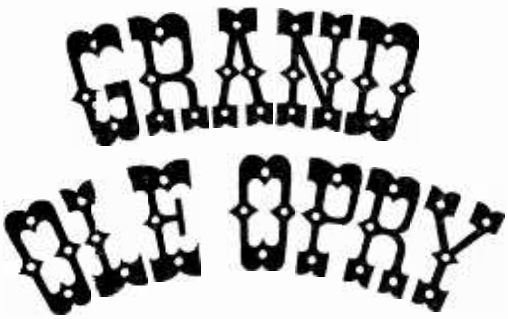
GRAND OLE OPRY

by WILLIAM R. McDANIEL

and HAROLD SELIGMAN


GRAND
OLE OPRY

WSM GRAND OLD OPRY Ryman Auditorium. Shot Made During World War II

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FOREWORD

Man has always liked to sing. Even as an infant he hums and coos the sounds that please him—a song woven from the fabric of his simple life in the cradle and in his mother's arms.

In later years, he sings of many things—of the people and the objects and the events that touch his daily life and thus become a part of him. But his song is still simple and strong, for it is cast in the musical idiom of the people.

Though a people's music is simple, the story of its origin, background, and development is highly complex. Any attempt to tell that story in a few pages, and especially to couch it in common terms, will necessarily result in much over-simplification.

The purpose of this book is to tell that story through the history of WSM's Grand Ole Opry, the nation's foremost exponent of country music and the principal agency through which Nashville, Tennessee, has become the folk music capital of the world. For every development in the history of country music, there is a story of human reactions that brought it about. I am aware that I have given these explanations in terms far less complex than they really are, but I am convinced that they are basically sound and that the simplification helps to give the reader a broader understanding of a people's music.

This simplified treatment has caused me to omit from the story some persons and some factors that exerted an influence on country music, but their inclusion would have increased the complexity without adding materially to the substance of the story. Such omissions are in no way intended to detract from the real effect that any person or any condition not mentioned may have had upon the growth of this kind of music.

Many persons have assisted one way or another in the preparation of this book. Special acknowledgment is made to WSM and its personnel, including Jack DeWitt, President; Irving Waugh, Commercial Manager and Executive Assistant to the President; Jack Stapp, Program Director; James R. Denny, Artists' Service Bureau Manager; Vito Pelletieri. Music Librarian; and George D. Hay, the Solemn Old Judge, originator of the Grand Ole Opry. I also want to acknowledge the excellent cooperation of the Grand Ole Opry performers, the photographers whose pictures have been used in the book, and Murry Nash of Acuff-Rose Publications, who has given much assistance in the compilation of the list of outstanding country songs which has been made a part of the book.

—WILLIAM R. MCDANIEL

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CHAPTER I

A dusty automobile drew up beside a gasoline pump in Hastings, Nebraska. First thing the filling station attendant saw was the map-shaped license tag of Tennessee. He didn't ask the usual first question about filling up the tank. He said:

"Where you from in Tennessee?"

The driver said, "Nashville."

The attendant seemed pleased. The driver knew what was coming next. It always happens at gasoline stations outside Tennessee. The attendant said:

"Bet you go to the Grand Ole Opry every Saturday night."

Of course, people in Nashville don't go to the Grand Ole Opry every Saturday night, for then there wouldn't be any seats left in the Ryman Auditorium for the thousands that come from the thirty-eight other states and Canada that are represented in the show's live audience every week. But the general belief that the hometown folks attend regularly is a good indication of the program's national, and even international, popularity.

Grand Ole Opry has become an institution in American radio. Its originator, station WSM in Nashville, says it is the oldest uninterrupted commercial radio program. It began in November, 1925, and has not missed a Saturday night yet. Each show is four and one-half hours long, and at least a part of it is heard by more than ten million listeners. In addition, an average of 5,000 people attend the show in the Ryman Auditorium each week. Since its beginning, nearly five million people have come to Nashville to see the show.

If more seats were available, the audiences would be larger. The house is always sold out. Tickets for reserved seats are exhausted six to ten weeks in advance. During the winter of 1951, Tennessee and much of the Central South was paralyzed by a disastrous ice storm. All public transportation was halted for several days. Electric power and telephone service were badly disrupted. Most of the roads into Nashville were closed. Many WSM employees were unable to make their way to downtown Nashville to work. Nevertheless, two thousand ardent fans showed up at the Ryman to see Grand Ole Opry. That's half a house at the Ryman, for it has only 3,574 seats. Of these, 1,384 are reserved at sixty cents each, including federal tax, and the rest are general admission tickets at thirty cents.

To the radio audience, the Grand Ole Opry is a big, fast-moving country jamboree. To the live audience in the Ryman Auditorium, it is a hillbilly extravaganza. During the course of four and one-half hours, more than 125 artists—the stars and their "side men"—perform before the microphones in a manner so spontaneous and seemingly unplanned that the clocklike precision of the timing seems unbelievable.

The show is split up into thirty- and fifteen-minute segments and sold to individual sponsors. Only the Prince Albert segment, which is carried by the full NBC network, is rehearsed—and that is mainly for timing. It is also the only portion that uses a script. Performers seem to wander on and off the stage at will, but they are always present for their turn at the mike. Mainly responsible for this thorough but unnoticeable coordination is Vito Pellettieri, WSM's music librarian and the station's contractor with the talent. He

Vito Pellettieri, WSM's Plainclothesman with the La Croix Sisters

spends most of Saturday night in the middle of the stage, checking his cast lists and cuing performers. Since he is usually the only one on stage in ordinary street clothes, he is often referred to as WSM's "plainclothes man."

Although the show plays to a large live audience, it is presented as a radio program with a live audience, rather than a stage show that is being broadcast. The artists play first to the microphone and second to the audience. Stage hands come on stage to change props and scenery, announcers and producers remain on stage, and other station staff personnel, photographers, etc. have access to the stage so long as their presence does not interfere with the progress of the show.

The old Ryman Auditorium sets a proper atmosphere for the show. It is a structure with an interesting history. Captain Tom Ryman was the owner and operator of a line of pleasure boats on the Cumberland River during the latter half of the nineteenth century. His boats had luxurious gambling rooms and fine teakwood bars. They were looked upon with disfavor by a revivalist named Sam Jones, who dared Ryman to come to his tent revival.

Captain Ryman, together with some of his river boat ruffians, decided to accept the dare. They sat in the back row and were prepared to heckle the preacher. But the preacher chose "Mother" as his subject, and this hit the Captain in a soft spot. He was converted that very night.

Afterward, he and his deckhands went to the docks, tore out the bars and gambling tables, and threw them overboard. Then Captain Ryman said: "No fine man like Sam Jones is going to preach in a tent." Thereupon, he set aside funds to build a tremendous tabernacle for all such revivalists of any denomination. In 1895 a balcony was added for the benefit of the Confederate Veterans Reunion. Later a stage was added and the tabernacle was converted to an auditorium. However, its seats are still the same hard church benches with which it was originally equipped.

Although the show lasts from 7:30 P.M. to 12 midnight, many of the fans sit through the entire program. Others leave about ten, after they have seen most of the performers. As a rule, the entertainers appear at least once before ten and once again after ten. This makes room for many of the throng who wait outside the auditorium in the hope of getting a seat for the last portion of the show. This turnover in audience permits the show to play to an average audience of 5,000.

Demand for tickets is greater during the summer months when streams of motorists pour into Nashville from far and wide. Tickets then are sold out many weeks in advance, and fans holding general admission tickets begin lining up in front of the auditorium by the middle of Saturday afternoon to assure themselves choice seats when the doors are opened at six o'clock. By the time the doors are opened, the crowds are usually lined up eight abreast for a distance of two blocks. After they are admitted to the auditorium and select the best seats available, they must sit and fan themselves for another hour and a half before the show begins.

Audience turnover is higher in the summer, mainly because it gets steaming hot in the auditorium, despite exhaust fans, personal cardboard fans, and shirtsleeves. For this reason, summer audiences usually number 7,500, with about 10,000 being turned away.

Despite the general belief of gas station attendants and others outside Tennessee, there are only a few fans who attend the Grand Ole Opry every Saturday night. But there are a few.

There is one woman who keeps a standing order for a ticket, insisting on the same fourth-row seat every time. She has attended regularly for nearly 27 years.

Some of the regular customers come from as far away as South Central Kentucky. Those from more distant points can't get there so frequently, but many of them do make repeated trips to see the show.

WSM recently received a letter from Mrs. J. B. McGuffin of Anderson, South Carolina, reserving six tickets. A postscript to her letter said: "This will make my forty-first trip to the Grand Ole Opry. A pretty good record, don't you think?"

A recent survey conducted among the audiences by WSM pointed up the phenomenal attraction of the Grand Ole Opry. The survey revealed that more than 88 percent of all those who visit the show came to Nashville

Mrs. Sue Baine (4th from left) has been an OPRY Regular for 26 Years

Cousin Louie Buck, Announcer on the OPRY for 15 Years

Prince Albert's Coast to Coast Network Portion of the GRAND OLE OPRY

for that specific purpose. In other words, anything else they did while in Nashville was merely incidental. They came to see the Grand Ole Opry, and they travelled an average of 485 miles to get there.

Somewhat more than 97 percent of the live audience are regular listeners to the program, either from WSM directly or through their nearest NBC station for the Prince Albert half-hour of the Opry. More than 87 percent of them have been regular listeners for many years.

One of the surprising facts about the live audience at the Grand Ole Opry is that Tennesseans rank third in number. The survey revealed that the largest number come from Alabama, the second largest from Illinois, and the fourth largest from Indiana. Next in order are Missouri, Georgia, and Kentucky. Ohio, Michigan, and Mississippi tied for eighth place. Texas is ninth in order and South Carolina tenth.

In lesser number, the audience comes from many other states, with every state in the Union and many foreign nations having been represented many times. Someone from Canada is usually present. In fact, a few Canadians have settled in Nashville to be near the Opry and the capital of country music.

One of these is a beautiful red-haired girl who works in Ernest Tubb's Record Shop. She said she has been hearing the Grand Ole

Mrs. Helen Moseley (Who Works in Ernest Tubb's Record Shop) Moved to Nashville to Be Near the OPRY

Opry on the radio since infancy. She made three trips to Nashville from her home in Ontario to see the show. On the third trip, she asked for and got the job at Tubb's store. A year later she married the manager of the shop.

Some fans come from points far more distant than Canada. Last summer a letter twenty-eight days in transit came from Saudi Arabia asking for a ticket reservation. The letter asked for special consideration, since mail service from Saudi Arabia was not very dependable at that time. It said in part: "Since I am travelling 11,000 miles to Nashville, I want to be sure I can get into the Grand Ole Opry when I arrive." In the interest of fairness to all, special consideration is given to very few. But the fan from Saudi Arabia did receive special consideration.

To many of the people who listen regularly to the Grand Ole Opry and attend the performance at one time or another, it is more than just a good radio program. It is an experience that gives them a great deal of esthetic and spiritual satisfaction.

This fact is indicated by the important events in their lives that they associate with their personal visits to the show. When they write for reserved seats, they don't send just a business letter asking for tickets. Many write friendly letters telling how long they have been listening to the program, outlining plans for their trip, and telling why they are coming to Nashville at the particular time.

This letter, quoted in part, is typical of many of the special-event letters: "We would like to have two tickets for Saturday, June 28. Please be sure we get good seats. We are getting married on the 25th, and we are coming to the Grand Ole Opry for our honeymoon." There is no doubt about the important role the program plays in the life of a couple who make it a point in their honeymoon.

We are all more hesitant to talk or write of our personal lives when we must tell of matters less happy than a honeymoon. But some Grand Ole Opry listeners do write of their troubles, and their letters reveal that the show gives them new hope and perhaps renewed happiness.

Here is part of one (without the writer's name, of course):

"Please reserve two seats for me for Saturday, September 20. This is very important to me. My husband and I have been married eight years, and we have a little girl six years old. But lately we have drifted apart. Now, the Grand Ole Opry is our last chance. He has agreed to take a few days off, and we're coming to the Grand Ole Opry to see if we can't make a new start in life together."

As they should be, letters containing personal outpourings such as this are treated with strictest confidence by the ticket bureau at WSM, and the letters themselves are destroyed after the ticket orders have been filled.

There have been many very popular radio programs before, but Grand Ole Opry runs deeper than that. The Opry is the fountainhead and driving force of a broad movement that is sweeping country music into the hearts and minds of all kinds of people from coast to coast—and far beyond the seas.

Ryman Auditorium

Never too Young to Come to the OPRY

There Is No Formality of Dress at the OPRY; Comfort Is the Byword

This first came to light when country songs began finding spots among the top ten tunes on the pop lists—and with increased bookings of country talent into night clubs and other establishments where pop talent had always been billed in the past.

Variety, show business trade paper, was quick to notice the trend. A page-one story said:

"With public domain tunes currently riding high on best-seller lists, bookings for country, western, and Ozark Mountain singers have opened up on a national scale. Heretofore limited to dates in the grass-roots areas, these singers are riding on the crest of the public domain fad into big city nitery and theatre engagements. . . .

"Growing interest in this country and western music is evidenced by the influx of diskery, pubbery, and nitery representatives into Nashville, Tenn., home base of the haywagon singers. Many of them appear weekly at the 'Grand Ole Opry' in the Ryman Auditorium, Nashville, and a large percentage are represented by station WSM, which conducts its own artists bureau."

The *Wall Street Journal*, trade paper of the financial world, said in a page-one story recognizing country music as big business:

"From such fabric the city's hillbilly music 'manufacturers' have cut a $25 million-a-year business recently. And, with most segments of the entertainment industry in the doldrums, they say they never felt better.

" . . . Nashville's Radio Station WSM and its Saturday Night Grand Ole Opry program are to a large extent responsible both for the big growth in popularity of hillbilly music and for its concentration here. . . .

"The big migration of hillbilly artists to Nashville took place during the war. Ten years ago, there were probably more country singers in Chicago than here, phonograph record men say. But, WSM has gradually attracted more of the top talent down here. An indication of the concentration of top country talent here is the popularity rating by 'Billboard', nine of the ten best-selling cation. Last week, nine of the ten best-selling hillbilly records were by Nashville artists. . . .

"The program's large national audience helps to lure talent here. It publicizes songs and artists, stimulates their record sales and creates demand for them to make personal appearances. This year, WSM hillbilly artists will collect $1 million from personal appearances, 25% more than in 1949. . . ."

And, the trend was recognized in a long series of articles that appeared in national magazines. *Collier's* said:

"Nashville is the focal point of so-called 'folk entertainment', known to the profession as 'hillbilly entertainment'. It has its own big hillbilly stars who individually make up to $300,000 a year, its own hillbilly music publishing companies, even its own handsome young hillbilly singing stars who set hillbilly bobby-soxers to squealing. For years this form of show business flourished apart from the Hollywood-New York axis, almost totally unknown to it. . . . But in the last few months, the balance has been suddenly and violently disrupted. The Nashville muse has won the entire nation. . . .

"For the full four-and-a-half hours of show, the stage swarms with some 125 singers, guitar players, fiddlers, comedians and the like, split up into combinations for the half-hour and 15-minute segments bought by individual sponsors. . . .

"On the Opry itself, sponsors are lined up five deep waiting for the first spot to open up on the show—or even on the pre-Opry period. If the rest of the radio industry is in the doldrums. WSM has more business than it can handle. . . ."

The armed forces of the United States have taken country music and Grand Ole Opry beyond American shores. In 1949, a survey was made among United States airmen stationed in Europe to determine what radio show they wanted most to tour their bases. Grand Ole Opry won by a landslide. As a result, a large group of Opry artists made a flying trip to air bases in the Azores, Europe, and Iceland. Their popularity among the troops was astounding. Later another group was taken to the same bases under the

GRAND OLE OPRY Plane and Talent Leave on a Trip to Entertain Armed Forces

Little Jimmy Dickens and Hank Williams Pose with German Children as Minnie Pearl Looks On

Red Foley Sings and Dances to Mountain Music in Germany

leadership of Roy Acuff. Other tours of this kind will follow.

