IS WESTERN BEAT TOO HOT FOR COUNTRY RADIO?

THE JOURNAL OF COUNTRY MUSIC

BLACK ARTISTS IN COUNTRY MUSIC:

Charley Pride, O. B. McClinton, DeFord Bailey, Cleve Francis, and more

Volume 14 No. 2

MEMORIES

of Bob Wills, by Rosetta Wills

Diesel Only's Rig ROCK

Photo by Marilyn K. Morton

THE UNIVERSITY
OF TENNESSEE PRESS

presents

DeFord Bailey

A BLACK STAR IN EARLY COUNTRY MUSIC

David C. Morton with Charles K. Wolfe

> "This is a book of great significance, and it will help fill a long-standing need for attention to black musicians in early country music. Morton and Wolfe know DeFord's career and early country music like no one else, and they have given us a study that includes not only Bailey's life and career, but important tangential social and cultural issues as well. A first-rate piece of work."
>
> —*Charlie Seemann, Country Music Foundation*

Ever since country music came into its own, the figure of DeFord Bailey (1899-1982) has fascinated and puzzled historians. A harmonica virtuoso, blues singer guitarist, banjoist, and composer, Bailey was a founding member of the Grand Ole Opry. One of the show's most popular performers from 1925 to 1941, this extraordinary musician was a pioneer recording artist and toured widely with such Opry Hall of Fame members as Uncle Dave Macon, Bill Monroe, and Roy Acuff.

A misty legend to many, Bailey in fact lived out his later life in downtown Nashville, just blocks from Music Row, headquarters of the entertainment industry he helped to create. A complex and occasionally bitter man, he turned down television, film, and recording offers. About his important role as the first black star in country music, and about the controversies that such a role had generated, he was largely silent. Many feared that his story would never be fully told.

In the last nine years of his life, however, Bailey found a friend and confidante in David Morton, then an employee of the agency that supervised the musicians' public housing unit. To Morton he poured out the trove of taped interviews, documents, letters, photos, and music on which this remarkable biography is based.

A moving parable of integrity and survival, this book recounts Bailey's childhood at the heart of "black hillbilly" music culture, his painful firing from the Opry in 1941, and his recollections of Nashville during six decades. The resulting narrative calls into question traditional accounts of the origins of southern music.

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DeFord Bailey was one of the Grand Ole Opry's most popular performers from 1926 to 1941. He is one of several black musicians profiled in this special issue of the *Journal*. For more on Bailey, turn to page 13.

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FIREBALL MAIL

Our expanded letters column now includes not only letters to the *Journal* (of which there are usually very few) but also telephone calls and letters to the Country Music Foundation's reference department. As ever, in the interest of editorial tidiness, we've forgone all sics. Feel free to read them in wherever they seem appropriate. First, some unusual telephone questions, then the letters.

- How can I tell George Jones that there's a man swindling people in his name?
- Is there an index to *National Enquirer*-type publications?
- Who recorded "She Broke My Heart at Walgreens"?
- Can you think of a fun song about a young woman's wild side?
- How may I get "Seven Beers with the Wrong Woman"?
- How can I buy a Dolly Parton stand-up cutout?
- Is Shelly West a singer?
- What can you tell me about "I Blotted Your Happy School Days"?
- What group was the first to be broadcast from an airplane?

Stuck in the Can Again

I felt the need to comment on Bob Allen's excellent article "Stuck in the Can: Five Country Albums You'll Probably Never Hear" (Journal 14, No. 1). I know Mr. Allen had to limit himself to five unreleased LPs or else the article would have taken up the whole magazine. Though I'm sure there are countless other similar stories, at least two others come to mind immediately. Rodney Crowell's last LP for Warner Brothers which he later rerecorded for CBS. Also Jim Lauderdale's debut LP for CBS/Epic which also never came out.

I really don't know why Warner Brothers pulled Rodney's LP back but Jim Lauderdale's story is very much like the others in Bob Allen's article—two singles, no radio airplay, a completed LP, record label not knowing what to do with the artist, LP release cancelled. Another excellent LP unreleased and "stuck in the can" till Jim Lauderdale becomes a big star at Warner Brothers where he presently records. Like Joe Ely, Jim Lauderdale hopes the entire LP will comeout, as is, someday.

One more artist with a completed project destined not to be released is Lucinda Williams. RCA poured a lot of money into her project before dropping her. (OK, she's not country but Joe Ely isn't really country either.)

Did you notice too that the record labels involved were basically RCA and CBS? Strange but true.

Anyway, thanks for continued excellence with the Journal of Country Music. It's always a joy to receive and I always read it cover to cover.

Alan Verhines
Indianapolis, Indiana

For an update on Jim Lauderdale, see "On the Record," p. 54.

Positive ID

I sell old records, etc., at the Cullman Flea Market, near Cullman, Alabama. A friend of mine said you could help me locate two recordings that I cannot find.

Some country artist or group recorded a parody song several years ago to the tune of "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." The 1st verse was: "Just a bowl of butterbeans" and the 2nd line ended with "turnip greens." It's the type of song that Homer & Jethro would record.

The second one is a comedy narration "Gunga Din," a sentry in an army whose duty was to watch for the enemy and sound his bugle if he saw the enemy approaching! You can hear the bullets hitting his bugle as the ememy approaches. At his funeral, he gives one last toot on his bugle!! This is one of the funniest recordings I have ever heard.

I would greatly appreciate any help you could give me on locating these.

Ules G. Reid Jr.
Athens, Alabama

"Gunga Din" was recorded by Dick Duane for Dot Records (Dot 15209, released in 1954). The other song you're after is "Butterbeans," recorded in 1969 by a man named Bob Cain on GWP 503. GWP was a New York-based label, though the song was cut in Nashville with Bill Walker doing the arrangement.

Czech Pleas

One crazy dreamer, who would like to realize his dream, is appliing to you, because he feels, that he has lot of energy. It is said that every way lead to Rome but the way of true country music lead only to you. It means—to the heart of this music.

I can acknowledge, that we have very deep originate of this music, becouse I've played this music for 5 years myself as the professional. Although I am only 23 years old, I've decided to ask you for cooperation. I can't keep silent. What do I think about? All the people were ardent by the Velvet Revolution in the 1989—but nobody guessed, which problems are waiting for us. But now—we know it. It is very hard reality. The clubs, which conducted this music are on the outside of bankrupt, because there are too much high charges to operation. I must point out, that there is no club of country music in our surroundings (to 100 km) and there wasn't any one before. It was only possible to lease some hall for these concerts. But now there is exchanges, markets, etc. in theis halls. And what about the musicians of country music now? Every of them is playing only for himself, somewhere in the "underground". They can't pay the leasing of the haals. And it is sad, that many of these musiciants (players) are very good and they need a help. I would like to help them and bring them again to the shine, because they belong there.

I am writing you as musiciant as a man with organizational abilities and I would like to ask you for help. Please would you be able to be the sponsor of the construction of the club of country music? The rest of everything secure myself (equipment, etc.). I am playing word for word for everything. But I believe, that it'll become true. I want to find new and new musiciants of country music and help them. I would like to do from them the best. Now I have only building site on the very attractive place, several people, who want help me and mainly I have a big zest to prove it.

I haven't only the money for the construction of the club, which will cost about 4000-5000 USD and this is why I am writing you. I am encloseing in this envelope the draft of the objekt (dimension 20 x 15 metre).

Later I would like to add the recording and radio studio. In case of succes I would like to contact you with regard to sale of LP and CD of your counry music groups.

I believe that you'll comprehend the sincerity of my thoughts.

Jiri Bilek
Sokolov, Czechoslovakia

I REMEMBER "DADDY BOB"

The dusty parking lot was alive with noisy cars and rowdy people. The loud fiddle music blasted into the hot night air every time someone stumbled out the door of Jump's Roller Rink. It was Saturday night, September 2, 1950, in Fairfax, Oklahoma. On Saturday nights the roller rink became a gathering place for the people of Osage County. They loved to dance the two-step and the cotton-eyed joe and generally raise hell. Next door was Smith's All Night Cafe and Motel. The rooms were cheap and convenient.

There was a feeling of anticipation in the air as we sat and waited. I saw the huge bus with BOB WILLS AND HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS painted on the side. The Texas Playboys were playing their hearts out inside, but Bob Wills had not arrived yet. Being 10 years old at the time, I was fascinated by the sounds, smells, and electricity in the air. I knew at that moment I wanted this feeling to be a part of my life.

I sat quietly in the car between my grandmother and grandfather while we waited and waited. Finally a yellow Cadillac convertible pulled into the gas station across the street. My grandmother broke the silence in the car. "Okay, Rosie, there he is. You just run across the street and tell him who you are." My grandmother always had a flair for the dramatic.

I was shaking as I ran across that street. I wanted to run the other direction, but I always did what my grandma said...so, I slowly walked up to his car and timidly spoke. "Hi. I'm Rosetta Wills." The man in the big white hat with the cigar stared at me in amazement before he blurted out, "Well, God bless you, Honey. Where in the world did you come from?" He had the softest, kindest voice I had ever heard. He reached for me and hugged me. That was my first memory of my father.

My grandmother, Grace Parker, whom my daddy always referred to as "Miz Parker," had decided it was time for me to meet him. My mother, Mary Lou Parker, had divorced him when I was sixteen months old. I knew very little about "the man" except that grandma always talked about his magnetic personality. She had wonderful things to say about him despite the divorce from her only child.

I also knew I was named after my mother's favorite song, "Rosetta," which my daddy recorded. It was an old song written by Earl Hines, a black jazz pianist. I memorized the lyrics years ago...

Rosetta, my Rosetta,
In my heart, dear, there's no one but you.
You told me that you loved me,
Never leave me for somebody new.
Don't ever leave me.
Don't break my heart.
You made my whole life a dream,
And I pray you'll make it come true.
God bless you, Honey...

"God bless you, Honey"—the very words he said to me that night in Fairfax.

A few days after our meeting I received a package in the mail. It was a beautiful gold identification bracelet, engraved with ROSETTA on one side and DADDY BOB on the other. There were always birthday and Christmas presents after that.

As I grew older I became more curious about him. I read the yellowing newspaper clippings my mother had saved and pieced together their story. My mother married him on July 22, 1939. He was twice my mother's age, she being only 17 at the time. After his first divorce from Edna Posey in 1935, he was married three more times in the next four years. My mother was his fourth wife, and I was his second child. He had a daughter, Robbie Jo, with Edna,

and his Texas Playboys
LIMITED

Courtesy of Rosetta Wills

On the road again: with satchel in hand, Bob Wills stands still for a moment, 1940.

his first love and wife. There were no children in his next two marriages, first to Ruth McMaster, his violin teacher, and then Mary Helen Brown, the widow of Milton Brown (another western swing great).

My mother also saved a 1940 radio diary kept by an avid fan, Ruth Thomason from Enid, Oklahoma. Ruth was injured in an accident and was paralyzed. Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys became her obsession. During the late thirties and early forties she listened to all the live KVOO radio broadcasts from Cain's Academy in Tulsa, both noon and midnight. She kept track of all the songs they played and who sang them. She also recorded many comments made during the broadcast. I looked up the noon broadcast for Thursday, July 25, 1940, the day I was born. She had written: "Bob missing from noon broadcast." My birth certificate announced my arrival into this world at 11:45 A.M., just forty-five minutes before the daily KVOO broadcast which began with fiddle music asking, "How do you do, friends everywhere?" Bob, along with his sister Ruby, was at the Pawhuska City Hospital, but he returned for the midnight show and sang "My Mary" for my mother and "Rosetta" for me.

Photo by Bob McCormick/Courtesy of Rosetta Wills

Bob, on fiddle, leads the Playboys in a broadcast from Cain's Academy in Tulsa sometime in the early 1940s.

On November 5, 1940, Ruth made the following comment in her radio diary:

> I heard today you had a little baby girl, named Rosetta, a beautiful name, and I know she is a beautiful baby. I have never seen her mother, but I bet she looks just like her mother and will have her father's wonderful personality.

Bob lived in California during most of the forties and early fifties, but he sometimes returned to Oklahoma to play a dance. In 1953 he was booked into Pawhuska's Whiting Hall, the same dance hall where he met my mother in 1938. Even though Whiting Hall was just a large open space above a downtown furniture store, it was the most exciting place in the small town of Pawhuska, Oklahoma. My friends and I often sat in cars in the alley below listening to the loud music of Ernie Fields, Leon McAuliffe (former Texas Playboy), and Hank Thompson pouring out of the open windows. Marcia Shimonek and I once climbed up the fire escape and peeked in, totally enthralled with the dancers. We dreamed of the day when we would turn 16 and march up those steep stairs and join in the magical times.

Posters were going up in the windows of Irby's Drug Store and the Manhattan Cafe downtown advertising the dance. People started asking me questions about him. It was reminiscent of the time my fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Schirmer, told the class my father was playing in a western movie at the downtown Osage Theater. My grandmother took me to see it, and I was so embarrassed I did not want to return to school!

I grew more nervous as the day for the dance drew closer and closer. I did not know if he would visit me or not. I was afraid my grandfather, Bill Parker, former Chief of Police in Pawhuska, would show up at Whiting Hall with his gun and escort my daddy to the house. After all, Grandpa was fined $25 for punching Bill Newport, who made disparaging remarks about my mother during their divorce trial at the Osage County Courthouse in Pawhuska.

A few hours before the dance was to begin, Bob and his manager, Sam Gibbs, showed up at the door. He had a big package under his arm, which turned out to be a red and white square dance dress from Neiman Marcus! During his visit he asked me, "Honey, if I sent you a fiddle, would you learn to play it?" I told him I was already taking piano lessons and that was enough. My grandmother made me play "San Antonio Rose" for him. Once again, I was so embarrassed.

A few years later he played a dance at Whiting Hall and did not visit me. My mother, grandmother, and grandfather walked the floor downstairs while I cried upstairs. The only explanation I ever received was that he thought I was old enough to be at the dance. How humiliating! What was I going to tell my friends?

But somehow, when I was around him, he always made up for it. His warmth and loving feelings were almost unexplainable when you didn't see him for months or years. The feelings were too real to be false, but there must have been an ability to forget—out of sight and out of mind perhaps.

When I was growing up in the fifties, his music didn't mean much to me. I was into rock & roll and had a great disdain for country music. Unlike Barbara Mandrell, I emphatically wasn't country when country wasn't cool. I worked at the local record store after school, which was part of Greer's Sporting Goods on Kihekah Avenue, just two doors down from Whiting Hall. I earned the distinction of selling more Buddy Holly albums than anyone else in the state. Like everyone else in 1956, I had a terrible crush on Elvis Presley. I was so thrilled later when my daddy told me he had played a package show with Elvis! He told me, "Elvis is such a nice clean boy...doesn't drink...doesn't smoke."

In 1957 Bob was booked at Cain's in Tulsa. My best friend, Kay Hughes, and I decided we were going. We had heard so many stories about the dances at Cain's. After all, we could get upstairs at Whiting Hall now! We talked our friend, Tommy Duncan (no relation to the Tommy Duncan who sang with Bob, but what a coincidence), into driving us to Tulsa, the big city fifty miles from home. We paid to get in because I wouldn't tell anyone who I was.

We weren't quite prepared for the sights and sounds of Cain's. I stared at all the bottles on the tables and under the tables—more alcohol in one place than I had ever seen in my young Baptist life. We all stared at the large portraits of the country & western entertainers that lined the walls. My daddy's portrait hung on the right side of the stage with the red velvet curtain that said "Cain's—the home of Bob Wills" and my uncle Johnnie Lee's hung on the left. Portraits of two other Wills brothers, Billy Jack and Luke, also graced the walls. The wooden dance floor was crowded with men in boots and women with beehive hairdos and high heels. Kay literally dragged me to the bandstand to tell him we were there. I will never forget the look on his face. I am sure he didn't know what to do about our presence. He told Kay, "Thank you for being my little Rosetta's best friend." He always charmed the women, young and old.

When I turned 21 I saw him in Las Vegas. I knew he had been playing the lounge in the Golden Nugget, but I wasn't sure about his schedule. I remember arguing with the security guard because he didn't believe I was Bob's daughter. He was getting visibly older, with less on top and more to spare around the middle. I can still see him with his suspenders over his big stomach, pants tucked into his boots, running down the stairs shouting, "Rosetta, my Rosetta is here." He was very excited to see me and introduced me to all the members of the band. When he went onstage, he told the audience in that soft, Texas drawl, "Folks, I am going to do something special I haven't done in a long, long time. Please bear with me if I forget any of the words." He sang "Rosetta." I cried.

In the mid-sixties, before his stroke, he recorded an album for Liberty Records called *Bob Wills Sings and Plays*, produced by Tommy Allsup. He was living in Tulsa at the time. I talked with him on the phone right after he finished recording it, and he said, "Honey, I was thinking about you the whole time I was singing 'Rosetta.'" Of course, that version on that album is my favorite.

On May 15, 1975, I sat in the Eastwood Baptist Church in Tulsa with my stepmother, Betty, and my half-brother, James, and three half-sisters, Carolyn, Diane, and Cindy, along with 500 other people while the fiddles softly played "San Antonio Rose" and the pallbearers wheeled out his coffin. I felt a great sadness, because we never had a real father-daughter relationship. It was too late now. However, he left me a real legacy.

I have experienced great feelings of joy when people pay tribute to him. The last Saturday in April is the annual "Bob Wills Day" in Turkey, Texas. Each September they also celebrate "Bob Wills Day" in my hometown of Pawhuska, Oklahoma. I am still thrilled that people line up to hear his style of western swing like they do regularly at the Broken Spoke in Austin.

When the fiddle starts "Faded Love," it takes me back to the early fifties when grandma and I stayed up to listen to the few midnight broadcasts he did from Cain's during that time. Grandma and I would huddle by the radio in the dark bedroom and listen to the music and the crowd. In the early sixties I actually stood at the back of Cain's and watched him intently. The bandstand came alive whenever he came onstage. I felt the same thrill I felt as a child waiting for him in the car at Jump's Roller Rink.

—ROSETTA WILLS

Courtesy of Rosetta Wills

Mary Lou and Bob Wills at home in Tulsa, in 1939, the year they married.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Diesel Only Records:

Where Singles Keep on Truckin'

Uneasy listening: Courtney & Western are the kind of band that typifies Diesel Only Records—strictly country, but with rough edges and a raucous spirit.

Vinyl appears to be nearly obsolete, but it hasn't disappeared yet. Even if major labels rarely press records anymore, and hardly any record stores actually carry records, vinyl continues to exist, although on an almost subterranean level. Tiny independent country labels across the nation continue to release 45s by artists who have yet to strike it rich on Music Row. There is still a hardcore vinyl following in the underground, independent rock music scene. But somewhere in between—or perhaps beyond—these two extremes is Diesel Only, a New York City label releasing some of the most innovative country and roots-influenced music to be found anywhere.

The label was started by Jeremy Tepper, Jay Sherman-Godfrey, and Albert Caiati, members of the Brooklyn-based World Famous Blue Jays, whose music is a beefy hybrid of rock & roll and country. The band blends Hank Williams Jr.'s gritty sound with Dave Dudley's truck driving-inspired themes to create what guitarist and vocalist Tepper calls "rig rock." After playing around New York's downtown bar scene for several years, the band decided to launch Diesel Only in January 1990. Tepper, Caiati, and Sherman-Godfrey wanted their band, and other bands that played the same bar circuit, to be heard beyond the insular confines of New York City. The 45 was the ideal format because it was inexpensive and allowed the bands to put forth their best songs. The inspiration for the label, Tepper says, came from "the original independent labels like Starday and Sun Records, who started with an idea, not a lot of capital, and a belief in the music."

Diesel Only's first releases were the World Famous Blue Jays' "Good Morning Mr. Trucker" and the Blue Chieftains' "Punk Rockin' Honky Tonk Girl," both rocked-up numbers with an urbanized hillbilly boogie beat—perfect realizations of the rig rock sound. "Good Morning Mr. Trucker" takes the Blue Jays' fascination with truck driving all the way, featuring a sleeve decked with photographs of 18-wheelers. "Punk Rockin' Honky Tonk Girl" satirically describes an unlikely combination that could happen only in New York. (Sample quote: "It's a two-step, square-dance, stage-dive romance/'Cause she knows how to boogie woogie, also how to slam dance.")

In less than two years, Diesel Only has already issued twenty singles. But because the label is still more of an artistic venture than a financial one, the bands pay for their own releases. In turn, the label takes care of distribution and promotion. As bands continue to express an interest in releasing records, Diesel Only's catalog grows bigger, and the label's range of musical styles expands. While at first there were just the basic country and rig rock releases, Diesel Only now has singles that range from the soulful pop of Jono Manson and the Sweetones to the power chord-driven hard rock of Knoxville's the Clintons.

At the core of Diesel Only's

expanding roster are bands that best exemplify the label's vision. Courtney & Western is strictly a country band, but with rough edges and a raucous spirit. The band's single, "Hungry Like a Man," features Courtney Lee Adams's brazen vocals, deliciously smooth pedal steel guitar, and searing electric guitar leads. Go To Blazes, another Diesel Only band, released "(And I'll Be) Hating You," a mournful rendition of an early Johnny Paycheck song. On its flipside is "Casa Diablo," a cranked-up, frenetic country number oozing with pedal steel. Mumbo Gumbo's two releases on Diesel Only range from the bluegrass-tinged, folky material of "Miss Fabulous" to the dreamy "Good Morning Mr. Afternoon," which sounds like it might have fallen straight out of a 1930s songbook.

