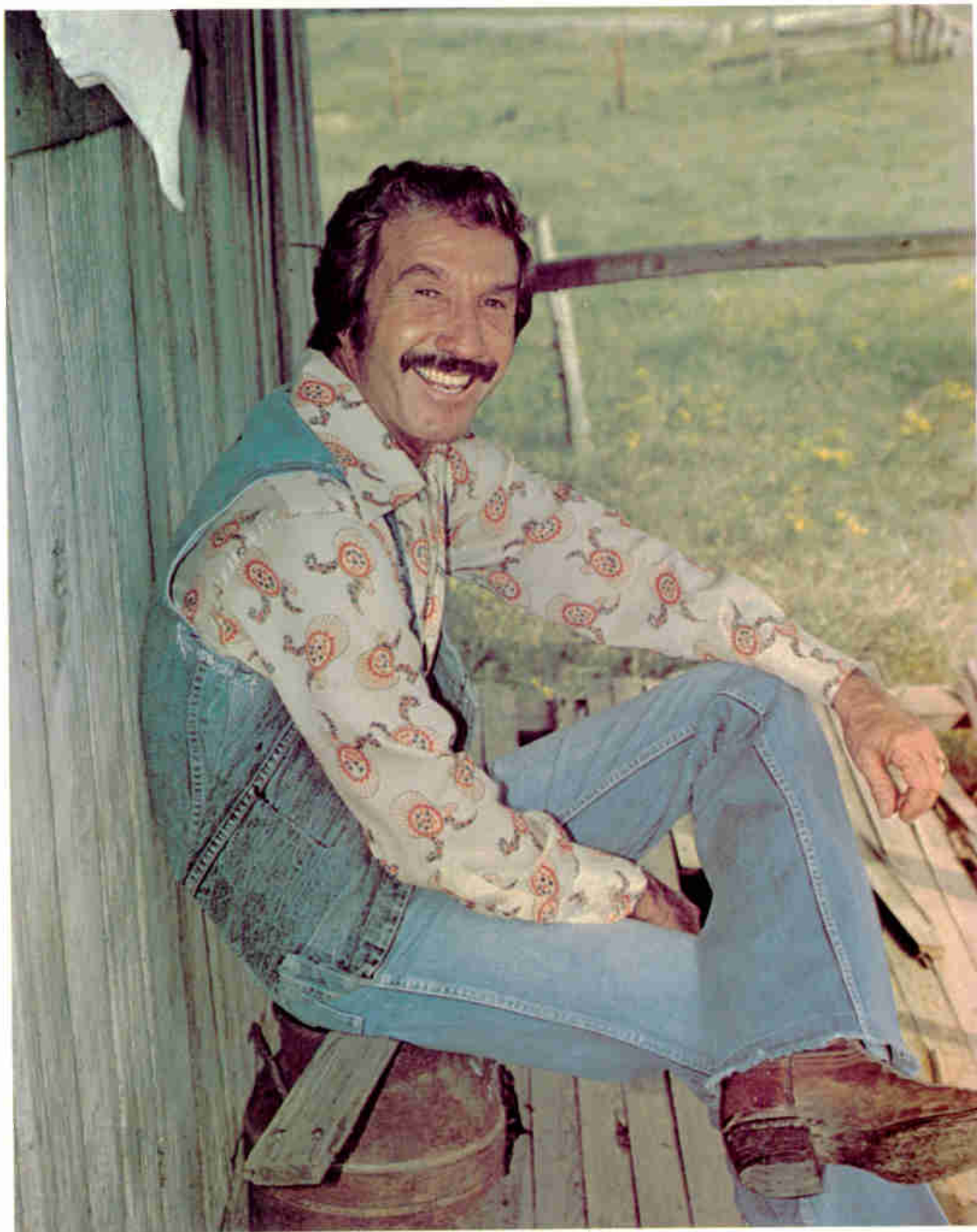
records and gold guitar awards to attest to his composing and singing ability.

Marty has starred in about a dozen movies and hosts his own popular country music television show. His other television credits include most of the top shows in television. A few examples are: “The Dean Martin Show,” “Kraft Music Hall,” “The Johnny Cash Show,” and has been the host on several of the “Midnight Special” shows. He joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1953.

Marty’s concerts always draw capacity crowds and he is always a top attraction in Las Vegas, Reno, and Lake Tahoe. He was the first so called Country act to ever play the main showrooms in Las Vegas and still holds the all time attendance record at one of the big hotels in that city.

And now to Marty the Race Car Driver. Although he only has time to run in about 4 or 5 of the big races a year and although he might tell you he only does it as a hobby, he is greatly respected by all the other drivers on the NASCAR circuit, both as a person and as a race driver.

Yes, Marty is a man of many talents and when you add them all up, Singer, Composer, Musician, Actor, Race Driver, and Businessman, you come to realize that he has truly attained the right to be called “Marty Robbins, Superstar.”



JEANNIE SEELY



Jeannie shares her latest joke with Opry announcer Hairl Hensley.

Jeannie Seely, the petite, pretty, blond, multi-talented Country Music star is probably best described as unconventional.

She often receives credit for changing the image of Country Music performers, but Jeannie denies any such acclaim. "I never planned to set any sort of trend. I've pretty much always worn whatever was in style at the time. When America wore miniskirts, hotpants and cocktail pantsuits, I did too. Now I wear a lot of jeans and boots. But tomorrow it'll be something else. Mainly, I just do whatever makes me happy and expect everyone else to do the same."

Jeannie exploded into the national spotlight on the wings of a monster hit record entitled, "Don't Touch Me." The record won Jeannie the 1966 Grammy Award for the Best Country Female Vocalist and brought her world-wide acclaim. All this would be enough for any one career. But not this little blonde who came from Townville, Pennsylvania, a small town of about 400 people.

Jeannie does everything. Besides performing and recording, she writes songs and owns her own publishing company. Jeannie has talented band members also. In fact, drummer Rick Vaughn took the beautiful color photo of Jeannie shown on the next page.

Music business facts of life were learned first hand, when Jeannie worked as an executive secretary with Liberty and Imperial Records in Hollywood in the early 1960's. She is also an experienced gal deejay with two years behind her as hostess of her own show on the Armed Forces Radio Network. But her singing is not just a sideline. She has been studying and perfecting her style ever

since she was eleven. That's when it officially started for her—on a weekly radio show in Meadville, Pa.

Since her debut broadcast, she has appeared on television and radio shows, auditoriums, clubs, and parks all over the world—including a command performance before the 11th Annual United Nations Concert and Banquet which was requested from the White House. Jeannie joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1967.

In 1977, Jeannie was injured in a near fatal automobile accident. She sustained a broken jaw, broken cheekbones, fractured ribs, a lung collapsed from a puncture, and a concussion. "You know, it sounds like such a cliché, but it's true that when you have a really close call your perspective changes. I've thought a lot about my songwriting. And things that were important, like material things, just don't matter as much to you any more. And what you took for granted you come to appreciate more. People mean more than anything else in the world. I guess I was taught a lesson—several of them.

"The thing that's most important is a new feeling I have now that I want to please people more. Of course, I'll try, but I don't know if I will—because I'm still Jeannie Seely."



JEAN SHEPARD



Jean and her band, "The Second Fiddles." Left to right: Jeff Jarred, Jimmy Johnston, Benny Birchfield, Jimmy Yates and Jack Leonard.

As the sounds of the windup Victrola across the valley, you could hear one small voice above all the others, singing along with some old Jimmy Rogers records. That small voice has grown into a big one and they both belong to Jean Shepard. Jean was born in Paul's Valley, Oklahoma, and spent most of her early life in Visalia, California. She was one of ten children, and Jean says that they were all musically inclined.

Music has always been a very important part of Jean's life and so it wasn't surprising that when she was fourteen years old she came up with the idea of forming an all girl western swing band that was called "The Melody Ranch Girls." Jean sang and played string bass and it didn't take long to recognize that this group was good. Soon they were playing for dances and making radio appearances.

One night, "The Melody Ranch Girls" were playing on the same show with Hank Thompson and he was so impressed with Jean's talent that he introduced her to several record executives. Hank was personally responsible for Jean's receiving her first contract on a major recording label. Jean, at fifteen, had her first record and was well on her way to a professional music career. Later she moved to Springfield, Missouri to join Red Foley and the other stars on the Ozark Jubilee. As her fame grew,

she felt there was only one place for her to continue her career and she moved to Nashville and was asked to join the Grand Ole Opry in 1955.

Now, many hits later, Jean is a true veteran in the country music business. She has recorded twenty-five albums and ten of them are currently available in record shops across the country. Some of the songs that made Jean famous are "Satisfied Mind," "A Dear John Letter," "Forgive Me John," (both million sellers on which she co-starred with Ferlin Husky), "Another Lonely Night," "With His Hand In Mine," "I Want You Free," "Then He Touched Me," "Seven Lonely Days," "Slipping Away," "At The Time," "I'll Do Anything," "Tips Of My Fingers."

With so many hit records behind her, Jean's career is at its peak. Her recent nomination for the Grammy Award for the "Best Country Female Vocal Performance of the Year" showed the world that Jean Shepard's greatest successes are yet to come.

Jean is married to Benny Birchfield, a musician, singer, and prominent member of Nashville's music community. Together, Jean and Benny have revamped her act and organized her first full time band, "The Second Fiddles." This is, without a doubt, one of the best and most complete country music shows available today.



"I was bashful when I was a kid, but I remember clear back when I was five years old I'd say, 'Someday I'm gonna sing on the Grand Ole Opry!' Of course, I said it with a laugh 'cause I didn't want anyone to know just how much I really wanted to. "Connie didn't think her dream would ever be fulfilled." She never really had any intention of following up that dream; it was just a place to run to for her own enjoyment.

Then in 1963 that dream suddenly, without her even trying, began to materialize. She went to a park near Columbus, Ohio, called Frontier Ranch to get her first glimpse of a real live Grand Ole Opry Star, got talked into entering a talent contest, won it, and this led to her meeting Bill Anderson. About six months later she and her husband went to see Bill perform in Canton, Ohio. He recognized them and asked them out to dinner. They talked of music and their love for it. Bill said, "You really like it, don't you?" She said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, why don't you come to Nashville?" She said, "Just like that?" (knowing it wasn't possible). Bill said, "Yes, I'm scheduled to host the Ernest Tubb Record Shop on March 28th; if you'll come to Nashville, I'll let you sing."

As it turned out, Ernest was in town and did the show himself. Connie sang through one of Bill's songs, "Walk Out Backwards," and was scared to death. After the show Loretta Lynn sent her husband, Mooney, to the stage to encourage Connie to stick with it no matter what it took to make it. With that, Connie flew back home to Warner, Ohio and continued to walk on air.

Bill himself missed Connie's singing but heard such good comments that he asked Connie to come back to Nashville in May to help with some demonstration records. A few days after the recording session, Bill called from Minneapolis with the news that Chet Atkins would like to sign her up to record for RCA Victor Records.

Connie signed with RCA June, 1964. Her first recording, "Once A Day," was recorded July, 1964; it was released the first week of August '64 and in November of '64 "Once A Day" was number one on the national country music charts and stayed there for 2½ months. As Connie said, "Just like that." She joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1971.

At convention time in October of '72 Connie married Marshall Haynes of Gallatin, Tennessee.



Connie and actor Claude Akins chat backstage at the Opry prior to their appearance.

Marshall teaches Sunday School at the Lord's Chapel where they attend church. Marshall and Connie do church services together around Nashville. Marshall preaches and Connie sings and testifies of how God has given her life the fulfillment that a successful career could not.

Connie's career slowed down for a while as she spent more time with her young family. But, Connie's now back at her work going strong.

In addition to Connie's TV appearances, being seen regularly on the Grand Ole Opry, her country music performances, and a little song-writing thrown in, Connie appears frequently at a lot of religious crusades. Connie also records at least one gospel album a year along with her country albums.



"I was the victim of a broken home at the age of eight. My parents divorced, separating our family of three sisters and myself, and sending two of my sisters to live in foster homes. Through my mother's second marriage, I inherited a cruel, heartless and ignorant stepfather. When I could no longer tolerate the severe punishment that was handed out by him daily, I shipped to sea as a cabin-boy on ships out of Eastern Canada. At the age of twelve, this was a last resort for survival.

"Since that time, I have faced the world on my own. I have known what poverty means. I know what it means to live in the slums of cities. I know what it is to do a man's work when I was only a young boy. I have never forgotten the abuse I received as a young boy, and now it is only natural that I should have a great interest in the welfare of children. Remember, the future of the world tomorrow depends on today's little children."

The above sentiments prompted Hank, in 1978, to establish the "Hank Snow International Foundation For Prevention Of Child Abuse And Neglect of Children, Inc." Box 750, Nashville, Tenn. And although he will be remembered as a Country Music giant, nothing pleases Hank more than working with the child abuse foundation.

Hank was born in Brooklyn, Queens County, Nova Scotia, Canada. And once when the sea-going fellow returned from one of his trips, he learned his mother had obtained a cheap guitar from a mail order house. This gave the youngster his first try on a stringed instrument.

Not long after this, Hank learned that the late Jimmie Rodgers had been discovered by Ralph Peer, and was already recording for the RCA Victor Company. "The Singing Brakeman," as Jimmie was known, was not only to become Hank's idol, but would serve as his guiding star along the rough road to success. Although Hank worked at many jobs, including work on fish docks, as a stevedore, on farms, etc., he continued his practice on the guitar and often sang to entertain his friends and ward off loneliness. Finally he was encouraged by his friends to seek an audition at Radio Station CHNS in Halifax. He did his first radio show on the day of his audition.



Lovely Kelly Foxtan and Opry announcer, Grant Turner join Hank for some delicious pastry backstage at the Opry.

Soon after acquiring his radio position, Hank decided to form the now famous Rainbow Ranch Boys and established himself as the "Singing Ranger." As Hank matured professionally, more important things came his way. Soon he was invited to become a featured act on the "Canadian Farm Hour." After much persuasion, he was signed to his first recording contract with RCA Victor, Canada, in October of 1936.

In 1949 Hank made his first performing tour in the United States to coincide with the release of his first American record. Hank, who joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1950, has assembled an impressive file of hits, including, "I'm Moving On," "Rhumba Boogie," "Bluebird Island," "Golden Rocket," "Hello Love" and many more. He has recorded more than 80 albums, and more than 2,000 songs and instrumentals. Hank now records and performs with the multi-talented Kelly Foxtan.

Hank has received many impressive awards in his lifetime, but still considers citizenship to the United States of America and involvement with the Hank Snow Child Abuse Foundation his greatest rewards.



THE STONEY MOUNTAIN CLOGGERS

Ben Smathers socializes backstage at the Opry with friends Ray Price, Roy Acuff and Minnie Pearl.



The history of country entertainment in America can well include the first settlers of Irish, German and Dutch descent, who arrived on horseback and covered wagons atop the Great Smokies and Stoney Mountains of North Carolina. In their spare time they gathered in homes, barns, and in the fields with their instruments to play and sing and exhibit their native folk dances.

Clogg dancing was handed down to the present, where here we introduce the most highly acclaimed of the cloggers of this generation, the celebrated and fabulous Smathers Family, better known to Grand Ole Opry fans as Ben Smathers and the Stoney Mountain Cloggers.

Of course, in these modern times, the Smathers have broadened their fascinating and fast moving performance with a conglomeration of country blue grass, pop, country and spiritual. The Smathers Family are Ben and pretty wife, Margaret, and their family: Hal, Tim, Candy, and Debbie. They are the only act of its kind in country music.

Numerous honorary mentions have been heaped upon the Smathers for their determined energies to keep clogg dancing alive. Their unique performances have been lauded by governors of the southern states, including a proclamation by the former Tennessee Governor Winfield Dunn, who acclaimed them, "Dance Masters of Country Music."

Ben and Margaret have been clogg dancing since their early school days just as other children in the Carolinas have been taught. It was traditional

among hill people where clogging contests were highly competitive. The couple entered all the country festivals and contests where their popularity spread and they soon became regulars on television shows in both Asheville and Greenville, North Carolina.

Their popularity continued to grow and in 1958, they were given a guest spot for an appearance on the Grand Ole Opry. They were accepted with wild ovations and numerous encores and have been regulars on the Grand Ole Opry ever since. Extraordinary musicians as well as clogg dancers and singers, the entire family play guitar, bass, drums, banjo and tambourine. They are sometimes billed as "Country Music In Review."

Since entering the professional entertainment field, the Smathers have appeared on over 130 network shows and six motion pictures. They have also been featured at 40 state fairs and numerous country fairs, and today hold the distinction of being the only group of its kind presented at Carnegie Hall. They now spend most of their time touring with the Charlie Daniel's Band.

Ben and Margaret hail from Hendersonville, North Carolina known as the heart of the clogg dance country, and billed by the Chamber of Commerce as, "The Dancingest Little Town In The World." They no longer reside in Hendersonville, North Carolina, but they have remained loyal to its name. They now live in Hendersonville, Tennessee, which is located on Old Hickory Lake 20 miles out of Nashville.



THE TENNESSEE TRAVELERS



The Tennessee Travelers demonstrate their unique style to hundreds of enthusiastic dancers at the Annual Country Music Fan Fair Squaredance held in Nashville each June.