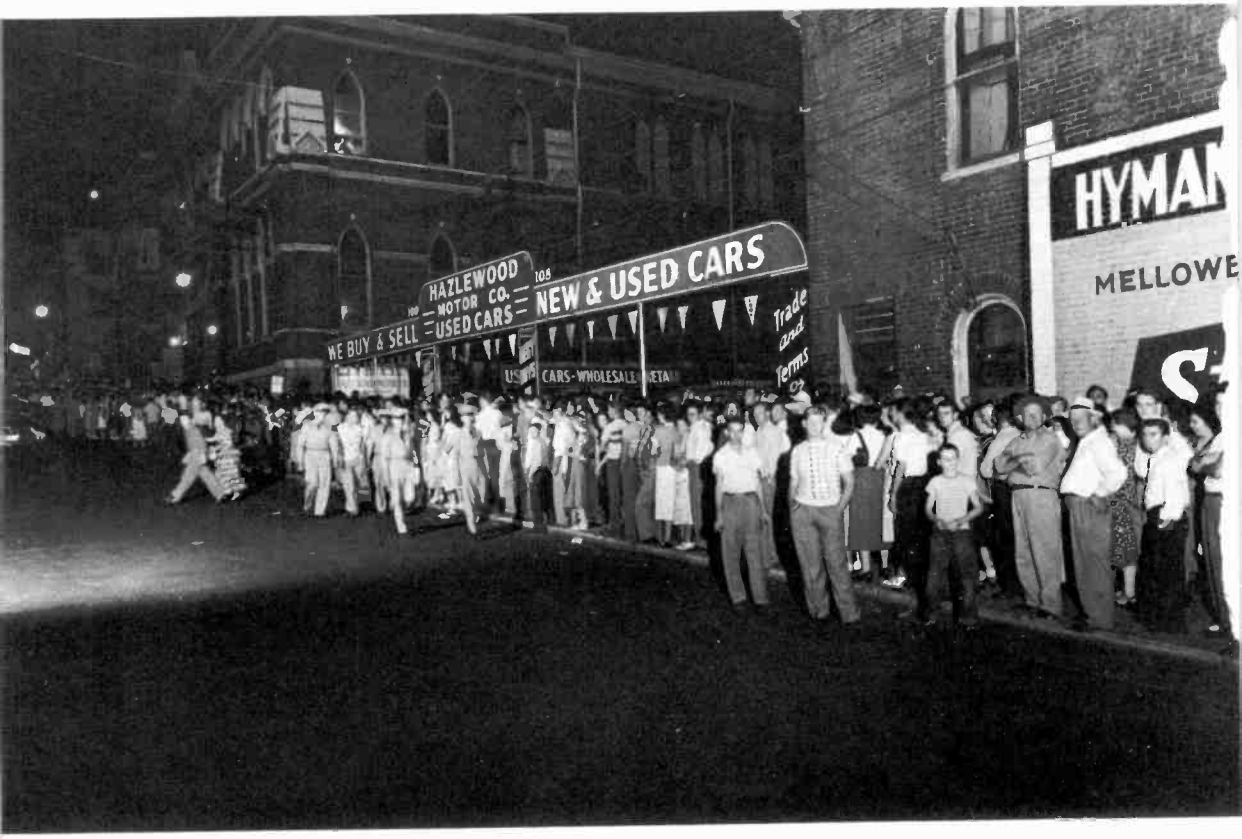
Since that time, special service personnel in the European Command of the United States Army has organized eight hillbilly bands from among the country-type musicians in uniform. These bands tour the military reservations, broadcast on the Armed Forces Radio, and every Sunday night at the Palmgarden Service Club in Frankfurt, Germany, the eight bands and their featured singers present what they call "Eucom's Grand Ole Opry." The Army says all the members of the hillbilly bands participate in the show voluntarily and without compensation during their off-duty hours.

The main auditorium of the Palmgarden Club holds 3,000 persons, but every week there's standing room only, just as there is at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville.

In addition to the Army's hillbilly bands, the Armed Forces Radio in virtually all overseas areas plays the thirty-minute NBC segment of the Grand Ole Opry and has its own record programs featuring Grand Ole Opry talent, such as Uncle Willy's Hillbilly Gasthaus, a daily feature of Armed Forces Radio in Frankfurt, Germany.

And in Korea the Grand Ole Opry is helping to fight the war. An Associated Press dispatch from Korea says: "Tankers of the 45th 'Thunderbird' Division have a novel method for getting an enthusiastic crowd at their troop information sessions.

As Many as 10,000 People Line Up and Wait for an Opportunity to Get a Seat at 10 O'clock at Night



Pap, Odie, Oswald and Lonzo Cool Oscar Off for the Audience's Amusement During OPRY

"A singing and guitar-playing trio from Company A, 245th Tank Batallion, get together at the point where the troop information hour is to beld and start performing their Korean version of the Grand Ole Opry.

"In a few minutes a crowd has gathered, listening and clapping their hands to the music. Then the information program begins."

Certainly one fact is clear. A lot of American people have turned to country music. And it is generally agreed that WSM's Grand Ole Opry, more than any other agency, is responsible for the trend.

Refreshments Sold During OPRY to the Audience

CHAPTER II

Before one can form a good understanding of the Grand Ole Opry, it is necessary to know something of the background of country music generally, and how it developed in this country to its present degree of popularity.

Music is a series of rhythmic sounds so put together as to express an idea or an emotion. This definition holds true for all types of music, from the Old World classics to the latest strains of Tin Pan Alley or the ardent outpourings of a hillbilly singer in Nashville, Tennessee—from concert music to dance tunes to folksongs. And, contrary to much opinion, the category to which any piece of music belongs has nothing whatever to do with how good it is.

The quality of music is determined by how well it expresses the ideas and emotions it was intended to express. To be good music it must be the means of fresh and direct communication between the performer and the listener. It does not have to be pleasing, harmonious, or consonant, but it must breathe the personality of a human being reacting to some real or emotional experience.

No matter how ambitious the work, how well versed the composer in musical techniques, or how many fine musicians are required to reproduce it, a piece of music whose lines do not reflect that vibrant human presence is poor music. By the same token a twelve-bar tune hummed by a farm boy as he follows his mule down the furrow is music of the highest quality if it is alive with his reaction to a new life experience.

These facts are emphasized in the hope of dispelling some of the musical snobbery with which this conutry is beset. Let's make it clear in the beginning that the terms "good music," "classical music," "serious music" are misleading terms applied to an artificial division within the field of music. To a really competent and worthwhile composer, music is music regardless of the particular category into which it falls. The old masters that we now hold in such reverence didn't confine themselves to their ambitious symphonic and operatic masterpieces. Many of them also wrote popular songs. (Schubert's songs form some of his most important works.) And virtually all drew liberally upon the folk music of their own culture.

Folk music is the spontaneous expression of the people themselves, usually reflecting in its simple earthy form something of the way of life of the people who created it. All peoples have folk music, and it varies from one nation to another or one race to another just as the native culture and environment of the people vary.

In this country there have been several distinct types of folk music. The earliest, of course, was that of the Indians who lived here when white men first set foot upon the shores. Next came Spanish folk music along with the Spanish explorers in the South and West. Then came the French, bringing their own distinctive folk songs, and about the same time the English-speaking people with their bountiful supply of Scottish and English ballads.

Since the white man's attitude toward the Indians was generally hostile, there was little fraternization and little intermarriage. Therefore, aboriginal music exerted little or no in-

fluence on what we now call American music.

Except in a few isolated cases, the Spanish and French occupation of what is now the United States was of a rather temporary nature. While some influence from their culture was exerted upon later musical development, it is far less noticeable and less important than that of the English-speaking people.

The English-speaking people who came to the New World came to make permanent homes. The earlier contingents especially were fugitives from religious or governmental restrictions they did not like. They left the homeland behind, but they brought its customs, its lore, and its music.

The folk music of these people was basically the Scottish and English ballads and folk songs and the music that accompanied their folk dances, such as the jig.

Life is a changing process. In the course of the years, the new environment of the people who came to the New World added new lore, new interests, new music, and new customs to their culture. Most of the old was forgotten. But there was one notable exception.

Many of these people, especially the Scots, had settled in the Southern Highlands where communication with other areas was difficult. They were comparatively unmolested by an unwanted British monarch. Here where their meager social contact was restricted to others like them, there were few new influences to change their culture. Their speech retained the picturesque and rhythmic character of seventeenth-century English with some adaption to the familiar objects of their New World environment. Their music remained the same. Some of the words to the old ballads were changed to fit new situations or new surroundings. New songs that sprang from events or situations in the new environment took on familiar forms and were, therefore, very similar to the ones they had brought from across the sea. The song *Darling Cory*, for example, is dated by its words:

"Wake up, wake up, Darlin' Cory!
What makes you sleep so sound?
Revenue officers are comin'.
Gonna tear your still house down."

Annie Lou and Danny, One of the Few Husband and Wife Duets on the OPRY

But, the tune, the attitudes and emotions, and the manner of singing remained substantially unchanged.

In many isolated sections of the Southern Highlands, these remnants of Old World culture have persisted to the present day. The old songs and dance tunes form the bulk of the people's music heritage. They have survived the test of time because succeeding generations have found in them ageless and universal ideas and sentiments.

However, people not only continue to sing the songs of their ancestors; they also create new songs of their own. This modern folk music is as authentic as the folk classics despite a good deal of scholarly opinion to the contrary. A spontaneous musical expression that stems from the life and environment of the people, their experiences and their emotions, is folk music regardless of whether it was written three hundred years ago or three minutes ago.

Folk music has always been handed down from generation to generation and passed along from one person to another mainly in unwritten form. If the hearer liked the song, he remembered it and repeated it. If he didn't remember it word for word, he usually reconstructed the sense of it in his own words. That is what keeps folk music vibrant and living.

Significant, too, in this respect, is that each

Ernest Tubb Playing at his Record Shop on Program from 12 to 1 o'clock Following OPRY

person usually learned the words and the tunes for his own use.

A generation or so ago, or perhaps earlier still, a few scholars discovered the value of folk material—both lore and song—in the study of how these people lived. This discovery led to college courses, theses, and much individual study of folk music and literature. Collecting and recording of this material were intensified by the realization that radio, movies, and "juke boxes" were rapidly supplanting folk songs and stories as popular entertainment. New generations had found new interests. The movement to retain and revive the old ballads and tales gained still greater, and far more important, impetus during the depression years when the cultural projects of the Work Projects Administration carried out a comprehensive program of collecting and preserving for posterity as much folk material as they could discover.

All this activity—both private and governmental—was most commendable and most important in augmenting the history of our cultural development. But there was one unfortunate accompanying attitude. Many scholars believed and, worse still, taught that songs were not true folk music unless they were old. There doesn't seem to be an entirely satisfactory explanation of what a song is supposed to be between the time it was first written or sung and the time it reached sufficient age to become folk music.

Fortunately, those who administered the government's Federal Music Project were well aware of the existence and importance of modern folk music. All those closely associated with that project were indoctrinated with the correct concept.

Nevertheless, the concept that folk classics are the only real folk music is still widespread. The worst effect of this is that it permits, breeds, and perpetuates musical snobbery. It permits highbrow critics to exclude from the folk music field the great mass of modern folk music which they have not learned to appreciate, yet to include in a sort of musical purgatory a few modern songs upon which they place a tentative stamp of approval by saying that when they have achieved sufficient age they will probably join the ranks of the already ancient ballads.

Modern folk music includes most of the music that is known today by several different names: hillbilly or mountain music, cowboy or western music, and country music. These are substantially the same except for subject matter of the songs, and to a lesser extent some differences in style. The term country music is used to refer to the several types and to distinguish them from folk music of urban origin, such as jazz and blues.

Country music is basically rural in its origin. Musicians who perform country music on the radio, television, and in personal appearances almost always have come from farm or small-town homes. And most of the songs are those composed by the performers themselves. Much of the subject matter of the songs stems from rural situations, and the instruments on which they are played are usually restricted to those frequently found in rural homes.

This brings us to the question of whether country music is in reality a distinct type of music or whether it is merely a style of playing and singing what otherwise might be conventional music.

The picture is complicated by the fact that both sides of the question are true. There is ample evidence that country music is a distinct type, but it is just as true that there is a country style of rendition that can be applied to virtually any song.

True country music is folk music, and folk

Hank Williams, One of the Nations Top Folk Singers and Composers

June Carter and the Carter Family

Eddie Hill

music is generally acknowledged as a distinct type. Folk music, whether it be the classics or present-day country songs, is an outpouring from the heart and mind of a person reacting to a new life experience. There is no formula with which it must comply and no mold into which it must fit. It is an artistic creation whose shape and form are determined only by the nature and magnitude of the emotion expressed. It is built out of the musical vocabulary with which the originator's environment equips him, and it is these things with which he is fondly familiar that bring about the new song's similarity to many already written. His originality is naturally limited by his own experiences and his own environment.

Conventional or composed music, on the other hand, must fit into a framework or a mold already set up by the chromatic scale. The key in which it is to be played is specified in the beginning. It is composed in a major or minor mode. If it is to be a symphony, there is an established form into which it fits. If it is to be a tone poem or a song, there is also a conventional form. These forms are subdivided into measures or bars, and the popular songs of today usually have a standard number of bars, such as the common sixteen measures and repeat.

This is not true of folk music. The human heart, if its possessor is not conditioned to the mechanics of formal music, does not speak in terms of the chromatic scale.

In the first place, there is no standard form for a folk song, whether it is a classic or a modern country tune. The originator of a folk song has something to say. He says it in his own way—the way that pleases him most. It is true that present day folk songs often come nearer the pattern of composed songs than most of the classics. This is brought about mainly through the increased familiarity of a folk song writer with composed songs, although he may still be entirely ignorant of the mechanics of written music.

Hank Williams, a top folk singer and song writer in the Grand Ole Opry, fills most of his songs to thirty-two bars, but they are not usually in the sixteen-bar and repeat pattern. The second sixteen measures normally are a little different from the first sixteen. His very popular *Cold, Cold Heart* is a good illustration of this.

A country song today, just as in the case of the folk classic, may change key in the middle, and it may change from major to minor modes or vice versa as suits the originator or the singer.

In short, country music is not diatonic. The sounds produced often approach the old pentatonic scale to which much of the world's ancient folk music conforms.

Folk music is oral in its origin. But this is an age in which we record our culture and our knowledge in written form, in which much of our communication is in written form. So folk music is written down, too. But this is a process in which the song itself is fitted to a pattern after it is written rather than having been written in a pattern. If the song doesn't fit the pattern well, it is because we are measuring it by the wrong yardstick.

CHAPTER III

Folk music in the United States has always been personal music, in the sense that the singer sang it for his own enjoyment. It has always been social music, in the same sense that the people took part in it actively rather than as a passive audience. They often joined in and sang the songs together, and they danced to the jigs and hoedowns.

The songs were a part of their daily lives, and the dance music was the common denominator in much of their social life. Members of the community played the fiddle, the banjo, and other instruments for square dances in their homes. Larger gatherings were held in barns. Real barn dances originated through the need for more space, which only the big hay barn of a prosperous farm often provided.

In addition to the larger square dances, there were often small rural gatherings called hoedowns. One hoedown held in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas, shortly after the end of the First World War had a significant effect on the development of folk music in this country.

George D. Hay, who later came to be known as the Solemn Old Judge, was a reporter for the Memphis *Commercial Appeal.* His newspaper sent him to cover the funeral of a war hero, the son of a prosperous farmer in the Ozarks thirty miles from Mammoth Spring. After he had filed his story, Hay spent a day in the town. Here is what he wrote of the occasion nearly thirty years later:

"In the afternoon we sauntered around the town, at the edge of which hard by the Missouri line there lived a truck farmer in an old railroad car. He had seven or eight children, and his wife seemed to be very tired with the tremendous job of caring for them. We chatted for a few minutes, and the man went to his place of abode and brought forth a fiddle and a bow. He invited me to attend a 'hoedown' the neighbors were going to put on that night until 'the crack of dawn' in a log cabin about a mile up a muddy road. He and two other old-time musicians furnished the earthy rhythm. About twenty people came. There was a coal oil lamp in one corner of the cabin and another in the 'kitty corner.' No one has ever had more fun than those Ozark mountaineers did that night. It stuck with me until the idea became the Grand Ole Opry seven or eight years later."

When radio broadcasting began several years later, Hay entered the new field. There were no networks upon which to depend for programming, and the era of the disc jockey was far in the future. Live programming was the order of the day. For talent, radio stations depended upon the musicians available in their own localities, few of whom were professional.

It was George D. Hay who brought to radio a new type of show and a new source of talent. The National Life and Accident Insurance Company employed him as the first director of their new radio station, WSM, in Nashville. He had already had a good deal of experience in the folk music field, having only a few months earlier originated the WLS Barn Dance in Chicago. This is the program that later became known as the National Barn Dance.

When George Hay came to Nashville, he recognized at once the great wealth of folk music material and talent available in the farms and hills of Tennessee. Calling himself the Solemn Old Judge, he launched the WSM Barn Dance at eight o'clock, Saturday night. November 28, 1925.

George D. Hay and Uncle Jimmy Thompson at One of the First OPRY Programs on the Air

The first performer was Uncle Jimmy Thompson of Nashville. Here's what Judge Hay said about it years later:

"Uncle Jimmy told us he had a thousand tunes. He was past eighty years old, so he was given a comfortable chair in front of an old carbon mike. He was accompanied at the piano by his niece, Mrs. Eva Thompson Jones. I presented Uncle Jimmy and announced that he would be glad to answer requests for old-time tunes. Telegrams starting pouring in to WSM immediately."