Impressed with what he'd heard, Nashvillian Gwil Owen contacted Tepper and arrang-ed to release a single on Diesel Only. "It was a side thing with no pressure," says Owen, who had decided that the "We-gotta-get-a-record-deal attitude is bad for a band." His record, "Messed Up Thing" backed with "Tennessee Hi-Way Blues," fits in perfectly with the rig rock sound, but with distinctively twangy guitar and an almost rockabilly beat.

The World Famous Blue Jays , the Brooklyn-based "rig rock" band that gave Diesel Only Records its start, are still working on the first half of their name.

As interesting and innovative as these singles are, Tepper insists that few of the bands consider themselves serious recording artists. "Playing live is very important to all of these bands," he says. "They come to life in the clubs." It was through years of playing downtown bars such as Nightingales, Continental Divide, Ludlow Street Cafe, and the Levee that Tepper met some of the bands that have since ended up on the label. As the Diesel Only stable grew in its first year, Tepper set up regular nightly shows at the Lone Star Roadhouse, a venue well-known for booking nationwide country and blues performers. The World Famous Blue Jays and other Diesel Only bands still play the downtown bar scene regularly. With so many bands playing all over town, Tepper says, "Diesel Only has become a very real thing in the New York community. The community existed already, but Diesel Only brought it out. It's something we tapped into that has been evolving and coming to fruition."

Even though Diesel Only has made a dent in the New York music scene, Tepper says that retail record distribution has been difficult due to the decrease in vinyl production. He explains that it's hard to find a place for Diesel Only's records in stores: "Our singles are up against the grungy alternative music that has taken over the vinyl market. Even though it's great that people are still buying singles, it can work against Diesel Only because it crowds our records out of the stores. People aren't looking in stores for the kinds of things we're putting out."

But Tepper has avoided the frustration of marketing his records for retail by tapping into an entirely different market: the jukebox. When he started Diesel Only, it was his idea that the releases be tailored to this market, complete with a large center hole for the spindle of the jukebox. The World Famous Blue Jays' paeans to the trucker are perfect for this largely forgotten machine, since jukeboxes can still be found in most any truck stop. But in practical terms, Tepper knows, through his editorial position at trade magazine *Vending Times*, that the jukebox is one of the few viable places left for vinyl. Even five years after the arrival of the CD jukebox, Tepper says that 80 percent of all jukeboxes in America still depend on vinyl. Furthermore, he explains, jukebox distributors are likely to buy ten times more records than retail distributors. And even if CD jukeboxes have made a more serious impact in urban areas, Tepper isn't concerned. Throughout the country, especially in truck stops and diners, vinyl still prevails, and Tepper wants to reach the people who patronize these places.

Getting Diesel Only's records widely distributed on the jukebox has required a major effort. Tepper ran ads for the label in trade magazines that proclaimed, "Major labels have abandoned the 45. Buy independent jukebox singles." After shipping out hundreds of promo copies, Diesel Only releases are now being carried by jukebox distributors across the country, including Mobile Record Service in Pittsburgh and One Stop Record House in Atlanta. Tepper has title strips custom-printed for his records at Sterling Title Strips, also in Pittsburgh. The stylish title strips, which feature Diesel Only's 18-wheeler logo, stand out from the rest of the titles on the jukebox. Surely, this has convinced at least a few truckers to risk a quarter on a Diesel Only single. Tepper knows that after the effort, his label is showing signs of success: "We've had sightings of Diesel Only records on jukeboxes all over the country."

Tepper says the label continues to grow. While getting raves and positive coverage in such widely read publications as the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, *Billboard* and *Music Row* magazine, he's also managed to reach out, literally across the country, to recruit fans among the nation's jukebox patrons. New records continue to come out every month; recent releases include the World Famous Blue Jays' third single "Cheeseburger Deluxe," Baltimore-based Mark Brine's "New Blue Yodel," an update of Jimmie Rodgers's blue yodels, and "Leavin'," by one of New York's hottest country bands, Angel Dean & the Zephyrs. But the label still has plenty of room to grow, and running an independent label, Tepper says, requires "the kind of spirit that says, 'We're gonna do this against all odds.' " Given the odds so far, they've done extremely well.

—JONATHAN MARX

PROFILES IN black & white

It's a commonplace when talking about country music to assume that it's produced by and for Southern white people. Period. Certainly, no one would deny that for the seventy-odd years of country's commercial history its complexion has been nearly lily white. But that qualifier—nearly—is important, for country music is a sound and a style after all, and not, as Charley Pride might say, a skin tone.

In fact, country music would hardly be the robust art form it is today if not for cultural cross-pollination. Many of country music's most influential performers learned valuable musical lessons from **black** musicians. Jimmie Rodgers borrowed heavily from jazz and blues in shaping his blue yodels. The first record Bob Wills ever made was a cover of a Bessie Smith blues. Bluegrass patriarch Bill Monroe spent a valuable apprenticeship with a black guitarist from Kentucky named Arnold Schultz. Hank Williams had a similar experience in Greenville, Alabama, under the tutelage of Rufe "Tee-Tot" Payne. And of course, by the time that rockabilly cats like Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins came along, the black influence became obvious and openly admitted.

Black musicians haven't merely remained behind the scenes of country music, however. The stories collected in this issue—about Charley Pride, O. B. McClinton, DeFord Bailey, Henry Glover, and others—remind us just how deeply black musicians have been involved with country music all along.

Reading through these stories, though, what one notices most about each of these individuals is how different they all are. Charley Pride is the picture of determination itself, a man resolved from the beginning to make it as a star, whether it be on a baseball diamond or on the stage. He chose country because it suited him, and he made up his mind that he would suit country audiences just fine. In contrast, O. B. McClinton seems like a gentle, good-humored soul who just wanted to make music any way he could, and if it came out country, fine. It's as if his talent carried him into country without his say-so. DeFord Bailey grew up in another era, when the color of a person's skin truly did mark one as a second-class citizen. He joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1926—before anyone called the music "country" and before anyone expected the music to be exclusively **white**. Because of his social status, he trusted that George D. Hay and the Opry would look after him, and was so bitterly disappointed when they didn't that he gave up his career as a professional musician. In contrast, Henry Glover, born twenty years after DeFord Bailey, benefitted from the gradually opening door of racial tolerance in this country. With a wide-ranging appreciation for music of all kinds and a head for business, he was able to shape the tastes of audiences white and black as an A&R man at King Records. Though well known to his peers in the music business, he was invisible to the public—as power brokers usually are. His story has waited a long time for the telling.

According to U.S. Census figures, black Americans make up about 12 percent of the U.S. population. Why haven't they been a more vocal presence in country music? The profiles in this issue strongly suggest that it isn't because black Americans have no affection for the music. Is it then a matter of lingering racial prejudice on the part of the predominantly white country music audience? Or are the major record companies simply too cautious in sizing up that audience? Or could it be that not enough black performers of Charley Pride's caliber and drive have entered country music to make an impact? This issue of the *Journal* explores some of those questions. As for the answers, they'll require some soul-searching from all of us.

Color Me Country: Tales From the Frontlines

BY JEFF WOODS

Lefty Frizzell sat alone at a corner table in a Nashville tavern, drinking and quietly weeping as the jukebox played Stoney Edwards singing "Hank and Lefty Raised My Country Soul." As chance would have it, Stoney himself was in the bar on this day in 1973, only two years before Lefty's death, and he walked over to meet the legendary honky-tonk singer for the first time.

"Lefty was sitting there crying and he was listening to that song," Stoney remembers. "He said, 'Boy, I tell you, that song just tears me up. That song's a tribute to me. I didn't think anybody cared nothing about me anymore. I thought everybody had forgotten about me.' And then out of the clear blue, Lefty says, 'And wouldn't you know it? It had to be by a nigger.' Well, then he shook my hand, but I don't think he ever did know who he was talking to."

Neon lights danced around the giant "YOU CAN BE A STAR" sign as the TV show's host shouted, "Nisha Jackson! You're our grand prize winner!" Then Nisha, grinning with her fists raised in victory, bounded from backstage to wild cheers from the audience in The Nashville Network's studio. "I wanted to cry," Nisha says now.

Nisha beat out 176 performers over eight rounds of competition to win 1987's talent contest on the country music cable channel. It might have seemed strange at first—Nisha, a big black woman, competing against all those white country hopefuls. But once you heard her belting out standards like "Stand By Your Man" and "You Ain't Woman Enough," it did not matter.

The celebrity judges were ecstatic. "I just wanted to jump up and scream in the middle of it," Kathy Mattea gushed after hearing Nisha. "I think you're a born singer."

The media noticed Nisha too. Syndicated columnist Jack Hurst wrote, "Jackson is undoubtedly the series' most distinctive winner. She has a voice that could make Memorex commercials."

She was the singing social worker from Tyler, Texas, and everybody loved her. As sure as Charley Pride broke the color barrier in country music, Nisha was on her way to stardom. She was so confident she quit her job in child welfare with the state of Texas and moved to Nashville.

Her "You Can Be A Star" grand prize included $10,000, a piano and drum set, and appearances on TNN's "Nashville Now" and the Grand Ole Opry. Her parents, Lula Mae and Hartzell Jackson, traveled from Tyler to see her on the Opry. Her father cried during the performance. Her mother posed for a picture with Minnie Pearl. "I'm on cloud nine," Lula Mae said.

The real clincher for Nisha's future was the single that Capitol Nashville would release as part of her grand prize. "Alive and Well" made it onto the national country charts and did well enough for Capitol to sign Nisha to a recording contract. As it turned out, that was the beginning of the end for Nisha.

Capitol never released any of the eleven songs Nisha recorded over the next two years and then dropped her from its roster in January 1990, a month after Jimmy Bowen took over at the label. "Mr. Bowen told me, 'Well, I've been listening to your songs and I just don't think what you did is really country enough. But I did take the liberty of sending your tape to our pop division to see what they can do.' I told him, 'I appreciate that, but I don't want to sing pop. I want to sing country.'"

Undaunted, Nisha took on two jobs to make ends meet while playing in talent showcases around Nashville and visiting record labels on Music Row. They listened to her music, told her she was talented but then politely showed her the door. Finally, an executive at one major record label laid it on the line for Nisha.

"There's been one executive from one label, which I'd rather not name, who just flat-out told me it was the color of my skin. He informed me, 'You sing better than a lot of people on major labels, but we're telling you straight. We're a little uncomfortable in trying to market you.' This particular executive pointed out that Charley Pride is the only black who's ever made it and that was twenty-five years ago. He said, 'That should tell you something.'"

Nisha still plays an occasional showcase but now she is back working full-time as a social worker. She clings to hopes for another chance at success as a singer. But when she talks to her parents on the phone from Tyler, they do not mention country music anymore.

"They realize it's a sore point with me now," Nisha says. "I think the record labels here underestimate the public. Country music has grown so much. It's not just rednecks or Ma and Pa Kettle on the farm who listen to it. But the labels are scared to try something different. My friends say, 'They let Charley Pride in, they let him slide by, but that won't happen again.'

"It's just amazing to me that talent means so little. There has never been a single person in this town who has ever said, 'You can't sing. You're not talented.' Instead, what I've heard is, 'We just don't know how we would market you. We just don't know how the public would accept you.'

"If being black is the reason I'm not making it, then that is discrimination and I don't think it's fair. If somebody black actually made it, then you might have more. Maybe that's a fear. The record labels are saying, 'Oh God, they're going to be coming in droves.' I guess I sound a little bitter. It's because I am."

O. B. McClinton, country music's "Chocolate Cowboy," waltzed into the Mercury offices and confronted Jerry Kennedy. "This looks like an equal opportunity label," McClinton told the surprised label executive. "Johnny Rodriguez is on it. If you'll sign Mexicans, you'll sign me."

And Mercury did sign McClinton. Kennedy already had heard McClinton's "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You," which had made the country charts, so he knew he was looking at talent.

"When I first heard that song, it just knocked me dead," Kennedy recalls. "I didn't know he was black. When I found out, I said, 'Wow!' because he didn't sound black. Of course, Charley Pride didn't either.

"I produced a few songs with O. B. at Mercury. We sent his records right out there with Faron Young, Rodriguez, Tom T. Hall, and everybody else who was out there on the label at the time. We shot them out there just like he was one of the guys, and he was. I don't know why he never made it big.

"I know one thing. O. B. McClinton was very honest about his music. He could rare back and sing a country song and you could close your eyes, and it's not black or white—it's O. B. McClinton."

Like the "hat acts" who have followed George Strait, a handful of black artists were offered as answers to Charley Pride in the 1970s and early 1980s. Big Al Downing, Stoney Edwards, Linda Martel (who became the first black woman to sing on the Grand Ole Opry), and the late O. B. McClinton were among the black country singers who found critical acclaim but very little commercial acceptance.

It was clever management as much as his wonderfully rich baritone that took Pride to the top. RCA neutralized the race issue by carefully choosing Pride's songs. He was a black man singing to Southern white women, so his love songs stuck to themes of mother and family. He did not sing about drinking and slipping around.

It was necessary for all the black country artists to emphasize their hillbilly roots (wherever he went, he was Country Charley Pride) and to put their audiences at ease with self-effacing humor. Pride spoke of his "permanent tan" and O. B. McClinton sang "Honky Tonk Tan" and joked about his Afro hairdo: "If I fell off the stage and landed on my head, I'd bounce."

When RCA dropped Pride in 1986, country's major-label artist rosters were all-white again. The industry's leaders in Nashville, where country music is made by and for white people, deny any discrimination. They say it is simply a matter of musical taste and sheer numbers. Relatively few blacks like country music and relatively few sing it, they say, so why should anyone be surprised that only one has become a star?

"I don't know if any blacks really listen to country music," says Harold Shedd, head of A&R at PolyGram. "I don't think there's any discrimination, not in the music business, of all things."

"What I'm going to say is very honest from my heart," says Harold Bradley, one of the pioneers of Nashville's recording industry and president of the American Federation of Musicians. "Charley Pride sounded authentically country. But most blacks just are not raised on country music. That's the problem.

"I don't think there's any prejudice against black country singers. I just don't think you can fake country music. The country folks are just not that easily fooled. You don't see rap groups playing steel guitars and fiddles. It's a difference in the culture. I've been a session musician for forty-five years. And in all that time, if there has been a regular black studio musician here, I've never seen one."

No one denies racism once existed in country music. Minstrel songs were common in the repertoires of early country singers—Uncle Dave Macon's "The Coon That Had the Razor" and Bill Cox's "Nigger Loves a Watermelon" are just two of many. "You're Bound to Look Like a Monkey" was recorded by Hank Penny as late as 1952.

DeFord Bailey was perhaps the most popular star of the Grand Ole Opry in its early, Depression-era years. He was fired after fifteen years on the show for refusing to learn new songs, according to a short history of the Opry written by its announcer and founder, George D. Hay. "Like some members of his race and other races, DeFord was lazy," Hay wrote. (See related story on DeFord Bailey for more detail.—Ed.)

The country music industry now strives to reflect the New South's more open-minded views on race relations. Whereas country stars joined the white-backlash presidential candidacy of George Wallace in 1968, now they are frequent visitors to the White House. A Grand Ole Opry troupe played for the leaders of the world's seven largest industrial nations at the Economic Summit at Houston, and President Bush is fond of referring to country as "America's music."

So it must have caused some discomfort among the industry's leaders when in 1988 Hank Williams Jr. sang his Top Ten hit "If the South Woulda Won" on the Opry's stage during the Country Music Association Awards show. Every year, the show is Nashville's biggest night. It offers national television exposure and the opportunity to make the case for country as the music for all America, not just Southern whites. But there was Hank singing his ode to the Confederacy, declaring that he would "put that capital back in Alabama" if he could only change the Civil War's outcome.

No one assembled at the Opry House in 1988 revealed the slightest displeasure with Hank, however. To the contrary, the industry embraced Hank later that night, summoning him back to the stage at the show's climax to accept the CMA's coveted Entertainer of the Year Award. The lone protest came from a writer, Edward Morris of *Billboard* magazine, who resigned his CMA membership. "I just did

Above: **"She has a voice that could make Memorex commercials," wrote syndicated columnist Jack Hurst, but so far no one has been beating down Nisha Jackson's door, least of all Nashville's record companies.**

Opposite: **Big Al Downing landed three Top Twenty singles for Warner Bros. in the late seventies, but the label never released an album of his material and dropped him in 1980.**

not want to be part of an organization that endorsed that kind of redneckery," said Morris.

Understandably, many black Americans see country as the music of the white oppressor, honky music worthy only of derision. But it is not hard to find blacks who have loved country music from their childhoods, listening to the hillbilly radio shows with their families, and they will tell you there are many more blacks who like it too but will not admit it.

"There are black musicians who play country all around here, but they're in the closet," says Mohammad Aleem, a young country-blues harmonica player from near Bellwood, Tennessee, the birthplace of the late DeFord Bailey. "Most of us blacks who grew up around here listened to the Grand Ole Opry. It was on the clearest radio channel, and it came through strong in the country."

Billboard
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On a muggy summer day, Mohammad was attending a ceremony to honor Bailey with a roadside historical marker at Bellwood. About fifty people stood along the dusty gravel shoulder of the hot asphalt highway waiting for the sign's unveiling.

"This is long overdue," Mohammad says. "There needs to be a lot more recognition for blacks in country music, but this is a foot in the door. This tells blacks they do not need to be ashamed to play country. It's the music of our ancestors too."

Growing up in Oklahoma, Stoney Edwards learned to love country music by listening to his uncles pick and sing the songs they brought west from North Carolina.

"It seems so long ago now," Stoney says. "I'd sit there in the middle of them and watch them pick. My uncles were hillbillies, they surely were. Of course, we listened to the Grand Ole Opry, and Bob Wills came on the radio every day at twelve o'clock, and we just had to be there to hear it.

"'The Great Speckled Bird' was the first song I ever learned fully all the way through. The Carter Family came through town singing the song and my sister got a copy of the sheet music. I used to hear it on the Grand Ole Opry too. Once I heard the melody of a song, I never forgot it."

Stoney recorded for Capitol for seven years, gaining some national exposure with hard-country songs like "Mississippi, You're on My Mind," "She's My Rock," and "Two Dollar Toy." In the late seventies, he fell into obscurity. Now 61 and in poor health, he lives on an Oklahoma farm with his family and harbors no bitterness toward the past.

"I don't feel like I was cheated out of anything," he says. "You make your own luck. I never found any prejudice when I was in country music. If there was, I'd say it. I remember what Tex Ritter once told me. It was backstage at the Opry and Tex said, 'Edwards, is this your first time on the Opry?' And I said, 'Yeah.' And he said, 'I'm going to tell you something. If you can't stand the heartbreak, you get out of this business right now.' I didn't know what he was talking about right away. But through the years, what he said has always come back to me."

As a young man, Big Al Downing hauled hay and summer alfalfa from Oklahoma to Texas. Bouncing along the highway behind the steering wheel of the flatbed truck, he would listen to country radio. "All they played all day long was country," he says. "I just grew to love it."

Downing is the only black artist besides Charley Pride to record a Top Twenty country hit, and he did it three times between 1978 and 1980. The singles—"Touch Me," "Mr. Jones," "Bring It on Home"—all were written by Downing and issued by Warner Brothers. But Warner Brothers refused to finance an album, and Downing has struggled since then. He now records for the tiny Tugboat label and hopes for a comeback at age 50.

"The road has been rocky since 'Mr. Jones' and all those hits, but it ain't going to get too rocky that it'll make me quit. I just believe in my heart that I have something to contribute to country music.

"I've been to every major label in Nashville and I've been turned down by every one. I couldn't even get a job as a writer. The first thing they'd say is, 'You're black, number one, so you've got a handicap.' That's prejudice. It should be you're handicapped because you can't sing good.

"It's not the fans. It's not the people. It's the people who put the money behind you. They say, 'Well, we don't know if there's a market for a black guy singing country music anymore.'

"But I refuse to let that stop me. You can't do shows and watch white audiences give you standing ovations and then let some guy who sits all day in an air-conditioned office tell you you're not marketable. I refuse to believe that. My only regret is the fact that there are so many black artists who never get to show what they can do because they are locked out."

It took a heart attack to open doors in country music for Cleve Francis. Francis, a 48-year-old black cardiologist with a thriving practice around Washington, D. C., played country music at nightclubs and fairs for a decade without notice. Then he treated a heart-attack patient whose brother had connections with the Miami independent label Playback Records. He paved the way for Francis at Playback to reward the doctor for saving his brother's life.

> I've been to every major label in Nashville and I've been turned down by every one. I couldn't even get a job as a writer. The first thing they'd say is, 'You're black, number one, so you've got a handicap.' That's prejudice. It should be you're handicapped because you can't sing good.
> —Big Al Downing

> My father's favorite singer was Hank Williams. Country music was all they played on the radio. I grew up with it and I always liked it. The blacks who come from the country—they love country music. But it became white music, and that's really sad.
> —Cleve Francis

Francis made an album and released a single for Playback, neither of which went anywhere. It was the video for the single "Lovelight" that took off, becoming wildly popular with viewers and capturing the attention of Capitol's Jimmy Bowen. He signed Francis to Capitol, and the debut album was slated for release in January 1992, the first major-label album by a black country artist in five years.

Francis's video alone is something of a landmark achievement for blacks in country music. RCA withheld pictures of Charley Pride, but Francis won acceptance by displaying the color of his skin on television for all to see.

"The video is the thing that got me where I am today," Francis says. "Without that video, for me to be as well-known as I am now, I would have had to get on a bus and play thousands of small clubs around the country. While I was sleeping, that video was introducing me to the world.

"The people at Capitol saw the video, and Jimmy Bowen sent for me. The only song of mine he had heard was 'Lovelight.' He said it just left him with a good feeling. He asked me what I wanted to do, and I told him I am serious about country music."

