

WISIM GRAND OLD OPERA

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W S M
Home of
GRAND OLD

THE NATIONAL
LIFE
and
ACCIDENT
INSURANCE CO.

LIFE INSURANCE
FOR EVERY
MEMBER OF
THE



Left to right, first row: Sonny Osborne, Bobby Osborne, Archie Campbell, Jim McReynolds, Jesse McReynolds, Bill Carlisle, Hank Snow, Skeeter, Guy and Vic Willis, Bobby Lord, Billy Walker. Second row: Willie Nelson, Roy Acuff, Cousin Jody, Bill Monroe, Dottie West, Porter Wagoner, Stoney Cooper, Wilma Lee Cooper, Curley Fox, Stringbean, Norma Jean, Grandpa Jones, Margie Bowes, Lonzo & Oscar, Bonnie, Maxine and Jim Edward Brown. Third row: Tompall, Chuck and Jim Glaser, George Hamilton IV, Marion Worth, Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Maybelle, June, Anita and Helen Carter, Roy Drusky, Hank Locklin, Bill Anderson, Teddy and Doyle Wilburn, Sonny James, Skeeter Davis. Fourth row: Minnie Pearl, Bobby Bare, Bob Luman, Del Wood, Ernest Tubb, Jimmy Newman, Ernie Ashworth, Loretta Lynn, Marty Robbins, Leroy Van Dyke, Charlie Louvin, Jean Shepard, Tex Ritter, Connie Smith, Billy Grammer, George Morgan.

WSM Grand Ole Opry

Traveling across the land,
Making every one-night stand,
Back on the road to travel far,
In a plane, or in a car,
Stop at diners, and motels,
A quick word, and some quick farewells,
Little time left to consume,
Hurry to a dressing room;
On the stage, on with the act,
Then the suitcase must be packed;
Back out on the road once more
To cover miles as before;
It's a rather gruelling life;
Far from the children and the wife;
But always when he has to roam
The Opry artist has a home;
A home to which he can return;
Where waiting lights will always burn,
Where he can find familiar faces,
Familiar homes, familiar places;
Where family ties are firmly knotted,
Where recreation is allotted;
This makes the Opry star unique;
He may be gone most every week;
But always there's a home for him;
Where he can satisfy each whim
Where he can work or play or rest,
Or answer mail, while suits are pressed;
He can stay home and appear
On the Opry throughout all the year
And still he can go home at night,
To see again that waiting light;
The Opry is where he unravels,
From his journeys, from his travels;
It's his home, his waiting spot;
A home that always means a lot
Where thousands wait to hear him sing;
When he concludes his one-night swing;
Where millions listen to each show
He broadcasts on the radio;
For more than forty years it's been,
A home to women and to men;
The finest in the country field,
The Opry is their home, their shield.

Official Opry History-Picture Book

Price: \$2.00

Cover: Original Painting
by Archie Campbell,
done specifically for
Opry History-Picture Book.

Photographs:
Les Leverett
Beverly LeCroy
Marvin Cartwright

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Volume 3, Edition 1

Souvenir of ERNEST TILD RECORD SHOP
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

History of Grand Ole Opry

The time was 8:00 p.m. The date was November 28, 1925. The place was WSM's Studio "A" (now Studio "B"), on the fifth floor of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, at 7th and Union Streets in downtown Nashville. The song was "Tennessee Waggoner." The performer was Uncle Jimmy Thompson. The announcer was George Dewey Hay. The power of the station was 1,000 watts, with an output that covered a radius of some 75 miles. The frequency (later to settle on 650 through the F.C.C.) was changed from time to time by the Dept. of Commerce and the Federal Radio Commission.

The studio contained a green carpet, red velvet drapes, two picture windows, and a crystal chandelier. There was one carbon microphone, which frequently needed "shaking" to continue operation. The studio engineer was John H. DeWitt, Jr. The transmitter engineers were Thomas L. Parks and L. H. Montgomery, Jr. Mr. DeWitt later was to become President of WSM, Inc. The only other employee of the station was a part-time secretary, and an announcer named Jack Keefe.

The first program lasted one-hour and five minutes. The sole featured performer on that first broadcast was Uncle Jimmy, who claimed to have more than a thousand fiddle tunes at his command, and had played them all since turning professional at the age of 56. On that particular night when the Opry was born, Jimmy Thompson was 80 years old. George Hay, who called himself the "Solemn Old Judge," was 36.

The first program might have gone beyond 65 minutes had not George Hay picked-up a device he had carried with him since his days on the Mississippi River at Memphis: a steamboat whistle (which, in hundreds of Opry performances to follow, was to become his trademark). He sounded the whistle, and Uncle Jimmy wound up his "fiddle-round" with a tune closely associated with the old "Shave and a Haircut."

Within a few weeks the cast of this show, initially called the "WSM Barn Dance," had swelled to about 25. One of the first to join was a zither player known only as Mrs. Cline. Then came Dr. Humphrey Bate, a graduate of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, who played the harmonica. Dr. Bate organized the first country band to appear on what was to become the Grand Ole Opry. This group called itself "The Possum Hunters." One of the original members of that band was Oscar Albright, whose brother was United States Minister to Finland.

The story is legend that, after the initial performance by Uncle Jimmy, Judge Hay suggested that, since an hour already had been surpassed, the fiddling had better stop. And the fabled reply: "An hour? Fiddlesticks! A man can't git warmed up in an hour. This program's got to be longer."

And longer it got—until today (with still no end to the growth in sight) it is programmed live each Saturday night for some six hours, on Friday night for three-and-a-half hours, and is played on a delayed basis by hundreds of radio stations throughout North America, and consequently programmed thousands of hours each week. It is the oldest continuous show in the history of American radio; a program which in its incredible tenure has never been preempted, never had a summer replacement, never had an intermission. Twice in its glorious history it conceded a small segment of its broadcast time: once to a fireside chat by the President of the United States; the other time to a special Will Rogers Memorial.

There is another documented and often repeated story as to how the Grand Ole Opry got its name. George Hay, who was waiting for an NBC network program to end, heard Dr. Walter Damrosch explain a number played by his New York Symphony Orchestra. Damrosch stated: "While we think that there is no place in the classics for realism, nevertheless, I have a manuscript here before me sent in by a young composer in Iowa depicting the onrush of a locomotive." Following the rendition of this musical number, the conductor said good evening, and closed his program. The barn dance came on, and Judge Hay had this to say: "From here on out, folks, it will be nothing but realism, of the realistic kind. You've been up in the clouds with Grand Opera; now get down to earth with us in a four hour shindig of 'Grand Ole Opry!'"

The first number was little Deford Bailey playing on his harmonica the "Pan-American Blues," in which he depicted an onrushing train. Bailey continued to play that same tune every Saturday night for the next 15 years. This young man, who had been an elevator operator at the Hermitage Hotel, asked Judge Hay for a chance to play, and got it.

It was in January, 1926, when the program was re-named, and the "Grand Ole Opry" title has belonged to WSM since that time. As in many cases of success, there was a serendipitous beginning.

Chance was involved in a trip George Hay had made as a young reporter on the Memphis Commercial Appeal in search of a story (which did not materialize). Instead, he was feted by a rural family which took him to his first barn dance. He realized at once the appeal of country music.

It was curiosity that brought Jimmy Thompson to Nashville in November of 1925. He wanted to see the sights, among them the new radio station which the National Life and Accident Insurance Company had put on the air just a few weeks earlier. In the interim, George Hay had made the transition from newspaper to radio work, had been adjudged (while working in Chi-

ago) America's number one radio announcer, and subsequently was hired by the new Nashville station to handle the programming. In those days of limited staff personnel, the program manager was not averse to guiding visitors through the studios. The meeting, it is recalled, took place in the hallway outside Studio "A." The conversation quickly led to country music, and to Jimmy Thompson's abilities. The meeting took place on a Thursday. On Saturday night, the show that was to become the Grand Ole Opry was on the air.

The response to the first broadcast was indicative of what was to follow. There were telegrams; there were letters. Eventually there were visitors. At first a glass window panel was installed in the wall of the studio to allow these visitors to watch the show in progress. When the hallway became so congested that it was blocked, National Life official Edwin W. Craig (later to become Chairman of the Board) suggested that an auditorium-type studio be constructed. This studio, built to house a crowd of 500, became the first "permanent" home of the Grand Ole Opry. Until 1964 it was utilized for the Friday Night "Opry," at which time the crowds again forced a move. The Saturday night "Opry" had outgrown this studio "C" in a matter of two years.

It is paradoxical that the first move away from the studios was to a tabernacle in East Nashville, for the Opry's final "permanent" home was later to be another structure initially built as a tabernacle. The East Nashville building, although suitable in size, lacked proper acoustics, had few parking facilities, and was in

an area razed by the great Nashville fire of 1916. The planners, seeking new quarters, found them in the old Hillsboro Theater located in the central part of the city. Acoustics were improved; there was a stage; and there was room for parking. The theater, however, seated only 2,400, and the crowds were being turned away. For want of additional space, the Opry was moved to the War Memorial Auditorium, an impressive building directly across the street from its original studio home, built by the State of Tennessee to honor its war dead. This remained the site of the Grand Ole Opry until 1941, when the program was moved once more—due to the still-growing crowds—to the Ryman Auditorium.

Another legend: Captain Tom Ryman, a rough, tough riverboat skipper, had brought his motley crew ashore from the Cumberland River dock in search of excitement. Ryman had been challenged by a noted revivalist in 1891 to attend one of his tent meetings in the heart of downtown Nashville. Ryman came, and brought his crewmen along. They intended to heckle; instead they stayed to pray. The theme of the revival sermon was "Mother," and it melted the heart of the riverboat captain. Ryman decided to elevate the Reverend Jones from tent status to something more spectacular, so he established a fund to build a tremendous tabernacle. This structure was completed in 1892. That old Ryman tabernacle, which later became the Ryman Auditorium, now is the Grand Ole Opry House, and it has been the Opry's home since the beginning of World War two. In 1897, a balcony was added to accommo-



This was the beginning. Uncle Jimmy Thompson fiddled on the first Opry performance, Nov. 28, 1925. "Judge" George D. Hay was the narrator.

date the Confederate Veterans' reunion, and it henceforth was known as the Confederate Gallery. The original pews of the tabernacle remain. Visitors to the Grand Ole Opry today sit in the same seats where Captain Ryman and his group sat more than half a century ago. Early newspaper accounts note that the Reverend Jones loved music. He doubtless would be proud of the music that comes from the acoustically perfect building today.

In the earliest days of the Opry, some of the featured performers included Paul Warmack and his Gully Jumpers; George Wilkerson and his Fruit Jar Drinkers; Arthur Smith and his Dixie Liners; Theron Hale and his daughters; the Binkley Brothers and their Clod-hoppers; Uncle Ed Poplin and his Old Timers; Sam and Kirk McGee; the Delmore Brothers, the Broncho Busters, Jack Jackson, and the Dixie Dew-drop, Uncle Dave Macon.

Dave Macon ushered in a new era, as later Opry performers were to do. David Macon, who always carried three banjos, tuned in different keys, became a professional at the age of 48. He joined the Opry in 1926, and during the next 15 years he was the show's biggest attraction. Still the basic talent employed on the Opry was the old-time band. A singer was part of a band, but he was always subordinate to the musicians. Roy Acuff changed all this.

Acuff and his Smoky Mountain Boys joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1938, and struggled for recognition during two-years of reshuffling to find the winning combination. It came when Roy became the featured performer, and the band provided background. This began a trend which was to continue on through the present day. Eddie Arnold was another who made this early step. A "sideman" with Pee Wee King and his Golden West Cowboys, Arnold found a song which fitted his style. In short order he formed his own group—a band to support a singer. And the Tennessee Plow-boy became part of the legend.

Red Foley, Ernest Tubb, and Cowboy Copas fit into this mold.

Artists, of course, were primarily responsible for the tremendous success and growth of the Opry. The vehicle, however, was an important factor. It was already noted that WSM began operation as a 1,000 watt station. In 1929, the Federal Radio Commission designated WSM as one of the stations to operate with a clear channel—which merely means no other station may operate on that same assigned frequency during peak nighttime hours. This was done to bring the facilities of radio to many areas of the nation which otherwise would be denied direct nighttime entertainment and information. Three years later WSM built what was then the nation's tallest radio tower—878 feet tall—and

increased its power to 50,000 watts. The Grand Ole Opry then was heard throughout most of North America. More and more people listened; more and more came to see this show in Nashville.

In 1939, both the NBC network and Republic Studios in Hollywood took notice. NBC began carrying 30 minutes of the Grand Ole Opry coast-to-coast, and the movies did a full-length feature on the Opry.

Actually, this was part of a musical evolution of which the Opry formed the link between the heritage of the past and the promise of the future. Historians show that Nashville had a musical beginning when Indians drummed up a war party on the banks of the Cumberland a few hundred years ago. And there is a recorded note of a man named James Gambil, who played the fiddle at a wedding in Nashville in the 1780's. It also is noted that President Andrew Jackson and his wife, Rachel, played musical instruments.

Regardless of how or where it started, no one will dispute the fact that it was given impetus and resurgence by the Grand Ole Opry. From it has evolved what is known as Music City, U.S.A., one of the largest recording centers in the world. One out of every two records now sold in the United States comes from a Nashville studio. This is a city of four record pressing plants, 10 talent agencies, 10 recording studios, five major trade papers, 26 recording companies, three performing rights organizations, more than 100 members of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, nearly 1200 Federation of Musicians members, 322 music publishing companies, and 850 professional songwriters. All four basic divisions of the music industry now are represented in Nashville: writing, publishing, recording and performing.

In 1925, however, it could not even be imagined. Surveys were completed at that time by Western-Electric engineers for the construction of the radio station of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, a dream of Mr. Edwin W. Craig. The go-ahead signal was given by the Board of Directors in April of 1925.

The call letters WSM were authorized by the Dept. of Commerce Bureau of Navigation (predecessor in this field to the FCC), and equipment was shipped August 8, 1925. Upon completion of the station in September, an inaugural broadcast was celebrated with a great dedication program October 5, 1925. Many notables were present, among them the Honorable Governor of Tennessee, Austin Peay; Mayor Howse of Nashville, and two representatives of the Dept. of Commerce. WSM, with 1,000 watts, was the state's first "high-powered" broadcaster. It later grew to be a 5,000-watt giant, and from that strength moved into the 50,000-watt society.

Readers will recall that these were the days preceding the Great Depression; yet not once during this

depression did the faith of E. W. Craig falter. He believed in the Grand Ole Opry, and dedicated himself, to keeping it on the air. This was not an easy task. The economy was difficult in itself, but the city of Nashville presented an even greater barrier in its efforts to disassociate itself with the country music image. There were organized efforts to run the Opry out of town. Later this same community was to realize that the Grand Ole Opry has been, and still remains, the life-blood of the city's economy. It has been honored and applauded by every civic organization, including the Chamber of Commerce.

The Opry brings an estimated quarter-million people to Nashville annually. In addition, more than seven million Americans and Canadians attend the Opry acts which travel the continent, and additional hundreds of thousands see them abroad. Opry stars journey three million miles a year to present these shows before audiences ranging from hundreds in small schoolhouse gyms to throngs in the tens of thousands at parks, auditoriums, arenas, and such staid places as Carnegie Hall in New York.

The "average" or composite Opry fan drives more than 500 miles each way from his home to see the Grand Ole Opry. He lives in a city of 10,000 or more, and probably works in a factory. The Opry has more visitors from the Midwest (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio) than from any other section. This "average" Opry visitor has driven to Nashville five separate times to see the show, and he almost always brings the entire family. On an average Saturday night, 35 states and at

least two foreign countries are represented in the audience. Over the course of a year, every state and virtually every foreign country will be represented.

The Grand Ole Opry is essentially a show without gimmicks. It is virtually unproduced, literally unrehearsed, spontaneously combustible. There is a rapport between audience and entertainer unlike anything else in the world. The Opry creates an electrifying atmosphere which charges the assembled throng, and the rafters ring. Sometimes a few bars of music, perhaps even a single chord, can set off the applause. Opry fans know the songs of the performers, and recognition is immediate.

From the early day when Opry fans were given different-colored tickets to allow them to watch one-hour of the show in relatively cramped quarters of studio C, to the old but ageless tabernacle where the Opry still performs, the basic show has never changed. The tastes of country music change, and the artists have never resisted this, but it still is a country show, as down to earth as Judge Hay first suggested.

The Grand Ole Opry still is sold out weeks, even months, in advance for reserved seats. To accommodate those many thousands who drive down on speculation, with no reservations, general admission tickets are sold the week of each show on a first-come basis. The Friday night Opry continues to grow, satisfying the demands of those who want more and more of this incredible program. No show has ever enjoyed such a run. With continued growth, it will stand unparalleled in American history.



One of the early and most popular of Opry performers was Uncle Dave Macon, shown with his son, Dorris, in a 1928 picture.

Past and Present Members and

Roy Acuff
David Akeman (Stringbean)
Rex Allen
Bill Anderson
Jack Anglin
Annie Lou & Danny
Eddy Arnold
Asher & Little Jimmy
Ernest Ashworth
Chet Atkins
DeFord Bailey
Bobby Bare
Jack Barlow
Dr. Humphrey Bate
Alcyone Beasley
Norma Jean Beasler
Bunny Biggs (Jamup)
Johnny Bond
Margie Bowes
Don Bowman
Jim Boyd
Harold Bradley
Rod Brasfield
Elton Britt
Binkley Brothers
Cecil Brower
Bonnie Brown
Maxine Brown
James Ed Brown
Smiley Burnette
Broncho Busters
Nap Bastian
Carl Butler
Pearl Butler
Jerry Byrd
Billy Byrd
Ginger Callahan
Archie Campbell
Jimmy Capps
Sheila Carlisle
Bill Carlisle
Bill Carlisle, Jr.
Martha Carson
Carter Family
Johnny Cash
Cedar Hill Square Dancers
Lightning Chance
Buddy Charlton
Lew Childre
Zeke Clements
Patsy Cline
Rosemary Clooney
Hank Cochran

King Harry Cole
Collins Kids
Carolce Cooper
George Cooper
Stoney Cooper
Wilma Lee Cooper
Cowboy Copas
James Crawford
Crook Brothers
Don Davis
Skeeter Davis
James Day
Jimmy Dean
Delmore Brothers
Jimmy Dickens
Clyde Dilleahea
Marie Dilleahea
Henry Dorrrough, Jr.
Pete Drake
Jack Drake
Jimmy Driftwood
Roy Drusky
Louis Dunn
Dave Dudley
Bobby Dyson
Joe Edwards
Jimmy Elledge
Buddy Emmons
Milton Estes
Jack Eubanks
Don Everly
Phil Everly
James Farmer
Bob Ferguson
Lester Flatt
Linda Flannagan
Dick Flood
Red Foley
Walter Forbes
Whitey Ford
Howard Forrester
Curley Fox
Ruby Fox
Tillman Franks
Lefty Frizzell
Hank Garland
Jimmy Gately
Don Gibson
Charles Glaser
Jim Glaser
Tompall Glaser
Bill Gokey
Billy Grammer

Claude Gray
Wayne Gray
Bobby Greco
Jack Green
Lloyd Green
Hubert Gregory
Theron Hale
Connie Hall
George Hamilton IV
Escoc Hankins
Sid Harkreader
Murrey Harmon
Freddie Hart
Hawkshaw Hawkins
Hoyt Hawkins
George D. Hay
Polly Hazelwood (Del Wood)
Luther Heatwole
Bobby Helms
Donald Helms
San Hitchcock
Bobby Hodges
Homer & Jethro
Johnny Horton
David Houston
Jan Howard
Harlan Howard
Paul Howard
Kathy Copas Hughes
Randy Hughes
Marvin Hughes
Ferlin Husky
Junior Husky
Aurey Inman
Glynn Irvin
Shot Jackson
Stonewall Jackson
Tommy Jackson
Sonny James
Bob Jennings
Betty Johnson
Jerry Johnson
Johnny Johnson
Ann Jones
George Jones
Grandpa Jones
Ramona Jones
The Jordanaires
Ramsey Kearney
Howard Kemp
Jerry Kennedy
George Kent
Anita Kerr

Guests of Grand Ole Opry

Merle Kilgore
Buddy Killen
Bradley Kincaid
Claude King
PeeWee King
Kenny Roberts
Pete Kirby
Lakeland Sisters
Brenda Lee
Debbie Lee
Ted LeGarde
Tom LeGarde
Milo Liggett
Lawrence Light
Ronald Light
Hank Locklin
Jack Logan
Bill Long
Lonzo & Oscar
Bobby Lord
John Loudermilk
Charlie Louvin
Ira Louvin
Bob Luman
Robert Lunn
Frances Lyell
Loretta Lynn
Smilin' Ed McConnell
George McCormick
Skeets McDonald
Elbert McEwen
Kirk McGee
Sam McGee
Speedy McNutt
Curtis McPeak
Jesse McReynolds
Jim McReynolds
Joe MacPherson
Warner Mack
Dave Macon
Dorris Macon
Rose Maddox
Mac Magaha
Joe Maphis
Marty Martel
Grady Martin
Neal Matthews
Frankie Miller
Len Miller
Roger Miller
Bill Monroe
James Monroe
Montie Montana

Melba Montgomery
Clyde Moody
George Morgan
Harold Morrison
Moon Mullican
Weldon Myrick
Shirley Nelson
Willie Nelson
Jimmy Newman
Ernie Newton
Louis Nunley
James O'Gwynn
Old Hickory Singers
Bobby Osborne
Sonny Osborne
Buck Owens
Leon Payne
Minnie Pearl
Bert Pellish
Luther Perkins
Bill Phillips
Pickard Family
Ray Pillow
Poe Sisters
Poplin String Band
Blythe Poteet
Ray Presley
Ray Price
Jack Pruett
Jeanne Pruett
Samuel Pruett
Ralph Sloan Square Dancers
Boots Randolph
Shirley Ray
Wade Ray
Jerry Reed
Del Reeves
Don Reno
Ronnie Reno
Speck Rhodes
Leon Rhodes
George Riddle
Jimmy Riddle
Tex Ritter
Gerald Rivers
Marty Robbins
Slim Robertson
Floyd Robinson
Freddie Rose
Bob Ross
Harold Rugg
Ford Rush
Mack Sanders

Billy Sanford
Sarrie & Sallie
Jack Scott
Earl Scruggs
Johnny Seay
Claude Sharpe
Allen Shelton
Jean Sheppard
Jack Shook
Short Brothers
Dee Simmons
Margie Singleton
Jimmy Skinner
Donald Slayman
Del Smart
Sue Smart
Ben Smathers
Delores Smiley
Arthur Smith
Cal Smith
Carl Smith
Connie Smith
Hank Snow
Jimmy Rogers Snow
Tommy Sosobee
Buddy Spicher
Pete Stamper
Darrell Statler
June Stearns
Ray Stevens
G. P. Stewart
Gordon Stoker
Oscar Stone
Donna Stoneman
Ernest Stoneman
Oscar Stoneman
Scott Stoneman
Van Stoneman
Veronica Stoneman
Billy Strange
William T. Strength
James Strickland
James Summey
Kay Tolliver
Demetriss Tapp
Gordon Terry
Rufus Thibodeaux
Judy Thomas
Jimmy Thompson
Sue Thompson
Mel Tillis
Helen Traubel
Buck Trent

Ernest Tubb
Justin Tubb
Tommy Vaden
Leroy Van Dyke
Porter Wagoner
Jimmy Wakely
Billy Walker
Charlie Walker
Ray Walker
Boots Walker
Jerry Wallace
Claude Waller
Staley Walton
Don Warden
Paul Warmack
Harold Weakley
Kitty Wells
Bill West
Dotty West
Duane West
Johnny Western
Onie Wheeler
Lasses White
Jerry Whitehurst
Slim Whitman
James Widner
Roy Wiggins
Herschel Wiginton
Teddy Wilburn
Lester Wilburn
Leslie Wilburn
Doyle Wilburn
Honey Wilds
James Wilkerson
Marijohn Wilkin
Curly Williams
Hank Williams
Hank Williams, Jr.
Lawton Williams
James Willis
Charles Willis
John Willis
Jimmy Wilson
Lonnie Wilson
Don Winters
Mac Wiseman
Sheb Wooley
Marion Worth
Bobby Wright
Johnny Wright
York Brothers
Faron Young
Joe Zinkan



"The Solemn Old Judge," George D. Hay, newspaper reporter-turned radio announcer, and the man who started it all.

