

# The Day Hank Williams Jr. Almost Died

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE COUNTRY PUBLICATION

November, 1979—\$1.25

# COUNTRY MUSIC



**Plus:**

**Bill Anderson**

**Moe Bandy**

**Joe Stampley**

**Doug Kershaw**

**BARBARA  
MANDRELL**  
**The Lady Is  
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Chairman & Publisher  
**Wesley Wood**  
President  
**Wayne Stierle**  
Vice President Finance  
**Sal Nastro**

Editor:  
**Russell D. Barnard**  
Managing Editor  
**Rochelle Friedman**  
Nashville Editor  
**Dolly Carlisle**  
Art Director &  
Production Manager  
**Richard Erlanger**  
Designer  
**Gail Einert**

Contributing Editors  
**Bob Allen, Michael Bane, Gail Buchalter,  
Patrick Carr, Douglas B. Green, Peter Guralnick,  
Leonard Kamsler, Rich Kienzle, Mary Ellen Moore,  
John Morthland, Nick Tosches.**

Advertising Director  
**Paul B. Confrey**

Direct Response Marketing  
**Anthony Bunting**

Circulation Manager  
**Henson Lacon**

Director: Special Projects  
**Stephanie L. Volpe**

Accounting Manager  
**George Menkes**

New York  
**Paul B. Confrey**  
475 Park Avenue So.  
New York, N.Y. 10016  
(212) 685-8200

Advertising  
Nashville Operations  
50 Music Square West  
Nashville, Tenn. 37203

**Jim Chapman**  
Associate Publisher  
(615) 329-0860

West Coast  
**The Leonard Company**  
6355 Topanga Canyon Blvd., 307  
Woodland Hills, Calif. 91364

South/Southwest  
**Newt Collinson  
Collinson & Company**  
4419 Cowan Road  
Tucker, Georgia 30084  
(404) 939-8391

**Len Mendelson**  
Director of West Coast Advertising  
(213) 340-1270

Midwest  
**Ron Mitchell Associates**  
1360 Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago, Ill. 60610  
(312) 944-0927

## TOM T. HALL finally tells it all— about Music City, U.S.A.

"Ole Tom T. should be proud of this book," says JOHNNY CASH. It's the story of his rise to superstardom, as well as a true insider's look at Nashville, the country music business, the street people and the drifters, the times and the places that have inspired his music—along with rare glimpses of Dolly Parton, Kris Kristofferson, Tex Ritter

and many others. Nobody tells a better story than Tom T. Hall—"he writes prose like Hank Williams wrote songs," says MINNIE PEARL—and he's never told a bigger, better one than THE STORYTELLER'S NASHVILLE. With photos; \$9.95 at all booksellers.

**DOUBLEDAY**



## COUNTRY STARS' FAVORITE RECIPES

The pumpkin bread Charlie Rich loved as a little boy. The crazy hamburger-soaked-in-cognac dish Hoyt Axton learned in Mexico. The old Texas chili recipe Ernest Tubb inherited from his dad. The nutritious kind of "moonshine" Ronnie Milsap makes.

They're all in *THE BEST COOKIN' IN THE COUNTRY* along with favorite recipes from Roy Acuff, Rex Allen, Jr., Bill Anderson, Chet Atkins, Glen Campbell, Johnny Cash, Tom T. Hall, The Kendalls, Anne Murray, The



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# Letters

## CMA Awards

After seeing the CMA Awards Show, I felt like I had to write you a letter. First off, I would like to say that I think this was one of the best awards show that the CMA has done in years. All the artists that won, I can honestly say, are all favorites of mine. However, there is just one thing . . . I couldn't agree with Willie Nelson any

more when he said he felt people like Little Jimmy Dickens, Ferlin Husky, Faron Young, George Jones and Ernest Tubb should be nominated and up winning some of those awards. Good for you Willie. Glad you spoke up. The way I see it is if it wasn't for a lot of these stars, where would our Country Music be today. I am 19 years

old and love a lot of the older stars in Country Music as well as the newer ones. I also feel the album, **Ernest Tubb-The Legend and the Legacy**, should have been nominated for **Album of the Year**. This album is a beautiful tribute to Ernest and it is truly a piece of Country Music History.

KIM SINCLAIR  
BRANTFORD, ONTARIO  
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I was terribly upset with the results of the CMA Awards this year. I am an avid Larry Gatlin fan and after seeing him in person this past week in Warren, Ohio I really appreciated not only the singing talent but the writing ability of Mr. Gatlin. He's one fantastic performer and a great entertainer. I can't understand the CMA not giving him anymore recognition then they did. (This letter is not meant to cut down the CMA, it's purpose is to only voice my opinion.) I do understand that being asked to sing at the CMA Awards and being nominated in a category is an honor in itself, but to me it just wasn't enough. I'm sure they understand the talent it takes to not only write your own songs but to sing them too. Not many country singers do both, some don't do either. It is a God given gift to do both and to do it as well as Mr. Larry Gatlin does it. In my opinion Larry Gatlin should have received the award for *Male Vocalist of the Year*. I only wish the CMA could share my opinion.

PATTI CHENOWETH  
PERRY, OHIO

We just finished watching the Country Music Awards show with our 5 year old son Lynn, who has been brought up with Willie records and tapes in the house.

When he was nominated along with Waylon for *Duo of the Year*, we were sad that they didn't get it and Lynn cried, so we told him maybe next time. Well you will never believe the excitement when Willie got *Entertainer of the Year*. We clapped our hands and stomped our feet and Lynn calmly said "that makes me happy."

We had the opportunity to meet Willie at the D.J. Convention in 1975 and he is a warm, wonderful person to talk to and we are truly happy that he is getting the recognition he deserves.

DALE, JENNY & LYNN JORDAN  
WINFIELD, MO



## The Killer

As a long and satisfied subscriber to Country Music Magazine, I cannot let my thanks pass by Michael Bane. I am referring to your record reviews where Mr. Bane reviews the Jerry Lee Lewis album in your September issue. I have had this 8 track tape for a few weeks as it was the Selection of the Month of one of the major record companies.

I thought it was Jerry at his best and now Mr. Bane confirms my opinion. How long has The Killer been knocking himself out? Unbelievably long! I buy about anything Lewis records and have yet to be disappointed. I have his song *Who Will The Next Fool Be* done in so many ways, but have never heard it so beautifully done as on his recording. My hat will always be off to The Killer despite all his personal problems (and we all have them, don't we), he is still a master of his talent. Who would think anyone would consider recording *Personality*, but Jerry pulls it off. His piano on this recording, I can't even try to describe, but as Michael Bane says "the meanest, mutha-humpin' piano pounder of all times."

Thank you and your magazine needs no wishes for continued success, because I feel you are doing everything A-one now! Mr. Bane closes his review with "This man ought to be declared a national monument." I agree.

WM. I. NACE  
PENNSBURG, PA

## Jim Reeves

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed your story about Jim Reeves in the July/August issue. I am one of his biggest fans and have been since *Mexican Joe*. I have all his albums except one I'm having trouble finding.

Tell Mary Reeves she's doing a terrific job of releasing songs of his. It's like he's still with us. Panola country can be proud!  
CAROL SEATER  
TECUMSEH, MI

## Anne Murray

Thank you for your article on Anne Murray (July/August issue) of whom I've been a fan for the last 10 years. In this world of egotistical and sometimes ruthless musicians it's nice to see a sincere and admirable singer like Anne surviving the "cuts" at her girl-next-door image and finally getting the recognition she deserves. And she deserves credit not only for her fine singing ability but also for her ability to build her career around her family life. It's not often you find her kind of honesty, diligence, and self-assurance in an artist. Anne Murray can move next door to me anyday. Hope you will have more on her in future issues.

RON HARMAN  
TIONESTA, PA

# HENRY MORGAN says: "Good appliance repairmen are scarcer than doctors who make house calls."



Did you know that there are over a billion appliances in use in the United States today? And three repairmen. At least that's the way it seems when one of mine goes on the blink. With more than two dozen electrical gadgets in my house going snap, crackle and pop, I finally got tired of trying to locate a guy with enough ambition to take my money and I decided to learn how to make the repairs myself.

When a well-aged comic like me decides to go back to school, you can bet the family jewels it won't be back at P.S. 93. I'm going to learn at home, or not at all. So I sent away for NRI's home study course in Appliance Servicing... and I took the course.

With a mechanical aptitude slightly below that of King Kong, I needed a course that started at the beginning and didn't move ahead too fast. Well, NRI did just that. They started with electricity — what it is and what it does — and went from there. You proceed at your own rate of speed. Whip through it if you want to, or take your time. What counts is the fact that you learn, in a way that it sticks with you.

You learn two things: how to repair appliances — from food processors and microwave ovens to refrigeration and air conditioning equipment — and how to get started in your own appliance business. That can mean money for you either way. If NRI can turn old ten thumbs Morgan into a reasonable facsimile of a repairman, think what they could do for you!

NRI's no fly-by-night outfit. They've been training people for more than sixty-five years... and they've had over a million students. It's the oldest

and largest home study school in the field of electronics and electricity, so they know it better than anyone else around.

The NRI course is really easy to understand... with lots of pictures to show you what they're talking about. They even send you the tools you need at no extra cost. Depending on which level of training you select, you'll get professional hand tools, test meters, and demonstration equipment that lets you see the circuits you've been reading about.

In just a few months, you'll be fixing your own appliances like I do. Then, you can start earning spare-time money fixing them for your friends and neighbors. Before you know it, you can have your own full-time business and be independent.

Take my advice and clip the coupon. Even if you don't know which end of a screwdriver is the handle, they can give you real professional training that'll help you break into the appliance repair field. It's one of the few things I've ever sent for that was even better than they said it would be... so why not invest a postage stamp to see if it's right for you. The NRI catalog is free and there's no obligation. No one will knock at your door or bug you at home. NRI doesn't use salesmen. They don't need them.

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# LIVING PROOF

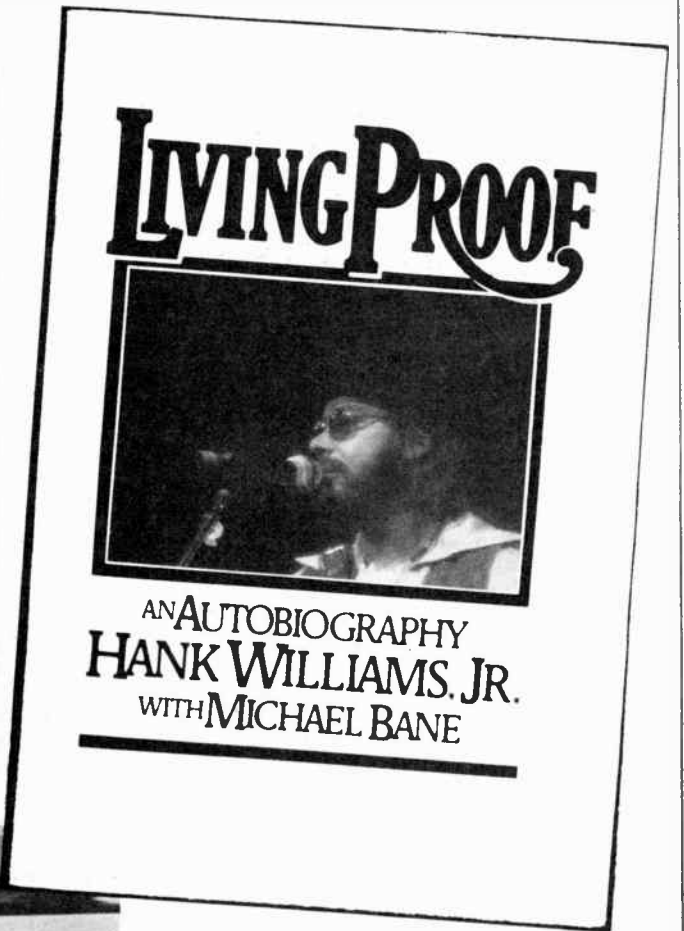
**The inspiring new autobiography of personal tragedy and triumphant rebirth.**

Hank Williams Sr. died in 1953. From the day his famous father died, Hank Junior was pushed to fill his father's shoes. By the time he was seven, he had been tutored by Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Brenda Lee. At the ripe old age of eight, he played his first show, singing his daddy's songs and telling his daddy's stories, and even then it was apparent he had inherited his father's musical genius. His rise to fame was spectacular: at eleven he premiered at the Grand Ole Opry and at fourteen was a hit on the "Ed Sullivan Show." At nineteen Hank Junior was perched atop show business.

But success took its toll. The drugs and booze that had destroyed his father began to claim the son. Two marriages failed. Hostile audiences came to watch him forget lyrics or drop his guitar. The pressures were so enormous Hank Junior wanted to die.

Then in 1975 Hank's death wish was almost granted when he slid five hundred feet down a mountain in the Rockies. Awaiting certain death in the snow, Hank had a powerful revelation—he wanted desperately to live, and amazingly he did.

Now twenty-nine, Hank just released his twenty-fourth album and has a full concert schedule. With his career stronger than ever, this great singer movingly conveys his extraordinary life and his tortured journey to escape his father's fate in this brand new volume. We at Country music Magazine thought enough of LIVING PROOF to excerpt it in this issue. You will love it!



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# Audio

## Speaking of Loudspeakers

By Hans Fantel

They say that figures don't lie. Well, maybe. But when it comes to loudspeakers, they don't really tell you much either. Anyway, judging a speaker by its numerical specs is like judging a wine by its label. For loudspeakers, like wines, have an individual flavor that can't be spelled out in numbers.

Even the most hard-bitten engineers admit that the best way to size up a speaker is by listening. That's why, from time to time, we give you listening reports on different loudspeaker models based on actual home use. These are frankly personal reactions—with emphasis on both "personal" and "frank." But just for that reason, they may give you more of a clue to the kind of sound you'll get from that particular speaker than a whole set of lab data.

This time we're concentrating on the Yamaha NS-10M, which carries a very reasonable price tag of \$130 and happens to be one of the best speakers for the money. One reason—besides its fine sound—why we have confidence in this product is that we know its ancestry.

Long before the age of electronics—at the turn of the century—Yamaha was already among the world's leading makers of musical instruments and its pianos, guitars, and brass instruments have been prized by musicians ever since. When Yamaha later branched out into audio, the musical background of their staff was at least partly responsible for the quality of their sound gear. (Just where all those motorbikes fit into the picture we haven't figured out yet).

The rare combination of musical and technical skills clearly shows in the design of Yamaha's speakers, and it is just as evident in this bantam speaker as in Yamaha's famous studio monitor speakers. The NS-10M is particularly good in the upper range, which has a sweetness and smoothness that will delight keen-eared listeners in any kind of music.

In the toughest of all listening tests—the massed strings in an orchestra—the violins sounded like real fiddles, with no metallic trace. Many experts believe that this is the telltale test for quality in a speaker. And, sure enough, all the other instruments—brass, winds, percussion—also came through with the same convincing naturalness.

Like all small speakers, the Yamaha NS-10M is allergic to two things: very low frequencies and very high loudness levels. But to demand belly-wrenching bass and rafter-shaking volume from a small speaker is like asking a VW to outrace a Jag. Which, of course, doesn't mean that you can't enjoy the ride in the VW or that it's a bad car.



Here's what the NS-10M won't do simply because it was never meant to: It won't put 32-foot organ pipe or a life-size kettledrum in your living room. And it won't—as the saying goes—blow your socks off. Anything else it does uncommonly well and with a rare sense of musical rightness. Give it just a touch of bass boost from your amplifier or receiver—to compensate for the natural limitations of a small speaker—and it provides the kind of sweet, balanced sound that's a pleasure to hear for hours on end. Voices, in particular, come through with all their natural character, and the transient response is so sharp and clean that you can practically visualize the pick on a banjo string.

As for the vital statistics, the NS-10M weighs 13¼ lbs and measures a mere 11½ inches high by 8½ inches wide by 7¾ inches deep. A 7-inch woofer works into a tightly sealed enclosure, which accounts for the clean bass without any false boom. A small dome tweeter spreads the highs over a wide angle, so you can walk all around the room without losing any part of the tonal spectrum as you move over to the side of the speakers.

To drive these speakers to full, room-filling volume levels, your amplifier or receiver should deliver at least 15 watts per channel, but it shouldn't be a lot more powerful than that—for anything above 30 watts could overload those little speakers.

The Yamaha NS-10M comes as a boxed

pair and the tweeters are located not in the middle of each unit but in opposite corners: in the upper left for the left speaker, the upper right for right one. This increases stereo separation for a given distance between speakers and makes the sound seem "bigger"—particularly in small rooms. The finish is an attractive black semi-gloss on a high-quality wood surface, with jet-black grilles. Our one and only gripe about this fine little model is the absence of a tweeter-level control to cut down the treble in rooms with smooth, sound-reflecting walls where the speaker might sound too bright. But this function of adjusting the treble to the acoustic environment can also be supplied by turning down the tone control on the amplifier or receiver until a natural overall balance is obtained. ■



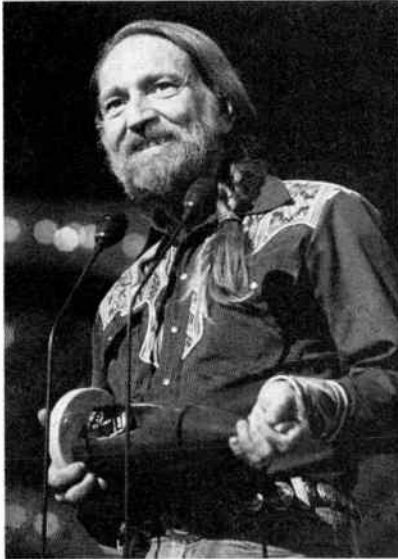
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# Rogers, Nelson, Mandrell, Daniels Capture 1979 CMA Awards



Entertainer of the year—Willie



Male vocalist of the year—Kenny



Song of the year—Don Schlitz

Kenny Rogers waltzed into the 13th annual Country Music Association's Awards Show as the odds on favorite to make a clean sweep of the awards. But when calling time came, country music's outlaw Willie Nelson landed the most coveted of them all, *Entertainer of the Year*.

It was with a sheepish grin that Willie accepted the award from last year's winner, Dolly Parton. "I'm trying very hard to look humble and cool," was his surprised comment. Pitted against the Statler Brothers, Barbara Mandrell, Kenny Rogers and Crystal Gayle, Willie won with a backdrop of number one hits and as the star of the about to be released *Electric Horseman* with Robert Redford and Jane Fonda.

Of course, Kenny was by no means left out of the winner's circle. Nominated for five awards, he came out on top for three categories—*Male Vocalist of the Year*, *Duo of the Year* with Dottie West, and *Album of the Year* for the *Gambler*. "How can I be disappointed? I won three awards and lost to Willie Nelson," he noted.

Petite, vivacious Barbara Mandrell accepted her *Female Vocalist of the Year* award with tears in her eyes and her road show partners, The Statler Brothers recaptured the *Vocal Group of the Year* award from last year's maverick winners The Oak Ridge Boys.

The Charlie Daniels Band received the other three major awards—*Instrumental Group of the Year*, *Single of the Year* (*The Devil Went Down To Georgia*) and Charlie won *Instrumentalist of the Year*.

Other award winners included songwriter Don Schlitz for *The Gambler* as *Song of the Year*. The wild-haired, t-shirted awesome man ascended the steps to the podium among the tuxedoed crowd with the comment that his writing career looked hopeful since *The Gambler* was his first song ever recorded.

Country Music veteran Hank Snow and the late Hubert Long won entrance into the CMA's Hall of Fame.

DOLLY CARLISLE



Hall of famer—Hank Snow



Female vocalist of the year—Barbara



Instrumental group, single & instrumentalist—Charlie Daniels



Group of the year—The Statlers



Duo of the year—Kenny & Dottie





Charlie McCoy



Norton Buffalo



Jean Toots Thielmans



Magic Dick

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# Country Scene

## Austin City Limits Schedules Super Season

Texans have always been proud of their ever-present dance halls and honky tonk heroes, elements which add a mystique to the region and a source of perennial liveliness to the national country music scene. Folks in Texas have their own way of doing things, and the producers of public television's *Austin City Limits* are no exception.

Starting early next year, a record 243 cities will carry the series, as it begins its fifth season. Nearly all of them will air the show in prime time slots, this time featuring a fabulous superstar lineup. Taping has been underway since September at the KLRN-TV studios on the University of Texas campus.

Don Williams, Charlie Daniels, Marty Robbins, Moe Bandy and Joe Stampley, and Janie Fricke are among those scheduled to appear. "We're not so much concerned with ratings as we are with the large volume of letters we receive," assistant producer, Doug Forbes, explained. "Last year we presented a broad spectrum of music, but this time we decided to stay more consistent with big name country acts. Some of them, including Johnny Paycheck and Billy Joe Shaver contacted us and asked to be on. Roy Clark suggested that we do a show with him and Gatemouth Brown, and it has been confirmed."

The tapings are a real bonanza for the mixture of Austin students and townspeople who jam the elevators before each performance. There is no charge for the tickets, and frosty cups of free beer line the tables at the entrance to the studio. "It is definitely a laid back atmosphere, like the city itself," Forbes commented. "We serve the artists a home cooked meal and allow them to conduct the shows any way they want to. It has worked out real well ever since the original pilot with Willie Nelson."

"We're not trying to compete with what they're doing in L.A. and Nashville. There is plenty of that on the air already. The shows are edited into pairings of half hour segments. We feel that an uninterrupted half hour gives a good illustration of an artist's performance. The audience is part of the show, and they're free to get up and dance if they want to. It's all very flexible. Our technical



The stars above the crowd below.



capacity is very good, though we operate on a small budget. We produce about ten shows for what it would cost to produce one episode of *Mork and Mindy*.

Among the highlights of the upcoming season are a songwriters' special with Sonny Throckmorton, Whitey Shafer, Floyd Tillman, Red Lane, Hank Cochran, and Willie Nelson. Another is Johnny Gimble with a gathering of western swing pioneers, such as Eldon Shamblin, Cliff Bruner, and Deacon Anderson. (Watch for a double album forthcoming from these guys). Ralph Stanley's bluegrass will be featured, in

addition to Austin regulars, Joe Ely and Jerry Jeff Walker.