Then Capitol began plotting strategy for Francis's new career. RCA dictated Pride's songs, but Francis says Bowen let him pick his own selections for the first album, *Tourist in Paradise*. Of course, it made it easier for Capitol that Francis sings exactly the type of non-threatening songs RCA picked for Pride. The "Lovelight" video, for instance, is a warm depiction of traditional relationships.

"I'm going right down the middle of the road with my music," says Francis, who is slated to take a leave of absence from his medical practice for a concert tour to promote the album. "I'm not going to sing any rebellion songs about slavery and all that stuff. I want happy, uplifting songs. I don't want any cheating songs or songs about people drinking in bars. But that's just the kind of person I am. That's no mandate from Capitol."

Francis grew up poor in Jennings, Louisiana, the oldest of six children. His mother worked as a maid and his father as a janitor. Francis made his first guitar out of a cigar box, a piece of wood and window screen. His mother worked for a year to save enough money to replace the homemade instrument with a Sears Silvertone.

"My father's favorite singer was Hank Williams. Country music was all they played on the radio. I grew up with it and I always liked it. The blacks who come from the country—they love country music. But it became white music and that's really sad. With me, people will see there's a door opening. I would like to bring in a new crowd of people who never bought country albums before.

"But I'm not leading a crusade. I've loved country music since I was a kid, and I'm getting a chance to sing it. Whatever fallout comes, it comes. Music can bring people together and if my music does that, then I will be happy. I certainly hope I see it in my lifetime."

JEFF WOODS
is a Nashville-based writer.

***Below:* Stoney Edwards's records for Capitol during the seventies included "Hank and Lefty Raised My Country Soul."**

***Above:* Cleve Francis signed to Capitol in 1991, with his debut album scheduled for early 1992.**

DeFord Bailey:
They Turned Me Loose to Root Hog or Die

BY DAVID C. MORTON with CHARLES K. WOLFE

Contrary to popular belief, Charley Pride was not the first black star in country music. That distinction belongs to a diminutive harmonica player from rural Bellwood, Tennessee, by the name of DeFord Bailey. At age 26, he joined the cast of the WSM radio's Saturday night barn dance show. That was around June of 1926, about six months after the show had begun. A year later that barn dance would become known as the Grand Ole Opry.

Very quickly, Bailey became one of the Opry's most popular performers; in 1928 he made twice as many appearances as any other act (forty-nine times in fifty-two weeks). DeFord toured regularly with Opry troupes across the South and Midwest, always proudly wearing his silver WSM pin. In those days, DeFord was as central to the show as Roy Acuff or Bill Monroe, and had considerably more seniority. After fifteen years with the Opry, DeFord was let go under circumstances that for years remained shrouded in mystery. In the following excerpt from DeFord Bailey*, published by the University of Tennessee Press, we learn at last the strange and tragic reasons why this talented musician was fired by the Grand Ole Opry.*

In the spring of 1941, DeFord was beginning his sixteenth season with the Opry. He was still appearing on the program as much as or more than any other regular performer—thirty weeks in 1939—but, like all the others by now, he had been cut back to one set per show. He had settled into a regular fifteen-minute slot at 9:15 P.M., just after the Fruit Jar Drinkers and just before the pop-oriented fare of Ford Rush and the blackface team of Jamup & Honey. By now the Opry had been on the NBC network for eighteen months, in carefully scripted thirty-minute segments sponsored by products like Prince Albert Smoking Tobacco. DeFord appeared on a few of these—about the only time he had a nationwide network venue—but most of the network air time went to new Opry stars like Roy Acuff and Minnie Pearl. The balance of the typical Opry show—the non-network portion—still included many of the old-time acts that had been on the show from its start: the Crook Brothers, Uncle Dave Macon, the McGee Brothers, the Fruit Jar Drinkers, the Gully Jumpers, and Robert Lunn. The slick "uptown" acts that had arrived in the mid-1930s—such as Clayton McMichen's Georgia Wildcats, Curly Fox & Texas Ruby, and Pee Wee King's Golden West Cowboys—had moved on, and for a time the show had retrenched, going back to its tried-and-true grassroots appeal. Yet to come were the new revolutionary sounds of people like Ernest Tubb, Eddy Arnold, and Red Foley. The show had an old-time ambience that, in the spring of 1941, seemed ideally suited to DeFord's music.

Nor had DeFord lost any of his appeal or his ability to draw crowds. When Acuff joined the show in 1938, he often worked with Bailey to take advantage of the harmonica player's popularity. He recalls: "When I came to WSM in 1938, I was an unknown person. At that time, DeFord was a very popular entertainer. There was quite a demand to see him. I carried him with me because they wanted to see him. They didn't know me. We always had very nice crowds."

"DeFord was pretty hot when we came down here," adds Beecher Kirby, known as "Oswald" in Acuff's band. "The audiences loved him." Bill Monroe, who joined the show in October 1939 as the newest kid on the block, also took DeFord with him to help draw crowds. Far from being a token or "mascot," DeFord in 1941 was still a powerful attraction for Opry road shows, as well as being a full-fledged member of the radio cast, with his own fifteen-minute spot still very much intact. It was all the more puzzling, then, when DeFord was suddenly fired in late May 1941.

Just why DeFord was fired from the show has for years remained somewhat of a mystery, and one of the most controversial aspects of Opry history. The modern Opry souvenir history and picture books simply avoid any mention of the incident, as do "authorized" histories such as Jack Hurst's *Grand Ole Opry* (1975). Others writing about Nashville and the Opry have been less circumspect in attempting to get

I told 'em years ago I got tired of blowing the same thing, but I had to go along with 'em....If they had let me play like I wanted, I could have stole the show. If I had been a white man, I could have done it. They held me down.... I wasn't free.
—DeFord Bailey

to the the bottom of the firing. Frye Gaillard, in his book *Race, Rock, and Religion* (1982), asserts that DeFord was "dropped from the cast under cloudy circumstances" and refers to the Nashville music industry that "shafted him." Paul Hemphill, whose *Nashville Sound* (1970) was one of the first serious portraits of modern Nashville, quotes DeFord as saying he "left" the Opry because "I wasn't getting but four or five dollars a night, and they kept me standing in the back." Peter Guralnick, in his *Lost Highway* (1979), argues that DeFord's leaving came about because, "as the Opry became more and more the province of professional entertainers," the "anomaly of DeFord's position became increasingly evident." He also felt DeFord was getting less and less playing time, but that, in sum, to DeFord "the debacle remains a bitter puzzle to this day." Then there is the famous explanation offered by Judge Hay himself, in his book *A Story of the Grand Ole Opry* (1946):

> That brings us to DeFord Bailey, a little crippled colored boy who was a bright feature of our show for about fifteen years. Like some members of his race and other races, DeFord was lazy. He knew about a dozen numbers, which he put on the air and recorded for a major company, but he refused to learn any more, even though his reward was great. He was our mascot and is still loved by the entire company. We gave him a whole year's notice to learn some more tunes, but he would not. When we were forced to give him his final notice, DeFord said, without malice: "I knowed it was comin', Judge, I knowed it was comin.'"
>
> DeFord comes to the show now and then to visit us. We are always glad to see him—a great artist.

Needless to say, DeFord didn't remember it quite this way. While he strongly rejected Hay's explanation, he didn't especially blame Hay for saying it:

> He had a boss, too. It was the company. It's terrible for a company to say things like that about me. That I didn't know no songs. I reads between the lines. They seen the day was coming when they'd have to pay me right...and they used the excuse about me playing the same old tunes.

The charge that DeFord refused to learn any new songs is curious and complex, and deserves closer examination. DeFord admitted readily that he tended to play a certain body of tunes over and over on the Opry: "Ain't Gonna Rain No More," "Shoe Shine Boy Blues," "Lost John," "John Henry," "Ice Water Blues," "Old Hen Cackle," "Hesitation Blues," "Alcoholic Blues," Casey Jones," "Muscle Shoals Blues," "Fox Chase," "Evening Prayer Blues," and his train pieces, such as "Pan-American Blues." And it was true that many of these had been learned in his youth, remaining in his repertoire for years. But this was due, in part, to insistence by the Opry management that he play only certain types of tunes on the show. As DeFord remembers:

> I told 'em years ago I got tired of the same thing, of blowing that same thing, but I had to go along with 'em, you know, Gene Austin [the well-known pop crooner of the 1920s] played one Saturday night when I was there. Played "Blue Heaven" on his guitar. Well, I came back next week and had that down on my harp. They said, "No. Naw, don't play that. That's their song. You play blues like you've been playing."
>
> I couldn't grow. They'd play my songs, if they wanted. That was all right....If they had let me play like I wanted, I could have stole the show. If I had been a white man, I could have done it. They held me down.... I wasn't free.

In view of all this, DeFord could not understand why, in the 1940-41 season, "all of a sudden" the Opry management reversed this policy 180 degrees and began talking about him coming up with "brand new" songs—not new versions of old songs but entirely new compositions. For years this puzzled fans and historians as well. Hay implies that the demand simply reflected the "modernization" of the show, but, as we have seen, the 1941 schedule was still full of very traditional acts. Hay was vague about the real reason, which was more ugly and controversial; it was only years later, when Opry star Kirk McGee pointed it out, that researchers were lead to it: the BMI-ASCAP copyright war that broke out in 1940 and led to a boycott by radio stations of some of the country's most familiar songs.

ASCAP (the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) had been formed in 1914 as an organization devoted to making theaters, dance halls, and restaurants pay fees for the live performance of copyrighted music. After a series of favorable court decisions, and after the organization had grown to include most of the major music

WSM
GRAND
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OPRY

publishers and composers, it extended its purview to radio. In 1932 ASCAP demanded that radio pay fees geared not to its use of specific music, but to a percentage of its total income. Their reasoning was that music was by then taking up some 65 percent or more of the air time, that broadcasters were spending only 3.4 percent of their income on it, and they were making a killing by charging sponsors high rates for commercials. Furthermore, it was argued, radio had seriously affected sales of sheet music, phonograph records, and even pianos. A contract for a flat fee of 4.5 million dollars a year had been negotiated with the major radio networks in 1932, and in 1940 that contract was coming up for renewal. ASCAP was asking for exactly double the amount for the new contract, and the radio networks refused. The deadline for the new contract was January 1, 1941, and in the fall of 1940, with the deadline approaching, the tension was rising. Newspapers were full of stories about the networks' plans to boycott ASCAP songs and about what impact the restrictions would have on the music of the day. Radio singers and band leaders were especially concerned; Bing Crosby, quoted in *Metronome* magazine in October 1940, said that he would simply quit radio after December 31 if "denied free choice in picking material." Many big band leaders felt the same way.

To counter the loss of ASCAP material, the radio broadcasters established a rival organization, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI). BMI invited songwriters who had not been allowed to join ASCAP, either because they were too young or because they specialized in country music (i.e., wrote and performed by ear), to join with them and provide a new catalog of music designed primarily for radio work. By the end of 1940, BMI claimed to have 140,000 numbers in its catalog, though only a few were actually hits. (Later, country songs like "You Are My Sunshine" and "Pistol Packin' Mama" would become some of the new organization's biggest hits.) BMI had signed contracts with over four hundred radio stations, including the three main Nashville stations, WLAC, WSIX, and WSM. One of the six hundred original stockholders in BMI was WSM's Edwin Craig, who was especially keen to see the new organization succeed. He made it clear that performers on his station were expected to do their part by creating new songs that could be copyrighted and licensed through BMI. As the January 1, 1941, deadline approached, the pressure became more intense. On September 21, 1940, NBC (of which WSM was an affiliate) ruled that "orchestras broadcasting on NBC sustaining shows must schedule and play at least three compositions not controlled by ASCAP during each broadcast period after October 1." The idea was to start easing the artists into using BMI material, thereby showing ASCAP that the networks and stations were serious about the boycott.

The ASCAP catalog did not just extend to current Broadway show tunes, movie hits, or big band favorites; it went far back into the fabric of American pop music. It included such basic songs as "Happy Birthday to You," "Rock-a-Bye-Baby," "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," "My Wild Irish Rose," "St. Louis Blues" (and most of W. C. Handy's other blues), "Sweet Adeline," and gospel favorites like "The Old Rugged Cross," "Go Down, Moses," "In the Garden," and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." Though some of these, and many other in the ASCAP catalog, were in fact traditional folk songs, over the years they had been dutifully copyrighted by various composers who had done arrangements of them. In the 1920s and 1930s, for instance, Ralph Peer, the Victor talent scout and A&R man who had recorded DeFord in Nashville back in 1928, routinely filed copyrights on just about any song he recorded for Victor and "published" it with his Southern Music Company—an ASCAP affiliate. DeFord's music, therefore, was bound to be affected by the ASCAP ban.

The cast of the Grand Ole Opry onstage, 1930s. DeFord Bailey is at left behind the WSM Grand Ole Opry sign. A cigar-smoking George D. Hay is standing, far right.

The threats became reality on January 1, 1941, when the boycott went into effect. Across the country, radio fans and critics alike began complaining about the sudden influx of odd, unfamiliar tunes, and the hastily contrived dance-band arrangements of classical pieces like Glenn Miller's "Song of the Volga Boatmen" or "Anvil Chorus." In Nashville, men like Opry music librarian Vito Pellettieri had begun to check out songs Opry personnel wanted to play and began finding out that many old favorites had ASCAP copyrights. This included many of the blues pieces that DeFord played, as well as his famous "Fox Chase," which had been copyrighted by Henry Whitter and Southern Music back in the 1920s. DeFord remembered: "You know the tune 'Casey Jones'? I had played it for years. Other people had, too. One night somebody called in and said that song was restricted and nobody could play it on the Opry no more."

This, then, was the explanation for Hay's curious comment about the Opry giving DeFord "a whole year's notice" to "learn some more tunes." He was especially hard hit by the ASCAP ban; many of his best songs were unusable on the air. It did not matter that many of the tunes were old traditional ones that DeFord had known since childhood; some kind of copyright did exist on them, and with WSM just beginning to make inroads with getting the Opry on the network, nobody wanted to alienate NBC.

DeFord felt caught between a rock and a hard place. For years he had been "restricted" to a rather small repertoire of tunes on the show, and now suddenly he was being asked to come up with new ones. To further complicate matters, his very notion of what it took to make a good tune was different from that of most other Opry musicians, or many of the dance-band musicians on the networks. His approach was not to learn a tune and then repeatedly play it in a fixed form. His approach was to improve or perfect a tune he liked, playing it in countless ways, trying notes and tones one way, then another. "It takes years to make a good tune," he said. This is something "black people know" but "most white people don't."

> White people think black people are the best musicians in the world. That's 'cause they make us play. They feel like they can't. They could if they would, but they want to get through it too quick. It takes years of your life on one song.
>
> See, they'll write a hundred songs. There won't be enough words out of all of 'em to make one perfect, good, nice song.... They're in a hurry. They'll pick on one thing, one key note, and that's it. They'll go over the top. They'll say, "Well, I made five thousand dollars tonight. What's the need to worry any more about that one?" They'll write some more. They're gone on then, and they ain't played n'er song. They just got a whole lot of songs out there.... I play a song over and over and over.
>
> By me playing the harp, I had such a good sound....I could change a sound so, I could come up with fine notes. Folks would say, "I'd rather hear him play that...." Just like being a good dancer: black or white, everybody would say, "Let him dance." You could not be a good dancer, but be such a good comedian or funny, you'd go over better than the one that danced.
>
> See, you have a pull one way or the other. I had a pull one way, and changed my notes. Whatever I played, it had such a mellow and peculiar sound. Like a man preaching.

In short, DeFord was very much aware that he was a stylist rather than a creator of new songs. This is one of the reasons he wasn't too upset when other Opry performers occasionally performed one of "his" songs: the performance would be so different stylistically that it might as well be another tune. Unfortunately, the ASCAP-BMI rules made little provision for stylistics; indeed, by banning any musical improvisation from the air, the radio networks struck another blow against DeFord's music since much of what was uniquely "his" about a tune was improvised. He was thus being challenged on two levels, in a complex situation over which he had no control and which he didn't fully understand. In fact, DeFord went so far as to associate "new songs" with "new style." He explained, "It's like working on cars. I worked on one style for sixteen years. Then they tried to get me to play another one. I was sixteen years behind." Hurt, puzzled, offended, he responded by continuing to perform just as he always had, bearing it all in dignified silence. "I've been through rough times, but I kept my head out of water and kept paddling. I don't let nothing get me down."

The weekly radio listings in the Nashville newspapers show that the end finally came in late May 1941. After May 24, DeFord's name no longer appeared in the listings. Not coincidentally, his departure came at the height of the ASCAP boycott, five months into the total ban of all ASCAP songs. By the end of July, NBC, WSM's network, would sign an agreement with ASCAP, and things would be pretty much returned to normal—for everyone, that is, except DeFord Bailey. Alcyone Bate Beasley, the daughter of DeFord's old friend and mentor Dr. Humphrey Bate, noted the irony of the situation. On today's Opry, and on the Opry for generations, most performers do "exactly what DeFord was let go for. They play the tunes they are best known for. Who can imagine Roy Acuff on the Opry not playing either 'Wabash Cannonball' or 'Great Speckled Bird'?"

DeFord did not remember the exact date of his last Opry show in 1941. He did remember, though, that the management was so sensitive to his firing that, for several weeks after he left the show, they continued to pay him to come on down to the broadcast just to "be around and let people see me." He thought this was an effort to quiet public criticism over his firing: "The people talked about it a whole lot...about not treating me right. They called me back up there to be around and let people see me. They'd give me three dollars a night. I went about three times. Finally, I decided to quit. I didn't want no more of that."

In addition to the insult to his music and his professionalism, the firing was a serious blow to DeFord in practical terms. He was 42 years old, a little late in life to be starting a new career; and he had a wife an three young children aged 9, 7, and 5.

"They turned me loose with a wife and kids to root hot or die. They didn't give a hoot which way I went. They got the good out of me and turned me loose." Some forty years after the incident, DeFord still resented how the station had treated him. "Sometimes I wish I'd never heard of WSM," he said. "They made me have some bad thoughts and I don't like that." For years he said he did not have one thing in his house he could "thank WSM for."

He did not blame Judge Hay for it all; he sensed that by then Hay was losing power with the Opry management and that circumstances were beyond his control: "Judge Hay did all he could. If he'd helped me, he'd have lost his job too. At that time, a white man couldn't do too much for a black person. If they did, they wouldn't get any help. It was nationwide. I was a black man."

At the same time, DeFord knew of numerous employers in Nashville who took a personal interest in the welfare of their employees and provided various fringe benefits for them. DeFord once expected as much from the Opry, but after 1941 he felt that the Opry's top management had no real concern at all for him or any of the employees. A story DeFord told about the Opry's Christmas tree seemed to symbolize his continual disappointment:

> They'd have a Christmas tree every Christmas Eve night. When it came on Saturday night, I'd be there. That was our work night, you know. I didn't ever get nothing off that Christmas tree. I never could figure that out. That's the only thing I never could figure out.
>
> I know if you work for the poorest sort of people, colored or white, around Christmas they're going to give you something. If you work for a man that's got a fairly good living, you can't tote all your stuff home at night. But...I ain't got nothing. I couldn't figure it out. The thing would be full of stuff....I ain't got a nickel. There wasn't ever nothing for me. They'd have that tree every year....
>
> I asked one time why I never got a Christmas card. They told me it would cost too much.

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PROFILES IN black & white

Charley Pride:
Alone in the Spotlight

BY BOB MILLARD

If Charley Pride had his way, the only thing people would find remarkable about his career as a country superstar would be the fact that he has done so well and stayed popular for so long. But the realities of race consciousness in the United States may never be that easy.

Nothing in the history of country music, before or during his career, suggested the likelihood that a man with dark skin would become a star. For all the blues and minstrel influences in the roots of traditional country music, the genre's stars, those who have been at the top of the sales and box-office heaps, have generally reflected the color and culture of its primary purchasing audience: whites with rural roots.

Although Pride was one of the hottest-selling country artists in the late sixties through the seventies, he is not (as some have dubbed him) "the Jackie Robinson of country music." Pride's breakthrough as a black country superstar stands as a unique and singular instance. If he broke the color line in the mainstream country music industry for African-Americans, no one has been able to follow with anywhere near his level of success. There have been black country recording artists, and r&b stars have recorded country material, but there is only one Charley Pride.

"The only people you can equate with me is somebody like Johnny Mathis or Nat 'King' Cole or Belafonte," Pride admits, putting himself in the same category as those black pop singers who played to primarily white audiences—and also hinting at the breadth of his success.

On the surface, Pride's background reads like a classic blues artist's biography. He was born in rural Sledge, Mississippi, in 1938, one of eleven children. His father, Mack Pride, sharecropped a forty-acre farm, and young Charley went to work in the fields when he was 5, picking cotton for as little as $3 per hundredweight in the North Mississippi lowlands. In Sledge during the 1940s, there seemed little difference in the styles and standards of living between white and black sharecroppers. Poverty made radio one of the few affordable avenues to professional entertainment, and everybody's radios got the same, mostly white, programs broadcast out of Memphis, just sixty miles to the north. "We listened to country before we went out to pick cotton and during dinner time," Pride told one interviewer. "It was local artists like Buck Stuffy Turner & His Buckaroos." On Saturday nights, they tuned in to the Grand Ole Opry from Nashville. Pride's early musical favorites were artists such as Ernest Tubb and Hank Williams.

"All of them," Pride says, "Ernest Tubb, Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe...they were the biggies at that time. My dad used to control the knobs on the Philco, and he was into listening to the radio.