The Tennessee Travelers, one of the most lively and exciting acts you will ever see anywhere, were organized by the late Ralph Sloan in 1947. Ralph developed his love for the exact art of square dancing when he worked as a doorman at a dance hall in the early 1940's.

Ralph first became interested in Country Music when he got a ukulele for Christmas at the age of five. He recalls walking two miles to a home that had a radio just to listen to Roy Acuff and Ernest Tubb.

The Tennessee Travelers perform the Appalachian style of square dance. It's a free lance step with each couple doing their own thing. However, the intricate figures and patterns are carefully rehearsed before being shown to an audience.

Over the years this dance team has earned the title: "World's Most Popular Square Dancers." The Tennessee Travelers were the opening act when Ambassadors and Representatives to the United

Nations made their historic visit to the Opry in 1976. They are the featured act at the Annual Fan Fair Square Dance held in Nashville each June. And, the Tennessee Travelers mail response indicates they have been the most popular act on the syndicated TV show, "That Nashville Music," since 1968.

Since the untimely death of Ralph in March, 1980, his brother Melvin Sloan, has become the new leader of the group. Although Country Music has played a major role in Melvin's life, he had never been involved with calling sets and square dancing.

This new aspect of entertaining presented quite a challenge to him. But with determination and many hours of hard work and sore feet, Melvin has met the challenge. Now he and the Tennessee Travelers are looking forward to continued growth, success and the opportunity to entertain their many fans around the country.



Ever since he burst upon the music world with his million-selling rendition of the Hank Williams classic, "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," B. J. Thomas has won fans around the world with his rich, sensuous baritone and a sultry vocal style that bends and caresses a melody, identifying that song forever in the mind of the listener as a "B. J. Thomas song."

Although B. J. has won Grammys for his gospel recordings, and sung the Oscar award-winning "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head," he is no stranger to country music. From "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," to the number one country record of "Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song," B. J. has always appealed to a country audience and included country music in his repertoire.

Growing up in Houston, B. J.'s early influence included Hank Williams and Ernest Tubb. He would sing songs by these country legends to his father late into the evening. When he was 15, he joined a local Houston band, The Triumphs. Soon they were recording with Texas producer Huey Meaux, but B. J. insisted that unless he did a Hank Williams tune for his father, he wouldn't be able to go home that night.

Meaux sold the master to New York-based Scepter Records in 1965. Not only was "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" B. J.'s first record, but also his first million-seller. He toured the country with the Dick Clark Caravan of Stars and recorded two more million-sellers, "Eyes of a New York Woman," and "Hooked on a Feeling." Fellow Scepter artist Dionne Warwick brought him to the attention of her own writing/producing team of Burt Bacharach and Hal David. The result was "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head." By the time B. J. sang the song on the Academy Awards show, his total record sales had passed the 20 million mark.

Like many performers who achieve early success, B. J. had trouble coping with his fame. A shy, sensitive person by nature, he found he could bolster his confidence with drugs and alcohol. By 1975 he was on the verge of a total physical and emotional collapse. Just as his life was about to bottom out, he experienced a spiritual rejuvenation, regaining touch with his family, his music, and most importantly, with himself.



Rudy, Larry and Steve? No, that's B. J. Thomas harmonizing with the Gatlin Brothers on an ole time gospel favorite.

B. J. decided to have his music follow his heart and set out to record in both the gospel and secular fields. His gospel recordings have garnered him four Grammys, and the distinction of being the first gospel artist to achieve platinum status. He continued to produce pop hits with such songs as "Don't Worry Baby" and "Everybody Loves A Rain Song."

By the late '70s, B. J. has found peace in what was once a troubled life. But he was still searching for the right musical direction. Now more than ever he wanted his music to express the positive feelings he had let into his life. He stopped recording in the pop field for a period of close to four years. By 1980 B. J. was once again ready to record, but he decided that he was going to stick closer to his roots and return to the country music that had launched his career over 15 years ago. He joined the Grand Ole Opry on his birthday, August 7, 1981.

For B. J. Thomas, it has been a long and varied career with highs and lows beyond the comprehension of most of us. But it has always been marked by his ability to turn a song into his very own, and subsequently turn us all on with his ability to transmit the deeper feelings of life through his music.



"His Texas drawl topped off by a twinkle in his eye and a kindly sense of humor plus his ability to interpret the songs of the soil, have endeared him to millions of Americans. From where we sit it looks like Ernest Tubb is really going places."—George D. Hay, the Solemn Old Judge, founder of the Grand Ole Opry. Circa 1945.

"I was born in Texas. You know that. But I never got a callin' to music 'til my sister brought home a Jimmie Rodgers record; 'In the Jailhouse Now,' I think it was, and this was when I was 15.

"Now, my daddy used to kid me. He'd hear me down in the pasture tryin' to yodel. That's where I'd practice. Nobody could yodel like Jimmie Rodgers, but I was bound to try. Did pretty good, too, 'til I lost my tonsils.

"Anyway, he'd hear me down in the pasture, and then, he'd come a-runnin', sayin', 'didn't I hear Jimmie Rodgers down here?' And my brother, he'd just aggravate me. He'd come runnin' up, sayin', 'Hey folks, I knew this boy before he could yodel.'

"Well, this was 1929, when I was 15. A couple years later, in Benjamin, Texas, I was singin' at dances, and my sister said, 'Why don't you get a guitar or something?' So, I brought one for \$5.95.

"Well, things moved on. A few years later, when Jimmie Rodgers died, I was in San Antonio. Had a program on radio station WONO. At the time, I also worked in a drug store. And I was thinkin' to myself one day, 'Now, Jimmie Rodgers' widow lives in San Antonio; I wonder if she's in the phone book?' So, I looked up the name, and sure enough, there was a Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers. I called her, and when she answered the phone, I like to fainted. But, I said, 'Hello, I'm Ernest Tubb, and I was wonderin' if you could send me a picture of Jimmie—just anything.'

"Come on over," she said, So, I went to her house, thinkin' I'd stay just a few minutes. Well, we talked and talked, and I looked at my watch, and saw I'd been there three hours. Anyway, she said she'd listen to my program. So, I went on home, and three months later, she called back and said, 'Ernest, I like



Two show business legends—E. T. and actor Jack Albertson.

your show. I've listened for a while, and I think you can go places, so I'd like to help you.'

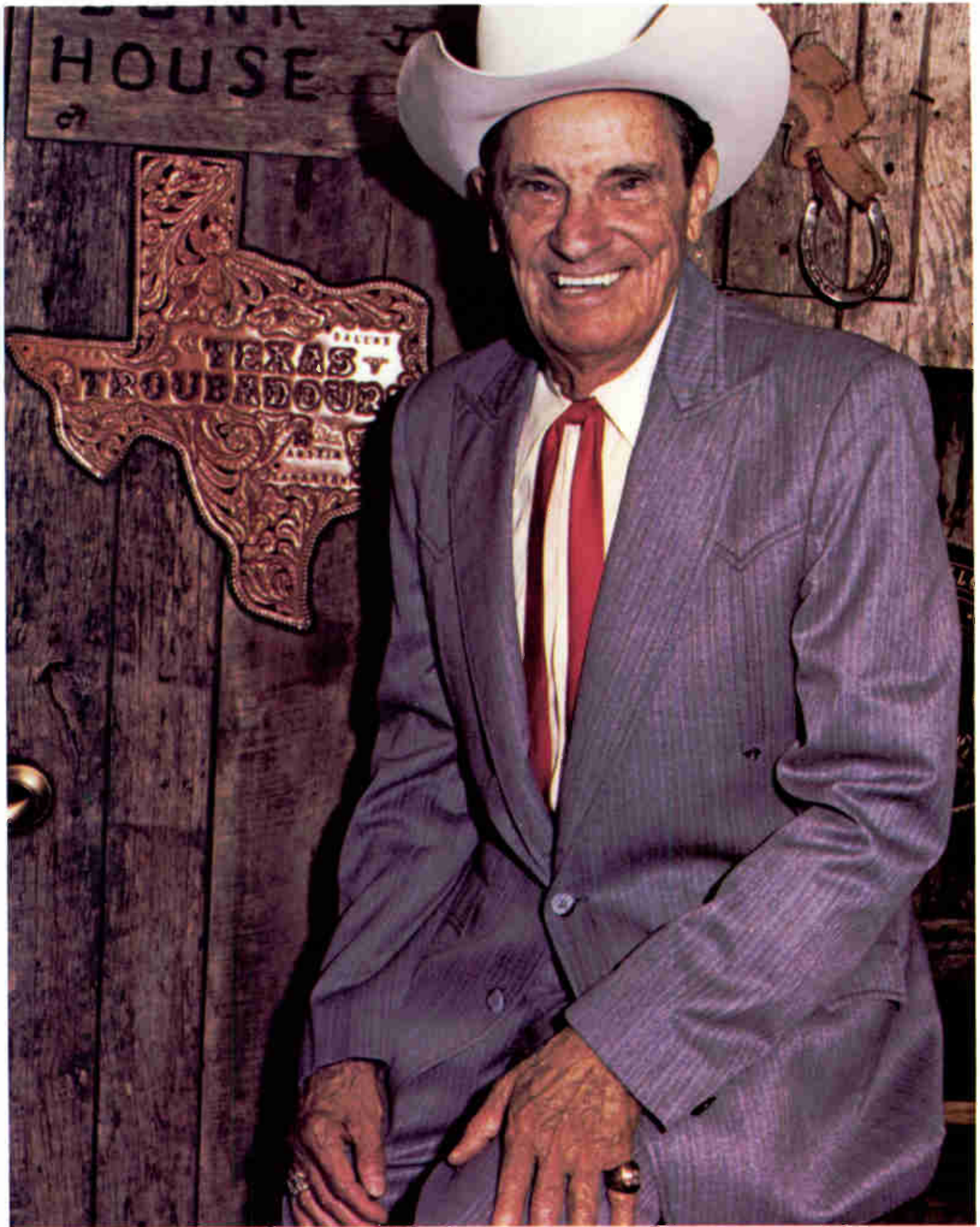
"And that's how I got started."

Today Ernest Tubb is one of the most celebrated stars of Country Music. He is honored as one of the "All Time Greats" by the Country Music Association and the many performers who have been helped by Tubb applaud the tribute.

Tubb's trip from the Texas Plains to the Hills of Tennessee followed the success of a song which he wrote entitled "I'm Walking the Floor Over You." The song, which soon became the theme-song for Ernest Tubb and his "Texas Troubadours," has sold millions of records. He has also written over one hundred songs. E.T. joined the Opry in 1943.

Always ready to lend a helping hand to the new-comer, Ernest has helped many country singers to a big career in the field. His famous "Midnight Jamboree" radio show, which is broadcast over WSM from the Ernest Tubb Record Shop in Nashville, has been the proving grounds for countless young hopefuls.

Ernest and his family make their home in Nashville. In fact, his son Dean took the two fine photos of Ernest Tubb seen on these pages. His hobbies include home movies, golf and reading. He travels about 90% of the time, with his versatile band in a big comfortable bus. His fans number in the millions all over the world, and many of them have followed his long career closely.



Proud Papa, Justin, gathers backstage with his handsome family. Left to right: Wife Carolyn, sons Zachary Dale, Cary Justin, and daughter Leah-Lisa Barrow.



It hardly seems possible that Justin Tubb, oldest son of Ernest Tubb, has been a member of WSM's Grand Ole Opry for 25 years. He became a regular on the world famous show in 1955, and has been one of its steadfast performers ever since.

Justin is also known as one of the better songwriters in country music, having won BMI awards for his songs, "Lonesome 7-7203," "Love Is No Excuse," "Take a Letter, Miss Gray," "Keeping Up With The Jones," and "Be Better to Your Baby." He's had songs recorded by Hawkshaw Hawkins, Ernest Tubb, Patsy Cline, Del Reeves, Jim Reeves, Dottie West, George Jones, Willie Nelson, Tony Booth, Faron Young, Ray Price, Hank Williams Jr., and Burl Ives, to name a few.

Justin was born in Texas. He actually got his start in country music writing songs, his father recording one of his songs in 1952. This just primed the pump, and he and two of his cousins formed a group and started playing local clubs in and around Austin while he was attending The University of Texas.

After a year of college, the lure of country music was too strong, and Justin moved to Nashville permanently, becoming a disc jockey on WHIN Radio in nearby Gallatin, Tennessee. He also was recording at this time, and some of his best known recordings include, "Looking Back To See," (with

Goldie Hill) "I Gotta Get My Baby," "Take A Letter Miss Gray," "As Long As There's A Sunday," "Hurry Mr. Peters" (with Lorene Mann), "Travelin Singin Man," "Texas Dance Hall Girl," and "Whats Wrong With The Way We're Doing It Now?"

Justin has travelled extensively, and has appeared in all but two of the fifty states, as well as Canada, Panama Canal Zone, Bermuda, Spain, England, and West Germany. He also took a show to the Far East in 1967, doing shows for servicemen in South Viet Nam, the Phillipines, Taiwan, Okinawa, South Korea, and Japan.

He and his dad formed a publishing company, Cary & Mr. Wilson Music, Inc., which Justin manages. He also is in charge of the Ernest Tubb Midnight Jamboree, a live hour broadcast from the Ernest Tubb Record Shop, every Saturday night immediately following the Grand Ole Opry. This doesn't leave much time for personal appearances, but Justin says he enjoys traveling more now, since he doesn't have to do it all of the time.

When you see Justin, you're seeing one of the country music's most talented and capable songwriter/singers, who has done much to make country music the most popular form of music throughout the world today.



PORTER WAGONER

Porter's been recording hits for RCA Records since the early 1950's. Today, he's one of the biggest selling artists on the label. Secondly, his syndicated television show has become the most popular program of its type and is seen weekly all over the nation (in over 100 markets) by over 45 million people, an audience surpassing that of many nighttime network shows.

Since 1957 he's been a member of the Grand Ole Opry and over the years he and the talented people working with him have won virtually every major award that can go to country music artists, including the celebrated "Grammy" Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

It all began in West Plains, Missouri. The Wagoner family lived on a farm, and they were far from being wealthy. By age 14, Porter helped out by working in a market as a clerk. During slack business times, while accompanying himself on a guitar, Porter would play for the customers and the owner. Because he enjoyed Porter's singing so much, the market owner sponsored a 15-minute local radio show featuring Porter Wagoner, "market clerk."

This led to a job at KWTO in Springfield, Missouri, in the fall of 1951. There the Ozark Jubilee was born, and Red Foley, who directed the casting, began teaching Porter the necessary "professional extra" that turn good entertainers into great showmen. Soon Porter was a featured star of that nationally televised show.

At about this time he was offered an RCA recording contract, despite his relative lack of bigtime experience. RCA's legendary Steve Sholes had so much faith in Porter's potential that he allowed Porter to experiment for four years until he found the right musical formula.

His first hit was released in 1955—"A Satisfied Mind"—and it shot to the top, with Porter soaring too. He's been there ever since. He's made literally

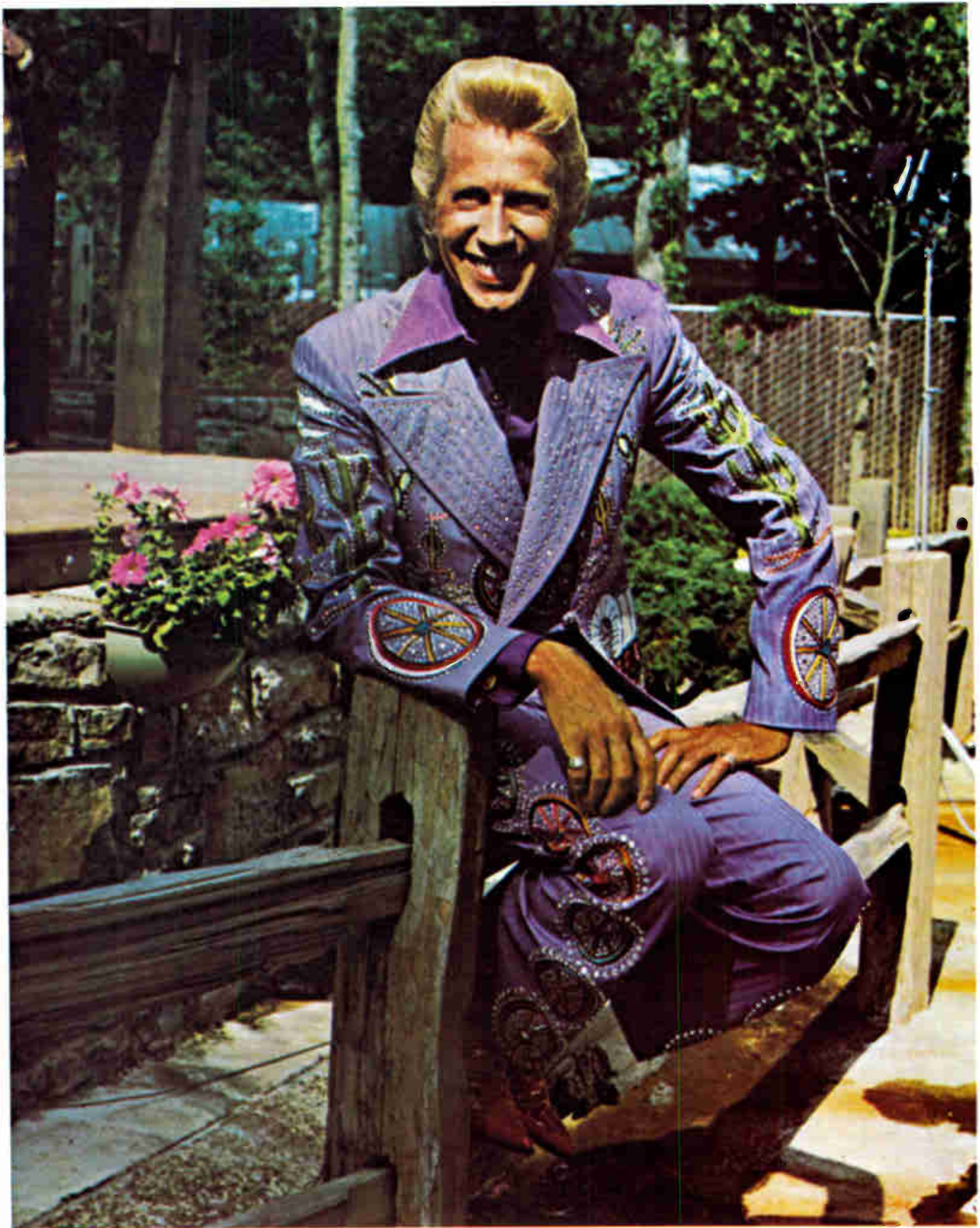


When George Burns saw Porter he said: "If I had known you were going to dress up, I would have worn my rhinestones!"

hundreds of records for RCA, and virtually everything he releases becomes big-selling merchandise: hit singles and albums.