Uncle Jimmy played an hour and didn't want to quit when time was up. Judge Hay still remembers his protest:

"Shucks, a man don't get warmed up in an hour. I just won an eight-day fiddling contest down in Dallas, Texas, and here's my blue ribbon to prove it."

For the first few programs, Uncle Jimmy, Mrs. Jones, and Judge Hay were the only talent on the WSM Barn Dance. Then came the deluge. The Solemn Old Judge recalls that "after three or four weeks of this fiddle solo business, we were besieged with other fiddlers, banjo pickers, guitar players, and a lady who played an old zither."

This was the real beginning of country music as an important element of radio programming. Saturday night barn dances sprang up at other radio stations through the county if enough local talent was available. The relative success of each of these depended upon the quality and quantity of local artists and the natural, informal manner in which the program was conducted.

It is significant that in those early years of country music on the radio, the emphasis was on instrumental music. Uncle Jimmy Thompson fiddled a full hour each Saturday night in the early weeks of the Grand Ole Opry. The great wave of artists who sought a hearing included fiddlers, banjoists, and guitarists.

These were followed by larger groups of folk artists. The first of these old-time bands was a group led by Dr. Humphrey Bate of Sumner County, Tennessee, which adjoins Nashville's home county. Dr. Bate was a physician and a surgeon of considerable standing, but his hobby was folk music. He played the harmonica, and brought along five or six of his neighbors who played other instruments. He and Judge Hay named the group the Possum Hunters.

Within a few weeks three similar groups joined the regular Saturday night cast. They became known as the Crook Brothers, the Gully Jumpers, and the Fruit Jar Drinkers. All four of these groups still appear on the Grand Ole Opry every Saturday night, although Dr. Bate and a few other old-timers have since died.

Arthur Smith, Fiddler, Dr. Humphrey Bate, First Leader of the Possum Hunters, Uncle Dave Macon and Judge Hay

George D. Hay, the Solemn Old Judge, Originator of the GRAND OLE OPRY

Stanley Walton and the Present Day Possum Hunters

There are two significant reasons why early folk music on the radio was mainly instrumental. Folk songs were personal music that a mother sang to her child, that a man sang as he plowed, that a boy hummed as he walked down the road with his fishing pole. Such persons were not accustomed to singing for an audience, seen or unseen. In addition, people are more likely to be self-conscious of their vocal deficiencies than they are of the lack of instrumental perfection.

On the other hand, the fiddlers and "pickers" were accustomed to playing for family and community social events. They had already lost their timidity and were willing to be heard.

The solo fiddlers and breakdown bands were popular with the listeners. But no real stars developed among them. An instrumentalist never develops into a top star in country music. There are two important reasons for this. First, instrumental music was most popular as social music, when all the people within range of the musicians danced to their strains. When they became passive listeners, the breakdown music lost much of its significance. Second, the first object of music is to express an emotion, a thought, or, as in the case of

the ballads, a complete story. The first instrument of folk music is the human voice, and the mechanical instruments themselves serve only to extend and increase the effectiveness of the voice. Through his voice, the singer could project his personality to the vast audiences. Through the stories of the songs he sang, he could keep them interested and fascinated. It was time for the Grand Ole Opry's first singing star.

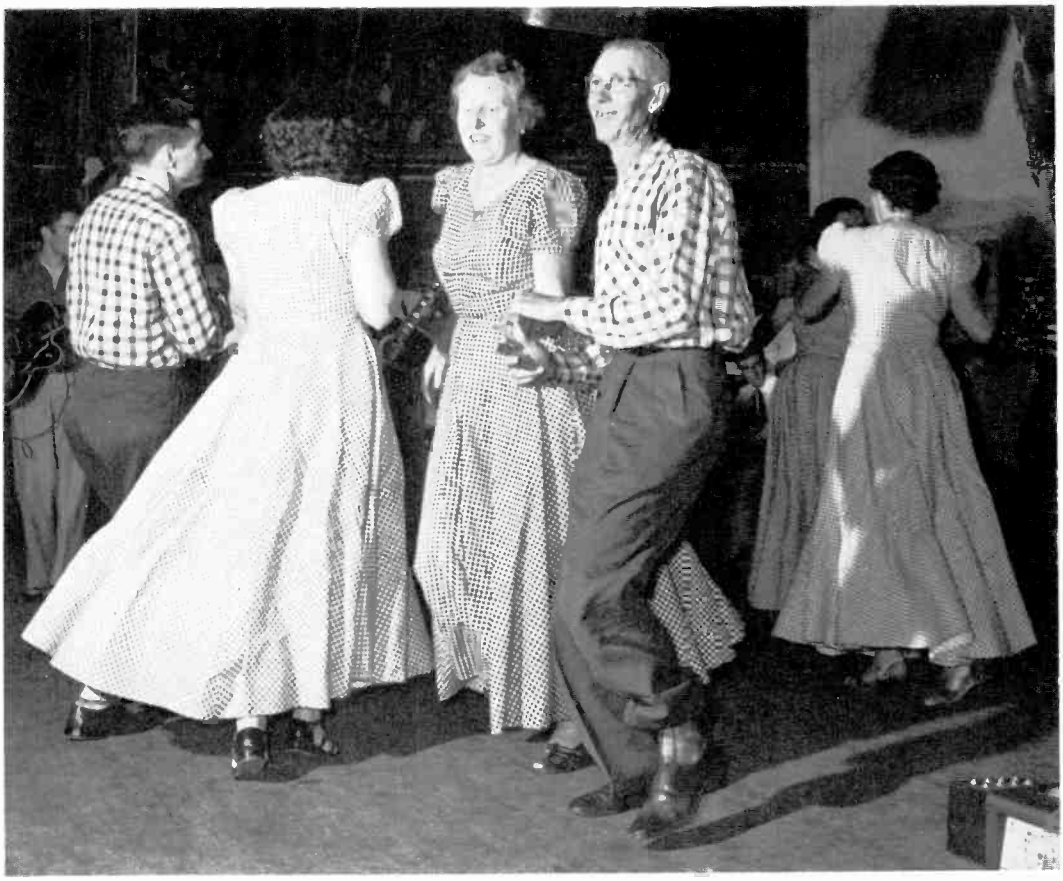
This first star was Uncle Dave Macon, who billed himself as the Dixie Dewdrop. He came to WSM during the early months of 1926, after having already been in show business for several years. His simple earthy tunes, his spry musical wit, and his flair for showmanship brought him immediate popularity. During the show's first fifteen years on the air, Uncle Dave was the biggest single attraction.

As the cast of the show grew to about twenty-five persons about the time Uncle Dave Macon joined the Opry, WSM felt that its studio had become inadequate. As a result. Studio B, much larger than the original one, was added. As was the custom in building radio studios in those days, a large plate glass window was left so that outsiders who were interested could stand in the hall and watch the show going on.

Such a window was certainly needed, because an increasing number of listeners wanted to come to the studio and see the show. But, instead of leaving them all outside to look through the window, WSM executives decided to let fifty or sixty of them come into the studio itself. This was one of the earliest live audiences who were actually admitted to a radio studio. Their presence helped to add homey, rural atmosphere to the show, and their applause added more life to the performance.

When Uncle Dave joined the show, it was still known as the WSM Barn Dance, a name which certainly added nothing to the program's distinctiveness. It kept that name for

The Late Uncle Dave Macon in His Characteristic Pose and Son Dorris Macon



"The Square Dancers" from Cedar Hill, Tennessee Square Dance on Stage During OPRY

about the first two years, and then received its new name quite inadvertently.

By that time network radio had been inaugurated with the formation of the National Broadcasting Company. WSM was one of the first network affiliates and still remains a basic affiliate of NBC.

The Barn Dance, which had now grown to a three-hour performance, kept its original eight o'clock starting time, and in that spot it followed NBC's Musical Appreciation Hour, which was conducted by the famous composer and conductor, Dr. Walter Damrosch. One evening, Dr. Damrosch said, in introducing the last number on his program:

"While most artists realize that there is no

Martha Carson, One of the Few Girl Vocalists Appearing on the OPRY

place in the classics for realism, I am going to break one of my rules and present a composition by a young composer from Iowa. This young man has sent us his latest number, which depicts the onrush of a locomotive. . . ."

The Solemn Old Judge evidently was feeling the exuberance of youth that night, so as soon as the Music Appreciation Hour was signed off and he got the signal that he was on the air, he decided to rib Dr. Damrosch a little. As he remembers it, the Judge paid his respects to Dr. Damrosch and said something like this:

"Friends, the program which just came to a close was devoted to the classics. Dr. Damrosch told us it was generally agreed that there is no place in the classics for realism. However, from here on out for the next three hours, we will present nothing but realism. It will be down to earth for the 'earthy.' In respectful contrast to Dr. Damrosch's presentation of the number which depicts the onrush of the locomotive, we will call on one of our performers, Deford Bailey with his harmonica, to give us the country version of his *Pan American Blues*."

WSM's early harmonica virtuoso played his tune about the train, and then Judge Hay took over again. He said:

"For the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from grand opera, but from now on we will present 'The Grand Ole Opry.'" The name made a favorable impression on the studio audience and the listeners alike, so it became the title of the show. So distinctive is it as a name, that it has contributed notably to the program's outstanding success.

More and more listeners wanted to see the show, but the studio was already overcrowded and the big hall outside the plate glass window was filled to capacity. It was then that WSM decided to build its auditorium studio, with a seating capacity of about five hundred and equipped with the latest accoustic materials.

The Opry fans filled the new studio, and the hundreds that couldn't get in crowded the front entrance of the National Life Building

George D. Hay, Announcing a Show on the GRAND OLE OPRY

hoping for admittance if someone in the auditorium decided to go home early.

This demonstration of the show's popularity pleased the station executives and the performers, but it brought about an incident that endangered the show itself. One Saturday night two high officials of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, owners of the station, tried to get to their offices inside the building. The eager Opry fans were wise to the ways of 'line bucking.' They refused to let the executives into their own building in the unfortunate belief that they were merely trying a ruse to get into the studio ahead of the others.

The executives were able to get inside by going to the rear entrance to be admitted by the night watchman, but the behavior of the crowd that night resulted in orders to stop admitting live audiences to the show.

The Grand Ole Opry continued on the air, but the performers and listeners missed the spark that was added by the presence and applause of the studio audience. Judge Hay and other station employees began to wonder if the show might not be taken off the air.

In recognition of the studio audience's importance to the show and in their desire to accommodate those who wanted to see the program in progress, the company executives rented the Hillsboro Theater. In its new quarters, the Grand Ole Opry regained its

previous warmth and color. The crowds filled the theater to standing room only, and many more could not be admitted.

To remedy this condition, the show was moved to a large tabernacle across the Cumberland River in East Nashville. The tabernacle's wooden benches and sawdust aisles gave the atmosphere of a camp meeting. It accommodated three thousand friendly, cheering fans. The show continued there for some time, but difficulties arose. The tabernacle simply didn't have the proper facilities for handling such a large crowd in orderly and efficient fashion.

The Opry was then moved to the state-owned War Memorial Auditorium, just across the street from the National Life Building and WSM studios. This auditorium seated eight hundred fewer persons than the tabernacle, but what it lacked in capacity it made up in the case of production of the program and in the management of the audience which it afforded.

Up to this time, tickets to the Grand Ole Opry had been given out free. Now, as a measure of gaining more control over the live audience, it was decided to charge an admission fee of twenty-five cents. This is the same basic charge for admission today, but the federal tax has increased the total to thirty cents. For the convenience of the live audience, nearly half of the seats are now reserved, and a charge of sixty cents, including federal tax. is made for reserved seats.

Picture of all the OPRY Stars Taken Some 20 Years ago in their Sunday Go to Meeting Clothes

CHAPTER IV

One of the most significant periods in the history of country music in America has been the dozen years that followed 1940. During that time this type of music reached professional maturity and achieved widespread popularity. Chiefly responsible for these developments were four obvious factors. Among the most important of these was the development of the singing star, a development that did not come to full realization until the 1940's.

It is true that Uncle Dave Macon was the Opry's first singing star and remained its greatest single attraction for fifteen years. But the basic talent unit was some kind of old-time band. After the first few years, these bands usually made use of a singer, but the singer was a part of the band and subordinated to it. He occupied about the same position with the band as the vocalist with a present day dance orchestra.

The story of the development of the modern country singing star is a part of the story of Roy Acuff, the all-time greatest singer of country music. Acuff actually represents the transition between the band featuring a singer and the singer backed by a band.

Roy Acuff and his Smoky Mountain Boys came to WSM in 1938 to try out for the Grand Ole Opry. They made the grade, but only after a couple of years and some reorganization of the band and the kind of show they put on did they make a really big hit. That reorganization gave more prominence to Acuff and his singing.

Roy had brought with him two songs that were well suited to his individual style of singing. They were a white spiritual called *The Great Speckled Bird* and a ballad called *The Wabash Cannon Ball.* Roy sang these and other songs with a zeal and fervor reminiscent of old-time camp meetings. So fervent and simple and natural were these songs and the way Roy sang them, fans said that he released emotion that was pent up within them, offering bodily gratification and spiritual peace.

Various members of Roy's band were featured as much as Roy himself. Comedy and song by Oswald, by Pap, and other members, and novelty music by the jug band, took just as important a part in each show, and they still do. Other bands of the day operated the same way. On the Opry, at the same time, were Pee Wee King and his Golden West Cowboys. They were a band with a couple of instrumentalists who doubled as singers.

Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys came to the Opry in 1939. They played old-time tunes, too, and featured the singing of Monroe himself and group singing by Monroe and several other members of the band.

But, about that time, there was another development that contributed to the growth of singing stars. Since the most important part of any folk song is the message it tells, the way it is sung has a great deal to do with its success. And since different types of stories are told best in different ways, it follows that a singer with a distinctive style can sing a particular kind of song better than other kinds—and that he possibly can sing the kind that fits his style much better than anyone else can.

Up to this point, most of the music played and sung by country musicians was taken from the great mass of folk classics with the natural alterations that kept them alive and up to date. Particular singers and instrumentalists merely specialized somewhat in those that seemed best suited to their indi-

vidual styles and that pleased them the most to perform.

However, folk musicians not only play folk music; they also create it. They always have from unrecorded time to the present. Soon Roy Acuff and others were writing their own songs, and still other musicians wrote songs with particular performers in mind. These tailor-made songs helped to make stars of the singers for whose style they were specially slanted. Examine the professional history of any country singing star today and you'll find his success began with a particular song hit with which he is probably still closely identified.

Acuff became country music's biggest star, but he had gained success first with a band, and he has kept his group that way. Eddy Arnold, on the other hand, was a guitarist and singer in Pee Wee King's band. He found a song called *Mommy Please Stay Home With Me* that so fitted his style of singing that it became extremely popular and removed him from his subalternate position with the band. He withdrew and formed his own group. This time the band was formed to support a singing star that had already been made.

Red Foley hit with *Smoke On The Water*. Ernest Tubb became a star with *I'm Walking The Floor Over You*. Cowboy Copas brought

Roy Acuff, Pap and the Boys Rehearse for a Show Back in the Late 30's

Roy Acuff, All Time Great Singing Star of the OPRY

Red Foley

out *My Filippino Baby*. George Morgan's *Candy Kisses* put him in the big time, and about the same time Little Jimmy Dickens succeeded with *Old Cold Tater*. Hank Williams followed *Love Sick Blues* into a miraculously successful singing and song-writing career, and Hank Snow got to the top with *I'm Moving On*. Carl Smith, newest of the Grand Ole Opry stars, made his entrance on *Let's Live A Little*.

Development of the singing star brought on a new phase of country music, but it was only partly responsible for the tremendous spread in the popularity of this kind of music. The second factor was increased listenership. After the Opry had been operating several years, the Federal Communications Commission designated certain frequencies as clear channels, meaning that no other radio stations would be permitted to operate on those frequencies. WSM thus became one of the clear channel stations, which meant that the station could be received without interference as far as its signal would reach.

A few years later, the station built what was then the nation's tallest radio tower, 871 feet high, increased its power to 50,000 watts, and billed itself as the Air Castle of the South. The increased power with the signal riding on a clear channel permitted the station to be heard at many points all over the nation and in some parts of Canada as well.

The increased listenership permitted the people of distant states to hear and learn to appreciate the type of country music that emanated from Nashville.

Although 50,000 watts is the highest radio power permitted in the United States, it does not provide a signal sufficiently strong to insure high quality reception in many areas remotely situated from the transmitter. So although the new power and the clear channel opened the Grand Ole Opry to many, there was plenty of room for improvement in the reception. Network radio helped to solve that problem partially.