"[The Grand Ole Opry] is what I heard, along with different various radio shows like 'Mr. District Attorney,' 'Fibber McGee and Molly,' 'Amos & Andy.' That's what I remember that highlighted the radio when I was growing up."

Pride, who has for the last few years been writing his memoirs, husbands details of his upbringing. But we do know that by age 14 young Charley had saved up $10 from cotton-picking to buy a mail-order guitar from Sears Roebuck and that straightaway he began trying to figure out how to play the country songs he was hearing on the radio. He didn't get much encouragement. His father and his friends and neighbors, he has said on occasion, "felt that I ought to stick to what they called race music—blues, jazz, spirituals, work songs. These are fine musical expressions, but I was Charley Pride, individual and American. I had to play what I felt—what would come to be called country-western music."

"Even one of my sisters laughed at me," he admitted in a recent interview. "She didn't think I'd get far in country music. She does not laugh anymore, though."

Although he may not have given his son much encouragement in actually singing country music, Charley's father did nevertheless imbue him with a sense of self-worth and self-assurance that all but blinded the singer to the possibility that racism might limit his ambitions. Pride has always considered racial prejudice to be other people's problem. In his career dealings, he treats it as mild xenophobic confusion rather than actual animus, thus defining it as a solvable inconvenience. Those who remain "confused" about the meaninglessness of skin tone in the true equation of any American's ability to sing American music are subjects of his pity, not hostility. This attitude contributed significantly to his ultimate acceptance among country fans.

"I don't go for that 'us and y'all and them' stuff," he says. "I am and have always been first and foremost an American.

"I would say it came from my dad telling me my ancestry—who he was and how proud he was to be who he was. The name itself—Pride—says something. In that sense, I still have an 83-year-old, strong father who believes he's the best that has ever been put on the planet Earth. He's a fine man, a tough old codger, and I'm glad he instilled it in me, but I'm not going to give him all the credit. You have to do something for yourself once you are pointed in the right direction."

Pride decided early in his life that the right direction was any direction that would carry him off the farm. By the time he reached 17, he excelled at playing guitar and singing, but more so at baseball. He left Sledge to play ball, but all along hoped to make music a serious second career.

He pitched and played outfield with the Memphis Red Sox of the Negro American League in the mid-fifties. There he met and married his wife, Rozene. Following two years of military service, he was hired to play semi-pro ball in the Pioneer League with a team in Helena, Montana, while he worked by day in a smelting plant. When his teammates on the East Helena Smelterites learned of his love of country music, they encouraged him to sing for the fans at the ballpark. One evening in 1960, in between innings of an otherwise meaningless game, Pride sang Lonzo & Oscar's "Hole in the Bottom of the Sea" and got an honest-to-goodness ovation. Thereafter, his landlady helped him get his first job singing in a local country nightspot. For the next year, he continued to work in the smelting plant and play baseball, singing when and where he could. He sang without a back-up band, accompanied by the strumming of his own guitar. And he sang then as he does now—smoothly, richly, and pure-toned, in a league with such country gentlemen crooners as Jim Reeves or Eddy Arnold. The good people of Helena seemed to find no more irony that a country singer with this much talent had dark skin than did Pride himself, and he endeared himself to the locals by developing an easy-going, folksy style of patter in between songs.

By 1961, Pride was called up by the California Angels as an outfielder and pitcher, but he struck out in the majors. Returning to Montana, he worked for Anaconda Mining by day and sang country music in nightclubs until he was discovered by Red Sovine and Red Foley, who were passing through town in 1963. Sovine recognized in Pride a can-do attitude, an innate friendliness, and an expectation that he would be judged on the quality of his character and talent. He offered to introduce Pride to RCA's Chet Atkins.

Pride was torn between Sovine's proposal and a possibility that a contract would be offered by a New York Mets farm team. He chose baseball once more, heading down to Florida for the Mets spring training camp in 1964. He showed up apparently unannounced and failed to impress Mets manager Casey Stengel. At age 26, his dreams of a baseball career in shambles, Charley decided it was time to give Nashville his full attention.

According to Pride, there was no intention of breaking the color line in country in any sense of a civil rights accomplishment. He just never thought about it.

"See, it wasn't until I got [to Nashville] that it was pointed out to me, 'Hey, you're the first,'" Pride explains. "Before that, it had eluded me. I had been singing country music for so long, just for the love of it...but the point is, once it got to that magnitude—I hadn't thought of it until somebody pointed it out to me."

"It" did not escape Chet Atkins, as Pride would later learn.

In 1965, Pride recorded some demonstration tapes for RCA, with Jack Clement producing. Atkins carried the acetate of Pride's sessions to RCA's New York headquarters, playing it "blind" for the executives there.

"He played it for them, and they liked it, but then he said, 'Now wait a minute. The guy is black,'" Pride recalls, laughing. "Of course, I think [the term] was 'colored' or 'Negro' then, but he says there was kind of a pause and they all looked back at each other. But they all said, 'We're gonna sign him anyway.'"

Pride recorded his first session with RCA in August of 1965. When the first record, "Snakes Crawl at Night," shipped in January 1966, RCA conferred with Pride's new manager, Jack Johnson, about artist development strategy. The question of race was a significant one initially. In those days, the market in country records was primarily for singles, which were normally shipped with plain white sleeves, so the decision was made not to send out publicity photos until Pride had a hit.

"We decided not to make a big hoopla but to let the record make it on its own merits," Pride says.

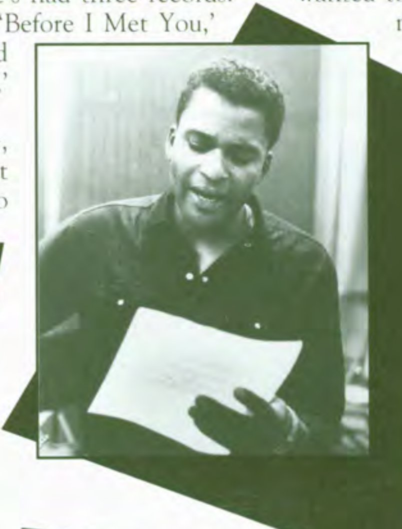
Pride returned to work in Montana while two singles were released. The third release, "Just Between You and Me," reached the *Billboard* Top Ten at the end of 1966. When this success brought his first major concert opportunity, opening for Buck Owens, Flatt & Scruggs, Merle Haggard, Dick Curless, and Red Foley in Detroit early in 1967, it seemed the only person who wasn't worried about audience reaction was Pride himself. Though Pride didn't know it at the time, questions about how he would be received were rampant backstage all day.

"There was some apprehension," Pride says. "The promoter was talking backstage because they had discussed it all the way leading up to, 'Wonder if we should put him on.'"

Whether or not by plan, Pride avoided the pressure by showing up at the the last minute. "I had a '66 Mustang and I drove it all the way from Montana," Pride recalls. "I get there and the promoter really got a little concerned after the discussion. He came to me and said, 'You don't have to do the first show.' It was a three o'clock show and I was a little late. 'You haven't rehearsed with the band,' he said.

"I said, 'No, I haven't, but do they play country music?' He says yes. 'Well, I'll be ready in about three minutes.'

"Ralph Emery was the emcee," Pride recalls. "He said, 'Ladies and gentleman, we have a young man here from RCA. He's had three records: 'Snakes Crawl at Night,' 'Before I Met You,' and now he's got one called 'Just Between You and Me,' and he's done real well.



"He got nice applause, but I'm pretty sure that out of that 10,000, maybe two or three hundred might be aware of what's getting ready to happen—if that many. So anyway, he announced: 'And now, from RCA, Charley Pride!'"

Enthusiastic applause greeted Emery's introduction. Then Pride took the stage.

"I come out of those shadows, out into the lights, and it's like turning the volume down," he says. "They didn't stop applauding, but there was a big rapture of applause and then it was kind of like turning down the volume."

As Pride stood in the spotlight, the applause slowly died away to nothing. Tension hung in the air all the way to the back seats.

"All of a sudden you could hear a pin fall," Pride says. "It's like, they were wondering was this a joke or what."

Pride and Johnson had discussed this eventuality in advance, however. As the issue dawned on Pride, he decided that, just as in Montana, people wanted to like him because they already liked his music. Ever the pragmatist, Pride realized they would need a little help getting over the initial shock:

"My manager and I had talked about this," he remembers. "We had come up with a little saying: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I realize it's a little unique me coming out here on a country music show wearing this permanent tan.'

"And all of a sudden there was a big applause after I'd said it, because it was kind of a humorous way of trying to do it, and yet I was nervous, too, you see. We loosened them up, which loosened me up, too.

"I was saying actually the very thing they were thinking, you see. Then I said, 'I've got these three songs that I want to do, and I hope you enjoy them.' I didn't have but ten minutes and I couldn't stand up there and talk about skin pigments all night."

Pride spent years repeating that line to break the ice with audiences, long after his albums appeared featuring his picture prominently on their jackets. In a few years, his albums began to go gold at a time when few country artists could boast such an achievement. Gently helping people get over a reaction that may well have shamed them in the first place undoubtedly contributed to the country audiences' love for him. He understood his uniqueness as other people's hang-up, not his, and yet he handled it with grace.

Bowing to the realities of racial attitudes was never a matter of religion-inspired tolerance for Pride. It has always been a simple fact of doing business in the country music industry, and Pride makes few career decisions without considering the business angles first.

"All I did was adjust to the situation and did what I had to do to take care of it," he says.

He quickly gained a savvy understanding that audiences were curious about him. For years, he allotted nightclub audiences twenty minutes of gawking before he allowed the dancers among them to block the view of the stage.

"I found out that by doing it this way, it won't get a lot of people angry by paying their money and wanting to see this unique situation that's come upon 'em here," he explains. "You kind of improvised as you went along. You did what fit the situation."

Pride pragmatically accommodated what he refers to as "the skin hang-up" with humor through the years, but he has addressed country music with genuine talent, drive, and business acumen. With RCA Records from 1966 through 1986, he scored twenty-nine #1 records on the *Billboard* country singles chart, including the million-selling crossover "Kiss an Angel Good Morning," which stayed atop that chart for five weeks straight in 1971. His string of fifty-one Top Ten regular-issue country singles (most of which were actually Top Five) began with "Just Between You and Me" in 1966 and continued unbroken through "The Power of Love" in 1984. He earned twelve gold albums and one gold single in his hottest period of record sales between 1969 and the late 1970s. During the seventies, according to some reports, Pride became RCA's second biggest-selling artist—country or pop—after Elvis Presley.

The honors piled up. He was named Entertainer of the Year by the Country Music Association in 1971. He earned a pair of Grammys for gospel recordings in 1971 and another Grammy for Best Country Vocal Performance in 1972. *Cashbox* named Pride the Country Artist of the Decade for the 1970s. He toured internationally, racking up sellouts at nearly every show and setting numerous attendance records.

With success in the late sixties, Pride moved his family to Dallas. Pride had three school-aged children, and Nashville was almost entirely segregated in 1967. Pride also wanted more anonymity when he was at home than he felt was possible in Music City.

"They have always jealously guarded their personal life," explained long-time Pride-family advisor Jerry Lastelick in 1983. "There's some obvious reasons: kidnapping, extortion…and some ancillary reasons. If people [tourists in Nashville] know where you live, they drive up and down in front of your house. Some will stop and knock on your door; want to come in and take pictures. I marvel at his ability to walk up and down the streets of Dallas. People don't mob him. They may ask for autographs, but he's able to carry on."

After nearly twenty years with RCA, Pride saw his singles suddenly dive into the lower realms of the charts in late 1984. When this continued for the next two years, he decided RCA was not giving his product the promotional push it deserved, that he was being shunted aside for younger artists. He gave the label an ultimatum—commit to him or let him go—and was surprised when they did the latter.

Jerry Bradley had been RCA label head during part of Pride's tenure there. He had produced a number of hits for the artist during that time and was just starting up 16th Avenue Records as a division of Opryland Music Group as Pride was released from RCA in 1986. Bradley signed Pride, and his was the first record released on the new label. Pride released three albums and saw his singles' chart positions improve with Bradley, but 16th Avenue Records folded in November 1990, leaving Pride again without a label.

You wouldn't know that Pride has no current records to promote to look at his 1991-92 tour schedule. A self-confessed workaholic, when he is not on the road he can often be found in the Dallas offices of his management company, Cecca. Cecca is a family operation, presided over by Pride and Rozene. Cecca also controls Pride-family interests outside the music business. Pride decided early on to invest in real estate and businesses unrelated to the music industry. One of the most visible of these is his controlling interest in the Dallas-based First Texas Bank, one of the largest minority-owned banks in the nation.

It is through First Texas Bank and private, charitable activities that Pride quietly works to aid the African-American community. Pride has given countless hours to the United Negro College Fund and, according to Lastelick, has personally underwritten the education of a number of black students at traditional all-black colleges throughout the South, but especially in his home state.

In June 1991, he received long overdue recognition from the black entertainment community when he was presented with a Celebrate the Soul of American Music Award in a ceremony at the Pantages Theater in Los Angeles. In a star-studded evening that saw similar accolades go to James Brown, Little Richard, B. B. King, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, and Etta James, the award and the subsequent standing ovation he received must have been deeply satisfying to the 58-year-old Pride.

It wasn't so many years before, during another awards program in California, that someone made a comment that "at least he married one of us"—referring to Rozene. "You face those kind of things," he added stoically.

On the flip side, there was the time when Pride applied for membership to the all-white Royal Oaks Country Club in Dallas. The club informed him by letter that his application had been rejected because of vetoes from at least four persons.

"I don't want to ask for any more acceptance from my people than I would from whites," Pride said in a recent interview. "Saying 'y'all gotta accept me' to either group is just as disastrous. I'm here by choice and I had to face what I had to face. I don't get mixed up with the hang-ups of the world."

He quickly gained a savvy understanding that audiences were curious about him. For years, he allotted nightclub audiences twenty minutes of gawking before he allowed the dancers among them to block the view of the stage.

Meanwhile, Pride quietly goes about his business. While he is reportedly a millionaire, he continues to perform more than 150 dates a year, including overseas. Though he isn't currently looking for a major-label record deal, he keeps the option open, and does not project a time of retirement. Whether or not he needs the money from concerts, he thinks he does. He has never gotten over the lessons taught by poverty, nor does he seem to want to. As soon as the land was available, he bought the parcel that his family had worked as sharecroppers.

"I've been on each end of the stick, and I understand what it's like not to have a nickel," he says. "Those things you store away in your memory and it will never leave."

Given America's social realities, the permanent asterisk affixed to his legend will probably remain as well. But the facts are that Charley Pride's career accomplishments, his memorable hits, and the pure country voice that continues to thrill fans from Asheville to Australia are what made the legend that the asterisk hangs on. And Pride has earned that legend.

"When people tell me 'you shouldn't be in country music, because it's not your music,'" Pride says, "I tell them it's mine if I want it to be mine."

BOB MILLARD
has written for *Variety* and *Country Music* magazine, and is the author or biographies on Amy Grant and the Judds.

O. B. McClinton:
Country Music, That's My Thing

BY ROB BOWMAN

O. B. McClinton as a performer achieved very little mainstream country success. In fact, he only had one big country hit single, "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You," in 1972. Nevertheless, he is interesting as a formerly successful r&b songwriter; as one of a handful of Afro-American country artists; and, ultimately, as a performer of extremely funny and touching country records over a twenty-year career.

Being black and trying to sing country is a hard row to hoe. "I've traveled a harder road coming behind Charley Pride than Hank Williams Jr. did coming behind his daddy," O. B. once told *Billboard*. "Many people in country music looked on Charley Pride as an accident.

"You can take a black guy to Nashville from right out of the cotton fields with bib overalls and two watermelons in his back pockets, and they will call him r&b. You can take a white guy in a pinstripe suit who has never seen a cotton field, take him to Nashville right out of a subway in Manhattan, and they will call him country." McClinton constantly found himself at odds with a variety of expectations and stereotypes. Through it all, he just grinned and tried harder. A man with a bigger heart I have never met.

Obie Burnett McClinton was born April 25, 1940, in the Gravel Springs Community located near Senatobia, Mississippi, about twenty miles northeast of Sledge, Charley Pride's hometown. His family was a large one: four boys and three girls with O. B. being the next to youngest ("what you call the 'knee baby'"). His family picked cotton for a living with his father also pastoring a number of Baptist churches for well over fifty years. O. B.'s mother raised the family and helped with the farming. According to O. B., no one else in the family showed any interest in music, although it should be mentioned that his brother has long hosted a Sunday gospel show on local radio.

"I took an interest early as a kid when all my brothers and sisters were picking cotton....If you were born in that part of the country, whether you were black, white, blue, green, purple, or turquoise, it was a way of making a living. A lot of people didn't think beyond farming. My father did it, my grandfather did it, my great grandfather did it, and anybody that thought about breaking the mold was considered weird, quite radical, disobedient, 'smart.'

"I remember when I used to be standing up in the cotton field singing 'Blue Suede Shoes' and 'Sixteen Tons,' and my daddy would ease up and give me a rap with a cotton stalk. My brothers would pick two- or three-hundred pounds of cotton and I would show up with fifty pounds. I can remember my grandfather telling my daddy, 'That boy ain't worth the powder and lead it'd take to kill him!' It wasn't that they wanted to hold me back. It was just that they didn't understand how a little kid from Senatobia, Mississippi, could aspire to sing on the Grand Ole Opry. As far as they were concerned, it was just something you listened to on the radio and you were lucky if you had a radio to listen to it on. To me, when I would hear the Grand Ole Opry, it was people up there making that music.

"As long as I can remember we had an old battery radio.... I used to listen to WLAC....That was when I really got just hooked on music—I mean, all kinds of music. I liked the blues, I liked John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, and Lightnin' Hopkins. I always liked songs that told a story. I got really hooked on country when songs like 'Sixteen Tons' and 'Big Bad John' came along. These songs just fascinated me. I would always learn the lyrics to them. See, I was never very good at sports, so when I wanted to impress the girl I would light into 'Every morning at the mine you could see him arrive/ Six foot six, weighing 245/ Kind of broad at the shoulder, narrow at the hip/ Everybody knew you didn't give no lip/ To Big John.' And they would just think that was great. I learned to imitate lots of artists. I do it now onstage—you know, people like Conway Twitty and George Jones. People enjoy it.

"We didn't have no record player, just a radio. I didn't have no record collection at all. I guess I was grown before I bought my first record. I'd listen to them on the radio and that was it. That would have been a great luxury for me out there to have a record player. But I've always had a good memory for song lyrics and things. If I'd hear a song on the radio two times, I'd know it.

"I didn't see an entertainer actually do a concert until TV, and that was in the fifties. The 'Ed Sullivan Show' was as close as I ever got to a concert. I remember seeing Elvis on the 'Ed Sullivan Show' for the first time. I was in the TV audience [at home] when they put the camera on him from the waist up."

O. B. started listening to Nashville's WSM and WLAC around the age of 12. A couple of years later, Dewey Phillips's "Red Hot and Blue" show on WHBQ coming out of Memphis drew his and the neighboring kids' attention. Phillips introduced them all to rock & roll, from Elvis Presley and Bobby Darin to Larry Williams and Chuck Berry.

O. B. moved to Memphis to live with his sister in 1954. While attending Hamilton High School, he went down to WDIA's "Teen Town Talent Time," hosted by A. C. Williams. O. B. won the talent show singing "Sixteen Tons." Later on , he won a Hamilton High talent show singing "Blue Suede Shoes."

"Doing these songs early, I realized kids looked at me a little different. They had guys out there singing songs by the Platters and all this stuff, and they didn't get the response that I got when I came out and did something different. I would always win the talent show.... It was just different to see me do it. So quite naturally the response was greater. It gave me an incentive to go ahead and pursue that.

> never had the voice for blues.... A blues singer has to have that feeling in his voice. My voice was always more a narrative type....Usually if you have a good speaking voice and can carry a tune you could sing a good country song because it is a lyric-oriented style.
> —O. B. McClinton

"I never had the voice for blues.... A blues singer has to have that feeling in his voice. My voice was always more a narrative type—I always had a good speaking voice. Usually if you have a good speaking voice and can carry a tune you could sing a good country song because it is a lyric-oriented style."

O. B. had originally moved to Memphis simply to escape the dead-end that Senatobia represented. "At that time I didn't know what I would be or what was in the world for me. The only thing I did know was that it wasn't there in Senatobia.... I talked my mother into letting me go to Memphis and live with my sister and go to school." After only a year, due to his sister's worries with regard to local gangs, O. B. was packed off to Senatobia again.

But by 1958, O. B. had returned to Memphis, where he lived on his own and worked at the world's first Pancho's Mexican Restaurant. Being in the big city gave O. B. a chance to see a number of performers in person. He remembers seeing James Brown and Ernest Tubb at Ellis Auditorium as well as a number of r&b shows at Club Paradise. On a trip with a friend to South Carolina in 1960, he witnessed an early Waylon Jennings performance. Shortly thereafter, O. B. landed a job as an r&b disc jockey on WDIA. It was in that capacity that he first met Al Bell, who was then a DJ at rival WLOK.

In the fall of 1962, trying to break into the music business, O. B. enrolled at Rust College, in Holly Springs, Mississippi, on a choir scholarship. "By that time I was working on different jobs—Sears and Roebuck and whatever—pitchin' songs and playing first one little gig, then another. If I could, I did a couple of things over at the Plantation Inn in West Memphis."

During his four years at Rust College, O. B. would thumb the thirty-odd miles from Holly Springs to Memphis at just about every opportunity to try and shop songs, often hanging out in front of the Stax Records office like a hundred other hopefuls. In O. B.'s case, he was doing more than dreaming. In January 1965, Otis Redding became the first artist to record an O. B. McClinton song, when "Keep Your Arms Around Me" appeared on *Otis Redding Sings Soul Ballads*.