By 1961 Porter had become a successful in-person performer as well, and his personal charm easily captivated audiences at the Opry and wherever else he played. This factor caused some Nashville advertising executives to think of Porter as a "natural" for television. He was signed to host his own television show, a syndicated series and a "first" for country music. Today it is the most successful program of its type in television history, and it has inspired dozens of other syndicated country series.

Porter's idea of resting is to go to the lake. That means fishing, an activity he attacks with as much zeal as work. Other interests include playing golf, and he's one of Nashville's outstanding amateurs. If there's a golf tournament around and he has the time, Porter will be in it.



BILLY WALKER

Over twenty years of dedication, diligence and a "strictly professional" attitude combined with overwhelming God given talent have ingrained Billy Marvin Walker as a strong thread in the colorful blanket of talented Nashville Artists who have pleased millions of fans over those years.

"The Tall Texan's" sheer determination as a result of being a young orphan and later hitchhiking eighty miles a week to do a New Mexico Radio show plus his tremendous personal desire to sing and entertain have been the stimuli of a driving force that has kept those wheels rolling on his big customized diesel bus which carries Billy and his fabulous band "The Tennessee Walkers" all over the U.S. and Canada annually.

Regarding his role as a professional Walker reflects: "We have an excellent self-contained professional show which plays weekly to thousands at fairs, rodeos, ballrooms, clubs, theme parks, and trade shows. This personal appearance element represents the majority of our professional activity time which includes two other elements—recording and television. I make no secret that I always make every effort to encore if I accomplish this it represents not only personal satisfaction; but also audience satisfaction and no one will dispute the fact that audience satisfaction has great bearing on any entertainer's future."

While still a young man, Billy apprenticed in the industry touring with the bands of Jimmy Lawson and Hank Thompson. He worked on Shreveport's Legendary "Louisiana Hayride" with then newcomers such as Webb Pierce, Faron Young and a young former Memphis truck driver, Elvis Presley. Later he became a regular on Red Foley's A.B.C.---T.V. network show, The Ozark Jubilee in Springfield, Missouri for three years during which time he also appeared on the Big D Jamboree in Dallas, Texas. His own show, "Country Carnival," Hee-Haw, Mike Douglas, Joey Bishop, Pop Goes The Country, Nashville On The Road, and The Ronnie Prophet Show "Grand Ole Country" have consistently kept him in front of U.S. and Canadian fans. He joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1960.

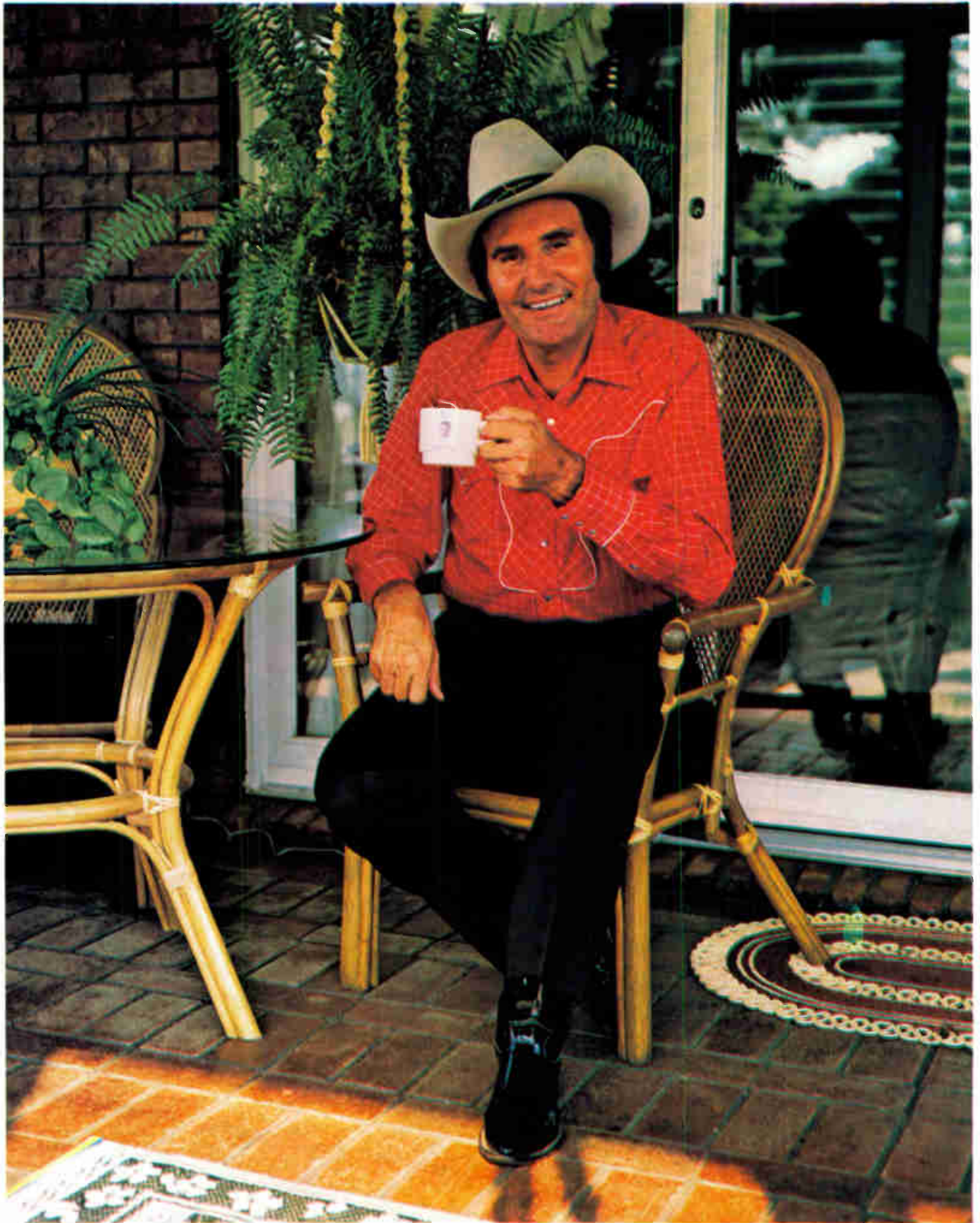


"I'm on the road again," is a typical theme song for Country Music Stars like Billy Walker.

Fifteen years with Columbia Records produced such Number one tunes as "Funny How Time Slips Away," "Cross The Brazos At Waco," "A Million And One," "Circumstances" and a huge quarter million seller "Charlie's Shoes." Billy's later recordings were "Word Games," "Don't Stop In My World," "When A Man Loves A Woman," and "If I'm Losin You." Hits are a trend for Billy as he ranked among the top twenty most programmed Country Artists over a period of twenty years according to a recent Billboard survey. Sixty-three recordings with forty-one chart records and thirty-two in top ten seems to explain the above phenomena.

His desire to maintain a top notch, neatly attired, versatile and professional presentation has earned him prestigious appearances on the international circuit. He is a consistent repeat engagement artist and gives an audience more than they require of him.

Billy enjoys farming and lives at "Walker's Acres" near Hendersonville, Tenn.



CHARLIE WALKER

As his friends and business associates already know—and as his fans find out wherever Charlie appears—this dark-haired, brown-eyed entertainer is a good natured, easy-moving, personable guy who knows what country music is all about.

Charlie was born in Copeville, Texas. He grew up on his parents cotton farm in Nevada, Texas about 35 miles north east of Dallas. Charlie's father was a Texas lawman and Justice of the Peace. He also taught young Charlie his musical foundation. The Walkers moved to Dallas when he was a senior in high school and Charlie finished school there.

His musical career actually began while still a senior in high school. Charlie got a job singing in a Dallas honky tonk and soon became a vocalist for Bill Hyde's big western swing band, the "Cowboy Ramblers." He was with them for a year until he was called into military service and served two years. One year was spent in Japan where he introduced country music to the Japanese people on Armed Forces Radio Network from Tokyo. When he came out of military service he moved to San Antonio, Texas and became one of the nation's top 10 Country disc jockeys.

His first noise making recording was "Tell Her Lies and Feed Her Candy." This was soon followed by his million selling record "Pick Me Up On Your Way Down." He has recorded 20 albums and had 47 songs in the national charts. Some of his other big hits are "Don't Squeeze My Sharmon," "Little Ole Wine Drinker Me," "Truck Driving Man," "My Shoes Keep Walking Back To You," and "Chase All The Honky Tonkers." Charlie's new album on Plantation Records is "Texas Gold."

Charlie is at his best in songs that describe the hopes, fears, and problems of everyday people. As an interpreter of country blues he is incomparable. He performs standard country with a deep intensity, while giving a timeless quality to contemporary tunes.

A Grand Ole Opry member since 1967, Charlie has toured every state in the U.S., plus England, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Canada. He is a headliner at Las Vegas, Reno, Jackpot and other Nevada cities. Charlie has also chalked up numer-



Charlie shares the Opry stage with friends Leona Williams and Merle Haggard.

ous credits via TV guestings on all the leading Country & Western syndicates. Also, a role in a new Universal International movie, "Country Music," not only proved he could make the movie scene, but sparked an incentive in this handsome 6 foot 1 inch, 185 lb Texan to do more movie work.

Charlies' hobbies are golf and duck & deer hunting. He shoots golf in the 70's and plays in about 10 pro-celebrity tournaments every year. Some of the tournaments he has played in are the Jackie Gleason Inverarry Classic, The Sahara Invitational in Las Vegas, The Colonial Invitational, The American Cancer Classic, The Southern Open, The Greensboro Open, The Texas Open, The Westchester Classic in New York, and the Nashville Pro Celebrity.

That first professional job at a Dallas honky tonk when he was 17 years old was quite different from the auditorium and packed house engagements he works today. Charlie Walker has come a long way from those early Dallas days, and has proven to be one of America's finest country blues singers.



DOTTIE WEST

In the song that has become her trademark, country music star Dottie West tells about how she was “raised on country sunshine” and is “happy with the simple things.”

As the oldest of 10 children on a farm near McMinnville, Tennessee, the auburn-haired Dottie sometimes had to make do without some of life’s amenities. Today, her life may not be any simpler but it’s undoubtedly a lot more comfortable.

Dottie lives with her husband, drummer Byron Metcalf, and her four children in a modern home in Nashville, Tennessee. The walls of one room are filled with awards she has won for her songwriting and performing. They include a Grammy for a song she wrote, “Here Comes My Baby,” which has become her most widely recorded hit. “There’s been 100 cuts of ‘Here Comes My Baby’ that I know of,” Dottie says. In all, she estimates she’s written 350 to 400 songs, “and that’s not really a lot.” It was enough to win her Billboard’s top award in 1974 and other writing honors from Broadcast Music, Inc., the performing-rights organization.

Dottie’s first professional job was in 1956, when she lived in Cleveland, Ohio. “Then in 1959, I was home on vacation in Nashville and I walked into Starday Records and asked them if they would listen to me sing. They were just getting their new studios open, and I did the first recording session at Starday.

Dottie had been earning her way through college with her singing. (She attended Tennessee Tech in Cookeville where she majored in music and got her degree.) She also had a radio show in Cookeville.

In 1961, Dottie joined a talent agency in Nashville for bookings and Buddy Killen (now head of Tree Publishing Co.) subsequently signed her with Atlantic Records, producing her sessions. The late Jim Reeves had heard Dottie’s songs and recommended her to Chet Atkins at RCA. She had never met Chet, but one day “Mr. Guitar” called her and expressed an interest in her career. The result was Dottie’s contract with RCA as a recording artist.

Jim Reeves recorded the first song Dottie wrote as a professional, “Is This Me?,” and it won her a BMI Writer’s Award. Dottie states: “It’s a great feeling to help another artist who’s really struggling as a newcomer to the business. I know what it means to a new artist for someone else to just speak up for them a little bit. So many times it really counts. I am



Dottie and Minnie Pearl display their high stepping version of country disco.

grateful to people like Hank Cochran and Jim Reeves.”

Dottie has taken this philosophy to heart. She met a young singer/songwriter by the name of Larry Gatlin, who so impressed her with his talent that she later sent him a plane ticket to Nashville and introduced him to publishers and record producers. Larry was later signed to Monument Records. Today, Larry is a big star in his own right who credits Dottie West as an important factor in his incredible rise in the music business. Dottie became a regular member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1962.

Dottie admits she likes to do songs such as Roberta Flack’s hits, “Killing Me Softly” and “Jesse.” Her albums are a variety, usually, and she doesn’t really stick to just strictly hard-core country songs. Today, Dottie and Kenny Rodgers are considered one of Country Music’s top duets.

Dottie West says, “I can’t remember when I didn’t sing. My Mama said I got here singing, and I want to go out singing.”



THE WILBURN BROTHERS

It was a cold Christmas Eve in 1938. Five frightened children were huddled together on a corner of the town square in Thayer, Missouri. They were there for a reason. After practicing all year at their farm home near Hardy, Arkansas, on the instruments their father had ordered for them from the Sears Catalog, the children had come to town to make their show business debut. And so began "The Singing Wilburn Children." And the two youngest—Teddy, 6 and Doyle, 7,—grew up to become one of the all-time best loved acts in Country Music—The Wilburn Brothers.

The year following their street corner debut the Wilburn Children toured the neighboring cities and states, giving concerts wherever Pop Wilburn, who acted as agent, PR man and booker, could gather a crowd. Schoolhouses, churches, movie houses and even more street corners were among the dates played by this country "Partridge Family."

Their first break came in 1940, when Roy Acuff saw the youngsters perform and brought them to the Grand Ole Opry. They stayed on the Opry for six months but finally had to leave because of their youth and the show's late hours. Their star was still rising, though, and in 1948 they went on to become regulars for three years on "The Louisiana Hayride," a popular country show out of Shreveport.

In 1951 the Korean conflict broke out and soon Teddy and Doyle received their bookings from Uncle Sam. After their release from the service, Teddy and Doyle went right back into the business of Country Music. They worked on the Webb Pierce Show, and soon were back on center stage (as regulars) at the Grand Ole Opry in 1953. In fact, it was Webb Pierce who helped get the boys their recording contract in 1954. They were on their way. National and non-country recognition came from their appearances on such shows as Arthur Godfrey, American Bandstand, etc.



Ma Wilburn is surrounded by three important men in her life, sons Doyle & Teddy with Roy Acuff.

Today the Wilburn Brothers are one of Country Music's most honored acts. Their great harmony and talent cover the country spectrum—from "nickel-in-the-jukebox" tunes to modern country-folk ballads. Teddy and Doyle have recorded 26 albums for MCA.

The year 1977 saw The Brothers singing in Alaska and making it the last of the states in which they had never performed. A great ovation followed their 1978 appearance at The Wembley Country Music Festival in London and after their choice of several years of inactivity in the business, the boys are once again becoming more involved and active with road engagements, TV and movies and the entire entertainment spectrum.

Their yester-year hit singles include "Trouble's Back in Town," (The Country Record of the Year in the 1962 Cash Box Year End Poll), "Roll Muddy River," "It's Another World," "Someone Before Me," and "Arkansas." From the sidewalks of Arkansas to the star studded walkway of the Country Music Hall of Fame, through the hopes and the dreams—the good times and the bad—The Wilburn Brothers sum up what Country Music is all about.



DON WILLIAMS

Country music composers in Nashville refer to Don Williams as “the song doctor.” He has a knack for helping with the construction of a melody line, or lyric when the writer is stuck or the end product doesn’t seem to be working. And that’s some compliment from your peers.