George D. Hay

George D. Hay chose a paradoxical name: he was neither solemn, nor old, nor a judge. He was light-hearted, young (30 years old), and a newspaperman-turned-radio announcer.

As a reporter for the Memphis Commercial Appeal, he was assigned the radio editorship. In June of 1923, when WMC began broadcasting as the voice of the Commercial Appeal, he went on the air. Specializing in news, he scooped the nation on the death of President Harding, and was on his way.

Less than a year later he became chief announcer at WLS in Chicago, and within a few month's time was voted America's most popular radio announcer in a nationwide contest conducted by the "Radio Digest." In capacity of chief announcer, he originated the WLS Barn Dance, later to become known as the National Barn Dance.

It was fitting that a man of this stature be invited to Nashville to take a part in the dedicatory exercises inaugurating WSM as one of the pioneer radio stations in the South, the broadcasting service of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company. George D. Hay liked what he saw; a month later he joined WSM as its first director.

It was here that he assumed the name: "Solemn Old Judge." It was here that he launched the WSM Barn Dance, shortly to become the "Grand Ole Opry." He served as its Master of Ceremonies for many years. Until his retirement, he appeared regularly on the program.

George Hay now lives with his daughter near Norfolk, Virginia, and still continues on the WSM payroll.



How many remember back to the old Opry Tent Shows? In the days before arenas, coliseums and theaters were available, many a tent was pitched to allow performers some protection from the elements.



The Grand Ole Opry could provide a crowd anywhere, inside or out. This old-time picture, taken on Capitol Boulevard in Nashville, shows Ernest Tubb and his Texas Troubadours drawing a crowd near the intersection of Church Street.



Roy Acuff

Anyone who's heard him sing
Knows why they call this man "the king."

It was baseball star Dizzy Dean who named Roy Acuff "King of Country Music," but it was Roy's ability to remain at the top for some 30 years that made the title significant.

Roy Acuff, one of five children from a deeply religious and judicial family (his father was both minister and judge) in Maynardville, Tennessee, may be the only entertainer who ever attained stardom through sunstroke. At least that was the ailment that got him on his way. A typical youngster endowed with physical talents, Roy wanted to be a professional ball player. Sun stroke laid him low, and during the recuperative period he taught himself to play the fiddle. That led him to his first job with a medicine show in 1934, and ultimately to his first job in radio a year later at Knoxville. In February of 1938 Roy made his initial appearance on the Grand Ole Opry, fiddling and singing the "Great Speckled Bird." Perhaps never before in history has one man gained such wide acceptance. In sixteen years of recording for Columbia records he sold 19-million discs. He toured every battlefield of the world, and usually was the first to go. He has been a successful businessman, has displayed repeated interest in politics, and has been recognized as a leading drawing card wherever he has played. That includes the crowd of 25,000 who turned out to hear him at Baltimore Park. Roy's wife and business partner since 1936 has been Mildred Acuff, whom he calls "Mimi." They have one son, Roy Neil Acuff.

In 1952, Newsweek Magazine wrote this about Roy: "He is a multithreat man. First and foremost, he is an entertainer. He is also a composer-publisher and a businessman-politician. He brought country music into the current national atheneum."

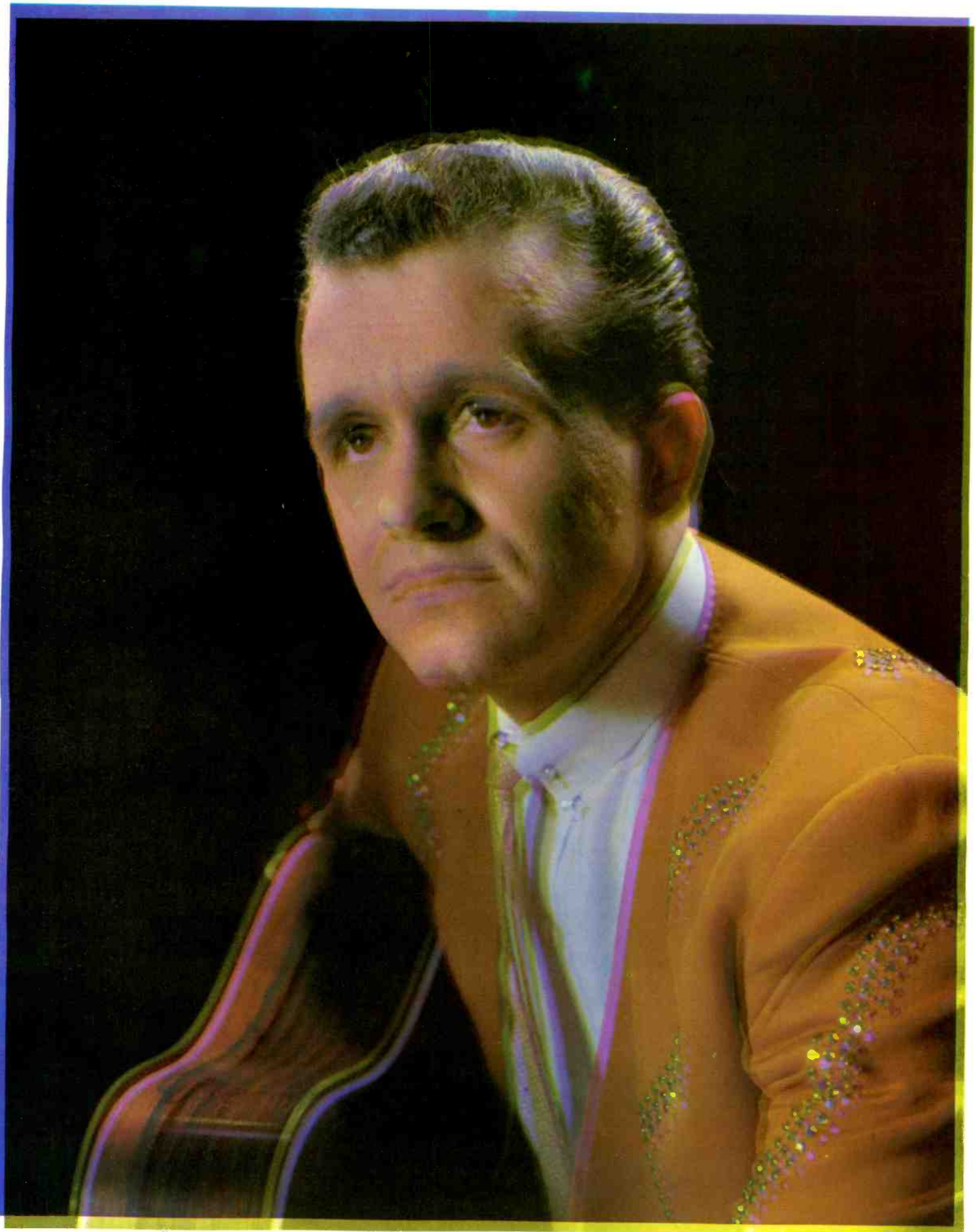
The same words would apply today, which is part of the reason Roy Acuff remains the "King of Country Music." The "Speckled Bird," by the way, was only his second biggest record. The greatest of all has been the now-immortal "Wabash Cannonball."

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When the Opry first broadcast, the studio utilized was the only studio in the building. The rest of the floor space was used by National Life for monthly company dances.



Long his partner in marriage and business, Mildred Acuff relaxes with Roy in their lakeside home near Nashville.



Bill Anderson

His first pursuits were journalistic
But now he follows lines artistic

The old stereotype of the barefoot hillbilly singer has been pretty well dispelled over the years in regard to country music. But the man who really put it to rest completely is doubtless Bill Anderson, a star of the Grand Ole Opry since July of 1961.

Bill Anderson, among other things, holds a B.A. Degree in Journalism from the University of Georgia; he is lucid, possessed of great wit, and can turn out news copy as well as such journalistic masterpieces as "Still," "Mama Sang A Song," "Five Little Fingers," ad infinitum. These are just a few of the estimated 400 songs he has had published and recorded.

No ordinary-size den would hold the awards he has won, which include the 1963-64 Songwriter of the Year plaques; the 1963 Male Vocalist of the Year and Number One Record of the Year; and 23 separate B-M-I songwriter awards . . . more than any other writer in the field of country music.

Bill was born at Columbia, South Carolina, and was interested in writing almost from the start. That was intermixed with a fondness for baseball. He aspired

to professionalism in that field, until he entered and won a high school talent show. He did "pick-up" work wherever available in Atlanta while matriculating at the University, and then got his first job in radio—as a disc jockey—at WGAU in Athens, Georgia.

Bill, as so many others, taught himself to play the guitar, and writing came naturally to him. He and his wife Bette have two daughters, Terri Lee and Jenifer Lane. Bill plays some golf, but, in his own words, "when I have a day off I do practically nothing but rejoice."

It's no wonder. Bill travels some 150,000 miles a year, writes hit tunes, records more hits, and collects awards. His biggest record (Decca) was "Still," but virtually everything he does is big.

Bill can recall now with amusement the time he swallowed a bug while singing on the Grand Old Opry. It wasn't funny at the time, and he came through without missing a note. That's showmanship he didn't learn in college.



Advertising agency personnel are frequent visitors at the Opry, along with sponsors. Here a group joins WSM officials in watching the show.



Ernie Ashworth

His upward path was strewn with knocks
But he just opened all the locks . . .

Ernie Ashworth is an artist who knows there is almost no such thing as overnight success. From those first days in music at Lincoln High School in Huntsville, Alabama, to his arrival at the Grand Ole Opry on March 7th, 1964, it was a succession of struggles.

Even before the high school jamboree Ernie had made an appearance before an audience, only to walk on stage with the band playing the introduction. He opened his mouth to sing, but nothing came out. But he overcame that fear, and eventually rose to be named the most promising country and western male vocalist in both 1963 and 1964.

It was a long climb to the Opry, but Ernie always had faith that he could make it. In 1951, he was hired as a vocalist with the Tennessee Drifters, and worked steadily in spot jobs until 1955, when he signed a contract with MGM. Two years later, Ernie left the music field, and worked at the Redstone Arsenal in Hunts-

ville. In 1960, Wesley Rose gave Ernie a boost by signing him to record for Decca Records. Ernie spent days and nights writing to some 30,000 disc jockeys, and his song "Each Moment" moved up to number three on the charts. In 1962, he signed a contract with Hickory Records, and began winning awards. Then came his "Talk Back Trembling Lips," and no one could doubt that this man had arrived. It took 13 years of trying, but he made the grade, and made it big.

Ernie and his wife, Bettye, now live with their four children, Rebecca, Michael, Mark, and Paul Wesley, in the Nashville area. In his spare time he writes hit tunes, many of which have been recorded by other country music greats.

Ernie bears a slight resemblance to Porter Wagoner and at times is mistaken for him. He considers this a supreme compliment. Ernie travels some 75,000 miles a year, but hurries back to make the Grand Ole Opry—the show which had been his lifetime goal.



Sam and Kirk McGee ("from Tennessee") and "fiddlin' Arthur Smith strike an early pose. Sam and Kirk still are an integral part of the Opry.



Bobby Bare

He has been a movie star
Without once strumming his guitar



Among his other talents, Bobby Bare is a fine actor. Here he appears in the Warner Brothers movie, "A Distant Trumpet." Veteran director Raoul Walsh called him "a fine, natural acting talent."

All Bobby Bare ever wanted to do was to be an entertainer. He thought about this constantly when operating his father's heavy equipment on the farm near Ironton, Ohio, and he thought of it when he made his first radio appearance on a station in Springfield, Ohio, at the age of 16.

Later in life, when he was to win the coveted Grammy Award, two B-M-I Awards, several gold records, and silver records abroad, his thoughts had borne fruit. He was every inch an entertainer, one of the finest in the business, and a star of the Grand Ole Opry.

He also had, by then, played starring roles in movies and in network television, and was in demand all over the world.

Bobby Bare represents what might be called the "new sound" in country music. His recordings for RCA-Victor have never failed to land in the national best-seller lists.

Bobby has much in common with some of the great song writers and singers of the past. Unable to read music, he composes by singing on tape. He has composed some 200 songs in all, of which more than 100 have been recorded by top artists.

Bobby's story has some of the Horatio Alger flavor. His mother died when he was quite young. He had to support himself at the age of 15. Just when he was beginning to rise he was drafted into the army (and later won the All-Army Talent Contest), got only \$50 for his first hit song, and then had to start again at the bottom following his discharge.

But a young man such as Bobby Bare isn't kept at the bottom long. When he appeared in the Warner Brothers movie "A Distant Trumpet," the director labeled him "the first natural actor I've seen in years."

Bobby's biggest song has been "Shame On' Me," with "Detroit City" a close second. He and his wife, Jean live with their five-year-old daughter in the Nashville area.

Only two men have received two silver records from Norway. One was the late Jim Reeves. The other is Bobby Bare. This is quite a testimonial.



Margie Bowes

She knew her high sights had been set
Once she became the best of Pet

It was in 1958 when Margie Bowes, a very nervous little girl at the time, stood among the finalists in the Pet Milk Grand Ole Opry contest and performed. When she was announced the winner, the nervousness was gone, and Margie was on her way to becoming one of the bright stars of the Opry.

Just a teen-ager at the time, she now is a wife and mother, and still manages to travel 100,000 miles a year for performances everywhere.

Born at Roxboro, North Carolina, Margie was one of a family of nine. All her life she wanted to be a singer, and spent most of her free hours working in this direction. Her first job in radio was at WRXO in Roxboro, but her first big break came when she won the talent contest.

Her biggest hit has been "Understand Your Gal," with "Big Girl" in second place. "Lost" and "I Can't Love That Way" threaten to overtake both of these. Like so many Opry artists, she has had scores of big ones. She also has written numerous songs, including "When Dreams Go Out of Style," recorded by Loretta Lynn.

Among the awards and honors won by Margie was that of Most Promising Female Vocalist, in 1959. She certainly lived up to all of the promises.



Margie Bowes makes her first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry since winning the Pet Milk Contest in 1958. She's been there ever since.



The pride of young Margie's life is her talented Sharon Rene, her even younger daughter.



The Browns

The one located in between
Jim Ed and Bonnie is Maxine

It's a fortunate thing there are three members of The Browns, else there wouldn't be room to hold all the awards they have won individually and collectively.

These awards include: Most promising; best vocal group (three times); vocal group of year; most programmed vocal group (twice) record of the year; best performance by a vocal group; best vocal combination, etc. The awards have come from Cash Box, Billboard, Music Reporter, NARAS, Juke Box operators, and just about anyone else who hands them out.

In addition, Maxine was cited as Billboard's Most Promising Female Artist. And Bonnie, among her other honors, was recently appointed to the board of the Arkansas Medical Auxiliary. Jim Edward has roared to the top with his recent singles. Alone, each is greatly talented in his or her own right. Together they are phenomenal.

Jim Edward and Bonnie both were born at Sparkman, Arkansas, while Maxine was born at Campti, Louisiana. They grew up in Arkansas, and got their

first job in music at the Barnyard Frolic, at KLRA, in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was Chet Atkins and the late Jim Reeves who helped them on the ascent, and they've been moving upward ever since.

There have been some tough times. The family recalls the time when Bonnie got off a train in Buffalo, New York, to get some pizza, and the train left without her. Not until it was well under way did Jim and Maxine realize she was left behind—with no money (just two pizzas.) She finally caught up with the train in Cleveland.

"The Three Bells" has been the biggest record of the Browns, and it was a million-seller gold record. "Scarlet Ribbon" and "Old Lamplighter" were also very big.

Jim Edward makes his home with his family in the Nashville suburb of Brentwood, while Bonnie commutes from Dardanelle, Arkansas, where she lives with her Doctor husband, and two children. Maxine similarly commutes from Little Rock. Jim Edward has one youngster. Maxine has three.



The Browns receive another award . . . this one in 1965 from Cashbox Magazine, as "Most Promising Vocal Group."



Archie Campbell

Oftentimes you'll see him rush
 From song, to comedy, to brush

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

This native of Greene County in East Tennessee is another of the Opry artists with a collegiate background, and he has about as many natural talents as anyone around. First and foremost he is an entertainer: excelling in both music and comedy. Secondly he is a song-writer, and authors virtually all of his own material. Finally, he is a painter of note, a man capable of capturing on canvas anything from serious landscapes to humorous caricature.

Art has long been an avocation of Archie Campbell, a form of relaxation matched only by his golfing.

A farm boy from the hills, Archie got his first job in music in a medicine show, and made the transition to radio at WNOX in Knoxville. After several guests appearances, he joined the Opry as a regular member in 1958. In that interim, he took time off for a tour of

duty in the Navy, and began recording for Starday records. His biggest hit to date has been "Rindercella," which he wrote himself, followed by "Trouble in the Amen Corner."

Archie has the ability to combine comedy with music, and he can handle the guitar, ukulele and bass with equal ease. He taught himself each instrument. He now is one of RCA Victor's brightest stars, and frequently is called upon to act as Master of Ceremonies at RCA functions.

He and his wife, Mary, and sons Steve and Phillip make their home at Powell, Tennessee, and Archie maintains a Nashville apartment because of his many days spent in Music City.

He can make people laugh (to his comedy), listen (to his singing) and look (at his paintings). It's a rare man with so many developed talents.



Archie Campbell, who did the cover of this book, shows the more serious side of his work as he paints a portrait of his son.



Bill Carlisle

The awards he has been reaping
Started with his brand of leaping . . .

Bill Carlisle was working on the assembly line as a painter in the Ford Plant at Louisville, Kentucky, when he was "discovered."

Young Bill, who had always wanted to be a preacher when he grew up, was "moonlighting" at night with his father and four brothers on a radio program of WLAP in Louisville known as the Carlisle Family Barn Dance. A Columbia Record scout came through, promptly pulled Bill off the assembly line, and got him to record with his older brother, Cliff. For years they appeared together as the Carlisle Brothers.

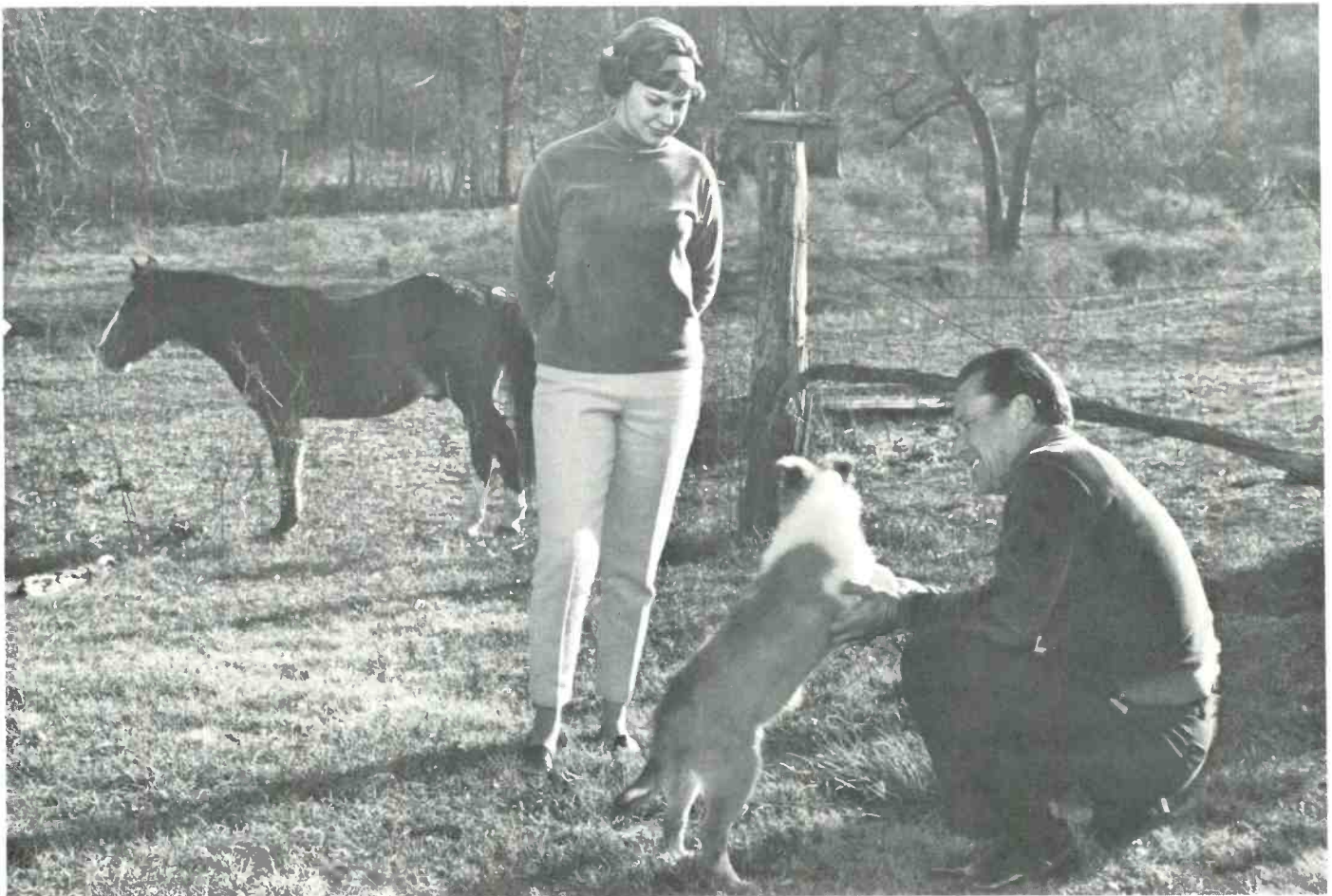
While appearing in Knoxville, Bill did a character in the act called "Hot Shot Elmer," which called for him to leap over some chairs. Later, when recording with Mercury, he sang numbers which "naturally involved jumping." Most everyone is familiar with the story about the time he leaped too vigorously, the trousers ripped, and Bill finished the tune in a very stationary position.

His two biggest hits: "No Help Wanted," (which he wrote himself), and "Too Old to Cut the Mustard," were both award winners. He holds 62 awards in all, including "Most Programmed Country and Western Vocal Group," "Best Comedian of the Year," and "Best Record of the Year." He was a triple-crown winner in 1953.

Bill still keeps his act pretty much a family affair. His talented youngsters, Billy, Jr., and Sheila, appear regularly with him. With his wife, Leona, they live near Goodlettsville, Tennessee.

As a boy Bill liked to fish and hunt, projects he still enjoys on those days off between dates. After all these years he's still going 80,000 miles annually, so it doesn't leave too much time.

He became a regular member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1953.



Bill Carlisle relaxes between dates on his farm outside Goodlettsville, Tennessee, with daughter, Sheila, who is part of his act, and with pets.



Carter Family

In keeping with the family trait
Every one of them is great

In the Carter Family, singing has been a tradition. The old Carter family from Maces Springs, Virginia, produced some of the earliest hits of the country music field. A. P. Carter sang bass, Maybelle sang harmony and Sara provided the alto, and they made their first recordings in 1927. Maybelle played the auto harp back then.

Maybelle carried on the Carter family style with her three lovely daughters, June, Helen and Anita. They still recall walking across the Clinch Mountains of Virginia with their grandmother, and hearing the real old songs. A. P. and Sarah had a daughter, Janet, who also sang. For a while she teamed with Helen, and later Helen joined Anita and June and Mother Maybelle.

Collectively, the family plays piano, guitar, auto harp and mandolin. Each of the girls will admit that most of their musical schooling has come from their mother, who has guided their phenomenal careers.

The "young" Carter family—or second generation—had to take the long road to Texas to get a start. They lived at a boarding house in San Antonio. Helen, Anita and June got their start by recording transcriptions in the basement of a house. They later progressed to radio stations in Del Rio, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Richmond, Virginia, and Knoxville, Tennessee. By 1951 they had made it to the Grand Ole Opry.

It was only justice that some years later, after reaching all sorts of successes, they would return to Texas and play before an audience of some 40,000 in the Cotton Bowl.

Individually and collectively the Carter family has received scores of awards—for writing and for singing.

The original Carter family would be extremely proud of the traditions carried on.



(above) Mother Maybelle Carter plays her autoharp, solely.

(below) The Carter family performs: l to r—Maybelle, June, Anita and Helen.





June Carter

She's the belle of diversification
And in every field, a real sensation

The old axiom about big things coming in small packages certainly applies to June Carter. This slight, but well-proportioned little girl has proven her ability as a singer, actress, comedienne, musician, writer, and occasionally as a dancer.