"I'd be out there in front of Stax just like a lot of other kids. They'd run me away and I'd come back. I kept going up there. I'd hang around Stax and when somebody'd come out that looked like they were important, I would run up to them and tell them about this great song I had. So Miss Axton [Estelle, co-owner of Stax] was the first one that was listening. She was a very pleasant lady. A couple of times I would run up to her and I'd say, 'Miss Axton, I got a song—it's a hit for Otis Redding!' She said, 'That's what they all say; they all are hits.' Then the next time I saw her coming out I just ran up to her and sang, 'Keep your arms around me/ I can't feel no pain.' I was singing like Otis. 'Your arms around me, oooh/ I'm the world's strongest man.' And she said, 'Oh my goodness, did you write that?' I said yeah. So then she got Jim Stewart to listen to it. I went in and I sang it for Jim Stewart and he said get me a tape and I made him a little cassette with no music, just singing it [a cappella] like that: 'All I can say is keep them loving arms around me.' And he took it and played it for Otis and then went back in there in the studio and Booker T. and those guys played it on piano and worked it up. The next time I heard it, they had recorded it for his album. That was as close to heaven as I thought I'd ever get."

Listening to O. B. sing those lyrics and then listening to Otis Redding's record, one is reminded of O. B.'s ability to imitate. His skill at mimicking Redding's style is what probably got Estelle Axton to think seriously of the possibility of using the song. While attending Rust College, O. B. was not just pitching songs. He was also attempting to launch his own recording career, releasing one single on Quinton Claunch's Beale St. Records,

"Trading Stamp" backed with "Mother-in-Law Trouble." (Claunch wrote the A-side and it later turned up as "The Ballad of a Stamp Licker" on O. B.'s first Enterprise LP, *Country*, released in 1971.) The B-side was a McClinton original that was recorded but not released by George Richie's brother, Paul, for Stax Records.

Claunch, along with Doc Russell, subsequently launched the Goldwax label with three O. B. McClinton singles, "The Day the World Cried," "She's Better Than You," and "Tryin' to Make It." All three were McClinton originals, the first being about the assassination of President Kennedy.

"She's Better Than You" was covered by another Memphian on Goldwax, James Carr. It was this association that really served as the launching pad for McClinton's career as a songwriter. Carr, a former gospel singer, was a soul artist with a very rich and unique style who unfortunately had severe drug problems. He specialized in mournful, big-voiced ballads. Between April 1966 and April 1969 he placed nine songs on *Billboard*'s Top Fifty r&b chart. Two of those hits, "You've Got My Mind Messed Up" (1966) and "A Man Needs a Woman" (1968), were written by O. B. McClinton. O. B. wrote several other songs for Carr and also had his material recorded by the Ovations (also on Goldwax), Clarence Carter, and Arthur Conley. The latter two connections came about as the result of a five-year songwriting contract O. B. signed in 1968 with the Muscle Shoals-based Fame Publishing Company, owned by producer Rick Hall.

Though posed here with a guitar, O. B. McClinton never learned to play any instrument. Nevertheless, he wrote dozens of songs, including "Keep Your Arms Around Me" for soul singer Otis Redding and "Ole George Stopped Drinking Today" for George Jones.

It's curious that someone who plays absolutely no instruments in even a rudimentary fashion has been so successful a songwriter. "I hear melodies. It's really weird to musicians in Nashville all the time, and they can't believe that I write a song 100 percent melody and lyric and don't play an instrument. I hear a melody and I start humming this melody in my mind and then I will write lyrics to go with this melody and everything is in meter. I can get down with a good session guitar player who knows the number system and sing this melody.

"Maybe I might sing it over three or four times and they'll keep playing. They'll play one chord, and if that's not right they'll say, 'What about this?' But I know when they play the right chord—it feels right."

It is also odd that such a successful r&b songwriter sang country. His own versions of songs that people like James Carr recorded such as "She's Better Than You" sounded country, even back then.

"Yeah, they would be a country voice against an r&b background. It wasn't very good. I never thought so. That's why I ended up recording country, because I always wanted to try and sing r&b but my voice just wouldn't let me. So for the longest [time], I felt like I couldn't sing at all. I felt like a misfit. Most of the time when I would write a song for somebody like James Carr or Clarence Carter or somebody like that, they would laugh when they'd play the demo. (I would always cut the demos.) They'd say, "You know, that's a good song but who is the redneck singing it? Who does this dude get to do his demos, Johnny Cash?"

O. B. was also doing a bit of stage performing at the time. The owner of Pancho's, Morris Berger, also owned the Plantation Inn in West Memphis. When O. B. was working at Pancho's, he was always singing to the waitresses. Berger "got tired of it and he told me, 'You want to be a singer. I don't need a singer in here, but I'm going to take you over there and see what you can do onstage.' He took me over to the Plantation Inn. That was the first time that I worked over there. I never will forget. I did 'Bonie Moronie.' The response was real good. After that, it was like being bit by the bug. That's when I started trying to sing [r&b] songs but it never came off right. I could do it but it just didn't feel as natural for me as country music did."

Shortly after graduating from Rust in 1966, O. B. was drafted by the Army. Preferring to choose his own service, he enlisted in the Air Force for a four-year hitch. That's where he finally decided that he was a country singer.

"That's when I started. When I was stationed on Okinawa, there was a lot of country and western bands over there. We used to go to the club all the time. A lot of the guys had heard me. I would sing some country around the barracks and one time I had a few beers and some of my buddies said, 'Hey, Mac, get up there and show this guy.' They had a little country band up there and they didn't think the guy was that good. I got up there and did 'Folsom Prison Blues' or something, and the place just went wild. I think they thought it was unique and different. So after that I started working at a lot of clubs on Okinawa, the Army base, and down at the Marine base, and I would work at the Air Force NCO club. Then I started writing more country oriented songs while I was in the service.

"I decided, while in the service, that I wanted to do country music when I got out. I had never thought about a black person being in country music before. There was a guy who came back from leave and he brought an album of Charley Pride's. He played the album for me and he hid the cover under his mattress somewhere. I said, 'Boy, that's a country dude.' Then after he finished and I told him how much I liked it he brought the album out, and it was Charley Pride and I couldn't believe it. I said, 'Man, maybe the time is right.' That's when I made up my mind. They had been saying I was country all along and laughing at me. I said, 'Well, shoot, if God deals you a lemon, make lemonade.' What I had considered a liability before I went into the service, I turned it into an asset."

Memphis's Stax Records seemed like an unlikely place for an aspiring country performer in 1971. Although the first several releases on Satellite Records, Stax's precursor in the late fifties, had been country and rockabilly, since June 1961 neither Stax nor any of its subsidiaries had recorded anything remotely resembling country. Although the company had tried to diversify, marketing a number of records in the jazz, blues, pop and gospel fields, the label's meat and potatoes remained rhythm & blues. When O. B. approached Stax they were riding high on the charts with records by Rufus Thomas, Booker T. & the MGs, the Staple Singers, Johnny Taylor, Sam & Dave, David Porter, and Isaac Hayes.

"It was where I felt I could get somebody to listen. I had heard the story of Charley Pride and how he got started and I knew that it wasn't easy. I had been around Stax and places enough to know that it wasn't easy to break in to any kind of music. I thought that I could get through the door at Stax. I had had some big records as a writer and I knew David Porter and Isaac Hayes at Stax. I got with them and played them some songs and they had talked to Al Bell [Stax vice-president and co-owner] and Al was thinking about venturing into country, and I think the timing was just right. I think that I will always be grateful to Stax 'cause I might never have been in country music if it hadn't been for Stax.

"I did go by Chart Records, a little independent in Nashville. I played them some songs and they were real interested but I was getting out of the service and I needed something to get a foothold. Stax offered me an advance. They advanced me $10,000 and that was really unheard of for that time. I had just got married and I was able to buy my first house. As I said I will always be grateful to Al Bell because if I had signed with a label in Nashville, I would have been lucky to sign, I wouldn't have got a nickel, so it was, I think, just a lucky break. I just came along at the right time and had some songs."

On January 12, 1971, O. B. McClinton signed with Stax. Bell put him on what was, in effect, Stax's utility label, Enterprise Records. Much that was not hard r&b seemed to end up on Enterprise. Bell also decided that, in contrast to most of the Stax conglomerate's artists, O. B. would not be recorded in Memphis. "That was the first thing they said when they signed me. 'We'll go to Nashville and we'll find a good producer and record you in Nashville.' Their philosophy was that they didn't know anything about country music. They didn't have anybody there that knew what to do so their first choice for producer was Billy Sherrill. They went and tried to get Billy Sherrill and of course he was locked in with Columbia and couldn't do it. Then they tried Jerry Kennedy and finally Jim Malloy. He had a big record on Sammi Smith at the time, 'Help Me Make It Through the Night.' So they went and got Jim Malloy, but it wasn't really the right decision for me. It turned out to be horrible, but it was good experience. I learned what not to do. Looking back on it, all of that was parts of courses and lessons toward my Ph.D. in country music."

O. B. felt that Malloy was not interested in recording a natural-sounding O. B. McClinton. Instead, Malloy wanted McClinton to sound as generically country as humanly possible. "I couldn't stand to listen to the playback and the reason why it sounded like that was because Jim Malloy was paranoid. He thought that the next black country singer had to be even countrier than Charley Pride. I mean, he thought you got to really put these people on. I kept telling him, 'You don't have to put anybody on. All you got to do is be yourself.' My idea was every record I had ever seen was black. The only thing people buy is what is in that groove.

"He thought there was only one way to cut a country record and that was, like, sing through your nose, get real throaty. In fact, he would come down out of the control room and say, 'You sound black on that word.' And I'd say, 'Well, look at me, 'cause I am!' I didn't think that I had to try to put on and do that Charley Pride bit [sings, 'Before You Take Another Step']. When I would see artists onstage sounding like that I could tell if it is forced. I just knew that if I recorded records like that and then tried to go out onstage, I was going to look like a buffoon."

The album is not quite as bad as O. B. suggests. Although somewhat brief, running a total of about twenty-five minutes, *O. B. McClinton: Country* (Enterprise 1023) has some strong material. Surprisingly enough, only two McClinton originals made the album, "Deep in the Heart of Me" and the autobiographically tongue-in-cheek "Country Music That's My Thing." The latter is sequenced in the middle of the five humorous songs that make up side two. Having that many novelty songs in a row makes O. B. seem self-effacing to the point of minstrelsy. Apparently, that was Malloy's idea. On the album's flip side, O. B. was permitted to record one r&b song, a cover of Clarence Carter's hit "Slip Away." This type of material, coupled with O. B.'s natural country-flavored voice, presents McClinton in far and away the best light.

Stax chose to release the album with a cover depicting O. B. at a distance looking at the Nashville skyline with his back to the camera. The casual shopper would not notice that he was black. To their credit, Stax did include a color portrait shot of O. B. on the back.

Between May 1971 and February 1972, Stax released three singles from that first album, O. B.'s two original compositions plus Bobby Fischer's "Bad Guys Don't Always Wear White Hats." None of them managed to make *Billboard*'s country charts. And no wonder: the company had no one at all who was really familiar with country music and no established connections with country radio. "Al [Bell] had the visions. He saw where country music was going and he was wanting to branch over, and he had an opportunity to try me and he did. But they hadn't organized a country division. Everything just kinda coincided with me. They would go and look for a guy to promote it from Nashville, go to Nashville and look for a producer."

Jerry Seaboldt was hired to handle country promotion, with O. B. McClinton being the only act he had to work with (Stax later signed Eddie Bond in 1973 and Connie Eaton and Cliff Cochran in 1974, also to Enterprise). Seaboldt ended up doing much more than just promotion, eventually making nearly all country-related decisions at Stax.

In spite of the disappointing performance of O. B.'s debut album, Stax readied a second album for release in late 1972. This time O. B. got to do it his way. "After [Jim Malloy] cut that album, I went to Al Bell and I said, 'Al, listen at that. That is not me. That is just as phony as a $3 bill. I know I've never produced a record but I know me better than Jim Malloy or anybody will ever know me. I know how to be natural. The engineer that Jim Malloy used, Tommy Strong, is a great engineer. I want to go to Tommy and offer him, if he'll just go and capture me and do a great job of engineering, I'll split the production [royalty].' See, I went and gave him an incentive. I said, 'Look, instead of us having a Jim Malloy, I know what I want to do and you know how to capture me. So let's go and cut a real record.' We went in that first time and cut 'Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You.'

"Most of the songs on the album I'll take credit for, good or bad. That was the first time that I picked the songs. Before that, I sat down with Jim Malloy and he'd pick the songs and he did all the production. He told me how to phrase. He did everything. I was just like a zombie.

"I always felt that I was a natural artist singing country music. I didn't want to try either way. I just wanted to let it flow the way it came natural. I cut a lot of those songs to prove a point to a lot of people at Stax and a lot of other people that a song is not either country or r&b. It's the artist himself who sets the mode of the song. Johnny Cash can make a blues song a country song, and Muddy Waters can make a country song a blues.

"'Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You' had been recorded by Wilson Pickett, and that's very, very black. But I knew the first time I heard the song, the title itself was country. I mean how much countrier can you get than 'Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You'?"

The first single off *Obie from Senatobie* was Jerry Ward's "Six Pack of Trouble." It scraped the bottom of the country charts, peaking at #70. O. B. got to pick the second single himself. "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You" was his choice and the result was a thirteen-week chart ride that went as high as #37 in January 1973. It was to be his most successful single.

O. B.'s reinterpretation of r&b songs are the highlights of his albums. Two more of them, "My Whole World Is Falling Down" and "I Wish It Would Rain," charted in the spring and summer of 1973, the former staying on the charts for eight weeks, peaking at #36.

O. B. contributed only one original to the album and that was the title track. "Obie from Senatobie" continues the humorous vein of the second side of the first album as does Bobby Fischer's "The Unluckiest Songwriter in Nashville." The latter was released as a single but did not dent the charts. The same fate befell a non-LP cover of William Bell's "You Don't Miss Your Water" (which the Byrds had covered on *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* in 1968).

Later in 1973, Stax released *Live at Randy's Rodeo* (Enterprise 1037), which had been recorded in San Antonio. "I don't know why they did that. I think Jerry Seaboldt talked them into doing that. Jerry Seaboldt was a pro when it came to spending money. For some reason or another, before I knew anything, he had convinced [Stax executive] John Smith and all of a sudden we were going to go to Randy's Rodeo to do a live album. Personally, I didn't feel that that stage in my career was the time to do a live album.

"Believe it or not, I went in and recorded that stuff without even rehearsing with the band or anything. There was a five-minute sound check to get the volume levels but we didn't have charts. They just pretty much winged it. I'm surprised that it came out as good as it did. It was really done very, very unprofessionally. I wanted to do a live album in the studio. In other words, get a crowd of people in the studio where you could really have a great sound. [Randy's Rodeo] was a big old place out there. It was just really not conducive to doing an album [because] the sound and people were so spread out."

O.B. McCLINTON
COUNTRY

O.B. McCLINTON
COUNTRY

The Memphis-based r&b label Stax Records chose to release O. B. McClinton's first album depicting O. B. at a distance with his back to the camera. To their credit, though, Stax did include a close-up portrait shot of O. B. on the back.

Considering the circumstances, the album sounds surprisingly good. It opens and closes with what was now O. B.'s trademark, "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You." In between are a couple of country standards ("The Lord Knows I'm Drinking" and "Today I Started Loving You Again"), a humorous offering from the pen of Stax eccentric John Kasandra in "Hollywood Star," a Charley Pride medley strung together by a funny monologue O. B. had concocted about the relationship between the characters in the songs and Pride's personal life, and further comedy with a hilarious cover of Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel."

O. B.'s last album for Stax was released in 1974. For *If You Loved Her That Way* (Enterprise 7506) an outside producer was again brought in. "Stax brought another guy in, Brian Littlefield. They fired Seaboldt. Littlefield said that I didn't have the experience and he didn't think it was a good idea for an artist to be producing himself. He went and brought in Larry Butler. Larry was a hot producer at the time but yet still I never received the success with that album that I had with 'Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You.'"

The first two singles from the album, "If You Loved Her That Way" and "Something Better," just barely made the charts. A cover of Bill Withers's "Lean on Me," released in late summer of 1974, was O. B.'s last hurrah on Enterprise. By then Stax was embroiled in seemingly never-ending legal problems and O. B. was one of several artists who simply fell by the wayside. Two further singles, presumably from a projected fifth album were released in 1975. Both sank without a trace, as unfortunately did Stax.

Nevertheless, O. B. looks back on his days with Stax fondly. "It gave me an opportunity. And I will forever be grateful because if it hadn't been for Stax, I might never have been in country music. I don't know whether a label like RCA or CBS would have signed an O. B. McClinton. If you check over all these years, there has only been one black artist signed for a major label and nobody knew he was black when he was signed."

McClinton subsequently signed deals with Mercury, ABC, and CBS. A total of six singles were released, none of which O. B. was happy with. "After Stax went under I fell back in the same situation. I couldn't go to Mercury and tell Jerry Kennedy how to record O. B. McClinton because Kennedy was a producer who had cut Roger Miller and all those hits and he had an ego. As far as he was concerned, he had forgotten more about production than I would ever know. My job was to sing and not say anything to him. But he didn't realize that every artist was different. Some producers can take an artist into the studio and cut a hit record on them and some can't. That artist and that producer got to be right for each other. Al Bell really did a great thing. He did something that many executives wouldn't do—let a new artist go into the studio and have control. See, I never got a chance to have that control again. So after a while, going in with different producers and seeing them come out of the studio with everything on the tape except O. B. McClinton, I just decided to work the road and not record for a while.

"See, to me, music means a lot. When I go in and record, I want to come out of the studio with something that I love to listen to. I would rather for the public not to hear a record from O. B. McClinton in several years than to hear record after record of lousy records. I would rather put out one record like 'Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You' every ten years."

So for most of the eighties, O. B. worked the road, wrote songs for other artists, and concentrated on TV appearances. He felt that one appearance on a show like "Nashville Now" gave him more exposure than a Top Ten record. He may have been right. Regular Nashville Network television appearances coupled with the loyalty of the country audience enabled O. B. to land gigs two or three days of nearly every weekend of the year.

When I first interviewed O. B. in September 1985, he was intrigued by the marketing of albums via television. Having given up on the major record labels, he had decided to go the TV route. By the fall of 1986, a double album produced by Andy Di Martino simply called *O. B. McClinton* was released by Suffolk Marketing. Over eighteen tracks, the album mixed country covers ("Kiss an Angel Good Morning," "Hey, Good Lookin'") with McClinton originals such as "Soap" and "Lady Diana." For good measure he included an updated reading of "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool You." O. B. had always been an actor of sorts and the commercials for the album shown on The Nashville Network and late night TV were hilarious.

Shortly after the recording sessions ended O. B. discovered that he had a cancerous tumor. He faced the situation with as much heart and courage as anyone ever could. He was operated on in September and was told he had little chance of survival. I spoke with him a number of times that fall. No matter how much pain he was feeling he always managed to smile and joke.

On November 11, 1986, a number of country musicians came together to honor O. B. at a benefit performance to help defray his rising medical costs. Over the course of several hours in front of a packed house at the Stockyard Restaurant in Nashville, Steve Wariner, Reba McEntire, Tom T. Hall, Exile, Ricky Skaggs, Rodney McDowell, Kathy Mattea, Waylon Jennings, and Rex Allen Jr. sang songs and spoke of their love for O. B. McClinton, who closed the evening himself singing three songs, including the autobiographical "The Only One." He had deteriorated significantly in only a few months. Out of breath by the end of each song, he was obviously pushing himself harder than he should have. You could see in his face that performing one more time meant more than words could ever convey. By the evening's end there were few dry eyes in the house.

The benefit raised enough money that O. B. was able to undergo experimental radical treatment. That evening also ended up giving O. B. one more shot at a major label album. Epic Records released *The Only One* in the fall of 1987. Again produced by Andy Di Martino, the record pleased O. B. immensely. All ten songs were O. B. McClinton compositions, and he had complete creative control over the finished product.

A short time later the cancer that had wracked his body for just over a year got the better of him and he passed away on September 23, 1987. Country music had lost one of its warmest hearts.

ROB BOWMAN, a frequent contributor to the *Journal of Country Music*, wrote the booklet notes for the recently released nine-CD boxed set *The Complete Stax/Volt Singles: 1959-68*.

Roots of Rock & Roll:
Henry Glover at King Records

BY JOHN W. RUMBLE

For Henry Glover, producing King Records artists like Grandpa Jones, Moon Mullican, and Hawkshaw Hawkins proved as easy as slipping into an old pair of cowboy boots.

On March 15, 1949, Moon Mullican was cutting some new sides for King Records at a Hollywood recording studio. With him was Henry Glover, who had recently joined the label as an A & R man. He had come to the West Coast to record Ivory Joe Hunter, then one of King's top r&b performers, and scheduled studio time with Mullican on the trip as well. Mullican and Glover had just put the finishing touches on "I'll Sail My Ship Alone," one of three songs Mullican would record that day.