Although the city's reputation as the melting pot of progressive music seems to have waned, its appeal as a music lover's mecca is stronger than ever. Ticket requests from tour groups to attend *Austin City Limits* tapings had to be turned down for lack of space. Those who didn't make it to the sessions missed out on a heck of a good time. But then, watching the series at home will be the next best thing to a night of honky tonkin'.

BILL OAKLEY

# Country Scene

## D.J. of the Month: Buddy Ray

Buddy Ray has spent over 20 years in the radio broadcasting industry. He has held every position in radio except ownership.

Buddy joined WWVA in 1972 after working at radio stations in Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia.

He's on the job seven nights a week over powerful 50,000 watt WWVA Radio. Sunday through Friday from 12 to 5 a.m., Buddy hosts the *Country Roads Show*, reaching people in 18 Northeastern states and 6 Canadian

provinces.

Buddy is a favorite with truck drivers who make up about 60% of his listening audience. He provides them with their favorite tunes, plus up to the minute reports on weather and traffic conditions. He also travels to truck stops throughout the United States with the *Country Roads Show*.

On Saturday nights, Buddy is the Master of Ceremonies for Jamboree U.S.A. which is broadcast live over WWVA.

Buddy doesn't mind the hectic schedule. He enjoys keeping busy and when he's not working, you'll find him on the golf course.



## WNBO:

### World's First Solar Radio Station

When WNBO in Bryan, Ohio, touts itself as "Sunshine Country," it's not just blowing sugar in your ear. The 500-watt country music outfit is the world's first solar-powered commercial radio station.

WNBO switched to the sun on August 29, 1979. Since then, it has drawn the energy for transmitter and auxiliary operations from an "array" of 33,600 photovoltaic cells that convert sunlight into direct current electricity. On a clear day at noon, it can grind out up to 15,000 watts of power.

The array covers a third of an acre in an open field beside the station. Estimates are that the station can count on the sun for 70 to 90 percent of its total power needs.

Most of the money for the \$300,000 experimental project was put up by the U.S. Department of Energy. It was designed and is being monitored by the Lincoln Laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Bryan is located on the flat, windswept plains of northwestern Ohio, about 50 miles from Toledo. It was chosen in the hope that the area's frequent cloud covers, rains, and snows would put the practical potential of solar energy to a real test.

## The Remotostart—For The Motorist Who Has Everything.

Tanya Tucker has one in her Pontiac Grand Prix, but her sister La Costa doesn't have one yet, because she drives a stick shift and they don't work on stick shifts.

Tanya's and La Costa's older brother, Don Tucker has the Tennessee franchise on them and is selling them—with Tanya's occasional help. And if Don has his way, all the Music Row big wigs will soon be getting them installed on their cars.

What is it you ask? Well, it's a device that will start your car, turn your lights on, warm up your engine, defrost your windows, act as a burglar alarm, and—with certain added options—test every electrical circuit in your car to see if there's a bomb attached . . . and it will do all this automatically . . . all while you're as far as 400 feet away from your car—maybe even still inside your house on a cold winter morning, drinking a second cup

of coffee or reading the comics. It's for "the motorist who *thinks* he has everything," and it's called the Remotostart.

Manufactured by a company in Pennsylvania, the Remotostart is, to hear Don Tucker extol its virtues, one of the more novel inventions since the hula hoop—yet much much more practical. At its proposed retail price of \$400-\$495, it's questionable just how many of us are going to be able to use it to forego the ravages of freezing toes, cold car seats and bomb scares this winter. Nonetheless, Tucker is confident that this handy remote car-starting device is going to go over in a big way—especially along Music Row.

"People like automatic garage door openers," he reasons as he flicks the hand-held activator (which looks like those remote TV channel-changers that used to be so popular

a decade or so ago) and triggers the Remotostart in his own car, which is sitting quietly in a parking lot a hundred yards or so away. The engine roars on, startling several nearby pedestrians. "This works the same way. It only takes four screws to install it."

For such a disarmingly simple looking device as it is, the Remotostart is capable of performing rather sophisticated acts. When it's installed, it's not even visible inside or outside the car; yet once you use it to start your car, it is programmed to run it for 12 minutes—two minutes at high idle and then another ten minutes at low idle. If the engine dies, the Remotostart automatically restarts it, and if you should get hung up on the phone or something, the Remotostart will automatically shut your car back off after 12 minutes.

"And nobody can steal it while it's out



# Country Scene

So far, the system has worked even better than anticipated—generating considerably more energy than the dawn-to-dusk broadcasting operation calls for. Excess electricity is stored in four large batteries, like those used in diesel locomotives. These power the station in the early morning hours and during other periods of insufficient sunshine.

The technical triumphs, however, are almost overshadowed by the promotional bonanza the station has fallen heir to via this widely heralded first.

WBNO's program director Bill Priest has resurrected a basketful of sun-oriented country music tunes to flashily ID the station. Says Priest, "We use Roger Miller's *Walkin' in the Sunshine* and *I Believe in the Sunshine*, Roy Acuff's *I Saw the Light*, the Statlers' *Do You Know You Are My Sunshine*, Nat Stuckey's *Lucky Old Sun*, and—of course—Dottie West's *Country Sunshine*. And we also did an album giveaway featuring Dolly Parton's *Great Balls of Fire*."

Appropriately enough, "the world's first solar radio commercial"—which was auctioned off—was for a farm machinery company.

Luke Thaman, the station's general manager, is just happy that the complex solar project is self-operating. "If we had to hire someone who understood it," he says, "we'd have to triple our advertising rates."

EDWARD MORRIS

## Cowboy Disco: Latest Dance Craze To Hit N.Y.

Now that purple and green designer cowboy boots are standard apparel at discos (and every place else), we shouldn't be surprised that disco music is going "country" too. "Cowboy disco is the latest trend in music," said Tony Martino, a radio show producer for the largest disco station in New York. "Let's face it, disco is 'now' but Americans don't stray too far from country music. It's part of our heritage and we always come back to it. If disco was going to make it, 'Cowboy Disco,' was inevitable." Martino opened the first Cowboy Disco club, Twelve West, four years ago and business is booming.

"Cowboy disco" is disco with a twang. It blends the distinctive flavor of country music with disco's electronic bass back-up. "The combination was made in heaven," said Kenny Alter, who has written several cowboy disco songs. "It works too well for them to ever split."

"It's easy to understand how country and disco got together. People are getting sick of disco. So, they fell back on country because it always works," said Alan Harris, who heads Alant, an entertainment promotion and consultation firm. "We believe disco will take on a more symphonic sound instead of the basic thump, thump, thump electronic beat. Country music is the logical next step for disco."

"Another trend we see in popular music, that we call 'cowboy disco' is the merging of

heart sob ballad lyrics to a disco beat," said Martino. "That's what Donna Summer's *Last Dance* and Gloria Gaynor's *I Will Survive* are all about."

We will probably be seeing more cowboy discotheques too. Twelve West is a private club but, it's always crowded. "It's a lesson in what discos should be like," said one sweaty dancer. The music is loud on the dance floor but thanks to an ultra sophisticated sound system, it is low enough so you can talk over it without screaming in any other area in the establishment.

"Since 1977 we have been watching the growth of Cowboy Disco at our club," said Martino, which is a sure sign of its success because Twelve West is one of the most prestigious spots for bigwigs in the recording industry. "If they don't like a song they just walk off the floor en masse. Nobody did any walking when Dolly Parton came out with *Baby I'm Burning*. That's when Cowboy Disco really exploded. Sure she's commercial but, boy is she good. *Bayou Village* by Voyage, *Day Tripper* by James Taylor and several tunes by Kenny Rogers are some of my favorite Cowboy Disco tunes."

"All the big recording companies are interested in cowboy disco because think of the market—so many people would buy it," said Martino, who also does music consultation. "Disco people would be into it because it's disco and a new thing. Country music fans, the largest and most devoted audience

there running," Don Tucker emphasizes. "The doors are still locked, and you've still got the keys in your pocket, of course. But if somebody should pop the hood or touch the gas pedal, or... open the door..." (He walks up to the car and opens the door, and after ten seconds, there is a frightening cacophony of beeping horns and blinking lights)... "the burglar alarm will automatically go off..."

Presently, Don Tucker has the Remoto-star market in the state of Tennessee sewed up, and he hopes to eventually expand his area into California and Oregon. Though she's not directly involved in the business, sister Tanya, as a favor, will be helping him out on the West Coast.

"She'll be showing it to people she knows and maybe giving out some cards now and then, and La Costa will be doing



the same thing. Tanya knows a lot of movie stars and TV people out there.

"Meanwhile," Don laughs, "I'll be showing it to people I know—Billy Sherrill,

George Jones, Tammy... the people at CBS and MCA Records... I'm going to be knocking on their doors pretty soon!"

BOB ALLEN

# Country Scene

in America, would want it too. Cowboy Disco always gets a good reaction because it's different and at the same time familiar, whether you're into country or disco."

"Country music is the only homegrown American music," said Martino. "If you don't like it you can't be American. It's our sound. Slowly but surely it makes inroads in every type of music Americans listen to. Take the classic example of the New York

City Ballet doing *Rodeo* written by the classical composer Copeland. He got cowboy sounds by incorporating cow bells in his music." The Joffrey Ballet is following suit and now they are doing country music.

"We called it Cowboy Disco instead of Country Disco because cowboys like to dance and Cowboy Disco is definitely dancing music. The new dancing focuses on free-flowing movement rather than a Saturday

Night Fever routine or the hustle which is what Cowboy Disco dancing is all about. You let yourself loose and do folk dance steps opposed to just flailing your arms. Dancers have outgrown the freaked out stage," said Martino.

"Everything is pointing towards a big future for Cowboy Disco," said Martino. "You can count on Dolly to give it a surge."

NANCY TRACHTENBERG

## Watch This Face: Steve Gibb



Inspiration is like lightning; it strikes at the strangest times and in the strangest places, often when one is simply not ready for it—much less *dressed* properly for it.

Take the case of Steve Gibb and his song, *She Believes In Me*, for instance:

*She Believes In Me* has obviously moved a lot of people. It moved Kenny Rogers and his producer Larry Butler enough for them to pick it out of a stack of several hundred

other songs and include it on Rogers' multi-million-selling LP, *The Gambler*. When the song was later released as a single, it moved enough people to go to the record stores and buy it, that it was certified gold in a matter of weeks; and it moved enough members of the Country Music Association to get it nominated in their Song of the Year category this year.

And *She Believes In Me* obviously moved

its writer, Steve Gibb too, when the inspiration to write it first came to him—but only long enough to set aside his beer and ham sandwich (with mustard) to scribble down the lyrics late one night as he stood over his kitchen counter, dressed only in his "skivvies." Steve, in fact, will be the first to tell you that the Muse sometimes does move in mysterious ways.

"It took me about 33 years and 20 minutes to write that song," he smiles. "I came home late one night from playing a gig, and it just *happened*. My wife inspired the song really. It was a Saturday night, it was foggy outside, and my wife was waiting for me in bed. The song just came out, like a little snapshot of my life. I didn't even have an instrument—just a ham sandwich and a beer!"

*She Believes In Me* is only the most well-known of the many songs that 34-year-old Gibb (Sorry ladies and gentlemen, no relation to the Bee Gees!) has written during the six years he has been in Nashville. The 400-odd titles that he has registered in the publishing company which he co-owns with his mentor and producer, Buzz Cason include those which have been recorded by The Oak Ridge Boys, T.G. Sheppard, Helen Reddy, Bobby Goldsboro, Eddy Arnold and Freddy Weller. Mike Douglas even recorded one of Steve's songs recently for an up-and-coming Christmas album. Steve even has an LP of his own songs, *Let My Song*, which was released recently on Clouds Records.

But as far as writing goes, Kenny Rogers' success with *She Believes In Me* has certainly been the big milestone in Steve's career; it has given Steve the sort of attention that he hadn't really expected. For one thing, it's made his telephone ring a whole lot more. "The number's been changed twice, and now it's unlisted," he laughs. "I've had people calling me from Arkansas at three or four in the morning, saying, 'Hey! I wrote a



# Country Scene

song. I want you to hear it!"

Gibb, by appearance, is a shy sort of man with a basically gentle nature, which he often seems to conceal behind a flippant sense of humor. During his early childhood years, he was a victim of polio, and at age two, his mother put him up on a piano stool and taught him how to play; and he's more or less been there ever since. "That's where I grew up, on that piano bench!" he smiles softly. "My mother always played records behind me... everything from New Orleans jazz, to Beethoven, to Hank Williams... Bless her. In her own way, she was giving me something even then, the environment or education or whatever you want to call it, that would see me through my life."

Born in Virginia, Gibb grew up in Florida and South Carolina. Later, he got advanced degrees in music from the Peabody Institute in Baltimore and the University of Maryland. After graduation, he taught at a prep school in Florida for a year or so. "It was dignified and well-organized, but it just wasn't my style," he shakes his head. "I am

neither dignified nor well-organized."

Gibb next took to the Southern cocktail lounge circuit, playing his piano, and he ended up in Biloxi, Louisiana. "I started writing songs there," he recalls with a shrug, "not to sell them or anything, but just to be writing them."

One of the club owners Steve worked for in Biloxi heard him play his songs and loved them. Somehow, he managed to get tapes of several of them to Sammi Smith's producer. Sammi recorded several of them, and her producer urged Steve to move to Nashville.

"It was difficult, because I didn't want to come up here," he recalls. "I was afraid to come up here, because I am not a city-type person. A friend of mine even got a job up here and moved up and found a house for me to live in. He did all that just because he wanted me to get my rear end up here! Looking back now, he has my eternal gratitude."

Unlike most songwriters, when he is actually writing a song, Steve does not painstakingly plunk away on the piano or the

guitar in search of an elusive melody or chord change for his work-in-progress. In fact, he writes most of his songs just like he wrote *She Believes In Me*—without an instrument, just scribbling down the lyrics somewhere and working out a melody in his head. "I hear the sounds in my head. I've sometimes gone into the studio to demo songs without even having played them on an instrument before," he explains. "I don't know. Some people bite their nails, some people scratch their beards... Me, I like to fool around with a pen and paper."

Despite his casual approach to his profession, Gibb admits that having a song do as well as *She Believes In Me* has, is a once-in-a-lifetime thrill. "The album's (*The Gambler*) gone past three million sales... the single has sold a million..." he says with quiet amazement. "It gives you a damn good feeling to finally get one after all the years of trying," he admits. "It gives you a feeling of, 'Well, by God, I'm working in the right direction. I'll keep on keepin' on!'"

BOB ALLEN

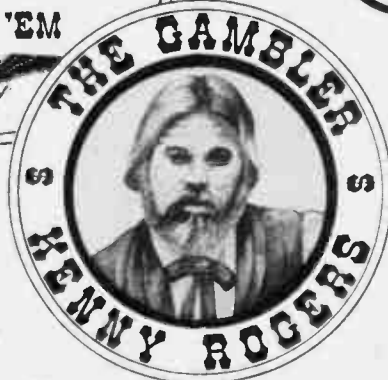
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# COUNTRY Scene

## A Celebration For Dorsey Burnette

Dorsey Burnette was never referred to as a living legend during his lifetime, but since his death on August 19, he has become a posthumous hero. Singing his praises on Friday, October 12, at Los Angeles' Forum, were Glen Campbell, Roger Miller, Kris Kristofferson, Duane Eddy, Gary Busey, Maureen McGovern and Tanya Tucker. The event also brought about a musical reuniting of the Bramletts, better known as Delaney & Bonnie, after an eight year separation.

Burnette, and his brother Johnny, helped to create and promote the rockabilly sound that launched their careers as well as those of Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis. According to Preston Pierce, who co-prompted the Dorsey Burnette Celebration, with Delaney, 'rockabilly' was named after Dorsey's son, Billy, and Johnny's boy, Rocky. Though the Brothers stopped performing together by the mid-50s, they continued to co-write songs and penned such hits for Rick (aka Ricky) Nelson as *Believe What You Say*, *Just A Little Too Much*, *Waitin' In School* and several others. Dorsey also wrote alone.

He recorded *Tall Oak Tree*, which was just one of his many country hits. Bob Dylan impressively considers that song to be the first ecological tune ever recorded. *Big Rock Candy Mountain* and *Hey Little One* were a couple of other Burnette hits.

"I'm doing this concert out of gratitude to Dorsey," says a tired looking Glen Campbell. "I get asked to do a lot of charity shows and I always consider what it's for. I owe the Burnette family as friends, and out of respect for Dorsey's talents. *Hey Little One* was a big song for me. Besides, it's always fun just to get together with your friends."

And many of Glen's friends turned out that night. It was a quick-paced show with each singer doing three or four songs. The most poignant moment of the evening occurred when an unsuspecting, Alberta Burnette, Dorsey's widow, was called on stage to receive a plaque dedicated to the memory of her husband from the Arthritis Foundation.

The Celebration was a tribute to Dorsey's unselfish nature and giving attitude. Because his sudden death left his family in a financially difficult situation, it was also an opportunity for his friends to show their love for the Burnettes.

Dorsey would turn down paying gigs to



Gathered for the celebration are Gary Busey, Glen Campbell, Norton Buffalo, Kris Kristofferson, Delaney Bramlett and security guard Jay York.

donate his time and talent to any organization for the needy—the March of Dimes, the City of Hope, underprivileged children, the ignored aged, and, of course, anybody in the music business. Friday night the industry repaid him and showed their respect for him and 10,000 fans bought tickets to watch them do it.

Preston Pierce began putting the benefit together with the help of Delaney, immediately after the funeral, in the kitchen of the Burnette home. A movie and double-album deal are now in the offing. Negotiations are currently underway and they are hoping for a six-week release date on both projects.

"Everybody who worked on this event wants to make Alberta a wealthy woman," comments Preston, one of Dorsey's oldest and closest friends. "The artists who performed are turning over the cash to Alberta the union requires them to accept. Plus, all the proceeds from the film and record will go to her."

Many of the stars of the evening go back a long way with the Burnettes. Duane Eddy, though recovering from a painful back problem, was one of Dorsey's poll-bearers. He flew in from Tahoe, where he lives, to take his place on stage. They met 20 years ago, and Duane credits Dorsey with "living his life with total enjoyment no matter what business hassles he went through."

Two weeks prior to his death, Dorsey had been at his house, talking with several friends and, according to Alberta, told everybody when he died he wanted a big funeral followed by a huge party. He got his wish. Forest Lawn said the last funeral attended by so many people (over 800) was Jeanette McDonald's.

Dorsey's other dream was to play the Forum. With the help of people like Kristofferson, who "met Dorsey through Roger Miller and told Delaney he would definitely be at the show," and Bonnie, who responded to Delaney's request they get back together for the night's performance, the Dorsey Burnette Celebration was a success.

Gary Busey opened the show and was there because of his friendship with Dorsey. But primarily, his connection was with Billy and Rocky Burnette. They are of the same musical era. The second generation of Burnette boys took their place on stage and wailed out some rock and roll that both their father's would have been proud of.

The show ended with the cast singing *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* and the unselfish spirit everyone brought to the show that had been initiated by Dorsey Burnette will keep the flow going and the circle unbroken.

GAIL BUCHALTER



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Vocals By: Frank Sinatra; Helen Forrest; Dick Haymes and Kitty Kallen; Ciriibirin; You Made Me Love You; All Or Nothing At All; Sleepy Lagoon; I Had The Craziest Dream; Two O'Clock Jump; Cherry; I'll Get By; I've Heard That Song Before; It's Been A Long, Long Time; The Man With The Horn.  
NO TAPE AVAILABLE

**FREDDY MARTIN - SM-11886 ALBUM \$2.98**  
Tonight We Love; Santa Catalina; Warsaw Concerto; Why Don't We Do This More Often; Bumble Boogie; Grieg Piano Concerto In A Minor; I've Got A Lovely Bunch Of Coconuts; Cumaná; Managua, Nicaragua; The Hut-Sut Song.  
NO TAPE AVAILABLE

**CLYDE McCOY - SM-311 ALBUM \$2.98**  
Basin Street Blues; Farewell Blues; Sugar Blues; Hell's Bells; Slues In The Night; Sugar Blues Boogie; St. Louis Blues; Limehouse Blues; Memphis Blues; Mama's Gone, Good-bye; Wabash Blues; Tear It Down.  
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**GLENN MILLER - ANLI-0974 ALBUM \$2.98**  
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**THE OAK RIDGE BOYS - C-33935 ALBUM \$2.98**  
Lord I've Been Ready For Years; No Earthly Good; Jesus Knows Who I Am; The Same Old Fashioned Way; I'm Winging My Way Back Home; Where The Soul Never Dies; Its Been Done; Doctor God; Jesus Was There; Last Train To Glory.  
8 TRACK TAPE - 18C-33935 \$4.98

**THE OAK RIDGE BOYS - C-32742 ALBUM \$2.98**  
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**BUCK OWENS - SM-11827 ALBUM \$2.98**  
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8 TRACK TAPE - 8TM-11827 \$4.98

**PATTI PAGE - CS-9326 ALBUM \$2.98**  
Tennessee Waltz; Cross Over The Bridge; Old Cape Cod; (How Much Is That) Doggie In The Window; Mister Mississippi; I Went To Your Wedding; Mockin' Bird Hill; Allegheny Moon; With My Eyes Wide Open I'm Dreaming; Changing Partners; Detour.  
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**RAY PRICE - CS-8866 ALBUM \$2.98**  
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**JIM REEVES - ANLI-3014 ALBUM \$2.98**  
Four Walls; Goodnight Irene; Why Do I Love You (Melody of Love); Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart; The Hawaiian Wedding Song; Welcome To My World; From A Jack To A King; My Happiness; Mona Lisa; You'll Never Know.  
NO TAPE AVAILABLE

**TEX RITTER - SM-1292 ALBUM \$2.98**  
Blood On The Saddle; Samuel Hall; Bury Me Not On The Lone Prairie; Little Joe The Wrangler; The Face On The Barroom Floor; Boll Weevil; Billy The Kid; Streets Of Laredo; Sam Bass; Rye Whiskey.  
8 TRACK TAPE - 8TM-1292 \$4.98

**JEAN SHEPARD - SM-11888 ALBUM \$2.98**  
A Satisfied Mind; I Learned It All From You; Under Suspicion; You're Calling Me Sweetheart Again; I Love You Because; The Other Woman; Beautiful Lies; Take Possession; You're Telling Me Sweet Lies Again; I'd Rather Die Young; Why Did You Wait?; Don't Fall In Love With A Married Man.  
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**FRANK SINATRA - M-11883 ALBUM \$2.98**  
I've Got The World On A String; Three Coins In The Fountain; Love And Marriage; From Here To Eternity; South Of The Border; The Gal That Got Away; Young-At-Heart; Learnin' The Blues; My One And Only Love; The Tender Trap.  
8 TRACK TAPE - 8TM-11883 \$4.98

**CARL SMITH - CS-8737 ALBUM \$2.98**  
Hey Joe; There She Goes; Old Lonesome Times; Are You Tasing Me; I Feel Like Cryin'; Doorstep To Heaven; Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way; The Little Girl In My Home Town; If You Saw Her Through My Eyes; You're Free To Go; Gettin' Even; I Overlooked An Orchid.  
8 TRACK TAPE - 18C-00010 \$4.98

**SONS OF THE PIONEERS - SING HYMNS OF THE COWBOYS - ANLI-2808 ALBUM \$2.98**  
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**TAMMY WYNETTE - BN-26486 ALBUM \$2.98**  
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8 TRACK TAPE - TRR-254 \$4.98

# Nashville Underground

**Bill Anderson** has purchased a 35-acre farm in Wilson County and plans to become a part-time country farmer. "I don't think that is unusual for a city (Atlanta) born boy." "After all, I guess there are some farmers who want to become part-time singers or songwriters."