June performs as part of the Carter Family, but appears also as a single artist . . . and what an artist. As a singer she has turned out such hits as "Baby, It's Cold Outside," with Homer and Jethro. As an actress, she has performed on many network television shows. As a comedienne, she is unsurpassed, and long has been the little sweetheart of the Opry fans. As a musician, she plays several of the string instruments. As a writer she has won three B-M-I Awards for such tunes as "Ring of Fire," "The Matador," and "Wall to Wall Love." And her little country-type dance is an applause getter at any performance she does.

She also finds time to be a good mother to her children, Rebecca Carlene and Rozanna Lee.

June and Johnny Cash are booked by the same manager, and consequently appear together on many shows around the country. It was Johnny, of course, who recorded "Ring of Fire," and the album of that title has recently won the Gold Record award.

June is possessed of the grace of a lady, and the showmanship of a real trouper. She has long been and will continue to be a star of the Grand Ole Opry.



June Carter does her famous dance to the delight of fellow performers.



*The "Original"
Carter family:
l to r—Maybelle,
A. P. Carter, Sara.*



Stoney Mountain Cloggers

When these cloggers move their feet
It makes a music show complete

Ben and Margaret Smathers turned a love of square dancing into a profession, and proceeded to step their way to success. They danced in their dating days in North Carolina, and continued to dance after their 1949 wedding in Hendersonville.

Margaret, of course, has taken time out now and then, for five reasons—Hal, Mickey, Candy, Debbie and little Sally.

Ben Smathers is the organizer and leader of this colorful group of North Carolina cloggers. (A clogger is defined as one who wears clog shoes and beats out a rhythmic dance on the floor.) The dancers commute to the Opry from Asheville, North Carolina, their native city. Ben was an only child; Margaret was one of nine children.

They are precision dancers, moving from one tricky step to another, always to the pleasure of the audience. They have the ability to make others want to dance.

They began dancing at conventions, but found their talents best recognized as members of the Grand Ole Opry, which they joined in 1957. Hundreds of times since they have made the trek over the Smokies in their station wagon.

Following their appearance on a network television show in 1965, the Cloggers were booked into the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago, and then into clubs all up and down the West Coast, finishing a tour with the New Christy Minstrels.

Ben and Margaret and their partners have danced their way into many hearts, and have kept alive the belief that good country dancing is an integral part of music entertainment.

Ralph Sloan Dancers

He started out all on his own
But many dance now with Ralph Sloan

Ralph Sloan and his Tennessee Travelers have danced as a team since 1951. Ralph, who broke into the business as a doorman at a square dance in the early 1940's, now farms 700 acres of land in Wilson County in between his Opry appearances, which occur every other week.

Over the years, this square dance team has performed at every sort of place, from roller skating rinks to network shows. He originally had 17 performers—16 dancers and a caller. The group has changed over the years, with some getting married, others devoting full-time to other businesses and the like.

Ralph was called to work on the old WSM-TV Country Junction Show in the 1950's, and then he and his dancers became members of the Opry, dancing with the Cedar Hill group. He recalls the time when he was enroute to Woodbury, Tennessee, to compete in a fair, and had some members of his group who had never rehearsed with him. They stopped on the pavement off

the highway, went through a quick routine, and then went on to Woodbury to win the contest.

Over the years his dance team has dwindled to eight in number, solely because of space problems. Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Huffine and Robbie Gregory have been members of the group for five years. Other current members are Deborah Shrum, Joyce Sloan (who is not related to him), and Jackie and Jerry Harper, who are brothers.

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 to listen to Roy Acuff and Ernest Tubb.

The Tennessee Travelers have won scores of contests at County Fairs, and confine most of their travels to their home state. They have never missed a scheduled appearance on the Grand Ole Opry, despite snow and sleet that occasionally hampers the 30 mile trip from their home.



Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper

Their efforts have been most harmonious
Because they're also matrimonious

Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper have utilized small steps to make giant strides in their rise to the top of the field. The Coopers worked at radio and television stations in Fairmont, West Virginia; Harrisonburg, Virginia; Wheeling, West Virginia; Grand Island, Nebraska; Indianapolis, Indiana; Chicago Illinois; Blytheville, Arkansas; and Ashville, North Carolina, on their way to the Grand Ole Opry.

Wilma Lee and Stoney made their start in 1945, and have recorded together since 1947. They currently record on the Decca Label.

Married for more than 20 years, they have one daughter, Carolee, once part of their act. Now Carolee is Mrs. Jimmy Rogers Snow. Her husband, son of Opry Star Hank Snow, is an evangelist for the Assembly of God church.

Among other accolades, Wilma Lee and Stoney have placed several of the songs they have written in the top ten of the nation. They include "Come Walk With Me" and "There's a Big Wheel."

As it turned out, these also were the biggest hits they have recorded.

Wilma Lee and Stoney and their Clinch Mountain Clan have been together over most of their professional years. Originally Wilma Lee was a member of the Leary Family singers, and Stoney joined their group as a youth. Prior to that he had organized his own band.

Wilma Lee and Stoney travel in their own bus, which Stoney keeps operating and Wilma Lee keeps decorating.

They are a modest couple, known for their clean living and their desire to help others. Nice people do get to the top!



The family together, as they originally performed. Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper, with daughter Carolee (Snow) in the center.



Skeeter Davis

She's found her place beneath the sun
And she can outtalk anyone . . .

A friendship that blossomed into a successful team, only to end tragically, is the series of events that started Skeeter Davis on her road to single stardom.

It was while in high school near her farm home at Dry Ridge Kentucky, that Skeeter (given this name by her uncle because of her small size) became friends with Betty Jack Davis, and the two of them began singing as "The Davis Sisters."

The Davis sisters made real strides at station WCPO in Cincinnati in 1949, and RCA-Victor signed them to a recording contract. By 1953, their songs were at the top of the charts. Shortly after that came the tragedy that was to plague so many who must travel for a living. On August 2nd, 1953, while returning from a personal appearance at Wheeling, West Virginia, their car was struck head-on. Betty Jack was killed instantly, and Skeeter was hospitalized in critical condition. She decided to give up singing.

Many friends persuaded her to come back; among them, Chet Atkins, Steve Sholes and Ernest Tubb. She

finally joined E. T. as a single, and toured with the Troubadours. She wrote and recorded as a single, and in August of 1959 joined the Grand Ole Opry.

It was then that things really began to break for the little girl from Kentucky. She recorded "Last Date," a song which she helped to write, and followed this with "End of the World," which became the best-selling song in America. Since that time, she has consistently scored hits.

From 1948 through the present, she has won more than a normal share of awards, and has set records with her appearances all around the world.

Known for her ability and agility at talking, Skeeter is a popular guest on many disc jockey shows across the nation.

She makes her home in the Nashville suburb of Brentwood, where many of her close neighbors are Opry stars.



Skeeter (left) and Betty Jack Davis, as they appeared together prior to B.J.'s tragic accident.



Curley Fox

He played at royalty's command
And they, too, gave him a hand

Curly Fox has played before European royalty, and he has played medicine shows. For ten years he was the undisputed and undefeated National Champion of Fiddlers, and retired from competition without ever having lost. And his connection with the Grand Ole Opry goes back to 1936.

In his childhood days near Graysville, Tennessee (very close to the site of the famous Scopes trial), Curly listened to the section hands on the Southern Railroad, playing the harmonica and guitar in the evening after supper. It was then he decided that music was the life for him.

After plugging away for six months in high school, Curly took the fiddle he had taught himself to play, went to work in a medicine show, and then signed on as a member of the Carolina Tar Heels on WSB in Atlanta, Georgia.

In the 1940's and 1950's, Curly Fox traveled 100,000 miles a year, playing everywhere including a crowd of 33,000 at Houston, Texas, in 1955. In 1939, he had married another great entertainer, the late Texas Ruby, and they worked primarily as a team from then on.

In 1956, Curley Fox played a command performance for King Paul and Queen Fredreka of Greece. Prior to that he had handled his own television shows in New York and Texas.

Curly has always been such an outstanding fiddler that few realize he plays four or five other instruments with dexterity.

His biggest record, "Black Mountain Rag," sold over 600,000 copies, which is phenomenal for an instrumental. His second biggest, and the one still most often requested, is "Listen to the Mocking Bird."

Curly's two grown children now live in Michigan, and he devotes virtually all of his time to his work. He has written more than a dozen recorded songs, and in these many years of performing has never tired of hitting the road. This is one of the years he is still the champion.

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Fred Ritchie, who died in the electric chair at the Tennessee State prison on Tuesday, August 10, 1937, for slaying his wife, had Warden Joe Pope call up WSM the preceding Saturday night, Ritchie's last chance to hear the Grand Ole Opry. This was his only final request; he wanted fiddle Dave Macon to play "When I Take My Vacation in Heaven."



Curley Fox and his late wife, Texas Ruby, performing together in their younger days.

Complete names of Grand Ole Opry Stars

Roy Claxton Acuff (Roy Acuff)
James William Anderson III (Bill Anderson)
Robert Joseph Bare (Bobby Bare)
Bonnie Jean Brown Ring (Bonnie Brown)
Maxine Brown Russell (Maxine Brown)
Archie James Campbell
William Toliver Carlisle (Bill Carlisle)
June Carter Nix
Dale T. Cooper (Stoney Cooper)
Wilma Lee Leary Cooper (Wilma Lee Cooper)
Mary Frances Penick (Skeeter Davis)



Tompall & The Glasers

Nebraska's fields have corn to shuck
For they've lost Tompall, Jim and Chuck

Historically, Nebraskans have left their mark in Tennessee over the years. They include William Jennings Bryan (who, among other things, wrote Tennessee's anti-evolution law), and Senator George Norris, who fathered the TVA.

In 1959, three young men came down from the Nebraska plains to join the Grand Ole Opry. They were Tompall, Chuck and Jim Glaser, one of the finest brother trios ever to sing country music.

The Glasers are all natives of Spalding, Nebraska, three of a family of five. Their father, a rancher, taught each to sing and to play a musical instrument. To their father, Louis, each attributes much of his success.

Possessed of inborn showmanship, the Glasers have developed their unique singing style to the point of perfection. Their first professional job in music was with KHAS-TV in Hastings, Nebraska. In a few short years their talents were recognized, and they were on their way to the Opry and to stardom.

Tompall, the group leader, has collected a BMI award among other things, and has written several hit tunes. He and his wife, Rosemarie, live in the Nashville suburbs.

Chuck, the youngest of the trio, lives with his wife Beverly Ann, and their five children—Denis, Kent, Karen, Louis and Bruce—in the Nashville area.

Jim and his wife, Jane, live with their four—Lynn, Jeff, Connie and James William II—in the same neighborhood as his brothers.

The Glaser Brothers biggest record has been "Let Me Down Easy," with "A Girl Like You" a close second. Each of the three brothers has had a hand in writing hits for others as well.

Although each has done some solo work, they work best as a team, and it's this way the Glasers attained their stardom. They've come a long way together, and together they'll remain at the top.



Tompall, Chuck and Jim Glaser welcome visiting disc jockey Russ Johnston from Fort Worth, Texas.



Billy Grammer

He hitch-hiked for his first assignment
Now he travels with refinement



Billy Grammer pauses between engagements to answer some fan mail.

Complete names of Grand Ole Opry Stars

Arnim LeRoy Fox, Sr. (Curley Fox)
Thomas Paul, Charles, James Glaser (Tompall,
Chuck, Jim Glaser)
Billie Wayne Grammer (Billy Grammer)
James Loden (Sonny James)
James Monroe McReynolds (Jim McReynolds)
Jesse Lester McReynolds (Jesse McReynolds)
James Clue Summey (Cousin Jody)
Louis Marshall Jones (Grandpa Jones)
Lawrence Hankins Locklin (Hank Locklin)
John Sullivan (Lonzo)

Billy Grammer's father was an Illinois coal miner who also operated a small farm, and still found the time to teach music to his family. Billy began learning stringed instruments early in life, and now is an accomplished guitarist, and can handle the mandolin and tenor banjo with skill.

He has many other accomplishments, however, and many talents. Among them are a voice which has turned out more than a normal proportion of hit records, and has won him a "Gold Record" for his million-seller "Gotta Travel On."

That was in 1958, just shortly before he became a member of the Grand Ole Opry.

Billy was born at Benton, Illinois, 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. Later, after high school, Billy served an apprenticeship for toolmaking and machine work, which was to help him immeasurably in later years when he designed and manufactured his own guitars.

Although he travels from 80,000 to 100,000 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 Franklin County, Illinois, in 1944, live with their children Donna, Dianne, and Billy in the Nashville area. He got started in the country music field at WARL (now WARA) in Arlington, Virginia, where he had hitch-hiked with a guitar in hand after his discharge from the army, and a short stint as a tool and dye worker. His radio show led to bigger and better things, including network appearances, and then he made it to the Opry.

As is the case with most Opry performers, Billy Grammer has very few free days. When they come, though, he's out on the river (Cumberland now) 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."

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The Grand Ole Opry is probably the only show in American radio to quadruple its original time in 10 months. In September of 1926, the Opry was extended to four-hours duration on Saturday night.



George Hamilton, 4th

He's glad "the fourth" had been applied
For it helps him stay identified.

Yes, there is a George H. Hamilton V, one of three youngsters in the household of George IV and his wife "Tinky." When the "fourth" became so famous, there just had to be a fifth.

It all started when George signed his first recording contract with Colonial Records of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The owner, Orville Campbell, noticed the "IV" on the end of his legal signature, and said he thought George should use that on his recordings to make his name more distinctive. Later, when movie actor George Hamilton rose to stardom, George IV was glad to have the extra accessory.

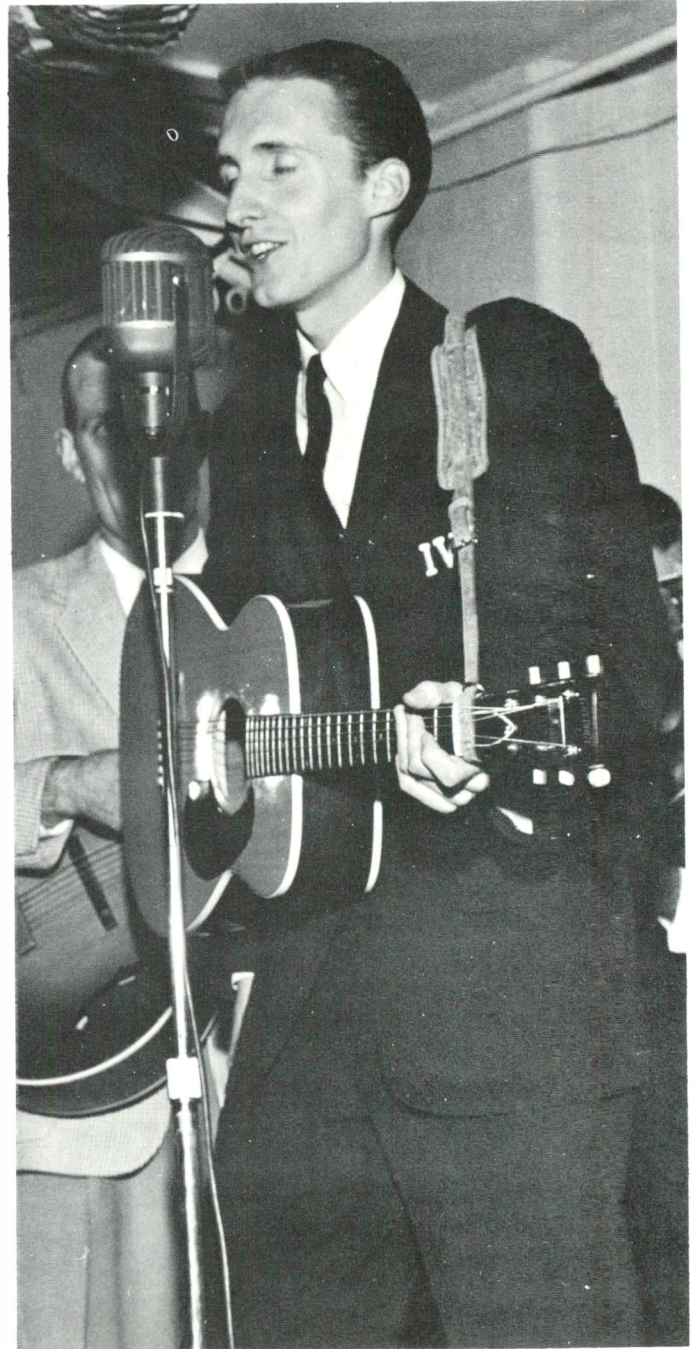
A native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, George attended both the University of North Carolina and American University. As a youngster he was always interested in magic, and he did a magic act intermingled with a puppet show in the basement of his home. He was normal in other respects, alternately running a neighborhood newspaper, raising snakes, and forming a country music band. When a Grand Ole Opry troupe came to his home-town, George wandered backstage. From that day on he knew he wanted nothing but to be on the Opry.

Many consider George's greatest hit, a "Rose and a Baby Ruth," to be non-country in nature, since it was the rage of the teen-age set, but George has never considered himself anything but country. His second greatest tune was "Abilene," which—among other things, he performed in a movie. By the way it was John D. Loudermilk, one of the finest country songwriters in the business, who penned "Rose and a Baby Ruth."

Arthur Godfrey, Chet Atkins and Wesley Rose are among those George credits with his success.

Things did not always go so well for George. As a child he appeared as a guest performer on a telethon in Nashville, at which Ernest Tubb was presiding. In front of some of the big names in show business, George sang a song he had written, and after the first verse promptly forgot the words!

But with or without the "IV", George Hamilton is someone no one forgets. Modest, sincere and friendly, he remains one of the most popular attractions in the field. When he joined the Opry in 1960, it was fulfillment of a lifetime ambition.



Eyes closed to stress a note, George the fourth performs at microphone.



Sonny James

You'll know him now as Sonny James
But he'd be great with any names . . .

Sonny James didn't wait long to break into the world of music. He was five years old at the time when he debuted in an act with his mother, father and sister. It was at a convention at the Muscle Shoals Hotel in Florence, Alabama.

He sang with his family for a number of years and, as the youngest of the group, was always called Sonny. The astute Ken Nelson of Capitol Records provided the rest of the stage name.

Sonny was born at Hackleburg, Alabama, and got his first job in radio at Florence, Alabama. He learned to play most stringed instruments at an early age, and spent hours-upon-end practicing. In the early days of his career, the rise was disrupted by an 18-month fighting stint in Korea.

And then came "Young Love." This great song which Sonny James made famous won him the coveted Gold Record (it sold well over a million.) He also won the Billboard Triple Crown Award, and several BMI awards for his song-writing. He also holds numerous citations from civic organizations for the work he does to help others.

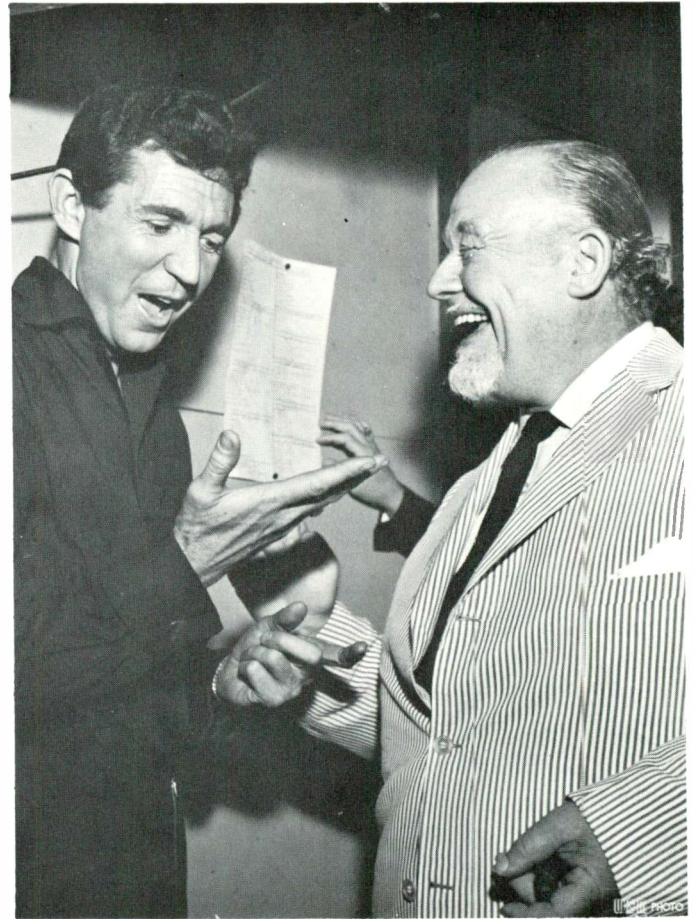
"Young Love," of course, was his biggest. But he has scored repeatedly since that time, and did almost as well with "First Date, First Kiss." His songs (which he wrote) "You're the Only World I Know," and "I'll Keep Holding On," were high on all the charts. Another of the songs he wrote was "Least of All, You." Scores of artists have recorded his tunes.

Sonny and his wife, Doris, live in a Nashville apartment, and the two of them get off to fish as often as possible. That's his idea of recreation on a rare day off.

Little Sonny has come a long way from that first convention in Alabama. Now, everything he records heads for the best-seller list. He joined the Opry in October of 1962.

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The shortest tenure of a performance site for the Grand Ole Opry was WSM's Studio C. From February to July of 1927, the audience was admitted to the Opry in the studio, which had a capacity of only 500. Three color tickets were issued, each admitting a person to one hour of the Opry. Thus, 1,500 were taken care of each Saturday night. From July to October, an additional 500 were allowed to cram into the studio, standing around on all sides. On October 21st, the move was made to the Hillsboro Theater, which had a full-house of 2,400.



A great name in country music talks things over with a great name in folk music: Sonny James and Burl Ives.

Complete names of Grand Ole Opry Stars

Rollin Sullivan (Oscar)
Robert Lester Lord (Bobby Lord)
James Yves Newman (Jimmy Newman)
Norma Jean Beasler (Norma Jean)
Sarah Ophelia Colley Cannon (Minnie Pearl)
Woodward Maurice Ritter (Tex Ritter)
Martin David Robinson (Marty Robbins)
Jean Shepard Hawkins (Jean Shepard)
Constance June Smith (Connie Smith)
Clarence Eugene Snow (Hank Snow)



Jim and Jesse

The legend of Jessie James still rings
When this famous pair now sings . . .

Jim and Jesse McReynolds are brothers who are married to sisters, which makes it a handy arrangement all the way around. Jim is married to the former Arreta June McCoy, while Jesse is married to the former Darlene McCoy.

The McReynolds brothers are Virginia boys, coming from a farm near the town of Coeburn. They took their first step up the entertainment ladder by winning a talent contest, and got their first job in radio at WNVA in Norton, Virginia, not far from home.

In those days they billed themselves as Jesse and James, and people came to the shows expecting to see Jesse James—so they quickly shuffled it around to Jim and Jesse. That's the way it's been ever since.

Not only have these boys long performed together, but they have collaborated on most of the songs they

have written. These tunes include "Flame of Love," "Diesel Train," "Uncle Will Played the Fiddle," "Drifting and Dreaming of You," "Border Ride," "Nobody But You," "The Voice of My Darling," and many others.