"We stood there over the piano," Glover recalled, "and took the remnants of a thing that he halfway remembered that he had gotten from this gentleman, a buddy of his named Thurston, and we made a song out of it.... You know, the structure was there, because he had the title, had a couple of lines. But way back in the thirties, Jimmie Lunceford had a record on the market called 'I'm Like a Ship At Sea.' And I borrowed some of the ideas ...." This number had been popular with blacks, and Glover's hunch that white buyers would like the ship-at-sea theme proved right on target. The new song was basically upbeat, but melancholy enough to serve as a follow-up to Mullican's hit "Sweeter Than the Flowers," a lament for a mother's death, which the singer-pianist had recorded two years earlier. Just to be safe, Mullican also cut "Sweeter Than the Flowers No. 2" in this March 1949 session. But it was "I'll Sail My Ship Alone" that went to #1 on the charts the following year.

As Glover put it, "I'll Sail My Ship" was "just a good country recording," basically a sentimental piece with standard fiddle-and-steel back-up behind Mullican's piano and vocals. The "B" side of record, however—also recorded on March 15—was "Moon's Tune," a Glover-Mullican collaboration that was more typical of Mullican's boogie tunes, his stock in trade since signing with King in 1946. "I hadn't seen anything like that," said Glover of Mullican's distinctive blues-boogie style. "I know there must have been some [like him], playing in those western bands. But I hadn't seen a white man play the boogie woogie piano that the early black pianists were famous and known for.... Moon had such a great soul, he was just like a black man to me, like he thought, felt, and expressed himself."

With Glover's guidance and musical knowledge, Mullican would soon perfect a driving blues-based sound that exemplified the mingling of country music with rhythm & blues during the years following World War II. In a larger sense, Glover's collaboration with Mullican symbolized a decade of musical and social interchange that paved the way for the rock & roll revolution of the mid-1950s.

Henry Bernard Glover was well-prepared for his role as a King producer, not only by family background, but also by education and musical experience. He was born May 21, 1921, in the resort town of Hot Springs, Arkansas, where his father, John Dixon Glover, worked as a bathhouse attendant. Pearl Ware Glover, Dixon's wife, took care of the couple's three children, Willie, Henry, and Nelson. (A fourth child, John Dixon Glover Jr., died early in life.) Music came naturally to Henry, and by his early teens he was working out chords on the piano and toying with a cornet given to him by an aunt. Although his brother, Nelson, mastered the vibraphone, neither of the elder Glovers were musical. "They looked down on the entertainment field," Henry said; to them, as to many middle class blacks of the day, entertainers were low-life "people off the levee camp." Nevertheless, the young man readily absorbed musical impressions from many sources. Hot Springs radio station KTHS and Little Rock station KLRA featured plenty of country music and carried network broadcasts that exposed him to a wide variety of pop and spiritual groups. Recordings and local street singers let him sample other sounds and styles, including a healthy dose of blues and jazz. During his school years, Glover learned much from music teachers who recognized his talent and took an interest in him. Julia Robinson helped him repair his cornet and coached him in duet singing. John Henderson, who took Mrs. Robinson's place as music teacher at Langston High School, further encouraged young Glover to acquire as much formal training as he could.

Racial interaction also readied Glover for life as a talented black musician in a white man's world. Hot Springs was a "very unusual town," in his estimation, because Northern resorters made up much of the population, and segregation was less rigid there than in many other cities. "I must say that," Glover affirmed. "And it probably had a lot to do with establishing a certain thing in my life." But there were harsh reminders of racial animosity that steeled him for difficulties that lay ahead. One day, shortly after the Glovers had moved next door to a German baker named Benedict, a friend who worked at the bakery warned them that trouble might ensue. Sure enough, the Benedict house burned down soon afterward, and firemen had to wet down the Glover home on the adjoining side to keep the fire from spreading. "The blacks moved in," Glover explained, "and he was gettin' out."

It was a disturbing episode, but poking around in the ruins, Glover found a trumpet book that he took with him to Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College in Huntsville in the fall of 1939. His sister, Willie, had gone off to A&M the year before, following a kinship network established by a cousin who had settled there. After successfully auditioning with bandmaster James Wilson, who approved a musical scholarship for him, Glover took part in the various groups Wilson organized to showcase the young musicians under his tutelage. These included a marching band, concert band, and dance band, as well as assorted quartets and combos. Between course work, performing, and private lessons with Wilson, Glover progressed rapidly in performing and arranging. He was especially impressed with Wilson's broad-minded approach to music. Along with such classical compositions as "William Tell" and "Poet and Peasant," the bandmaster would occasionally throw in minstrel-show numbers with raucous, sliding trombone parts. "That would make the people laugh," Glover said. "He was that commercial."

Meanwhile, music professor Hayes Strider drilled Glover in sight reading and honed his sense of relative pitch. Additionally, Strider taught him principles of harmony, the voicing of instruments within arrangements, techniques of constructing melodic movement within chord progressions, the interplay of harmony and dissonance, the proper spacing of chords, and the use of syncopation. Glover's improving musicianship served him well when he went home between academic years. "In fact," he said, "I was so advanced in music and as a trumpet player that the white musicians invited me to become part of their big band. I was the first black, or the only black maybe, ever to have played with this band that came out of the Hot Springs white high school."

Back in Huntsville in the fall of 1940, Glover told James Wilson about the summer. "He says, 'Oh, you've been playing with the Ofays, huh?' I said, 'Yeah.' " Glover had heard the expression used by blacks in reference to whites, but Wilson explained that "ofay" was pig latin for the word "foe." Wilson had a deeper message as well, Glover stressed. "He said, 'Well, you can't be afraid of the foe. You can't fear the foe. You gotta go with it.' And that's what I did throughout my whole career. I was not afraid of the Ofay, or anybody else, really, when I had prepared myself not to have to be.... [Wilson's] thinking was constantly into developing me into leadership."

For a time, it looked as though Glover might follow in James Wilson's footsteps as a bandmaster. Following his graduation from Alabama A&M in 1943 with a Bachelor of Science in education, Glover enrolled in a master's degree program in political science at Wayne University in Detroit, where he lived with his father's brother Arthur. Henry still kept his hand in music, however, as choir director at St. Stephen's African Methodist Episcopal Church. A hectic schedule and the lure of performing made school seem less and less attractive, and the young trumpet player soon found himself working in a sextet in a local night club called Little Sam's. When big-name black bands led by Duke Ellington, Lucky Millinder, Cab Calloway, and Buddy Johnson played Detroit's Paradise Theater, many of the musicians would often stop by the club and sit in. Before he knew it, Glover was on the road with Johnson's group. "I had to leave on account of illness," he said with a smile. "I got sick of education." In addition to touring with Johnson's outfit, Glover recorded with the band and did some arranging for Johnson's recording sessions.

Glover and Johnson parted ways over a pay dispute several months later, but by this time Glover had established a comfortable base in New York with help from Ruth Catherine Johnson, a longtime family friend who had done well in the cosmetics business there. Attempting to keep him off the road and wean him away from music, she renovated an apartment for him and bought him a new piano. "So what did I care about Buddy Johnson giving me a notice?" Glover said. "I laughed at him. But I still had that music thing in me, and the people that knew that I was in New York were still after me to come with their bands." During the mid-1940s, he worked briefly as trumpet player and arranger with bands fronted by Tiny Bradshaw and Willie Bryant, playing freelance engagements between stints with these groups. "Thelonious Monk and I were in a band with a guy that had just left Duke Ellington's band called Skippy Williams," Glover remembered. "We started playing dates with Skippy up around Massachusetts and the neighboring states there around New York." One afternoon when Williams was auditioning his band for the manager of New York's Savoy Ballroom, orchestra leader Lucky Millinder brought his group in for a rehearsal and gave the Williams band a listen. Millinder liked what he heard and made Glover an offer of "something like $250" per week. "I was a trumpet player on call," Glover said, "and I made good money from that. I didn't have to go out on the road. But when Lucky came along and offered me the job, I went with him because I liked the class of the band."

Young man with a horn: Glover's formal education at Alabama A&M paved the way for his commercial success.

Traveling with Millinder, as with Johnson, Bradshaw, and Bryant, Glover played for dances held in tobacco barns and small town lodge halls, as well as for shows staged in big-city auditoriums. In many

Glover's skills as writer, arranger, and producer widened his reputation in the music industry. Here he poses for an ad endorsing Baldwin Pianos.

Southern venues, he recalled, "there would be sections, where they would have a rope between the black and white. This was the 'liberal' part of it. Blacks would be on one side, whites on the other, at the same time. But before that, they had it whereas we would play for the whites up until midnight, and then blacks from midnight to three, or whatever. We would play a double date." In the North, Glover and his fellow musicians followed the black theater circuit, with New York's Apollo Theater as the lead engagement. From there, bands would usually move in succession to Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, and Louisville, and back again. Life on the road could be grinding, but he was earning a decent salary and bolstering his income through songwriting and arranging.

Glover's role as Millinder's leading writer and arranger led directly to his long and profitable association with King Records. Glover had tried his hand at penning lyrics while still in high school but generally composed instrumentals until he began working with Millinder and saxophone player Bull Moose Jackson, Millinder's featured singer of the mid-1940s. During one of Millinder's stops in Cincinnati, probably in mid-1945, King Records founder Sydney Nathan approached Millinder about signing with Queen Records, a new rhythm & blues label Nathan was starting as a companion to King, launched in 1943 to market country music. Millinder was under contract to another label at the time, but that didn't deter the bandleader and the record executive from making a deal. As Glover told music researcher Arnold Shaw, Millinder "suggested that Nathan talk to his vocalist, Bull Moose Jackson, which he did, and then to his arranger—meaning me—which he did." The result was a new recording act called Bull Moose Jackson & His Buffalo Bearcats, with Millinder temporarily controlling Jackson's contract. Glover hurriedly wrote out some arrangements and assisted with the group's first recordings.

As Glover was well aware, there was a ready market for standard pop love songs among black and white buyers alike. Now that he'd made a commitment to commercial music, he was quick to capitalize on Bull Moose Jackson's facility with this sort of material. In 1947, Glover struck paydirt as the writer of "I Love You, Yes I Do," a song he conceived while working with Millinder in New Orleans.

"I was standing outside the door at this dance hall wherever we were playing," he recalled, "and I heard a guy say to a girl, 'Baby, you know I love you, yes I do.'" The double affirmative caught Glover's ear and his interest in dialects, and when the band got back to New York he and Millinder worked out the song at Glover's apartment, using the bridge from an earlier song Glover had written. Actually, the composition was almost entirely Glover's; Millinder's contribution, Glover said with a wink, was "enthusiasm." In any case, the two musicians copyrighted the song through Nathan's main publishing firm, Lois Music, with Millinder using the name of his girlfriend, Sally Nix, instead of his own. (Glover explained why: "He had an ASCAP contract, and I was a BMI writer, so in order to claim the royalties [from BMI] on these songs that we were writing together, he put 'em in her name.") Recorded in New York in August 1947, featuring Bull Moose Jackson's melodious vocal, "I Love You" became a strong seller.

In 1948, Jackson hit with two more love songs, "All My Love Belongs to You" and "I Can't Go On Without You," both credited to Glover and Nix. Glover estimated the sales on these hits in the range of 250,000 copies each. The resulting royalty income was substantial enough that Henry's wife, Doris

Davis, whom he married in 1945, no longer had to work and could devote herself to raising a family, which eventually included three children, Joni, Leslie, and Ware. Also, Glover could now give up his chair in Millinder's orchestra and focus on songwriting and arranging for Millinder's personal appearances, recording sessions, and an NBC network radio series that lasted some six months. One notable program in this series, evidently aired in 1950, starred W. C. Handy playing his legendary "St. Louis Blues," with the orchestra playing Glover's arrangements behind him.

Glover's achievements were not lost on Syd Nathan, the driving force behind King Records and possibly the most colorful music executive of his time. During the 1940s and early 1950s, Nathan built King into one of the nation's leading independent record labels, competing successfully with the much larger Decca, RCA, Capitol, and Columbia labels for the attention of an increasingly affluent public.

Together with family members and other investors, Nathan organized a group of interrelated companies, including Royal Plastics, which handled record pressing; the King label, for recording and distribution; and Lois Music, a BMI affiliate, to control publishing rights. The King complex eventually included a complete recording studio and photographic laboratory to process record labels (and later, album covers). Most smaller labels relied on independent distributors, but Nathan set up King distribution outlets from coast to coast.

"I have developed a system," he would boast, "of running a record company that all I have to go to the outside [for] is to sell the record. And I don't have to do that, because I have my distributors there."

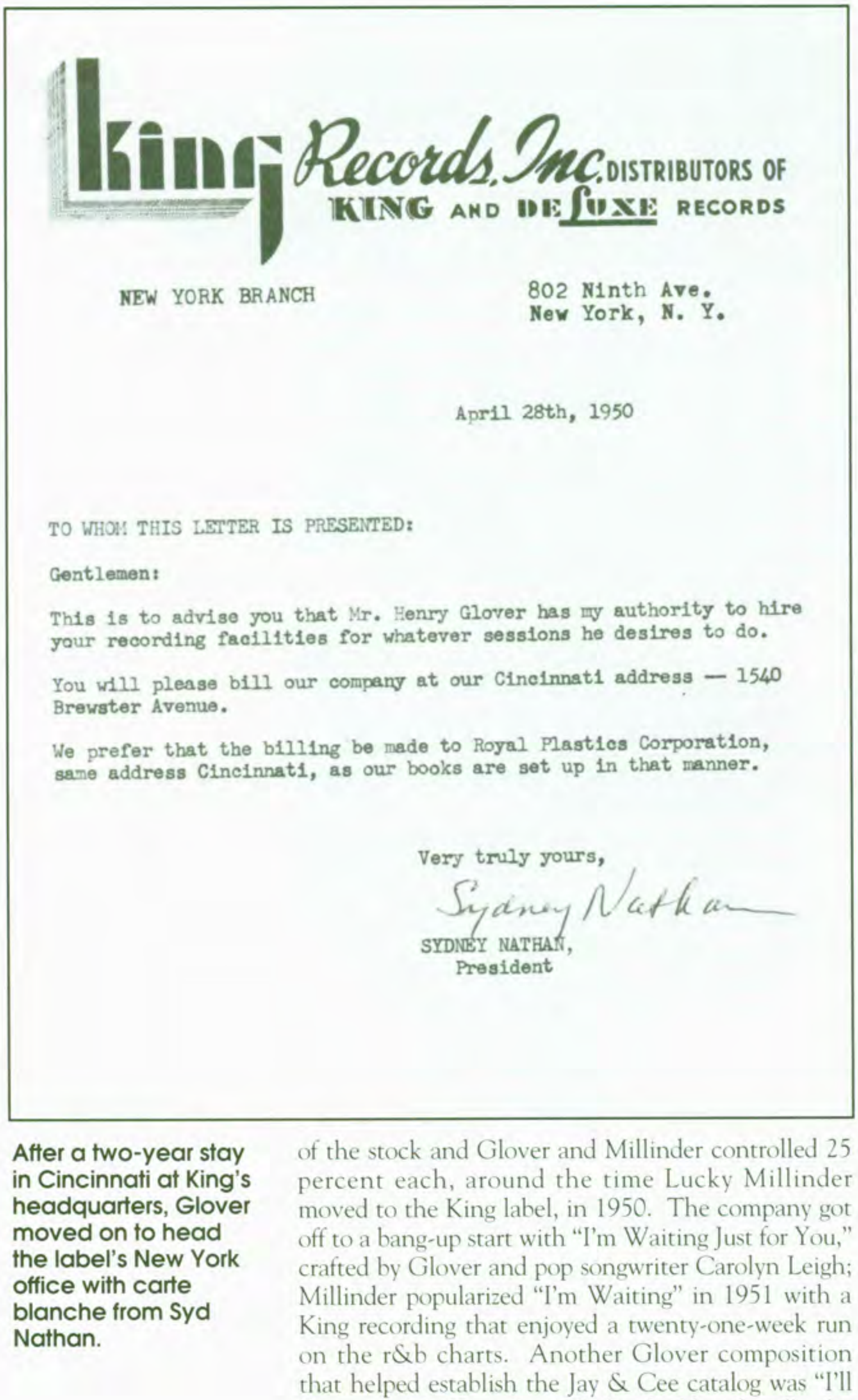
After merging Queen Records into his King operation, Nathan started the Federal label in 1950 to market his lengthening list of r&b acts; acquired masters from the DeLuxe, Miracle, and Bethlehem labels; and issued new r&b sides on the DeLuxe label. Like any sharp record company boss, he formed numerous publishing companies with his artists and producers; Nathan grouped his under the Lois Music umbrella. On one occasion, he even threatened to go it alone and collect his own performance royalties from broadcasters, though Glover saw this as part of Nathan's attempt to bludgeon BMI into increasing its annual guarantee to Lois. A more effective tactic Nathan used with BMI was threatening to switch the Lois catalog to ASCAP. Glover cooperated in the negotiations by temporarily using the pseudonym Henry Bernard, as he did on "I'll Sail My Ship Alone," but never became an ASCAP writer.

Along with a good-humored appreciation for Nathan's "egomania," Glover had a genuine regard for Nathan, who dropped out of school to wait tables and began his business career with a small used record store in a black section of Cincinnati. "He thought he knew more than anyone would ever know about the business," Glover said, laughing. "And he perhaps did. A lot more than many.... He knew more about the business than any one person that they had back there during those times." The former King producer thus found it strange that Nathan built much of the King physical plant on land the company didn't own, an oversight that Nathan and his heirs later came to regret.

To implement his expansion strategy, Nathan cemented relationships with a number of producers during the late 1940s and 1950s. In addition to Glover, these included Ralph Bass, who worked with r&b acts on the Federal and King labels; Dewey Bergman and Milton DeLugg, whom Nathan recruited for a brief and largely uneventful foray into the pop market; WCKY's Nelson King, who worked with country acts for a time; and several others. With the possible exception of Nathan himself, however, no producer straddled the country and r&b fields as successfully as Glover did. Late in 1948, Nathan put him on the King payroll to the tune of $150 per week, with another $100 per week from Lois Music as an advance against songwriting royalties and an expense account routed through Royal Plastics. "I don't care whether you were black or white," Glover said, "it was a big break."

About this same time, Nathan persuaded Glover to move from New York to Cincinnati, initially for a period of six months, to become even more familiar with the King operation. Further increases in salary, some of them retroactive, enticed the young executive to remain for approximately two years before returning to New York. "My wife was a New York person," he explained. "She loved New York. And we were, at the time, sort of torn between whether we were gonna stay [in Cincinnati]." Ultimately, Glover went back to help run King's New York office, as he and Nathan had originally planned, but still maintained a strong presence in Cincinnati. Many times he would travel to Ohio and back by plane within a single day. On other trips, he used a company apartment that Nathan rented for itinerant producers like Glover and Ralph Bass. Either way, producers' meetings were not easily forgotten. "When they all assembled," Glover remembered, "there was Syd Nathan sitting behind that oval desk giving out instructions to the A&R men one by one, or all as a group—presiding over 'em, directing, and mostly giving 'em hell if things weren't going right in their particular category."

Grateful as he was to Nathan, Glover felt cheated by Nathan's policy of licensing songs in the Lois catalog to King and its affiliated labels for one cent per recorded side—half the statutory rate that United States copyright law then required. To placate the newly recruited King staffer, Nathan organized Jay & Cee Music, in which Nathan controlled 50 percent



King Records, Inc. DISTRIBUTORS OF
KING AND **DE LUXE** RECORDS

NEW YORK BRANCH

802 Ninth Ave.
New York, N. Y.

April 28th, 1950

TO WHOM THIS LETTER IS PRESENTED:

Gentlemen:

This is to advise you that Mr. Henry Glover has my authority to hire your recording facilities for whatever sessions he desires to do.

You will please bill our company at our Cincinnati address — 1540 Brewster Avenue.

We prefer that the billing be made to Royal Plastics Corporation, same address Cincinnati, as our books are set up in that manner.

Very truly yours,

Sydney Nathan

SYDNEY NATHAN,
President

After a two-year stay in Cincinnati at King's headquarters, Glover moved on to head the label's New York office with carte blanche from Syd Nathan.

of the stock and Glover and Millinder controlled 25 percent each, around the time Lucky Millinder moved to the King label, in 1950. The company got off to a bang-up start with "I'm Waiting Just for You," crafted by Glover and pop songwriter Carolyn Leigh; Millinder popularized "I'm Waiting" in 1951 with a King recording that enjoyed a twenty-one-week run on the r&b charts. Another Glover composition that helped establish the Jay & Cee catalog was "I'll Drown in My Tears," a 1952 hit for blues bandleader Sonny Thompson, with Lula Reed on vocal, and a 1956 hit for r&b superstar Ray Charles. Royalties from songs like these allowed Glover to support his retired father and improve his own lifestyle considerably. "I could buy a couple of pairs of overalls," the songwriter chuckled, recalling his dramatic rise in personal income. But with lucrative copyrights at stake, Glover soon rankled at having to split publishing royalties with Millinder and pressed for parity with Nathan in the Jay & Cee enterprise.

"Knowing a little about corporate law and structure," Glover said, "I knew that unless I could appoint two directors to the board and create stalemate, I was up shit's creek. That's when I acquired Millinder's stock." Although Nathan continued to give his record labels a one-cent rate to license material his publishing companies owned, Glover's full 50-percent stake in Jay & Cee now made up for the resulting reduction in the writer's royalties he received from King. "Whatever I was doing," Glover asserted, "I wanted my share."

While songs like "I'm Waiting Just for You" and "I'll Drown in My Tears" proved Glover's knack for writing pop-oriented ballads, he poured most of his energies into developing King's country and r&b acts, most of whose output was considerably earthier than Millinder's or Thompson's love songs. To be sure, Glover's work with Millinder, Bull Moose Jackson, and other black bandleaders had led Nathan to enlist him for help in the rapidly emerging r&b field, but Nathan placed no limitations on his new find and eagerly employed Glover's talent in country sessions. For his part, Glover regarded himself first and foremost as a musician. His African American heritage gave him a leg up in r&b, of course, but his training and interests encompassed many music markets.