Grand Ole Opry was begun as a part of the station's local programming, and its purpose was principally to build good will for the station and its parent company and to perpetuate the region's folk music. But any program that attracts such a broad and loyal audience is a good place for effective advertising of any type product the audience needs or uses. Certain portions of the Opry, therefore, have been sponsored from time to time since its early years. A great many of these sponsors used the show for mail-order offers and for specialized products.

One of the first of the big advertisers to recognize the sales impact of the Opry was

Little Jimmy Dickens

Ernest Tubb

Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys

the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, through its advertising agency, William Esty and Company. In January, 1939, Reynolds sponsored a half-hour portion of the Opry for Prince Albert smoking tobacco. On October 14 of the same year, that portion of the show was placed on the NBC Red Network of twenty-six stations. Since this didn't provide quite as full coverage as the sponsor wanted, transcriptions of the half-hour were made and placed on five additional stations.

Soon it was recognized that the show should be given still wider circulation. So the program went coast-to-coast July 20, 1940, with thirty-five NBC stations and the five other stations using transcriptions. More stations have been added as the network grew, until the Prince Albert portion is now carried on 176 stations with a listening audience of about ten million persons.

Shifting populations have also been an important element in spreading country music throughout the land. At the beginning of the Second World War, this type of music was most popular in the Southern region and certain sections in the Midwest. But during the next few years war workers moved to new regions where their services were needed. The Armed Services took men and women from every point in the land, mixed them in military units, and stationed them in areas often strange to them. Many who had been unfamiliar with country music moved into places where it was already popular. There some of them learned to like it. Many who remained in areas where that type of music was not popular came in touch with it through country music adherents who came into their midst as soldiers or war workers. Anyone who was in the Armed Forces will remember how

Red Foley and the Andrew Sisters at a Recording Session

many service men brought their guitars along and sang country music in barracks, forecastles, and jungle glens.

Greater coverage by the station itself, placing a portion of the Opry on the full NBC network, and the effect of shifting populations all helped to increase the popularity of the Grand Ole Opry and country music generally by making it available to more people. The fourth factor was a series of developments in what is generally termed pop music.

We usually think of folk music as being rural in origin, and most of it has been. When many of our folk classics came into being, the population of the countries from which they came was predominantly rural. Furthermore, the rural life, being more leisurely, economically more secure, and environmentally better suited to singing to oneself, is somewhat more conducive to the production of folksongs.

But folk music can be made and often is made in an urban atmosphere. In fact, it is the evolution of one strain of urban folk music that has given us today's pop music.

A group of Negroes in New Orleans and Memphis several decades ago gave birth to the blues and to jazz, of which the blues is the fundamental melody. The blues and true jazz are folk music—urban folk music. They take their melodic form, their structural patterns, their non-diatonic character from the musical language of the people of the South. In many blues tunes are the rhythm patterns of the square dance or hoedown, as in *Stackolee*. Similar rhythm patterns have also come from the natural environmental variations of European ballads, old hymns, and spirituals, which were themselves Negro folk music of slavery days. Examples of blues songs derived from such sources are *Trouble in Mind*, *St. James Infirmary*, and *Careless Love*.

Blues music is a rich folk expression, often sad and often bitter, with its imagery drawn from the real or vicarious experiences of the people who made the music. They sang of the adversities of love, as in *St. Louis Blues*, *Careless Love*, and *Ain't Gonna Play Second Fiddle;* of great natural phenomena from which they suffered, such as fire and floods, as in *Backwater Blues;* of railroads and steamboats, and of gamblers and bandits who represented to them personal rebellion against the social and economic restrictions under which they lived, just as their ancestors had expressed their resentment to slavery in the far less realistic Biblical imagery of the spirituals.

In their urban environment, the makers of blues and jazz had available musical instruments different from those of the rural folk musicians. They had trumpets, clarinets and saxophones that combined with the blue notes and other distinctive characteristics to give their music a new sound.

Jazz, of course, soon broke out of its birthplace. It spread across the nation. People of other races and other backgrounds and environments began playing it and began composing in the jazz idiom. The new influences naturally brought changes in jazz, since music changes with the times and conditions and

Ernest Tubb Urging Audience Applause on Martha White Program

George Morgan Gives a Few Pointers to Newlyweds June Carter and Carl Smith

backgrounds of the people it serves.

The makers of jazz, who had begun as amateurs, turned professional and were able to make a living from their music. Everywhere there were new demands for jazz music, jazz musicians, and jazz singers. Then something happened, over a period of years, that took the virility, the vibrant human factor from the music we now know as popular music. Here is the explanation, expressed succinctly by Sidney Finkelstein, one of the foremost music critics, in his book on jazz:

"As the music industry became more monopolized, as radio, sound pictures, the electric phonograph records made the music producing industry a center of large capital investment, the tendency was to avoid the interplay of artist and audience that makes for active entertainment and great art, and to substitute a pseudo-entertainment depending largely on shallow novelty offered to a passive, undemanding audience. Music was keyed down to the minimum that would be acceptable to everybody, and consequently had little meaning for anybody. Tune producers no longer depended on public approval. Tie-ups were made with singers, bands, and song-pluggers, with radio and Hollywood, controlling songs before they were written, and song writers had to turn out the tunes according to specifications as if they were producing frankfurters. Radio and juke box destroyed the economic base for the small band. The factory-produced popular tunes overwhelmed the blues, rags, and folk song germs with a harmonic idiom taken from nineteenth century concert music."*

The general public was little aware of this gradual change in the great body of music they heard every day. Pretty tunes, often with catchy lyrics, catapulted into great popularity and disappeared a few months later just as rapidly. The main indication that the public suspected the deterioration of popular music was to be found in their critical remarks about silly lyrics.

But as the folksongs, both old and new, from the Grand Ole Opry and other sources reached increasingly greater numbers, many devotees of popular music found themselves captivated by the country singer whose song told a story in simple, honest terms and often in words of great strength and simple beauty. They found warmth in the untrained voice speaking directly to the listener in fresh imagery.

The public didn't stop to think that a man who goes to work at nine o'clock every morning to write songs, who rests his elbows on his piano keyboard while he seeks inspiration for a new money-making tune cannot compete in musical quality with the strength and freshness of a country troubadour who expresses an honest, sincere emotion as he tells the story of a new life experience in terms familiar yet strangely new.

Lazy Jim Day, The Singing News Man, Wears Ordinary Farm Overalls

* *Jazz: A People's Music*, by Sidney Finkelstein, 1948, Citadel Press.

An excellent example of true country music as opposed to the synthetic Broadway imitations is Hank Williams' *Ramblin' Man*:

RAMBLIN' MAN[1]

Hank Williams

I can settle down and be doing just fine
Till I hear an old train rolling down the line
Then I hurry straight home and pack
And if I didn't go I believe I'd blow my stack
I love you, baby, but you gotta understand
When the Lord made me He made a

.MBLIN' MAN
)me folks might say that I'm no good
hat I wouldn't settle down if I could
it when that open road starts to calling me
here's something o'er the hill that I gotta see
)metimes it's hard but you gotta understand
'hen the Lord made me He made a

RAMBLIN' MAN
I love to see the towns a passing by
And to ride these rails 'neath God's blue sky
Let me travel this land from the mountains to the sea
'Cause that's the life I believe He meant for me
And when I'm gone and at my grave you stand
Just say God's called home your

Is it any wonder then that the nation, and many beyond its shores, have turned to country music? Is it any wonder that juke boxes from the Atlantic to the Pacific are well stocked with records by Grand Ole Opry stars? It is any wonder that the top tunes on the pop lists for the past several years have been recordings of country tunes?

With this increasing crossover of country songs into the pop lists, we may be seeing the beginning of the erasure of that artificial division between country and popular music.

CHAPTER V

The most controversial feature of country music is the untrained quality of the singing voice. This quality is demanded by the adherents of country music and vehemently decried by its detractors. But there are some fundamental reasons for it.

The purpose of all music is to establish fresh and direct communication between the performer and the listener. The criterion of musical quality is how well the music conveys the message it was intended to tell. In country music, the emotion, idea, or story is usually expressed by a singer, for the human voice is the first and most important instrument of folk music. The trained singing voice is capable of producing beautiful tones, but beautiful tones are not the primary object of folk songs. The trained voice is a product of concert music. It hangs its tones neatly and accurately on the notes of the diatonic scales. But folk music will not be confined to the vocal limitations of the chromatic scale. It is a music in which the voice is free to tell its story in the manner most effective, and the beauty of it depends upon strength and vigor, the expressiveness which comes of contrast of the familiar and the strange. This music needs a voice that reflects the forcefulness and personality of its possessor rather than the respectably cultured atmosphere of conservatory halls.

On the Grand Ole Opry there are voices of many types ranging from the completely untrained to those who have had a little musical training. Red Foley and George Morgan both have had a smattering of musical training. They both have more of a tendency to "sing sweet" than other members of the Opry. The songs they normally sing, and the songs they sing best, are the country tunes that are more nearly diatonic in structure. They are both properly classified as country singers, however, because of the folk nature of the songs they sing, the genial, earthy personality exhibited in their singing, and the genuine sincerity they project.

This simple earnestness, sincerity, and humility are the first requisites of a successful country singer. In virtually all branches of show business, irrational temperament of the stars is taken for granted. But this is not true in country music. The very nature of the art they practice demands that they be simple in their manner, genial, friendly, and unpretentious. Success in the profession never results in a swell head, for that would be out of character for a country musician. The public would no longer accept him, and neither would his fellow performers. And it is significant that this is not simply an adopted pattern of behavior but an honest, sincere way of life that comes to him naturally from his background and upbringing.

One would think that the money that comes with success would make it difficult for country musicians to maintain their simple folk ways. But they have little trouble with this, too, despite the fact that the top country musicians on the Grand Ole Opry make up to $300,000 a year from their various sources of income.

Most of the artists have come from families of low income. When they achieve success that brings in more money than they have ever known before, naturally they want to buy things they have always desired. And most of them do, with a minimum of ostentation. Among the first things they buy are

Cowboy Copas in his Western Suit and Elaborate Cowboy Boots

expensive clothes, plenty of them, and in many cases very fancy. This is permitted them by their public, because fancy clothes are the uniform of the profession. Many of them buy diamond rings and other jewelry, and nearly every one of the really successful buys at least one long shiny Cadillac.

So long as the performers retain their unassuming, genial manner, the public seems to get a vicarious pleasure out of their success and the worldly goods that it brings to them.

The high-powered automobiles, of course, are considered a part of the necessary equipment for country music stars, for a large part of their business is traveling widely over the country and even into other countries to make personal appearances. In addition to their desire to own fine automobiles, they want large cars to accommodate more passengers and insure riding comfort on their many long trips.

Colorful clothes are even more necessary in their profession, for virtually all country musicians wear some kind of distinctive clothes.

Generally, the clothes fall into two groups: hillbilly type clothing and cowboy apparel. Basic garment of the hillbilly outfit is the plaid shirt, either cotton or wool. This is normally combined with ordinary trousers or overalls, conventional shoes, either high top or low quarter. Headgear usually consists of caps or conventional felt hats.

The cowboy get-up, on the other hand, presents a completely different picture. No one ever saw a cow puncher wear anything like it. The basic part of it is a pair of authentic high-heeled fancy Western boots and a ten-gallon hat. Between is a hand-tailored wool suit with a tight-fitting coat and pockets with piping of contrasting color forming arrows and similar designs. The coats also have varying amounts of embroidery ranging from abstract designs to musical notes.

The fancy cowboy costume was originated in Hollywood. Back in the time of silent Western films, in the days of William S. Hart and Tom Mix and Buck Jones, movie cowboys wore the same kind of clothes that were actually worn on the range—big hat, work shirt, tight-legged trousers with chaps, high-heeled boots, and a big handkerchief around the neck. But when sound movies and other developments brought on the singing cowboy, he had to be glamorized. Hollywood costume designers borrowed from the Mexican *rancheros* across the border the fancy pockets and embroidery that appeared on the *chaquete* or short jacket. With these designs as decorations they made fancy shirts for their singing heroes. As more singing cowboys came upon the scene, the costume designers soon were vying with one another for fancier suits. They adopted the Mexican *chaquete* itself with some modification, and within a short time they had converted it to a full-length suit coat, retaining all the embroidery and other decorations.

To keep in the height of singing cowhand fashions, just about all the Western musicians ordered complete wardrobes of latest design.

Western music and hillbilly music are substantially the same, so there has always been much mixing of its performers. The cowboy singers so outshone the hillbillies with their fancy costumes that many of the hillbilly performers discarded their plaid shirts and overalls for the new duds. Now you can't tell from their clothes who came from where, and both types of singers sing the same songs too.

Ernest Tubb and Moon Mullican are from Texas and Cowboy Copas is from Oklahoma. They wear fancy Western clothes, but no more elaborate than those worn by Hank Williams, who is from Alabama, Little Jimmy Dickens, who is from the mountains of West Virginia, and Hank Snow, from Canada.

Hank Williams has a wide variety of costumes of Western design. One is lavender with fringe reminiscent of the old buckskin jacket and spattered with sequins. Two others, one blue and the other white, have embroidery forming the first few measures of his first big hit song.

Jimmy Dickens' costumes are often two-toned. The outstanding feature, though, is the sterling silver toes of his sharp-pointed high-heeled cowboy boots.

Carl Smith, from Maynardville, Tennessee,

Little Jimmie Dickens, Guitar, Purple and Creme Shirt

also wore Western clothes during most of his first year at WSM, but he cast them off after he and Ernest Tubb turned up on the same show one night in exactly the same style costume. Since that time Carl has been wearing informal sport-type suits with loud ties. He said he noticed the approval of the audiences at once after he discarded the fancy cowboy togs.

Red Foley, from Kentucky, wears a plantation-owner type white Stetson hat, with a conservative plaid shirt, ordinary slacks, and short boots. Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys, also from Kentucky, wear the same type of hats, plain shirts, and riding breeches with riding boots. George Morgan, from Middle Tennessee, wears only casual sports clothes.

Roy Acuff, from Maynardville, Tennessee, often wears a conservative plaid shirt, but the distinguishing mark of his clothes is his large collection of handpainted ties. The members of his group dress in a variety of ordinary hill country clothing.

The original old-time bands also dress in ordinary clothing that might be seen on any farm or small-town street corner.

Although their costumes are a great deal alike and their detractors often say they all sound alike, each country singing star has his own individual style. Acuff holds his head and shoulders back and sings zealously and expressively. Hank Williams assumes a crouching position as he strums his guitar and sings with sincere emotion, filling his lines with blue notes. He ascribes the blue notes and similar characteristics of his style to the fact that an Alabama Negro taught him to play the guitar when he was a child.

Hank Snow depends largely upon a fast singing style. The songs he writes and those he selects from other songwriters always have about three times as many words to the line as other songs. Little Jimmy Dickens seems to keep every muscle in constant motion as he sings in a clear shouting voice. Ernest Tubb keeps his baritone voice in the lower register and usually sings songs of a slow tempo in a monotonous Texas drawl.

Red Foley and George Morgan both have smooth voices that tend to sweet singing, but they keep the folk expressiveness with a genial warmth of personality that comes through every line. Carl Smith's style is the straightforward singing of a country troubadour. Cowboy Copas sings with a full, rich, but untrained voice. Bill Monroe has a high tenor voice which he usually seems to pitch into falsetto.

Roy Acuff Balances Fiddle While Oswald Plays Jug. Roy is Wearing His Typical Striped Pants, Plaid Shirt and Hand Painted Tie

The individual style determines to a large extent the type of songs each singer selects. The songs that are popular on the Grand Ole Opry fall into three general categories: Sentimental songs, novelty songs, and songs with various degrees of religious significance.

Sentimental songs include those that deal with love and romance, such as Pee Wee King's *Tennessee Waltz* and Hank Williams' *Cold, Cold Heart*, as well as those concerning nostalgic memories of people, places, or events, and tragic war stories.

Novelty songs include those that poke fun at conditions, customs, or situations, such as the one Jimmie Dickens sings about *Keep Them Cold Feet Over On The Other Side;* and songs that burlesque another song or style of music, such as *Let's Live A Little No.* 2 and the various other Number 2 songs so frequently sung by Lonzo and Oscar to poke good-natured fun at their fellow stars on the Opry and the songs they sing seriously and sincerely.