Don Williams is thought of as songwriter to some, singer to others, a mellow, sure and atypical country entertainer to most. The lanky, laid-back performer says of himself, “Family and music make up my life. I love the music because it lets me really express myself. I could never talk up to all those people (in the audience) and say what I can say in song.”

An East coast writer says of Don’s style, “The sound is quite out of place with the main current of the times. It’s almost as if, in some unlikely circumstance, Jim Reeves had been raised again today, given a Texas accent and sent downtown in blue jeans to cut sweet country songs without the violins . . . the voice is slow and easy, a comfortable baritone devoid of flash or stress or edges. . . . the sound is rare indeed. It features a complete lack of cuteness and a considerable portion of good taste . . . it is anything but commonplace.

But among his talents, Don leans towards writing. “It’s the most fulfilling for me,” he says. “I understand what is a good song and that’s just what I try to write. Finding the right combination and putting it all together is satisfying. It’s a projection, while performing, the song reinforces the initial idea; it’s almost an after-the-fact type thing.” Charley Pride was the first established country music artist to record a Don Williams song. Others to have followed suit include Sonny James, Jeanne Pruett, Johnny Cash, Lefty Frizzell and Lobo, Don figures he’s written close to 500 songs.

Born in the small Texas town of Floydada, Don’s family moved often, to Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Iowa, and Missouri. While living in a small Missouri town Don latched onto the guitar and learned to play from his sole teacher, his mother. He was 12 at the time, but had a craving for an entertainment career already. Don’s first paid job in country music came during his sophomore year in high school in Gregory, Texas, when a band he headed played for the grand opening of a local service station. It was a start. He also played and sang with a group during Army basic training, and



A rare photo of Don without his famous hat.

while he was in military school, then later when he was stationed in Japan.

Following his discharge from the Army, Don took jobs here and there, until he decided to return to music. In 1964, while in Corpus Christi, Texas, Don formed the Pozo Seco Singers, a three member vocal group who sang a variety of popular music—folk, pop and country. Their first recorded single, “Time,” climbed to the top 10 on national music charts. The name Pozo Seco literally translates as “dry hole” from a colloquial term used by geologists in that part of the country, but Don had finally hit and the hole was anything but dry. The group clicked time and again with their records and personal appearances, and stayed together until 1970, during which time Don wrote several of their songs.

In April 1976, Don joined the Grand Ole Opry. He keeps his public appearances down to a comfortable amount per month, and divides the rest of his time between recording, songwriting, and tending his farm in Ashland City, Tenn. Don also had a prominent role with Burt Reynolds in the 20th Century Fox movie, “W. W. and the Dixie Dancekings.”

Don now records for MCA Records. Some of his hits include: “Shelter of Your Eyes,” “Come Early Morning,” “Amanda,” “Love Me Tonight,” and “Til The Rivers All Run Dry.”

Don produces his own records because, “I want to do music the way it feels most honest to me.” And honest is a good description of the kind of music this Texan makes. His songs don’t rage with gimmicks but are quiet songs in an intimate, dignified style all his own. And that style has established Don as one of the most appreciated country singers in the world.



THE VIC WILLIS TRIO

Vic Willis, seated left, Curtis Young and C. W. Mitchell render their latest harmonies for an attentive John Conlee.



The Vic Willis Trio is carrying on a long and famous tradition that began at the Grand Ole Opry in 1946.

Originally known as the “Oklahoma Wranglers,” the Willis Brothers—Vic, Guy and Skeeter—began their career at KGEF Radio in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Besides achieving fame in radio, TV, screen and recording, the Willis Brothers had three important firsts in the world of Country Music. . . . the first group to back the late Hank Williams, later becoming known as the original “Drifting Cowboys”. . . . the first featured act on the “Jubilee, USA” shows at Springfield, Mo. . . . and they, along with other Grand Ole Opry acts, were the first Country and Western musical entertainers to give a concert in Constitution Hall in Washington, D. C., a place normally reserved for classical music.

With the death of brothers Guy and Skeeter, Vic decided to try a new sound. “I got to thinking, why don’t we do something a little different. There was no way we could duplicate the Willis Brothers sound. We could sing the words and music, but it wouldn’t be the same at all. Why not try some things we never had time to do as the Willis Brothers.”

First, Vic found new members C. W. Mitchell and Curtis Young. Then he decided to bring his accordion back out in front as a lead instrument. After that the new Trio spent a great deal of time finding the right songs and arrangements.

The new sound was successful from the very first time the Vic Willis Trio performed on the Opry in November, 1979. The Trio performed such established hits as “Old Flames Can’t Hold a Candle to You,” “If I Said You Had a Beautiful Body,” and “The Last Cheaters Waltz,” as well as such traditional material as “Shenandoah” and the “American Trilogy,” all performed with their own original arrangements.

“It’s a sound people say they find unusual, especially the accordion,” says Vic. “We’ve been getting encores at the Opry, and that’s the hardest place in the world to get an encore.”

Now the Vic Willis Trio is making their niche as one of the freshest harmony sounds in Country Music. But wherever they go, they’ll carry with them the spirit and tradition of Guy and Skeeter, the original Willis Brothers.



During the past ten years, Nashville has built up a reputation for itself as Music City, USA, by virtue of the steady stream of hits that pour from its studios over the airwaves and into record stores across America. Most people would therefore be surprised to hear that the first gold record cut in Nashville was recorded more than 25 years ago and that Country Song Round-up magazine still hails it as the biggest-selling instrumental of all time.

That record was "Down Yonder" and the artist who recorded it was pianist Del Wood.

Although she has been featured on the Grand Ole Opry since 1953, Del does not consider herself primarily a country-style pianist. "I'm still in the category of ragtime playing," she points out. "Critics have called my playing 'honky-tonk,' 'jazzy country,' and 'dixie pop,' but I personally do not look for new labels. It's just self-expression for me."

In analyzing her keyboard style, Del observes, "I've found no one who can duplicate my exact style. I am not big on chords, except for bounce rhythm arrangement; I would much rather rely on a lot of left-hand bass runs which I counter with a great deal of fast melody playing on the high right-hand keys. I use every key on the piano in producing the fullest and most diversified sound I can possibly create."

Del, the only native of Nashville to have earned a regular spot on the Grand Ole Opry, traces her musical roots back to her childhood. "My folks bought me a piano for my fifth birthday," she recalls, "and had me start attending weekly lessons with a private teacher. I studied formally from the time I was five until I was seventeen and I practiced the classics for many years, although bluegrass and mountain music were parts of my heritage since I was born and raised in Nashville. For example, the



Del Wood shows Grandpa Jones her pride and joy backstage at the Opry.

late Moon Mulligan was a performer I greatly admired; he was one of the first country keyboard performers, and he paved the way for later artists like Floyd Cramer and me. I also enjoyed listening to recordings by Joe 'Fingers' Carr, but of course, that goes back a few years. As you can see, liking classical music does not exclude you from enjoying country music as well."

Del (her real name is Adelaide Hazelwood) has been dubbed the "Queen of the Ivories" by her co-stars at the Opry, and is frequently named "Best Female Instrumentalist" by music polls. "Down Yonder" was only one of several big records for Del. With over twenty albums and sixty singles to her credit, her fame has spread internationally. She has appeared on numerous network TV shows, and spent a ten week tour of Viet Nam as the featured act in a group sent to entertain servicemen in 1968.

Del spends her spare time canning jams, jellies, and preserves for which she has won many cooking awards. She also enjoys gardening and flower arranging, and spending enjoyable moments with son, Wesley.



OPRY SHOWS



E. W. "Bud" Wendell, Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Operating Officer, president WSM, INC—AM-FM Grand Ole Opry, Opryland & Opryland Hotel.

Country Music is America's music, and the Grand Ole Opry is Country Music's home.

For over half a century, the Grand Ole Opry has been entertaining America with a kind of spontaneous, unpretentious, unabashed happening that is unique in broadcasting annals. The Opry music is telling you pieces of life's harsh story. And through



Dot Downs, secretary to Chairman Wendell.

it all she is being constantly reminded of Judge George D. Hay's first commandment: "Keep her down to earth boys!"

One secret for the Opry's tremendous success is the fact that the show is performed live. Her squaredancers dance and her singers sing. A constellation of stars brighten the audience each



Hal Durham, vice president and general manager of the Opry, directs the entire Opry operation, while his secretary, Debbie Logue keeps a record of each musician who appears during each Opry performance.





Tom Griscom, senior vice president of WSM Broadcasting maintains close relations with the many Opry sponsors.



Becky Jackson, left, and Cindy Wood of WSM Radio traffic, schedule each commercial announcement and prepare the radio log.

Friday and Saturday evening right in front of your very eyes.

Another reason for the Opry's popularity is the illusion that the performance is just happening; that it has no rhyme or reason to it; that it is chaotic informality which somehow stumbles through each weekend.

It is literally true that any single Grand Ole Opry performance will never happen again, but the illusion that the show has not been programmed or planned is not true at all.

The Grand Ole Opry is fortunate to have a capable and dedicated staff responsible for seeing that the world's greatest country music show happens 52 weeks a year. This group spends long, exacting hours behind the scenes tending to the smallest detail required for a smooth flowing Opry production.

The principal person in charge of shows and other business related to the Opry and its artists is General Manager Hal Durham, a native of nearby McMinnville, Tennessee, and a high school class-

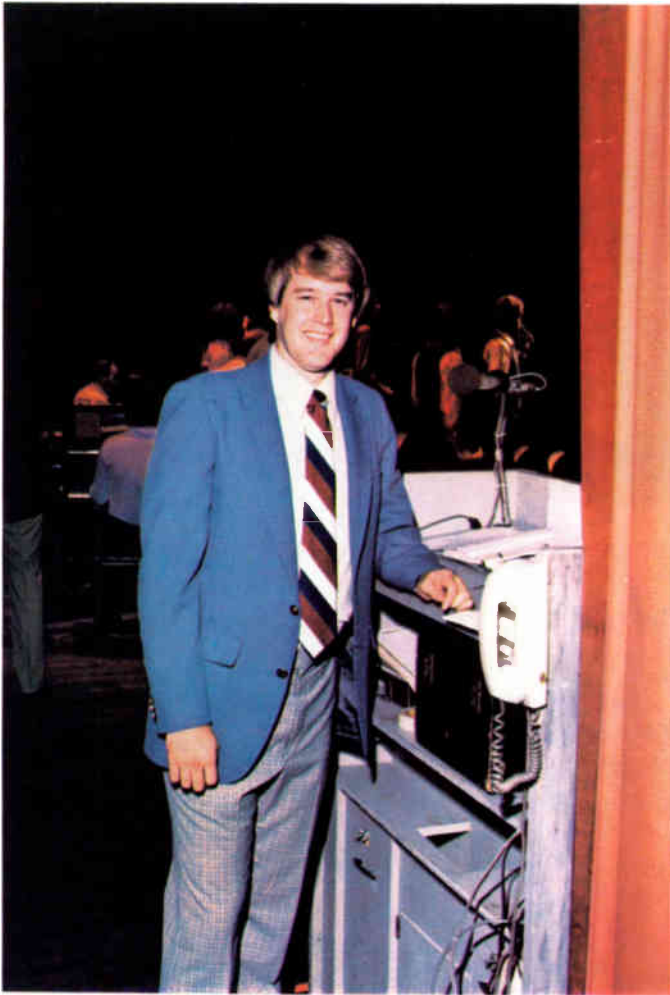
mate of Dottie West. The oldest, most famous Country Music radio show in history appears, at first glance, a manager's nightmare. The Opry is unique in many ways, with its seemingly endless stream of singers and dancers doing their thing—and managing the Opry is a unique experience. There is no other job like it in existence, and there are no schools that teach courses in this business.

"I've thought many times if you sat down to design a successful show, you would probably do everything just the opposite of the way we do," Hal says. "I can't conceive of anybody setting out to pattern a show that has no rehearsals. And we don't know more than 48 hours in advance who is going to be here. We have no advance promotion of the artists you're going to see, and we interrupt the whole thing continually with commercial content." Yet, the Grand Ole Opry actually brings the equivalent of a major convention to Nashville each weekend. Over 900,000 attend the Opry shows annually.

"The Opry is the ultimate. It is synonymous with



This energetic staff cheerfully deals with thousands of annual ticket requests, phone calls, and letters.



Chuck Morgan, the Opry's newest staff announcer.



Lynn Eldridge, secretary to the Opry House Manager.

being at the top of the ladder, and we can't have off weeks. Each week has to be great," according to Hal Durham. "People plan their vacation around the Opry knowing they are going to see the greatest show in Country Music, and we try not to disappoint them." Hal then adds, "And when you get to the end of a Saturday night, sometimes you feel a little apprehensive. Because you know that starting Monday you have to put it all together again."

The thing that ends in a continuous procession of singers, comics, bands, square dancers and cloggers on Saturday night does indeed begin Monday morning with the delivery of some advertising copy to the desk of a young woman named Cindy Wood at WSM Radio and Television Studios on Knob Road, nearly 20 miles from the Grand Ole Opry House. It comes from various advertising agencies, and it is the commercial guts around which the Opry is woven from week to week.





It takes a large, friendly staff to insure the continued popularity of Opry shows—beginning with the colorful hostesses and ushers who assist those guests entering the front doors . . . while Norman Van Dame, left, and J. D. Bell direct traffic at the back stage entrance.



“Each commercial done on the Opry, whether it is done live by the announcers and performers or played on a tape cassette by one of the engineers, must be scheduled beforehand,” Cindy says. And making up the schedule of the commercials for every Friday and Saturday night Opry show is the job of Cindy and the WSM Traffic Department.

The sale of commercial time on WSM Radio and the Opry is the responsibility of Sam Littleton and his staff. The first Opry sponsor was Crazy Water Crystal which beamed its message in 1936. Most of the Opry advertisers have been with the show many years. Martha White Mills is now the Opry’s oldest sponsor.

Stage Director, Fred Frederick, who controls the show's pulse from his station off stage, chats with Del Reeves and Brent Burkett of the Four Guys quartet.



Other advertisers on the Friday and Saturday Shows include: Cracker Barrel, Odom Sausage, Kroger, Sunbeam, Schlitz Brewing, ACME Boot Co., P. Lorillard, Cee Bee Stores, Vietti, Mrs. Grissom Salads, Rudy's Sausage, Danner Foods, Standard Candy, Kelloggs, Fender Guitar, Union Oil Co., Trailblazer Dog Food, Coca Cola, Elm Hill Meats, The Alamo, Wrangler, and Little Debbie Cakes.

While those sponsors' messages are coming to

Cindy's desk at radio traffic every Monday, Wilma Briggs, ticket manager, and her staff are busy at Opryland reading the thousands of pieces of mail received there, answering phones, handling Opry tickets requests, and balancing the books from the previous week.

A recent survey indicated that in one month the Opry Ticket Office received requests for tickets/information from 49 states, D.C., Canada, and seven foreign countries. This did not include the hun-



Stage hands Freddie Perta and Ken Demonbreun make sure the sponsors' visual messages project a colorful backdrop during the show sometimes with an assist from Charlie Walker.



The sight and sound of the Opry are provided by Lighting Director Susan Ray and the audio engineering staff of Conrad Jones and Terry Farris seated at the Opry's multi-channel console, while John Long and Vic Gabany look on from the rear.

dreds of pieces of miscellaneous and artists' fan mail. The Opry fan is a traveling man and comes an average distance of 1,000 miles—round trip—to see the show. Calculations reveal that forty-five percent of the guests come from: Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Tennessee and Wisconsin. For information on how you can attend an Opry show write: Grand Ole Opry Ticket Office, 2808 Opryland Drive, Nashville, Tenn. 37214

For the Grand Ole Opry's scheduling purposes, Tuesday is really the first day of the week. On that day, Cindy begins typing the advertising copy that arrives at WSM. Wilma, meanwhile, is busy verifying the various deposits against the number of tickets sold, and opens sale of general admission tickets to the waiting public. Most of the reserved seat tickets are sold out long before the night of the performance. At the same time, the Opry Manag-

er's office begins contacting the members for appearances on the weekend show.

The person in charge of the preliminary stages is secretary Debbie Logue. Debbie calls the talent agents who represent Opry stars. As she inquires about the Opry members, she also gathers information about non-Opry acts who could be available as guests. Normally, Tuesday and Wednesday are



The Opry announcers play a vital role on every show. They must introduce acts, wave in applause to increase the excitement, read live commercials, and keep a close eye on the clock so that the shows move on schedule. Thirty five year veteran, Grant Turner, is the dean of Opry announcers, while Hairl Hensley, center, and Tony Lyons, right, are the youngsters of the staff. During week days, all three can be heard in the evening or early morning hours over Clear Channel WSM Radio (650) interviewing guests or playing the hits of the day.

James Smith and Rosa Mae Hodge keep the backstage artists' lounge supplied with refreshments.

required for her to get the necessary information on the members and guests. Debbie averages 450 telephone calls a week. And almost every one is connected with lining up the weekend shows.

Thursday is the day Hal Durham plans his show. By then, Debbie has completed her list of who's in town and who's out. "She gives it to me and I write out the schedule of sponsors in the order in which their segments come on the Opry shows," Hal explains. "I write down whether the segment is 15 or



30 minutes long. Then I start filling in the names of the acts."