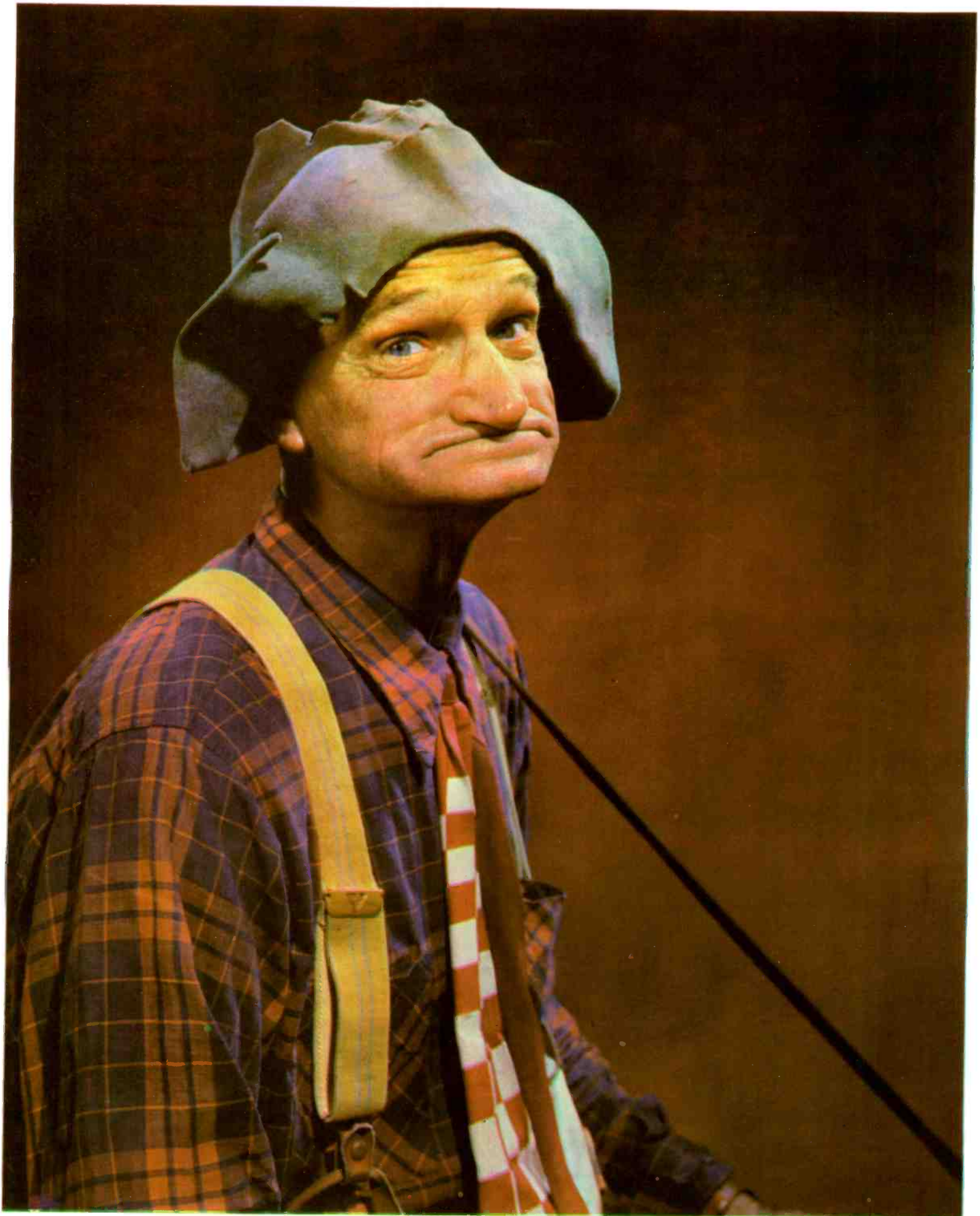
Their biggest hit has been "Cotton Mill Man," with "Better Times A-Coming" ranked second.

Jim and Jesse and their Virginia Boys travel about 100,000 miles a year by bus.

Jim plays the guitar, while Jesse (he's the younger of the two) plays the mandolin, fiddle, guitar and bass. Music comes naturally to them. Their grandfather was a famous fiddler and recorded for Victor many years ago. Jim and Jesse have recorded for Capitol, Columbia and Epic. Jim and Jesse both make their homes in Gallatin, Tennessee.



Opry Manager Ott Devine goes over papers with Ernie Ashworth, and the McReynolds Brothers, Jim and Jesse.



Cousin Jody

You'd swear he had a magic wand
The way he makes guitars respond

Cousin Jody is one of the few stars of the Grand Ole Opry who isn't immediately recognized in his street clothes. This gives him one distinct advantage: he can listen to audience comments about himself assured that they are not spoken for the obvious reason of empty platitudes.

Cousin Jody (who performed for many years as Tex Summey) joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1937 with Roy Acuff. He later became a member of Pee Wee King's old Camel Caravan Band, and once played before an audience of 55,000 at Buffalo, New York.

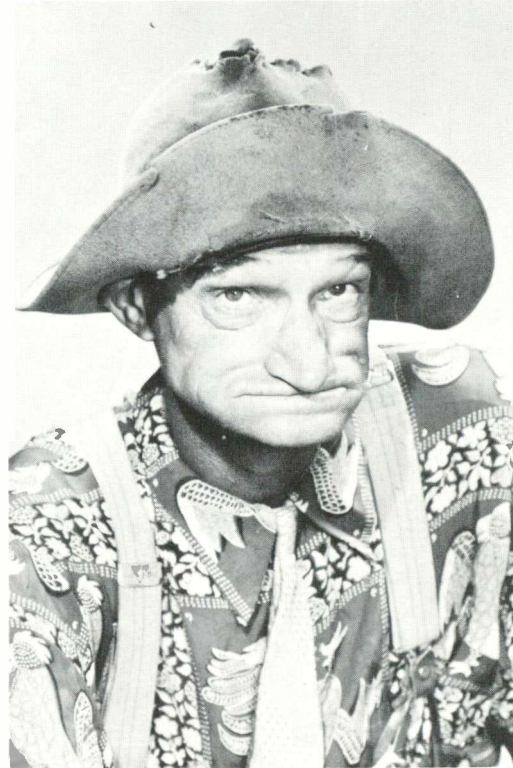
Jody is unusual in many respects, among them the fact that he studied music under a qualified music teacher. He is an expert on the steel guitar, and it takes an outstanding musician to make it respond in his manner. Just as a circus clown must first be qualified to perform all acrobatic functions, a clown on the guitar (and he is the best of them) must be able to play well while drawing laughs.

Married in 1940, Jody and his wife Sarah had their first child, Jodena Claire, after 18 years of marriage. Jodena is Jody's constant companion in those precious hours between show dates.

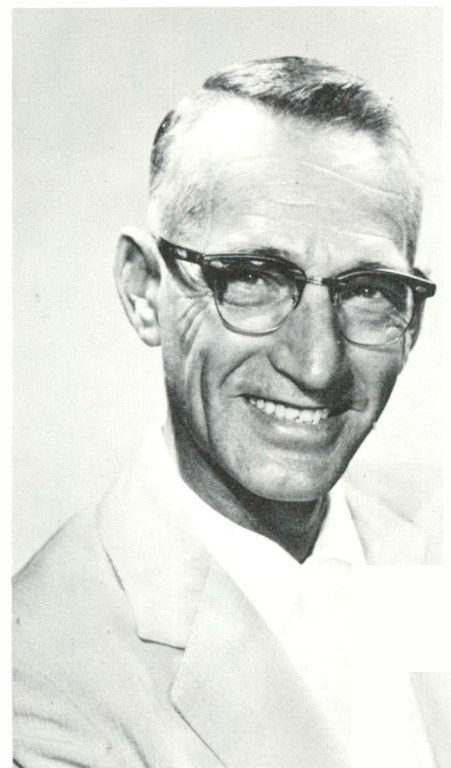
Jody is an East Tennessean, and broke into music as a guest on WNOX in Knoxville. He attributes much of his success to Roy Acuff, who has helped so many along the way.

He has authored many songs, including "Georgiana Waltz," and "Steel Guitar," but his own biggest hit has been "Television Set."

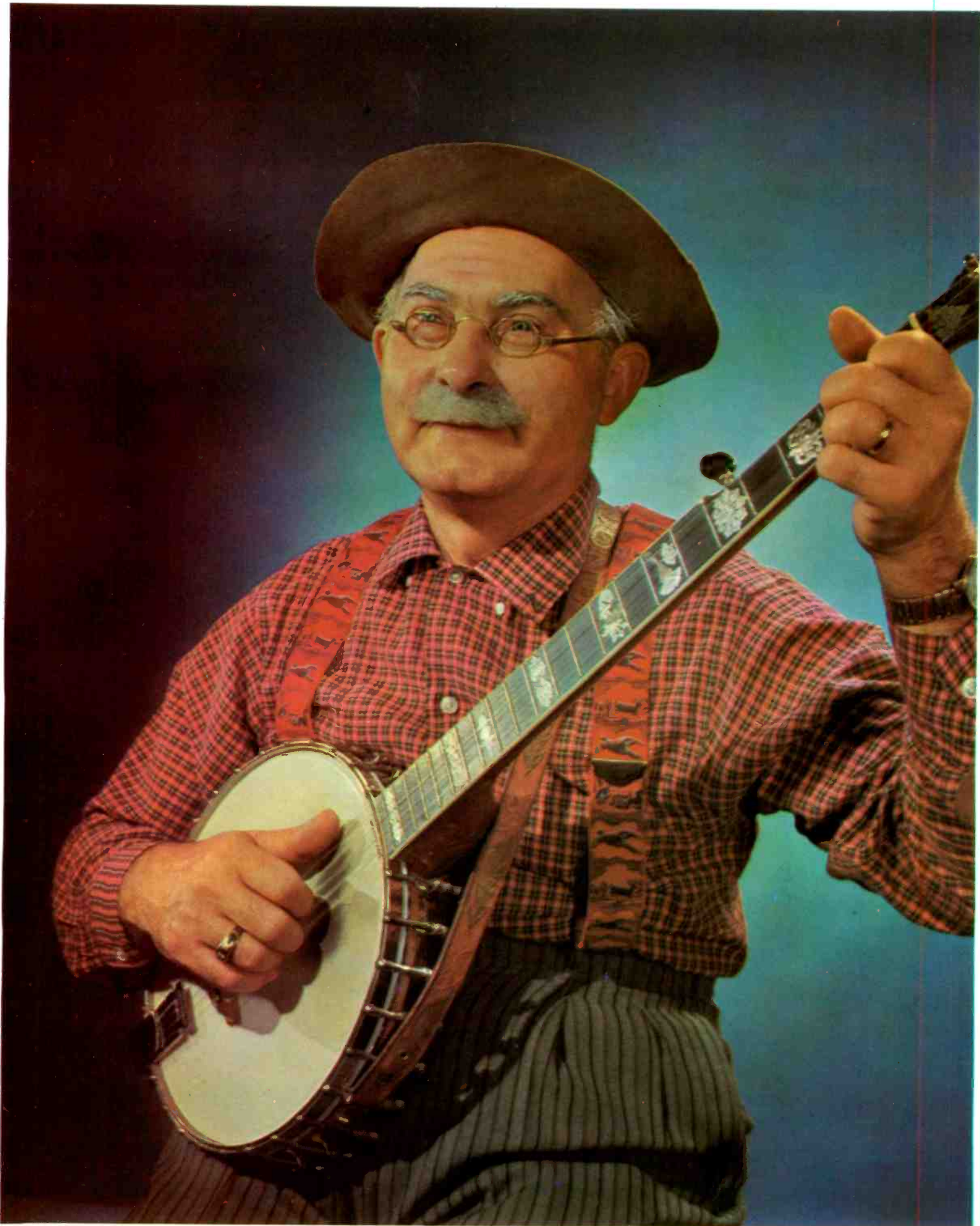
In between personal appearances, recording sessions and song-writing, Jody finds time for woodwork, fishing and hunting. The family lives in a suburban area of Nashville.



Cousin Jody as he appears in character on the Opry.



Cousin Jody as he really looks.



Grandpa Jones

He was younger than he ought to be
When he became "Grandpa" at twenty-three



Without make-up, he's a pretty young "Grandpa."



*Bradley Kincaid, who gave "Grandpa" Jones his name.
It's really Louis.*

It was Bradley Kincaid who gave "Grandpa" Jones his name. He was not then, nor is he now, a "Grandpa," but his style and his old-timey music lend credence to the name.

Grandpa Jones started his professional career inauspiciously, doing a commercial for a dentist in Akron, Ohio. But any money was welcome in those days. He was one of ten children in a farm family at Niagara, Kentucky.

Grandpa later got his start in radio at WJW in Akron. He became a member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1946, one year before his marriage to Ramona, who has made frequent appearances with him over the years.

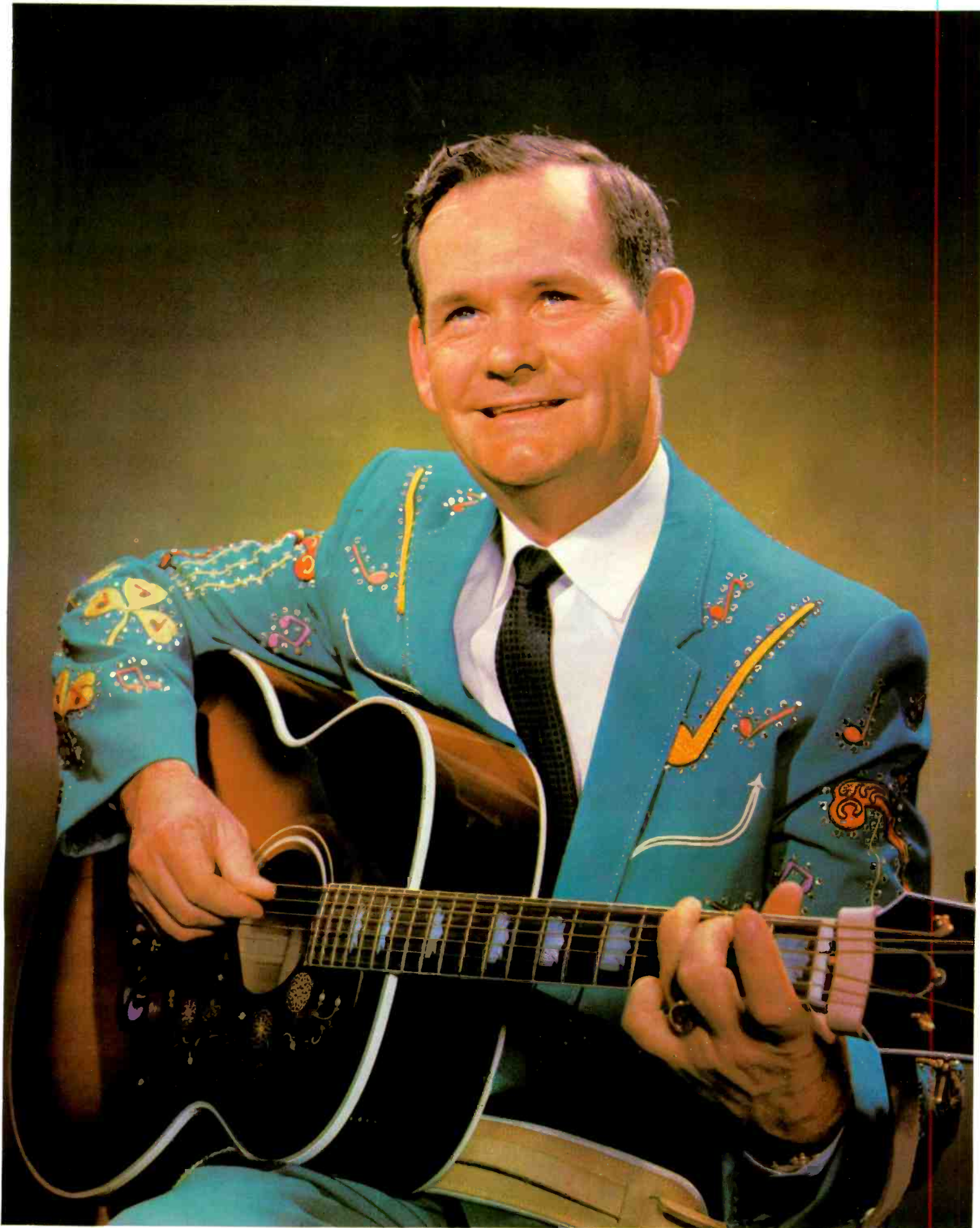
Grandpa, master of the five-string banjo, was taught to play the instrument by his cousin "Emmy," and picked up the guitar by himself.

Grandpa, Ramona, and the three children—Eloise, Mark and Alisa—live on a farm near Ridgetop, Tennessee, within sight of Nashville. He travels in a camper mounted on a three-quarter ton truck.

His father, a farmer, frequently played for dances, and this interested Grandpa in music at an early age. His biggest hit record has been "Old Rattler," with the often-requested "Mountain Dew" second.

Grandpa Jones, by the way, was 23 years old when Bradley Kincaid gave him his name. His first act under that name was billed as "Grandpa Jones and his Grandchildren."

He has written more than 200 songs, and has recorded about 75 of his own. In constant demand for national television appearances, he is one of the outstanding showmen in the business.



Hank Locklin

Not only is this man the mayor
But he's a singer-writer-player

Hank Locklin is probably the only Mayor of McLellan, Florida, who has ever been voted the most popular recording artist of Northern Ireland.

The "Mayor" title, of course, is honorary. But the honor bestowed upon him by the Irish is completely genuine. Already established in popularity in this country, Hank won the hearts of those on the Emerald Isle during a 1965 tour.

Hank had an eventful, though inauspicious early life. After recovering from being run over by a school bus, he got his first job playing a honkey-tonk. For this he was paid \$2.00. It cost him \$5.00 to get there and back.

After breaking into radio in Houston, Texas, however, things went a little better for him. He had taught himself to play chords out of a do-it-yourself book, and parlayed that knowledge into the background for one of the finest singing voices in the business.

Hank is one of the few Opry members who does not make his home in the Nashville area. He and his wife Willa still live on the "Singing L" Ranch at Mc-

Clellan. He flies back and forth for appearances. Their three children (two girls and a boy) are now pretty well grown up.

Along with his list of awards Hank has the Music Vendor Award of Distinction; the Grammy Award; the Cash Box Award; the Music Reporter Hit Award; and a BMI Award.

Behind a good many of these awards was the tune: "Send Me the Pillow You Dream On," which (much later) was rediscovered by the pop field, and recorded by Dean Martin, among others. He also penned "Same Sweet Girl," "Faith and Truth," and many more.

His recording of "Please Help Me I'm Falling," surpassed the sales of his own version of "Send Me the Pillow."

Possessed of a great sense of humor, Hank is always as welcome addition to any show. He joined the Opry in 1960, and his most difficult job is getting back from Europe—particularly Ireland—where he is in constant demand.



Hank Locklin, the pride of Northern Ireland, talks over an album with sales executive and former Opry M-C Louie Buck.



Lonzo & Oscar

They admit their work is corn
But that's how comedy is born

One of the things that has made country music so great is the ability of those involved in it to kid themselves a little. Probably the two greatest "kidders" of all times have been Lonzo and Oscar, in real life the Sullivan brothers.

Actually they were two of seven boys in the Sullivan family, which also had two girls in those days around Cork and Admonton, Kentucky. Most of the family were musically inclined, and both Lonzo and Oscar learned music from older brothers. Their first job in music was in home-town square dances.

The boys got their start in radio at WTJS in Jackson, Tennessee, back in 1939, but the team itself wasn't formed until much later. Actually there had been an earlier "Oscar," but Rollin adopted the name in 1950 when an announcer couldn't remember Rollin. The original names were invented by Eddy Arnold.

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. Their number two hit has been, appropriately, "Moving On Number Two."

Experts at satire and parody, the boys also are good musicians. Lonzo plays the guitar and bass while Oscar handles the mandolin (an almost lost art) and drums.

Johnny and his wife, Mildred, live with their three sons, Danny, Donny and Mike in the Nashville area; while Oscar and his wife, Geneva live nearby. A daughter, Linda Kaye, is now 21. Oscar also is extremely proud of his two grandchildren.

"I'm my own Grandpa," was a million-seller record, even though they learned it only minutes before it was recorded.

In recent months they have found a new outlet, recording scores of commercial jingles, all with the humorous country flavor.



Lonzo and Oscar, sans makeup, with their natural look.



Bobby Lord

He set his goals up rather high
And hit them every time he'd try

Bobby Lord is one of the few top artists in the business who can be seen in many places without doing a lot of traveling. A successful daily television show on WSM has been expanded into a syndicated show in many parts of the nation.

This, along with recording sessions and song-writing, keeps Bobby close to home with his wife, Mozelle, and their youngsters Robert, Jr., Sarah and Cabot.

Bobby Lord is a native of Sanford, Florida, attended the University of Tampa, and wanted to be a doctor. But when he was offered a television show at the age of 19 his thoughts began running in other channels. His first job on radio was a network appearance, so he didn't exactly start at the bottom.

His recording of "Hawkeye" was one of the top in the nation, and "Life Can Have Meaning" outlasted

most other songs on the charts. His awards include a TV program citation for "Best Musical Show."

Bobby has written such tunes as "When the Snow Falls," "Fascination," "Don't Shed Any Tears For Me," "Baby Where Can You Be," etc. He has written many which have not yet been released.

Bobby once played before an audience of 20,000 at the Indiana State Fair. Now his television show plays before millions.

One of the strongest-voiced singers in the business, Bobby also makes frequent appearances on WSM's Waking Crew program, heard each morning.

He's a Kentucky Colonel, and an honorary citizen of Tennessee. His Nashville residence, of course, makes that more than honorary.

Bobby Lord joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1960.



Bobby Lord and recognizable friends backstage.



Charlie Louvin

Success as a single took some provin'
But it was done by Charlie Louvin

In twenty-two years of show-business, Charlie Louvin traveled two million miles. That's a long-way to go from a small farm near Rainesville, Alabama, where Charlie was born.

His first job in music came at a fourth of July celebration in Flat Rock, Alabama, back in 1942. Then the move into radio, at WDEF in Chattanooga, with his late brother, Ira, with whom he performed as a team for many years.

Charlie learned to play the guitar by watching others, and then getting off by himself to practice. His ability to play and sing paid rich dividends. With his brother, he won 18 top song awards, five more BMI awards, and was nominated for a Grammy award. He and Ira wrote more than 400 songs.

Twice Charlie interrupted his career to serve in the military.

Married in 1949, he and his wife, Betty, live with their children: Charlie, Junior; Kenneth and Glenn, near Nashville.

Over the years his greatest song hit has been "I Don't Love You Anymore," but his more recent "See the Big Man Cry" may eventually outrank it.

Charlie is a cousin of John D. Loudermilk, a leading song writer.

In his two million miles of travel, Charlie has run into nearly every conceivable situation—including the time when a booker couldn't afford to pay him for a date, but fitted Charlie and his band out instead in new suits of clothes. The booker was the local tailor.

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Ingenious WSM engineers, early in the history of the Opry, devised a button for George Hay, which allowed him to cut an untalented or "racy" performer off the air without offending him. It was located under a window sill of the studio. The Judge could walk to the window, gaze out, and unobtrusively punch the button. The result, unknown to the performer, was the few minutes of silence.

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On the first day of broadcast, the Shrine band performed on WSM. There were too many to get in the studio, so they played from the roof.



Charlie Louvin, with his late brother, Ira.

Complete names of Grand Ole Opry Stars

David Akeman (Stringbean)
Leroy Frank Van Dyke
Porter Wagoner
Thurman Theodore Wilburn (Teddy Wilburn)
James Ulysses Willis (Guy Willis)
Virgil Doyle Wilburn (Doyle Wilburn)
Charles Willis (Skeeter Willis)
John Victor Willis (Vic Willis)
Polly Adelaide Hendricks Hazelwood (Del Wood)
Mary Ann Ward Wilson (Marion Worth)



Bob Luman

Though roadblocks stymied his career
Now he's moving in high gear . . .

There is nothing more frustrating to an artist than an interruption. When the interruption lasts for two years, it can be fatal to some. To a real pro, however, it is taken in stride.

The interruption in the case of Bob Luman was one familiar to most young men in the nation—the call to colors. He served his time in the army, willingly, despite the fact that the call came just as his career was taking him upward in a hurry.

His recording of "Let's Think About Living," was well up on the charts. Two years out of circulation forced him to begin again, and—following his discharge—Bob signed with Hickory and Acuff-Rose.

True to the adage that a good man can't be kept down, Bob started upward again in a hurry. His recordings of "Interstate 40," "You Can't Take the Boy from the Country," and others re-established him as a star, and in 1965 he became a member of the Grand Ole Opry.

Bob Luman had followed a familiar route toward the goal he set the first time around. After winning a talent contest at Tyler, Texas, shortly after finishing high school there, he joined the Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport. In a short period of time he was doing a television show, and things were looking up. Then came the notice, and the army stint, and the re-start.

His recording of "Go on Home, Boy," was one which made virtually every chart, and he followed that with even greater successes. He made several guest appearances on the Opry before becoming a regular member.

Early in 1965 his recording of "Five Miles From Home" began moving up the charts, and showed promise of outselling all his others.

Bob is particularly popular with the young set . . . but his fame has grown over the years to include following among people of all ages.

Bob Luman once signed for a short run of a show at Las Vegas, and stayed on for many months. That's the sort of performer he is. Once he's heard, he's in great demand. Once he's seen, people keep coming back.



In a style all his own, Bob Luman performs to a packed house.

When the Department of Navigation first granted WSM its license to operate, it stated that it could function on any frequency between 1500 and 500 kilocycles. Often it would vary from day to day. Listeners had no trouble finding it, however, since—with so few stations operating—there was little else on the dial. It hardly mattered; radios in those days seldom had frequency calibrations.

When the early crowds began coming en masse to the Opry broadcasts, WSM installed loud speakers on two corners of the National Life Building for those who couldn't get inside. Some of the earliest visitors traveled as far as 50 miles, which was an accomplishment in those days. Many came early and brought their lunches. The fifth employee hired by WSM, consequently, was a janitor.



