



FELICE AND BOUDLEAUX BRYANT: NASHVILLE'S PERFECT PAIR

Wife-and-husband team Felice and Boudleaux Bryant were among the first people to make a full-time living as Nashville songwriters and are considered among the all-time best.

Born in Shellman, Georgia, in 1920, Diadorius Boudleaux Bryant was one of five children who all had unusual names. Bryant's parents, both musicians, gave their son a violin for his fifth birthday, and he became skilled at both classical music and country fiddling. As a young adult, he made a living performing in traveling bands that played western swing, jazz, and country music.

Felice Bryant was born Matilda Genevieve Scaduto in 1925 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the daughter of Italian Americans. Her extended family included many singers and musicians, and she sang as a child. She also loved poetry and wrote her own lyrics to traditional Italian melodies.

Felice and Boudleaux met in 1945 at a Milwaukee hotel where Felice was an elevator operator and Bryant was playing in a band. Within days, they married. Boudleaux gave his wife the nickname "Felice," which means "happy" in Italian.

The Bryants settled in Georgia, where he continued to work as a musician. The couple soon began writing songs together. Their big break came in 1948 when Little Jimmy Dickens recorded their song "Country Boy,"



which became a Top Ten hit. That success inspired the couple to move to Nashville and become full-time songwriters.

In 1957, the Bryants' career took off when the Everly Brothers, a rock & roll duo, began recording their songs. The Everlys had hits with twelve of the couple's songs, including "Bye Bye Love," "Wake Up Little Susie," and "All I Have to Do Is Dream."

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LISTEN

"Rocky Top" (Osbourne Brothers), "Country Boy" (Little Jimmy Dickens), "Bye Bye Love" (The Everly Brothers)



FELICE AND BOUDLEAUX BRYANT: NASHVILLE’S PERFECT PAIR (CONTINUED)

The Bryants’ success opened doors for them to write for artists in all categories of music, including pop, folk, country, and rhythm & blues. In 1967, the Bryants wrote the bluegrass classic “Rocky Top,” which was adopted as a Tennessee state song in 1982. After Boudleaux died in 1987, Felice mostly gave up songwriting. She died in 2003.

The Bryants left behind more than 900 recorded songs and an estimated half-billion record sales worldwide. They were inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1972, the national Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1986, and the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1991.



CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What gift did Boudleaux receive for his fifth birthday? Why do you think this gift was important?

2. Circle the phrase “big break” in the fifth paragraph and underline the clue words that help you understand the meaning of the phrase. Then, define the term in your own words

3. Explain why Felice and Boudleaux might be called a “perfect pair.” Highlight evidence for your answer in the text.