Veteran artist **Mac Davis** was in town recently to record a new album under the direction of producer **Larry Butler**, the same who produces the likes of **Kenny Rogers** and **Billie Jo Spears**. Davis who is taking an entirely new direction with his career, recently starred in *North Dallas Forty* with **Nick Nolte**. This album will feature several of his own songs and will have a different sound from previous Davis albums.

**Jessi Colter**, wife of **Waylon Jennings** and mother of a new baby nicknamed "Shooter" decided to take up roller skating. So she rented a roller rink for her daughter and girlfriends for lessons. Feeling superbly confident after an hour's worth of lessons, Jessi decided to try rolling on her own. She promptly fell and ended up with a black eye, fractured elbow and a few bumps and bruises. Mrs. Jennings is taking it easy for awhile.

Amid rumors that he is on dope and having marital problems, **Johnny Cash** and wife **June Carter Cash** have exchanged their wedding vows again as "proof of our love," said Cash. Rumors began when it was recently announced that the **Carter Sisters** (**Jan Howard** and **Helen** and **Anita Carter**) would no longer be a part of the act. The gossip was that Jan left at June's request because of a supposed romantic liaison between Johnny and Jan. But according to Johnny, the group disbanded because of economics. He also reaffirmed that the Carter Sisters were not fired as rumored. Meanwhile, Johnny and June have been seen lovey, dovey on airplanes and during the recording of their upcoming



New Brenda Lee

Christmas Special *The Johnny Cash Christmas Show* to be aired on CBS on December 6.

**Tammy Wynette** can't seem to escape troubles. During a recent performance in Princeton, Indiana, she was robbed of \$20,000 in cash and \$6,000 in jewelry. The goodies were taken from Ms. Wynette's motel room while she and family members were out to dinner. Songwriter husband, **George Richey** said he normally carried the money with him but inadvertently left it in the room.

Those who have viewed **Loretta Lynn's** new movie, *Coal Miner's Daughter*, to be released in March of next year, say the movie's got to be a blockbuster. "It's a four-hankie movie," **David Skepner**, manager of Loretta Lynn, was quoted as saying. "It's got some terribly funny parts, but the sad parts brought tears to even my eyes." Meanwhile Loretta has reportedly been working too hard with the film and all. So she landed in the hospital due to exhaustion. As a result, she missed the CMA Awards this year, but she's looking forward to spending a little time with her husband and getting away from it all for a few days after her release from the hospital.

Of all people, **Andy Williams** was in town to record a few songs. Rumor is that he has even recorded a few country influenced numbers. While here, Andy really got into the swing of things and went and bought himself some boots and western wear complete with wide-brim cowboy hat.

**Brenda Lee**, country music's perennial little girl-next-door has changed her image. "I'm a woman and I enjoy looking like one," said the 34-year-old star. After recently signing a recording contract with MCA, the change began. "They brought in the best hairdresser, the top make-up people and the best photographers and when they were done, well I didn't know I could look like this, but here I am and I kinda like it." But she is quick to add, that "it is only the image they've changed, not the person."

Watch for the **BEE GEE** special that is slated on NBC November 15. Of all things, their show is supposed to be partially country. Their only scheduled guests are **Willie Nelson** and **Glen Campbell**. It seems everybody is getting in on this country act.

**Emmylou Harris** and her husband, Producer **Brian Ahern**, have welcomed a new daughter into the world and named her Brian Ahern. Emmylou was recently featured in an article in "People" magazine that profiled her as a fine Southern cook.

Even though **Jim Ed Brown** and **Helen Cornelius** have announced that they are going their separate ways, a hesitant Cornelius said before the Country Music Awards Show that the separation may be awhile coming. With their single *Fools* floating high on the country charts, it would be a shame to see such a dynamic duo part ways. Their manager **Tandy Rice**, was quoted as saying "Jim Ed and Helen have simply reached a point where it seems to make sense for them to go in new directions. There is absolutely no rancor or animosity between them. Their show is just evolving into two separate road shows, effective in January 1980. There is nothing but good will between everyone involved." We'll wait to see if the separation is that soon.



Big Al Downing

A new/old face to watch for in country music is rock and roller **Big Al Downing**. He was recently named *Billboard Magazine's* Number One New Artist and Number One New Male Single Artist. Receiving the award at Nashville's Exit/Inn during CMA Week, he almost gushed with enthusiasm and thank-yous. "I've always wanted some recognition for my work and never got any . . . until now," he said with his usual wide grin.

Some folks just can't win. **Jerry Lee Lewis**, who just finished a one-year probation for a drug conviction earlier this year, was recently arrested at his home in Hernando, Mississippi. The arrest was made one day after Internal Revenue Service officers went to his house to seize some of his personal possessions in lieu of unpaid federal taxes. Jerry was released after posting a \$30,000 bond.

By Dolly Carlisle



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# MOE & JOE

## Fifth Avenue Honky-Tonkin'

By Russell D. Barnard

### *The Night Before The Morning After*

I arrived at the Lone Star Cafe at about 8:30, so I'd have plenty of time for a bowl of chili before The Moe Bandy/Joe Stampley Show. It was scheduled for 9:30 and since it was to be broadcast live on WHN Radio, I knew it would start on time. If I got there after nine, the place would be jammed and chili hard to get.

Chili comes in three grades at the Lone Star: hot, searing, and thermonuclear. Coming from Texas myself, I have a great love for powerful chili, but I do like to be able to taste what I'm eating. So I skip the "thermonuclear" (which paralyzes your taste buds for several days), order a bowl of "searing" and sit back to contemplate the coming evening: two of Country Music's top honky tonk men, performing at a real honky tonk, on Fifth Avenue, in New York City, broadcast live, over the biggest country music station in the world, WHN, also in New York City. Never mind that Acme cowboy boots, with Ralph Lauren labels sewn in, are now the hottest fashion item in New York's most fashionable store and being worn by New York's most fashionable people, this evening needs contemplation.

Not the least reason is that Moe and Joe make no apologies for singing *real* country music, have no fashionable labels sewn over the real stuff, and, have just put out an album together called **Just Good Ol' Boys** which is being played by real country music radio stations (and which some knowledgeable people say is going to break the world's record for the number of hit singles to come off of one album).

Normally, at the Lone Star, I would go to the late show for personal enjoyment. The late show doesn't have to end on time, the crowd is usually a little crazier and sometimes the performers get turned on and something special happens. But tonight, I have to go to the early show. I'm scheduled to meet Moe and Joe tomorrow morning to interview them for an article for this magazine. Normally, one of our team of crack country music writers would

handle that job, but all our crack writers are unavailable (probably out writing some crack article for someone else so they can pay their rent). So I end up with the job, which means no late show, since I have to be responsible in the morning.

I will later regret this, since it caused me to miss the sight of Bob Baglund, the world heavyweight wrestling champ, and Cal Rudman, crack radio pundit, dancing on stage while Moe and Joe sang *Just Good Ol' Boys*. Since Baglund and Rudman together probably weigh six hundred pounds or more and Moe and Joe are pret-



ty healthy boys themselves, I understand that it didn't exactly look like the minut. No casualties were reported, however.

The crowd tonight is about par for the Lone Star, mainly made up of real country folks (from New Jersey, upstate New York, or the potato farms of Long Island), exiled Texans who live and work in the Big Apple and hip New Yorkers who know good music when they hear it and good times when they see them.

Lee Arnold, one of WHN's top disc jockeys, who will be MC for the live broadcast, steps to the mike, introduces the boys and, BANG, out come Moe and Joe, and the cool, quiet night air on Fifth Avenue is permanently split by the raucous vibration of honky tonk. No doubt the

same Fifth Avenue residents and businessmen who are suing the Lone Star (because they don't like the fifty foot long, monster-movie-green iguana which Lone Star proprietor Mort Cooperman has installed on the roof) will not like this sound.

But I do. Yet I can't quite focus on it. I'm too caught up in thinking about what I'm going to ask these guys tomorrow. So I'm not really hearing what they are saying tonight. I know its something about cheatin, foolin around, tears, whiskey, crying, and all of that . . . but I'm not really getting it. I'm off in some fog thinking things like, "I wonder if Crystal Gayle ever played a real honky tonk." Hmm. Where *are* my crack writers when I really need them. If they were here, I could relax and listen to the music.

Just when the fog is at its thickest, it is pierced by a haunting sound from the grave. *Honky Tonk Man!* Yes, that's what I'm hearing as the fog rolls back. Johnny Horton singing his own never-equalled honky tonk classic, back from the dead, live on-stage at the Lone Star Cafe, what an event! But, the strong echo doesn't sound like the original. Wait a *minute*—that's not Johnny Horton, its Moe and Joe singing the hottest rendition of *Honky Tonk Man* since the master himself. To hell with this article, got to listen. . .

### *On The Bus*

After the show, I go out to Bandy's bus to say hello and reconfirm our appointment for the next day. Talking with the boys are some writers, a belly dancer, producer Ray Baker, and others. Interesting talk, but nothing out of the ordinary till two members of a Famous Major League Baseball Team arrive. Talk turns to pro athletes and their interest in country music. Lively and interesting, but I've got to get back to work. As I leave the bus, a real honky tonk event is taking place on the sidewalk next to the Lone Star's stage door. A pretty girl is being pulled on by her male companion, who has obviously had more than an iced tea at the Lone

Star. He believes that she must leave with him, *now*. She doesn't think so. She thinks he should go away by himself, so that she can go back inside to find another gent who she seems to feel is better company. But this guy won't leave her alone. I'm expecting him to drag her off by the hair to his cave any minute. But she resists firmly, and he finally gives up. Chalk up another point for the Lone Star as a real honky tonk. (No gunplay yet, however.)

#### *The Morning After The Night Before*

Well, time has come. My cab arrives at the Gramercy Park Hotel, which faces one of the most beautiful parks anywhere, surrounded by many of New York's most beautiful houses. On Gramercy Park, you're more likely to think of Cary Grant and Fred Astaire than honky tonk Moe and Joe. It's 12 noon sharp, right on time.

Moe and Joe don't seem the worse for wear. They fill me in on the late show including the dancing wrestler. I fill them in on the drunk and the pretty girl.

#### *On Drinkin' Too Much*

"Yeah," says Moe, "strange things can happen when people drink too much. I remember once . . . at a honky tonk called

the Frontier outside of San Antonio . . . I was talking and telling jokes on stage and some drunk stands up and says, 'We don't pay to hear you talk, boy. We pay to hear you sing!'"

Joe agrees that the general behavior of fans in honky tonks would not be appropriate at a church social.

#### *On Professionals: Athletes and Singers*

Also Stampley comments that he wouldn't be surprised if a certain Famous Major League Baseball Player might not be in the best form at the game today, after his late night at the Lone Star

"Well," I allow, "lots of pro athletes carouse all the time and still deliver. That's the mark of a pro. Only amateurs have to be in tip-top shape to be good."

"Yeah," Joe allows, "maybe the same is true of singers, too. Lots of times I go out there when I'm sick or tired and don't feel like it. But you can't tell the customers to go home just because you don't feel good."

#### *On Broken Bones*

Bandy, who is a big-time sports fan, agrees, "Pro athletes are hurt all the time and they have to keep doin' it. My brother is hurt all the time. He still rides those

bulls. That's why I quit." Moe's brother, Mike Bandy, has been one of the top ten professional bull riders for years and Moe rode in the rodeos himself for three or four years, quitting after his second broken collarbone.

#### *On Fishing*

Stampley says he lives to fish. He happily tells Moe how he thinks they are each going to get a boat and motor from Evinrude for an endorsement. I ask Joe whether he knows Ray Scott, head of Bass Angler Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.) "Never met him, but I know who he is. He's the best." I suggest the possibility of setting up a trip for Joe and Moe to go fishing with Ray. "Great!" says Joe, "Let's do it."

(Make a note to write Ray Scott.)

#### *On Wolves and Watermelons*

"Is your place in Louisiana anywhere near the White River in Arkansas?" I ask Stampley.

"No, the White River is up in central Arkansas. That's the only place I've ever seen those big alligator gar, though. It's a beautiful river," says Joe. "You know, Moe, up at my place the wolves come out



Honky tonk heroes Joe Stampley and Moe Bandy playin' pinball at New York's only real honky tonk, The Lone Star Cafe.



of the woods at night and eat my watermelons in the garden. They love those watermelons." You can tell that Stampley likes living in the country fishing and watching the wolves. "Once I almost bought one of those half-wolf, half-shepard dogs from a guy in Florida, but my neighbor told me that it would howl all night, so I said, forget it."

Speaking of wolves, I told Joe that I had recently read a fascinating book about wolves, written by a guy who spent a year living in the Canadian wilderness studying wolves and who had proved that just about every popular belief about wolves was totally wrong. Joe's eyes lit up, so I asked him if he'd like a copy of the book, yes he would.

(Make a note to send Joe Stampley a copy of *Never Cry Wolf* by Farley Mowat.)

### *The Only Question*

Finally, we were running out of things to talk about, so I unleashed the only question I'd been able to think up in the last twenty-four hours:

"Do you think Crystal Gayle ever played a real honky tonk?"

"Naw!" They answered in unison and further allowed as how lots of the newer successful performers were in the same boat.

"Playin' honky tonks was like goin' to school as far as I'm concerned," said Bandy. "That's where I learned my business."

So, my big question was answered just the way I thought it would be. So what. Besides we all know Crystal Gayle is a big talent, and *no one* would think she's a honky tonk singer.

That's not it. It's this: You aren't going to learn anything about Moe and Joe singing honky tonk in this article. You might see what its like to go to the Lone Star to see them, and that I like it. And that I liked talking to them about bull riding, fishing, drunks, wolves, baseball players, and Crystal Gayle. But to really get to the bottom of this, I realize that we needed one of our crack writers to tell you about this new union between Moe and Joe—to tell you what their record is like as an event—not to review the record (see our Record Review for that), but to share the experience with you since I haven't been able to come to grips with it. So, I called Michael Bane, crack writer and former editor of this magazine. "Michael," I said, "listen to this record **Just Good Ol' Boys** and write something."

"You mean a review?"

"No, Michael! Something about the experience."

"O.K."

Bane's resulting work accompanies this piece. Read it. He obviously got lost, too. But, I love reading his stuff anyway. So—I guess, if you want to know what this rebirth of honky tonk listening experience is like, you'll just have to go buy the record. ■

# Redneck Revolution

*The war is over when country music radio stations start playing country music again and fashionable New York women are paying \$49 for cowgirl shirts.*

It may be too soon to tell for sure, but the Redneck Liberation Front may have just won the war hands down. Moe and Joe know it—that's how come their singing is so popular these days—and pretty soon the rest of the country is going to get the drift. The situation has progressed so far, in fact, that we're starting to hear country music on country music radio stations again, and owning a steel guitar isn't even a social stigma anymore.

Course it could get out of hand. You wanna dress like a redneck in New York, you gotta go to Bloomingdale's High Fashion Department Store and be prepared to lay down a bundle. We took a friend from Little Rock, by way of St. Louis, over to Bloomie's a couple of months back to show her the Bloomingdale's clones, a strange breed of women, all around six feet tall, who look, dress and smell alike and never button their shirts. Imagine our surprise when they all looked like Loretta Lynn in 1964, only Loretta used'ta keep her shirt buttoned. Our friend was so impressed with these clothes, which she used to be able to buy at the J.C. Penney's in Little Rock, that she wanted to buy something as a souvenir. She picked out a nice flower print shirt, poorly made, to be sure, but kinda cute. I was watching a clone adjust her garter belt (bet they don't do *that* at the Penney's in Little Rock!) when I heard my friend gasp and drop the shirt, like she'd picked up a blacksnake. "Four-tee-nine dollars!" she said, almost reverently. "Good Lord!" She backed away from the shirt, her hand locked over the top of her purse, and we made a break for it. If everybody hadn't been so intent on the garter belt crisis, we might've never made it out alive.

Being a redneck wasn't always so chic, you know. I recall a family feud once, where my little sister, who's lived in a lot of places where they speak funny languages (No, Joe Bob, further than even New Jersey) and drink wine with breakfast, was trying to score a point on my father, who once crossed the universe to move the sixty miles from Booneville, Mississippi, to Memphis, Tennessee. "Oh," said my sister in a fit of pique, "You're nothing but a . . . a . . . redneck! A redneck!" At that, my father looked thoughtful for a minute and finally said, "Yes, I guess I am." I knew right then that, in the long run, rednecks would win.

Well, what all this has got to do with Moe and Joe is tenuous, I suppose. Except that country music used to be a celebration of what we were, of the real world. That's why the people who were singing about changing the world or hijacking a starship laughed at us, because the real world seemed so . . . mundane.



So, well, you know, a *down*, a *bummer*. Country music always celebrated the little victories and little defeats; a music of sharing, of reaffirmation. Country music said—and, who knows, might say again—that we are what we are. Good ol' boys is all we'll ever be. So it's good to hear a couple of good old boys like Moe and Joe singing a couple of good old boys songs, 'cause it makes one feel *good*, like when the 11:45 p.m. stripper at Skull's Rainbow in Printer's Alley moseys over and gives you a big ol' hug and plops herself on the stool next door, or the guy you've been making eyes at for the last two years on the night shift remembers your name, finally.

Only thing is, this redneck thing's getting so big it worries me. Like, so many fashionable people in the little town I live in have started buying pick-ups that I'm thinking of trading mine in on a Buick. The way things are going, I may be able to sell my National Rifle Association window sticker to a collector for twenty bucks. And that's *all* we'll ever be, too. Rednecks!

—MICHAEL BANE

# Bill Anderson's

If Bill Anderson had become a professional baseball player (which he nearly did), his career probably never would have ended in the outfield. Like Pete Rose, he would have moved to third base once the legs gave out, and when his throwing arm lost its strength he would have extended his career even further by moving over to play first base. Like Rose, Anderson seems driven to actively rely on his natural abilities for as long as he can. One way, perhaps the only way, to extend that career is to accept change and master its effect.

In the era of the Great Media Branding Iron where everything, people included, is viewed as expandable commodities fitting neatly into narrowly defined categories, Anderson has survived comfortably and has avoided having his hide singed.

He attributes his survival in the May fly world of entertainment to a resurgence of self-confidence and the fact that his private life, like the soil after an earthquake, finally has settled. During his 20-year career he has already experienced a second coming when he stepped out of the gaudy rhinestone suits and into a less bizarre, more leisurely attire. Few artists are shrewd enough to rise like the Phoenix from the ashes of their own success, but Anderson, a smooth synthesizer of popular trends has risen to yet a third coming.

Just when you think ol' Whisperin' Bill has taken his last gasp he makes a miraculous comeback. His resilience has astonished several record company executives who figure he was ready to join the dinosaurs of his profession. The answer to a terminal ailment is indeed to find a cure. Few artists perceive that as well as Anderson does.

Anderson is a man of incredible diversity and multi-faceted talent. He's recorded hit songs; he's written hit songs; he owns several radio stations which play hit songs; and in recent years he has expanded into non-music commercial television as a game show host.

"The other day somebody was talking about one of the older artists in this business," Anderson begins, "and they commented that he'd lost all his fans. The other person with us said, 'No, he just outlived them all.' There's a lot of truth to that. He didn't create any new fans; he just outlived the old ones. I don't want to do that."

So Anderson makes subtle changes in his personal and musical appearance, hoping to appease his old fans while attracting new, younger ones. "The biggest changes have been in the past three years," he says. "I changed record producers (from Owen Bradley to Buddy Killen) and I changed the concept of my band from the Po' Boys to the Po' Folks." Other behind the scene changes oc-



curred too. He hired a west-coast-based manager and a New York publicity firm to aid the transition once he realized his rhinestone image wasn't hooking it anymore. "Those were the significant changes," he adds. "Everything else has been triggered off of one of those events."

About the same time he changed stage costumes Anderson's political thinking began to swing from the right. In 1970, he released a patriotic song at the height of the Vietnam War protests entitled, *Where Have All Our Heroes Gone*. "After that song died down I realized my thinking on that kind of thing was changing," he notes. "That's the one song I don't do on stage today because it's just not what I think anymore."

The new-found political awareness was coupled with a personal awakening. That same year he married his second and present wife, Becky. "I key a lot of it to finally being happy," he explains. "I went through some pretty unhappy times in my personal life. As I got my personal situation straightened out, other things seemed to fall in line."