Stringbean, Playing One of the Few Banjo's Used on the OPRY

There are many songs of religious significance in country music, for the spirituals originated by the Negroes during slavery, white spirituals originated by country folk, and some hymns are true folk expressions of a segment of the people who share a deep religious conviction, despite their desire for jollity and merrymaking. These vary from such songs as *The Great Speckled Bird*, so closely identified with Roy Acuff, to *Peace In The Valley, Just A Closer Walk With Thee*, and *Where Can I Go But To The Lord.*

So closely are some of their songs identified with a particular singer and his individual singing style that no one else on the Grand Ole Opry would dare sing them. This stems from two reasons. They respect the song as something that more or less belongs to him, and they know their own rendition would compare unfavorably in the judgment of the audience. No other singer than Jimmy Dickens would sing *Old Cold Tater.* Only Hank Williams sings *Cold, Cold Heart* and *Lovesick Blues* on the Opry and in personal appearances. They all leave *The Great Speckled Bird* to Roy Acuff and *Candy Kisses* to George Morgan, *I'm Walking the Floor Over You* to Ernest Tubb, and *I'm Moving On* to Hank Snow.

To get a place on the Grand Ole Opry is the ultimate aim of the country musician, for that means he has arrived at the top of big time country music. The best way to get that spot is for the aspirant to get the attention of WSM's program director, Jack Stapp, whom *Time* Magazine called the Rudolph Bing of Grand Ole Opry, and convince him that he has the potentialities of developing into a finished country performer.

Simplest way to do this is to attend the regular weekly auditions held at WSM. Stapp's attention is sometimes called to promising performers at other stations by some of the Grand Ole Opry stars and by visiting song pluggers. This often results in a special

Jack Stapp, WSM's Program Director

audition for the recommended performer.

Regardless of how a potential star comes to the attention of WSM, if he has a distinctive individual style, seems sincere and forceful, Stapp often will give him some guest spots on regular shows and perhaps his own early morning show in order to give him an opportunity to develop. In the course of a year, he should have gained in popularity and improved sufficiently in style and performance to prove his worth. If he has not, he probably will have shown conclusively that he is lacking in some necessary quality and that he will never find his way to the top.

In auditioning new performers, Stapp will consider the authenticity of the instrument the artist plays almost as much as the singing style, for the accompaniment must be restricted to folk instruments. Folk instruments for country music are those that are often found in rural homes, that can be played for accompaniment to singing without requiring much formal training. These are mainly stringed instruments, such as the banjo, the fiddle, the zither or similar small harps, the guitar, the bass fiddle, the mandolin, etc.

In the early years of the Grand Ole Opry, the banjo was quite widely used by folk artists, but it has gradually been supplanted by the guitar. Uncle Dave Macon accompanied his singing with a banjo 26 years. Stringbean, one of the featured artists on the Prince Albert portion of the Opry, plays a banjo, as do several of the musicians in the four original old-time bands. But just about all the top singers accompany themselves with a guitar.

The Spanish guitar, known as the "take-off" guitar by the country musicians, came into use from Mexico by way of the cowboy singers. As the Western singers and hillbilly artists mixed, the guitar was adopted by the hillbillies along with the Western costumes, for it was somewhat more versatile, somewhat easier to play, and traditionally more in keeping with sentimental songs than the banjo seemed to be.

When electronic developments produced the electric guitar, the Grand Ole Opry and similar programs permitted its use. The electric

Joe Talbot (seated), an Attorney, Plays the Electric Guitar with Hank Snow's Band

guitar gave substantially the same tones but added volume and versatility needed in personal appearances and was more adaptable to broadcast conditions. The electric steel guitar, often consisting of two or three banks of strings mounted on a flat board, was also admitted. The country musicians often refer to this instrument as a "double barrelled biscuit board." Just as modern developments and changing environment bring and justify changes in the folk songs themselves, so are changes in the instruments brought about.

Nevertheless, some folk artists believe that the instrumentation should be restricted to the instruments in use years ago. For that reason, Roy Acuff will not permit an electric guitar to be used in his troupe.

Likewise, drums are never used in authentic country bands and are never permitted on Grand Ole Opry. Instead, the bass fiddle is used as a percussion instrument. Pee Wee King, who is no longer on the Grand Ole Opry, has added drums to his Golden West Cowboys band. When he and his group make guest appearances on Grand Ole Opry or other country music programs on WSM, the drummer gets a holiday. Although drums are among the oldest folk instruments in many civilizations, they were not used by the folk from whom our present day country music stemmed.

No brasses or woodwinds are permitted. The nearest approach to a woodwind instrument is the harmonica, which was played in the early days of the Opry by Dr. Humphrey

Bate and DeFort Bailey and is played today by Jimmie Riddle of Roy Acuff's Band. The accordion is also used often.

The piano is permitted in country music, because it is an instrument for home use. It is used on the Grand Ole Opry for accompaniment of vocal quartets such as the Old Hickory Singers and the Jordanaires. And one featured Opry singer, Moon Mullican, is noted as a hot hillbilly pianist as well as a singer.

After Program Director Jack Stapp satisfies himself with the singing style of a new Opry aspirant, he also checks into his ability to talk and read effectively. The informal nature of country music makes it desirable for the entertainer to act as master of ceremonies very often—and he must be able to read effctively so that he may help to deliver the commercial announcements for his sponsors' products.

The original purpose of the Grand Ole Opry was not commercial, but the show's large audience and its sales impact upon the listeners made it a busy market place for all manner of products. For years now, prospective sponsors have been lined up four or five deep waiting for commercial time to become available on the Opry. Since the show is so successful as a sales medium, there is little turnover in sponsors of the various segments of the program.

This condition resulted several years ago in repeated requests from the prospective sponsors that the show be started earlier in the day to make more time available. WSM management did not want to expand the Opry itself beyond its four-and-one-half-hour span. Instead, a group of individual "pre-Opry" shows were begun in the station's auditorium studio, which accommodates a live audience of about five hundred persons. These shows, featuring Grand Ole Opry artists, begin at 5:15 Saturday afternoon and last till 7:30, when the Opry begins at the Ryman Auditorium.

The pre-Opry shows were still not sufficient to satisfy the sponsorship demand, and WSM found it necessary to spot a few country type shows on Friday night, featuring Grand Ole Opry stars. Finally, in the fall of 1951, the individual Friday night shows were unified as different segments of a big country show with a common name—The Friday Night Frolic. This show originates in the auditorium studio from 7:00 to 9:30 and plays to a live audience limited to the studio's capacity of about five hundred.

Ernie Newton Plays a Bass Fiddle, Used as a Percussion Instrument in Country Bands

Some of the sponsors on these extra shows are waiting for an opportunity for time on the Opry itself. Others already have time on the Opry and are using the other shows for added effect.

The results achieved by some of the sponsors on both the Opry and the pre-Opry shows make fabulous stories of success. The R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company has used the Opry to sell Prince Albert smoking tobacco for thirteen years. Royal Crown Cola is now in its eleventh year of sponsorship and counts among its results the introduction of its trade name into the folk music of the nation with the song called *Give Me an RC Cola, a Moon Pie, and Play Maple on the Hill.*

When Royal-Barry Carter Mills began ad-

vertising Martha White Flour on WSM in 1946, it was a small company with fairly local distribution. Now the product has good distribution in eighteen states. In merchandising the product to their retail outlets, the company uses this slogan: "Early to bed and early to rise, work like hell, and advertise on the Grand Ole Opry."

Jefferson Island Salt Company officials expressed their reaction this way: "With one WSM Grand Ole Opry half hour a week, this advertising has shown the greatest sales increase in the history of the Jefferson Island Salt Company."

To test WSM audience interest at a different hour from that of their program, Jefferson Island Salt Company bought a one-minute commercial spot announcement for one time only at 7:00 P.M. in September, 1951, and offered a free picture of Little Jimmy Dickens, who stars on their portion of the Opry. They got 24,984 replies.

The Warren Paint Company bought a portion of the Opry to increase their distribution. At the end of three years, their dealership in the Central South had increased eighty-two percent.

O'Bryan Brothers, a manufacturer of work clothing, bought a half hour of pre-Opry time. At the end of two years, their sales had increased twenty-four percent, although they had been in business eighty-five years.

The General Shoe Corporation bought a half hour pre-Opry show to sell their Cedarcrest work shoes. By the end of the first year, their sales in the WSM area had increased seventy-three percent. By the end of the second year, the increase reached ninety-six percent.

Because of WSM's broad coverage, most of its sponsors are manufacturers or wholesale distributors. But the Station has one retail advertiser. That's Harvey's, a department store that was established in Nashville in 1941. Its owner, Fred Harvey, was not content with the Nashville market alone, so he used WSM to talk to an area twelve times the size of Nashville. In ten years his store expanded from the original thirty-five foot front to four buildings with a frontage of about three hundred feet, and his business volume from half a million dollars to more than eleven million dollars a year.

The station also has one large mail-order account. Mr. Otis Carter has been selling baby chicks by mail over WSM for fifteen years. Mr. Carter has a half hour pre-Opry show. In the fall of 1951, he sold all the chicks he had, so he needed something else to sell on his program. All he had was a pasture full of white face cattle, so he put them up for sale on the radio. Just two programs did the trick. He sold $51,592.00 worth of sirloin on the hoof. But Mr. Carter wasn't surprised. He merely said: "Anyone can sell a farmer anything he needs over WSM."

Irving Waugh, Commercial Manager and Tom Harrison of the Commercial Department Talk Over Station Time with a Prospective Buyer.

Ernest Tubb Discusses a Personal Appearance with WSM Artists and Services Bureau Chief Jim Denny

CHAPTER VI

The people themselves make country music, for it is the flowering into song of the events in their daily lives—their hopes, their joys, and their fears. But it is only some of them —the more articulate in word and melody— who crystallize these things into a people's music. The men who write the songs and those who sing them—often one and the same person—are the instruments through which the lives and lore of the people are released.

These instruments of folk music have until fairly modern times been the men and women who spoke in the musical language of the people mostly for the personal enjoyment of musical expression. And this was indeed true during the first few years the Grand Ole Opry was on the air. Uncle Jimmy Thompson fiddled that first hour and many hours on succeeding Saturday nights because he liked to play the fiddle, and he liked to be heard by many. The fiddlers, banjo pickers and guitarists that besieged WSM soon afterward were people who wanted to play for the enjoyment it gave them, and also for the novelty of having played on the radio. And it was some time before payment for performance on the

The Present Day Gully Jumpers Led by Fiddlin' Sid Harkreader, Center, Tom Andrews (left) and Burt Hutvherson (right)

Early Picture of the Possum Hunters: (left to right) Walter Liggett, Stanley Walton, Oscar Stone, Buster Bate (Dr. Bate's Son)

The Fruit Jar Drinkers

The Crook Brothers

Grand Ole Opry was expected by the talent or considered advisable by the station management.

In time, however, most of those who had sufficient talent became either professional or semi-professional. For our present purposes we may consider a professional folk musician as one who depends upon the performance of his art for a living, while a semi-professional is one engaged primarily in some other type of work but who is paid for occasional performances, such as a farmer who appears on Grand Ole Opry on Saturday night.

Several groups who fall into the semi-professional category are regular performers on the Gand Ole Opry today. They are principally the four instrumental groups who began in the early days of the Opry twenty-seven years ago. Their members work at various jobs during the week, but they never miss a Saturday night on the show, and they are paid for their appearance.

The first of these groups was the Possum Hunters, which was organized and led by Dr. Humphrey Bate. In fact, the band consisted of Dr. Bate, several of his neighbors, his thirteen-year-old daughter, Alcyone, and his son, Humphrey Bate, Jr., called Buster. Some months later they were joined by Oscar Stone, a fiddler, who became the leader of the group upon the death of Dr. Bate in 1936. Present members of the band include Alcyone, who is a housewife, Oscar Albright, Staley Walton, Noel Scruggs, Alonzo Apple, and George Presley.

The Gulley Jumpers band remained intact for many years. It was led by Paul Warmack, an automobile mechanic. Warmack played a guitar. Charley Arrington, a farmer, played fiddle. Bert Hutcherson, a wood worker, played guitar; and Roy Hardison, another garage mechanic, played banjo. Warmack and Hutcherson still perform regularly with Thomas Andrews, Clifton Beard and Sidney

Harkreader, the present Gulley Jumpers.

The Fruit Jar Drinkers also remained intact for many years. Grandpappy George Wilkerson, a fiddler, is their leader. Claude Lampley plays guitar, and Tommy Leffew mandolin. H. J. Ragsdale, the original bass fiddle player, has been replaced by Hubert Gregory. Wilkerson and Lampley are garage mechanics and Tommy Leffew is a barber.

Herman Crook, a tobacco worker who rolls "twist" tobacco, is the leader of the Crook Brothers band. His brother, who was a co-leader in the early years of the Opry, left the band long ago, but the name was retained because it had already been established. Present members, in addition to Herman Crook, are Lewis Crook (no relation to Herman), Basil Gentry, Blythe Poteet, Willian. A. Cantrell, and G. P. Stewart. In addition to these, Sam and Kirk McGee form an old-time twosome, with one playing the guitar and the other the banjo and both singing.

These groups are the principal performers who remain semi-professional. Many of them could have become professional, but for one reason or another they preferred to keep following their original occupation. Herman Crook, for example, is a tobacco worker who makes about forty dollars a week at piece work when he works full time. Yet he said he declined to go professional in the country music field many years ago because it would have kept him away from home too much.

Many performers who came to the Grand Ole Opry after it had been operating for some years were already professional when they were accepted for the show. The greatest of these is Roy Acuff.

ROY ACUFF

As the Caruso of country singers, Roy Acuff has a larger and more loyal following than the great Enrico ever had. In eighteen years, his recordings of country songs have sold more than twenty-five million copies. American soldiers stationed in Europe voted him more popular than Frank Sinatra. And although he was not elected governor of Tennessee when he ran in 1948, more people are said to have listened to his campaign speeches than to those of any other candidate in the state's history.

Roy Acuff

In Washington's Constitution Hall, a capacity audience paid $6.60 top to hear a country music program starring Acuff. When he packed seventeen thousand shouting fans into Venice Pier in California, officials feared it would collapse.

In the center of the country music world, Nashville, Tennessee, Roy is really a king. He puts on five radio shows weekly on WSM, makes frequent television appearances, has a road company that makes as much as five thousand dollars a working night, operates one of the largest music publishing firms in the business in conjunction with songwriter, Fred Rose, and owns and operates a resort called Dunbar Cave, which includes a large lake, a $75,000 swimming pool, restaurant, dance floors, concessions, and a one-hundred-room hotel.

Roy was born and brought up on a farm near Maynardville, Tennessee, in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. His father, a preacher, and his mother played the fiddle and sang for their own enjoyment and relaxation. Roy thus learned to fiddle at an early age. He was a skillful baseball player and planned to play professional baseball, but a serious illness kept him from fulfilling a contract. After he recovered, he joined a medicine show. Later he played in a country band on two radio stations in Knoxville and then organized his own band. He joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1938.

Roy sings serious songs, many of them reli-

gious in nature. He sings with shouting zeal and great emotion and so projects himself into the song that tears sometime roll down his cheeks from the sadness of the story.

Many of his songs he wrote himself. Among the most popular of his records are *The Great Speckled Bird*, *The Night Train to Memphis*, and *The Wabash Cannon Ball*.

Roy dresses in a modest plaid shirt and slacks for most of his performances, preferring to appear in a garb that might be worn on any Tennessee farm or small-town street rather than adopt the fancy cowboy costume so many folk singers wear. He has a large collection of hand-painted neckties. Other members of his group, the jug band and the La Croix sisters, a vocal trio, dress in traditional mountain costume, with the comedians of the show in exaggerated hillbilly dress.

Roy is married. He and his wife, Mildred, have an eight-year-old son, Roy Neal.

BILL MONROE

Bill Monroe joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1939, together with his band which he calls the Blue Grass Boys. Although Bill himself is the featured singer, several other members of the group are also featured, both singly and together with Bill, as a quartet.

Bill Monroe was born in Rosine, Kentucky, one of eight brothers and sisters. He began as a singer in church when he was a small boy, and this may have some bearing on the fact that a great many of the songs his group sing have considerable religious significance. Other than sacred songs, he depends largely upon his state's stock of old-time folk tunes and some of his own compositions. He sings fewer new songs than most of the Opry artists. In addition to their playing and singing, the group is capable of some good country comedy acts, which they present in personal appearances more often than on the radio. Bill has sold more than 6,000,000 phonograph records.

Bill plays a mandolin expertly and is the possessor of a fine tenor voice, which he often pitches into a high falsetto, especially when singing in the group.

This group wears neither Western costumes

Bill Monroe

nor hillbilly garb. Instead they wear large white hats like Kentucky plantation owners, plaid shirts, riding pants and riding boots.

Bill owns a large farm in Kentucky, where he raises walking horses and game roosters as a hobby in addition to the normal operation of the farm.