Loretta Lynn

She sought to be a great home-maker
But she became a record-breaker

In the world of entertainment, descriptive adjectives are commonplace. But when someone prefaced Loretta Lynn's name with the word "lovely," it was never more suited.

Lovely Loretta (as she is almost always introduced) is a real country girl from Van Lear, Kentucky. As a child she wanted no more than to grow up to be a good mother, and to cook and to sew. She does all that for her six children (and now one tiny grandchild), but in between meals she goes out and sings for their supper. And how she sings!

Her start in the business came a long way from home, with a group called The Westerners at Bellingham, Washington. In a few years she was appearing at the huge Hollywood Bowl. In between she won such honors as Most Promising Singer, Number One Singer, Most programmed singer, and scores of fan club awards.

Loretta got her first big boost from the Wilburn Brothers, and she also gives much credit to her husband, Mooney.

The most difficult part of her job is being away from the youngsters: Betty, Jack, Ernest, Clara, Patsy and Peggy.

Somehow in her busy life of travel (150,000 miles a year) and keeping house she has found time to write such tunes as "World of Forgotten People," "Haunted House," "Hundred Proof Heart Ache," "Honkey Tonk Girl," and dozens of others.

Her own recording of "Happy Birthday," shot right to the top of the charts, and is listed as her greatest record. "Blue Kentucky Girl" is close behind.

Loretta now operates her own annual rodeo on a farm just outside Nashville (in her spare time), and it's of championship caliber.



Loretta and husband, Mooney, with the twins shortly after birth.



Loretta receives the top vocal award from Bob Austin of Record World.



Bill Monroe

The bluegrass style that he first set
Has never been approached as yet.

There was a time, some years back, when Bill Monroe spent his spare time running a baseball team . . . a club coached by "Stringbean." On top of the bus in which the team traveled were the words: "Blue Grass Special."

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 Vanderver, who taught him the mandolin. Bluegrass music became a way of life with him, and he later was to wear the title: King of Bluegrass Music.

In 1927, Bill Monroe and two of his brothers (Charley 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 own Bluegrass style. A year later he joined the Grand Ole Opry.

In the type of music employed by Bill, the mandolin or five-string banjo always plays the lead, with the fiddle playing harmony. He is credited with inventing the name "Bluegrass" in regard to music, relating to his native state.

Bill Monroe, 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. Later his first record "What Would You Give in Exchange For Your Soul" was a hit. His first song on the Opry was "Mule Skinner Blues," and was his biggest. "Blue Moon of Kentucky," which came later, also was a best-seller. Among the many songs that Bill has written are: "Blue Grass Breakdown," "Along About Daybreak," "I Hear a Sweet Voice Calling," and many more.

Over the years, Bill Monroe's records have sold over 25,000,000 copies. Few can match this.



This one goes way back. Bill Monroe and the earliest of his Blue Grass boys.



George Morgan

Here's a man who seldom misses . . .
When he's tossing Candy Kisses . . .

George Morgan started life less than one hundred miles from the Grand Ole Opry, but had to move to Ohio to get his musical career under way.

Born on what now are the banks of Kentucky Lake at Waverly, Tennessee, his family migrated northward, and George spent most of his early days dreaming of becoming a baseball announcer. He spent his carefree hours playing baseball, hunting and fishing.

By "sheer determination," George also taught himself to play the guitar and the harmonica. The voice came naturally. He put them to good advantage at a New Year's eve party at an Ohio restaurant many years ago, and was rewarded by the grand sum of five-dollars. Shortly after that he went to work at WWST in Wooster, Ohio, and began the climb which would bring him back to Tennessee, and to the Grand Ole Opry.

It's a pretty well known story now that George couldn't find the Opry House (then the Ryman Auditorium) when the big night came in September of 1948.

He asked directions, and was told he was standing right behind it. The man who supplied the information was a pretty fair country singer named Eddie Arnold.

George never had trouble finding it again, nor did he ever slow down in his ascent to stardom. When he wrote and recorded "Candy Kisses," he had no idea, of course, that it would become something of an immortal. But it did. His second biggest hit was "Almost." It was fitting that George and his wife, Anna, named their first daughter Candy Kay. She came along shortly after that first big hit. Other members of the Morgan household are Bethany Bell, Lian Lee, Matthew, Martin, and Loretta Lynn. The Morgans were married in 1949 at Doylestown, Ohio.

By plane and auto, George covers some 90,000 miles a year. On a day off, he pretty much takes life easy. A man of many talents and many friends, George is possessed of a great sense of humor. He is one of the most likeable personalities in the music industry.



George Morgan obliges autograph seekers at the Opry warm-up session.



Willie Nelson

The hits he's written are unique
He turns out two or three a week . . .

One of the distinctive differences in the "pop" and the country field of music lies in the fact that the country artists double in brass: many of them write as well as they sing. Willie Nelson is an excellent case in point.

Unquestionably one of the greatest song writers in the field, Willie also stands above the crowd as an entertainer and recording artist.

A native of the small town of Abbott, Texas, Willie was the grandson of the village blacksmith. This same grandfather also sang folk songs in the evening, and this is where Willie acquired his early love for music. With this background, it is not surprising that the first song he wrote was titled "Family Bible." Nor is it too surprising to those familiar with the ways of the struggles of music that he sold that first song for just \$50.00.

Along with those early struggles came experience, and greater technology, to go with his natural feeling for music. When he began recording (for Liberty), he

wrote his own tunes—"Wake Me When It's Over," "There'll Be No Teardrops Tonight," "Am I Blue," and many others. He wrote and recorded one for Monument titled "I Never Cared For You."

Then Willie signed with RCA, and the hits began pouring out. He wrote songs for himself and for others: "Hello Walls" (Faron Young), "Crazy" (Patsy Cline), "Funny How Time Slips Away," "Pretty Baby," "Congratulations," "Touch Me," "Mr. Record Man," "Last Letter," "Things I Might Have Been," "Darkness on the Face of the Earth," etc.

Two of his biggest albums were titled "And Then I Wrote . . ." and "Here's Willie Nelson."

He has won virtually every writing award in the book, and a large number of honors for singing.

Willie and his wife Shirley make their home at Ridgetop, near Goodlettsville, Tennessee.

He became a member of the Grand Ole Opry November 28, 1964.



The attractive ladies who keep the records just off-stage enjoy a lighter moment with Willie Nelson. They are June Johnson and Lorene Connor.



Jimmy Newman

Jimmy used to run and romp
Down in an alligator swamp



What he's saying is "A-eee." It's the Cajun call which has given new identity to Jimmy Newman.

When Jimmy Newman sings of the bayou country, he knows whereof he sings. He was born at High Point, Louisiana, near Big Mamou—right in the heart of the Cajun land. And he grew up wanting to be a cowboy.

Jimmy's first job in music was at Big Mamou, back in September of 1946. Just a youngster at the time, he got his first real break through Dot Records, which took him to the *Louisiana Hayride* in 1954. Two years later he was a regular member of the Grand Ole Opry.

Jimmy and his wife, Mae, were married in 1948 at Ville Platte, Louisiana, still in Cajun country, and they have one son, Gary.

Jimmy's most popular record, of course, has been "A Fallen Star," which skyrocketed to the top of all the charts. And his second biggest hit has been one called "Artificial Rose."

Jimmy is a man with a wealth of Cajun stories, but didn't start adding them to his act until a few years ago. He said he just had the urge to tell them, just as he had the urge several years ago to take up music as a career. Fortunately, Jimmy has followed many of his urges.

In addition to the many honors heaped-upon him for "Fallen Star," Jimmy has won an award as co-author of "Cry, Cry Darlin'." And he notes that he is a Colonel on the staff of Louisiana Governor Jimmy Davis. He has written scores of songs, and records many of his own.

All Grand Ole Opry artists may be reached by writing to them in care of WSM, Nashville.

The call letters of WSM are a symbol of "We Shield Millions," the slogan of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, the parent firm of the station.

The first recordings done in Nashville were engineered by WSM technicians, composed by WSM personnel, and recorded by WSM artists.



Norma Jean

Her rise to fame became much shorter
When she was helped along by Porter

Norma Jean has always been a believer in simplicity. She chose to use only her given name because the full name was (she felt) too long for people to remember. But Norma Jean is one of those persons who is hard to forget.

This very beautiful girl was born in Wellston, Oklahoma, one of a family of three children, and began playing the guitar at square dances when she was only 12 years old. Even when playing, she wanted to be a singer.

Norma Jean got her first real chance on a 15 minute show at station KLPR in Oklahoma City. But it was Porter Wagoner who gave her that first real break, and her regular appearance on his syndicated television show led to her becoming a featured act on the Grand Ole Opry in 1965.

Norma Jean spends what little spare time she has with her young daughter, Roma Lynn. But traveling some 90,000 miles a year for personal appearances leaves little time.

Her recording sessions have been rewarding. Her biggest record, "Let's Go All the Way," did go all the way—right up to the top of the charts. And her second hit "I Wouldn't Buy A Used Car From Him," did almost as well.

In between her square dance job in Oklahoma and her arrival at the Grand Ole Opry, Norma Jean made personal appearances with a number of established artists, and eventually a spot on the "Ozark Jubilee" in 1958. Two years later she joined Porter on his filmed TV show, and was an instant success.

Norma Jean changed to the RCA-Victor label in 1963, and began her career of hit-making.



Norma Jean, a vision of beauty, adds warmth to the Porter Wagoner TV show.



Osborne Brothers

One sports a beard; the other shaves
Think of the time that Sonny saves

In the early 1960's Bluegrass music became the most popular form of entertainment on college campuses across the nation. It was the Osborne brothers who pioneered this move, playing the first campus date at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, in 1959.

Another first belongs to Sonny. He published the first book dealing exclusively with playing the five-string banjo Bluegrass style. This is quite an accomplishment, in that both Sonny and Bobby were self-taught. While Sonny learned the banjo, Bobby learned the mandolin and guitar.

Both boys were born at Hyden, Kentucky (Bobby is the older), but the family moved to Ohio and it was there—at WPFB in Middletown—that the boys got their start in music.

They joined the Grand Ole Opry in July of 1964, and that same year played before 18,500 at the Newport

Folk Festival. Six years earlier they had been named the nation's "most promising vocal group." They certainly fulfilled the promise.

The Osborne brothers moved to the Nashville area in 1965, and their families live in the same block at Hendersonville, Tennessee. Sonny and his wife, Judy, have a son, Steve, and a daughter, Karen. Bobby and his wife, Patsy, have a son Robby, and a daughter, Wynn.

The biggest record of the Osborne brothers has been "Ruby, Are You Mad?", followed by such favorites as "Take This Hammer" (which they wrote together), "This Heart of Mine," (which Bobby wrote) and "Once More," (which neither of them wrote). In addition to writing many songs, Sonny also is noted for his unique arrangements of old standards.



Sonny Osborne gestures a point as brother Bobby, and Opry Manager Ott Devine, listen with satisfaction.



Tex Ritter

His talents now scan many years
And also many great careers

There really weren't many things Tex Ritter hadn't done before he joined Grant Turner as co-host on WSM's Opry Star Spotlight, just nine days after becoming a regular member of the Grand Ole Opry.

He had roped and ridden on a Texas Ranch, and he had "cut 'em off at the pass" in scores of Hollywood movies. He had studied law at the University of Texas and at Northwestern, and had appeared on the New York stage. He had done network television, and had made personal appearances all over the world. He had done early radio dramatic shows, and had sung an Academy Award song. He had married one of his beautiful leading ladies, had become part owner of a successful music firm, and had studied enough to be labeled an authority on the southwest and a collector of American and Western folk ballads.

Tex Ritter had also turned out one hit record after another (he was among the first of the Capitol artists), and served two terms as President of the Country Music Association.

But he had never disc-jockeyed, and had never been a regular member of the Grand Ole Opry, although he had made frequent guest appearances.

Tex, a native of Murvaul, in Panola County, Texas, starred in 78 movies in a 12-year Hollywood career. He appeared on such network TV shows as "The Rebel," "Shotgun Slade," and the "Zane Gray Theater." Early in his career he appeared on the New York Stage in "Green Grow the Lilacs," which later became the successful musical "Oklahoma."

His best selling records include "High Noon," "Boll Weevil," "Wayward Wind" and "Hillbilly Heaven."

Tex has won most of the awards in the music profession, and was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame.

A long-time West Coast partner of Johnny Bond, Tex moved to Nashville, where his family will join him upon graduation of his teen-age sons.



The familiar chuckle, the friendly voice, the country philosophy all come through when Tex Ritter speaks on the WSM microphone.



Marty Robbins

On stage or in a racing car
He is everybody's star . . .



Put Marty Robbins behind the rig of a big tractor, and he's right at home, excavating or plowing. Put him in the cockpit of a racing car, and he'll wheel around the track with a heavy foot, giving no quarter to other drivers. Put Marty in a recording studio, and he'll turn out a "golden" record or album. Put him on a personal appearance and he'll fill the house. And put him on stage at the Grand Ole Opry where he is really at home, and the audience screams for more.

This, then, is Marty Robbins—who lives hard and fast, and yet is completely moderate in his habits (he is a non-smoker, non-drinker who takes the proper exercise and diet), and who doubtless is one of the most talented artists to come along in this generation.

Marty was born at Glendale, Arizona, in the shadow of Phoenix, and spent his early life farming and ranching in the arid soil of that sunny state. Later he did a stint in the Navy, and only after his discharge did he really become interested in music as a career. While playing radio stations in the desert land, he formed his own band, and finally started his climb toward the top. He joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1953.

Four years later he was the "Most Programmed Country and Western Artist," and the "Favorite Country and Western Male Artist." His first big hit: "Singing the Blues," was at the top of every chart. He continued to write and to record, and scored repeatedly with such hits at "El Paso," "Devil Woman," "White Sport Coat and a Pink Carnation," "Don't Worry," and many more. Year after year, he walked off with awards, with hits, and with praise. In 1965 he received from Columbia Records the "Gold Record" award for his top-selling album of "Gunfighter Ballads."

Marty owns two music publishing companies, and has involvements in other business affairs. He and his wife, Marizona, live with their two children in Nashville.

The Sound of Robbins. The incomparable Marty performs late in the night at the Grand Ole Opry.



Jean Shepard

The Valley of the Sun Juaquin
Is often visited by Jean . . .

Jean Shepard is every inch a trouper, in the old-fashioned sense of the word. When she resumed her career following the death of her husband, Hawkshaw Hawkins, she chose to do it on the stage where she and "Hawk" had been married four years earlier in Wichita, Kansas. Their second son, Harold Franklin Hawkins II, was born just a month after the tragic plane crash.

Jean is not the type to feel sorry for herself. She had so much talent, and so much to give to others, that she pulled the strings together and performed better than ever. She has continued to outdo herself ever since.

A native of Paul's Valley, Oklahoma, Jean lived there until the age of 11 when she and her family moved to Visalia, in the San Juaquin Valley of California. In high school, she started her own all-girl western band, appearing as the "Melody Ranch Girls." During

one of their tours she was heard by Hank Thompson, who was instrumental in getting her a recording contract with Capitol Records.

Her first two recordings were successful, but the third one really sent her on her way. It was "A Dear John Letter," which she cut with Ferlin Husky. From there she went to the Ozark Jubilee, and in 1955 she joined the Grand Ole Opry. Her next big hit was "Satisfied Mind."

Jean is an expert horsewoman, and is proficient at training bird dogs. She maintains a home in the Nashville area, and a farm at Columbia, Tennessee, some 40 miles to the South. She still owns show horses.

In 1953, Jean was voted the "Most Promising Female Country Music Singer," the first of many awards that were to come her way.

Jean's older son, Don Robbin, was named after friends Don Gibson and Marty Robbins.



Jean Shepard, with son Don Robbin, and close friend Hank Locklin.



Connie Smith

Connie had her finest hour
When she used her vocal power

Adversity sometimes leads to better things. Such was the case with Connie Smith, one of the most dynamic vocalists to come along in many years.

One of 14 children growing up at Elkhart, Indiana, Connie had certain chores to perform around the home. While mowing the lawn, a rock flew from under the mower and severely cut her leg. It was during her mending period in the hospital that she taught herself to play the guitar, and she made up her mind then that music was to be her cup of tea.

She began, typically, entertaining at square dances, picnics and similar outings. Invariably there is someone in an audience who recognizes talent and potential, and in short order she was doing radio and television spots.

It's also typical of Grand Ole Opry stars to help others with natural ability, and Bill Anderson heard her perform at a park near Columbus, Ohio. Impressed, he asked her to come to Nashville to audition tapes for new songs he had written. From there on it was like a chain reaction. RCA's Chet Atkins heard Connie sing on the tapes, signed her to a recording contract, and she was off and running, scoring with Bill Anderson songs. Her first release was the great hit, "Once a Day." She followed this quickly with others equally as successful.

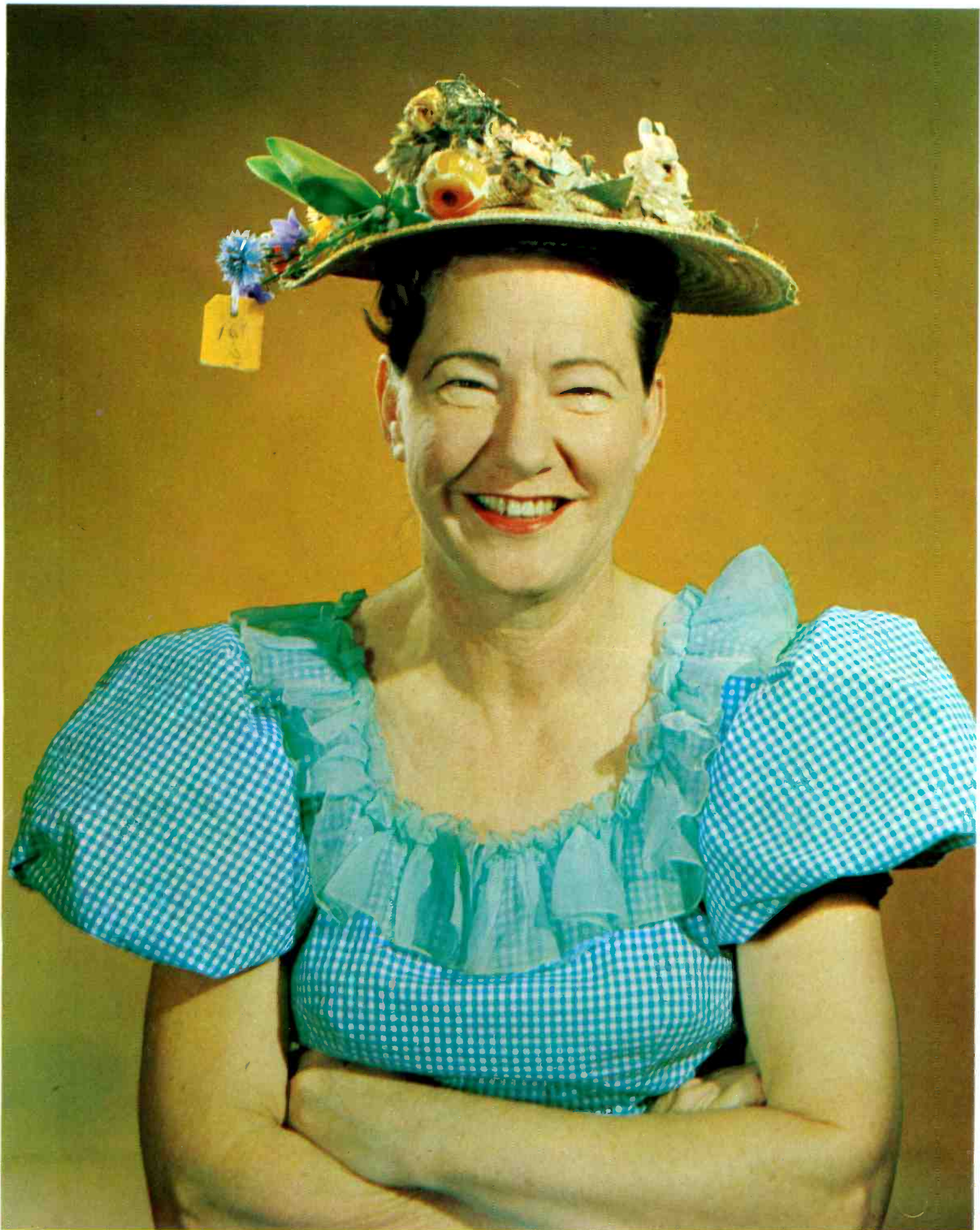
The sudden leap to stardom brought Connie to the Grand Ole Opry, and she became a member in 1965.

A small girl, just over five-feet tall and weighing less than 100 pounds, she is a devoted wife and mother. She and her husband, Jerry, and little Derren Justin Smith (born in 1963) live in Hendersonville, near Nashville.

In 1965, Connie swept most of the trade press awards, and gave every indication of even bigger and better things in the future.

Connie Smith looks over an award, and smiles with pleasure.





Minnie Pearl

She gave the teaching life a whirl
And then developed "Minnie Pearl."

It's a long way from a small-town life near Grinder's Switch to becoming Nashville's outstanding woman, but Minnie Pearl made this transition with the determination that has brought the best of her talents before the public for many years. During those years she won her way into the hearts of America through her humorous portrayal of the witty man-chasing gal from the backwoods.

Minnie was born Sarah Ophelia Colley near Grinder's Switch (actually a switching station for the railroad) outside Centerville, Tennessee. She grew up there through a happy and uncomplicated childhood, the youngest of a large family.

At a very early age, she began performing and showing off in local functions, resolving one day to go onto the stage. After high school her father, a successful lumberman, sent her to the fashionable girl's school of the day, Ward-Belmont College, in Nashville. After graduation she was to utilize her training, first as a teacher in Centerville and later traveling for the Wayne P. Sewall Producing Company throughout rural areas as a director of amateur plays. In this capacity she would organize local talent, either in a small town or in a consolidated school, and produce a musical comedy, sponsored by a local organization.

It was during these years that she became interested in country girls, their dreams and their disappointments, and thus gradually created a composite of all these girls and named her "Minnie Pearl."

Little by little, she picked up bits of wit and humor and began incorporating them into the character of Minnie Pearl, which she presented in her debut on the Grand Ole Opry in November of 1940. Her personal appearances then carried her from coast-to-coast and overseas. She appeared on scores of national television shows. In 1957 she was the subject of Ralph Edwards' "This is Your Life."

Minnie is married to Henry R. Cannon, her business manager and pilot, who flies her to personal appearances. Always active in civic, church and social work, Minnie in 1965 was named Nashville's "Woman of the Year." It was one of the few times in the life of Minnie Pearl that nobody laughed.

Another of these times occurred early in 1966 when Minnie, called to the Starday Studios to record, was handed a "serious" song. It was Tommy Hill's "Answer To Giddy-Up-Go," a tear-jerker which showed the other side of Minnie Pearl.

Minnie's songs in the past have always been of a comic nature, and she admits that she was extremely nervous when she cut this one.

She also is the author of a couple of books about her early life, and they are loaded with wit.

Minnie and Henry have a constant traveling companion—a poodle—which has logged perhaps as many flying hours as most private pilots.



The most imitated of all artists, Minnie Pearl.

WSM Musical directors have been famous for penning hit tunes. Among them, Francis Craig wrote such standards as "Near You," and "Beg Your Pardon." Beasley Smith wrote such tunes as "Old Master Painter from the Faraway Hills," and "Lucky Old Sun." Owen Bradley and Marvin Hughes also wrote hit songs.



Hank Snow

Early days of toil and strife
Led him to a better life . . .

Hank Snow could get applause from any audience just by mentioning the fact that he was born in Brooklyn. The Brooklyn in this case, however, is in Queens County, Nova Scotia . . . making Hank the only non-USA born member of the Opry cast.

Hank doesn't need the Brooklyn recognition to get applause. People naturally react that way when he walks on stage. Life was not always rosy for the "Singing Ranger."

Hank shipped off to sea as a cabin boy at the age of 12. When he returned home, his mother bought him a cheap guitar and a mail-order guitar course. His boyhood idol was Jimmie Rodgers, and he listened to Jimmie Rodgers records between jobs working on the fish docks, in fish plants, and in horse stables.