It is not, however, just a matter of writing down names. Some of the Opry's more historic members have, over the years, been afforded certain places on the show by tradition. The Crook Brothers have always been on at 7:30 and 10:45 on Saturday nights, and the Fruit Jar Drinkers have always had the 8:30 and 11:00 slots. Hank Snow normally does the 8:30 and 11:00 shows. Roy Acuff does not mind when he is on, as long as it is neither first nor last. Marty Robbins traditionally does the 11:30 Saturday night show when he is in town, because he used to drive his race cars on Nashville tracks and couldn't make the Opry before this period.

Sponsor commitments dictate when a few performers appear. Lester Flatt, who has sung the theme for Martha White Flour's commercial advertisements since 1953, is always on the Martha White



It's "Showtime" when Bill Jones' spirited "Promenadors" kick-off another Friday Grand Ole Opry.



sponsored portion. The Willis Brothers, who have recorded jingles for Kellogg's cereals, always do that segment. If there are vacant slots in the schedule after he has filled in all the in-town Opry acts, Hal looks at Debbie's list of available guests.

After his tentative schedule is completed Thursday, Hal makes a firmer program on Friday morning to send to Cindy Wood in the WSM Traffic Department. It arrives about 1:30 pm Friday. Cindy

types up copies for the personnel at the radio station. When a change occurs, she has to do everything over again. By early afternoon, the Opry's announcers—venerable Grant Turner, Hairl Hensley and Tony Lyons—have seen the schedule and know which stars they are to be working with on the segments they are to work.

It is now Friday evening. The Opry fans from around the world have picked up their tickets,

The Carol Lee Singers



*The Grand Ole Opry
Staff Band.*



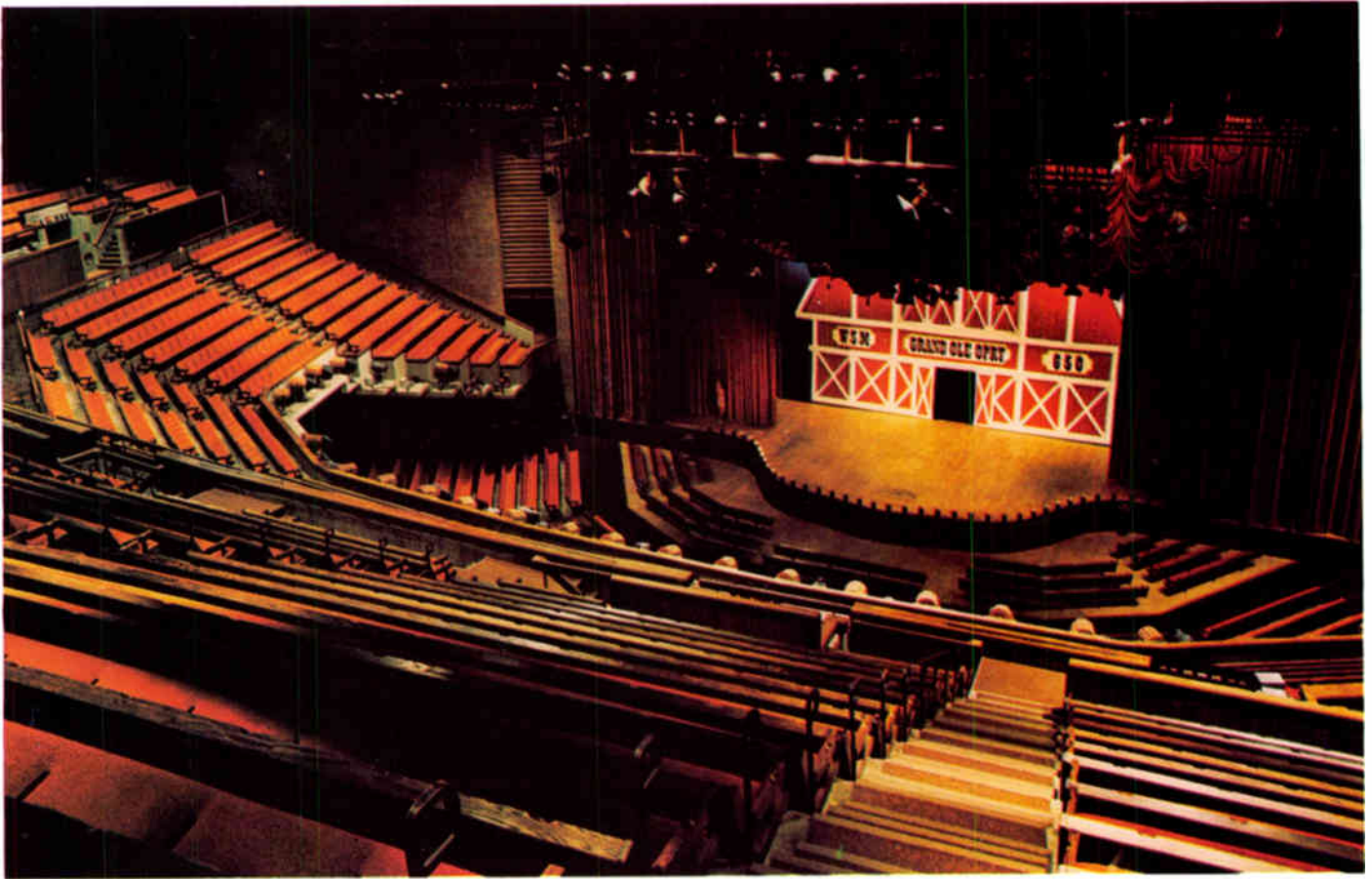
poured in the doors, and are settling into their seats. The stagehands, lighting director, stage manager, engineers, and staff band is poised, waiting for the opening curtain. The Opry star scheduled to MC the first segment has finished his backstage warmup and now is chatting with the announcer who is handling the first half-hour of the show.

Hal Durham is standing in the wings waiting to see how the next show he has constructed is going to get off with the audience. Debbie Logue is watching with a clipboard to keep a payroll record of which musicians play instruments on every song.

Everyone is waiting for the same thing—the beginning of another historic show which puts itself together before your very eyes. Then that giant orange curtain rises and you watch the first step in the week-long process of resurrecting the Grand Ole Opry.

For the 4,400 in the Opry House and thousands listening on WSM Radio—it is once again, “Show-time!”.



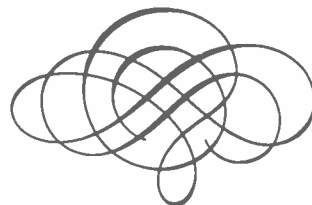


It is now a little past midnight—Sunday morning. The crowd has left the Opry House; some bound for the Ernest Tubb Midnight Jamboree, an early breakfast, or their hometowns throughout America. Reverberating melodies follow the Opry stars

into the cool darkness. The imposing Opry House is silent again.

But if one listens carefully he can almost hear the remarks Judge Hay delivered at each show's finale . . . echoing through the empty auditorium:

"That's all for now friends . . .
Because the tall pines pine
And the pawpaws pause
And the bumble bees bumble all around,
The grasshoppers hop
And the eavesdroppers drop
While, gently, the ole cow slips away . . .
George D. Hay saying, so long for now!"



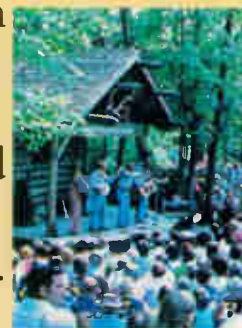
Opryland USA!

The happiest place on earth for country music lovers.



Whether you like a Hank Williams classic, a Loretta Lynn ballad, a Dolly Parton rocker, a Larry Gatlin love song or some good ole Bill Monroe Bluegrass, then Opryland has plenty of your kind of music and your kind of fun. Opryland is the only musical show park in the whole U.S.A., and it's just bursting with live shows, thrilling rides and natural beauty.

Best shows by a country mile. Opryland's sensational show "Country Music U.S.A." has traveled the world for the U.S. Department of State. A full hour of non-stop hits, the stars and tunes in the history of country music. There's lots more on, too. The Smoky



U.S.A." has traveled the partment of State. A full show salutes the greatest pickin' and singin' going history of country music. Mountain Boys, Bashful

Brother Oswald and Charlie Collins, are always dishing up some fancy licks and hearty laughs. And high in Opryland's Appalachian Hill Country, Mac Magaha and his Country Bluegrass Show are settin' the woods on fire! Opryland gives you 14 over 450 bright, and dancing in of America.



fully staged musical productions in all, spotlighting young, talented entertainers singing an exciting tribute to all of the music **The Opry Stars at no extra charge!**

On Monday through Thursday in the summer, Opryland presents the Grand Ole Opry Showcase. You'll see Grand Ole Opry in special hour-long Opry House. Names like Barbara Acuff, Larry Gatlin, Loretta Lynn and Opryland guest, you enjoy the Opry



the stars of the shows in the Mandrell, Roy Marty Robbins. Best of all, as an Star Showcase at no extra



A. A "How-dee!" salute to Minnie Pearl in Country Music USA.
B. Clap your hands to Country Blue-

grass. C. Swing 'round and 'round on the Tennessee Waltz. D. Grand Ole Opry star Barbara Mandrell.

E. Putter in a sputtering Tin Lizzie.
F. Make a splash on the Flume Zoom.
G. Two of 450 talented young per-



charge! **Rides and Fun in a beautiful setting.** When you're not clapping your hands to one of Opryland's 14 dazzling musical productions, why not go for a ride! They're all here — from the million dollar super-coaster, "The Wabash Cannonball," to the



sputtering "Tin Lizzie." From the rushing "Flume Zoom" to the "Opryland Railroad."

From the swooping "Waltz." There are lots of children's activity area, shops, the seven re-



that is Opryland. **gain.** All of this is rides, the Opry Stars, the country, the match-

single admission price. Opryland U.S.A., America's entertainment park, is also America's greatest entertainment share the wonder of America's music. You'll never you live! **Let Opryland Plan Your Visit.** The



one and only musical entertainment bargain. Come, forget it as long as people at Opryland on Nashville as well.

are not only experts on Opryland, but experts We'll reserve your hotel room, provide tickets to Opryland and make all the arrangements for your

choice of several fashioned buses take stars like Johnny late Tex Ritter and see historical sights



cinating tours. Air conditioning you to the homes of the Cash, Minnie Pearl, the Tom T. Hall. You'll also like Ryman



Auditorium and the Hermitage, home Andrew Jackson. And, schedules permit in a studio audience at one of the place at the Opry House and able on a first come, first served basis. plete tour information, write the Nash- 2800 Opryland Drive, Room 102, (615) 889-6600.



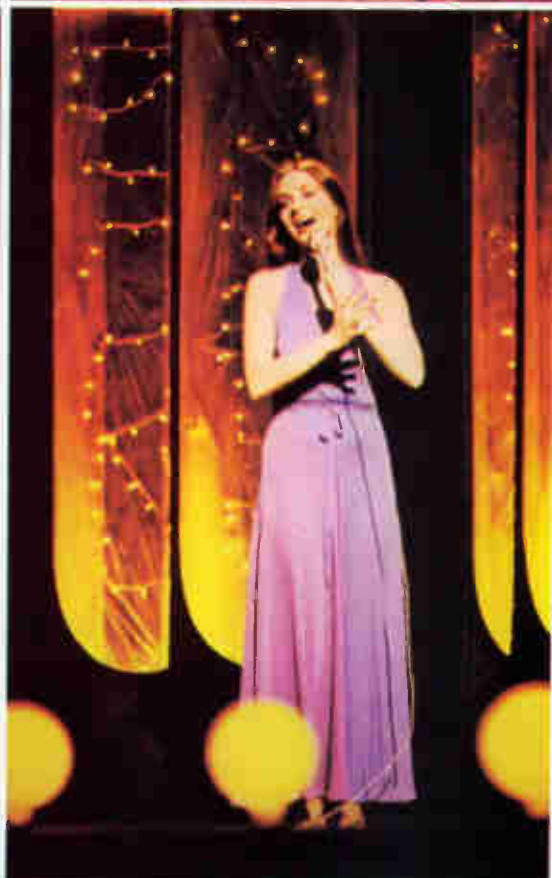
of President ting, you may be included many TV tapings that take Opryland. Tickets are avail- For taping schedules and com- ville experts: Opryland Travel, Nashville, TN 37214 or phone

formers. **H.** For a rip-roaring topsy-turning ride — the Wabash Cannonball. **I.** Become a dare-devil pilot on

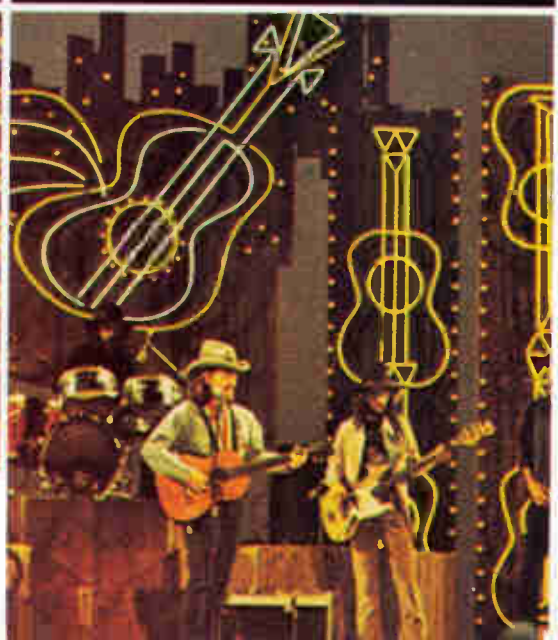
the Barnstormer. **J.** Climb aboard the Opryland Railroad. **K.** The pickin' 'n singin' of a country quartet. **L.** Our

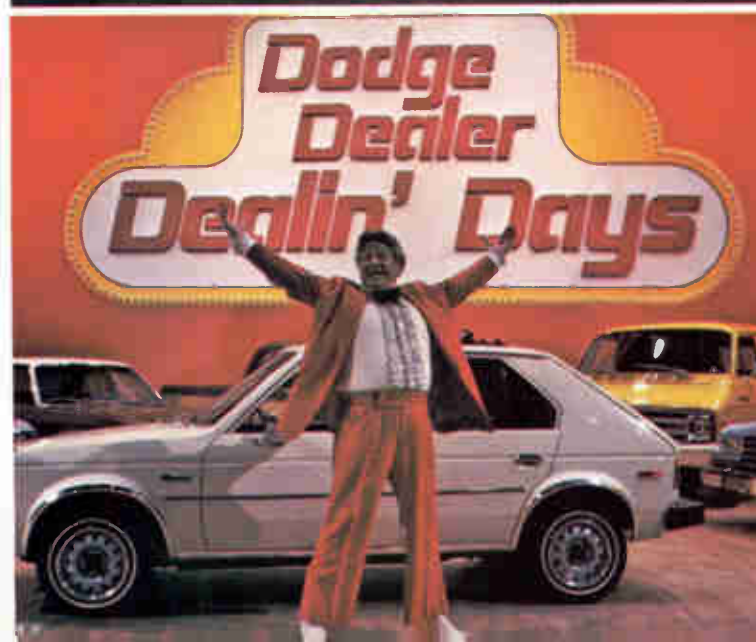
Mini Timber Topper thrills the little folks. **M.** The inimitable fiddling of Mac Magaha.

**We work magic
with video tape.
Complete show and
spot commercial
production.**



Operated by WSM, Inc.





Owned by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company.

Now. A grand new hotel

First, there was the Grand Ole Opry, a country music radio show that has become an American tradition. Then, building on the popularity of the Opry, came Opryland U.S.A., a fabulous entertainment theme park that showcases American music. Then,

Opryland Productions, a separate television production company based in the finest studios in the world, the Grand Ole Opry House.

And now, the Opryland Hotel recreates an old Southern lodging tradition that belies a

sophisticated, carefully-designed convention complex.

Six hundred and fourteen graciously appointed guest rooms surround the Hotel's center where a Grand Lobby welcomes you to Tennessee hospitality. Where a skylighted Galleria offers a



(First row, top) Shopping's fun and relaxing in the quaint boutiques that line the skylighted walkways of the Galleria. *(First row, bottom)* The talents of our chef earn raves for the Old Hickory, our restaurant for fine

dining. *(Second row, top)* Day or night, our lighted tennis courts are available for a friendly game or improving your strokes with one of our resident pros. *(Second row, middle)* Quality and comfort are the key

elements in the furnishings of each of our guest rooms, that are designed to insure your own satisfaction. *(Second row, bottom)* The Saloon, where a mellow mood prevails, is a favorite meeting place. *(Third row,*

in an old Southern tradition.

comfortable promenade and interesting shops. Where three restaurants and four lounges suit a variety of tastes in dining and live entertainment.

The Opryland Hotel is where you'll want to stay whenever you're in Nashville...for the

Grand Ole Opry or Opryland, for conventions, for business, for fun.

Come visit. Sample our splendid new Hotel. Relax in the charm of a fine Southern tradition. For information and reservations call or write Opryland Hotel, 2800

Opryland Drive, Nashville, Tennessee 37214, (615) 889-1000.