In the country field, Glover recorded acts that Nathan signed; many, in fact, had joined the King fold before Glover came on board as a salaried producer. Along with the label's country artists, Nathan also had the last word in choosing material, though once in a while, as with the Wayne Raney hit "Why Don't You Haul Off and Love Me," Glover was first to spot a potential hit, and his opinions were almost always valued. On occasion, Nathan would notify the producer well in advance of a recording date and ask him to consult the artist involved and come up with material, with help from professional songwriters, if need be. But with country performers, Glover mainly brought his talents to bear in preparing for sessions and in completing the sessions themselves. Hawkshaw Hawkins, for instance, would sometimes stay with Nathan or Glover when visiting Cincinnati to record, and the three men would gather at Nathan's house to map out the next day's work. In the studio, Glover would help artists and back-up musicians run through songs and decide on tempos and instrumental arrangements. He would also work the mixing board, either by himself or in conjunction with King engineers like Eddie Smith, a former member of Millinder's band whom Glover himself had helped bring into the firm.

Henry Glover's musical ability and his way of relating to musicians were instrumental in the label's success in country music. Early in the history of the company, when Nathan ran most of the country sessions himself, it would probably be fair to say that he succeeded in spite of his limited musical knowledge and explosive personality. Short and overweight, handicapped by asthma and poor vision that forced him to wear Coke-bottle eyeglasses, Nathan was full of bluster and bluff, and his loud, abrasive manner sometimes put musicians off. "They loved him," Glover said, "but not in the studio because he was too gross, you know." In contrast, Glover knew how to make musicians feel comfortable. But in spite of the uneasiness Nathan sometimes caused, the self-styled King of King liked to keep his hand in country sessions and sometimes assisted producers or engineers by working the mixing control panel or the cutting lathe. As a result, most of the Glover's country sessions took place in Cincinnati, either in the company's own studio or in the independent Herzog studio.

Glover worked smoothly with the Delmore Brothers, who combined elements of r&b and country. Alabama natives, the Delmores had a solid grounding in traditional blues, as evidenced by their earlier RCA records like "Brown's Ferry Blues" and "I've Got the Big River Blues." The brother duo starred on Nashville's Grand Ole Opry during the 1930s and moved on to WLW's "Midwestern Hayride" in the 1940s. Although it wasn't quite as popular as the Opry, the Hayride packed quite a wallop thanks to WLW's 50,000-watt transmitter, and WLW's country lineup formed a natural pool of talent for the King label, whose Brewster Avenue headquarters were not far from the radio station. The Delmores and other WLW acts who recorded for King also had the advantage of WCKY, a powerful radio outlet located just across the Ohio River in Covington, Kentucky. Here, disc jockey Nelson King was a sympathetic and influential gatekeeper to the listening public.

In October of 1946, prior to recording with Glover, the Delmore Brothers had cut "Freight Train Boogie," one of the first boogie tunes to hit the postwar country market. This recording cracked *Billboard*'s country jukebox chart the following December and ultimately rose to the #2 slot. In subsequent sessions the Delmores recorded a wealth of black-influenced material, looking for another blues or boogie hit. On May 6, 1949, they found it, when Glover took them into the King studio along with harmonica wizard Wayne Raney to record "Blues Stay Away from Me."

Glover said he derived this number from songs he had written earlier. The idea began with "Boarding House Blues," which Glover had arranged as theme music for a 1948 movie short by the same title. Lucky Millinder began using the number on the road, and his RCA recording of the tune, recast as "D' Natural Blues," first made *Billboard*'s r&b charts in April 1949. Meanwhile, bandleader Paul Williams had gotten a copy of Glover's "Boardinghouse Blues" arrangement from Andy Gibson, a young arranger then working for Millinder along with Glover. Williams had beaten Millinder to the street and gained a chartmaking hit on Savoy Records with "The Hucklebuck," whose similarity to "Boardinghouse Blues" Glover considered more than coincidental. Glover obtained a favorable ruling from the American Federation of Musicians declaring Glover and Millinder the rightful composers, but later he and Gibson made a handshake agreement to keep their respective songs. As it turned out, "The Hucklebuck" eclipsed "D' Natural Blues," went to #1, and stayed on the r&b charts for 32 weeks.

"I felt out in the cold," said Glover. "So I went to Cincinnati and got the Delmores together and came up with 'Blues Stay Away From Me,' based on the same melodic structure and the [electric guitar] doing the same moving at the bottom, with the bom-ba-pa-dum-ba-pa-dum, and we came up with 'Blues Stay Away from Me.' . . . I taught Wayne the melody, which was actually nothing but [an] old blues thing, very closely, from years ago. And Wayne played that harmonica on it right away." Electric guitarist Zeke Turner supplied the low-register melodic-rhythmic sequence that unifies the arrangement. As Glover recollected, Louis Innis played rhythm guitar, and Ralph Gunther played bass. The lyrics, Glover said, were largely Alton Delmore's, though Alton and Rabon Delmore both shared songwriting credits along with Glover and Raney. The record made all three of the country charts *Billboard* was publishing by mid-1949—retail sales (#2), jukebox (#1), and radio airplay (#2). "That did my heart good when I saw the thing selling," Glover related. The hit also piqued Syd Nathan's interest. Once sales on "Blues Stay Away from Me" started to climb, the ever-combative Nathan wanted to demand royalties on "The Hucklebuck" from his competitors, but Glover dis-

Rabon
Best of Luck Always
To our
"Scrapbook"
fans
Delmore
Brothers
Alton

Glover co-wrote, arranged, and produced the 1949 hit "Blues Stay Away from Me" with the Delmore Brothers, Rabon *(left)* and Alton.

missed the idea. "I says, 'Syd, that was before this. This had nothing to do with it. We have "Blues, Stay Away from Me." Let it stay as that. The other thing is over.' "

> You couldn't sell Wynonie Harris to white folk, and black folk weren't buying Hank Penny. But black folk might buy Wynonie Harris doing a country tune.
> —Henry Glover

Nathan relented, but Decca country producer Paul Cohen soon gave him something else to rant and rave about. Cohen saw a good thing coming in "Blues Stay Away from Me" and recorded the song in Nashville with a combo led by Owen Bradley, Cohen's right-hand man in Nashville recording sessions. According to Glover, Cohen heard Nathan play an acetate dub of "Blues Stay Away from Me" at a music convention in Chicago. "Paul Cohen heard it," Glover said, "and saw Syd put it back in his briefcase, and he stole it out [of] the briefcase and went to Nashville and recorded it with Louis Innis, Zeke Turner—the same musicians that I used up there behind the Delmores.... They put it out with Owen, and it was a hit. But we came out a day later (or something like that) with 'Blues Stay Away from Me,' and it swept 'em out. Then, the next time I assembled these musicians to come up from Nashville, I didn't allow Syd in the studio because it disturbed [them], you know. I said, 'Syd, don't come down there. We don't need you.' But he would like to come in. But this time, I had these musicians there—the same ones, he found out, that had recorded this thing for Paul Cohen. I had the musicians down in the studio. Louis Innis was always shaky and nervous, anyway. And Zeke Turner was there, and I think Jerry Byrd. . . . Syd came there and picked up the microphone from the control room and started cussin' 'em. Oh, God, he could cuss 'em. He said, 'You bunch of goddamn thieves!'. . . Then they all ran out of the studio back there to talk with him. And one guy went in and said, 'Syd, look. We didn't mean to do that. We just played what the man [asked us to play].' . . . I think it was Jerry Byrd [who] said, 'Listen Syd, don't be hollering and screaming. I wasn't even on the session. I wasn't on the session.' Syd says, 'All I can say is, when you get hit in the butt with a buzz saw, you can't blame one tooth. You gotta blame the whole goddamn saw!' That meant all of 'em were responsible for taking his song and taking his record."

Like the Delmores, Wayne Raney handily lifted ideas from r&b in sessions with Glover, including a Cincinnati session held on May 16, 1949. As Glover remembered, "I recorded Wayne Raney with a thing called 'Why Don't You Haul Off and Love Me?' It was my arrangement, because I had incorporated a little of my musical know-how in capturing a rhythm with a pause and a break. If you listen to the record, I established how important those lines were, of the title, 'Why Don't You Haul Off and Love Me.' In actual beats, I cut it in half. . . . I cut it in half and made a long pickup of it." (The effect of the change in time signature was to slow down the three words, "Why . . . Don't . . . You," for emphasis.) Raney's disc shot to to #1 on the country charts and prompted Glover to record the song with Bull Moose Jackson in September; by year's end, Jackson's rendition had become a #2 r&b hit.

Admittedly, there were business reasons as well as artistic ones for recording the same song with country and r&b artists. Partly it was a matter of targeting product for the black and white markets. Even though country singers and fans were delving more deeply into r&b and r&b acts were using country songs, the two groups of buyers were still largely distinct. "You couldn't sell Wynonie Harris to country folk," Glover told Arnold Shaw, "and black folk weren't buying Hank Penny. But black folk might buy Wynonie Harris doing a country tune." Moreover, Syd Nathan's ambitions as a music mogul came into play in this sales effort. Nathan insisted on controlling publishing rights to the vast majority of tunes released on King, and if he, Glover, or other King producers could obtain multiple recordings of a song, so much the better for Lois Music, Nathan's principal publishing company. "Since Syd published most of the tunes we recorded," Glover confirmed, "it was also augmenting his publishing income and building important copyrights. He was a smart businessman and didn't miss a trick."

While Henry Glover leaned toward country artists who shared his love for rhythm & blues, he worked well with more traditional country singers and accepted them on their own terms. One of the first country acts he recorded in Cincinnati was Jimmy Osborne, the Kentucky Folk Singer, who composed "The Death of Little Kathy Fiscus" about the real-life tragedy of a girl who fell into a well and died after days of unsuccessful rescue attempts. "We were afraid to release it," Glover related, "until we got certain rights, or found out whether we were within rights to release the record." The producer accompanied Nathan to California, engaged a lawyer, and secured the family's permission. "The record was released," Glover went on to say, "and it was quite a big hit. After that, of course, Jimmy became the tear-jerker in that area. He sort of put himself in that position." Not long afterward, Osborne used the story of a statuette, which faithful Christians believed to be shedding real tears, as the basis for "The Tears of Saint Anne."

With country stalwarts like Osborne, Grandpa Jones, and Cowboy Copas, Glover's job consisted largely of assisting in the recording studio. Their respective styles had jelled well before Glover came into the picture, and he had little impact on their songs or recordings. Still, he offered interesting anecdotes about these important country artists. Jones, Glover said, "would bounce up and down as we recorded. I can recall to this day the first session I ever had with him. I said, 'Gramp, you're gonna have to try to stay in one position on that microphone in order to get the sound that I want.' He said, 'By God, I've been recording up here for years like this, and there ain't been nothing wrong with it!' But he cooperated, and we did some very good records together." Glover especially enjoyed recording a duet on "Mule Train" with Jones and Copas, in which Copas, gentlemanly and dignified, sings "his straight, good-voice melody" while Jones inserts ad lib comedy lines between Copas's melodic phrases. "It was right up Gramp's alley to come on with just great words," Glover remembered. "Hey, maybe they're not on the record, but I do recall some of them that just cracked me up in the studio."

As he helped King gain hit after hit in the r&b field, Glover began to look for more country acts who could use r&b elements as the Delmore Brothers and Wayne Raney did. The York Brothers' "Hamtramack Mama," recorded for Nashville's Bullet label soon after World War II, indicated some promise for this duo as blues-influenced country singers. Glover pushed the Yorks to cut songs like "Motor City Boogie," which had crossover potential for the pop or r&b markets as well as country, but the two musicians didn't duplicate the Delmores' success. "They were of the old-school type, but trying very hard," Glover said of the York team, looking back after forty years. "But there was just so much you could get out of someone like that." At the same time, Glover thought the sound the York Brothers achieved set precedents for the Everly Brothers, who burst out of the country ranks to conquer the pop charts just a few years later.

Another traditional country act Glover attempted to influence was Hawkshaw Hawkins, a mainstay of Wheeling, West Virginia's WWVA "World's Original Jamboree" and, later, the Grand Ole Opry. "I've never seen a guy try any harder than Hawkshaw Hawkins to try to grasp what I was trying to get across of the [rock & roll] change coming," Glover said. "Hawkshaw had that same flexibility that I could have worked with—had he continued at King—that Moon had. Hawkshaw could have been a rock singer." (In the mid-1950s, Hawkins left King and had one chart-making disc with Columbia in 1959 before returning to his former label. His "Lonesome 7-7203" topped *Billboard*'s country charts in 1963, the year he was killed in the same plane crash that took the lives of fellow Opry stars Patsy Cline and Cowboy Copas.) But in the early 1950s, Hawkins "proved stubborn" and refused to project the way Glover wanted. "I don't think he really understood what I was after," Glover concluded. Hawkins handled numbers like "Doghouse Boogie" well enough, but Glover had better luck with him on covers of pop-tinged hits such as Lucky Millinder's "I'm Waiting Just For You" and Pee Wee King's "Slow Poke."

In a strict musical sense, Glover's quest for country performers with an r&b edge culminated in Aubrey "Moon" Mullican, King of the Hillbilly Piano Players. Born in 1909 in the Polk County, Texas, village of Corrigan, he absorbed the blues and boogie styles of pianists who worked East Texas lumber camps. As researcher Rich Kienzle has noted, Mullican began playing cafes and brothels while still in his teens, and his nickname probably derived from his late-night work or from a fondness for moonshine. During the thirties and forties, the pianist often played radio shows and dancehalls with fellow Texan Cliff Bruner, leader of the Texas Wanderers, the Showboys, and other musical aggregations. As a recording artist, Mullican revealed his penchant for black music as early as his first King session, evidently made in October 1946. Among the songs he recorded were "Don't Ever Take My Picture Down" and "What Have I Done That Made You Go Away," both of which rely on high-energy electric guitar and fiddle breaks in addition to Mullican's pumping piano. "That type of arrangement," Glover said of the latter performance, "was about as far advanced as country music had come in style. It would have been considered, back then, a little ahead of its time with the country musicians." Glover believed "What Have I Done" may have been borrowed from "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't," a contemporary r&b hit by Louis Jordan. Of the first eighteen numbers Mullican recorded for King, however, his rendition of "New Jole Blon," a take-off on Harry Choates's Cajun French "Jole Blon," was the one that became a 1947 hit, counted among King's first in the country market.

Glover *(left)* shares the glory with King Records chief Syd Nathan (center) and BMI's Bob Burton at a BMI awards ceremony, ca. 1958.

Had Hawkshaw Hawkins stayed at King, Glover said, he might have become a rock & roll singer.

But given Mullican's musical roots and Glover's market-spanning studio work, it was only a matter of time before performer and producer found a blues-boogie groove. "Southern Hospitality," recorded in Cincinnati in April 1950, took a long step this direction. Glover speculated that on this session James Paul, famous for his brush strokes on Tiny Bradshaw's 1953 r&b hit "Soft," may have played drums. (Kienzle identifies the drummer as Richard Pryne, and a definitive answer may require further investigation; in any event, Glover warned researchers against relying on session credits that have appeared on King or Starday-King albums.)

On July 3, 1950, Glover and Mullican returned to the King studio. In this session, Mullican cut chart-making cover versions of Nat 'King' Cole's smash hit "Mona Lisa" and Leadbelly's "Good Night, Irene," a song popularized on disc by the Weavers, Ernest Tubb and Red Foley, and other country and pop acts. Musically, though, "Well, Oh Well," stands as the jewel among this group of performances. This song is credited to Henry Bernard (Henry Glover), and Lois Mann (Syd Nathan), and Tiny Bradshaw, whose recording of it entered *Billboard*'s r&b chart in May 1950 and peaked at #2. Mullican's disc was a deliberate cover. In fact, Glover used two musicians from Bradshaw's combo: bass player Clarence Mack and a black drummer named Calvin "Eagle Eye" Shields. (Kienzle again credits the drum part to Richard Pryne, but Glover was insistent on this issue.) Listening to the recording in 1990, Glover was still proud of the musical results, even though the recording didn't chart. "[Moon's] version was so good that ten years later it would have been a good record," the producer stated, "because it had everything in it that was proven to be advancement, such as the stops." Rhythmic fills between lines of the verses make the performance even more exciting. "Moon fell right into that," Glover said. "I didn't have to tell Moon where to come in, or where not to come in, or how many bars. See, he was perfect with time."

For Mullican, recording with black musicians was an extension of the jam sessions he'd been joining for years in clubs across the nation. In Cincinnati, Mullican frequented tiny, hole-in-the-wall night spots as well as the larger Cotton Club, a regular stop for big-time black bands like Bradshaw's. "We would go to a club together," Glover related, "not after a session but during the time we were rehearsing for a session. . . . They called him up onstage in a black club, and he'd get up there and play. . . . They loved him. They loved him." Mullican wasn't the first country performer to record and perform with black musicians, of course; Jimmie Davis and Al Dexter, among others, had done so before him, and many a country singer had chosen material from black musical traditions. But under Glover's influence, Mullican expressed his fascination with black music on levels that few country artists had ever attained.

In December 1950, Mullican recorded "Cherokee Boogie," a song he'd learned from a performer billed as Chief Redbird, who was working the Michigan area and caught the attention of King's Detroit branch manager Jim Wilson. Mullican's rollicking treatment of the tune became a #7 country hit the following year, joining Red Foley's "Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy," Tennessee Ernie Ford's "Shotgun Boogie," and a host of others in the boogie craze that was rapidly gathering force in the country music world. In this instance, Glover pointed out, it was Mullican who established the song, with a King r&b act making the cover; Bull Moose Jackson cut "Cherokee Boogie" in May 1951, though his version did not chart.

By 1952, Mullican was a regular on the Grand Ole Opry. While on tour with Hank Williams, then the show's reigning honky-tonk hero, Mullican co-wrote "Jambalaya," a Cajunesque number whose melody he and Williams seem to have extracted from the song "Big Texas." Williams published the song under his name through his publisher, Acuff-Rose, apparently with Mullican's blessing. Mullican, as did other King artists, suspected Nathan of fudging on royalty payments, and Williams shared songwriting royalties with Nathan under a gentleman's agreement. Mullican recorded "Jambalaya" for King in July 1952, but it was no match for Williams's MGM version, which went to #1 later that year.

Mullican's immersion in rhythm and blues, deepening with encouragement from Glover, led to a stunning quartet of recordings made in Cincinnati on March 6, 1953. (Researcher Michel Ruppli's date for this session seems more likely than the one Kienzle gives—1950.) For these performances Glover added horns, evidently for the first time in his work with Mullican. Complete horn credits have not been finalized, but Glover identifies one of the saxophonists as Rufus Gore, who played with Tiny Bradshaw, and the producer almost certainly borrowed other players from black bands he was recording for King. The first song Mullican cut that day was "Rocket to the Moon," a blues-based number on which Glover himself joined in the background vocals. "That was perhaps a cover," Glover said, "over from a thing that I had done with Todd Rhodes called 'Rocket 69.'. . . Instead of 'Rocket 69' we said 'Rocket to the Moon,' to change it around and keep it what was considered being clean, and being able to be played on the air, because they were beginning to get stricter and stricter on double entendre stuff."

Next came "I Done It," credited to Glover, Mullican, Louis Innis, and "Lois Mann." Earlier, Glover had followed up the 5 Royales' King recording of "Baby, Don't Do It," which hit the r&b charts in January 1953, by writing "Baby, I'm Doing It" and recording it for King with r&b artist Anisteen Allen. His coauthor on this song was Fred Weismantel, an arranger who worked with Glover in New York. To encourage airplay, Glover and Weismantel put Alan Freed's name on the tune and cut Syd Nathan in as "Lois Mann" for good measure. Allen's recording charted for two weeks in late February and early March, and Mullican's "I Done It" became the third song in this series.

After knocking out "Rheumatism Boogie," a humorous ditty he wrote with Louis Innis, Mullican turned to "Grandpa Stole My Baby," written and recorded for the r&b market by King/DeLuxe artist Roy Brown. As he did with his arrangement of "Well, Oh Well," Glover used his previous r&b arrangement of "Grandpa Stole My Baby," recorded by Brown in December 1952, for Mullican's session. "I don't remember it selling that much," said Glover, speaking of Brown's rendition of "Grandpa." "But I knew it was a good record, and I gave it to Moon to do a country version of whatever we called whatever he was doing. It's certainly not country. It looks like it was that forerunner of the rock & roll era."

In what proved to be one of Mullican's last few sessions with King, Glover called on Boyd Bennett & His Rockets, a white rock & roll band he was promoting in the r&b market. Resembling Bill Haley & the Comets, of "Rock Around the Clock" fame, Bennett scored big when his recording of "Seventeen" became a #8 r&b hit in mid-1955, much to Glover's pleasure. "I had pressed hard to get him [Nathan] to record Boyd Bennett," Glover said. "He just didn't want it." The producer was further vindicated when Bennett, on the strength of "Seventeen," landed a slot on one the widely publicized rock & roll extravaganzas Alan Freed was then staging in New York.