He got his first job in music at radio station CHNS in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Life was still a struggle for many years, and then RCA Victor signed him to a recording contract. That was in 1936. It was 14 years la-

ter when he joined the Grand Ole Opry, and he worked scores of jobs in between. He still was not very well known across the United States until he recorded "I'm Movin' On," a song he had written in Canada several years earlier. That recording stayed in the number one spot on the charts for 49 consecutive weeks. In 1951, Hank was named America's Favorite Folk Singer. Since then he has won virtually every award in the country music field, including the RCA Gold record for outstanding achievement.

He and his wife, Minnie (married in 1935) have one son, Jimmy Rodgers Snow now a minister.

Hank has written some 150 songs, including "I'm Movin' On," "Rhumba Boogie," "Bluebird Island," "The Golden Rocket," and others. His second biggest tune was "I Don't Hurt Anymore," recorded in 1955. It was the most programmed record of the year.

In addition to his other activities, Hank owns a Music Center in downtown Nashville, and has his own recording studio at his home in Madison.



Hank Snow in his den at Rainbow Ranch.



Stringbean

His famous phrase to the contrary
This fellow is quite necessary . . .

In the spring of 1965, an overflow crowd of students stood on their feet and cheered as "Stringbean" played his five-string banjo at the University of Chicago. He had scored with the college crowd, just as he has scored with Grand Ole Opry audiences since 1942.

At that time he was one of Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys. And not many years before that he had gotten his start in music playing for a Kentucky politician. "String" was still a young man when he got his first job in radio at Lexington, Kentucky, in 1935.

It wasn't long after that when he adopted his permanent nickname. It all came about because an announcer forgot his real name (David Akeman), looked at the lanky performer, and called him "Stringbean." It's been that way ever since.

Born in Anneville, Kentucky, "String" spent his early life dreaming of becoming a baseball player. But,

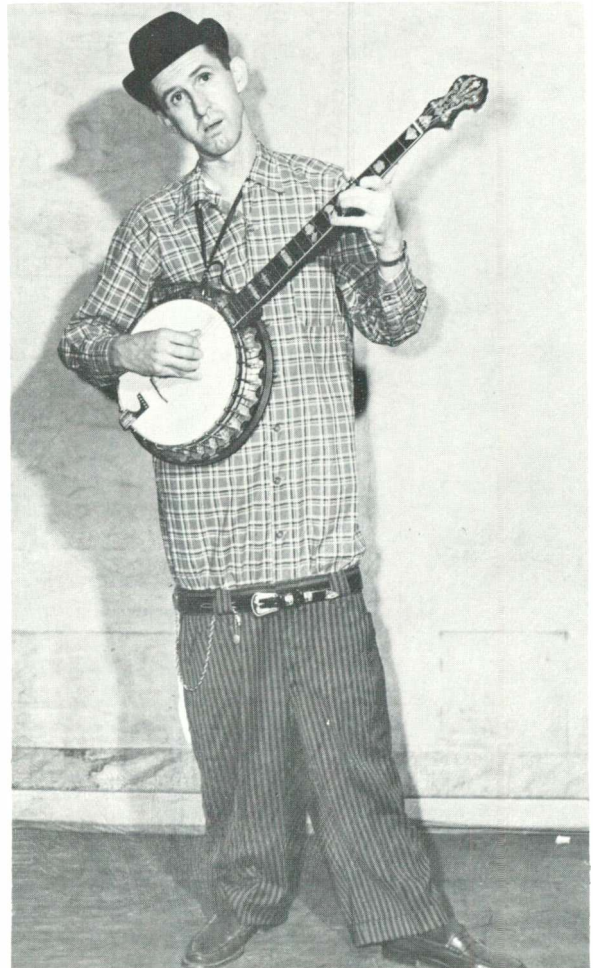
after he and a friend made his first banjo, it was a life of music, interspersed with fishing. For three years Dave toured with Lou Childre as part of a comedy team. And it was Uncle Dave Macon who gave him a great deal of encouragement and help.

"Stringbean" has won scores of honors over the years. His biggest record (on Starday) has been "Barnyard Banjo Picking," which he just happened to write himself. Another big one for him was "Twenty Cent Cotton." Other compositions of his include "String and his Banjo," "Wake Up Little Betty," and "String's Fishing."

Dave and his wife, Estelle, live on a farm near Goodlettsville, Tennessee, just a few miles out of Nashville.



Stringbean in one of his original costumes.



Stringbean in a later costume.



Ernest Tubb

The singing brakeman led the way
To where this fellow is today . . .

Ernest Tubb credits much of his success to the late Mrs. Jimmie Rodgers. There are, perhaps, dozens of artists who attribute their success to Ernest Tubb. That's the sort of man he is.

Ernest is truly a Texas Troubadour. Born in the town of Crisp, in Ellis County, Texas, Ernest wanted to be a Western movie star (he later played this role in more than one movie). But when he heard his first recording of a Jimmy Rodgers tune, he knew he wanted to sing.

Ernest started his career playing (not singing) at a drive-in-stand, and later migrated to KONO in San Antonio, Texas. He taught himself guitar from an instruction book.

Ernest Tubb has won many awards, but perhaps one sums up the situation entirely. He was named the "All Time Great" of country music. The fact that he has recorded for one major label (Decca) for more than 25 years bears this out. He also has been a continuous member of the Grand Ole Opry since January of 1943 . . . shortly after he recorded his now-immortal "Walking the Floor Over You." "Rainbow at Midnight" is one of perhaps dozens of others that have been best sellers over the years. And Ernest has composed more than 100 songs.

He and his wife, Olene, live in Nashville with the five youngsters still at home—Erlene, Gayle, Ernest, Jr., Larry Dean and Karen. Ernest has two others—Justin and Elaine.

He still travels 100,000 miles a year in his own bus, and owns the Ernest Tubb Record Shop just a half-block from the Grand Ole Opry House.

In addition to his many single hits, he also has fared well with albums, and ranks near the top of Decca's greatest recording artists over the years.

The name Ernest Tubb is synonymous with success . . . his, and that of many others.

—0—

In 1965, Ernest Tubb was named to the Country Music Association "Hall of Fame."



Ernest Tubb with a portion of his family.



LeRoy Van Dyke

The golden, deep tones you are hearing
Come from sophisticated auctioneering . . .

When looking for a word to describe LeRoy Van Dyke's style of singing country music, someone hit upon the adjective "sophisticated." Most would agree this describes it very well.

LeRoy comes from a rather distinguished family: one brother is an electrical engineer, another an obstetrician; one sister is a nurse, the other a school teacher. And LeRoy is a graduate of the University of Missouri, with degrees in animal husbandry and journalism. He also has done post-graduate work in journalism.

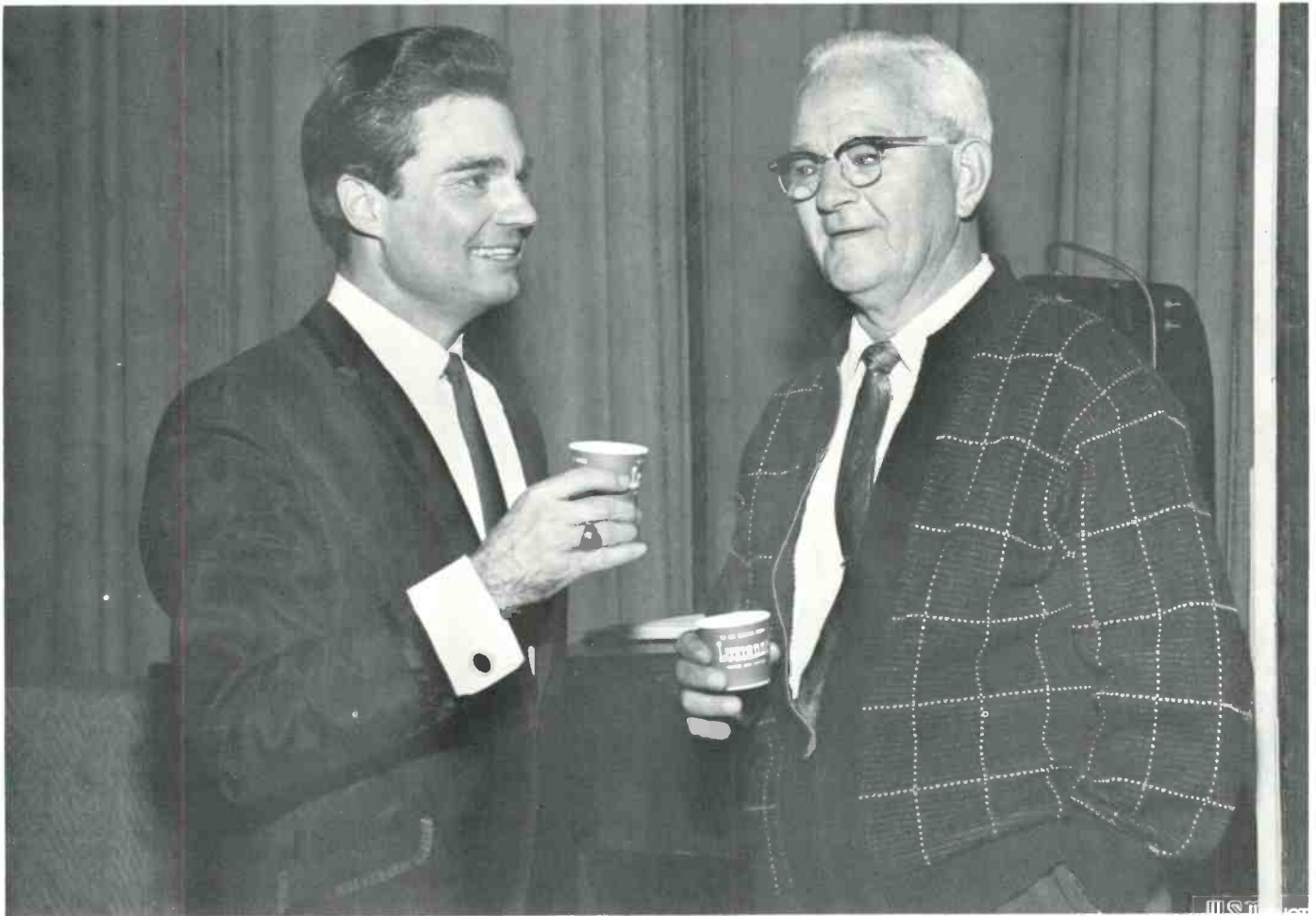
As a youngster, LeRoy aspired to be an auctioneer, which led him to write his now-famous record: "Auctioneer." A native of Missouri (Spring Fork), he got his first professional job with the Ozark Jubilee in Springfield, and quickly rose to the Grand Ole Opry, becoming a member in 1962.

LeRoy doubtless has opened new doors to country music. His road company is the only staged and produced show in the business, and he plays the leading supper clubs as well as the traditional country music showcases. He has a manager in Nashville and a publicity agent on the West Coast.

In these few short years, LeRoy Van Dyke has received the Grammy Award for "Walk On By," has been cited by Music Reporter and Music Vendor for "Record of the Year," and won a Silver Record for sales in England.

LeRoy perfected his guitar playing while serving in Korea, and this time to himself has been invaluable. He now travels some 120,000 miles a year (with virtually no time off) by station wagon and plane.

LeRoy and his wife Sue live with their son, Lee Frank, in Nashville.



LeRoy Van Dyke sips a sponsor product backstage and talks things over with George Cooper, President of the Nashville Musician's Union local.



Porter Wagoner

On the stage or on the air-way
Everything is still his fair-way

As an entertainer, Porter Wagoner is well over par. As a golfer, he frequently is well under par. If he should ever foresake the country music circuit and start touring the links, he probably would be as good as the best of them. Fortunately for fans of the Grand Ole Opry, he has no such plans.

Porter showed no early golf inclinations. Neither time nor money allowed such diversities. Instead, he worked as a parttime butcher and clerk in a store in his hometown of West Plains, Missouri, where he, his two brothers and sisters fished and swam during those recreation hours.

His parents were farmers, and there just wasn't money to spare. But he sang at an early age, and always wanted to be a singer. Once, when working on the farm, he told a friend that someday he would be on the Opry. His first step up the path in that direction was at station KWPM in West Plains. By this time he had taught himself to play the guitar.

From there Porter moved to KWTO in Springfield, Missouri, and then became part of the Ozark Jubilee. In 1957, his prophecy came true when he became a part of the Grand Ole Opry.

Porter modestly lists his awards as "various," but they encompass virtually all of the top ones, both for singing and for writing.

His biggest hit, of course, was "Satisfied Mind." His second greatest, which came many years later, was "Green, Green Grass of Home." In between he had scores of big ones.

Among the songs he has written are: "Trademark," "Look What Followed Me Home Tonight," and "Be Glad You Ain't Me."

The 90,000 miles Porter travels each year include occasional stops at golf courses. When he's not on stage, you'll find him on a fairway.



Porter Wagoner in a pensive mood with Tom Hanserd, manager of the Delayed Opry network.



Billy Walker

Here is one man who delivers
When he crosses all those rivers . . .

When Billy Walker sang of the Brazos River and Matamoros, he was singing of places close to home. A native of Ralls, in Crosby County, Texas, Billy even has the tall, lean look of a Texan, which he retained through his growing-up days at Clovis, New Mexico.

As a youngster, Billy alternately raced ranch horses, searched for arrowheads, and swam in the nearest watering hole. He did some singing, too, in those early days—as a member of a quartet in Lubbock, Texas.

At the age of 15 he branched off on his own, won a talent contest, and this led to a radio show at KICA in Clovis. He then joined a traveling band, played on the “Big D” Jamboree in Dallas, and moved from there to the Louisiana Hayride and the Ozark Jubilee. In 1960 he became a member of the Grand Ole Opry.

Billy has collected more than his share of awards: the Music Reporter award for “Charlie’s Shoes,” the BMI award for “Heart Be Careful,” and Billboard awards for both “Circumstances,” and “Cross the Brazos at Waco.” Of these, “Charlie’s Shoes” was his biggest record, with “Brazos” ranked number two.

Billy and his wife, Sylvia, live with their four daughters: Judy Lynn, Deana Ann, Tina Kay and Julie in a Nashville suburb.

Over the years, the “tall Texan” has had problems which would upset a lesser person. He once fell through a hole in the stage at Springfield, Missouri, and another time left his costume at home and had to go on the stage in blue jeans.

Billy travels about 100,000 miles a year, as he puts it: “by car, train and foot.” He is one of the outstanding performers in the field today, and has turned out five or six successive hits.



Billy and his lovely wife, Boots (Sylvia) .



Dottie West

The lady with the auburn hair
Has followers most everywhere



Dottie West with Alan Hale, Jr., star of the television series "Gilligan's Island."

McMinnville, Tennessee, has an annual "Dottie West Homecoming Day" to honor its favorite daughter. It's no wonder. In the days since living in the Middle Tennessee community she has won such coveted prizes as the Grammy Award, the BMI Award, Country Music Review Award, Music Business and Record World Award, has been named queen of carnivals, festivals and celebrations, and has become perhaps the most popular red-head in America.

Dottie always took her music seriously. She started music at home, took private lessons, and then followed through by majoring in music in college. It was at Tennessee Tech where she met her husband, Bill. They have four youngsters: Morris, Kerry, Shelly and Dale.

Dottie once was right on time for a show at Bowling Green, Kentucky, only to learn the show was supposed to be in Bowling Green, Ohio. But that's one of the hazards of show business. Touring 150,000 miles a year by plane and car is enough to confuse anyone.

Dottie, however, is perhaps one of the least confused persons in the business. Her great tune: "Here Comes My Baby" was number one in the nation. She wrote it and recorded it, and then some others recorded it as well—Perry Como, Dean Martin, Ray Price, Ray Smith, Eddy Arnold, to name a few. She also wrote "Is This Me" (Jim Reeves); "Didn't I" (Skeeter Davis); "When Love Goes Wrong" (Justin Tubb); "Don't You Ever Fret" (Archie Campbell); "Secret Sin" (Buddy Meredith); "What's the World Coming To" (Ray Pillow), and literally hundreds of others, many of which she has recorded herself.

Dottie's first job in music was at a school square dance, and she began in radio at WMMT, McMinnville, at the tender age of 12. Not until July 8th of 1964 did she join the Grand Ole Opry, and she has continued her ascent since then. It's pretty hard to top the awards she already has won, but if there's a way Dottie West will find it.

This is how the McMinnville paper front-paged the story of Dottie West Day.

Southern Standard

McMinnville, Tennessee, 37103, Tuesday, July 10, 1966



DOTTIE WEST, Miss Dottie West, McMinnville, Tenn., is seen here today as she is greeted by a large crowd of people in McMinnville, Tenn., on Tuesday, July 10, 1966.

8,500 Greet Dottie West At Homecoming Saturday

The city of McMinnville, Tenn., was the scene of a homecoming celebration for Dottie West, country music star, Saturday, July 9, when she was greeted by a large crowd of people in McMinnville, Tenn., on Saturday, July 9, 1966.

The celebration was held at the McMinnville High School gymnasium, where Dottie West performed for a large crowd of people. She was accompanied by her band, the Dottie West Band, and her manager, Bill West.

The celebration was a homecoming for Dottie West, who was born in McMinnville, Tenn., on July 10, 1938. She has become one of the most popular country music stars in America.



PARADE (Left) Dottie West and her band, the Dottie West Band, are seen here today as they parade through McMinnville, Tenn., on Saturday, July 9, 1966.

WANTED TO TALK
The article which I mentioned in my column about Dottie West's homecoming celebration in McMinnville, Tenn., on Saturday, July 9, 1966, was a very interesting one. I am sure that many of our readers enjoyed it as much as I did. I am sure that many of our readers will also enjoy the article which I am writing today about Dottie West's homecoming celebration in McMinnville, Tenn., on Saturday, July 9, 1966.

READ BY HER EYES
Miss West, who is a native of McMinnville, Tenn., is a very popular country music star. She has recorded many hit records, and she has become one of the most popular country music stars in America.

She has been married to Bill West since 1964. They have four children: Morris, Kerry, Shelly, and Dale.

She has also written many songs, and she has recorded many of them herself. Some of her most popular songs are "Here Comes My Baby", "Is This Me", "Didn't I", "When Love Goes Wrong", "Don't You Ever Fret", "Secret Sin", and "What's the World Coming To".

She has also been named queen of carnivals, festivals, and celebrations, and she has become perhaps the most popular red-head in America.



Wilburn Brothers

Their great career was really sprung
When both were very, very young

Teddy and Doyle Wilburn could barely see above the footlights the first time they appeared on the Grand Ole Opry. They had won a talent contest in Arkansas, and Roy Acuff brought them to Nashville for a guest appearance on the show. Doyle was not quite 10 years old at the time, and Teddy was just a shade under 11.

It wasn't until 13 years later that they became regular members of the Opry cast. In the meantime, they had played at many stations and worked many road shows, and appeared on the Louisiana Hayride with their two older brothers, Leslie and Lester, who still are integral part of their act. At one time their sister, Geraldine, also appeared with them. From there both Teddy and Doyle went into service, with the army in Korea, and joined the Opry following discharge.

Natives of Hardy, Arkansas, the Wilburns were trained to be entertainers almost from the time they could hold an instrument. And they held many. Doyle plays the guitar, fiddle, bass and mandolin, while Teddy plays the guitar, bass, autoharp, mandolin and ukelele.

But it is their singing, rather than their playing, which has brought them fame. For five years they have been listed as the number one singing group by Billboard. They have won numerous other awards from trade publications and from their fans. Together they also have written many hit tunes, and together they operate the Sure-Fire Music Company and the Wil-Helm talent agency. Doyle is President of both firms, and all four brothers play an important part in the operation.

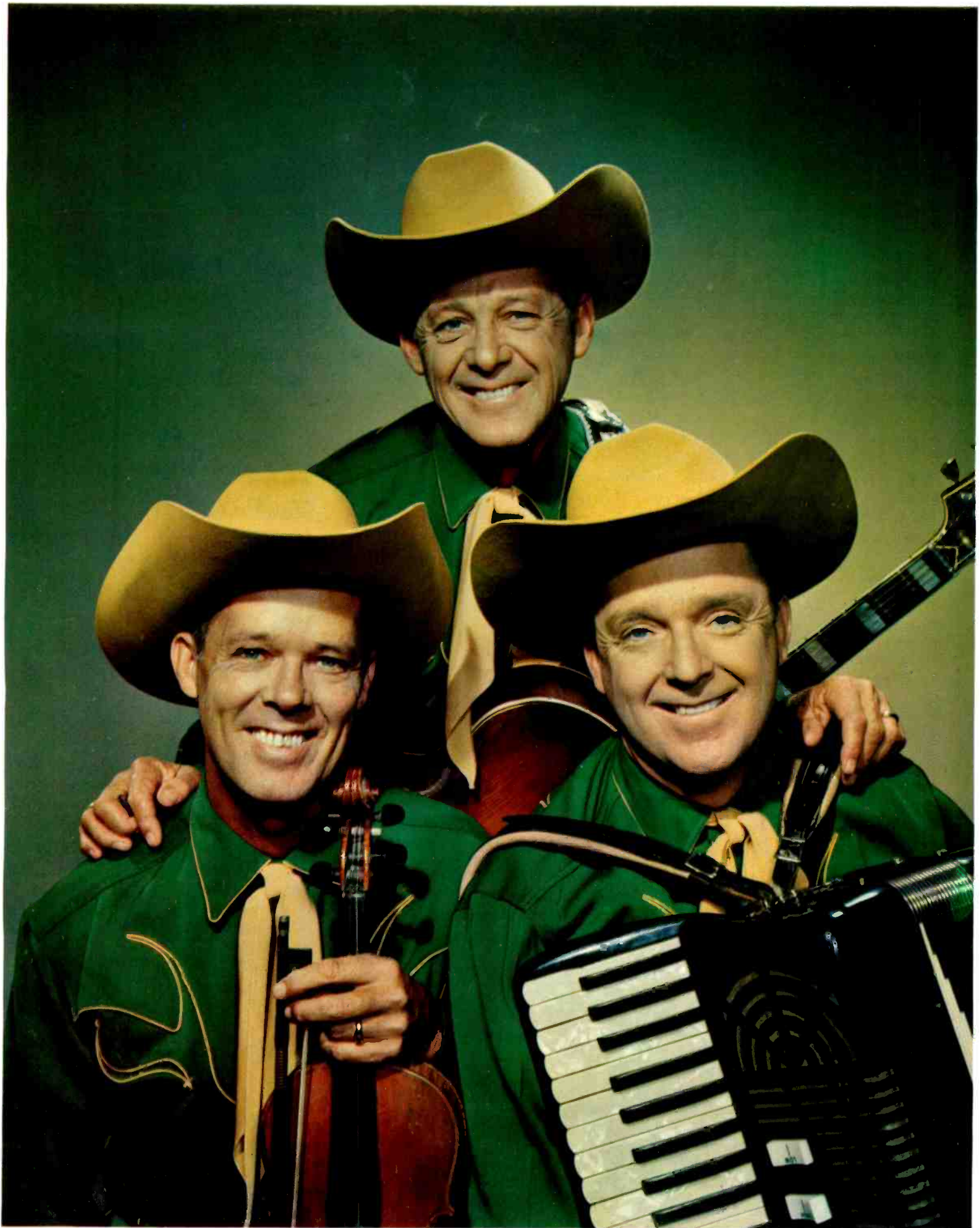
Their first job in music took place at Thayer, Missouri (when they were seven and eight years old), and their first job in radio occurred at KBTM, Jonesboro, Arkansas.

Their biggest hit: "Trouble's Back in Town," with "Roll Muddy River" listed second. However, virtually everything they record is a hit.

Togetherness has meant a great deal to the Wilburn Brothers. You'll even find them on the golf course together in those rare moments of relaxation.



Teddy and Doyle squander a dime for a back-stage phone call.



Willis Brothers

Talent coming on in threes
There are few as great as these

James Ulysis Harrod Lynn Willis sort of set the stage for the rest of the family when they decided to become full-time entertainers. He decided the name was too long, and he subsequently shortened it to "Guy." Charles Willis became Skeeter, and Victor simply shortened his to Vic.

Guy, Skeeter and Vic Willis, by any name, would be outstanding. Possessed of hearts as big as their Oklahoma hats, they are the first on hand throughout the year to entertain orphans, the elderly, the shut-ins, and the handicapped.

This is a particularly magnanimous gesture considering the schedule they must maintain: Opry appearances, road appearances (sometimes as much as 120,000 miles a year), recording sessions, and "jingles." The Willis Brothers operate a successful custom jingle plant, where they do country style commercials, station identifications and the like.

There were seven boys in the Willis family at Alex, Arkansas, and later at Shawnee, Oklahoma, and it was

their father—who divided his time as a coal miner, railroad worker and farmer—who interested them in music. They grew up wanting to be entertainers, and they became three of the finest.