*Opryland Hotel is a property of the **MLT** Corp.*



top) The beautiful Tennessee Ballroom can seat 2,200 for banquets or special programs. *(Third row, middle)* A splash in our pool will relax and rejuvenate. *(Third row, bottom)* Three inviting restaurants offer garden-

style snacks, a full course gourmet meal, breakfasts, burgers... the choice is yours. *(Fourth row, top)* The Stage-door Show Lounge offers dancing and spotlights some of the finest show groups around. *(Fourth row, bottom)*

Nashville "Music City U.S.A." pulses with vitality and interesting things to see and do. *(Fifth row)* The traditions of Southern life-style endure in our grand new hotel.

Grand Ole Opry Tours

Seeing your favorite stars at the Grand Ole Opry and enjoying your kind of music and your kind of fun at Opryland are certainly highlights of any trip to Nashville. But there is so much more, things that are hard to find and see on your own. Nashville is truly a world entertainment center, and Grand Ole Opry Tours will make sure that you experience all of it!

Grand Ole Opry Tours sponsors 8 different scheduled sightseeing outings daily, centering around Nashville's history, culture, architecture, Country Music involvement and the homes of the stars!

See Homes of the Stars

Most popular with Country Music fans everywhere, the majority of our tours include seeing the homes of many famous entertainers. Drive by the estate that Johnny Cash calls home, take a picture of Minnie Pearl's house, and see exactly where Tammy Wynette lives! You can see the homes of stars such as Roy Acuff, Ronnie Milsap, Webb Pierce, Eddy Arnold, Tom T. Hall, Kitty Wells and the late Hank Williams.

Behind the scenes in "Music City, U.S.A."

Choose the tour that includes the homes of your favorite stars, and you'll get a good smattering of other Country Music sights in the bargain. You can walk through the Ryman Auditorium, home of the Grand Ole Opry for over 30 years,

and get a feeling for Country Music during its formative years. Then contrast the Ryman with the impressive Grand Ole Opry House out at the Opryland complex. You'll know that Country Music has made it big, but you'll also understand why it will never be separated from its past.

Many tours include a drive down Music Row, a visit to the Country Music Wax Museum and Hall of Fame, and even a stop at an actual recording studio.

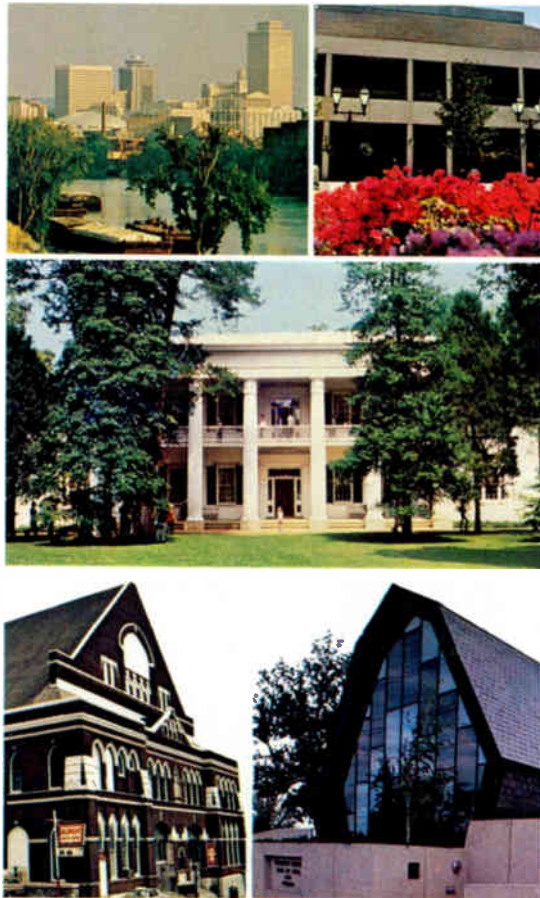
Nashville is "The Athens of the South!"

And for insight into the cultural environment of Music City, USA, Grand Ole Opry Tours has excursions highlighting the city's history and art. You can soak up the presidential past of the Hermitage, home of Andrew Jackson. Walk around the queen of Southern antebellum plantations, Belle Meade, and visit the Parthenon and Cheekwood Fine Arts Center.

In addition to the scheduled tours, Grand Ole Opry Tours can arrange special trips for individual groups, whatever

the size. Except for these individually arranged excursions, all tours originate at the Grand Ole Opry Ticket office at Opryland, the Ryman Auditorium, or the Opryland Hotel.

Just call or write Grand Ole Opry Tours, 2800 Opryland Drive, Nashville, Tennessee 37214, (615) 889-9490, or stop by one of the 3 tour locations and we'll show you a Nashville you'll never forget!





COUNTRY MUSIC FAN FAIR

There is nothing quite like the harmony between the Country Music Stars and their fans. And there is no better place to witness this relationship than the International Country Music Fan Fair in Nashville, Tennessee.

Music City, U.S.A. comes alive each June with excitement and color as fans from all over the world pour into town for seven days of spectacular shows and activities.

The Fan Fair is a musical extravaganza designed for the enjoyment of those who love Country Music, buy the records, come to the personal appearances and join fan clubs. Co-sponsored by the Grand Ole Opry and the Country Music Association, the Fan Fair allows participants to see and hear the music industry's biggest names with over 30 hours of spectacular stage shows, a Bluegrass concert, Grand Masters Fiddling Championship, picture taking and

autograph sessions, three delicious lunches, softball tournament, square dance, a ticket to the Country Music Hall of Fame, Opryland USA, and the Ryman Auditorium, plus a large exhibition area featuring the latest in Country Music records and merchandise.

And the best part of all . . . the Fan Fair is open to everyone! The only requirement is that you have a strong desire for music, fun and excitement. For those who like to rub elbows with the stars, the Country Music Fan Fair is the closest thing on earth to "Hillbilly Heaven."

For information on how you can attend the next Fan Fair write:

Fan Fair
2804 Opryland Drive
Nashville, Tennessee 37214



GRAND OLE OPRY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Every autumn since 1951, WSM has held a birthday party in honor of the world's oldest radio show, now celebrating over one half a century of entertainment.

From a humble beginning, when less than 100 radio men attended, the Grand Ole Opry Birthday Celebration and Disc Jockey Convention has grown in size and scope. Now over 3,000 D.J.'s, talent directors, publishers, musicians, record company executives and everyone else employed in the music industry attend the annual gathering.

Conventioneers see special stage shows, and luncheons and parties sponsored by participating organizations. RCA, Columbia, Capitol, MCA, Sho-Bud/Baldwin/Gretsch, First Generation, and the Federation of International Country Air Personalities stage presentations.

Although the luncheons, parties, and special shows add icing to the cake, the real attraction is the Opry itself, truly the "Mother Church of Country Music."

THE OPRY TRUST FUND

The Opry Trust Fund was incorporated in 1965 to provide financial assistance in time of need, emergency or catastrophe to country musicians or their families. And they need not be Opry members.

The Fund has distributed over \$750,000 since its inception. An 11 member board, composed of Opry Stars and WSM representatives, approves all grants.

One half of the \$50.00 registration fee collected at the annual birthday celebration is channeled to the Fund. The rest helps defray a portion of the convention expenses incurred by the participating firms.

WSM underwrites all administrative expenses. No salaries are charged to the Fund. And the money is not handled by WSM, but placed in the hands of a Nashville bank.

The Opry Trust Fund exemplifies the music industry helping its own less fortunate overcome financial and emotional crisis.



WSM
Radio
Section

Nashville Banner.

WSM
Radio
Section

VOL. L. No. 178

NASHVILLE, TENN., SUNDAY OCTOBER 4, 1936.

D

DAILY 3c—SUNDAY 6c



WSM Completed Dream of National Life Insurance Company

WSM, super-power 1,000-watt radio broadcasting station, now being dedicated to Nashville, the home city of The National Life & Accident Insurance Co., is the completed dream of the big insurance company's executives, who when planning the erection of The National's beautiful home building, included in their plans the erection of one of the finest broadcasting stations the country affords.

Following the completion of The National Building, first steps were taken toward the building of the powerful station. Vice-President E. W. Craig (himself an ardent radio fan) was commissioned to begin the task of gathering together the best ideas of the radio world. The National Company earnestly devoted time and study to radio's advantages as exemplified by leading broadcasting stations in the United States, and many trips were made during the past year by Mr. Craig. Conferences were held with radio experts over the country and the best ideas of them all were collected for the purpose of incorporating them in the station that Nashville can proudly boast of as one of the very finest, equaled by only one other Southern station, and stronger than eighty-five per cent of all broadcasting stations in the United States.

Many obstacles had to be overcome before a class B wave length could be secured. As there are no exclusive Class B wave lengths obtainable, through the courtesy and co-operation of Dr. James D. Vaughan, owner and operator of station WGAN, a class B station operating at 222.5 meters, at Lawrenceburg, Tenn., arrangement was made by which station WSM could divide time on the air. This proved to be a very fortunate arrangement, as a class B wave length is considered to be the highest class functioning under a standard set by the Department of Commerce at Washington.

Among the many difficult tasks encountered by The National's crews was the working out of details in connection with the remote control system. This system was adapted for use by WSM, after investigation upon investigation had been made as to its practicability. The remote control system was chosen for increased efficiency and it is said to be the practice of the most recent radio installations.

Next to be considered was the selection of a suitable site for the giant towers and radio machinery. This had to be found in a section where water pressure is good and a three-phase electric current could be had, also the location had to be available for four private telephone circuits, thus the selection on Fifteenth avenue, south, near Ward-Belmont.

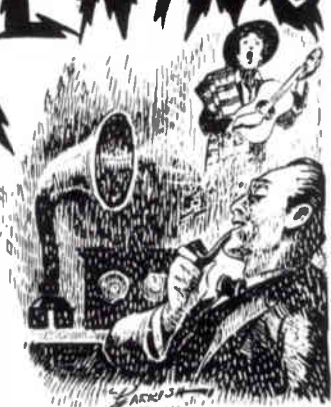
After much thought and toil all of the apparently insurmountable difficulties were mastered and as a result the very latest and most perfect transmitting equipment, one which will carry to the world the worthy presentation of all that Nashville stands for, is now being placed at the disposal of the capital city, as well as the state's best talent by an insurance company that has already made her home city famous.

The National Life & Accident Insurance Co.'s Field Force of more than 8,000 working in as many cities and towns in twenty-one states who have never faltered in their efforts to aid in building what is now known as one of America's strongest Life Insurance Companies, are slated over the great nation and they are selling thousands daily of the station that is destined to put Nashville on the International Radio Map.

ANNOUNCING OPENING OF WSM

MONDAY NIGHT (October 5th) Continuous Program

From 7 P.M. to 2 A.M.



WSM Mammoth Dedication Program 7 P.M. to 2 A.M.



Western Electric Company to Install Loud Speakers for Public

Due to the limited number of persons able to be accommodated in WSM's auditorium, the station regrets that it cannot invite the general public to be present at the studio on opening night, October 5, but in order that those who have no receiving sets who desire to hear the program can do so, the Western Electric Company will install large loud speakers in windows of the National building and as many as care to can assemble in front of the building and enjoy the broadcast.

These horns or speakers forming the Western Electric public address system reproduces the music perfectly and can be heard for more than a block away. Mr. C. S. Powell, sales manager of the W. E. Company in Nashville, is installing the system, and those who would like to hear WSM's inaugural program or part of it may do so through these loud speakers.

After opening night WSM extends a cordial invitation to everybody to visit the new studio during broadcasting hours or between. A comfortable auditorium has been prepared to take adequate care of a normal audience, and visitors will be heartily welcomed after October 6 at any time to listen to the concerts being given by Nashville artists through WSM.

- 7:00 to 8:00 P. M.
1. Opening Announcement of Station—Mr. Edwin W. Craig, Vice-President of the National Life & Accident Insurance Co.
 2. Prayer—Dr. George Storer, Pastor of the West End Methodist Church.
 3. Shrine Band—Playing the National Anthem.
 4. Dedictory Message—President C. A. Craig of the National.
 5. Music—The Shrine Band.
 6. Brief Message—Gen. Austin Peay.
 7. Song—Joseph Yant Morrison, Concert Baritone, with Miss Helen Panchal, Piano Accompanist.
 8. Brief Message—Maj. D. H. Carmon, Commissioner of Navigation, Washington, D. C.
 9. Song—Joseph Yant Morrison, Baritone; Miss Panchal, Accompanist.
 10. Brief Message—Mayor Hilary T. Hume of Nashville.
 11. Song—Joseph Yant Morrison, Baritone; Miss Panchal, Accompanist.
 12. Brief Message—Maj. Walter Van Norder, Supervisor of Radio Fourth District.
 13. Instrumental Trio—Including Mrs. Harace Olson, Cello; Miss Allene Featery, Violin; Miss Hattie Panchal, Piano.

8:00 to 8:30 P. M.
Famous Philadelpia Quartet of Phil University. Brief Message by Dr. A. F. Shaw, Dean.

8:30 to 9:00 P. M.
Beady Smith's Andrew Jackson Orchestra.

9:00 to 10 P. M.
Knights of Columbus Vocal Quartet—Including Eugene Cunningham, First Tenor; John A. David, Second Tenor; Eugene Murphy, Baritone; Vernon E. Arrington, Bass; and Bill Campbell, Piano Accompanist.

Instrumental Trio—Including Mrs. Harace Olson, Cello; Miss Allene Featery, Violin; and Miss Hattie Panchal, Pianist.
Miss Alida Waggoner, Soprano Soloist.
Vincent Kuba, Vocalist.

10:00 to 11:00 P. M.
Mrs. Daley Hoffman, Concert Pianist and Duo-Art Artist.
Mrs. Thomas J. Malone, Jr., Concert Soprano.
Mr. Kenneth Rice, Violin Soloist and Director of the Violin Department at Ward-Belmont.
Mrs. Kenneth Rice, Concert Pianist and Member of the Ward-Belmont Faculty.
Mrs. Robert Caldwell, Contralto Soloist of the West End Methodist Church Choir.
Mr. Milton Cook, Baritone Soloist of the First Presbyterian Church Choir.

11:00 P. M. to 12:00 M.
Francis Craig's Columbia Record Orchestra, with Vocal and Instrumental Soloists.

12:00 M. to 2 A. M.—Jamboree
Miss Bonnie Burdick, "The Lady of the Radio," Singer of English Melodians.
Jack Ennis, Popular Entertainer.
Ted Coomb, Tenor Soloist.
Ted Stever, Succumbing Pianist.
W. J. Kambor, Banjo Soloist.
Francis Craig's Columbia Recording Orchestra.
Other Pastors.

The National Life & Accident Insurance Company

(INCORPORATED)
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

WSM entered the broadcasting field on October 5, 1925. On the first formal program, National Life and Accident Insurance Company President C. A. Craig declared: "It is my privilege and pleasure, on this our first night on the air, to dedicate this station to the public service." And WSM's history has been one of outstanding public service with world-wide popularity, thanks in large measure to its Clear Channel status.

When radio was in its infancy, before 1920, individuals and organizations could broadcast on any frequency. Although these stations were low-powered by modern standards, the lack of man-made interference enabled them to effectively blanket the United States. As the number of stations increased, interference between stations operating on or near the same frequency severely limited the area over which programs could be clearly transmitted. The National Radio Conference of 1923 was the beginning of the Clear Channel concept. It recommended 50 channels be assigned the exclusive use of one frequency. More conferences and various political pressures resulted in Congress passing the Radio Act of 1927 forming the Federal Radio Commission. The Communications Act of 1934 established the present Federal Communications Commission, charged with the regulation of standard broadcasting stations. Shortly afterwards, the FCC assigned frequencies to the various classes of radio stations for the purpose of reducing mutual interference on the same or closely adjacent channels. Thus the birth of Clear Channels—designed to serve wide areas of the country day and night with no other station allowed to operate on this channel during the nighttime hours.

During the daylight hours most Americans receive excellent radio signals from anywhere in the country. But at night millions living and traveling in vast regions of the continental United States occupy what is termed a "radio desert" or "white area." These sections depend entirely on Clear Channel broadcasting for their only AM radio listening—supplying vital information, emergency data and entertainment.

A good example of how Clear Channel's aid communities was WSM's part in the Ohio River Flood of 1937. High water eliminated WHAS Radio in Louisville from transmitting flood messages,

warnings and directing rescue operations. All recovery orders and messages were phoned to WSM and broadcast from Nashville for 82 consecutive hours. It is estimated that WSM's efforts directly affected the lives of some 200,000 Louisville citizens.

Originally there were 40 1-A Clear Channels. Now there are only 11 providing listening service to millions of people in rural regions encompassing nearly 60 percent of the nation's land area. These Americans rely solely on Clear Channels at night. Adding more full-time stations will never provide acceptable radio service to the "radio desert" because AM signals behave differently at night, and changes in the ionosphere reduces the coverage of regional and local stations.