Anderson was one of the first country artists to improve the sound and presentation of live performances. "Emmylou Harris said it so great to me one time," he recalls. "I asked her how she defined her music and she said, 'It's country music played with a rock atti-

tude.' I loved that!" While some country artists eschewed rock music, Anderson studied it, applying its methodology to his own music.

Thus the Po' Boys became the Po' Folks, the road troupe increased to 13 people, and his show blossomed into a multi-media presentation complete with three screens and nine projectors.

"It costs me about a quarter of a million dollars a year to be in this business," he says. "I've got all my own sound equipment which is run by an audio man who sits in the audience and mixes the sound. All the audio visual equipment was a tremendous investment — computers, slides, projectors, and screens. The cost of being on the road has tripled for me and quite frankly the income generated from it hasn't tripled. But I feel it's an investment that will eventually bring that kind of a return."

One does not survive in the music business through impatience, and wisely Anderson has not tried to make all his investment back too quickly. His theory is to profit through repeat business with concert promoters. "Where some entertainers may play a coliseum in Milwaukee, I'll play Waukesha, in the suburbs, in a building which holds maybe 2500 people, and do two shows," he advises. "I do about 70 percent repeat business. When you've been at it 20 years, that can amount to some-



# Got A Plan

By Kelly Delaney



thing.”

The theme of Anderson's show is to parallel his changes with those of country music. The show is psychologically designed to suggest to the audience that Bill Anderson and country music are growing in the same direction. “The one conscious thing I set out to do with it was to say, ‘Okay, this is what I was and this is what I am today.’” he explains.

During his show he distinctly separates the music of the old and new Bill Anderson. When he does a medley of his earlier hits he dramatically removes his tailored sport coat and puts on one of his rhinestone jackets, the projector flashing slides of an earlier Anderson. “When I put on the jacket I’m indicating that I’m thankful for what helped me to get here,” he says, “but rather than mix *I Can’t Wait Any Longer* in with *Wild Weekend* I feel like I’m better off to say, ‘This is where I came from, but that’s finished and here is what I am.’”

With the release of *I Can’t Wait Any Longer* in 1978, Anderson set a musical trend — country disco. While he anticipated an adverse reaction from some of his fans to the disco beat, that wasn’t what he got. Instead people were upset with the suggestive lyric. Even his number one fan — Mother Anderson — once commented during one of his performances of the song, “I wish he wouldn’t

sing that!” “I knew the lyric was pretty strong,” he admits, “but at the same time there were other songs in the charts like *Lay Down Sally*, *She Can Put Her Shoes Under My Bed Anytime*, and *I Want To Talk To You*, which was the punchline to an old dirty joke. I really didn’t think anything about saying *I Can’t Wait Any Longer* — to hold you, to kiss you, and in effect to get in your pants. The negative reaction wasn’t to the disco beat; it was to that terrible lyric I put with it!” Ironically, that song is one of the most requested at his shows.

While Anderson had some trepidation about recording such a potentially volatile song, he was assuaged by producer Killen who told him, “Bill, you’ve come too far now for one record to ruin your career.” Fatefully, the record heralded the third coming of Bill Anderson. If country music was moving uptown, Anderson was going to be in its penthouse.

“I guess it’s all a matter of confidence,” he muses. “I never had a lot of confidence in myself as an artist. I’ve had a lot of confidence as a writer (He has received more songwriting awards from BMI than any other composer). I know I’m not the greatest singer in the world and for that reason I’ve lacked a certain amount of confidence to do some of the things I’ve wanted to do. But particularly since I put

the new group together I’ve had more confidence. It shows up in a lot of different aspects of my life, and recording that song was one of them.”

Anderson was also the first country recording artist to ever host a television game show. During its six-month airing on network TV, *The Better Sex* achieved a rating comparable to *Family Feud* during its early existence. *Family Feud* is now the top rated game show and *The Better Sex* has since been cancelled. Anderson makes no attempt to second-guess the reasoning of programming executives. “I feel pretty sure I’ll get another one,” he says. “I just have to wait until the right one comes along.” He has done several pilots in the past few months.

Anderson claims to have set some goals for himself—something he has never done before.

“I never really set any goals for myself back in the beginning, because for me, everything just kind of happened,” he says. “Right now is the first time I’ve ever set goals for myself. Maybe it’s because Becky and I have a son now (he has two girls from a previous marriage), or maybe it’s just that as life goes on you begin to think along those lines.”

Anderson’s plan for the next ten years includes aiming his show toward the lucrative Nevada nightclub circuit, ala Las Vegas and Reno, and doing some more television, possibly a variety-talk show along the lines of a Mike Douglas format. Realistically, toward the end of that ten-year period, he envisions his performing and recording to recede as he becomes more involved with his radio stations (as a youth his hope was to be a disc jockey in Atlanta) and with his publishing company. Conway Twitty recently recorded *I May Never Get To Heaven*, a song Anderson wrote 20 years ago which had gone unnoticed in his publishing firm.

While he’s not exactly putting himself out to pasture, Anderson has sold his ultra-modern home on the shores of Old Hickory Lake, near Nashville, moving further out in the country to a small, secluded farm, “I may even have a few horses and cows!” he roars. He plans to convert a barn into a studio, hoping that may inspire him to write more, something he hasn’t had much time to do lately.

In the meantime, stocked with a fresh supply of confidence, a healthy respect for his profession, and with new horizons ahead, country music’s Horatio Alger may realize the implications to a line from his most recent hit: *The dream never dies—just the dreamer*. Bill Anderson is still very much alive and for him the dreams are still coming true. ■

\**The Dream Never Dies* by Richard Cooper. ASCAP, Welback Music Corp.

# Doug Kershaw

## The Ragin' Cajun Puts on the Brakes



By Gail Buchalter

The two-story yellow house on the corner is the picture of suburban bliss. The brilliant blue 4-wheel drive Jeep Waggoner parked in the driveway adds to the image. Surprisingly, the door-chimes didn't play a chorus of *Louisiana Man*, as Doug Kershaw opens the door.

Standing next to him, is his three-year-old, blond-haired son, Zachary, whom Daddy proudly introduces. Yes, this is, or rather was, the Ragin' Cajun—a moniker now applicable only to the performer and not the man. The wildman from the swamps has traded in his pills for parenthood and his crazies for calmness.

The cleaned-up Cajun, has been living in this Los Angeles suburb for two-and-a-half years, with his third wife, Pamela and their two boys. The youngest, Tyler, will be two in a few months.

Kershaw married on June 21, 1975, on stage at the Houston Astrodome. Shortly after, he and Pam, whom he met at one of his concerts, moved to Evergreen, Colorado, which is near her hometown of Denver. There, they began a new life. "I had to stop doing drugs so I had to get out of Nashville, where they were too accessible. All the things people were telling me—especially Pam—about myself were true. Why, I couldn't even go into the studio without screaming at people. Pills were a normal way of life and I knew it was time to try something different. So, I stopped taking pills the same way I quit smoking cigarettes. I just stopped," Doug proudly relates giving up his five pack a day habit. "I still drink beer though," he adds, turning the

Coors can around in his hands. A quick conversation of hot, smoggy, summer days, tall cold drinks and proper home insulation follows, interrupted by a request from Pam while she is packing up their clothes, asking Doug to please check the washing machine.

"We all travel together when I go on the road and that's new for me," Doug continues, after putting the laundry into the dryer. "I've never done it this way with my other marriages but I've learned from them. I think this is the only way you can make it work. When you're on the road by yourself, young girls can become a habit and you can't leave your wife alone for too long," Doug's voice fades off ending the sentence.

"Pam and I depend on each other," adds Kershaw, showing tremendous concern for his wife and their family. "I've always been a considerate person but I'm more so with Pam because we are so close and I like doing things for her because I know she appreciates them."

The Kershaw's are getting ready for a seven week stay at Harrah's in Reno, where Doug will be performing. He claims his work trip will show him "where the man lies." An avid fan of the baccarat tables and blackjack, Kershaw avoided the temptation of gambling during his last stay at Harrah's in Tahoe, and more recently while in Las Vegas, when he performed at the Jerry Lewis Telethon. According to Doug, that experience turned out to be "the greatest jam in the world. It was all rock and roll," says the countrified Kershaw, who sat in with Bill Wyman of the Rolling

Stones, ex-Beatle Ringo Starr and past member of the Byrds, Dave Mason.

Wyman and Kershaw met last summer when the Stones were touring in the U.S. Bill went to see Doug after he finished his show in New Orleans, where they were both appearing. They talked for awhile and a few days later Doug opened for the Stones in Fort Worth. Wyman recently spoke to Doug about the possibility of their doing more shows together this coming winter.

"There are very few people I'd even consider opening for but, I've always been a fan of the Stones. And to find out they're a fan of mine has been great for my ego. I won't be crushed if the tour doesn't happen but it sure would be nice.

"They're a great bunch of guys," Doug continues, "but what really impresses me is how they've stayed together for 16-17 years. So many great acts split up when each one wants his own thing but somehow the Stones have managed to keep it together."

Doug had a painful parting with his brother, Rusty, in 1961, when the singing duo of Rusty and Doug broke up. The fact that they were brothers made it more difficult that it would have been had they just a working relationship. Both Kershaw boys felt the other lacked understanding and it mystified each one that the other wouldn't cooperate. We never stopped talking but we stopped communicating. It hurt like hell but I think it gave me the spark to do it on my own," Doug ruefully shakes his head. As difficult as it's been for Doug, it's been harder for Rusty, who spent



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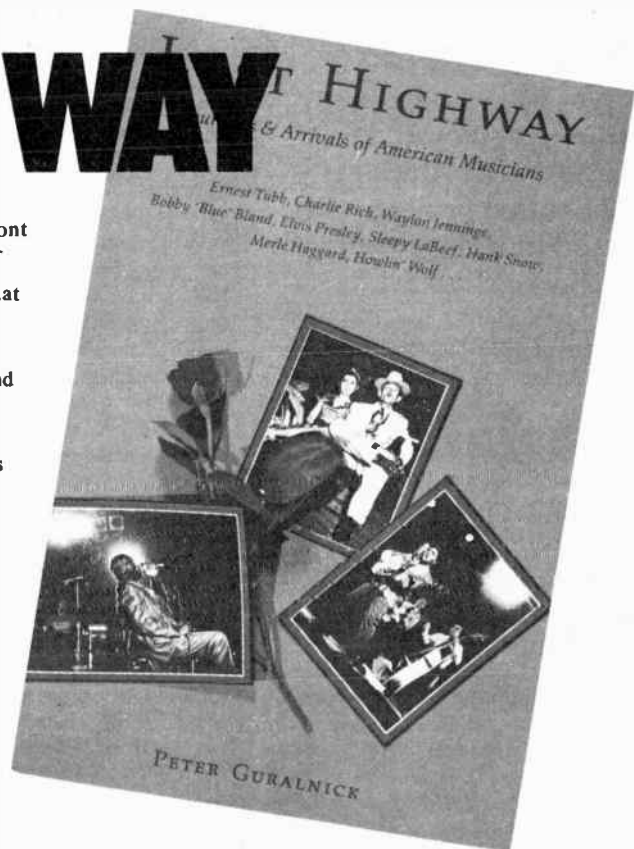
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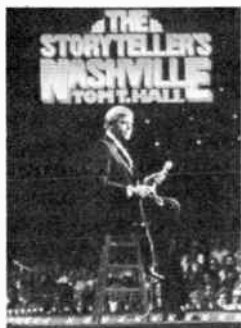
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some time in a mental institution.

"I could never work with anyone," claims Kershaw. "I wouldn't gamble my future on anyone ever again. I might do a one-record project with someone but that would be all."

Glen Campbell is one such person Doug has considered working with but time has halted this possible musical collaboration. They have known each other for years but it's only since Doug moved to California, that they have become close friends. But they haven't had more than a few hours of time to get into the studio together. They put down a couple of tracks which will be included on Doug's next album. Though he has no record deal, Kershaw plans to go to Muscle Shoals and record. He then will sell the completed album to a label.

It is the first time in 10 years that Kershaw hasn't had a record deal. He and Warner Bros. have gone their separate ways. Though Kershaw's albums have been competent they have not been spectacular. Doug is responsible for getting Cajun music out of the Louisiana lowlands by blending the beautiful French Cajun melodies with English lyrics but

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**"I wouldn't gamble my future on anyone ever again. I might do a one-record project with someone but that would be all."**

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his music has stagnated like the land that produced it. So now, he is looking for a new direction.

"I'm financially and mentally stable, and able to play my moves again. The first thing I want is some new blood in the way of a record label. I can fill any facility but I have trouble selling albums. I already have a new manager and my music is changing. I've been talking and listening to a lot of people and doing a lot of jamming since I've been in Los Angeles. I want to get more rock and roll."

But no change comes easy and Doug can still remember the difficulties involved in converting his brothers, Pee Wee and Rusty, from pure Cajun to Cajun-country. Of the three performing siblings, Doug was the one with a musical vision. He wanted to get out of the local Louisiana clubs and he knew to do so would necessitate expanding their sound. By the time Doug was in his late teens, he had been performing for over a decade and he knew that's all he wanted to do for the rest of his life—and he wanted to be very successful at it.

"My Dad killed himself when I was seven," says the son, who immortalized his father when he wrote *Louisiana Man*. "He was a fisherman, and after his death we left the river and the houseboat where I was born. We moved inland and music came into our lives as a means of survival. Pee Wee's five years older than me and we formed a band. Any money we made we brought home to

Mama Rita."

When Doug was nine he joined another group. He continued going to school and working and got his "Master's Degree in Mathematics by playing in honky-tonks and whore houses." By the time Kershaw was 13, 11-year-old Rusty joined him on guitar and once again the Kershaw's had their own band — until the Army split them up. They had incorporated some Top 40 Country sounds and a smattering of rock and roll into their act and had created an appeal which took them all over the country. When Doug was discharged from the Army, they picked up where they left off and formed Rusty and Doug.

With the demise of the group, Doug found himself to be a performer without an audience. So he began to put his unlimited energy, oft times helped by incredible quantities of speed, into his songwriting. He clutched a fiddle-case built for concealing a bottle of booze and dressed in outrageous velvet suits in the middle of the afternoon. But his flamboyance, tempered with smarts and talent, and encouraged by speed, payed off.

Johnny Cash discovered Kershaw playing at the Black Poodle in Nashville. A downtown, country club in Music City's famed Printer's Alley, "when I was ready to be found." Kershaw had worked on his solo act for several years and marks that time as the beginning of his second career in the music industry. The year was 1969, and Cash also embarked on a new stage of his career—his one hour, weekly variety show on ABC-TV. His opening show featured Doug and a very rare television appearance by Bob Dylan.

"The network couldn't figure Kershaw out," recalls the show's Executive Producer, Joe Byrne. "They thought he was off the wall but would be a great balance for Dylan. Most people tuned in to see John and Dylan but Doug tore the place down and got most of the mail. People wrote telling how much they liked him or asking who he was and what is 'Cajun'?"

"My career shot up after that appearance," comments Kershaw, "We moved to L.A. almost three years ago so I could do more television. Denver just isn't the place to audition for dramatic roles. I loved the mountains but I missed the business," Doug continues. He has been in several productions including *Days of Heaven* and *Zachariah*, and he had a feature role in *The Chisolms*, with Robert Preston.

"I'm just getting my teeth into acting," he admits. "I've been feeling my way around and I'm very comfortable doing it. But you have to realize I act every time I get on stage and sing. The main difference is, though I'm pleasing an audience while I'm singing I'm in control but even when I'm pleasing a director, he's always telling me what to do."

Kershaw definitely knows how to work an audience. A "whirling dervish" on stage, he spins and jumps and prances—all the time taking his audience up and down with him. Rosin flies off his bow as it moves faster than the speed of light, the horsehair shreds worse than a terminal case of split ends. Doug keeps



a basket of bows next to his speaker which he dips into frequently. Sweat streams down his body causing him to lose approximately 12 pounds of water weight each performance. It's easy to see why Kershaw claims to prefer performing to any other aspect of his music career.

"I'm sure I could have made a real healthy living just doing studio work in Nashville, states Kershaw, "but I'm a performer, not only a musician. It's easy to get into a rut there. And you have to be on call 24-hours-a-day."

"I'm basically lazy so I have to gear up for a show. I start when I take my shower by becoming Doug Kershaw, the Star, instead of Doug the Daddy. My family follows my lead. During the day I fit into their lives but at night when it's showtime they help me. They know it's important I get mentally pumped up before I go on stage."

By the time Doug reached his encore he's in overdrive but after 30-odd years of performing, he knows how to apply the brakes. "I used to be a workaholic. I took speed so I could work more so I could write more songs. Sometimes I miss those days but at least now I can get some sleep."

Doug hasn't written a song in a couple of years. But his sleepless nights have produced more than 20,000 tunes and a huge catalogue. According to Kershaw, he has had over 1500 songs recorded by other artists and he is now content to let other songwriters write for him.

"I have enough of a name and ego today to ask for some material. That's one of the things I've been working for. I miss writing but not enough to ever want to go back to that 24-hour-a-day grind. Now I have other things I like doing better. I found out not only does writing take me physically and mentally away from where I am, but I also had to be depressed to do it. I've traded all that in for a happy homelife. ■



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# BARBARA MANDRELL

## The Lady Is A Champ

By Dolly Carlisle



Four-time contender Barbara Mandrell finally won Country Music Association's Female Vocalist of the Year. "I really wanted that award very badly," she exclaimed after the Monday night award show, dressed in a sparkling silver sequined snug-fitting full-length gown. It was the one award she thought properly climaxed her most successful year yet as a country music singer and entertainer. Many thought she should have won the award last year. "Sure, I was hurt," she reflected amidst the tears of triumph that continued to periodically well up in her eyes. "But that just made me work harder."

Of course, Barbara Mandrell will most likely react to winning in the same manner that she reacted to losing. "I think it would be a real coupe to see somebody win and then turn around and have such a fantastic year that they would win it again." Such is the philosophy of Barbara Mandrell—singer, entertainer, musician, actress, wife, mother, daughter—sometimes known as a super woman.

The sun had just come over the Nashville horizon when the massive bus moved in from the darkness to pick me up one recent chilly, foggy morning. Irby Mandrell, dressed in sky-blue knit shirt and matching slacks stepped down to greet me. A 6-foot, slender, wiry man with wavy graying hair combed straight back from his face greeted me with intense, penetrating, analyzing steel blue eyes. They were no-nonsense eyes that I knew were quickly summing up my person. He smiled in a friendly but rather suspicious, tight-lipped manner and invited me on.

Irby Mandrell quickly verified what I had heard about him. He is known as a rather straight-laced, hardnosed business man.

"Ah, Irby, you take the fun out of this business," a band member doubling as a driver on this particular morning playfully nudged. "It's not supposed to be fun," quickly retorted Irby. "It's a business."

He did not seem to be a man to be teased. Serious, direct, intense was his manner. A former cop who quit the Houston, Texas, police force after a comrade who "wouldn't support you if you got in trouble" became chief, runs a tight ship as the manager of Barbara Mandrell's entourage. He is a man who expects a lot, not only of himself, which he more than handily delivers, but from the crew. At 54, Irby Mandrell still travels with his daughter on her tour schedule. It is a pace that is grueling even for Barbara, (who is thirty), and the musicians, (most of whom are under thirty), but since he accepts few excuses for anything less than optimal effort, he is the last to allow himself any laxity.

Much later during the day, Barbara Mandrell would say that she is very much like her father. "A chip off the old block" was her remark. At first, the comparison seemed surprising. After all, sitting before me, applying make-up for an upcoming state fair show in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was this very pretty,

pert, blond-haired, petite woman. Her image is sexy, glamorous, bubbly, happy, appearing everywhere with a smile and a welcoming hand. Not at all the same image as her angular, sharp-featured, sometimes gruff father. But watching her work through the day, I began to see similarities.

Barbara Mandrell is a very hard-working, disciplined, ambitious, determined young woman. She is talented, yes, and gifted with a husky yet mellow voice that has a growing versatility and expanding range. But she didn't become CMA's Female Vocalist of the Year by being the soft, pretty, sweet thing that appears in the photos. This is not to say that Barbara Mandrell is a disagreeable person, because she is not. In fact, she has one of the best all-around reputations of anybody in the country music industry. There doesn't seem to be anyone who doesn't like and respect Barbara Mandrell. But she didn't come by that kind of respect in a male-dominated industry easily.

It came through dogged determination and hard work. It is because she has worked so hard that she wanted and perhaps even needed the CMA award. She had reached the point and stage in her career that she desired some recognition and acknowledgment for her efforts from her cohorts.

"I've worked hard to have a reliable sort of reputation," she pointed out during her preparations for the state fair show. "I wanted to live down the fallacies that are so often associated with those in show business. "I've tried to build a reputation so that my audience would know I was going to be prompt and that I wasn't going to be drunk or pillied up or doped up. I've worked hard to be consistent in all that."







Barbara Mandrell goes about her work with an almost messianic intensity. She seems to totally ignore obstacles that roll into her path. "Darn" was her only comment when the bus's generator broke down only a few hours before she was to appear before several thousand people. "Actually, I'm boiling inside," she said with a nervous laugh. "But life goes on."

For many in the music business, the effects of a dead generator would have been disastrous. The coolness of the morning had left and in its place had come one of the last of the fall's hot days. Not only did the failing generator leave Barbara void of the modern conveniences of our technological age—hair dryer, make-up mirror, curling iron—but very quickly the once comfortable bus became an oven.

Her six musicians, "The Do-Rights," quickly moved to a temporary trailer that had been provided by the fair's sponsoring Jaycees. "We're lucky," she said with a sigh of relief. "We wouldn't have had that had the trailer been in a lot of other places."

The musicians hastily made their move. "Anything to get out of that heat trap," said one without so much as a backward glance. But Barbara remained. "I'm not moving until I do something with this hair," she responded with a fingering of her still damp, just washed head of frizzed locks.

"I just had a permanent," she noted. "Get

Barbara always insists on looking her best. She is a country girl at heart with an uptown look. Her desire is to bring sophistication to the Country Music industry, her Las Vegas style act could take place in any exclusive nightclub.



an electric hook-up, so I can dry my hair, then I'll move," the ever-conscious-of-her-image Barbara Mandrell said.