They broke into radio at KGFF in Shawnee back in 1932, and some years later they were playing to 162,000 people in a 16 day period in Amsterdam, Holland. They first joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1946.

Each of the Willis Brothers is a prolific song writer, and each is a businessman in his own right. But basically, these men are entertainers, and their showmanship is unsurpassed.

Once known as the "Oklahoma Wranglers," the Willis Brothers did more than a thousand television shows. All three brothers are married and have families, and they live in the suburban Nashville area. Although their personalities differ considerably, each has a great sense of humor.



Skeeter, Vic and Guy Willis exchange quips with the Grand Old Man of the Grand Ole Opry, Vito Pellitieri.



Del Wood

Ragtime Music made the grade
When it was played by Adelaide

East Nashville High School had a "Del Wood" night several years ago, and presented its favorite daughter with a loving cup. Del had come a long way from her days at East High to the nation's "Best Female Instrumentalist."

Del's parents bought her a piano on her fifth birthday, and set their sights on her becoming a concert pianist. Del, at the same time, had her own sights set on the Grand Ole Opry. In her final year of high school, Del played for dancing classes at a music school, and, after graduation, took a job in a dime store playing piano for customers. The rest of the story is well-known. She pounded out her own version of "Down Yonder," and Del was on her way. In 1952 she turned down a week's engagement at a hotel in Miami, Florida, with Bob Crosby to make her first appearance on the Grand

Ole Opry. Her dream was realized, and in 1953 she became a regular member.

Del is one of the few Opry members who is a native of Nashville. She and husband Carson and their son, Wesley, live just a few miles from the place where she was born.

When she changed Adelaide to "Del," this top-rated pianist didn't know what she was letting herself in for. Among other things, she was invited to a lodge party before a show in North Carolina. The hosts thought she was a man, and the party turned out to be stag.

But her many fans know well that Del is "all girl," and truly is the Queen of the Ragtime Piano.

Del spends her spare time canning jams, jellies and the like, and aspires one day to do a show on home-making.



Del Wood, Queen of the Ragtime Piano, talks things over with stagedoor guard, Dick Norris.



Marion Worth

Every music fan on earth
Knows she will give them all her worth

By any name, Mary Ann Wilson would have been a success. But it was a disc jockey named Happy Hal Burns who gave her the name Marion Worth. Now it's one of the biggest names in the business.

Marion Worth was born in Birmingham on the fourth of July (at four o'clock in the afternoon, to be specific), one of five youngsters in a railroad family. As a child she wanted to be a nurse, and even went into nurse's training after going through high school and business college.

Her first job in music came about as a result of her business training; she worked as a bookkeeper for a recording company. But she won a talent show, and this eventually led to her own radio show on WVOK in Birmingham.

There is a tremendous amount of talent packed in this little girl (she weighs less than 100 pounds) and, among other things, she has won two B-M-I awards for

songs she has written. Among her songs: "Are You Willing Willie," "That's My Kind of Love," and "I Lived a Lifetime In a Day," the latter recorded by Marty Robbins.

Marion Worth has recorded for the Columbia label since 1959, and has turned out one hit after another, including "Shake Me I Rattle," which was her most successful. "Crazy Arms" ranked second.

Married to Eugene "Happy" Wilson, a music executive, they are parents of a teen-ager named Joyce Lea. The Wilsons make their home near Nashville.

Marion learned to play the piano (taught by her father) before she learned the guitar. In her occasional free time she reads extensively, and likes to knit for her family. Marion flies to most of her appearances to enable her to spend more time at home.

She has been a regular member of the Grand Ole Opry since 1963.



Marion Worth, with visitor Bill Dixon of Little Rock, and an artist friend.

Music City Tours

There is a personal feeling between the stars of the Grand Ole Opry and their fans. It is perhaps unlike any other form of entertainment. And there is nothing more personal to an artist than his home. Yet every week of the year, many of these artists share their homes with the multitudes who come to Nashville to see the Opry.

A visit to the homes of the stars is a part of the Music City Tours conducted by WSM every Friday and Saturday of the year, and on other week-days during the peak summer months. The tour also includes these extras: a visit to the WSM studio where the Opry began, with a detailed history of it all. The tour guides then take you on comfortable buses past the Hank Snow Music Center, past many historical points of interest, past the motel where one of the greatest country songs of all times was written, and past the Acuff-Rose publishing company, where Hank Williams and Fred Rose composed.

The bus swings past homes of 15 of the artists (including that of the late Hank Williams), and tourists take pictures at will. There are other points of interest, too, ranging from Civil War battlegrounds to the woods where a plane crash took the life of the late Jim Reeves. More often than not, the tourists will see an Opry star or two working in his yard, or playing with his family.

The bus continues past the boyhood home of Pat Boone, the college attended by Minnie Pearl, the high school where Dinah Shore studied. Then it makes the circuit down "Music Row," where visitors are astounded to see the scores of publishing houses, recording studios and other related structures which make this the "Tin Pan Valley." The Music Row junket is climaxed by a personal guided tour through the Columbia Recording Studio, and the visitors see the spot where such stars as Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Hank Williams, Jr., Jimmy Dean, The Carter Family, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, Billy Walker, Marion Worth, Marty Robbins and scores of others record. They see this area's only modern "floating" studio.

The climax of the tour is a visit backstage at the Opry itself, where the tourists see the dressing rooms, the color portraits, the museum pieces and the sets. Then they walk onto the stage, looking out into the auditorium, and standing on the spot where all the great names of country music have stood.

During the tour, the visitors alight from the bus and walk around for pictures at the sprawling ranch home of Eddy Arnold. They also pass the Governor's mansion, and the many churches and educational facilities of Nashville.

The tour lasts approximately two-and-a-half hours. It provides the only way for most visitors to see the homes of the stars, tour a recording studio, and get backstage at the Opry.



A special modern bus prepares to leave the Opry House to take visitors on the tour of Music City.



The bus makes a swing in front of one of the homes of the stars in a Nashville suburb.



Visitors tour the backstage area of the Opry House at the conclusion of the trip through Music City.

Opry Trust Fund

A headline seldom tells a full story. You may read in a headline that a famous old time country music performer has died, or is gravely ill. What you do not read is that this individual, long down on fortune, is virtually penniless, and is desperately in need of financial help.

You read of an accident that takes the life of a performer. What you do not read is that the widow of this artist is left with little or nothing or else an estate is held up for long periods of time in litigation or legal problems.

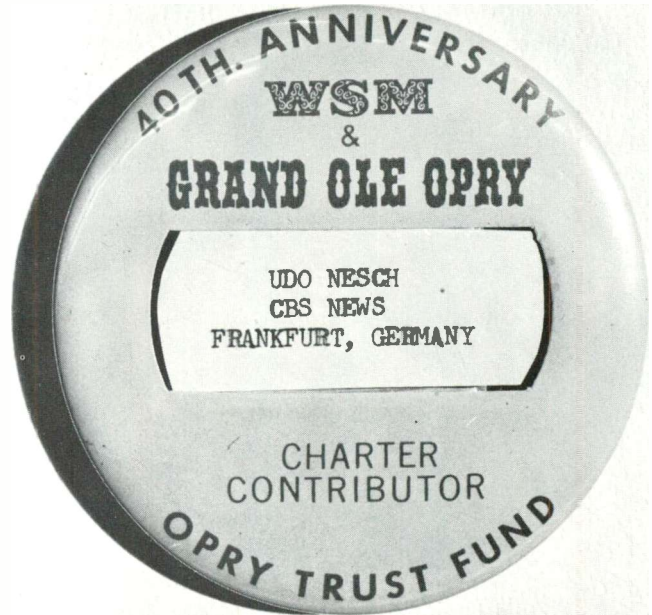
And the letters pour in asking: what has become of so-and-so?

Because of these and similar problems, there long has been a need of a fund to aid such persons. Until now, there has been no such fund available to them.

In 1965, at the 40th anniversary celebration of the Grand Ole Opry, each person who registered contributed \$10.00 to such a fund—named, appropriately, the Opry Trust Fund.

Almost immediately, this fund went to work. A special committee established for its administration received applications from various parts of the country. As days went by, other applications poured in. The need was obvious; and the fund, at last, was available.

Now, under the auspices of the committee, applications are screened and acted upon. Those in need, those who have met adversity, are being helped. In future years the Trust Fund will continue to grow, and will be available to country artists anywhere.



This is the "badge of distinction." It was worn by every person who registered at WSM's 40th anniversary celebration, and donated \$10.00 to the Opry Trust Fund.



Beneficiary committee for Opry Trust Fund. l to r—John H. DeWitt, Jr., Walter Robinson, Earl Scruggs, Roy Drusky, Porter Wagoner, Ott Devine, Roy Acuff, Robert E. Cooper, Jimmy Newman. Not shown: Ernest Tubbs, Bobby Lord, Hank Snow.

Famous Stars



Though man is mortal, his accomplishments can be immortal. Such is the case with Hank Williams, whose ability to write and to sing assured a lasting place for his name in the annals of music and entertainment.



They called him "Gentleman Jim," and in his quiet, easy way he could bring any crowd to its feet. Jim Reeves, whose life ended tragically in a plane crash, is another of the music immortals.



Patsy Cline had all the attributes of success: an excellent voice, poise, beauty and showmanship. Yet, tragedy stalked her life. She is remembered in death as well as in life.



A long, tall man who could have been an expert horseman (which he was), a fine baseball player (which he was) or a leading country music singer (which he certainly was), Hawkshaw Hawkins' untimely death left a deep void.

of the Past



Cowboy Copas had many friends and many fans. His life ended at the peak of his career. Here he is shown with daughter, Cathy.



Jack Anglin was part of a team—that of Johnny and Jack. Ironically, his life ended while en route to the funeral of those killed in a plane crash.



Lew Childre was a philosopher, an entertainer, and a man with a million stories. When Lew wasn't performing, he was fishing.



Rod Brasfield was the king of the country comics. He had the knack to make anyone laugh, even while ill-health plagued him. He left a tremendous void.

Old Timers



These are the "Possum Hunters," one of the early groups on the Grand Ole Opry.



This was the early trio of Jack (Shook), Nap (Bastion) and Dee (Simmons). Others in the picture include Owen Bradley, Mack McGarr, and George Cooper.



Cackle Sisters, an early comedy team.



In the days of the Minstrel shows, two of the greatest stars were Jamup and Honey.



Pee Wee King and his band, with "San Antonio" Rose.



One of the first stars of the Opry, one-time bellhop DeFord Bailey, who performed on his harmonica.



Few old time fans would forget Asher and Little Jimmie, a father-son act in the old times.

During the war, the Camel Caravan carried the Opry to the troops. Here Eddie Arnold performs.



Sarie and Sallie, as they appeared in their comedy skits on the Opry many years ago.



Sarie and Sallie, as they looked during a recent backstage visit with Roy Acuff.

Grand Ole Opry Delayed Broadcast Network

Delayed Opry Network

Each Saturday night, as millions of listeners hear the live broadcast of the Grand Ole Opry, WSM engineers are busy capturing the entire show on tape. They get the audience reaction, the ad-lib comments of the artists, and the performances themselves.

From the control room the tape is taken to a small "shop," where it is edited judiciously, deleting commercial messages, allusions to time or date, and nothing else. The entire program, with these exceptions, is left intact.

From this point the show is broken into five programs, each of 55 minutes duration. Each show is pressed on a quality LP vinyl 12-inch disc . . . twenty-nine minutes on one side and twenty-four minutes on the other, with nine continuous spirals in each daily show allowing for nine one-minute commercials. The extra two minutes are left open at each end.

The discs then are shipped in sets of ten or fifteen at a time, pre-paid.

And where do they go? Well, they go to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, to Dowagaic, Michigan, and to Cypress Gardens, Florida. They also go to Cincinnati, to Denver and to Des Moines. In fact, they go to hundreds of cities and towns throughout the United States and Canada, where they are programmed five days a week.

Even on a delayed basis, the Grand Ole Opry enjoys extreme popularity. In each market, one station is given exclusive rights to this broadcast. The consequence is obvious: thousands of hours of broadcast time each week allocated to the Grand Ole Opry.

Already it surpasses many networks, and shows promise of becoming the largest network in the world.

Tom Hanserd, manager of the delayed Opry network.



Typical Opry Visitor

While there really is no such thing as a "typical" person, statisticians have been able to reach certain conclusions through mathematical averages based on surveys.

Several such surveys show that there can be such an individual in relation to visits to the Grand Ole Opry.

This "average" person travels 480 miles each way to visit the Opry. His mode of travel is automobile. He normally brings at least one other member of his family along, and spends the better part of three days in Nashville. Chances are he has made four or five trips to see this famous show.

Once in Nashville he checks into a motel and goes to a nearby restaurant to eat. The odds are better than even that he came from Indiana, Illinois or Ohio. And he came from a city of more than 10,000 population.

He has made his reservations for the Opry some two months in advance. His sole purpose in coming to Nashville was to see the Opry. He is one of nearly eight-million people who have made the trek. He is in the neighborhood of 29 years old.

He listens to the Grand Ole Opry each Saturday night, and is able to identify virtually any sponsor product. He most likely is a factory worker of some sort.

This is a stereotype, of course, for in any Opry audience there would be hundreds of exceptions. Surveys show that the occupation list runs from nuclear physicist to professional baseball player, from music teacher to milkman. He might come from any of the 50 states, or from any of several foreign countries. He might even hitch-hike to reach the Opry.

Surveys show a rather even mixture of preference for types of music (old, new, Bluegrass, etc.) and for the artists themselves.

All highways lead to Nashville, and to the Opry.

Opry's 40th Birthday



Roy Acuff performs at a testimonial breakfast given by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce for National life, WSM, and the Opry, preceding the Opry's 40th birthday. Among those at the head table: a governor, a Congressman, a Mayor, a College President.



WSM's Dave Overton moderates a panel discussion on broadcast license renewal at the birthday celebration. Panelists are: Robert J. Rawson, Chief, Renewal and Transfer division, of the Broadcast Bureau, FCC; and R. Russell Eagan, attorney.



The Columbia party during the Opry birthday celebration. The Carter Family entertains.



National Life Chairman Edwin Craig is presented a plaque of appreciation from Chamber of Commerce officials.



Part of the crowd of assembled broadcasters and publishers at FCC panel during Opry Birthday Celebration.

Other Birthday Celebrations



Minnie Pearl and Judge Hay join the crowd at Opry Birthday party in 1952.



The 1953 gathering brought familiar faces to the convention.



Televising a portion of the 1954 birthday party from the hotel lobby.



Among others at the 1955 party were Dub Albritton, Red Foley, Gene Autrey and Hank Snow.



The late Judge Burton of BMI takes part in the 1956 conclave.



The crowd is gathered to hear the late Hawkshaw Hawkins perform in 1957.



Mr. and Mrs. John H. DeWitt, Jr., cut the birthday cake as Dee Kilpatrick looks on in 1958.



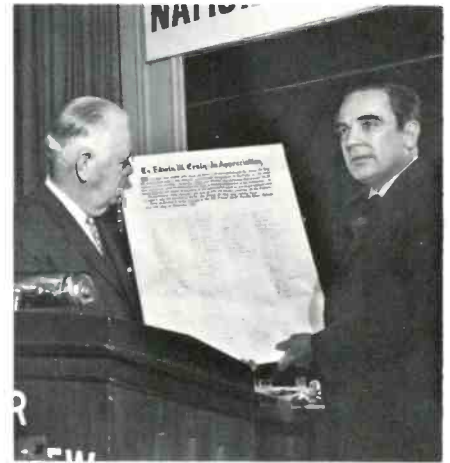
The 1959 cast gathers on the stage of the War Memorial Auditorium, one-time home of the Grand Ole Opry.



Part of the crowd scene in the hotel lobby at the 1960 birthday gathering.



The speaker's table in 1961 included the late Senator Estes Kefauver, Senator Ross Bass, and Governor Frank Clement.



In 1962, Governor Frank Clement presents a citation to National Life Chairman Edwin Craig, signed by all members of the Opry cast.



Among the many visitors in 1963 was famed pianist Liberace. Also at head table is Congressman Richard Fulton, long-time champion of country music.



Dizzy Dean gets in a few licks of the "Wabash Cannonball" during the 1964 get-together with Ott Devine, Roy Acuff, and Oswald.



A star is born. Young Roy Neil Acuff, Jr., makes his debut as his famous father beams approvingly at Opry's 40th birthday.

WSM Radio Staff

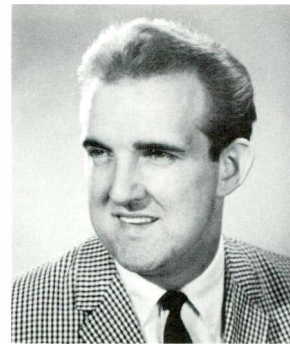
There are those behind the scene
 Part of the overall machine
 Which keeps this famous program going
 People you should all be knowing:
 Like the man who makes all tow the line,
 The Opry boss—that's Ott Devine;
 And the man who's long been on the job,
 The World of Music's David Cobb;
 Among the many things he's done
 Is name our city—he's the one
 Who coined "Music City, U-S-A,"
 He's helped big stars along the way,
 When they were struggling lesser-lights,
 His show is heard each week, four nights.
 And then the man of lore and memory
 With great appeal to all: Ralph Emery;
 This D-J of the dark-hours show,
 Tells listeners where the artists go;
 And he plays songs they like to hear
 Clear Channel makes him loud and clear;
 He's the favorite record spinner,
 And a consistent honor winner;
 Ralph is followed then by Grant,
 He gives the show a different slant;
 And in those hours around sunrise,
 When listeners still have half-mast eyes,
 Grant Turner spins the records round,
 Abounding with the Nashville Sound
 When Grant is finished, we are due
 To listen to the "Waking Crew"
 A daily 90-minute treat,
 And the man who works it, on his feet
 Is Dave Overton, who effervesces
 He's had many great successes
 He works with singers and the band
 Who lend the show a helping hand
 Then "morning people" take the mike,
 There's Barbara Moore, quite lady-like,
 Who lends the show both charm and grace,
 And really brightens up the place;
 And Houston Roberts, with the news,
 Who also voices vocal views,
 On people, places, and such things
 And other comments that he brings;
 Bob Loflin's almost always there,
 His observations fill the air,
 With features that he's run across,
 And it's likely he will toss
 A quip or two with his quick chatter
 And now and then they spin a platter,
 To intersperse the conversation
 Which helps diversify the station;



Ott Devine



David Cobb



Ralph Emery



Grant Turner



Dave Overton



Babs Moore



Houston Roberts



Bob Loflin

Diversity again is shown
 As Big John takes the microphone;
 John MacDonald, farm director
 Is a steady interjector
 Of matters dealing with the soil
 And of the people who will toil,
 To grow the food to fill our shelves,
 For our quite affluent selves;
 And then Hal Durham, for a spell
 Has information he can tell,
 With music in between those facts,
 For it's good music which attracts,
 The audience as nothing can,
 And he is joined by Dick McMahan,
 Who joins in stories with a meaning,
 Stories which all have a leaning,
 To events from out the past,
 So the hours spin by real fast
 And then a man of multi-art
 Composer-singer Teddy Bart;
 He plays piano, improvises,
 And offers afternoon surprises;
 His many talents all abound,
 He offers his own Nashville sound;
 Larry Munson handles sports,
 From football fields to hardwood courts;
 He broadcasts every single tilt,
 Involving sports of Vanderbilt,
 And other recreation chores
 Involving all the great outdoors;
 About the time of dinner bells
 We hear the big voice of George Sells;
 His talents are diversified;
 He has a pleasant music side,
 And Sells excels with news comment;
 So his time is quite well spent;
 And there's the man who juggles switches,
 He's seen stars go from rags to riches
 Carl Jenkins, the chief engineer,
 Who sets the levels you can hear,
 And he keeps equipment going,
 So the voices are free-flowing
 And now, to get all off the hook,
 All the words found in this book
 All the verse and all the prose
 Were done by one nobody knows
 Whose chores include the record keeping,
 Ashtray cleaning, office-sweeping,
 And anything that comes to mind;
 So, if in probing this you find,
 An error here, an error there,
 The blame lies solely in this square. . . .

John McDonald



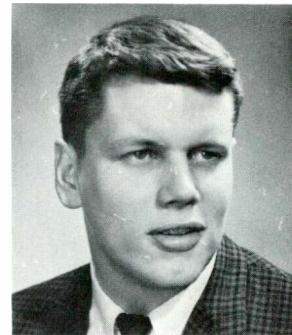
Hal Durham

Dick McMahan



Teddy Bart

Larry Munson



George Sells

Carl Jenkins



Bill Williams

The Waking Crew

The "Waking Crew" is phenomenal for many reasons. First of all, it is a daily, live radio show now enjoying its 15th consecutive year of success. That it utilizes a full orchestra is incredible in itself. But that's only part of the story.

The Waking Crew is emceed by Dave Overton, Program Manager of WSM, and unquestionably the most versatile announcer of his type in radio. He has the ability to sustain this one-hour-15-minute long program (7:45 to 9:00 a.m.) each day, and to make it effervesce.

Dave once remarked that he is the only M-C in the world who banters with 13 members of the orchestra, and not one of them a straight man. Many of these musicians have been with WSM for more than 25 years, and have worked under such distinguished leaders as Francis Craig (author of "Near You," and "Beg Your Pardon,") Beazley Smith (author of "Lucky Old Sun," and "The Old Master Painter From the Faraway Hills,") Owen Bradley (A & R director for Decca Records) and Marvin Hughes (A & R director for Capitol Records). The band played as a unit in the "old days" during the NBC network shows such as "Sunday Down South," and "Mr. Smith Goes to Town."

The orchestra currently is directed by Bill McElhiney, one of the top arrangers in the music field, and an outstanding trumpet player.

One of the vocalists is Teddy Bart (who also has his own afternoon radio show), a noted singer, musi-

cian and composer. Teddy, in his relatively short time in Nashville, has written songs recorded by Brenda Lee, Al Hirt, Johnny Mathis and others. The other vocalist is Carelin Darden, auburn-haired thrush, who walks in the footsteps of other greats who have preceded her—such as Dinah Shore, Kitty Kallen and Dottie Dillard. Carelin, a graduate bacteriologist who now studies law, is one of the most popular singers of the region.

Members of the band include guitarist Jack Shook (who sang in the old trio of Jack, Napp and Dee), bass player Chuck Sanders (who plays nightly with Boots Randolph), drummer Farris Coursey (who also accompanies Bobby Lord), trumpeter Carl Garvin (who originally sang with the "Hilltoppers" quartette), trombonists Dutch Gordon (the finest Dixieland trumpeter in the South) and Beverly LeCroy (who doubles as a WSM photographer), saxaphonists Jack Gregory (doubtless the wittiest, good sax man in the business), Augie Clevenger (knowledgeable on all subjects), Cecil Bailey (one-time solo singer), Newt Richardson (who doubles on the flute) and Tommy Knowles, (who conducts his own orchestra at night).

Others on the program include Bill Williams, who has done the weather in rhyme (120 lines of it) for the 15 years of the show's existence, and Dr. Philologue, a master of word derivations. George Sells handles the news.



The Waking Crew orchestra and staff: Carelin Darden and Teddy Bart, vocalists; Dave Overton, Master of Ceremonies; Bill Williams, Rhyming Weatherman; and Dr. Philologue.



Dr. Philologue is, of course, a pseudonym. The real name is Charles Maxwell Lancaster, and his list of accolades tells only part of the story. A one-time Alabama track champion, he became a Rhodes scholar, studied also in Spain, mastered 14 languages, became Professor of Romance Languages at Vanderbilt University, cited by the Peruvian government for translating ancient Inca dialects, ad infinitum. Here he converses informally with Dave Overton on the Waking Crew.



Wilna Briggs sorts the morning mail, coming to Opry artists from all over the world.



Roy Acuff picks up mail from Opry Post Office, a registered post office in the National Life Building.



Music Librarian Claude Sharpe has the task of overseeing the thousands of records found in the WSM music library.



Stagehands Buddy Lunn and Charlie Bernhardt, the heart of the physical operation of the Opry.



Fivemen on duty at the Opry—in one of Nashville's safest structures.



Some of Nashville's "finest." Police officers are regularly assigned to the Opry to assist with the crowds.

Television

Every happy home enjoys companionship, and WSM radio is delighted to have a "little sister," WSM Television. Twenty-five years younger than radio, she nonetheless has matured rapidly, drawing on experienced management and qualified personnel to get the job done.