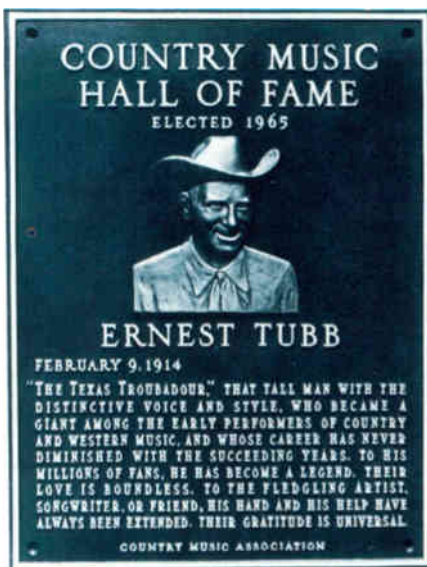
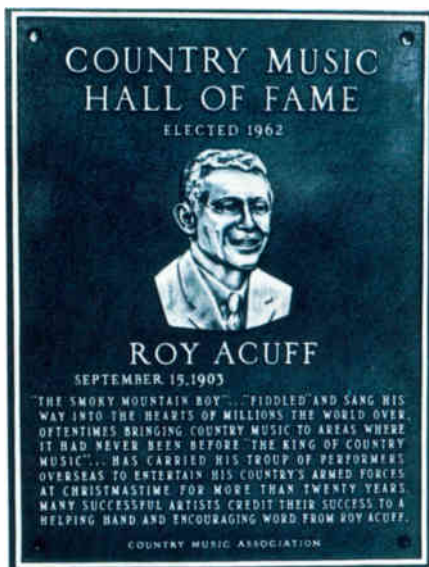
In 1938, when there were 504 stations operating day and night, Clear Channel stations provided the only nighttime AM radio listening to 61.3% of the nation's land area. In 1961, 1919 stations had to rely on the Clear Channels to furnish nighttime AM listening to 58.3% of the nation's land area. Today, with over 4000 fulltime stations broadcasting, the picture remains largely unchanged.

WSM has applied to the Federal Communications Commission for permission to increase its power for 50 kilowatts to 750 kilowatts. Such an improvement would increase WSM's signal strength almost four times.

But today, WSM and the Grand Ole Opry are in serious danger. The Federal Communications Commission wants to reduce coverage of the nation's clear channel radio stations, limiting WSM's audience and putting an end to the Grand Ole Opry being heard in over 34 states. This action could close the books on one of America's most remarkable chapters in broadcast history.

Today's complex and fluctuating society demands a well informed populace. More important, America's political heritage stresses the equal opportunity creed. This then is the pledge and responsibility of WSM and the remaining Clear Channels: to provide the thinly populated areas of the United States the same quality listening opportunity as urban residents. Or as C. A. Craig proclaimed over 55 years ago—to serve the public interest.

HALL OF FAME



*Present Grand Ole Opry Members
Enshrined in the Country Music Hall of Fame Nashville, Tennessee*



Photos courtesy of the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum.

THE GRAND OLE OPRY



The Grand Ole Opry is as simple as sunshine. It has a universal appeal because it is built upon good will, and with folk music expresses the heart-beat of a large percentage of Americans who labor for a living.—George D. Hay, founder of the Grand Ole Opry.



George D. Hay and Uncle Jimmy Thompson—1925



DeFord Bailey

The “Roaring Twenties” were turbulent and exciting years for America and the world. In 1920 the Versailles Treaty went into effect, and the doomed League of Nations was created. War broke out between Poland and Russia. It was a decade that saw Man O’War win the Belmont and Preakness Stakes, the beginning of air mail service between New York and San Francisco, and a young cornetist named Louis Armstrong came from New Orleans to Chicago, joined Joseph “King” Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band and made musical history.

The world famous Grand Ole Opry is a show business phenomenon. This live, Country Music radio program has entertained millions of Americans for over half a century. And it is more popular today than ever before. The Opry’s history is rich, colorful and distinguished. It’s past is unique as the show itself.



George D. Hay—The Solemn Old Judge



The “Possum Hunters”—Front: Walter Leggett, Dr. Humphrey Bate, Buster Bate, Staley Walton. Standing: Oscar Stone and Aaron Albright. The first country band to play on WSM Radio.



The Crook Brothers—Blythe Poteet, guitar; Kirk McGee, fiddle; Bill Etters, guitar; Herman Crook, harmonica; and Lewis Crook, banjo.

The early twenties also saw great developments in the radio field. Before the end of the decade this infant medium would have a profound influence on the social, economic, and entertaining life of the United States.

On November 2, 1920, radio station KDKA in East Pittsburgh, Pa., began the first regular broadcasting service by airing the returns of the Harding-Cox election. The first commercially sponsored program in the United States was broadcast by WEAJ New York on May 12, 1922. By 1924, radios in the United States numbered over 2,500,000. Five years earlier there were not more than 5,000 receiving sets in America, and most of these were in the hands of expert technicians. Nowhere was the impressive influence of radio more felt than in Nashville, Tennessee.

One of the really memorable events of the city of Nashville took place on October 5, 1925. On the



"The Gully Jumpers"—From left: Bert Hutcherson, Roy Hardison, Charlie Arrington and Paul Warmack.



"The Fruit Jar Drinkers"—From left: "Grandpappy" George Wilkerson, Claude Lampley, Tommy Leffew and Howard Ragsdale.

evening of that date the first program was broadcast over National Life and Accident Insurance Company's new radio station, WSM. The call letters, reflecting insurance company ownership, stand for "We Shield Millions."



Grand Ole Opry Cast—1927.

The early interest in radio of E. W. Craig, then vice president of the company, had much to do with its decision to enter the broadcasting field. WSM began as a 1,000 watt station—one of only two in the entire South with that much power, which was twice as strong as 85 per cent of all stations in the United States.



Sam and Kirk McGee, "The Boys From Sunny Tennessee."



"Uncle Ed Poplin and His Ole Timers"—Standing left: Jack Woods and daughter, Louise, Ed Poplin. Seated: Frances Woods and Ed Poplin, Jr.



Son Dorris and Uncle Dave Macon, "The Dixie Dewdrop"

That Nashville should be known as "Music City USA" is a result of WSM and the Grand Ole Opry, which have always been the nerve center of the country music industry. For over half a century, the Opry and the radio station have directly influenced the city's economic and physical growth. Without its dedication to country music and its nurturing of talent, it is doubtful the industry would have centered in Nashville.

"Without the Opry, I don't believe we could have had a Music City USA," Craig had said. "It came to be the dream of every folk musician to be on the Opry. It was only a matter of time until 'cowboy laments' and other new songs were written for Opry performers. They became popular, but it meant a complete shift away from folk music. These new songs were popularized on the Opry, then played on the juke boxes around the country. They gave rise to a whole new gamut of country western music

with Nashville and the Opry being the musical backbone."

The Opry had its beginning on November 28, 1925, on the fifth floor WSM Studio of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company. Legend has it that the featured performer on that show was



"Jack Shook and the Missouri Mountaineers"—From left: Jack Shook, Dee Simmons, Bobby Castleman, Arthur Smith, and Nap Bastian.



The Delmore Brothers—Rabon, left, and Alton.



Left to right, Robert Lunn, George Wilkerson, Glen Stagner, and minstrel, Lasses White.



Paul Howard, second from left, and his "Arkansas Cottonpickers."

Uncle Jimmy Thompson, an eighty-year-old fiddler who boasted that he could fiddle the "taters off the vine." His early appearance, however, was restricted to one hour. Not quite enough time to prove his reputation of knowing a thousand fiddle rounds.



Jamup and Honey



The Bailes Brothers.

The announcer was one of America's pioneer showmen. George D. Hay, a reporter for the Memphis Commercial Appeal, started his radio career when he was appointed radio editor for the newspaper. He first went on the air over the Commercial Appeal's station, WMC, in June of



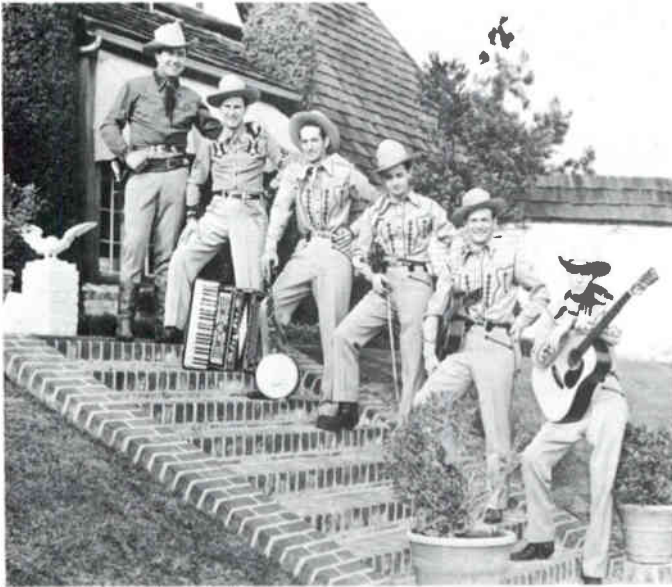
Roy Acuff, left, and his "Crazy Tennesseans."



One of the early Grand Ole Opry Tent Shows.



Bill Monroe, second from right, and one of his early "Bluegrass Boys" band.



Left, Cowboy Star, Johnny Mack Brown, Pee Wee King and his "Golden West Cowboys."

1923. A year later he went to Chicago and was appointed chief announcer of Radio Station WLS. Here he was voted America's most popular radio announcer in a nationwide contest conducted by The Radio Digest. Here, also, he originated the WLS Barn Dance, later to become known as the National Barn Dance.

On October 5, 1925, Hay came to Nashville for the dedicatory ceremony inaugurating WSM. One month later he joined the station as its first director.

Then at 8:00 p.m. on November 28, 1925, he announced himself as "The Solemn Old Judge" (although he was only 30 years old) and launched the WSM Barn Dance. Two years later he gave it the title "The Grand Ole Opry."

WSM, a member of the National Broadcasting Co. network, was also carrying on Saturday nights "The Music Appreciation Hour" conducted by a



Curly Fox and Texas Ruby before the present era of luxurious, custom made buses.



Eddy Arnold sings to a large war time street crowd in downtown Nashville.

celebrated personality, Dr. Walter Damrosch. The Station followed that hour with three hours of "barn dance" music.

Hay later recalled the moment in a 1945 pamphlet. "Dr. Damrosch always signed off his concert a minute or so before we hit the air with our mountain minstrels and vocal trapeze performers. We must confess that the change in pace and quality was immense. But that is part of America—fine lace and homespun cloth.

"The monitor in our Studio B was turned on, so that we would have a rough idea of the time which was fast approaching. At about five minutes before



Whitey Ford, "The Duke of Paducah."



L. to R.: Hank Williams, Milton Estes, Red Foley, Minnie Pearl, Geroge Rosen—Radio Editor of Variety magazine—Harry Stone, Eddy Arnold, Roy Acuff, Rod Brasfield, Lew Childre.

In front: Wally Fowler

eight, your reporter called for silence in the studio. Out of the loudspeaker came the correct, but accented voice of Dr. Damrosch and his words were something like this: While most artists realize there is no place in the classics for realism, nevertheless I am going to break one of my rules and present a composition by a young composer from Iowa, who sent us his latest number, which depicts the onrush of a locomotive. . . .

"After which announcement the good doctor directed the symphony orchestra through the number which carried many 'shooshes' depicting an



Bradley Kincaid

engine trying to come to a full stop. Then he closed his program with his usual sign-off.

"Our control operator gave us the signal which indicated that we were on the air. We paid our respects to Dr. Damrosch and said something like this: Friends, the program which just came to a close was devoted to the classics. Dr. Damrosch told us that it was generally agreed that there is no place in the classics for realism. However, from there on out for the next three hours we will present nothing but realism . . . It will be down to earth for the earthy.

"In respectful contrast to Dr. Damrosch's presentation of the number which depicts the onrush of locomotives, we will call on one of our performers—DeFord Bailey, with harmonica to give us the country version of his 'Pan American Blues'.



Left: Curly Fox, Zeke Clements and Roy Acuff.



Curly Williams and his "Georgia Peach Pickers."



Chet Atkins and Mother Maybelle, with guitars, and the Carter Family.

“Whereupon, DeFord Bailey, a wizard with the harmonica, played the number. At the close of it, your reporter said: “For the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from Grand Opera, but from now on we will present ‘The Grand Ole Opry.’”

It wasn’t long before the crowds clogged the corridors of the WSM studio to observe the performers. This led to a decision. Edwin W. Craig, the man of early and continuous vision, suggested that all the observers be allowed to watch in a studio so their reactions could add to the program. His suggestion led to the construction of Studio “C”, an acoustically designed auditorium capable of holding five hundred enthusiastic fans.



Cousin Jody, left, with Lonzo and Oscar.



Hank Williams, a Country Music Legend.



The York Brothers—George and Leslie.



Patsy Cline and Ernest Tubb.



Cowboy Copas and George Morgan

Soon the auditorium-studio could no longer accommodate the throngs, so the search for an appropriate home began. The first move was to the rented Hillsboro Theatre, a former movie house in what was then the southwest part of the city. When the audience continued to grow, Opry officials sought another hall.

A huge tabernacle across the Cumberland River in East Nashville was available. Although the floor was covered with sawdust and the splintery benches were crude, the audience outgrew this location in two years.

In July, 1939, the show moved to the newly-constructed War Memorial Auditorium, an entrance

fee of twenty-five cents was imposed in an effort to curb the crowd. It didn't work, the weekly crowds averaged better than 3,000. The move to the Ryman Auditorium in 1943 was a necessity.

The Ryman had been built in 1891 by riverboat captain Tom Ryman who came to a religious tent meeting to heckle the preacher, only to stay and be converted. He built the structure for the Reverend Sam Jones. The Confederate Veterans reunion was scheduled in 1897, and a balcony was added for the meeting. It then could seat over 3,000 people.

The first real country band to appear on WSM was headed by a genial physician, Dr. Humphrey



Gentlemen Jim Reeves, Jack DeWitt and Del Wood.



Hank Snow and Lew Childre performed for hundreds of servicemen in Korea.



The Louvin Brothers—Charlie, left, and Ira, right, with Faron Young.



Edwin W. Craig, Dizzy Dean and Stringbean

Bate. At the time of Dr. Bate's death in 1936, Judge Hay wrote, "As a matter of fact, Dr. Bate played on the station even before the Barn Dance started." Dr. Bate was a graduate of Vanderbilt University Medical School, and played harmonica. He joined the Opry with six of his neighbors and named them the "Possum Hunters." At the piano was Dr. Bate's 13 year old daughter, Alcyone, who performed for 50 years each Saturday night until her recent retirement. Other outstanding string bands were: The "Gully Jumpers," "The Fruit Jar Drinkers," "The Crook Brothers," "Arthur Smith and His Dixie Liner," "The Binkley Brothers and their Clod Hoppers," "Uncle Ed Poplin and his Ole Timers," "The Delmore Brothers," and "Jack Jackson and the Bronco Busters."

Uncle Dave Macon, "The Dixie Dewdrop," joined

the Opry in 1926 after several years in Vaudeville. He remained its top star for many years.

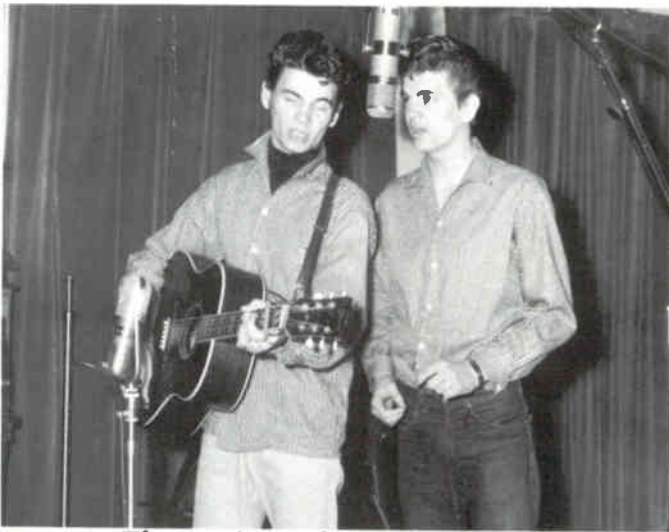
Until 1938 the Grand Ole Opry placed virtually all emphasis on instruments. There were some singers, but they were subordinate to the band. Then came young Roy Acuff and the Smoky Mountain Boys. A short time later, one of the instrumentalists in the band of Pee Wee King and his Golden West Cowboys stepped forward to sing. That was the start of the career of Eddy Arnold, "The Tennessee Plowboy." Arnold later formed his own group, and the rush was on. Red Foley became a hit, then Ernest Tubb, Cowboy Copas and Hank Williams.



Left to right: Johnny Wright, Carl Smith, Tex Ritter, Webb Pierce, Smilin' Eddie Hill, and Jack Anglin.



Lew Childre at the mike and "Mr. Guitar," Chet Atkins on drums.



The Everly Brothers—Don & Phil.

On came the Duke of Paducah, Whitey Ford. He had been the star of a network radio show "Plantation Party." Then Minnie Pearl and Rod Brasfield, Curly Fox, Texas Ruby and the Fox Hunters. Those were the days of minstrels, and the Opry produced Jamup and Honey. Bill Monroe arrived to introduce Bluegrass Music.