Even after the move from her own bus to the provided trailer, the troubles continued. After hastily packing the day before the trip, someone had forgotten Barbara's saxophone mouthpiece and her accordion that she plays during one number of her show. Last minute adjustments in her show were discussed. Then for several tense moments, she couldn't find



her looped diamond earrings that matched her white sequined pant suit. "It would have been so much easier if I could have stayed and dressed on my bus," she said with just a touch of exasperation after she had sent one of the musicians back to her bus yet again to look for a pair of shoes. He had brought the wrong pair the first time.

But the audience that warmly welcomed Barbara shortly afterwards would never know her troubles of the afternoon. Her frustration was never evident in her performance. "It's my duty and my pleasure to do my best. I always want to give everything I know how to give. I guess it's because I come from the old school of trying to give people their money's worth. The crowd doesn't care if you're having a bad day. They want to see you and hear you at your best. Whatever it takes to accomplish that, I try to do."

The hour and a half show was a blending of country, pop, rhythm and blues and gospel. Under the late September sun and clear blue sky, she sang a medley of her hits, *Woman to Woman*, *Standing Room Only*, *Married, But Not to Each Other*, *Putting on the One Who Really Loves You*. During one number, she

industry. "I'm watching our business grow and hopefully I'm a part of what's making it grow. I have people come up to me all the time who say they didn't like country music until they heard me."

Barbara Mandrell is reflective of the new upcoming breed of country entertainers. Born into a middle-class family instead of the pov-

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**"I've tried to build a reputation so that my audience would know I was going to be prompt and that I wasn't going to be drunk or pillled up or doped up. I've worked hard to be consistent in all that."**

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erty surroundings from where so many of her predecessors originated, Barbara chose country music as her creative outlet. "Many people have this preconceived notion that those of us in country music do this because it's all we know how to do. In my life, I've performed all

was 18, she had traveled the world with her family as part of the singing Mandrell clan. So, while she is still country, she brings a worldliness and awareness to the industry and its audiences that hasn't existed in the industry until the last few years. She is reflective of the mellowing, ever growing, blending appeal of the new country.

Perhaps, ironically Barbara Mandrell has no desire to go pop. Her roots are country. "I'm enjoying cross-over success and I'll never lie to anyone about that. I think it's terrific and I'm elated by the whole situation. But I'm first and utmost a country performer. That's who I'm out to please. My main objective is to cut number one country records. The rest of it is icing on the cake."

It is with this attitude that Barbara quickly and with little thought turned down a prestigious interview with *Playboy* magazine—a publication with some 6 million in circulation. "I don't think country fans are turned on by that stuff," she noted. "I'm not going to lie and say I've never looked at the magazine. Because I have. But I object to some of the photographs. It's just not right to compromise your mind. I'm in the business for myself and



Barbara's father Irby, who is also her manager, runs a tight ship. At 54, he travels with her on her tour schedule. A grueling pace, even for Barbara.

amazed the audience with a showing of her instrumental talent, first picking up a banjo, then switching to the electric guitar and finally finishing the number on her saxophone.

It was a strange setting for Barbara Mandrell's uptown, slick, Las Vegas type show. The stage was set amidst a spattering of bales of hay, which functioned as seats for the blue-jeaned, short-sleeved typical fair attending audience. Backed by six clean-cut, attractive musicians wearing maroon Yves St. Laurent velour jackets and coordinately black slacks, Barbara Mandrell's act could have easily taken place in any exclusive nightclub. Her desire is to bring sophistication to the

kinds of music. Not just the obvious—pop and rock, but including light opera. I chose country because that's what I prefer."

But because country music is of her choosing, rather than being the only musical medium accessible, she and the new ones like her are bringing a sophistication to the industry. Instead of blue jeans, she wears swank sequined gowns. Besides having an ear for music, she reads it. She is a talented and accomplished musician in her own right. When she learns a new song, rather than following the "hear and then sing" techniques of many of her comrades, Barbara can read and promptly play the notes. By the time she

that's the way I chose to conduct my business."

There seems to be little compromise in the life of Barbara Mandrell. At least, compromises that were questionable in her mind and heart. She has routed the path to success in her own fashion in an uncompromising way.

"Not every musician could be part of this group," noted one player as we walked the fairgrounds before the second show that was scheduled for eight that evening. "We have certain rules that have been laid down. It's not that any of the guys in the group would do otherwise, but the rules let everyone know what's expected."

For the music industry, the "rules" are stiff—no drinking before the shows, no partying while on the road. Popping pills, taking dope, smoking a joint—aren't even mentioned. Absent is the range of obscene jokes that are customary on the touring trips of most music entertainers. The rules were laid down by Barbara and are enforced by Irby.

While both expect and demand the same efficiency, professionalism—it is Irby who is the enforcer. That is the way it should be. Barbara, after all, is the entertainer, the performer, the creative link in the chain. But without her father, Barbara's job and role would be much tougher.

It is a difficult role that Irby plays, especially since he is Barbara's father. As in most family operated enterprises, the "outsiders" (those who are entourage members but non-family) feel a certain resentment toward clan members. It is a natural reaction. Historically,

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**"I'm watching our business grow and hopefully I'm part of what's making it grow. I have people come up to me all the time who say they didn't like country music until they heard me."**

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bloodlines have always superseded working ties.

On this particular trip the resentment was subtly evident. The day had been afflicted with technical difficulties—first the generator breakdown, then sound system feedback problems flourished. Barbara seemed undaunted. After all, she knew her father would do everything possible to produce a successful show. "He knows the effects," she pointed out. "He was once a performer himself." But the musicians couldn't so easily overlook the day's irregularities. Since Irby was in charge, he became the most visible target to tag for their troubles.

In the Mandrell set-up, Irby also represents Barbara's resistance to re-establish in Los Angeles. Because the LA image is more glamorous, prestigious and visionary, there is the illusion among many Nashville musicians that the road to super-stardom must entail the transition from Nashville to the West Coast. Whether or not the California agents, managers and personnel can actually provide better services is not the point of concern. It is that LA has a bigger and better image. But Barbara believes she has the best of all worlds.

For Barbara Mandrell is happy with her overall operation. "I'm totally satisfied with my personal team. I think my father does an excellent job as manager. My agent Dick Blake is a master at promotion. And my producer is as innovative and creative as any I've ever known. So why should I go elsewhere?"

It is important for her to achieve success in her own way. Surrounded by a protective family shield (her husband keeps the books



"If I didn't allow myself the opportunity of making myself available to the public, I'd think I'm missing

and invests their monies; her mother oversees the family office and her father is manager), she has avoided much of the hassle and worries of successful stars. She knows and is constantly assured that when her father makes a decision, her best interest is at heart. That level of dedication and loyalty cannot be easily replaced. In the overall scheme of Barbara's career, that constant reassurance may be much more important than the technical know-how and expertise that could be found in another.

Her protective shield is much of the reason Barbara has been able to emotionally and mentally handle career and family. Barbara is not only a blossoming star, she is also the mother of two, Matthew (9) and Jaime (3). Only Matthew had joined Barbara on this trip, but it is her younger daughter that normally accompanies Barbara on the road. "I never questioned that the two wouldn't work together," reflected Barbara, referring to children and career. "Matthew was a surprise, but the pregnancy of Jaime was carefully planned around my schedule on the road. With organization I don't see why I would ever have to let one interfere with the other. I knew when Jaime was born that I would need to be making enough money to have a governess and housekeeper. I've worked to have



When she's not on the road, Barbara enjoys her time

that financial position. I was lucky enough to have my mother accompany me on the road when Matthew was little. She (mother) has always said I was born under a lucky star."

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**"The crowd doesn't care if you're having a bad day. They want to see you and hear you at your best. Whatever it takes to accomplish that, I try to do."**

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something that's a real pleasure," says Barbara.



me with husband Ken and kids, Matthew & Jaime.

Outwardly, Matthew is a well-adjusted, bright, mannerly child. Although he frequently talks with his mother before and between the shows, he is not a bratty, demanding boy. Slender, fair-haired, he is exceptionally well-behaved for his age. He also has the gift of being able to entertain himself. With a few dollars from his mother's purse, he enjoyed his time without being an interruption in the set-up and aftermath of Barbara's shows. He is also surprisingly obedient. Once asked to periodically check in with her so she would know he was safe and alright, he did just so. Barbara Mandrell has obviously

reared her children with the same disciplinary tactics that her father used with her.

After the show, Barbara quickly ran back to the substitute trailer and changed from evening gown to tailored blue jeans, long-sleeved beige shirt and boots. After a physically demanding show during which she frequently moves from one side of the stage to another to create her own whirlwind of excitement that eventually encompasses the audience, Barbara sat down to autograph hundreds of album covers, paper napkins, photos, and pieces of paper.

The crowd was large and demanding. Pressed in close around her the throng of people seemed to want her very breath of life. But it is this part of the show, the signing of autographs, that Barbara enjoys most. "I'm a self-proclaimed extrovert and I love people. I like going out and doing autographs. Many times that takes longer than the show itself. I've heard people say that you owe it to the fans—I think I owe it to me. If I didn't allow myself the opportunity of making myself available to the public, I'd think I'm missing something that's a real pleasure."

Around midnight, Barbara Mandrell crawled back on the bus, exhausted after two shows, three hours of local radio and tv interviews and two massive autographing sessions. But as with most of her performances, Barbara Mandrell was satisfied that she did her best, gave it her all, signed every autograph that was wanted.

She wants to slight no one. She tries to shake every hand, return every hopeful stare with a smile and to reassure everyone. "It scares me sometimes to think of the little kids that idolize me. I want to be what they need for me to be. It's not that I'm trying so hard to impress. I just try and think if I saw someone I really admired. It would hurt if they weren't what I wanted them to be."

Around two o'clock in the morning, Barbara Mandrell finally allowed herself the luxury of sleep. Her child, Matthew, lay peacefully sleeping next to her in their room on the bus. She had graciously granted me two more hours of interview time. And after talking about her hopes for her career that were yet to be ("I feel like I'm just beginning to scrape the surface,")—acting, the continued broadening of her career as an entertainer—she softly closed the door behind me.

When I left her room the bus was speeding down the road back toward Nashville. I would be let off sometime in the early morning, around five o'clock. The bus, containing Barbara, her father, her son and the rest of the entourage would continue on toward Indiana where she was scheduled to give a performance the next evening.

I watched the bus as it pulled away into the early morning mist—the huge oblong shadow eventually disappearing around a corner. It moved slowly, steadily, with seemingly subtle forcefulness back onto the major highway. It moved in much the same way that Barbara Mandrell is moving forward in her career. She is one who will be around a long time. ■

## The Lady Is A Winner

It was her fourth consecutive nomination as Country Music Association's Female Vocalist of the Year. Her first two nominations were little more than indicators that she was an emerging talent. But last year, she was considered the prime dark horse candidate and was deeply disappointed when her name was not announced over the airways. In her stead, came the surprising announcement that Crystal Gayle had won for the second time in two years. The projected winner had been Dolly Parton. But history will show that Dolly went on to win Entertainer of the Year.

"Everyone was gathered in the green room, behind the stage of the Grand Ole Opry," reminisced Barbara. "When the winners were announced there was usually a cheering and great rushing around. But when the announcement came for Female Vocalist, there was a hush."

Such was not the case this year. Barbara Mandrell had been the odds on favorite against chief competitors Anne Murray and Crystal Gayle, with such smash hits as the moody and soul-flavored *Married But Not To Each Other* and *Woman to Woman* which was among the top three on the country charts.

Later in the season middle of the road *Tonight* was followed by *Sleeping Single in a Double Bed* which became one of the few singles in recent years to remain number one for three weeks in all three national music trades.

Barbara Mandrell accepted her bullet shaped award on national television with tears flowing unashamedly. She was to say later, "When they called my name, something inside sort of snapped, I guess. I just couldn't hold it back. It was like a dam breaking lose." Bubbling sometime later, "I feel so neat inside," was her glowing remark.



# Bookpickin' F

Either country music fans are becoming a whole lot more literate, or there really is an enormous surge in interest in the music, because this fall has seen a whole flood of newly released books on and about the music and its musicians.

All have merit, some are superb, and many will make excellent Christmas gifts, which of course is the design of the fall releases. Still, before we look into the recent arrivals, it would be well to mention several currently available books for those interested in country music literature.

Doubleday's *Illustrated History of Country Music*, edited by Patrick Carr, came out early in 1979, and is a superb work; it is both intellectual, intelligent, and yet highly readable and well illustrated, and belongs on every country music lover's shelf. Doubleday also released *Back In The Saddle Again* recently, which is Gene Autry's autobiography; despite its ups and downs it is a fascinating introspective on The Singing Cowboy.

Bill Malone's *Country Music USA*, long the definitive history, is still available, though it is aging gracefully, and Salamander/Harmony's *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Country Music*, while marred by numerous typos, is still an extremely valuable reference work. University of Illinois Press has two superb

titles still in print: *Stars of Country Music* and Dr. Charles Townsend's *San Antonio Rose: The Life And Music Of Bob Willis*, but Nolan Porterfield's excellent study of Jimmie Rodgers won't make it out by Christmas. Still, watch for it; it will be magnificent.

Nick Tosches' erratic but brilliant *Country* is newly released in paperback, as is Alanna Nash's probing *Dolly*; both are well worth giving as gifts, or keeping for that matter. There are a number of others, of course, both in and out of print, but it is primarily the brand new releases which concern us here.

Most notable is Hank Williams Jr.'s *Living Proof* co-written with former *Country Music* editor Michael Bane. It is stirring, compelling, at times even astonishing; rather than go into it further here, it is excerpted in this issue beginning on page 58.

Three other autobiographies grace the Yuletide season. Tom T. Hall's *The Storyteller's Nashville*—from Doubleday again—was long rumored to be a semi-autobiographical novel; instead it is a straightforward autobiography, told with Hall's ego-deflating irony and wit. It was also rumored to be somewhat sensational, but again, it is not, except to those (can there possibly be any left?) who are sure that country musicians never touch alcohol.

Hall narrates his arrivals and struggles in Nashville before fame struck with determination and humor. The storyteller did not wax as philosophical as I would have expected—he does have a mordant eye for posturing and vanities—but he does indeed tell a story well, and there are a host of amusing incidents recalled with life and humor.

June Carter Cash claims that "klediment is mountain language for anything that is precious and has earned a right to be part of things close to you," in introducing *Among My Klediments*, her autobiography from Zonder-van. Indeed the entire book is something of a klediment, for it is more a family album and a tender reminiscence than it is a searching or revealing autobiography. A family-oriented woman, she writes touchingly and at length about the Carter Family from which she came, that sturdy group of Virginia mountain people who changed the course of country music history; she moves rapidly from there through some of the most fascinating parts of her life (her two years in New York studying drama, for instance) to her new "family," which she presides over as Mrs. Johnny Cash. There are snatches of poetry, a few wonderful old pictures and a whole slew of photos of children and grandchildren; it is a warm family album, and inspirational in tone, and is





# or Christmas

By Douglas B. Green

neither particularly candid nor revealing about June Carter Cash the artist and the performer.

Tammy Wynette's life has been compared to a soap opera so often the metaphor is scarcely worth repeating, except that her new autobiography, *Stand By Your Man* (co-written with Joan Dew) confirms the suspicion that she herself sees it that way. There is astonishingly little mention of the forces which shaped one of the great country music singers of all time, the music which shaped her unique sound and style. Instead, there are endless recountings of the comings and goings of a rapid succession of husbands, their good deeds and bad, and a bathetic series of traumas worthy of *Days Of Our Lives*.

Perhaps this is what the public wants of Tammy Wynette; perhaps it is indeed how she views herself—we must assume it in light of this 350 pages of evidence—but I would have been far more satisfied had she examined her music one tenth as much as she examines the virtues and faults of her husbands. Chalk this one up for soap opera and gossip-column fans.

Two new biographies have recently appeared, the more notable *Hank Williams: Country Music's Tragic King*, written by Jay Caress and published by Stein and Day. Mr.

Caress has done an exceptional amount of homework and legwork in digging up a myriad of little known facts about the late Hank Williams, and his impressive research adds new fact and insight. Although he treads on shaky ground when he attempts to analyze Hank's profoundly eccentric personality and the cause and effect of his genius, Mr. Caress does well when sticking to fact and research, and on the balance it is a fascinating and important work.

Those among us who enjoy tuning in *Three's Company* will doubtless find some rewards in Michael Kosser's *Those Bold And Beautiful Country Girls: An Illustrated Tribute To The Women Of Country Music* (Special DOLLY PARTON poster inside!) for it consists of a few lines of compunctory biography scattered amid a plethora of pinups. Included are Tanya in skintight red body suit, a rare shot of Dolly's awesome cleavage, the sultry faces of Barbara Mandrell and Crystal Gayle, Linda Ronstadt flashing shapely thighs, etc etc. Strictly for jiggle fans.

Finally, there is Peter Guralnick's *Lost Highway: Journeys & Arrivals of American Musicians*, from David R. Godine, a Boston publishing house. Those of you who read bylines on stories in *Country Music* will recognize Mr. Guralnick as a contributor of some of

the finest pieces to appear in these pages. One expects a great deal of this book, for Mr. Guralnick has shown both talent and commitment in the past, and, astonishingly, it does not disappoint. *Lost Highway* is probably the most moving and revealing book on country music to date.

In profiling a scattered lot of country and blues musicians in the context of their performances and in their nomadic life "on the road," Mr. Guralnick reveals again and again, with both compassion and the ability to see to the heart of the matter, the musical and personal passions which fuel the creative artistic urge. It is a powerful, affecting, compelling work, to be read slowly and with care, and is beautifully written as well.

I was profoundly moved by the introduction in particular, in which Mr. Guralnick articulates the inchoate rush of emotions which drive all of us who choose to write about music and musicians; not for the glamour nor the small amount of money, but for the exhilaration in sharing the joy brought to us by certain performers and performances.

Compassion and concern and sheer love of music shine from every page of *Lost Highway*—though his judgments can at times be harsh—and all this and more make this work in particular one absolutely not to be missed. ■

The Illustrated History of  
COUNTRY MUSIC  
The Editors of Country Music Magazine  
edited by Patrick Carr

THE  
STORYTELLERS  
NASHVILLE  
FROM 1945 TO 1965

LOST HIGHWAY  
JOURNEYS & ARRIVALS OF AMERICAN  
MUSICIANS

STAND BY YOUR MAN  
AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
BY TAMMY WYNETTE

# Country Superstars of The Seventies Perform at Ford's Theatre

By Laura Eipper

It seemed like an odd combination: Washington's historic Ford's Theatre, invaded by the creme de la creme of country music.

But even the skeptics had to admit that October's "Celebration of Country Music" gala at the theatre—where Lincoln was assassinated 114 years ago—was a smashing success.

"From now on I'm a country boy," quipped national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of the 650-member audience that paid a whopping \$250 a ticket to attend the concert, a benefit for the restoration of Ford's Theatre and a kick-off for Country Music Month.

If the big names in the audience were impressive—President and Mrs. Carter, White House press secretary Jody Powell, House Speaker Tip O'Neill, Senator Howard Baker and a host of lesser political luminaries—the lineup on stage dazzled even cast members themselves.

"Quite a bunch, isn't it," noted Tom T. Hall, as he looked at the talent assembled onstage. In addition to Hall, the show featured "greatest hits" performances by no less than Dolly Parton, Lynn Anderson, Glen Campbell, Johnny Cash, Roy Clark, Freddy Fender, Larry Gatlin, Ronnie Milsap, Barbara Mandrell, The Oak Ridge Boys, Eddie Rabbitt, Charlie Rich, The Statler Brothers, Ray Stevens, Mel Tillis and Dottie West.

Neatly bridging the gap between country and Capitol Hill, Sen. Robert Byrd shed his tuxedo jacket and took to the stage for a rousing rendition of *Little Cabin Home on the Hill*.

The show was taped as an NBC Big Event special by Joe Cates and Chet Hagan, and

aired October 16. It marked a rare appearance by a president in office on a non-news television show, and Carter was in rare form indeed. Grinning broadly, the President clapped along to Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys, sang along with Glen Campbell on *Hound Dog Man* and, said Tip O'Neill, "really loved it."

Country music, Carter said in his remarks, is "about sad times, bad times and wasted dreams, and the simple emotions all people share."

Illustrating his point, there were a goodly number of tunes on the show in the true honky-tonkin', cryin' in your beer tradition. Freddy Fender tremoloed through *Until the Next Teardrop Falls*, and Charlie Rich provided *Behind Closed Doors*. Looking straight at the Carters in the front row, Dolly warbled *I Will Always Love You*.

The upbeat and the plain zany had their place too: Ray Stevens and *The Streak*, The Statlers and *How to be a Country Star*.

Regardless of the mood, each performance was met with tremendous waves of applause from the audience, many of whom readily admitted to becoming country music converts during the evening.

Outside the elegant, four-story building, another crowd of the already-converted lent a Saturday-night-at-the-Opry flavor to the proceedings.

Straining police barricades, they lined up early for a glimpse of their favorites as they arrived in limousines for the show.

Most of the stars had never been inside Ford's Theatre before, and during two days of rehearsals preceding the show

commented often on what an experience it had been to work on the famous stage.

The theatre, built in the 1860's, remained empty for years after Lincoln's death, served briefly as a storage facility for the Army, and then was dark again until 1968, when it was restored as a theatre and museum by the National Park Service.

The Lincoln Box, to the right of the stage, was refurbished to look just the way it did the night Lincoln was shot. Antique bunting and draperies decorate the box—traditionally closed even to presidents—and the top of a small velvet chair is just visible over the railing.

"I find it awesome because I'm a history freak," said Lynn Anderson during rehearsal. "To be here and look up at that box and know that Lincoln sat right there, to stand on the same spot on the stage where Booth must have stood that night, makes you feel you're so much a part of our history."

There were some haunting moments during the rehearsals and the show itself, and the irony of Johnny Cash singing a mournful *Dixie* on the stage where Booth once cried "The Confederacy is avenged" escaped few in the house.