He and his group make many personal appearances, usually traveling in a large bus. During the summer months they are accompanied by Bill's professional baseball team, which he calls the Blue Grass Ball Club. They are a well trained, fast team which plays local teams wherever Bill and the band are appearing.

MINNIE PEARL

When a tall blonde girl races to the microphone each Saturday night and yells "HOW-DEE! I'm just so proud to be hyere!" the audience calls back "HOW-DEE!" and settles down for a lot of laughs. For that's the opening for Minnie Pearl, America's foremost country-style comedienne.

Sarah Ophelia Colley, a native of Centerville, Tennessee, tried teaching drama after graduating from Ward Belmont, a fashionable finishing school, but finally decided to become a country-style comedienne. She hit upon the name of Minnie Pearl for her comic character and presented her to the Opry. Since the early 1930's, the coy yet boisterous, boy-crazy Minnie, who never gives up trying to land a "feller," has made her appearances


W S
GRAND OLE OPRY

Red Foley

Minnie Pearl

in a bright yellow organdy dress, white lisle stockings, a square black pocketbook, flat-heeled Mary Jane slippers with loose straps, and an ancient flat straw skimmer trimmed with flowers and bits of fruit.

Bubbling with good humor and gossip about the "doins" in her home town of Grinders Switch, Minnie Pearl has piled up an enviable record at every one of her personal appearances, for she always draws a capacity audience. Her cheery monologues are presented frequently at hospitals and benefits or wherever a friendly show is needed. She also makes frequent guest appearances on network radio and television shows.

Minnie Pearl is married to Henry Cannon, owner of a private airline, who frequently flies some of the Opry troupes on their personal appearance tours. They make their home in Nashville where she is also active in civic and community affairs.

RED FOLEY

Long before he became known as the Grand Ole Opry star, Red Foley was making music as a tiny boy in his home town of Berea, Kentucky. He received his first guitar at a very early age and began picking out folk tunes. While in high school, Red began taking vocal lessons and at the age of seventeen won the Atwater Kent singing contest. Later, in a state competition when Red forgot the words, he stopped completely to ask the piano player what the lyrics were. The judges were so impressed with his completely unselfconscious showmanship that they awarded him a prize. After high school, Red studied at Georgetown College, and it was there that a talent scout hired him for the Chicago Barn Dance.

Red, along with several other entertainers, including the Duke of Paducah, organized the Renfro Valley Show. From there Red came to WSM and his present starring spot on the NBC portion of the Opry.

Besides his radio work, Red has recorded many hits that stay consistently among the best-selling folk records. He has made television appearances on several network shows.

Red has a warm pleasing voice that reflects his genial personality and gives a richer folk effect to the songs he sings. The songs he likes to sing the most and sings the best are those that fall more nearly into the pattern of the chromatic scale, for he "sings sweeter" than most of the Grand Ole Opry stars. He accompanies himself on the guitar but has his own band, consisting of Tommy Jackson, fiddle; Ernie Newton, base fiddle; Grady Martin, guitar; Jimmy Selph, guitar and singer; and Elbert McEwen, accordion. Jimmy Selph, Ernie Newton, and Red often sing together, especially songs of religious significance.

Red has sold more than 11,000,000 phonograph records. His first big hit was *Smoke On The Water*. Other top hits were *Peace in The Valley*, *Alabama Jubilee*, *Our Lady of Fatima*, *Steal Away*, *Cincinnati Dancing Pig*, *Tennessee Border* and many others. His recording of *Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy* was the top country disc of 1950. He was also declared the top folk artist that year.

In addition to his singing, Red is noted for his Keepsake Album, a collection of poems and readings expressing homespun philosophy. On his radio programs, he often reads from the Keepsake Album.

Red dresses conservatively for a country singer. He wears the wide-brimmed white hat of the Kentucky plantation owner, a modest plaid shirt and short boots.

The singer and his three daughters live in a large home in one of Nashville's best resi-

Cowboy and Cathy Copas

dential sections. The daughters, Shirley Lee, 18, Julie Ann, 14, and Jennie Lou, 10, sometimes sing with their father. They have made several Christmas song records together. Mrs. Foley, the former Eva Overstake, died in 1951.

COWBOY COPAS

Cowboy Copas has an authentic cowhand background, for he grew up on his father's ranch near Moskogee, Oklahoma. His entire family was musically inclined, and his career in the folk music field actually began when he was a small boy and taught himself to play the old songs of the West on his Mother's guitar.

When he was only eleven years old, Copas entered a child's talent contest program on a radio station in Tulsa. He sang *Red River Valley*, and the cards and letters that poured in made him second place winner in the contest.

Later on, he moved with his family to Ohio and there he began playing and singing at parties and square dances while still attending school. When he was fourteen years old, he began regular appearances on the radio and played one-night performances at county fairs and other gatherings. Since that time he has performed on more than two hundred radio stations in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Cowboy Copas joined the Grand Ole Opry in January 1946. He became a big star when he hit with *My Filippino Baby*, which he still uses as a theme song. He records for King, having sold more than 4,000,000 records. Among his most popular have been *You're Living A Lie, Strange Little Girl, Copy Cat* and many others.

Copas is more than six feet tall and slender, with a look about him that suggests outdoor living. He has a friendly smile and a genial voice that carries a great deal of warmth. He wears the traditional Western singer costume, with ten gallon hat and boots.

The musical tradition is continuing in his own immediate family, for his attractive blonde daughter, Kathy, now sings with him on many of his radio programs and personal appearances.

JIMMY DICKENS

Little Jimmy Dickens is definitely the smallest star on the Grand Ole Opry, and he probably has the loudest voice of any man his size in the entertainment field. He is only four feet and eleven inches tall, but every inch of him helps to make up a dynamo of energy and a captivating personality.

Jimmy was born in Raleigh County, West Virginia, near Bolt, and was brought up on a farm. When he was seventeen years old, he entered radio in Beckley, West Virginia, where his big voice and friendly smile made him a local success. From there he went to stations in Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Cincinnati, Ohio.

Jimmy joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1948, and within a short time he had become a nationwide favorite for his performances both on the air and in personal appearances.

The songs that Jimmy sings most are those reminiscent of rural customs and the country way of life, some serious, some humorous. Best example of this is the song that first made him famous: *Old Cold Tater*. It harks back to childhood days when he had to wait to eat at the second table on Sunday when the preacher came for dinner at his house, and his mother said: "Jim, take a 'tater and wait." Similar songs that he has made famous and recorded for Columbia are *Sleepin' At The Foot Of The Bed, The Galvanized Washing Tub* (a familiar bathing vessel), *Get Them Cold Feet Over On The Other Side*, etc.

Others of slightly different nature but equally successful are *Bessie The Heifer, I'm Little But I'm Loud*, and *It May Be Silly, But Ain't It Fun*. Like all other folk artists, he also sings religious songs. One of his latest is *They Locked God Outside The Iron Curtain*.

During his performances, Jimmy is a diminutive cowboy. He wears a smaller version of the traditional Western garb, usually two-toned. He wears cowboy boots, and his favorite pair have sterling silver toes.

As his loud voice goes into action, he pats his foot vigorously, jumps and bounces in time with the music. He never loses his infectious smile, and his eyes twinkle with good

Little Jimmy Dickens

humor. Between his turns at the microphone, he is usually engaged in some spontaneous comic routine with other members of the cast.

Jimmy is married, but he has no children. He and his wife live in a modest home in Nashville's suburbs. He keeps a horse and is fond of riding and hunting.

LEW CHILDRE

One of radio's outstanding personalities, Lew Childre, has been in radio almost since it first came into existence. This fact, as well as his remarkable ability for making friends easily, has given him a tremendous following throughout the United States. He has a style that is different from anyone else in radio. No matter what he says or does on stage, the crowd always laughs, for the "Boy from Alabam' " is just naturally funny.

From the moment he starts his theme song, to his own guitar accompaniment, the audience knows he's going to present a good show. Lew has been in show business all his life and his wide experience includes working on radio stations in New Orleans, Dallas, Mexico, and Wheeling.

Lew Childre has appeared on transcribed radio programs all over the country for more than ten years. He has also made personal appearances all over the United States, working in tent shows, auditoriums, and clubs. Always, his stock of unusual songs, which he writes himself, are well received by his multitude of fans.

He has no particular costume but merely wears informal clothes that might be worn by any Alabama resident.

ERNEST TUBB

Ernest Tubb, the Texas troubadour, is one of the enduring stars of the Grand Ole Opry. His Texas drawl, a lively twinkle in his eye, a kindly sense of humor and his ability to interpret the songs of the soil have endeared him to millions of Americans.

Ernest was born in Crisp, Texas, and grew up in Ellis County, which is largely devoted to cattle raising. When he was a boy his guiding star was the late Jimmy Rodgers, the Singing Brakeman, an early folk singing star in Texas. When Jimmy Rodgers died, his widow gave his guitar to Ernest, who proudly

Ernest Tubb

uses it in his radio and personal appearances.

Ernest Tubb made his first apearance in radio at a station in San Antonio, Texas, in 1933, but it was not till 1941 that he entered radio professionally. That was KGKO in Fort Worth. He made personal appearances all over Texas and then was accepted on the Grand Ole Opry in 1942.

Without any musical training, Ernest pitches his deep baritone voice into a drawling monotone that seems well suited to the type of songs he sings. He made his first recording in 1940, but his first big hit was a song called *I'm Walking The Floor Over You*, which he still uses as a theme song. Since that time he has recorded many tunes on the Decca label, having sold more than 15,000,000 copies in the past ten years. Many of his records have appeared week after week in the listing of the top ten country discs. Among the most popular of his records have been *Throw Your Love My Way*, *Letters Have No Arms*, *I Love You Because*, *Goodnight Irene*, and *Too Old To Cut The Mustard*. The last two were recorded as duets with his good friend Red Foley.

Being straight from the cow country, Ernest wears a Western costume at all times.

In addition to his radio activities and records, Ernest Tubb makes personal appearances all over the United States and in Canada and has appeared in several motion pictures. He also appears regularly on television. As a profitable sideline, he owns and operates Ernest Tubb's Record Shop in Nashville, which specializes in country music records. After the Grand Ole Opry is over at midnight each Saturday, Ernest puts on a one-hour show at the record shop and invites as many of the Opry's live audience as possible to crowd into his place. The show from his shop is also broadcast on WSM.

CARTER FAMILY

One of the most versatile groups in radio today is the Carter family, consisting of Mother Maybelle and her three daughters. Mother Maybelle is one of the original Carter Family, an earlier group of country style entertainers. She plays a guitar and sings.

June Carter acts as mistress of ceremonies and has her own specialty acts. She is a small attractive girl who is a bundle of energy and good humor. She is a natural comedienne, plays the autoharp, an instrument somewhat like a zither, and sings. Her songs are principally novelty and comic numbers except when she sings with the group.

Anita plays the bass fiddle and sings solo numbers in a beautifully tenuous voice with a hauntingly unusual quality. Helen plays the accordion and sings with the group.

The girls and their mother wear mountain type cotton dresses for their performances, and June usually wears old-fashioned ruffled pantaloons, some of them in loud colors, which she shows off coyly during her individualistic dances and comic routines.

The Carters are from Virginia, where they own a prosperous farm. The father was a railway mail clerk, but he has now given up his postal work to act as their manager. Since they joined the Grand Ole Opry several years ago, the entire family has made Nashville its home. Helen and Anita are now married, but June is still single.

Other than their shows on the Grand Ole Opry, the Carter Sisters have a weekday program which WSM feeds to a regional network, and they often appear on both local and network television. In addition, they make a great number of personal appearances throughout the country and make records as well. They are currently recording for Columbia, having had an earlier contract with RCA Victor. June and Anita both have individual recording contracts in addition to their work in recording with the entire group.

Among the group's recordings are *God Sent My Little Girl*, *Little Orphan Girl*, and *Got To Find Me Somebody To Love*. Typical of June's records are *Bashful Rascal* and *Crocodile Tears*. Among Anita's best is *Just When I Needed You*.

JOHNNIE and JACK

Johnnie and Jack grew up with folk music in their families, so it was natural that one day they would choose that field for their profession.

The Carter Family

**Johnnie and Jack,
the Tennessee Mountain Boys**

Johnnie Wright's father played a five-string banjo, and his grandfather was the champion of the old-time fiddlers in their part of Tennessee.

Jack Anglin's father was also an old-time fiddler, and he taught Jack and his brothers to pick a guitar.

Then Jack and his brothers formed a quartet and began a radio career in Nashville in 1936. It was there that they met Johnnie. They joined forces and formed the Tennessee Mountain Boys.

In their present duet, Jack sings the tenor part and Johnnie the baritone. For several years after the formation of their partnership, Johnnie and Jack appeared on the Grand Ole Opry, and they made personal appearances throughout the country. They left the Opry for several years and returned in 1951.

In addition to their appearances on the Grand Ole Opry, they still make many personal appearances and are frequently guest artists on radio and television shows.

Song writing is another of their important activities. They have turned out more than one hundred tunes of their own. Outstanding among these are *You Can't Tell My Heart That*, *What About You*, and *Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide*.

The boys record for RCA Victor. Among their recent hits both on the Opry and on records are *Poison Love*, *I'm Gonna Love You One More Time*, and *Crying Heart Blues*.

Johnnie and Jack wear the traditional film cowboy costumes and accompany themselves with the guitar.

Both Johnnie and Jack are married. They now make their homes in Nashville.

ROD BRASFIELD

Rod Brasfield, the teller of tall tales from Hohenwald, Tennessee, is one of the cleverest comedians in network radio. He is possessed of a quick wit, keen judgment of his audiences, and almost perfect timing. He is a true folk comedian, with roots deep in the lore and traditions of the South. As such he depends as much on his mannerisms and pantomime for laughs as he does on the jokes he tells.

Ironically, the slack-jawed, simple appearing comic is a reformed tragedy actor who became a comedian by coincidence.

Rod calls it his "doggone stubborn nature" that started him making people laugh. After eight years of playing villains and a varied assortment of characters who came to no good end, Rod accepted the offer to play straight man to his brother, "Boob," the comedian of the Brasfield clan. They played a tent show together. But it was mid-depression and times were tough. "Boob" decided to quit. But not Rod. When "Boob" walked

Rod Brasfield

out, Rod grabbed his red wig, placed it on his own head, and went out on the stage alone. It paid off. For the first time in his life, he was making people laugh with his own lines.

Since that day, Rod has continued to garner laughs with a comedy routine that appeals to both the sophisticate and corn lover. His home town of Hohenwald, upon which most of his radio adventures center, is getting to be as famous as the Grinders Switch birthplace of his partner in comedy, Minnie Pearl.

A veteran of show business from high class stock companies to burlesque, Rod began playing the Grand Ole Opry in 1944. A full bag of fan mail every week is evidence enough that a coast-to-coast audience approves Rod's last love—radio.

HANK WILLIAMS

Hank Williams has made an outstanding success in country music, both as a singer and a songwriter.

Hank began singing almost as soon as he could talk, singing the hymns as his mother practiced on the organ at the little country church where she played. He was born on a farm near Georgiana, Alabama, and almost from the beginning he was ambitious for a musical career. His parents encouraged his talent, giving him a guitar for a Christmas present when he was eight years old. He learned the basic country music chords from an old Negro street singer named Teetot. Soon he was playing his own accompaniment. When he was only twelve he won an amateur talent contest and landed a radio job at six dollars a week. At fourteen he organized his own country band which played at square dances all over Alabama.

From the first radio job in the 1930's, Hank went to other stations in Alabama and Louisiana. In between his radio shows he played and sang at personal appearances in country schoolhouses, in ball parks, or anywhere else he could get a crowd.

Finally in 1949, Hank won a place for himself on the Grand Ole Opry and he became a star immediately. Now his fame is nation-wide, and even international, both for his songs and his singing.

Hank Williams in Typical Crouching Position and Patting Foot

Almost as soon as he began singing, Hank began to write down the tunes that kept running through his mind. They were ballads, novelty tunes, religious songs of simple faith, all well interspersed with blues characteristics.

His song writing success rose sharply when Fred Rose of Acuff-Rose Publications, and himself a distinguished composer of popular and country type tunes, heard about him. Rose sent for Hank, listened to him sing, and challenged him to write a song about a girl who marries a rich boy instead of the poor boy who lives in a cabin. The result was *Mansion On The Hill*, which was eminently successful. Many others followed, and a high percentage of them have been outstanding hits.

Among them are: *Lovesick Blues*, *Why Don't You Love Me? Honky Tonkin'*, *Moanin' The Blues*, *I Saw The Light*, *I Can't Help It*, *Baby*, *We're Really in Love*, *Hey*, *Good Lookin'*, *Cold*, *Cold Heart*, and many others.