In the field of the Grand Ole Opry and related programs, WSM-TV has made giant strides.

The fall of 1965 marked the start of Grand Ole Opry telecasts in 46 markets throughout the nation. The show is videotaped for television on Friday nights before live audiences at the Opry House, sponsored by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company.

Syndicated television shows are produced and taped at the WSM television studios. This includes the Flatt and Scruggs Show, the Porter Wagoner Show, and the Bobby Lord show.

A daily Bobby Lord show also is carried live by WSM television, as is the Opry Almanac, with Ralph Emery.

Ernest Tubb and his Texas Troubadours pay an early morning (6 a.m.) call on Ralph Emery, host of the Opry Almanac show daily on WSM-TV. Announcer is Bob Olson.

In the glare of the klieg lights, a live audience responds to a portion of the Bobby Lord Show, seen and heard each afternoon on WSM-TV.

Syncopation in syndication. Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys perform for Martha White Mills on a videotaping of their TV show which is shown in cities across the nation. It originates from WSM-TV.

Lovely Loretta Lynn is flanked by Doyle and Teddy Wilburn on the Wilburn Brothers syndicated television show. Lester and Leslie Wilburn join Don Helms and Shorty Lavender in accompaniment, while comic Harold Morrison adds his bit.

The Porter Wagoner syndicated television show has won wide acceptance, and is one of several originating from the WSM-TV studios.

Ralph Emery, long-time master of ceremonies of WSM's Opry Star Spotlight, now does a daily TV show for WSM called Opry Almanac. Marty Robbins takes part.

WSM-TV, Channel Four, companion of WSM Radio, and similarly owned and operated by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company. This relatively new structure is located on the west edge of Nashville, and its tower stands taller than the Empire State Building.

The new radio studios take form directly adjacent to the television station.



Ernest Tubb & Troubadours



Bobby Lord Show



Flatt & Scruggs



Wilburn Brothers



Porter Wagoner



Ralph Emery



Building



Dream of a lifetime. Proctor and Gamble Lava Soap Contest winners dine with Roy Acuff, LeRoy Van Dyke, Jimmy Newman.



The "many faces" of WSM include regular broadcasts of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. Picked up on a remote basis from the War Memorial Auditorium (once the site of the Grand Ole Opry), the symphony, under the direction of Willis Page, is carried as a public service for those whose tastes run to concert music.



Grand Opera comes to Grand Ole Opry. Here Marguerite Piazza of the Met performs with Minnie Pearl, of Grinder's Switch.



Helen Traubel, also of the Metropolitan Opera, joins in with George Morgan on the Opry.



George Hamilton IV looks over his audience before preparing to perform for television.



Youngsters of Grand Ole Opry Stars and Opry officials get a stage-view of the proceedings at the Opry.

Improvements



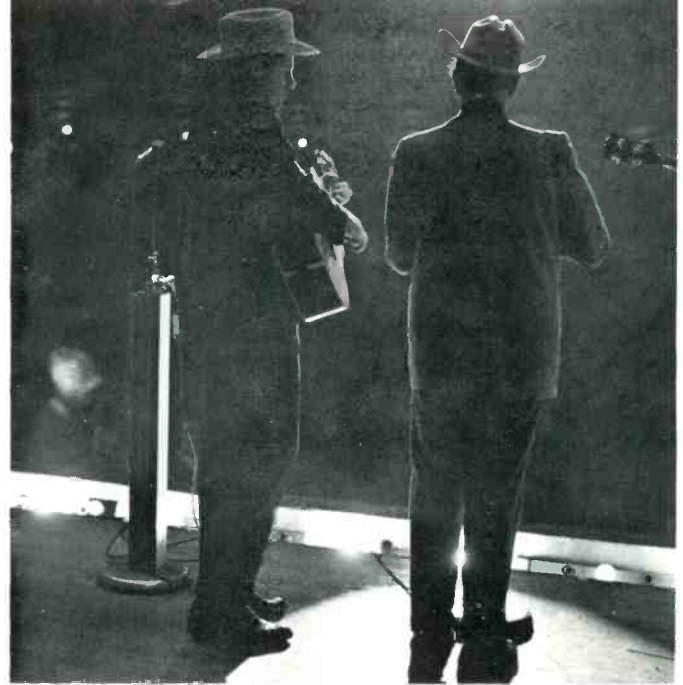
A new ticket booth, inside the lobby of the Opry House, provides both expediency and comfort from the weather for ticket buyers.



Even the ceiling gets dressed up. The Opry House ceiling, long dark in color, is given a gold paint job to brighten the surroundings.



The Grand Ole Opry flies en masse to a command appearance at Carnegie Hall in New York. At the Hall, it was standing room only.



At the base of the stage, from amid the softer footlights, blinking lights advise artists and announcers of FCC regulations concerning specified times for station identification.



Stage Door. The familiar door through which pass the greatest stars in the world.



Vet's hospital

Men Behind the Scenes



Jack DeWitt

As in a successful army, the generalship remains in the background, planning for the troops. They exemplify their leadership by pointing to the success of those in the forefront.

WSM, Incorporated, is headed by John H. DeWitt, Jr., who has been with WSM since its inception. A one-time engineer who worked his way to the top, he has made countless friends in the country music field over the years. He has known, personally, every artist who has appeared on the Grand Ole Opry. Now he oversees the entire operation of radio and television.

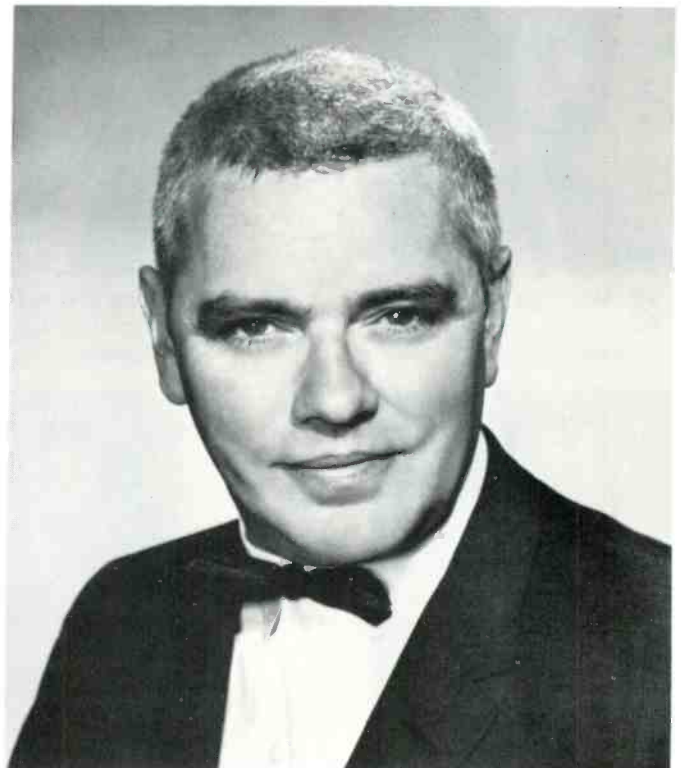
Directing the radio station, and, subsequently, the Opry itself, is Robert Evans Cooper, Vice President and General Manager, who has been associated with WSM for more than 10 years. A man experienced in all phases of radio operation, he now maintains a close liaison with all members of the Opry cast, and originated and developed the Opry Trust Fund beneficiary committee. He also guides the other station operations, including news, programming, farm, continuity, etc.

Radio's counterpart, WSM-television, is headed by Irving Waugh, Vice President and General Manager of that operation. Since many syndicated television shows involving Opry talent originate at the WSM studios, he, too, maintains a close association with the artists. Mr. Waugh was a long-time WSM radio personality, who moved into the television field with the inception of TV in Nashville.

All three are members of the Board of Directors of WSM, Incorporated.



Irving Waugh



Robert Cooper



Ott Devine, Opry Manager, at whose home Roy Acuff stayed when he first joined the Grand Ole Opry.

In 1964, when the Grand Ole Opry was celebrating its 39th birthday, the Opry artists presented a "Father of the Year" plaque to Ott Devine, from his "children."

This was not at all facetious. Ott Devine, indeed, has been head of the household for many years. In 1965, he observed his 30th year as a member of the WSM staff, and the majority of those years found him connected with the Opry and its artists.

So Ott remembers "way back when." As a young announcer he still had a great deal of the "country" in him. This led to both quick and firm associations with the performers, and these associations have brought about lasting friendships.

Ott, a native of Alabama, had his radio apprenticeship in that state, in Georgia, and in East Tennessee. After joining WSM in 1935, he moved up the ladder to Chief Announcer, to Assistant Program Director, to Program Manager, and to Manager of the Grand Ole Opry.

During these years he produced and announced many network shows, and helped countless persons on their way to stardom. Ask any Opry artist to whom he or she owes a great deal, and the name Ott Devine will appear with regularity.

He is the man behind the scenes, the guiding force of the greatest show in radio.



E. W. Wendell, Administrative Assistant to the President, WSM.



Len Hensel, Commercial Manager, WSM Radio.



Louie Buck, local sales manager, WSM.



Tom Hanserd.



Richard Rhodes, Manager, Grand Ole Opry House.



James Regan, sales account executive.

It All Started With the Floods

January of 1937 was unseasonably warm throughout the Ohio Valley, and unusually wet. The winter snows to the north were thawing, and the skies opened up to unleash some 15 inches of rain throughout the region. The inevitable happened.

On January 22nd of that year, the Ohio River first went out of its banks, spreading out over the low valley countryside. As the crest moved downstream, massive areas of land became inundated. Tributaries poured more muddy, debris filled water into the stream, and by early February the sometimes peaceful river was 30 miles wide. The crest, by then, was approaching Louisville, Kentucky.

Radio stations are geared for public service, and WSM was equal to the task. Without hesitation, WSM turned its entire broadcast facilities over to service, and performed one of the engineering feats which has made it famous.

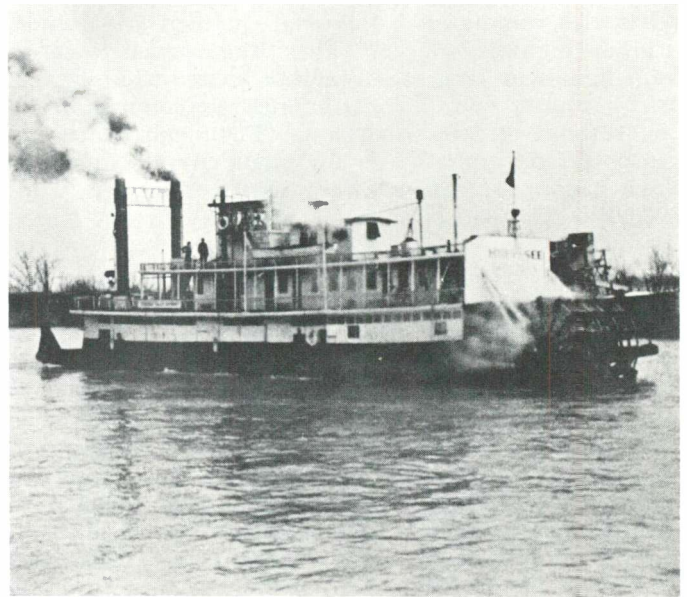
The chief engineer at the time was John H. DeWitt, Jr., (now President of WSM, Inc.). His young assistant was a man named Battle Klyce (now with Time-Life, Inc.), and the chief announcer was Jack Harris (now Vice-President of KPRC, Houston, Texas). These three, equipped with a 20-watt transmitter and boxes full of spare parts to build a 250-watt amplifier, boarded a train in Nashville. Carrying a two-kilowatt generator, they rode to Johnsonville, Tennessee, where they met the Steamboat Jayhawker, up from Florence Alabama. Aboard the Jayhawker, DeWitt and Klyce built the more powerful amplifier, and had it operating before the vessel arrived at Evansville, Indiana. With special permission from the Federal Communications Commission, Harris broadcast flood reports for four days and nights back to the WSM studios, and this information was relayed throughout the Ohio Valley. People thus were able to evacuate before the floods struck, and were kept informed as to the whereabouts and safety of loved ones.

When the water rose higher and higher in Louisville, Kentucky, the city power plant was submerged, and there was a widespread power failure. Radio Station WHAS, ably serving its community, was in danger of going off the air, so it utilized WSM's facilities for broadcast purposes.

The WSM steamboat played a dual role during this tragic flood. It carried food to isolated areas, where people in rowboats came to meet it. At Gilbertsville, Kentucky, American Legionnaires unloaded food from the boat and carried it ashore. Through it all, WSM continued to broadcast the life-saving information.

When the floods had subsided, the waters receded, DeWitt, Klyce and Harris boarded a train at Evansville and hauled the equipment back home.

All of the Ohio Valley was grateful for this service, but the Louisville Courier-Journal chose to show that gratitude in an unusual way. Beginning in February of 1937 and continuing through today, this outstanding newspaper has carried daily the WSM radio log. Along with the logs of the Louisville stations, it lists all of the programs carried by WSM . . . the station which came to the rescue in the famous flood of 1937.



THE COURIER-JOURNAL, LOUISVILLE, KY.

W S M		NBC News on the Hour	6 5 0
FRIDAY A.M.		P. M.	
5:30 Jamboree		12:00 Noon Neighbors	
5:45 Flatt Scruggs		1:00 This is WSM	
6:00 Farm News		5:30 News; Sports	
6:30 News		6:45 Country Music	
7:15 Sounds Nashville		7:00 Porter Wagoner	
7:30 News		7:30 Wilburn Brothers	
7:45 Waking Crew		8:00 Friday Night Opry	
9:30 Autumn 650		10:00 News	
11:00 Back to Bible		10:15 Tex Ritter	
11:30 Farm; News		10:30 Grant Turner	
		11:00 Opry Spotlight	
		Until 5 A.M.	



Clear Channel

What's so important about radio clear channels?

Local radio channels correspond to the residential streets of a community. Regional channels are similar to urban highway arteries. They are designed to carry radio signals to large metropolitan areas including the nearby country side. Clear Channels are comparable to long distance express highways. Their purpose is to transport radio signals over an extended area much of which cannot be reached from sunset to sunrise with listenable AM signals in any other way. A I-A Clear Channel is used by only one station at night.

Originally there were 40 I-A Clear Channels, designed to provide a choice of three or four nighttime radio signals throughout the continental United States. Many have been duplicated. Only a handful, including WSM, now remain which could utilize higher power to carry out the purpose for which they are intended.

During the hours of daylight most Americans receive good groundwave radio service. But at night, over 25 million people living in almost 60% of the continental U. S. land area do not receive one single primary or groundwave service. They live in a radio desert—"white area." They are entirely dependent upon clear channel skywave service for their only AM radio listening. Additional millions are able to receive only one groundwave service at night and depend solely upon the "clears" for a choice of programs.

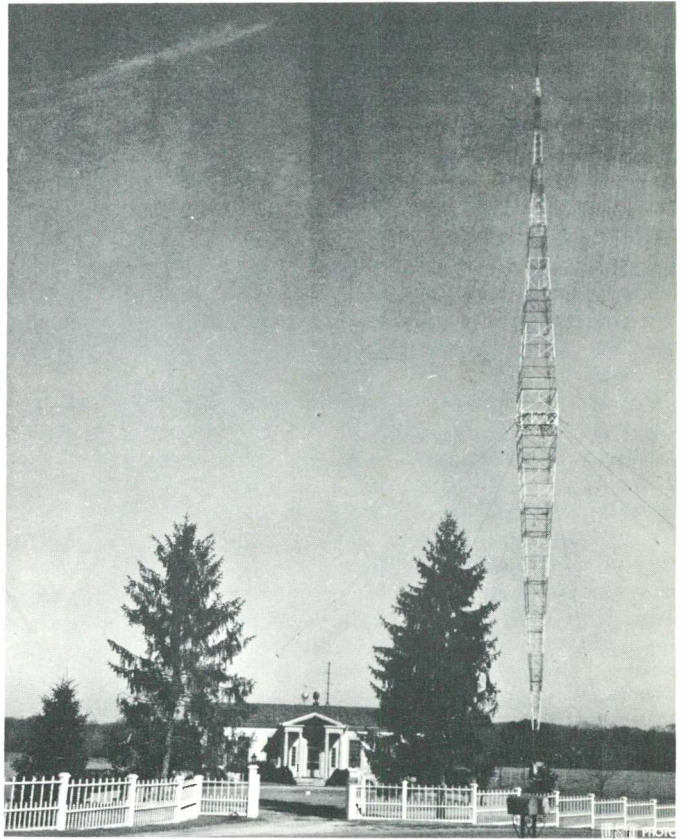
Signal strength of Clear Channel stations (the only stations that can reach these areas at night) is simply inadequate when only 50 kilowatts of power is used. Signal strength can easily be improved by removing the present 50 kilowatts power ceiling. Stronger signals are necessary to overcome interference from foreign stations operating on the channel, atmospheric static, the peculiar variancies of skywave service and to counteract growing levels of electrical interference. Rural consumption of electrical energy continues to double and re-double. The use of 500 to 1000 kilowatts power on Clear Channels is the only way most "white area" residents and travelers will ever receive more acceptable AM nighttime radio service. The use of adequate power on Clear Channels would also lead to better hemispheric understanding and neighborliness. Higher power has long been in common use in many other countries. Mexico, for instance, uses power far in excess of the 50 kilowatts U. S. ceiling on all its clear channel stations. Where all frequencies are included 1,930 stations in 79 countries are already using power in excess of 50 kilowatts.

WSM has applied to the Federal Communications Commission for permission to increase the first 50 kilowatts to 750 kilowatts. Such an improvement would increase WSM's signal strength almost four times. It would interfere with the signal of no other radio station in North America.

It would provide the only reliable nighttime signal to 10,000 people now living in the "white areas." It would make a second signal available to many more

millions who now have only one radio signal to rely upon for entertainment or emergency communications.

The first recordings done in Nashville were engineered by WSM technicians, composed by WSM personnel, and recorded by WSM artist.

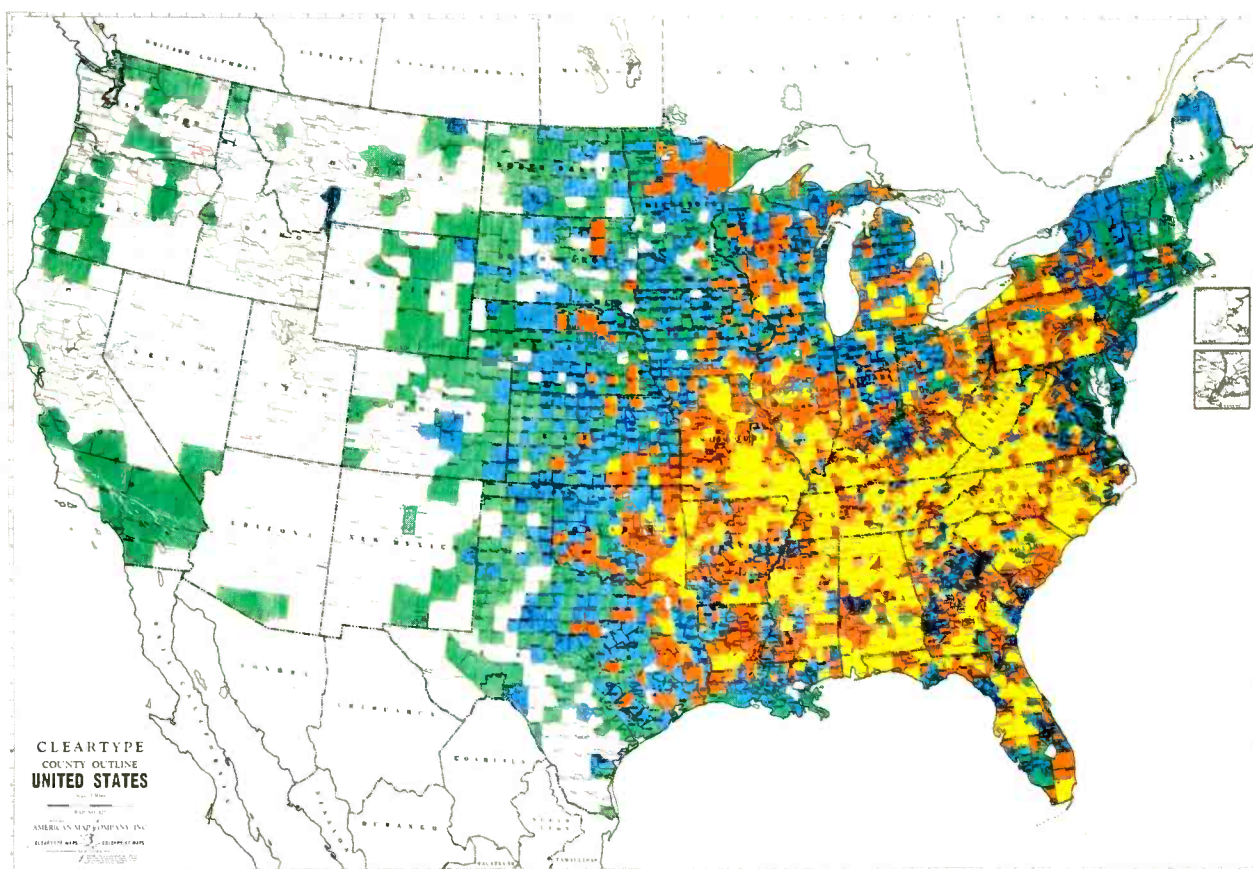
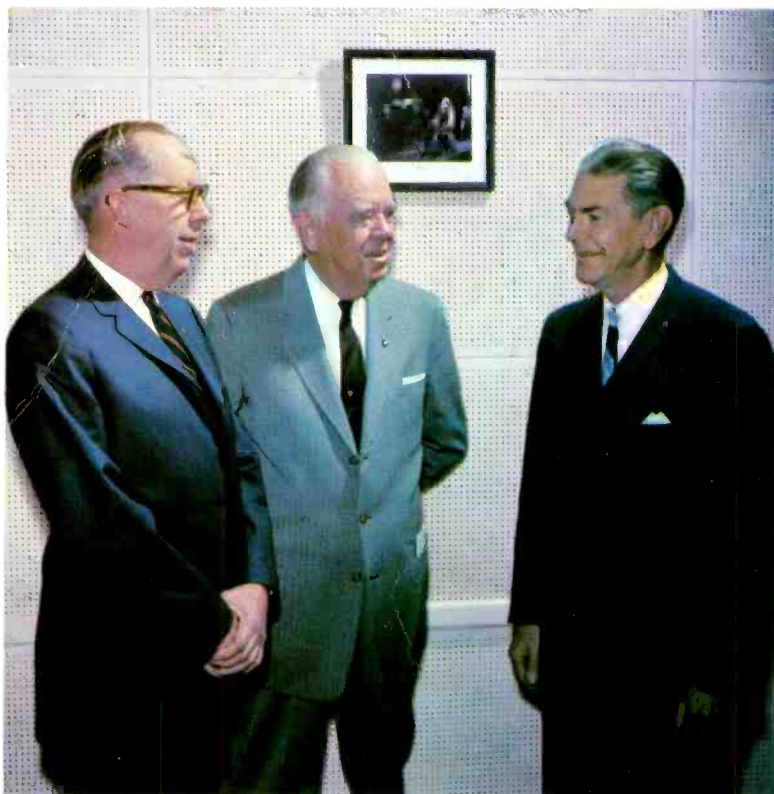


From its lonely spot south of Nashville, the WSM radio tower points its nose into the air to transmit 50,000 watts of power on a frequency of 650 kilocycles through a clear (unobstructed) channel to listeners everywhere. The outpost is manned 24 hours daily.

Talent Agencies in Nashville

- Moeller—815 16th Avenue South
- Acuff-Rose—2508 Franklin Road
- Wil-Helm—801 16th Avenue South
- Key—812 16th Avenue South
- Bob Neal—812 16th Avenue South
- Hubert Long—806 16th Avenue South
- Joe Taylor, 1717 West End Avenue
- Hal Smith, P. O. Box 96, Goodlettsville
- Audrey Williams, 812 16th Avenue South

Three men who took an active part in the first broadcast of the Grand Ole Opry: John H. DeWitt, Jr., President, WSM, Inc.; Edwin W. Craig, Honorary Chairman of the Board, National Life and Accident Insurance Company; L. H. "Pete" Montgomery, Chief Transmitter Engineer, WSM Radio.



The map shown on this page is an illustration made by one of the Opry advertisers showing the locations from which WSM listeners wrote in concerning an offer on his program. Few would question the claim that WSM Radio has the largest single listening audience in the world.