A country affair through and through, however, there were plenty of lighter moments. Glen Campbell teased the President from the stage about a White House reception earlier that day for the cast, which ended with a chorus of "Happy Birthday to Carter in the State Dining Room."

"Mr. Carter, I'd like to thank you for the lunch today," said Campbell. "It makes me feel like I got some of my tax money back."







Bridging the gap between country and Capitol Hill, nineteen country music superstars gather for the finale of the two hour gala at the Fords Theatre in Washington, D.C. (Top); Senator Robert Byrd performed a bluegrass medley and Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill enjoyed a little conversation with country's "speaker" Mel Tillis. The Oak Ridge Boys and Dolly Parton were among those who got to meet the President & Mrs. Carter.

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Now in this brand new book, Tammy Wynette, the queen of Country Music, tells her own inspiring life story of ascent from rags to riches. From the obscurity of the tarpaper shack in rural Mississippi, where she grew up, to the splendor of the pre-Civil War mansion in Florida she shared with her star husband, George Jones, it's all here: the ups and the downs, the five marriages, the divorces, the heartbreak and the joy. This is the story, above all, of her pursuit of happiness—through struggle, personal fulfillment, love, ambition for success, and the mixed joys and sorrows of stardom.



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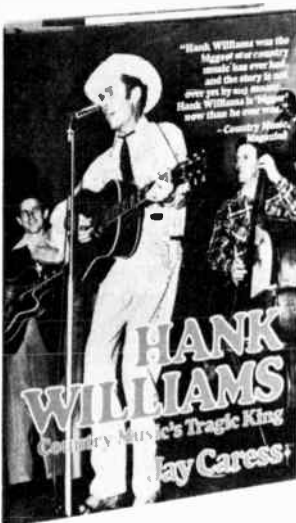
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# Record Reviews

## Kenny Rogers

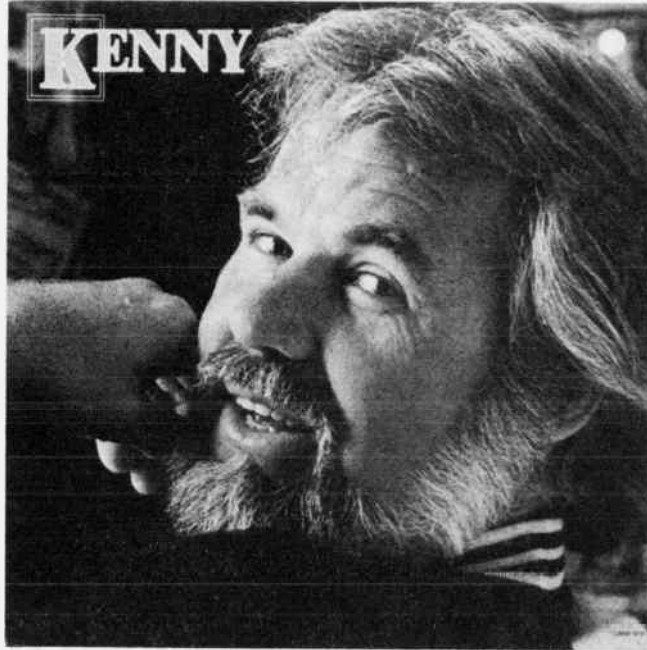
Kenny

UA LWAK-979

On the heels of his triple platinum *Gambler* album, Kenny Rogers has released another potential blockbuster, simply titled, but richly endowed with great material. If Kenny has any secrets, one must surely be his ability to rock gently, roll smoothly, wrap his voice around a ballad, and tell a story in such a way as to command universal acceptance.

The CMA's Best Male Vocalist kicks off both sides of the new album with fast movers, *You Turn the Light On* and *Santiago Midnight Moonlight*. Following these, he deals from a deck of believable themes and one and one ballads. More often than not, the subject of love gets into the picture. There's *You Decorated My Life* about happy together love, *Old Folks* about neglected love, *Goodbye Marie* about hit and run love, and *One Man's Woman* about cheatin' in a sleazy motel love. There is even one about being so crazy in love that a doctor is called to the scene.

The high point of the album



is a four minute melodrama called *Coward of the County*. It starts out with the message of a dying man to his son, in words that linger on to haunt him as he struggles to become a man. Coming after *Lucille* and *The Gambler*, *Coward of the County* should firmly establish Kenny Rogers as the modern day master of the saga song.

Kenny is at the point in his career where he can snag some

of the best songs being written. In conjunction with producer Larry Butler, he has used this advantage to put together ten of them in an evenly balanced package. Even if an artist of Kenny's stature possesses the talent to make a weak song sound passable, why should he bother? This album proves that it is worth taking the time to do it right.

BILL OAKLEY

## Moe Bandy & Joe Stampley

Just Good Ol' Boys

CBS JC 36202

Maybe it was the stereotype of the lone figure on a bar stool, staring into a foamy mug of amber, or perhaps it was the image, pioneered by Hank Williams and perpetuated by Lefty Frizzell and George Jones, of the solitary singer, pouring out odes to jukeboxes, booze and lost women that gave honky tonk singers a lone wolf ambience. So it might seem kind of weird hearing two of today's best honkers, Moe Bandy and Joe Stampley, working as a team. But it's been done before; Ernest Tubb and Red Foley cut a duet LP in the early fifties. And there was the 1957 Lefty Frizzell/Johnny Bond single and the George Jones/Earl Montgomery duets from the same period.

*Just Good Ol' Boys*, unlike much of Bandy's more melancholy works, celebrates the joyous side of those nightly



sometimes distant voice.

With the exception of *Miss The Mississippi*, the remaining songs have a contemporary feel (which is not to imply that the title song sounds dated by any means; it is, in fact, haunting), although they do not seem quite as individually distinctive as have selections on some of her previous albums.

Crystal Gayle's albums have long set a standard for taste and discretion in contemporary/crossover country music, and *Miss The Mississippi* is no exception. As it is, it is excellent; had a couple of better songs been found it could have been a killer.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN

## Crystal Gayle

Miss The Mississippi

Columbia BL 36203

There is a bit of piquant irony inherent in *Miss The Mississippi*, for Crystal Gayle, country music's foremost crossover artist, has chosen as the title song for her latest LP a Jimmie Rodgers classic a full half-century old.

Still, Ms. Gayle's voice is so fluid, and Allen Reynolds' production impeccable as always, and it works beautifully. As always seems to be the case, things are just spare enough, never too busy, and leave ample room for the expression of her supple, though



and weekend bar stool expessions, from the hit recording of *Holding The Bag*, a hilarious tale of post-binge back biting through *Tell Ole I Ain't Here*, *He Better Get On Home*, a tune anyone who ever answered a beer joint phone for someone else can understand to *Only The Names Have Changed*, a tongue in cheek peean to wife swapping. The rip through two oldies, *By Bye Love* and Johnny Horton's *Honky Tonk Man*

# Record Reviews

and backed by Johnny Gimble's scintillating fiddle, lead their way through the libidinous *When It Comes to Cowgirls (We Just Can't Say No.)* Only *Partners In Rhyme* seems out of place.

As always, Ray Baker's production is a model of simplicity. Aside from the principles, the only voices are those of the Jordanares; the only strings those on the guitars, fid-

dle and steel. Some of the licks here are decades old yet it's reassuring to hear them again.

Still, times have changed. Tubb and Foley would never have posed as Moe and Joe did, looking half tipped, holding bottles of Miller and Bud for their album cover.

Good drinking LPs are an endangered species these days; thank God for this one.

RICH KIENZLE

## Sleepy LaBeef Down Home Rockabilly Sun 1014

In this age of quicksilver taste changes there remain some eternal musical verities. Among them Sleepy LaBeef, an overpowering 6'6" rockabilly powerhouse who has stuck to his urgent rockabilly style through thick and thin.

Though young, he was present at the creation, recording for the original Sun records back in its creative heyday. He's still at it, now recording for Shelby Singleton's revived Sun label, playing and singing with the same power and intensity undiminished by time nor by the unfortunate relative obscurity which has dogged his career.

His sources on *Down Home Rockabilly* are varied: Billy Emerson's *Red Hot*, the Delmore Brothers' *Blues Stay*

*Away From Me*, Hank Ballard's *Tore Up*, Johnny Horton's *Honky Tonk Hardwood Floor*; the potent mixture of blues, jump, and country which forged rockabilly 25 and more years ago.

Sleepy's vocals are pungent and strong, his guitar playing (rarely heard on record until this set) is biting and effective. The only drawback to an otherwise very strong album is a similarity of tempo and feel on too many of the songs; there are two, at best three tempos among the twelve songs, and while each cut has life of its own, when listened to as an album this set tends slightly to monotony.

This is not the febrile rockabilly of Elvis' Sun sides, nor of Jerry Lee Lewis; but it is solid, confident, strong and exciting, and may help bring Sleepy LaBeef some of the recognition he has long deserved.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN



## Jimmy C. Newman The Happy Cajun

Plantation PLP-544

There's always been sort of a hardfast rule about Cajun performers who make it. Before they're able to play anything even resembling their native music outside Louisiana, they've had to start as standard C & W performers. Rusty and Doug Kershaw recorded country (and even rock) from 1954 until *Louisiana Man* established their Cajun credentials in 1961. And so it was with Jimmy C. Newman, who started out with conventional hits like *Cry*, *Cry Darling* until *Alligator Man*, which also hit in 1961, permitted him to record Cajun from then on.

Today, of course, that's history. Kershaw's popularity established the music far beyond anyone's wildest dream. And Newman, though he still retains Nashville elements in his sound, plays a purer form of Cajun than any mass performer today, since Kershaw now has plenty of hard rock in his sound. For anyone going into the bayous musically for the

first time, *The Happy Cajun* is probably as good an introduction as any, combining exuberant, uptempo country with the peerless fiddling of Rufus Thibodeaux and accordionist Besshyl Dunon.

There's a refreshing variety here, not unlike the ambience of a Louisiana dancehall, ranging from the rockabilly edge of Eddie Shuler's *Sugar Bee* to the pure, raw-edged *Basile Waltz*. For those of you who've heard that Hank Williams' *Jambalaya* was musically inspired by a Cajun tune titled *Big Texas*, Newman gives a performance of the latter that leaves little doubt of it. Gib Guilbeau's *Big Bayou* combines modern country-rock with the Cajun past. Only *A Cajun Man Can*, a pale imitation of *Louisiana Man*, sounds in any way contrived.

There's something incredibly refreshing about this set, as there is to anything that sounds like it was cut in one take. *The Happy Cajun* isn't 100% pure, but it has enough EHHH-HEEEEEEEE! in it for me.

RICH KIENZLE



# Record Reviews

## Joe Sun Out of Your Mind

Ovation OV1743

If the name Joe Sun doesn't sound familiar to you, take it from this ol' cowboy, you have somehow managed to miss out on one of the brightest young stars to rise out of the doldrums of country music in recent years. Don't take my word for it—read the liner notes written by Johnny Cash on the back of Sun's second album for Ovation Records.

The "man in black" is not prone to offer praise lightly, yet he calls Sun the "greatest new talent in twenty years" who could become "one of the all-time greats in country music." If you are still a "Doubting Thomas," then listen to the album—it obliterates any skepticism regarding Sun's immense talent.

In fact, the unique timbre of Sun's voice is so distinguished that he seems destined to rank someday with other legendary stylists, the likes of Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell, Waylon, Willie, and Cash himself. All the above have a deep feeling for the blues in their voices, a trait which also is apparent in Sun's vocals. The only way this eventuality could be prevented would be if Sun gave up singing to become a Trappist monk. And that's not likely.

Entitled "Out Of Your Mind," this album is considerably stronger in every respect than his tantalizing debut album of a year ago. Once again Brien Fisher produces and once again his production presents no stumbling blocks for Sun's voice, an instrument in itself. Although the musicians on this album are not the usual so-called "A-Team" pickers, their performance on this lp deserves an excellent rating.

Among this lesser known but equally as talented group are: Ron Oates, keyboards; Sonny Garrish, steel guitar and dobro; Fred Newell, electric guitar; Fred Carter Jr., acoustic and

electric lead guitars; Gregg Galbraith, acoustic rhythm guitar; Jerry Kroon, drums; and Jack Ross, bass guitar.

With a discerning eye for selecting material, Sun and Fisher have chosen some solid commercial tunes while maintaining a rare level of artistic creativity and interpretation.

A *Little Bit Of Push*, written by Don *The Gambler* Schlitz, could do for Sun's career what *The Gambler* did for Kenny Rogers. The song is a guaranteed smash. Schlitz, a Capitol recording artist, plays acoustic guitar on this cut.

Adam Mitchell's *Out Among The Stars* may be one of the finest songs in quite some time. Sun's emotionally charged voice delivers this poignant

song of social comment with a chorus which burns itself indelibly into the sub-conscious mind.

There is another tune for the discerning listener—Joe Nixon's *Mysteries of Life (My First Truckin' Song)* which is not the standard "10-4 good buddy" 18-wheeler tune. Jo El Sonnier's French accordian is a tasty touch here.

While these songs are a cut above the others, the remaining seven selections are no slouches either. *Out Of Your Mind*, the title cut, penned by Dennis Knutson and Byron Hill, is in the same vein as Sun's biggest hit to date, *Old Flames (Can't Hold A Candle To You)*, and is flavored with Garrish's dobro-work. Zack Van Arsdale's

*Home Away From Home (I'll Find It Where I Can)* has a thumpin' rock beat which intensifies subtly to its conclusion. Sun's emotional rendering of Arti Portilla's *I'm Still Crazy About You* is more than believable and Paul Craft's *One Timers* is a funky tune accented with the sultry background vocals of Suzee Waters.

To quote my Uncle Charlie, an old railroad man: "You can't stop a runaway freight train once it's got up a full head o' steam." The same holds true for Sun. After listening to this album, one has to agree with ol' John—Joe Sun is undeniably one of the greatest talents in two decades. This new album serves notice.

KELLY DELANEY



## Stella Parton The Best of Stella Parton

Elektra 6E-229

The flock of "little sisters" popping up in country music (i.e.—Crystal Gayle, Peggy Sue, Louise Mandrell, Mary Jane Wynette, Stella Parton) no doubt has some folks believing their success is owed chiefly to nepotism, with talent a

secondary consideration. If Crystal Gayle hasn't completely obliterated that bias, Stella Parton should finish the job with this set of ten outstanding tracks from her first three albums for Elektra.

No, no one's trying to con you with a phoney "Greatest Hits" package—that's not the idea here. Thru this collection, the public is being given a second chance to sample the talent

which this lady has been gradually bringing out of her sister's considerable shadow. Her resemblance (vocally) to Dolly is even becoming an advantage, as big sister moves more and more to the high power arrangements that accompany her superstardom. Those fans who miss "the old Dolly" should particularly enjoy the remake of Stella's 1975 hit *I Want To Hold You In My Dreams Tonight*. Her silky-soft vocals, devoid of the cutting edge that characterizes Dolly's work, also work wonders on some fine lyrics, notably Dennis William Wilson's *Standard Lie Number One*, Bob McDil's *I'm Not That Good At Good-bye*, and Even Steven's *Room At the Top of The Stairs*. The gentle conviction in Stella's delivery, most likely a product of her several years as a gospel singer, has a way of making believers out of her listeners, and this collection should expand her following considerably.

Oh, by the way—there is no Mary Jane Wynette—I just threw that in to see if you were paying attention. Pay some attention to Stella Parton. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

DAVE DISINGER

# Record Reviews



## Rita Coolidge Satisfied

A&M SP4781

The first two cuts on this album—*One Fine Day* and *The Fool In Me*—pretty much set the tone for the entire disc. The instrumentals are too strong, too involved and too intricate. The overall result was lackluster. However, the same formula seemed to work on the third cut—*Trust It All To Somebody*. The lyrics of this song are better than those of the first two. Rita also sang them better, and the musicians seemed to have more feeling for the piece. A good number all around.

The fourth cut—*Let's Go Dancin'*—is disco, and made for dancin', not listenin'. But let's not knock it, folks. It has the first guitar solo to be heard on this decidedly non-country album. The second such is on the first cut on Side Two—*Pain Of Love*. Both solos sound more rock than anything else.

Of the remaining three cuts, *Sweet Emotion* and *Can She Keep You Satisfied?* are routine pop arrangements. Everything starts out well in *Crime Of Passion*, but for some reason proceeds to fall apart. The beat is at first compelling, then turns monotonous as the lyrics drag along with it.

Rita Coolidge is not known for a strong, feeling delivery, and this album is decidedly weak in the vocal area. Perhaps that's why the instrumentals are so forced. But the material she was working with is hardly noteworthy.

ARTHUR J. MAHER

## The Nashville Super Pickers Live From Austin City Limits

Flying Fish 097

This cheery, lighthearted album was gleaned from the soundtrack of the popular Austin City Limits television show, and features the outstanding instrumental talents of this particular version of a band characterized by fluid personnel lineups.

Charlie McCoy, on harmonica and vocals, seems to loosely lead a first rate crew con-

sisting of Johnny Gimble on fiddle and vocals; Buddy Emmons, who sings one in addition to playing the steel; "Pig" Robbins on piano; Henry Strzelecki on bass and vocals; Buddy Harmon on Drums; Phil Baugh on lead guitar; and Russ Hicks on rhythm guitar and on steel guitar. An impressive lineup, for sure, who by and large live up to their expectations.

There is a very fine live feel here which more than makes up for a few technical imperfections, and the unaccountably loud mix on the drums. Johnny Gimble, in particular, plays with his exceedingly rare com-

bination of zest and taste, and Buddy Emmons supplies occasional sizzling breaks on the steel. Phil Baugh's gimmicky guitar playing is impressive and exciting nonetheless, and the lineup of songs is eclectic enough for any taste, including *Long Tall Texas*, *The Shadow of your Smile*, *Mansion on the Hill*, *Canadian Sunset*, *What a Friend We Have In Jesus*, and *Orange Blossom Special*.

The vocals are nothing special, but the spirit of fun pervades all, reaffirming the occasional great joy which is a part of playing music.

DOUGLAS B. GREEN



## Gene Watson Should I Come Home

Capitol ST-11947

In his own way, Gene Watson is himself a rebel. Nothing about him, from his pre-perm Twitty hairdo to his spare, understated voice, is currently in vogue. He remains free of excesses and close to the simplicity the best country music should maintain. Known for his ballads, he's avoided the route of all too many crooners who aspire to be Nashville's answer to Perry Como. Watson's music, particularly here, is a haunting reminder of past spine-chilling balladeers like Lefty Frizzell (an obvious influence) and Jim Reeves. *Should I Come Home* makes

the most of all this.

Producer Russ Reeder's production, assembles a small group of veteran studio players like Harold Bradley, Sonny Garrish and Buddy Harmon around Watson's voice, giving the lie to the prevailing notion that a small backup band can't sound full and lush. They manage to get in some excellent playing, yet compliment Watson without once overwhelming him. The selection of material, ranging from old standards to newer, obscure songs was obviously done with care.

Something has to be said for *anyone* who can breathe new life into *I Can't Help It If I'm Still In Love With You*, as Watson does here. Wade Ray's old hit *Heart of A Clown* absolutely thrives in his hands,

driven along admirably by Garrish's steel. He may be a bit lowkeyed to tackle rawer, up-tempo rockers like *That Evil Child* and *The Beer At Dorsey's Bar*, but he doesn't back down from them, either, and avoids any affected, phony bluster. *Bedroom Ballad* is sensuality without soppy excess. *Should I Come Home*, his current hit, a Bandyesque honkytonk plea and *Beautiful You*, a love song with echoes of the mid-sixties Bakersfield sound, kick along nicely.

In an era when the question of what constitutes a country record is still being debated, it's welcome to see an album that leaves no doubt. Watson will have a tough time topping this one.

RICH KIENZLE



# Record Reviews

## Marshall Chapman "Marshall"

Epic JE 36192

The problem with Marshall Chapman's albums thus far has been their failure to capture the style, strength, energy and swagger that characterize her live performances. Unlike others who've attempted to crossover from country, Marshall's a genuine "rock'n'roll girl," taking the stage, appropriately, to the strains of the Rolling Stones *Honky Tonk Woman*. Fronting a mean rock'n'roll band, Marshall's outdistanced the established female competition to the point that she's virtually in a class by herself, though you wouldn't know it from her first two LP's. Her latest, *Marshall*, comes the closest of all to capturing the real Marshall on vinyl, stopping just this side of perfection.

While a live album might provide that final breakthrough—there's a fine live version of *Why Can't I be Like Other Girls?*—a strong rock'n'roll producer (forget about Al Kooper) could really do the trick. (Imagine the possibilities of a Marshall and Mike Chapman ("Blondie" "The Knack") collaboration!)

Nevertheless, *Marshall* is an undeniably excellent LP, her best by far, with much of the punch and excitement provided by tunes like *Rock'n'roll Clothes*—a concert highlight—*Home to the Road*, *Going to Hell and Get it Back* (with its Heavy Metal riff), and *Rock'n'roll Girl*. Although one might question the presence of *Why Can't I be Like Other Girls?* due to its similarity to the studio original on Marshall's last LP, *Jaded Virgin*, that song more than any other is her signature piece. It's almost anthemic the way it speaks for so many women, so if a few more people get to hear it this time around, then it's worth it.

Also included here—at last—is Marshall's most outrageous



song, the near-legendary, hilarious *Don't Make Me Pregnant*:

"Don't make me pregnant  
I just wanna dance  
Let's stop and think it over  
Before we take that chance  
If you make me pregnant  
I'll take it very well  
I'll go home to my mama  
And you can go to hell!

"Get that thing outta here!" Marshall quips at the end, "Whattaya mean let's just see if it fits!?" That, along with typically sharp lyrics like "You

got what it takes to turn me on/ But all we ever do is get you off." from *Runnin' Out in the Night* ought to raise a few eyebrows! Marshall, though, should do more than just raise a few eyebrows and turn some heads. Any number of its songs could make it to the top of the Hot 100, and with any luck—i.e. airplay and a push from Epic—it could very well establish Marshall Chapman as one of the top rock'n'rollers in the business.