Cold, Cold Heart was voted the top country song of 1951, for which Hank was given a

special award by *Cash Box Magazine*, a trade paper of the Juke Box industry. In addition to their outstanding popularity as country tunes, *Cold, Cold Heart*, *Hey, Good Lookin'*, and several others of his songs were recorded in pop versions and remained for many weeks on the listings of the top ten pop tunes.

All in all, Hank has turned out about five hundred country songs. He has no musical training whatever. As a new song runs through his head, he picks it out on his guitar and sings it. When he is satisfied with it, he has someone write down the music for him.

His songs are usually thirty-two measure tunes, but they don't fit into the sixteen bar and repeat pattern, for the second sixteen measures are usually a little different from the first. Their subject matter is usually thwarted love, plain misfortune, country style carousing, and religious repentance. They are all written in strong simple imagery.

Hank's voice is strictly untrained. He gets many of the vocal effects that make him so popular by injecting many blue notes and other characteristics often found in blues and jazz. He accompanies himself on the guitar and sings in a crouching position, with his foot soundly patting the floor. He sings in a moderately loud voice with convincing sincerity and honest, heartfelt emotion.

Although he was born and brought up in Alabama, Hank wears Western type costumes, some of them modern versions of the buckskin and fringe pioneer garb and others the movie cowboy type. A couple of his cowboy suits are decorated with the notes of the first phrase in *Lovesick Blues*, his first big song hit.

In addition to his radio work on the Grand Ole Opry and other WSM programs, Hank owns a Western clothing store in Nashville, makes many personal appearances throughout the United States and Canada, makes many records under the Columbia label, of which more than 5,000,000 copies have already been sold, and makes frequent appearances on both local and network television shows.

He has a five-hundred-acre stock farm near Nashville, where he raises Tennessee walking horses as a hobby.

The Jordanaires with Little Jimmy Dickens, Singing the Praises of Jefferson Island Salt

THE JORDANAIRES

The great mass of spirituals and other songs of a religious nature in folk music makes a gospel quartet an integral part of any well-rounded folk talent cast. In the Grand Ole Opry and other WSM programs, that place is often filled by the Jordanaires. The four boys and their accompanist have made a rapid rise in popularity in the few years they have been singing together. Although they have been working as a quartet a relatively short time, the musical background of each member has done much to make the Jordanaires the outstanding quartet it is.

All the Jordanaires come originally from Missouri, but they now make their homes in Nashville. Bill and Monty Matthews are both ministers of the gospel. They are sons of an evangelist, and they began singing at revivals with their father when they were small boys. At one time they joined with their brothers to form the Matthews Quartet, a junior group that gained considerable attention for its spiritual songs.

Culley Holt, Gordon Stoker, and Hoyt Hawkins, the other three members of the group, also have substantial backgrounds in the spiritual tradition.

The Jordanaires appear on the Grand Ole Opry every week and have a place on several other WSM programs. They also make many

George Morgan

personal appearances, television appearances, and make records, both on their own and as choral background for solo artists.

GEORGE MORGAN

One of the youngest and most versatile of the Grand Ole Opry stars, George Morgan, is noted for the warmth, sincerity, and feeling with which he sings a song. Like Red Foley, he has had a smattering of musical training, and this, together with his rich, resonant voice, results in his "singing sweeter" than most other Opry performers.

George was born in Waverly, Tennessee, June 28, 1924. His family later moved to Barberton, Ohio, where he finished high school and began playing the guitar and singing over a local radio station. From there he went to WWST in Wooster, Ohio, and WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia. He joined the Grand Ole Opry cast in 1948.

During his first few months on the Opry, his own song *Candy Kisses* made him one of the most promising stars in country music. Columbia Records signed him to a long term contract. Twenty-six different records of the

song were made, including his own recording, and more than 2,000,000 copies of it have been sold. Among the other records he made were *Broken Candy Heart*, *Mansion Over The Hilltop*, and his recent big hit *Almost*.

George has his own band, the Candy Kids, which supports him on his radio broadcasts, his records, and his personal appearances. In addition to his segment of the Grand Ole Opry and several other country music shows on WSM, George appears frequently on television and has a network show that is carried on one hundred twenty radio stations. His fan club is one of the largest in the country, with representatives in all forty-eight states and some foreign countries.

George is more than six feet tall, has blue eyes and blonde wavy hair, and weighs one hundred eighty pounds. He is married and has a little girl named Candy Kay.

Casual sport clothes are what George usually wears for his performances, though he often appears in a modest business suit.

MOON MULLICAN

A talented young Negro farm worker taught Moon Mullican to play the piano when he was only a boy, and he has been active in the entertainment field ever since.

The sessions with Joe Jones, the Negro farmhand, were the only music lessons Moon ever had, but he has come to be known as the King of the Hillbilly Piano Players.

Moon was born in Polk County, Texas, and helped to work his father's farm. But after he learned to play the piano, he left, at the age of sixteen, for the nearest big city, Houston. There he got a job with a band called the Blue Ridge Playboys. He later played with several other well-known country musicians, among them Jimmy Davis, who became governor of Louisiana. In fact, Moon played with Davis during his campaign for the governorship.

Moon is a big man, red-faced and good-natured. His big hands dart across the keyboard almost faster than the eye, and they bring forth his own style of hot country music. He also sings in a strong, untrained

Moon Mullican

friendly voice. The combination of his playing and singing make him one of the fastest one-man shows on the air.

Because of his versatility, Moon has made hundreds of phonograph records, some as a member of a band, others featuring his playing and singing as a soloist.

Moon joined the Grand Ole Opry early in 1951 and thus extended the popularity he had already won in the Southwest.

The *Billboard* popularity polls for 1950 showed Moon high on the top ten both in retail record sales and in juke box plays. Most popular among his records, under the King label, were *I'll Sail My Ship Alone*, *Mona Lisa*, *Goodnight, Irene*, *You Don't Have To Be a Baby To Cry*, *Nine Tenths Of The Tennessee River*, *Southern Hospitality*, and *Well, Oh Well*. His biggest hit since that time has been *Cherokee Boogie*.

Moon wears traditional cowboy boots and a ten-gallon hat, but he wears the modern version of the buckskin and fringe frontiersman's garb rather than the more glamorous Hollywood cowboy costume.

RAY PRICE

A newcomer to the Grand Ole Opry is Ray Price, who seems now well on his way to stardom in folk music, with his biggest song hit, *Talk To Your Heart*, now among the top ten on the popularity lists.

Ray was born January 12, 1926, on a farm

Ray Price

near Perryville, Texas, one hundred miles east of Dallas. When he was nine years old, he began singing and playing his older brother's guitar. From that time on, music became an important part of his life.

He attended high school in Dallas, singing in the high school chorus. Then he went to North Texas Agricultural College, where he studied veterinary medicine for three-and-a-half years. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1943, serving that branch of the service two and a half years during the war.

After his release from military service, Ray spent three years playing the rodeo circuits, roping, doing trick riding, etc. Then he took up singing again.

About four years ago, he formed his own band and began making personal appearances in Texas and Louisiana. His first radio job was at WSM, where he was accepted for the Grand Ole Opry in January, 1952. Since that time his popularity has soared rapidly, and he has recently signed a recording contract with Columbia Records.

Ray sings in a smooth pleasing voice but with a very definite country style. He wears a moderately conservative version of the Hollywood cowboy costume.

CARL SMITH

Carl Smith is one of the Grand Ole Opry's newest stars, but he is one of the most popular. He was born on a farm near Maynardville, Tennessee, March 15, 1927. He grew up on the farm, spending the summers working and the fall and winter months going to school in Maynardville.

Carl got his family to buy him a guitar while he was in school. He mowed the lawn for a family in Maynardville once a week for a dollar to pay for his weekly guitar lesson.

His first radio work came at the age of thirteen when he participated in an amateur talent show. After this, he was sure he wanted to be a country singer. During the summer of 1944, he received his first job as a singer, but he returned to school in the fall. The next spring he joined the Navy and was called to active duty three days before his scheduled graduation from high school. Eleven of his eighteen months in the Navy were spent on a ship in the Pacific.

After he was discharged from the Navy, he returned to the old group with which he had sung. He sang on radio stations in Knoxville, Tennessee, Augusta, Georgia, and Asheville, North Carolina.

Carl was recommended to WSM Program Director Jack Stapp by a song plugger. He auditioned for the station in 1950 and was given a job a few weeks later. He was given some early morning shows and an occasional guest spot on the Grand Ole Opry to give him an opportunity to develop. At the end of about a year, his popularity rose suddenly and he became a star almost overnight.

One of his records on the Columbia label, a tune called *Let's Live A Little,* soared to a place among the top ten country tunes and was followed by several others, including *Mr. Moon, Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way,* and *Don't Just Stand There.* At this time, his record sales are approaching the 2,000,000 mark.

Slender and youthful, Carl is six feet two inches tall. He has dark wavy hair, blue eyes, and an infectious smile. With these characteristics to begin with, his romantic singing brings squeals of delight from the country bobby-soxers.

Personal appearances over the country take

Carl Smith

much of Carl's time, but he has more radio shows than any other Opry star at this time. In addition to his own segment of the Opry and other local country shows on the station, WSM feeds the Columbia Broadcasting System five Carl Smith shows each week and another five a week to the Mutual Broadcasting System.

During his earlier months on WSM, Carl wore the traditional cowboy costumes. He switched to casual sport clothes, however, after he and Ernest Tubb appeared on the same show one night in identical costumes.

In addition to his singing, Carl takes a hand in songwriting once in while. He wrote *The Girl In My Old Home Town* and helped to write *Mr. Moon* and *I Overlooked An Orchid While Searching For A Rose.*

Carl is the youngest child and only boy in a large family, is unmarried, and lives simply in a furnished room in Nashville.

OLD HICKORY SINGERS

One of the most versatile vocal groups on the Grand Ole Opry is the Old Hickory Singers, whose singing, in the tradition of the Gay Nineties, covers the field from barbershop to hillbilly and Western styles.

The quartet is composed of Claude Sharpe, Ross Dowden, Luther Heatwole, and Joseph McPherson. All are soloists in their own right, but they say their greatest enjoyment in their work comes when they appear as a group.

Joseph McPherson, bass singer with the group, was for six years a leading basso with the Metropolitan Opera in New York, appearing in *Aida, L'Africaine, The King's Henchmen* and other famous operatic works.

Other than their work on the Grand Ole Opry, in which they appear regularly on the NBC portion of the show, the Old Hickory Singers often make guest appearances on other WSM programs, both pop and country types, and on television shows. They also make personal appearances and have recently signed a recording contract with Dot Records.

For their appearances on the Grand Ole Opry and other country type programs, the

Old Hickory Singers (left to right) Claude Sharpe, Ross Dowden, Luther Heatwole, Joseph MacPherson

Old Hickory Singers wear plaid shirts, but for other shows they wear costumes befitting the nature of the program.

HANK SNOW

The songs of Hank Snow have delighted many audiences, especially in Canada, for a dozen years, but it was only after he joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1950 that he reached the peak of his success.

Hank was born in Canada. He began his musical career at the age of thirteen, when he shipped to sea as a cabin boy with his guitar and began entertaining his shipmates with songs, dances, and guitar interludes.

After three years at sea, Hank decided to become a professional entertainer. He worked his way to Halifax to audition for a radio job. He made the grade, and from then on radio was his career.

He organized a five-piece country band and played and sang regularly for the Canadian Brodcasting Company. He also made personal appearances throughout Canada and broad sections of the United States, all the while writing songs and making records.

Hank joined WSM in 1950, and it was later that year that his recording of his own song, *I'm Movin' On*, hit the top of the country song popularity charts. When it was followed closely by *Golden Rocket* and *Rhumba Boogie*, he had definitely established himself as a country singing star. Most of the time since then, he has been represented on the top

Hank Snow

ten list by at least one song, the latest of which is *The Gold Rush Is Over*. Among his other recorded hits on the RCA Victor label are *Marriage Vow, With This Ring I Thee Wed, I Cried But My Tears Were Too Late, Drunkard's Son, Nobody's Child,* and *I'm Paving The Highway With Tears.*

Hank's recording of *I'm Movin' On* was the top selling country record of 1950, and Hank himself was listed among the top ten country singers according to both retail sales and juke box plays in the annual recapitulation of top tunes, records and artists conducted by *Billboard*, trade paper of the entertainment industry. He was also named top folk singer in a poll conducted by the *Southern Farmer Magazine*, for which he received a special scroll. Early in 1952, he was named the favorite country singer in the area of Washington, D. C., as a result of a radio poll conducted by disc jockey Ray Armand of WARL in Arlington, Virginia. The poll drew thirty thousand letters and cards.

Hank is small of stature, with blue eyes and brown hair. He wears Western type costumes, with white, blue and brown as the predominant colors. The songs he sings usually have many more words in them than those written and sung by other performers.

Hank lives with his wife and fourteen-year-old son in the Nashville suburbs, where he has room for his trained horse.

TOMMY SOSEBEE

Newest addition to the cast of the Grand Ole Opry is Tommy Sosebee, who had already made a name for himself in South Carolina and Georgia before joining WSM in May, 1952.

Winning a contest when he was only ten years old actually started Tommy on the road to a career in American folk music. He won a radio job as a prize, and from then on, even while attending grammar school and high school in his home town of Greenville, South Carolina, he kept up his singing and guitar playing and he learned to play the bass fiddle. He stayed with the local radio stations until, after one year at Furman University in Greenville, he decided to go all out for a musical career.

After leaving WFBC in Greenville, he worked with other stations, among them WBT in Charlotte, KLX in Lexington, Kentucky, WCON in Atlanta, and WRDW in Augusta, Georgia. He also sang with the Renfro Valley Barn Dance show and travelled with that group for three years. From his early days in the profession Tommy has made many personal appearances. During the Second World War he was active as a USO entertainer.

Tommy Sosebee, Rising Young Star

While Tommy was singing with Pee Wee King and his band, he recorded his first song for RCA Victor. Since then, he has recorded for Apollo and is now on the Coral label. Among his most popular songs have been *You're Always Brand New*, *Easter Parade*, *Mail Order Kisses*, *Don't Trade Your Love For Gold*, and his own song, *How Can You Smile?*

Audience reaction to his first song on the Grand Ole Opry in May of 1952 foretold his coming widespread popularity. He now appears regularly on the Opry, and on WSM's other big country show, the Friday Night Frolic.

Tommy accompanies himself on the guitar. His only attempt at a professional costume is to wear a plaid shirt. He sings in a pleasingly warm and friendly voice.

Tommy and his wife, with their family of three girls and a boy, now make their home in Nashville.

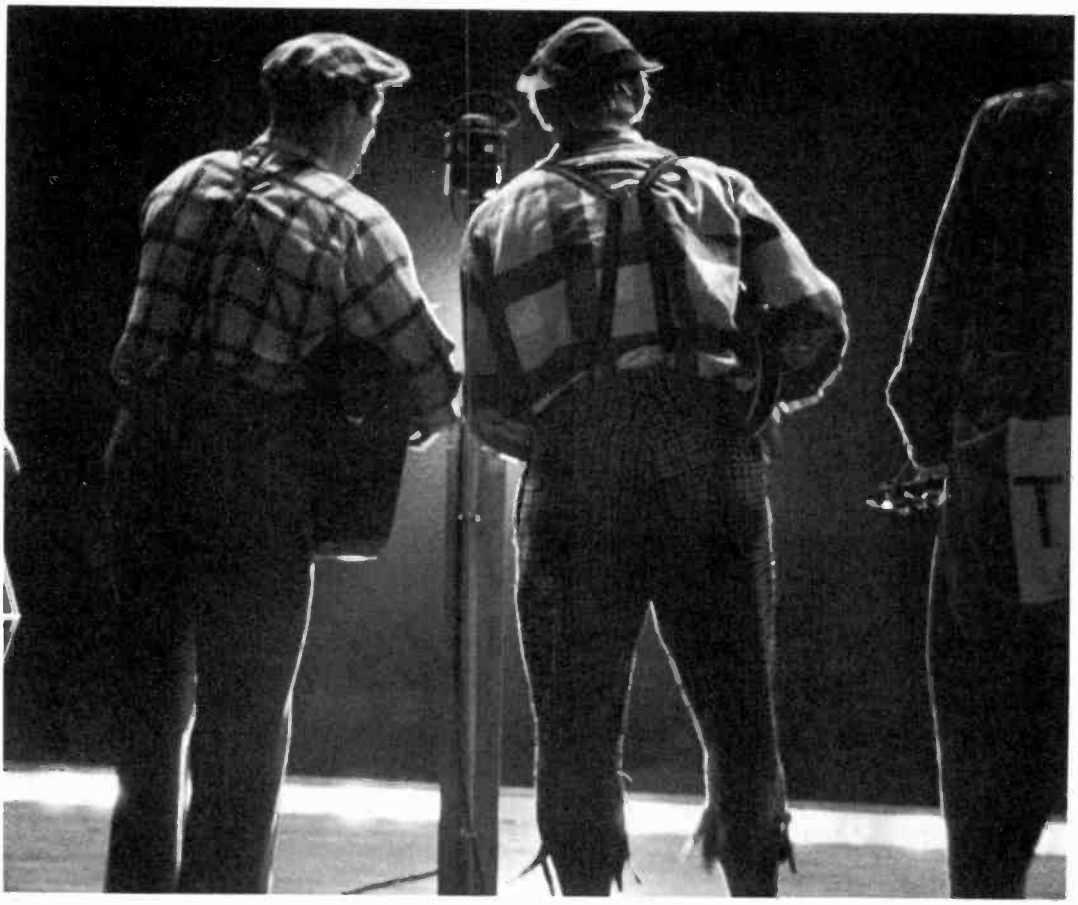
LONZO and OSCAR

Few performers have been able to burlesque country musicians successfully, for sincerity is one of the qualities most important to success in the country music profession. The team of Lonzo and Oscar are the only ones on the Grand Ole Opry who can get by with poking fun at their fellow performers and the music that they sing seriously.