Others included Uncle Joe Mangrum and Fred Schriver, Asher Sizemore and Jimmy, the Vagabonds, Lew Childre, Zeke Clements, Paul Howard, Curly Williams and Clyde Moody.



Snooky Lanson and Dinah Shore

In 1939, the Opry was carried on the NBC network for the first time. Sponsored by Prince Albert, the first show featured Uncle Dave Macon, Roy Acuff, Little Rachel, the Weaver Brothers and Elviry, and the Solemn Old Judge. This same group made the first Grand Ole Opry movie a year later.



Hawkshaw Hawkins



Johnny Cash.



Tex Ritter, "America's Most Beloved Cowboy."

The late Vito Pellettieri, Opry stage manager since 1934, handled all the complicated stage traffic.

The 1940's and 1950's brought new stars to the Opry: Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Lonzo and Oscar, Ray Price, Johnny and Jack, the Carlises, Mother Maybelle Carter, Ferlin Husky, the Jordanares, Stringbean, Cousin Jody, Marty Robbins, Hank Snow, Don Gibson, The Stoney Mountain Cloggers, The Ralph Sloan Dancers, Billy Grammer, Charlie Louvin, Jean Shepard, Little Jimmy Dickens, Justin Tubb, Kitty Wells, The Willis Brothers, Margie Bowes, George Morgan, Bobby Lord, Hank Locklin, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Del Wood, Faron Young, Jim Reeves, Jimmy Newman, Roy Drusky, Johnny Cash, Grandpa Jones, Archie Campbell, The Everly Brothers, Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper, Porter Wagoner, George Hamilton IV, Skeeter Davis, and the list continues.

The 1960's brought no let-up in new and great talent. They include Marion Worth, LeRoy Van Dyke, Dottie West, Tex Ritter, Bobby Bare, Connie Smith, Bob Luman, Billy Walker, Sonny James, Ernie Ashworth, Loretta Lynn, The Osborne Brothers, Jim and Jesse, The Glaser Brothers, Jim Ed Brown, Jack Greene, Dolly Parton, Del Reeves,



Kitty Wells



Ferlin Husky and Vito Pellettieri, who became the Opry's Stage Manager in 1934.



Earl Scruggs and Lester Flatt

Mel Tillis, Jeannie Seely, Stu Phillips, Charlie Walker, The Four Guys, Ray Pillow and others. The Opry has since added: David Houston, Barbara Mandrell, Jerry Clower, Jeanne Pruett, George Jones, Larry Gatlin, Don Williams, and Ronnie Milsap.

The Grand Ole Opry family is unique. But like every other family it shares many human emotions.



The Jordanaires



Stoney & Wilma Lee Cooper

It has not always had the happiest of times. Tragedy has been a sad chapter in its history.

In 1953, at the age of twenty-nine, Hank Williams died in the back seat of a car somewhere between Knoxville, Tennessee and Oak Hill, West Virginia. Ten years later, Patsy Cline, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Cowboy Copas and his son-in-law, Randy Hughes were killed in an airplane crash. Then Jack Anglin, Betty Jack Davis, Texas Ruby Owens, Jim Reeves, Ira Louvin and Sam McGee were lost in tragic accidents. Probably the most publicized disaster occurred in 1973 when Stringbean and his wife, Estelle, were murdered at their farm after a Grand Ole Opry performance. The 1970's also claimed the lives of: Tex Ritter, George Morgan, Staley Walton, Ed Hyde, Claude Lampley, Jimmy Widener, Cousin Jody, Stoney Cooper and Bob Luman.

From every state in the Union and many foreign countries 900,000 Opry fans annually travel an average of 1,000 miles round-trip to see the Friday, Saturday and Sunday performances. It has been estimated that an additional seven to eight million see Opry stars themselves journey three million miles a year in making these appearances. Today the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce proclaims the fact that the city's music industry, an offshoot of the Opry, is a billion dollar a year



Bob Luman

business. The statistics are impressive indeed. Nashvillians are employed by recording studios, record pressing plants, talent agencies, trade papers, recording companies and performing rights organizations. Through the Opry, WSM has created a musical family that has in turn made Nashville "Music City, U.S.A." In fact David Cobb, retired WSM personality, is responsible for dubbing the town "Music City" many years ago. The first recording studio, Castle, was put together by three former WSM engineers: Aaron Shelton, George Reynolds and Carl Jenkins. And the man generally considered the father of Music Row's recording



March 16, 1974, former President and Mrs. Richard Nixon attended the premiere performance at the new Opry House. Here Roy Acuff tries to help President Nixon learn the art of the Yo Yo. Since that historic initial show, the Opry House welcomed government officials and celebrities from all walks of life. And in June 1976, for the first time in its history, Ambassadors to the United Nations assembled away from their New York headquarters and visited the Grand Ole Opry.



In October 1975, the joint U.S.—USSR Apollo-Soyuz Test Project crew docked on the stage and presented Opry Manager Hal Durham a color photo taken from space showing Opryland along the Cumberland River. Left to right, Cosmonaut Valeriy N. Kubasov, Astronaut Vance D. Brand, Durham, Astronauts Donald K. Slayton and Thomas P. Stafford.

industry was Owen Bradley, former musical director of WSM. Bradley succeeded Beasley Smith who penned such famous songs as: “The Old Master Painter from the Faraway Hills” and “Lucky Old Sun.”

Bradley was succeeded by Marvin Hughes, who later became a producer for Capital. Hughes’ successor was Bill McElhiney, whose most recent successes have included arranging for Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass. Roy Acuff and Fred Rose both worked at WSM. They teamed to form Acuff-Rose, the publishing and talent management empire. Chet Atkins, one of Nashville’s musical giants and a key RCA executive, came to WSM as a sideman with the Carter Family. Jack Stapp, who had been program director and produced the old Opry network shows for NBC, formed Tree Publishing Company. Frances Preston, head of BMI in Nashville, had worked for the station in the promotion department. There was also Dinah Shore, Snooky Lanson, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Phil Harris, Kitty Kallen, James Melton, Francis Craig and Anita Kerr among others.

The body and soul of music is the musician. In Nashville he has prospered. WSM and the Grand Ole Opry have been patrons of live music for more than five decades. Now there is a boon in Country Music. But even during the long, lean, early years, music was always present in the studios and halls of WSM.



There are performers who have been members of the Grand Ole Opry or members of the WSM staff band for 20, 30, and even 50 years. The disbursement of weekly and monthly monies has not been confined to a few. Witness the hundreds of stars and thousands of “sidemen” who have performed on the Opry, and the dozens of staff musicians employed by WSM in the pop field. The fact that WSM has possibly the last remaining studio staff orchestra in America speaks for itself. The station has formed its own record label, Opryland Records, to further the advancement of music and musicians.

Continuing in the traditional role of vanguard for new concepts in broadcasting, WSM gave America



Mel Tillis



March 4, 1978. For the first time in its colorful history, the Grand Ole Opry was televised live over the national PBS Television Network.

its first commercial frequency modulation radio station in 1941. Retired WSM President, John H. DeWitt, who manned the audio controls at the first Opry broadcast, was the principal force behind this new venture. W47NV is now a part of broadcast lore, partly because people were uninterested in buying a converter or receiver or receiver to pick up the station's signal. In the early sixties, interest in FM revived. WSM-FM (95.5) made its debut in 1968 with 100,000 watts. The station broadcasts in stereo with vertical and horizontal polarization. It covers a 100-mile radius surrounding Nashville.

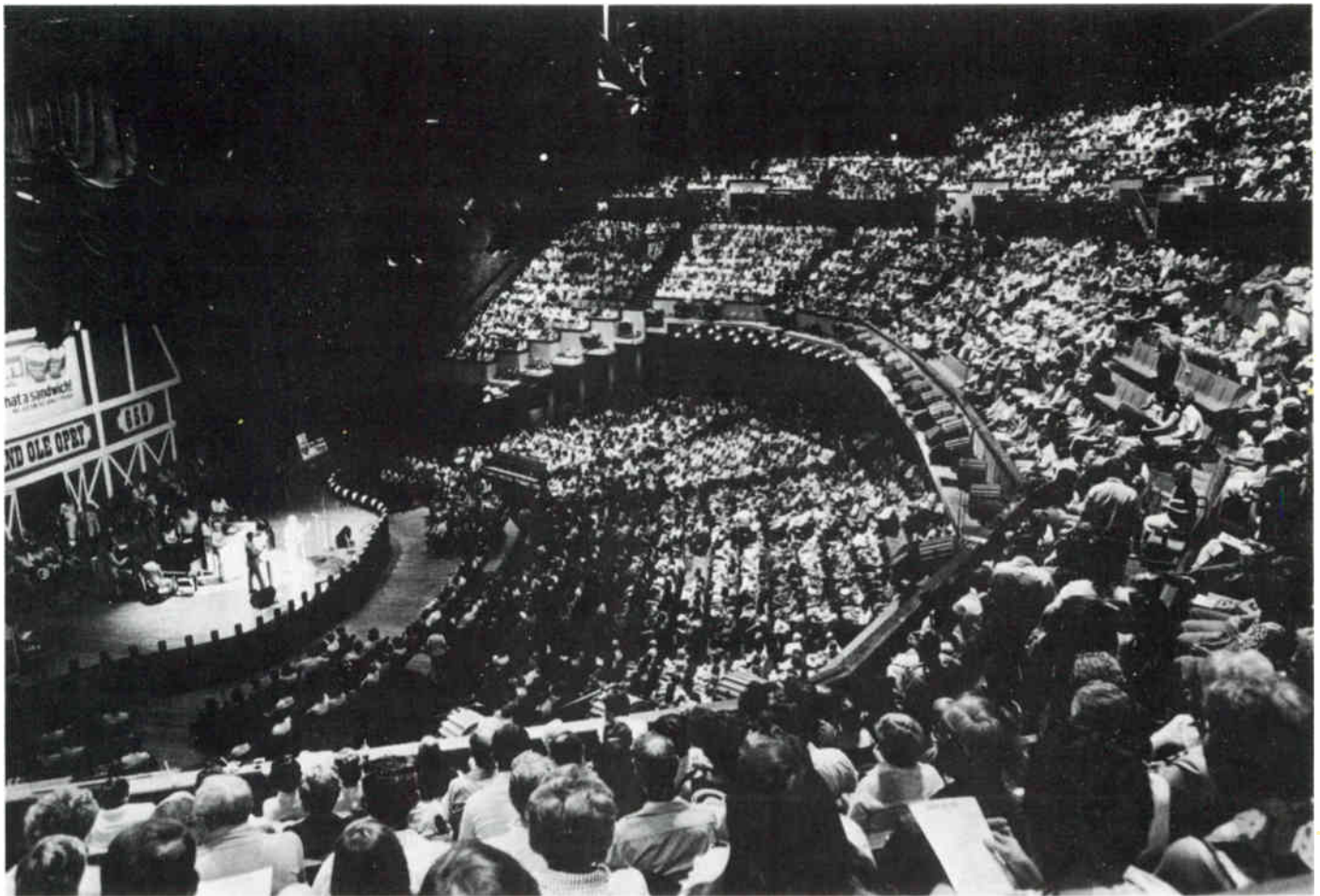
In 1950, WSM brought Nashville its first television station. The video facility set up a series of five microwave relay stations between this city and Louisville, thereby becoming the first TV network affiliate in town. The station also brought this area

its first color programs and installed the first color film processor in Nashville.

WSM's latest influence on the growth and economy of Nashville is the construction of a multi-million dollar family entertainment park and music center. Of course, the Grand Ole Opry House is the focal point of this project.

In the summer of 1968, Irving Waugh, president of WSM, Inc., and National Life executives, Edwin Craig and Bill Weaver, talked of plans to build a new Opry House. When they began thinking in terms of space and parking and other consideration, the plan for a park was conceived.

At the 1968 Grand Ole Opry Birthday Celebration, Waugh announced to the thousands of disc jockeys and music industry notables that a feasibility study would be undertaken to determine if such a



The curtain rises—followed by a fast fiddle tune, an enthusiastic crowd, intricate squaredancing—and the Grand Ole Opry eagerly begins another historic evening.

complex were economically sound. At the 1969 birthday celebration, Waugh stated that all systems were go.

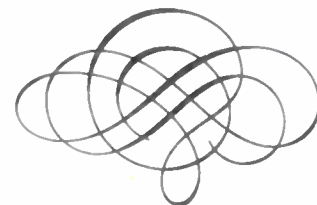
Opryland USA, a 400-acre complex, is designed to be "The Home of American Music." The park is divided into entertainment areas that combine live musical shows, natural animal habitat areas, restaurants, gift shops, and sensational thrill rides. Opryland opened its gates to the public in the spring of 1972, and two years later the Grand Ole Opry show moved to the new 4,400 seat Opry House. In 1975, National Life and Accident Insurance Company officials announced plans for The Opryland Hotel. Located adjacent to Opryland, it is Tennessee's largest hotel-convention-exhibition center.

The Grand Ole Opry is, and has always been, entertainment, pageantry, vaudeville and music of all the people packaged into one presentation. The rapport between the Opry artists and the audience is unlike anything else in the world. Whether the

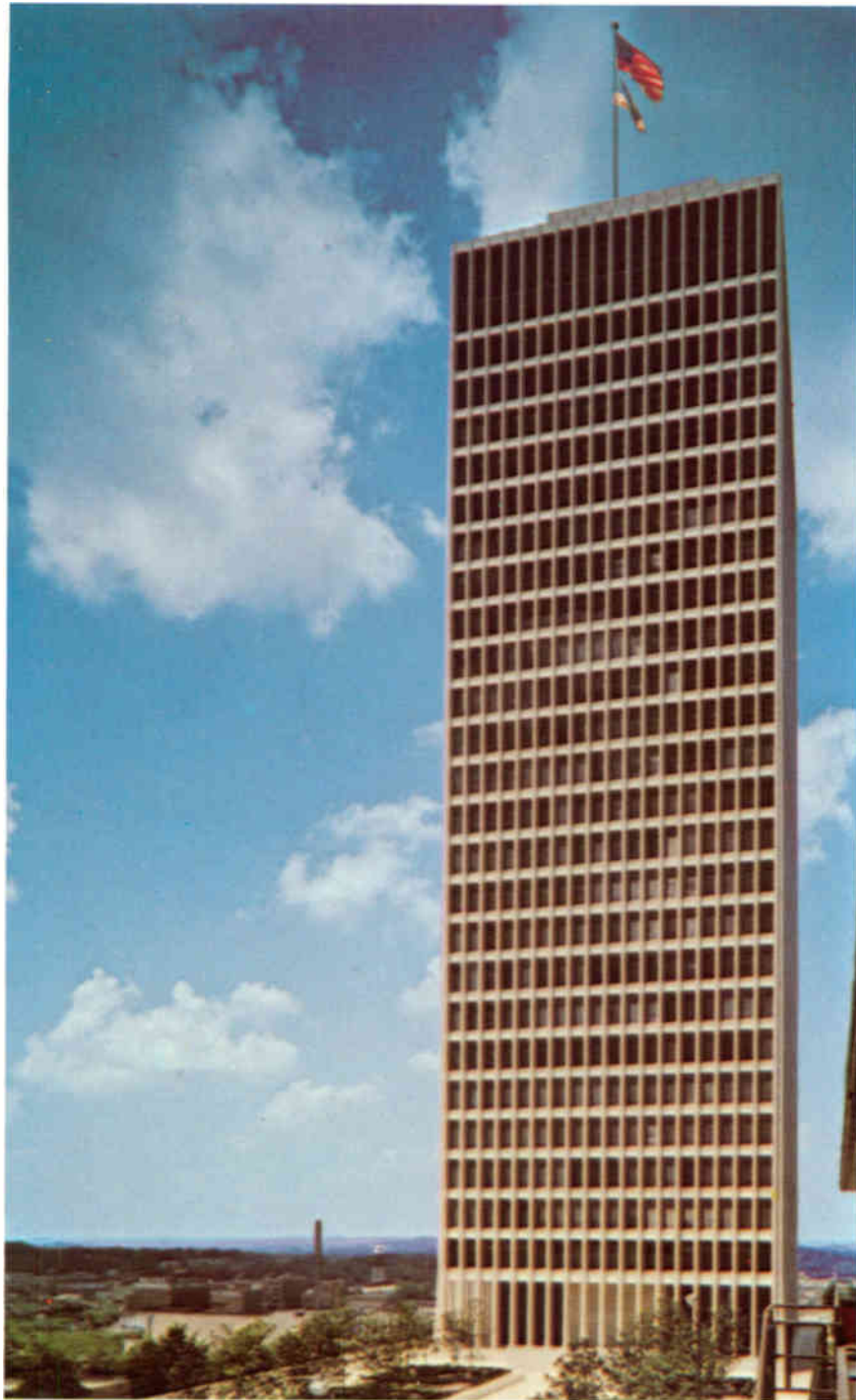
listener be at the Opry House or tuned to WSM's Clear Channel Frequency (650) that spans the United States.

The music is genuine, down-to-earth, and honest. It is realism. And as Judge Hay explained once, "The principal appeal of the Opry is a homey one. It sends forth the aroma of bacon and eggs frying on the kitchen stove on a bright spring morning. That aroma is welcomed all the way from Maine to California."

—Jerry Strobel



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