BRUCE PALEY

## John Wesley Ryles Let The Night Begin

MCA-3183

I've long wondered when John Wesley Ryles would settle on a direction for his revived career. All his albums, with the exception of his first, showed a disturbing ambiguity of musical direction. But finally, at long last, he's made a choice.

*Liberated Woman*, his recent chart hit, lays out this new direction along the lines of soft, easy-listening love ballads custom-built for crossover. The song itself is just vague enough to keep from enraging feminists or chauvinists, as its success proves. And no matter how it strikes any given listener, its hard-hitting lyrics aren't easy to ignore.

Bob Montgomery's production is far more lush than Johnny Morris's previous work with Ryles. He relies even heavier on orchestrations. But that in itself isn't the problem. With material like this strings are all but necessary. But the material, musically and lyrically has so little variety that many of the tunes tend to run together. The arrangements are adequate, but are so cut-and-dried that they don't enhance Ryles' voice as they should. On all too many numbers, Ryles himself is just going through the motions, and to make this sort of music succeed, a vocalist has to have an obvious feel for the material. Only with *Surrender*, where his voice lays well against a creative arrangement and an ingratiating melody does his potential show (he wrote the song). But on tunes like *Mommys And Daddys* and the inane disco arrangement of *Nothing But Love*, he's spinning his wheels.

I'm not going to take the standard purist line and say Ryles should go back to the sound of *Kay*, his hit of over a decade ago, but he needs stronger material and a more varied approach to realize his chosen path, this set only hints.

RICH KIENZLE

# Record Reviews

**John Conlee**

**Forever**

MCA-3174

Looking back over the 1970's, we can see a panorama of revivals, new arrivals, and more than a few upheavals in country music. Certain catchwords of the period, such as "progressive" and "outlaw" have already been laid to rest. But one term that is bound to stick around for awhile is



"crossover." The term applies not only to a pop charted country record, but also to one that is made to sound as though it could be. This outgrowth of the so-called "Nashville sound" has emerged from a sea of controversy to become the potential mainstay of a musical era.

Nashville's successful deployment of John Conlee into the crossover fold is a curious phenomenon. He sings in nasal tones, often with the inflections of a country traditionalist. Yet, there is a balance built into his second album, thanks to a bank of strings and a saxophone. The flavor of the sax is not unlike that to be found on the early recordings of Paul Anka and Frankie Avalon.

Several of the cuts on *Forever* are slow ballads, including *Let's Keep it That Way* and *I Wish That I Could Hurt That Way Again*. These are handled just fine, but perhaps a few shifts into a faster tempo would have made the record more interesting. The impetus behind Conlee's celebrated *Rose Colored Glasses* returns,

though to a lesser extent, on *Before My Time* and *No Relief in Sight*.

It is painfully hard to escape the reoccurring vision of this man following in the footsteps

of Hank and Lefty and Merle. He certainly has the voice for it. And goodness knows, Moe Bandy could use a little healthy competition. But for now, John Conlee is holding a cue card

marked "crossover." He's riding that crowded bandwagon down the road to the 1980's, not knowing, any more than the rest of us, where it will lead.

BILL OAKLEY

## BURIED TREASURES

By Rich Kienzle

Nearly ten years ago, Merle Haggard's Bob Wills tribute album sparked a renewed interest in western swing. Today western swing enjoys a small, specialized audience similar to that for bluegrass (which we'll look at in an upcoming *Buried Treasures*) and the past few months have seen a veritable hailstorm of reissued and new swing recordings.

Columbia, who owns the definitive Wills recordings of the 30's and 40's, recently issued *Lone Star Rag* (P 14390) as part of their new *Encore* reissue series. This is a special set, as most of the material, from his 1936-41 period, was never released. Most are big-band performances, like *Darktown Strutters' Ball*, *William Tell [Overture]*, *Wait 'Til You See* (with Wills as lead vocalist) and the truly weird *Red Head*, a tune eons away from *San Antonio Rose*. There's also a rare, unissued Wills fiddle solo and the original *Cherokee Maiden* that Haggard recreated.

From Fort Worth, Texas come two reissues of 1964-65 Wills material. *The Texas Sound On Longhorn* (Longhorn 007) compiles all his Longhorn singles (and two unissued tunes) and features a band (Wills had sold the Playboy name by then) with ex-Playboys Al Stricklin, Johnny Gimble and Joe Andrews among others. There's a rock tune, *Buffalo Twist*, some honkytonk material like *If He's Movin' In* and the afterhours blues of *Wills Junction*.

**Bob Wills' Keepsake Album #1** (Longhorn 001) was originally issued in the mid-

sixties. Folklorists have long lamented that Wills recorded so few of the frontier fiddle tunes of his rural Texas youth, but this superb, informal LP, with plenty of reminiscing between songs, focuses on just that. Backed by bass, guitar and banjo he cuts loose on *Big Taters In The Sandy Land*, *Done Gone*, recreates the first fiddle tune he ever learned and warbles *No Disappointments In Heaven*, a hymn he once sang on his radio shows. This isn't swing fiddling *per se*, but the music Wills played as a youth in Texas—before the Texas Playboys.

Cliff Bruner was Johnny Gimble's idol back in the forties. A Texas swing fiddle legend, Bruner led the Texas Wanderers until the 50's, when he left music. Now in his sixties, he's back with *Watch Out For Cliff* (Showtime 5002), backed by a group of veteran Texas western musicians. His exquisite fiddling on tunes like *Salty Dog*, *Jesse Polka* and *Jazztime* is as striking as ever, and the band revives the funky, bluesy style of the prewar Texas bands. He also remakes *Truck Driver's Blues*, the original Trucker tune, which he first cut for Decca 40 years ago.

England's String Records has a fine new compendium of vintage material. *Operators' Specials* (STR 807) covers the music of 12 obscure Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana groups from 1936-1949. Particularly outstanding are Johnny Lee Wills' *Milk Cow Blues*, Buddy Jones's *Rockin' Rollin' Mama* (perhaps the first record

to couple "rock" and "roll"), Hoyle Nix's *Big Balls In Cowtown* and *Panhandle Shuffle* by the Sons Of The West.

Another String set *Chuck Wagon Swing* (STR 806) by the Swift Jewel Cowboys features an interesting Memphis-based group that drew heavily on jazz and western swing, without much commercial success.

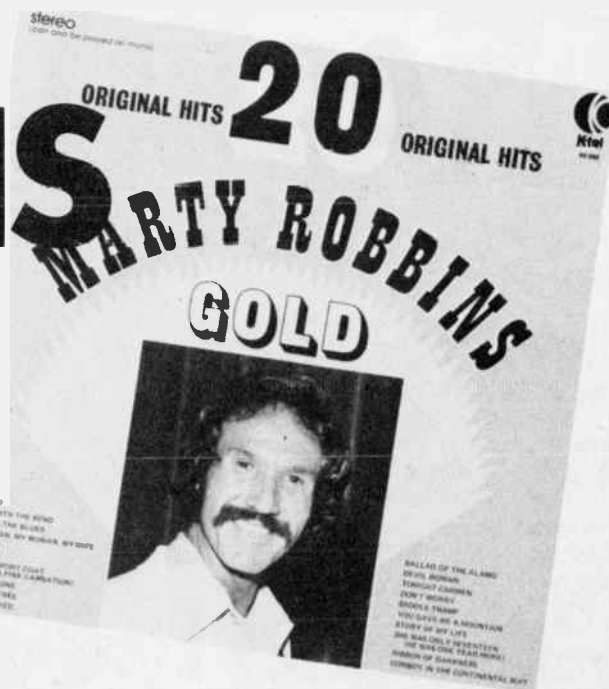
*Texas Sand* (Rambler 101), an American swing anthology, bring together swing hands from the 30's to the 50's, balancing prewar bands like Jimmie Revard's Oklahoma Playboys with the jazzier postwar bands. Outstanding are *I Never See My Baby Alone* by Johnny Tyler, Curley Williams' *Southern Belle (From Nashville, Tennessee)* and the hot *Tex Tyler Ride* by T. Texas Tyler.

Singing Cowboy Jimmy Wakely's Shasta Records recently issued a stunning LP featuring the late swing steel guitarist Noel Boggs playing with an all-star swing band in the 50's. *Noel Boggs And Friends* (Shasta LP531), was taken from Boggs's work on Wakely's CBS Radio shows features 13 excellent Boggs solos.

For more information on the Wills Longhorn and Bruner LPs, write Keith Kolby, 6604 Chapel Lane, Fort Worth, Texas 76135. The *Texas Sand* LP is available from Down Home Music, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, California 94530. The Boggs LP is available from Shasta Records, P.O. Box 655, Simi Valley, California 93065.



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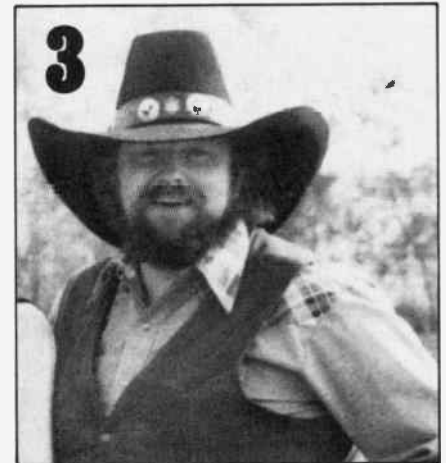
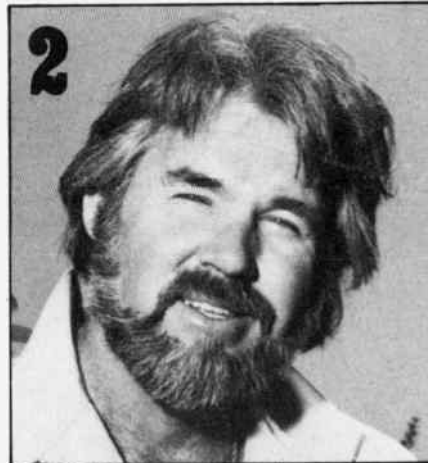
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# The Day I Almost Died

*In August 1975, while climbing Mt. Ajax in the Montana Rockies with friend Dick Willey and his eleven-year old son Walt, Hank Williams, Jr. was nearly killed in a rock slide. This article, Hank Jr.'s own account of that experience, is adapted from his new autobiography Living Proof, written with Michael Bane and published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, N.Y.*

## by Hank Williams, Jr.

with Michael Bane

There's probably been snow on top of Ajax Mountain since the day after creation, and there'll be snow there long after any of us are around to appreciate it. From the Big Hole, Ajax looks just like a postcard, a green-and-brown jagged tooth capped with white enamel, with maybe a cloud or two in a blue, blue sky to set it off. From up here on the side of Ajax, though, it just looks treacherous—a smooth white blanket of deceptively simple terrain.

What's bothering Dick is that, to work our way around the peak, we're going to have to cross a snow field about a hundred yards wide. Of all the things a casual hiker's likely to come across in these mountains, a snow field just may be the most dangerous. Even an idiot has sense enough not to harass a bear or climb a mountain in the dead of winter, but a snow field looks so *innocent*. Just a nice, flat expanse of snow, and all you've got to do is walk across it.

That's all you have to do, except that there's no way of knowing how sturdy the ground is underneath the snow, or whether the snow is melting underneath or whether it's all ice or anything.

This one looks especially scary. This whole side of Ajax is nothing but one huge rockslide, from the peak all the way down thousands of feet into the lake. There's not one square inch of solid ground, just jumbled rock from the size of your fingernail up to the size of your house.

"Just for damn sure, be careful!" Dick says, and he works his way down to the edge of the snow



Hank Jr., with Dick Willey, surveys the spot where he nearly died.

field. When Walt and I catch up with him, he pauses again. "I'll go first," Dick says, "Then Walt, then you, Hank."

Dick starts walking across the field. He's walking slowly, testing every step before he makes it. The ground slopes slightly toward the center of the chute, and the snow field is shaded by the peak itself. We'll work out way across, then back up. So far, so good. Dick's 165 pounds don't seem to be dislodging anything. The minutes drag on and on. He's finally across, and it seems like we've all been holding our breath forever. I smile and slap Walt on the shoulder. "Nothing to it."

"When you come across," Dick yells back across the field, "walk in my footsteps. And be damned careful not to slip 'cause it's a long way down!"

Walt starts across, and doesn't seem to be having any trouble at all. It's amazing how clear your mind can get when there's nothing

but that flat expanse to concentrate on. I watch Walt and measure his every step. He steps off the field onto the rocks and waves back at me. The snow looks firm. The path is clear. I smile, wave back, and start across the field.

The snow crunches underneath my hiking boots—it feels like old snow, frozen and refrozen until it crunches like so much popcorn. I weigh about 205 pounds, and I'm packing the snow down a little deeper than Dick. After a few steps I feel a little confidence re-

**"Be calm, because there's no escape. You're going to die here."**

turning—no sweat, just be careful of each step. I'm almost halfway, and there's no problems at all.

I raise my right foot and lower it into Dick's footprint. The boot tread catches in the snow, and I

gingerly shift my weight to that leg. I start to plan my next step when there's a tiny movement under my right foot. The rock, I think, shifted. *The rock shifted!* The movement grows, and I pull my foot away, shifting all my weight to my left leg. I step back, and feel the ground start dropping away under my left leg. Around me I see the snow shifting, the rock rearranging. I am trapped while the mountain moves. Below me, even the ripples on the lake seem frozen. I see Walt's mouth frozen in a scream. I see Dick's arms outstretched, as if he could just reach out and grab me across seventy yards of snow. The blink of an eye. A frozen breath. A heartbeat. The rocks shift. The snow slides.

And I fall.

Falling.

Like a million nightmares suddenly come true. The sick, knotted fear that explodes out of your gut and washes over your whole body, and your mind screams for you to wake up, WAKE UP!, and find the bed underneath you soaked with the sweat of falling, falling, falling.

Falling.

Frozen. Time is frozen. Your brain just refuses to let the moment go. I see everything. I see the peak. I see the lake. I see my friends. I see the rocks, and they're waiting for me. I am cold and the air is frozen. I feel the ground beginning to move again, and, oh God, I wish it would be frozen forever!

Falling.

And I am two beings. One is an

animal, insane with a primeval fear, clawing at the air, gulping great draughts of air, looking frantically for escape. The other is very, very rational, a warmth that fights the insane fear. Be calm, because there's no escape. You're going to die here. You're already dead.

Falling.

I know I am dead just as surely as I've ever known anything in my life, the way that you know when you push on a door, it opens. I fall forward, and begin sliding, head-first, down the snow chute.

"My God!" Walt screams from a million miles away. "My God! He's going to die! He's going to die!"

It's almost funny that Walt should belabor such an obvious point. Faster now; the snow burns my eyes, cuts across my face, the

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**Walt screams from a million miles away. "My God! He's going to die!"**

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rocks thunder past me, and I'm calm, because it doesn't matter. I feel the rocks cutting and slashing my arms, I feel the palms of my hands shredding like papers across razor blades, feel the skin peeling away and the bones jarring, but it doesn't hurt. Through the haze of snow, I can see the lake. I am going to fall into the lake, I think.

"Turn around, Hank! Get turned around! The boulders, man! The boulders!" Dick is screaming, and he is right. I see the boulders a long way away. Five hundred feet away, a thousand feet away, a city block away, and I'm almost there.

I wiggle and I struggle and I manage to turn myself around, feetfirst, heading toward the boulders. If I can just slow down . . . I dig my heels in, and nothing happens. If I just had something to act as a brake . . .

My gun!

The long-barreled Ruger .44, our insurance against bears, is still in the shoulder holster, still riding on my left side. If I could just get the gun out, dig the barrel into the rocks . . . But I'm a bobsled. I can barely touch the grip of the pistol with my fingers. The holster's too tight. The gun won't come out. What a joke. Maybe I can sell the holster company an endorsement, except that I'm not going to be around. All I can think of is a joke: When you're in a falling elevator, jump, just before you hit the bottom. The elevator will be wrecked, see, but you'll be okay 'cause you're up in the air—get it? My elevator has just fallen about twenty-five stories, and it's getting *real* near the bottom. Jumping makes perfect sense.

I get my feet around first and bring my knees up to my chin as far as I can. I've got on these mountain-type boots, and the rocks are getting bigger and

bigger and there's not much time left. So I just kick out, as hard as I can.

And it works!

And I'm airborne!

Shot out of a cannon! Damn it all, it works! From a bobsled to an eagle, up off the side of the mountain, over the boulders, and time stands very, very still. I can see the lake again, still three thousand feet below, and this time maybe I'll make it. Maybe I can

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**"I raise my hand . . . my forehead . . . there's something soft and squishy. That's my brain. I think."**

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make the longest swan dive in the history of the world and land in that icy lake, and maybe I won't be dead. I twist in the air, trying for more distance. I tumble, lining myself up for the dive. I see the lake slipping away from me, and as I tumble I see the snow and the rocks. I jerk and I tumble and I'm not going to make the lake. There's nothing below me but more boulders. And the eagle's going to crash.

I hit the rocks like a discarded basketball. I slide, and roll, and tumble, and everytime I seem to come down on my face, until I'm a bobsled again, only this time I'm going much faster. I slide, face forward, and the rock chips

cut my chin and cheeks and the snow burns at my eyes and I can see more boulders. But I don't despair, because there's no sense despairing over the inevitable.

I am sliding, and I see it ahead of me. It's gray and ridged, sort of like a big tomahawk. I'm lined up perfect for it, as if someone started at the top of the mountain and aimed me at that gray boulder. The ridge is aimed at my nose, and I'm sliding and there's nothing I can do. In another universe Dick screams and Walt screams and I hit the boulder head-on.

What's it like . . . you remember the sound. A dull thud that goes on and on and on. Just like a hard shot in the head. I'm on my knees, and my head is down between my knees, slumped in the snow. Good God, I fell down a mountain and I'm not dead! I look at my hands, and they're still there. I always look at my hands. They're battered, but they're still there.

"I'm all right," I mumble. "I'm all right."

I am still mumbling when Dick comes down the mountain like an avenging angel. He half skis, half stumbles down old Ajax himself, and no time seems to have passed when he's by my side.

"I'm all right," I say, raising my head. "I'm all right."

Dick just stares. His eyes are wide.

"I'm all right," I say again. "I'm all right, damn it! What's wrong?"

Dick stares. "It's your nose," he finally says. "Your nose is broken."

"Then I'm going to walk off this mountain," I say. "I've got to walk off this mountain."

I stand up, and I start to take a step, but something is wrong. I sink back down to my knees.

"It's not as bad as you think, Hank," Dick is saying from someplace far away. "It's just your nose."

Walt has finally worked his way down from the peak, and I see him come running up. When he sees me, his eyes go white, and he screams and screams. It puzzles me, and I put my hands up to feel my nose. Where my nose should be there's nothing there. My teeth and parts of my jaw fall out in my hand. I raise my hand to my forehead, and where my forehead should be, there's something soft and squishy. That's my brain, I think.



Ajax Mountain, looking at its picture-postcard best. The tops of the peaks mark the Continental Divide.



I have no face.

"What is it?" I say to Dick.  
"What is it?"

My cheek is gone. My eye is hanging down. My head is shattered, and the warm stuff I feel is my blood. "Oh, God," I think. "Oh, dear God. After all this, the mountain's going to win anyway."

"It's not that bad, Hank, but you can't walk off the mountain," Dick is saying. I look close with my one good eye, and there's a tear on Dick's cheek, which is sort of funny because everybody knows cowboys don't cry. "It's just your nose."

Dick lays me down in the snow and takes my hands away from my face. He has decisions to make. He takes his hand—"his dirty ole hand," he says later—and pushes my exposed brain back into my head. It makes a terrible sound, a nightmare sound

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**"If he goes to sleep,  
he's dead for sure.  
Just keep him  
talking."**

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that nobody can hear but me. I'll always hear that sound. Then he takes the shredded pieces of my face and pushes them back where they're supposed to be, and he whips off his shirt and ties it around my head. Then he steps back and looks at me.

From someplace far away I can see a lot of things in my friend's eyes. I can see a deathwatch, and I could see that he has a tough decision to make. Go, or stay. He knows that I'm finished. I see that with perfect clarity, just as plainly as I could see the lake while I was tumbling in the air.

In a flash, the decision is made.

"Walt, you're going to have to stay here with Hank while I go for help," Dick says.

"No." Walt is horrified. "I can't do it."

"You have to."

"He's going to die, and I'm not going to stay here with him!"

"Walt, if he's got a chance in the world, I'm going to have to go," Dick says. "It's got to be me."

Walt finally agrees, and I hear it all. I don't really have an opinion one way or the other. It was a question, Dick says later, of whether to stay with your best friend while he was dying or take the long shot. He doesn't know



why he took the long shot, only that a feeling came over him that he had to *take* it.

I lie in the snow while Dick and Walt confer. Walt is shaken, but he's an awful tough eleven-year-old.

"Whatever you do, don't let him go to sleep," Dick says. "You've got to keep him talking. If he goes to sleep, he's dead for sure. Just keep him talking."

#### Standing In The Shadows

"Hank, I'm going down the mountain to get help," Dick says. "I've got to go for help. Now, Walt's going to stay here with you, and he's going to talk to you to keep you company, and everything's going to be just fine. Understand?"

Of course I understand. What's to understand? I am irritated, but not much.

"Okay, now just don't worry. I'll be back as soon as I can."

I am not worried. I am lying in the snow, and Dick thinks I should be lying somewhere else. It is nice, though, because with my one eye that still works, I can look across the high valley. I can see the peaks, and I can see the lake. On the whole, it's a good view. And I'm going to sleep.

Only Walt is talking.

What he's talking about is fish, and I can't think of anything I'm less interested in at this moment than fish. Brook trout,

"I guess I musta caught fifty,

maybe seventy-five of these I'll ole brook trout, you know, about as big as your hand. But they're real good eatin', you know.

You do a lot of trout fishing, Hank?"

Un-huh, I say, because it would be really impolite not to say anything.

"You ever been in one of those fishing holes where you just can't miss, Hank? Where those trouts just beg you to catch them? Hank?"