Lonzo and Oscar have been going strong on the Grand Ole Opry since 1944, when their first big hit was *I'm My Own Grandpa*. At that time and for several years afterward, they depended more on straight novelty tunes, such as *There's A Hole In The Bottom Of The Sea*, *If Texas Knew What Arkansas*, *Onion, Onion*, *I'll Go Chasin' Women*, and *My Dreams Turned Into Nightmares*.

Later, however, they began a series of humorous versions of top hillbilly tunes, the first of which was *I'm Movin' On, No.* 2. This

Oscar, Pap, Odie, Jody, Oscar and Lonzo



was a take-off on Hank Snow's big hit. Lonzo and Oscar were so successful with their version that they followed it with *Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way, No.* 2, and several others.

About this time they enlarged their team by adding a third member, Cousin Jody, a toothless comic with a dozen humorous facial expression, comic antics, and a masterful if uproariously funny technique on the steel guitar.

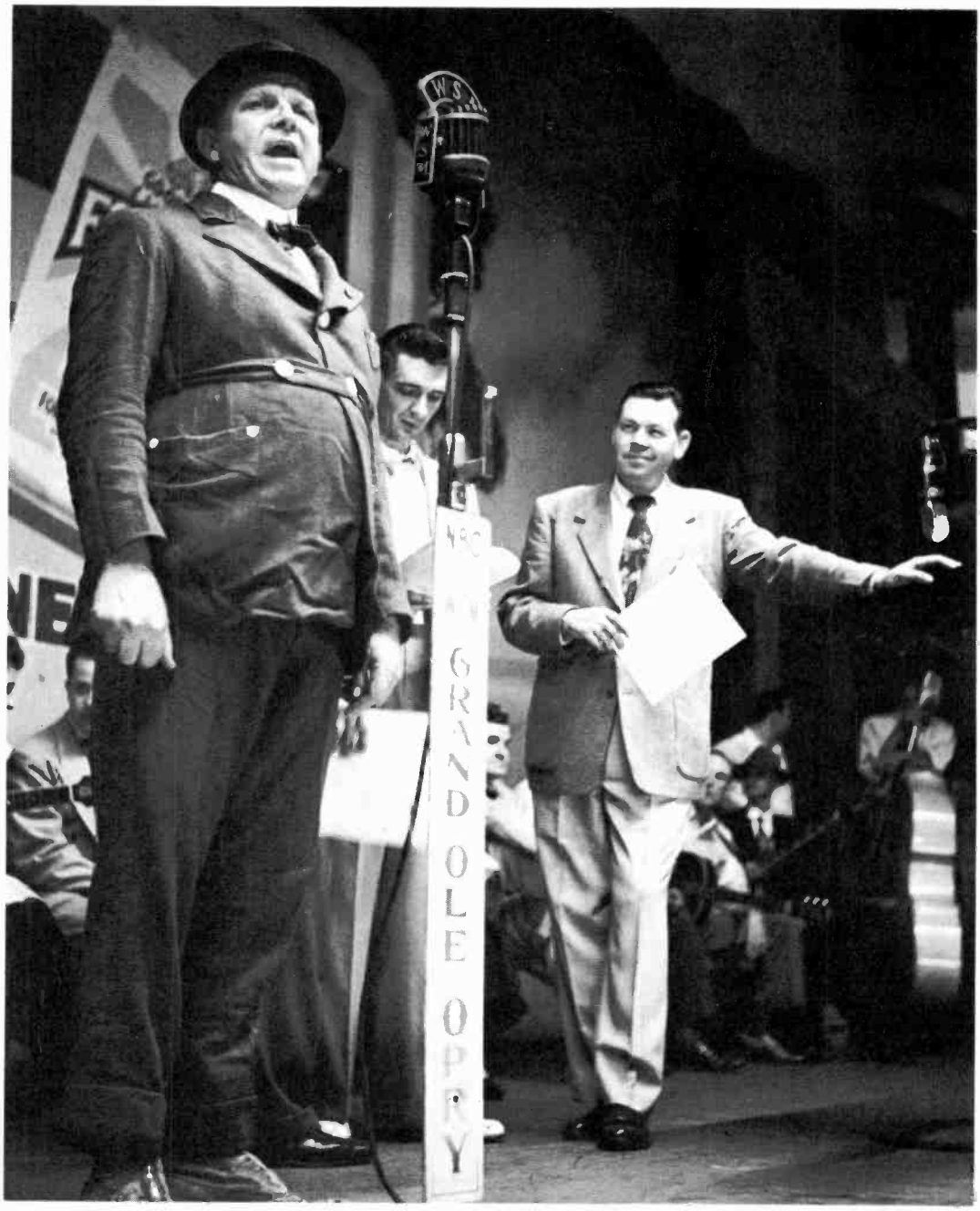
Lonzo and Oscar themselves are both accomplished musicians. Before joining the Grand Ole Opry, Oscar played drums, piano, saxophone, and mandolin. On the Opry, he has concentrated on the mandolin and is considered one of the country's top men on that instrument.

Lonzo also plays the guitar, fiddle, and bass fiddle. On the Opry he confines himself principally to the guitar.

All three members of the team wear exaggerated hillbilly costumes. Lonzo wears a plaid shirt, ordinary country slacks, Little Abner shoes, and a cap. Oscar wears a pair of plaid modified knickers, a loud shirt, suspenders, a tousled blonde wig, a comic felt hat, and he blacks out several teeth. Cousin Jody wears a checked shirt, oversized cotton slacks with suspenders, a felt hat turned up in front, and he takes his teeth out.

In addition to their regular appearances on the Grand Ole Opry, this team makes frequent guest appearances on other WSM shows, on local and network television shows, and plays many personal appearances from coast to coast. They record for RCA Victor.

Lonzo and Oscar are brothers, Johnny and Rollin Sullivan. Their original home was in Kentucky, but they now live in Nashville. Both are married and have children. Cousin Jody, in reality Tex Summey, is also married and makes his home in Nashville. Despite his nickname, he is a native of Tennessee.



Duke of Paducah, Whitey Ford, with Announcer Grant Turner on Network Show

THE DUKE OF PADUCAH— WHITEY FORD

"I'm goin' back to the wagon, boys, these shoes are killin' me!"

That famous line signifies the closing of a "Duke of Paducah" monologue. As such, it has become a well-known expression to millions of Grand Ole Opry fans.

The Duke of Paducah is one of the nation's outstanding country comics. His style of timing and delivering laugh lines in his soft drawl has endeared him to several types of audiences.

Whitey Ford introduced his comical counterpart, The Duke of Paducah, in 1937 while serving as master of ceremonies on radio programs originating from St. Louis. Before the creation of the Duke, Whitey's chores had consisted of playing the mandolin, banjo, guitar, and harmonica; singing; writing; and delivering comedy sketches. His clever ad lib introductions are always amusing, and in the past few years he has accumulated one of the largest and most complete gag libraries in America.

As his popularity began to spread across the nation, he was given star billing on NBC's Plantation Party for four consecutive seasons. He is now a featured comedian with the WSM Grand Ole Opry and has his own NBC show for half an hour just before the Opry begins.

Ford was born in Missouri in 1901 and was christened Benjamin Francis Ford. He started his radio career at station KTHS, Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1924. After four years active duty in the Navy, he toured the country with his own orchestra, Benny Ford and his Arkansas Travellers. He then toured the Keith Vaudeville Circuit with Otto Gray's Oklahoma Cowboys and later was Master of Ceremonies for Gene Autry. This versatile master of ceremonies' experience covers the entire entertainment field. Whitey has appeared with dramatic show units, tent shows, minstrels, and in motion pictures. He says that he gained his most valuable experience while working with a medicine show. His ability to hold and sway audiences was rewarded by a citation from the U.S. Treasury Department in appreciation of his feat of selling nearly $4,000,000 in War Bonds in less than six weeks.

The Duke of Paducah act is a burlesque of a country rube. He wears a bright green suit, after the fashion of about 1908, a green felt hat to match, and yellow high-top button shoes. In addition to his monolgue routine, the Duke also sings novelty-type songs.

Whitey Ford now makes his home on a farm near Nashville, where he raises livestock and lives in a fine home of American Colonial architecture.

ANNIE LOU and DANNY

Tennessee-born Annie Lou and Danny, otherwise known as Mr. and Mrs. Dill, are one of the most popular vocal and instrumental duets in the folk music field today. Sandy-haired, clear-voiced Danny and brunette, sweet-voiced Annie Lou form a combination that is much in demand for radio, television, and personal appearances.

Danny began his musical career several years ago as a single, singing and playing guitar over Southern radio stations. In 1944 The Duke of Paducah saw and heard Danny, liked him, and promptly signed him for a year's road work with his troupe. It was during this period that Annie Lou joined forces with her husband to form today's well-known team.

Annie Lou and Danny keep busy with their regular WSM schedule plus several weekly radio programs of their own, televion spots, and personal appearances.

They record under the RCA Victor label. Two recent releases are *My Life With You* (as a duet) and *You're Always Brand New* (a solo by Danny).

Photography is their hobby, and they particularly prize the movies they took in Alaska during 1950 while entertaining U.S. troops stationed in that area.

(*See picture on page* 13)

KEN MARVIN

Ken Marvin is showing considerable promise in the folk field today, with a long list of successful records to his credit.

Ken was born in Haleyville, Alabama, on June 27, 1924. He made his first radio appearance over WMSD in Sheffield, Alabama. Since then, he has appeared on WAPI in Birmingham, WLAC and WSIX in Nashville, and, of course, WSM's Grand Ole Opry where he has been for the past ten years. He originated the Lonzo and Oscar team in 1944 as a part of the Eddy Arnold show and was famous for his portrayal of Lonzo. A couple of years ago Ken became a featured folk singer in his own right, and he is currently touring as a featured singer with Grand Ole Opry units.

Ken and Clyda, his wife, make their home in Nashville. Clyda fits well into the musical atmosphere which surrounds her life by being a successful songwriter along with performing her other duties in the Marvin household.

Ken stands 5 feet 11 inches tall, weighs 165 pounds, has brown wavy hair and gray eyes. He has an eye-catching wardrobe of Western costumes. Ken likes golfing and fishing for relaxation.

Ken records under the Mercury label. Among his best known songs are: *Afraid, I Love You a Thousand Ways, You Can't Pick All the Roses, Tom Cattin' Around, I'm Waitin' Just For You, Half as Much,* and *More Pretty Girls.* His current best selling records are *Heartsick Soldier, Missing in Action,* and *Wonderin'.*

APPENDIX OF OUTSTANDING COUNTRY SONG TITLES

Title	Publisher
Afraid	*Milene*
Always Late (With Your Kisses)	*H&R*
Any Time	*H&R*
Away Out on the Mountain	*Peer*
Baby We're Really in Love	*Acuff*
Be Honest with Me	*Western*
Birmingham Jail	*Public Domain*
Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain	*Milene*
Blue Yodel	*Peer*
Blues in My Mind	*Milene*
Bonaparte's Retreat	*Acuff*
Boots and Saddle	*Southern*
Brakeman's Blues	*Peer*
Candy Kisses	*H&R*
Careless Love	*Public Domain*
Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy	*Acuff*
Cold, Cold Heart	*Acuff*
Cool Water	*American*
Country Boy	*Milene*
Cry Baby Heart	*Acuff*
Daisy May	*Peer*
Deep in the Heart of Texas	*Peer*
Detour	*H&R*
Don't Just Stand There	*Tubb*
Don't Make Me Go to Bed	*Peer*
Don't Rob Another Man's Castle	*H&R*
Down Yonder	*Southern*
Foggy River	*Milene*
Footprints in the Snow	*Peer*
Guilty Conscience	*Peer*
Hey Good Lookin'	*Acuff*
Hominy Grits	*American*
Honest and Truly	*Feist*
Honey, By My Honey Bee	*Peer*
Honky Tonk Blues	*Acuff*
Honky Tonkin'	*Acuff*
Hot Diggity Dog	*Acuff*
I Can't Help It (If I'm still in Love with You)	*Acuff*
I Gotta Have My Baby Back	*Peer*
I Love You Because	*Acuff*
I Love You So Much It Hurts	*Peer*
I Only Want a Buddy, Not a Sweetheart	*Cole*
I Overlooked An Orchid	*Peer*
I Saw the Light	*Acuff*
I Wish I Had Never Seen Sunshine	*Peer*
I'm Little but I'm Loud	*Acuff*
I'm Movin' On	*H&R*
I'm My Own Grandpa	*General*
I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes	*Peer*
If Teardrops Were Pennies	*Peer*
Jealous Heart	*Acuff*
Jole Blon	*Milene*
Just a Closer Walk with Thee	*H&R*
Just Because	*Peer*
Kentucky Waltz	*Peer*
Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way	*Peer*
Let's Live a Little	*Peer*
Letters Have No Arms	*H&R*
Little Girl in My Home Town	*Peer*
Lonely Mound of Clay	*Acuff*
Lonesome Whistle	*Peer*
Lovesick Blues	*Mills*
Missing in Action	*Peer*
Mister Moon	*Peer*
Moanin' the Blues	*Acuff*
Mule Skinner's Blues	*Peer*
Music Makin' Mama from Memphis	*H&R*
My Mother	*Peer*
My Pretty Quadroon	*Cole*
Night Train to Memphis	*Peer*
Old Shep	*Cole*
Peace in the Valley	*H&R*
Peach Pickin' Time in Georgia	*Peer*
Pins and Needles (in My Heart)	*Milene*
Poison Love	*H&R*
Ridin' Down the Canyon	*Cole*
Rock All the Babies to Sleep	*Southern*
Room Full of Roses	*H&R*
Rumba Boogie	*H&R*
San Antonio Rose	*Bourne*
Slippin' Around	*Peer*
Slowpoke	*Ridgeway*
Smoke on the Water	*Adams*
Stack-O-Lee	*Cole*
Stay a Little Longer	*Peer*
Steel Guitar Rag	*Bourne*
Streamlined Cannon Ball	*Acuff*

Title	Publisher
Take Me Back to Tulsa	*Peer*
Talk To Your Heart	
Talking Blues	*Cole*
Tennessee Waltz	*Acuff*
Texas Playboy Rag	*H&R*
That Silver-Haired Daddy of Mine	*Cole*
The Golden Rocket	*H&R*
The Great Speckled Bird	*Cole*
The Mansion on the Hill	*Milene*
The Precious Jewel	*Acuff*
The Wreck on the Highway	*Acuff*
Three Ways of Knowing	*Peer*
Too Old to Cut the Mustard	*Acuff*
Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee	*Southern*
Walking the Floor over You	*American*
We Buried Her beneath the Willow	*Cole*
When My Blue Moon Turns to Gold	*Peer*
Won't You Ride in My Little Red Wagon	*Peer*
Would You Care	*Peer*
You Are My Sunshine	*Peer*
You Nearly Lose Your Mind	*American*
Wabash Cannon Ball	*Peer*

Legend to names of song publishers

Acuff-Rose Publications	*Acuff*
Adams, Vee and Abbott	*Adams*
American Music, Inc.	*American*
Bourne, Inc.	*Bourne*
M. M. Cole Publishing Co.	*Cole*
Leo Feist, Inc.	*Feist*
General Music Corp.	*General*
Hill and Range Songs, Inc.	*H&R*
Milene Music Co.	*Milene*
Mills Corp.	*Mills*
Peer International Corp.	*Peer*
Ridgeway Music Co.	*Ridgeway*
Southern Music Pub. Co., Inc.	*Southern*
Tubb Music, Inc.	*Tubb*
Western Music Publishing Co.	*Western*

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