Uh-huh. I don't think Walt has seen just how banged up I am—that's the only way to explain this conversation. He doesn't know that I'm going to die, and he doesn't know that he's going to

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**"I've want to die a lot  
of times. I tried to kill  
myself once, and I  
even screwed that  
up."**

---

end up on this godforsaken mountain with a corpse. I feel sorry for him.

"I'll never forget, we had this ole coon dog, and it was the darndest thing, this ole dog. He'd run them coons right until . . ."

It's almost time, now. I try to say something real profound, like "Hank, you're dying. This is it," but I can't. I can't think at all.

It's odd, you know, but I've wanted to die a lot of times. I tried

to kill myself once, and I even screwed that up. I've wanted to die a lot, but I never wanted to die on this godforsaken mountain. I never wanted to die on some old mountain. It's just not *musical* enough, damn it. I mean, I'm not opposed to the idea of *dying*: I've got nothing to live for, I guess, so what difference does that make? But dying ought to be classy, like in some motel room on the road, or even on stage—now that would really be doing it up right. Just get up there on that stage, under all those lights, pick up that old guitar and die, deader than a brick. My daddy had style, and I always figured I'd go something like that, in the back seat of a Cadillac on the way to another show in Nowhere, Ohio.

But this is real, I think. The real thing is on this mountainside, and I can feel it coming. I wonder if Walt can feel it creeping up through these rocks. I sort of hope he can't.

---

**"I think of my daddy,  
and I think I owe him  
some kind of  
explanation because  
I'm going to be  
seeing him soon."**

---

"The basketball team was okay, but I'm really looking forward to football, see. I'm not big enough to be a fullback or something like that, but I can run real good and catch passes and I think I'd make a great tight end or something, don't you, Hank? Whatdaya think, Hank, an end or what?"

I am alone on this mountain, and I have been alone all my life. I hear and see and feel, but I think my mind has disconnected me from all that, because there are more important things to be decided this afternoon.

I think of my son, Shelton, who was going to grow up without a daddy anyway.

I think of my wife, Gwen, who'd told me she doesn't love me anymore, and I can't get that through my thick head.

I think of my mother, who loves me too much, and I forgive her what she did, and I think I understand a little, too. I wish she would forgive me for things I did.

I think of my daddy, and I think I owe him some kind of explanation, which is important, because I'm going to be seeing him soon.

## **“... but the demons. Daddy, I can't seem to shake the demons.”**

start out that doesn't seem too trite. I have all the time in the world, and my thoughts drift away. I see my friends, my few friends who love me whether I'm Hank Williams Junior or not. There's Dick who's climbing down the mountain and Bill Dyer who's my hunting buddy in Tennessee, and J.R. Smith, good ole Robert, who's my new manager and who told me maybe I wasn't fated to go to Montana and now won't have much to manage.

My friend Merle Kilgore is crazy, and he's never going to forgive me for this. It's enough to make him quit drinking. He remembers my daddy, and I think things would have been different if Daddy had lived.

If he'd lived, then maybe I wouldn't have to have tried so hard to become him; sing his songs and practice his patter. Mother used to coach me, when I was just a little kid. She'd coach me in things Daddy said and then I'd go out on stage and the audience would go crazy. They'd say I sounded just like ole Hank, and I guess I did.

That's what it's like, Daddy, and I guess that's what I've got to say. I mean, I tried, standing there in front of the mirror and singing along with your records, trying to get it down just like you did, every catch, every wail. I wanted to be just like you, because it was important that I was just like you. People wanted me to be just like you. Mother wanted me to be just like you. I wanted it so bad.

Did I ever tell you that one time I made it with this girl singer on the bus driving over to meet my wife? Did you ever do stuff like that? On the way to meet Mother?

But there's my own music, and it's in there trying to get out. There's my album back in that can in Nashville. And I'm getting better—what a joke, at least, I was getting better—but the demons, Daddy, I can't seem to shake the demons. They gnaw at me and claw at me and tell me that it all turns to dust, that I'm nothing but the son of a bum, the weak son of a bum who was better than I'll ever be. People have spit on me because I wasn't you, Daddy. Have hated me, and snarled at me, and wanted to slap my face

and I don't understand. I never understood.

I look across the lake, and my eye focuses on my hand. I look at it for a while, then I notice my two rings. Two diamond initial rings. H.W. Hank Williams. The most famous name in country music. My daddy's rings. There's nobody here but me and God and two diamond rings.

“So we were hunting this muley deer, and we'd been tracking the bunch of them for a long time when we finally jumped them and—please don't die, Hank. Don't die. I know you're

## **“I can see the drying puddles of my blood, and there are lots of puddles. I don't think I can afford all those puddles.”**

going to be all right . . .”

I hear Walt, and he's still talking. There are tears rolling down his face, and it's almost dark on the mountain. I feel the cold creeping in, around the edges of my warm cocoon. I know the pain can't be far behind, and I know it's going to be bad. Death thwarted will want his revenge.

“Walt!” There's a shout from down in the valley, and I think it's Dick! He's back! Has it really been hours? Could it have been? “Walt! Is Hank alive?”

Inside, I almost laugh.

“Dad! Dad!” Walt yells, and

the mountains echo. “He's still talking! He's alive!”

When Dick makes it back to the ledge, the pain is just beginning, and he can't understand why I'm beating on the ground like some kind of madman.

## **I Saw The Light**

There are parts of the story I can't tell, parts I didn't even know until days, months, even years later. I knew Dick Willey had come back. What I didn't know were the details of his own ordeal, a frenetic race down the face of Ajax to find help, sick with the knowledge that his own son might be sitting on the mountain with a corpse.

As Dick told me later:

“It took me about twenty minutes to get to the car that's down the face of a steep mountain.”

He finally made it to the car, a Toyota Land Cruiser station wagon with four-wheel drive. The drive down Ajax is along an old fire trail. On a good day the trail is almost as wide as a jeep. Almost. And it's steep enough to cause a mountain goat to gulp. On those good days you can watch the rocks overturned by your tires roll off the side of the mountain, take a couple of bounces, and drop away into oblivion. More than one jeep has joined those rocks.

“I jumped in that son-of-a-gun and away I went. It's a fifteen-mile-an-hour road if you know it real well. There were times I was going eighty.”

Two years later Dick told me that he'd wrecked the car trying to get help. He hadn't wanted to bother me with it before.

“I thought, ‘My God, what else can go wrong?’ What happened was I came around this turn and of course it's a gravel road, and I got to sliding. I smashed into the side of a bridge, which threw me back across the road into a creek-

## **“Every single one of those bones was broken—every single one.”**

bed, about ten feet deep. I didn't know what else to do, so I got the sucker in four-wheel-drive—and this bank must be almost straight up. I backed off and hit the bank. And hit it again. And I'll be darned if that rascal didn't come out of there. And I just headed on along what we call the foothills road—I still had about ten minutes to go when as luck would have it, I ran into a Forest Service vehicle.”

Luck.

Forest Service vehicles are few and far between. You could drive for months along those fire roads and never see another vehicle, much less a Forest Service one. Luck, eh?

“So he radioed back to Forest Service headquarters that there had been an accident on Ajax and that it was going to take a helicopter to get to the victim. So I stayed there until he did confirm that there would be a helicopter. I was there for about forty-five minutes. Then I took off. I headed back up the mountain. From the time I left Hank until the time I got back, I guess it took me a little over two hours.”

Two hours. Could that have been all?

There is a helicopter coming, and Dick has come back, and I know that is good. Dick is talking to Walt, and they're both watching me pretty closely, pausing their conversation to reassure me. I accept their reassurances and record them somewhere inside.

Something else is happening inside—pain. I feel sharp stab-bings and aches from my body, from my face. I accept the pain, and I know it's going to get worse, much worse. There is, I think, a certain irony here, perhaps a lesson to be learned. The more alive I am, the more I hurt. I've been given life, and now I'm going to



Hank Jr. at one of his earliest shows (around the age of eight) with mother Miss Audrey.



have to pay the price.

I can hear the helicopter from a long way off. The helicopter! I feel excitement for the first time. I am tired of this mountain. I have fought my battle here, and I am impatient to get on with the other battles that are waiting. And the pain, the pain is a constant gnawing now and I am impatient and sulky. I want off this mountain!

The helicopter circles once, and everybody is yelling and waving. The helicopter doesn't land, but starts instead to go away. The yelling takes on a desperate sound, and the helicopter, as if it heard and relented, turns back, circles again, and starts looking for a place to alight. They find the only flat space in the rocks, about 200 feet away, and the helicopter sets down. There is a medic, and his name is Swede Thorenson, he says, and he asks me, "How ya doin', pal?" Just fine, I say. Just fine. Actually, I snap, because it's a stupid question and it's that much longer before I get off the mountain. I don't think he noticed that I snapped. I don't think I can talk very well. Maybe I can't talk at all. Swede asks me other questions, and I don't think I answer him.

He changes the dressings on my head. It hurts this time. There's a prick in my arm, and the pain goes away a little. There's another prick in another place and something starts trickling into my body. This is good, I think, because I can see the drying puddles of my blood, and there are lots of puddles. I don't think I can afford all those puddles.

All that remains between me and getting off this mountain is 200 feet of rock, and the strap me in the stretcher and start the trip.

It's a nightmare!

The rocks are huge and unforgiving, and I'm strapped into the stretcher. My feet are raised. My head is lowered. And I'm in agony! Up, down, up down up down. I can't understand why it's taking so long. Twenty minutes it takes. Ten times longer than it took me to fall. We are at the helicopter, and they are strapping me to the *outside*. I don't want to be on the outside. I want to be on the inside, where it's warm, where there's no wind and no pain. I complain, but no one understands. Swede climbs into the helicopter with the pilot. I hear the motor rev, faster and faster, and the helicopter gives a little lurch. It rises an inch, hovers for a

second, and is then airborne for real.

I am off the mountain, alive.

It's cold and I'm trying to figure out a way to get my right knee out of these damn straps! I feel like one giant bruise, from my knees to my chest to my back, and I know that if I can just get my knee out of the strap and bring it up, I can stop this pain. I struggle and I scream and I hurt—Lord, I hurt! My leg hurts. My thigh hurts. All I can concentrate on is breaking the straps—I am not worried about gravity. I know that if I break the straps, I'll somehow avoid falling off the helicopter. I am still struggling and screaming when the helicopter lands at a nearby ranch with an airstrip, and there's a small plane waiting to ferry me to the hospital at Missoula.

Which is much better. Swede is talking to me now, telling me how I'll be all right. I'm still trying to get the straps off my legs—I can't seem to get across how badly my legs hurt, how much I want to curl up. Swede's holding up those bottles that are dripping into me. It seems to take a long time to get to Missoula, over a hundred miles away, but when we get there another helicopter is waiting, this time for the short trip to Community Hospital. Even through the pain I marvel about how organized these guys are. I congratulate myself for having the good sense to fall off a mountain with all these guys around.

I see the big red cross below, the hospital landing pad, and we set down again. All those people in white come swarming out of the hospital, and I'm being unstrapped and loaded into a different stretcher.

"You got it, buddy," one of the medics says. "You're going to be okay."

"You want us to call someone?" And I think about it. My mother is sick, maybe dying, and if she isn't dying, this should just about do it. My wife is just more pain. My friends are after my money. Dick cares, and he already knows. Maybe I shouldn't bother anyone else with my problems. Maybe I've spent my whole life bothering other people with my problems. Maybe that's what I learned up on that mountain.

"You want us to call someone, buddy?"

"No!" I almost shout, and the attendant jumps back startled.



Even at age fourteen months, Hank Jr. was being groomed to follow in his father's footsteps.

No!

Then I'm on my way to the operating room, with them cutting away on my clothes all the while. Just like that, my boots and jeans are cut off; my bloody jacket and the shoulder holster with the gun

### Dr. Dewy just shakes his head, "I don't see how you survived."

that wouldn't come out, snipped through like so much tissue paper. I must look like some kinda outlaw, I think, with my head all bloody and that gun and holster with all the bullets in it. They cut off my belts and my underwear. Then they cut off my cross I was wearing around my neck: the cross that had been with me through charging elephants and stalling planes. I didn't know why I was wearing it when I went on the mountain, but I beg them not to cut it off. I tell them I know what it means now, and to please leave it on.

Snip.

They wash me and prep me and I watch, pretty interested. I am clean and warm and not in too much pain at all when the nurse comes with another needle. Sodium pentothal, she says. You're going to go to sleep, she says, and sticks the needle in.

It is seven thirty in the evening, August 8, 1975, almost eight

hours since I started across a snowfield on the side of old Ajax. I am Hank Williams Junior, the son of a legend, and I am alive. Thank God.

That said, I go to sleep, finally.

There are parts of the story I can't tell, how three surgeons who just happened to be in the hospital on a Saturday—instead of at their house on the lake, ninety miles away—spent seven and one-half hours putting me back together again. Dr. Don Murray, Dr. Tom Holshaw, Dr. Richard Dewey working on the remains of my face, cleaning out the wounds, suturing, saving what they could.

### "... three surgeons spent seven and one-half hours putting me back together again."

They thanked the cold on the mountains for keeping down the infection. They added the pluses of my youth and good condition. They added their skill, and they decided that I had a chance. When they came out of the operating room, Dick told me later, they looked like they'd been through the mill. They looked worse than I did.

I wake up in the Intensive Care Unit late the next day, and the first

thing I notice is the nurse, which, I think is probably a good sign. There is something in my throat, a breathing tube, I think. There are needles in my arms, and my jaws are wired together. I move my tongue around, and the inside of my mouth is all a maze of wires and plastic stuff and braces. My head is swollen up like a watermelon, and I explore the wreckage of my mouth with my tongue. The nurse leans close, and her nameplate says "Fitzgerald."

"You've had a bad mountain fall, Mr. Williams," she says. "You're in Community Hospital in Missoula, Montana, and we're going to take care of you. Do you understand?"

I think they're worried about whether there's anything left in my head except wire and plastic.

"Um-huh," I say, and that's as much as I can say. I'm suddenly very, very tired, and as I go to sleep, I hear the machinery of the Unit. It sounds reassuring.

In the morning come the doctors. They have lots to tell me, but what I really want is ice. My mouth is filled with the gritty, coppery taste of blood, and I want

to gargle and spit it out. Except that my jaws are wired shut, and there's this little hole where they can squirt medicine and maybe a little ice through. They have this stuff I have to take, stuff to fight an infection of the brain that the doctors *have* to talk to me about, and the only way to take it is orally, through a large syringe. So they squirt it through the hole, and it tastes *awful, terrible, vile!* And I get lots of it, because that's what the doctors are worried about.

Well, it's one of the things the doctors are worried about. I'm lucky with doctors—Dick Dewey, my neurosurgeon, spent two tours in Vietnam, and he'd seen a lot of bullet holes and bone fragments. Dr. Holshaw, the eye, ear, nose, and throat man, is going to have a field day, finding me a new eye, ear, nose, and throat. And then, of course, Don Murray, the plastic surgeon, is probably facing a challenge of a lifetime, and he is certainly up to it.

Imagine, they tell me, a chart of the human skull with all the bones in the face displayed. Every single one of those bones was broken—every single one. The

probable reason you're not dead, they say, is that the front of your face—the jaws, the gums, the teeth, the nose, even the forehead—cushioned the brain from the blow. Unfortunately, the cushions were destroyed. Also unfortunately, the human brain isn't designed to be exposed to the elements, much less shoved around on a godforsaken mountaintop. When the brain is exposed, an infection invariably—almost invariably—results, with fatal results.

In other words, they say, you're off the mountain, but you're not out of the woods. Not by a long shot.

I can see the snow on the mountaintops out the window. I look out and watch the clouds roll by. Dr. Dewey just shakes his head. "I don't see how you survived," he says. "But you did. You did."

So we settle into routine, quickly. I've lost a lot of my sight, all my sense of smell and taste, some of my hearing. There are tubes down my throat, needles in my arm, monitors hooked all over. I have my rings, and when I need a shot for the pain, I tap on the side of the bed, against the metal rail.

Nurses and doctors ask me questions, and I write answers on a little pad. Routine.

Soon the word gets out, south to Nashville. I am near death, the reports say. But I don't think I'm near death; I've been near death, and I've got a pretty good idea of what it's like. My wife comes to my bedside, and she looks tired. She says she still loves me, and it's all been a horrible mistake. Sure, I write. Sure, I want to believe her, but I've heard that song before.

Dick and Betty and Walt are here, as is Bill Dyer and his wife Betty, and J.R. Smith, my manager and friend. I believe in them, and I hope they'll head off the shitstorm that's headed for Missoula, Montana. It's going to be a circus, I think, a real three-ring circus.

If I make it eight days, the doctors tell me, I'll live.

Eight days.

One week and a day.

Oh God, everyone wails. And they all settle down to wait a week and a day. ■

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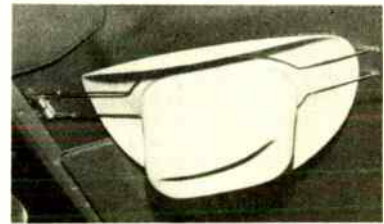
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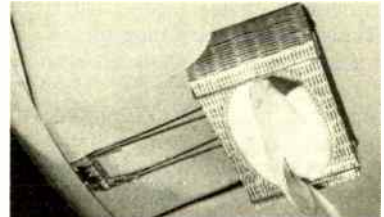
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# Everyday People

This is the first of a series of articles concerning everyday people. Real people like you and us whose lives have been the source and inspiration of so many country songs.

## Travels With Davis

By John Pugh

Davis Nabors sits in a cheap, run-down rooming house. The drab green wallpaper is peeled such that it looks as if someone randomly took a knife to it. What was once someone's favorite easy chair is now faded and sprung so that Nabors must do a lot of shifting and squirming before he can adjust to its contours. The bed resembles a relief map of Montana. Two grimy, gauze-like curtains hang forlornly over the lone window. The room is small, hot, dirty, old; the kind of place punch-drunk boxers always inhabit on the late show. Suddenly a nightmarish-looking roach darts out and scurries across the floor. "Yeah, this place has roaches," Nabors said offhandedly. "But it's a damn sight better than some of the places I've lived."

At first meeting it is hard to understand how Davis Nabors has fallen on such an existence. He is not an alcoholic. He is not lazy. His wife didn't leave him. He didn't get wiped out in the stock market. It is easy to envision him leaving his wife and two kids at their three bedroom ranch style home every morning as he rolls out of the driveway for another day as, say, a heavy-duty mechanic. Except for a rather considerable girth around the middle, he is what writers have always referred to as "ruggedly handsome" with strong facial features and a thick shock of black wavy hair, and bears a keen resemblance to major league baseball player Bob Bailey. He is soft-spoken, polite and, though not intellectual, reasonably intelligent. Given another set of circumstances, he would make some woman a good husband, some company a good employee. He has had offers to do both and always turned them down. For David Nabors was born with an unquenchable wanderlust and must forever be moving on to satisfy some unfathomable longing in his soul.

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*No phone, no food, no pets*

*I ain't got no cigarettes*

"I was born in Oklahoma City, December 16, 1943," Nabors began. "I was raised there until I was about nine or ten when we moved to a farm near

Shawnee, Oklahoma about 30 miles east. I couldn't stand the farm and I wanted to go and see new places, so I hitchhiked out to California at 15. I had 50 cents in my pocket and rode that all the way to Albuquerque, New Mexico. From there I got a ride on a cement truck all the way to L.A. in exchange for unloading cement blocks. I was always big for my age and could do heavy work even then.

"I moved in with an uncle in Long Beach, Calif. lied about my age and got a job on a turkey farm slaughtering turkeys. I worked there all summer, then hitchhiked back to Oklahoma. On the way back I saw the Hoover Dam and Las Vegas and decided then that I wanted to travel the rest of my life.

"I'd leave every summer and come back for school in the fall. My parents didn't mind because they were having enough of a struggle on the farm and I was just another mouth to feed. I went to the 12th grade and had 23 credits. I only needed 18 to graduate, but I never graduated because of a technicality. I maintained a B average just half trying, but in that time and place I just didn't feel like it was that important to get an education.

"Since then I've been going for 21 years. I've lived in 30 states, Canada, Mexico and the Virgin Islands. I've visited Australia and Hawaii before it was a state. I've got a car now, but I've hitchhiked, rode freight trains, stowed away on ships, just about every way possible to get to the next place.

"I've been thrown in jail, shot at, chased by drunk Indians, knocked cold in barroom brawls, you name it. One driver I hitchhiked with fell asleep at the wheel, the car rolled down a 40-foot canyon, threw him out and killed him instantly. I walked away with only a few cuts and bruises. Once I hitched a ride with a homosexual. He made a play for me and I started to get out. Then I noticed my door had no handle or window knob. I knocked the man out with my fist, kicked the glass out, opened the door from the inside and left him slumped over the steering wheel out cold at a downtown traffic light.

"But there's no way I'd trade my life.

The dulllest existence I can imagine is the 9-to-5 routine, never going anywhere or seeing anything. I know most people live a lot better than I do financially, but material things, security, money just don't mean that much to me. The only kind of steady job that would interest me would be one involving travel. I'd like to be a big sales executive going all over the country, but I don't have the education. That's my only real regret, that I didn't get my diploma."

*All around the water tank*

*Waiting for a train*

*I'm a thousand miles*

*away from home*

*Sleeping in the rain*

He is asked why there seems to be such a universal disdain of people like himself. "I think people just dislike anyone who goes against the grain," he replied. "They feel like I'm not really part of society and don't contribute my share. But I've always been independent, self-supporting, everything the American Dream is supposed to be. I don't follow the harvest or do migratory work because I've always gone where I wanted to go. And I think that kind of freedom makes some people envious.

"Look forward to tomorrow?" he asked rhetorically. "No, I've never really looked forward to anything. Right now I just want to work about a month and get up enough money to get to Florida."

\* \* \* \* \*

Later Nabors is driving to his current job as a temporary laborer when John Denver's *Back Home Again* comes on the radio.

*Hey, it's good to be*

*back home again*

*Sometimes this old farm*

*seems like a long*

*lost friend*

"You know, that's my favorite song," Nabors says with a distant air.

"Why is that?" he is asked.

"Listen to the words," he says. "Old boy's got back home to his wife and family. There's a lot of truth in what he's singing."





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