On January 26, 1956, Glover brought the aging piano player and the young rocker together in Cincinnati to record eight sides, possibly with assistance from drummer Eagle Eye Shields. The best of the lot were "I'm Mad with You," and "Seven Nights to Rock," marked by a heavy back beat, moving bass lines, and harmonized horn-and-electric guitar fills between vocal phrases. "Had we gone all out in that direction with Moon," Glover mused upon hearing the recordings again in 1990, "he was the ideal rock artist. That's exactly what he was.... He would have been a tremendous rock & roll artist had we started working on him just for that." Indeed, Mullican's recordings might have caught fire with rock & roll fans; sides like the ones he cut with Bennett's group had genuine prospects, though sales did not pan out as expected. On the other hand, as Glover admitted, Mullican "was no spring chicken," and it has been correctly asserted that the balding, heavy-set pianist was unlikely to supplant Elvis Presley or other handsome young rock & roll stars of the day. But in Glover's view, Mullican had the bold, self-confident attitude that many a rocker displayed. "He carried himself like that," the producer said. "Not as a drug addict or anything like that, [although] Moon liked his booze. But he frequented these joints that played that kind of thing. If it's black, or white, or whatever, he would sit in with 'em and feel right at home, and they'd feel at home with him. . . . He should go down in history as a big contributor. Even though these were not big hits with him, they should be listened to and documented as part of that early desire for country music going in that direction."

Throughout the 1950s, Henry Glover continued to live out the racial interaction he was promoting in the recording studio and in the marketplace with Moon Mullican and other King artists, black and white. In the King studio, white country artists readily accepted the black producer because of his musical ability, and one songwriter affectionately nicknamed him the "Hillbilly in Technicolor." When Glover and his wife moved to Cincinnati, they shared an adjoining apartment next to the Nathans for a time, and over the years Nathan and Glover's friendship transcended the business tensions they experienced. ("Taught him how to dress, too," Glover said. "He was so corny in his dress until I carried him downtown to my tailors, and they dressed him up pretty good.") Nathan "had a little respect for me because of my intelligence," Glover said. "'Come and help me mastermind this with your big-time education,' as he would put it. I could speak with his engineers on their level. As a result of many of those things, I came up with many of the improvements in the electronics myself, with Eddie Smith... . Even when I traveled in the South recording country people, never no big deal about it. They took it as something altogether different, not me trying to integrate or anything like that. They saw that I had something to offer [in] whatever I was doing. I knew what I was doing, and people had me there

With Glover's help, Grand Ole Opry star Moon Mullican laid important groundwork for rock & roll.

because I could be of benefit to the artist."

Nevertheless, traveling in a segregated South could be difficult. Glover recalled that on one trip to Texas with Mullican, "Moon sort of realized that maybe there was no hotel that would make an accommodation for me, and with great diplomacy, he came right to the rescue of the whole scene, the whole bit. And he carried me over to a black family's house, friends of his, that put me up well, fed me good. They were friends of Moon's—a lady friend. The next day, we went back down to the studio, and we tried to get something out of a session, but we ended up leaving because the equipment was no good." Sometimes, to disarm whites who might otherwise disapprove of a white man and a black man traveling together, Glover would don a cap and pose as chauffeur for Syd Nathan or for Bernie Pearlman, a King executive who handled paperwork while Glover dealt with artists and songs. "I knew how to get around in the South," Glover stated, "because I had worked in real hip hotels and had been around playing these hotels. . . . If you could out-talk 'em, or outmaneuver some kind of way, you're all right. But they get the upper hand on you, you're in trouble." Did the need to use such tactics anger Glover? Not really, he said. "What the hell [did] we care about that? We had it together for ourselves."

By the late 1950s, Glover was spending less and less time with King's country acts, and many of his country production duties then fell to veteran studio musician Louis Innis. Early on, country music had accounted for some 70 percent of King's sales, but now country took a back seat to r&b as the label's bread and butter. By the time Glover recorded Moon Mullican with the Boyd Bennett band, he was working diligently on r&b with Bill Doggett ("Honky Tonk"), Little Willie John ("Fever"), and the Charms ("Hearts of Stone"), and occasionally making a few records for King himself. New r&b artists were emerging so rapidly that Glover turned some of them—including a young James Brown—over to producer/arranger Andy Gibson, who came up with many of the horn parts integral to Brown's early recordings. In working with r&b performers, Glover generally had more freedom than he had with country artists, both in choosing song material and in calling the shots in the studio. In New York, he mostly used the Belltone Studios, one of whose executives, Les Cahan, was long instrumental in advising Nathan and Glover on technical improvements for the Cincinnati operation. After King acquired an Ampex tape recorder, Glover also made some r&b sessions on the road, including at least one Roy Brown session held in a Carolina tobacco barn. All the while, Glover continued writing, too, and built the Jay & Cee catalog with hits like "Teardrops on Your Letter," recorded by Hank Ballard and released with "The Twist" on the flip side.

Sometime in 1959 or 1960, as Glover put the date, he decided to leave the King organization. During interviews for this article he skirted the issue to a degree, but he did briefly refer to sources of conflict that may help to explain the move. For one thing, Glover and Nathan clashed on studio design. Glover wanted to go into four-channel stereo recording while Nathan ignored his advice and stuck with a three-channel system. More serious was Nathan's attempt, during federal investigations of payola in the recording and broadcasting industries, to deflect criticism from himself by attributing alleged wrongdoing to Glover. "[Nathan] said, 'Whatever was done in connection with payola was done out of the New York office.' That'd mean me, you know." Glover had ample documentation for his expenses and was able to square himself with the Internal Revenue Service, which audited him during this episode. But the whole affair strained his relationship with Nathan and temporarily hurt Glover's rapport with black disc jockeys, who were essential in breaking new hits. The rift was by no means complete, however, and Glover spent a good deal of time with Nathan in Florida as Nathan's health began to wane, late in the 1960s, and the executive began to ponder

Glover and keyboardist Garth Hudson work out an arrangement during a 1975 Paul Butterfield session.

the sale of his companies. Nathan's wife liked having Glover around because he always seemed to cheer the older man out of a tendency toward hypochondria. (Glover joked that Nathan's tombstone should read, "I told you I was sick!")

After leaving King, Glover briefly worked with Hy Weiss's Old Town Records, recording hits like Billy Bland's "Let the Little Girl Dance." He also issued a few discs on his own label, Glover Records. About this same time, he had an offer from ABC, but ultimately decided to go with Roulette Records, where he worked with Joey Dee (hitmaker on "The Peppermint Twist"), Sarah Vaughn, Dinah Washington, Tommy James & the Shondells, Dave "Baby" Cortez, and other artists during the early 1960s. Through these years, he maintained his 50 percent holding in Jay & Cee, his major source of income over the long-term.

Glover rejoined the King operation when Nashville-based Starday Records bought King from Syd Nathan's estate, shortly after Nathan's death, in 1968. Almost immediately following this merger, Starday-King, together with its associated publishing catalogs, was acquired by Lin Broadcasting, a major media corporation. Jim Wilson and Hal Neely, two of Glover's former King colleagues who had moved to Starday prior to the Starday-King merger, persuaded Glover to join the team and run the New York office of Lin's music division. "So Henry came back aboard," Wilson said, "because of his own familiarity with many of the writers and/or artists that were on King, particularly. We felt that would be a valuable addition. Plus, not only his knowledge, but his own skill and talent and a writer and producer to work with artists. And it gave us a base in New York. . . . Through Henry's contact, we were able to record Redd Foxx and Arthur Prysock." Glover also commuted between New York and Cincinnati, as he had done during the decade he'd previously spent with King. But Starday-King did not survive long under the Lin corporate umbrella, and Lin divested itself of its music holdings early in the 1970s. Polydor Records bought King's recording contract with James Brown, who had dominated King sales during the late 1960s. Most of the remaining recording and publishing properties were acquired by partnerships fronted by Hal Neely, music publisher Freddie Bienstock, and songwriters Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller. These interests attempted to keep the former Starday-King recording operation alive under a newly organized company called the Tennessee Recording Corporation (TRC) and wanted Glover to run its Nashville office. Busy with independent productions and sensing the instability of the situation, he refused. His intuition proved correct: TRC soon became dormant and died an early death. Gusto Records acquired the Starday-King masters, and Bienstock wound up with most of the Starday-King publishing interests, including the 50 percent of Jay & Cee Music that Lois Music, King's chief publishing arm, controlled. Glover later sold his half of Jay & Cee to Bienstock as well.

Glover was comfortably fixed, and his songs continued to generate additional income as the years went by. Now he could choose projects as he saw fit. One of those he produced was *The Muddy Waters Woodstock Album*, which won a 1975 Grammy. He also served as producer, conductor, and arranger for Paul Butterfield's 1975 album *Put It In Your Ear*. Not long afterward, he helped make the soundtrack for *The Last Waltz*, a 1978 film directed by Martin Scorsese that documents a concert given by The Band on Thanksgiving, 1976, in San Francisco. Both Waters and Butterfield joined Glover on the latter project, which also included such musical luminaries as Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Neil Diamond, and Emmylou Harris.

In 1986, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) placed Henry Glover's name on its Honor Roll of A&R Producers at a special ceremony given by the Academy's New York Chapter. He richly deserved the honor, a testament to almost half a century of work as songwriter, publisher, producer, performer, and arrangers. He grew up in the South of the 1920s and 1930s—an especially difficult time and place for persons of African American ancestry—and aggressively pursued his education as a means of social mobility and professional fulfillment. As a man and as a musician, he moved easily among individuals of diverse social backgrounds, Northern and Southern, black and white. Likewise, Glover found common ground with persons of many musical tastes, from classical to country. Coming of age in the era of big-band swing, he made a successful transition to rhythm & blues and country. By applying his training and experience in these two genres, he furthered a process of musical synthesis that gave birth to rock & roll. To the end, his close family ties, his easy manner, and his sense of humor bespoke his identity as a cosmopolitan musician with strong southern roots.

Henry Glover died on April 7, 1991, following a massive heart attack. He is survived not only by his large extended family, but also by the hundreds of recorded performances he helped to shape. Taken together, they form a remarkable sampling of mid-20th century American music and enduring gift to the nation and to the world.

Sources and Acknowledgements

The primary sources for this article were five interviews conducted by the author with Henry Glover. Interviews were conducted by telephone on February 15, 1983; March 1, 1983; and March 14, 1983; face-to-face interviews were made in Huntsville, Alabama, on April 15 and April 26, 1990. Quotations from these interviews have been combined for narrative purposes. In addition, the author conducted a series of interviews with former King Records executive Jim Wilson, on February 17, 1983; February 23, 1983; March 3, 1983; March 7, 1983; March 14, 1983; April 4, 1983; and May 16, 1983. The quotation from Wilson used herein comes from the May 16, 1983, interview. The following sources also proved especially helpful: Rich Kienzle, annotator, *Moon Mullican: The King Years, 1946-1956* (Western Records 2001); Arnold Shaw, *Honkers and Shouters: The Golden Years of Rhythm and Blues* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1978); Michel Ruppli, with assistance from Bill Daniel, *The King Label: A Discography*, 2 Vols. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), Nick Tosches, *Country: The Biggest Music in America* (New York: Stein and Day, 1978), and Joel Whitburn's widely used indexes to *Billboard*'s music popularity charts. Additionally, the author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Doris, Leslie, and Ware Glover, of New York; Willie and David Kelley, of Huntsville, Alabama, and their family; Nelson Glover, of Stonybrook, New York; Helen Hill, of Hampton, Virginia; and Alan Stoker, Ronnie Pugh, and Paul Kingsbury, of the Country Music Foundation staff.

Above: **Family and friends join Glover for 1986 NARAS ceremonies in his honor. Top, left to right: Dr. Lolieta Trotter, William McDavid, Ware Glover, Dr. Helen Hill. Front: Arthur Prysock, Mrs. Ruth McDavid, Henry Glover, Leslie Glover, Nelson Glover.**

Right: **Glover knew no musical boundaries. Here he confers with jazz artist Roland Kirk during a 1950s session.**

All Henry Glover photos courtesy of the Glover family

JOHN W. RUMBLE is historian for the Country Music Foundation.

COWBOY SONGSTARS

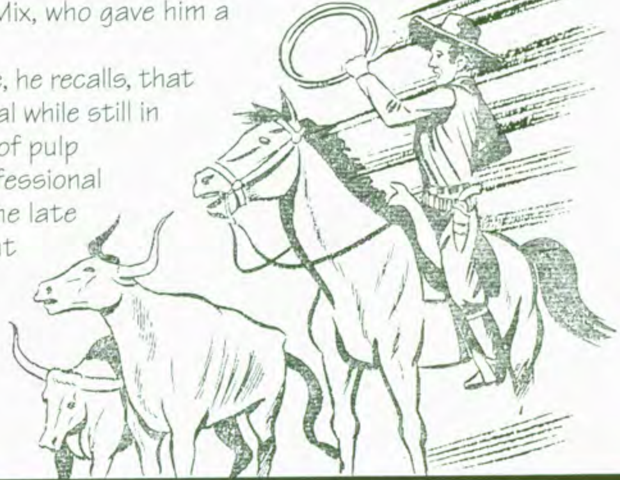
GALLERY

DRAWN by MARIO A. DEMARCO

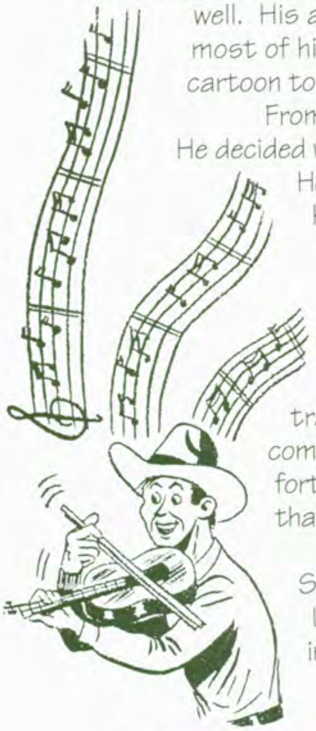
The cartoons on the following pages were all originally published in Cowboy Songs, a now defunct sister magazine of the venerable Country Song Round-Up. We liked the cartoons very much, and contacted William Anderson at Charlton Publications for permission to reprint them and for leads on whereabouts of the artist, Mario DeMarco. We found Mr. DeMarco just where the folks at Charlton said he would be—in West Boylston, Massachusetts, working at his easel on still more cartoons.

As it turns out, Mario DeMarco has been a successful freelance cartoonist for more than fifty years now, and the pen-and-ink drawings that appear on the following pages constitute a very small portion of his life's work. In fact, DeMarco turned out this series of country music cartoons for just a year and a half between March 1951 and November 1952. But his love affair with country and western music (especially western) has lasted much longer than that.

Born and raised in Worcester, Massachusetts, young Mario made his first contact with things western at Saturday afternoon movie matinees as a small boy. Not long afterward, while selling newspapers on the street, he met one of his heroes, Tom Mix, who gave him a dollar for a 2¢ paper. He was hooked.



Mario was about 13 when he began cartooning—around the same time, he recalls, that comic books were coming into vogue in the 1930s. He turned professional while still in high school, submitting his first illustration of Tom Mix to a publisher of pulp westerns. Postponed by Army service during World War II, DeMarco's professional cartooning resumed when he returned to civilian life in 1945. During the late 1940s and 1950s, he freelanced for a number of publishers, turning out drawings for several comic books devoted to such western stars as Tim McCoy and Sunset Carson, plus cartoons for sports publications as well. His association with Cowboy Songs began the way most of his assignments did: he submitted an unsolicited cartoon to Cowboy Songs and they liked it.



From the beginning, Mario was pretty much on his own. He decided which stars he would feature. He hunted up biographical information himself—as well as photos to work from—in books, magazines, and newspapers. For this he was paid the princely sum of $20 a page—good money in those days, and certainly a step up from the $5 a page he had started out making for his cartoons.

After ending his association with Cowboy Songs, DeMarco devoted more and more time to sports cartooning and historic drawings for the Navy Times. Today he concentrates primarily on drawing sports cards for collectors, which are printed by the Beckett company. In his late 60s now, he still works two or three hours a day, more if he's on a deadline. "In forty years of cartooning I've never missed a deadline," he says, "because if you miss a deadline that editor is going to look for another cartoonist."

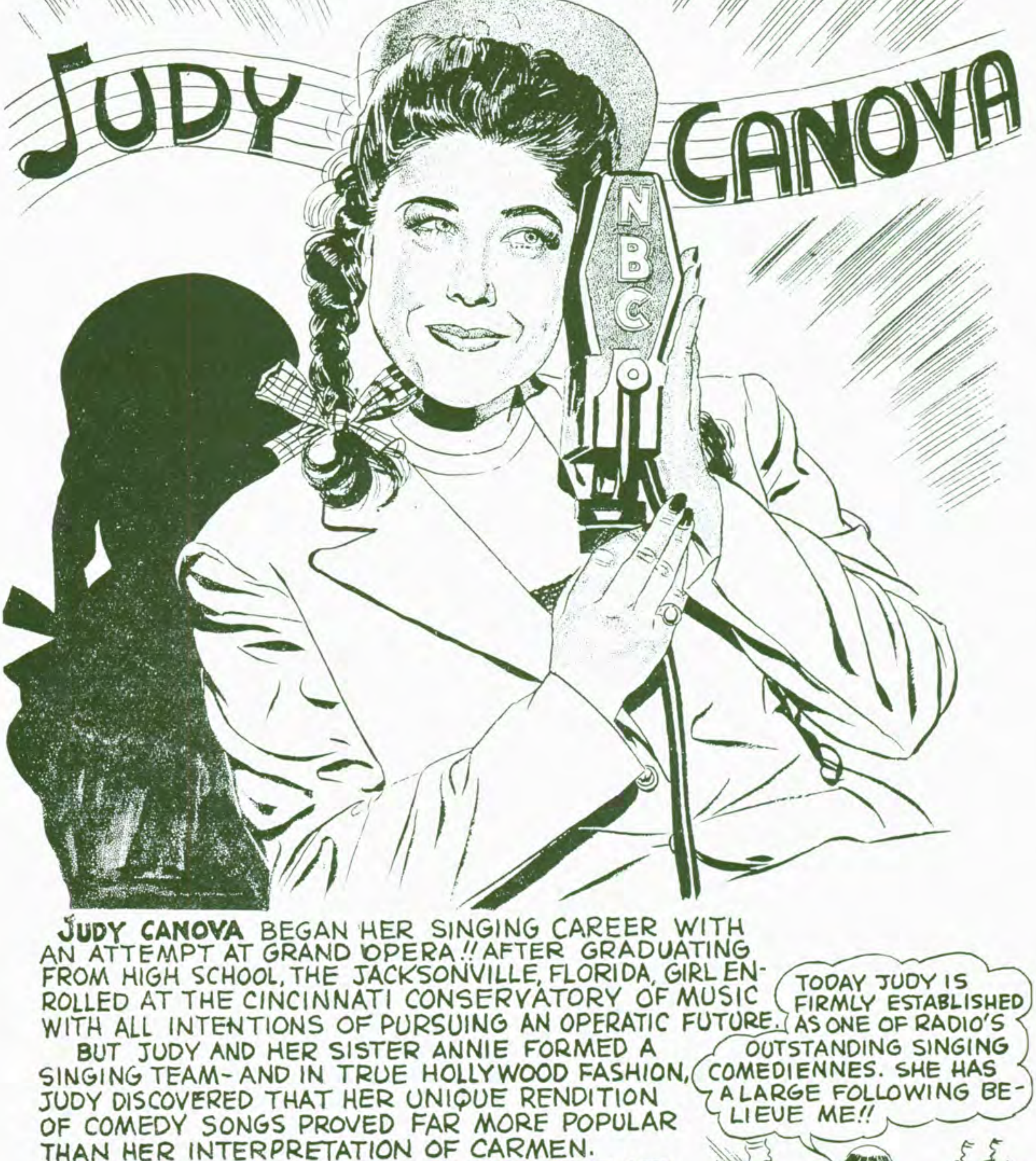
He remains a big fan of western music and frequently listens to tapes of old cowboy groups like the Sons of the Pioneers ("I met Tim Spencer and all the boys") while he's working. Unfortunately, he no longer owns his original drawings for many of the old publications, including Cowboy Songs. They're worth a lot of money now—anywhere from $800 to $1200. A friend recently informed him that his old sports drawings for Street and Smith Publications are now framed and hanging in the company's corporate offices.

He could march right in and tell those folks who created those drawings, but that isn't the way DeMarco works. He says that he's only met two editors (out of the thirty-five he's worked with) during his fifty-plus years of cartooning. "And that's the way I'd like to keep it," he adds with a chuckle.

We did our interview over the phone, so his string is still intact.

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO DEMARCO

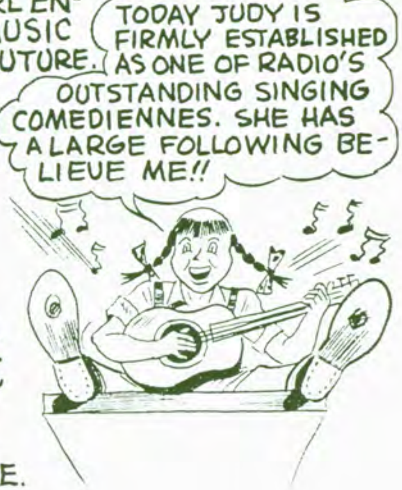

JUDY
CANOVA
NBC

JUDY CANOVA BEGAN HER SINGING CAREER WITH AN ATTEMPT AT GRAND OPERA!! AFTER GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL, THE JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, GIRL ENROLLED AT THE CINCINNATI CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC WITH ALL INTENTIONS OF PURSUING AN OPERATIC FUTURE.

BUT JUDY AND HER SISTER ANNIE FORMED A SINGING TEAM- AND IN TRUE HOLLYWOOD FASHION, JUDY DISCOVERED THAT HER UNIQUE RENDITION OF COMEDY SONGS PROVED FAR MORE POPULAR THAN HER INTERPRETATION OF CARMEN.

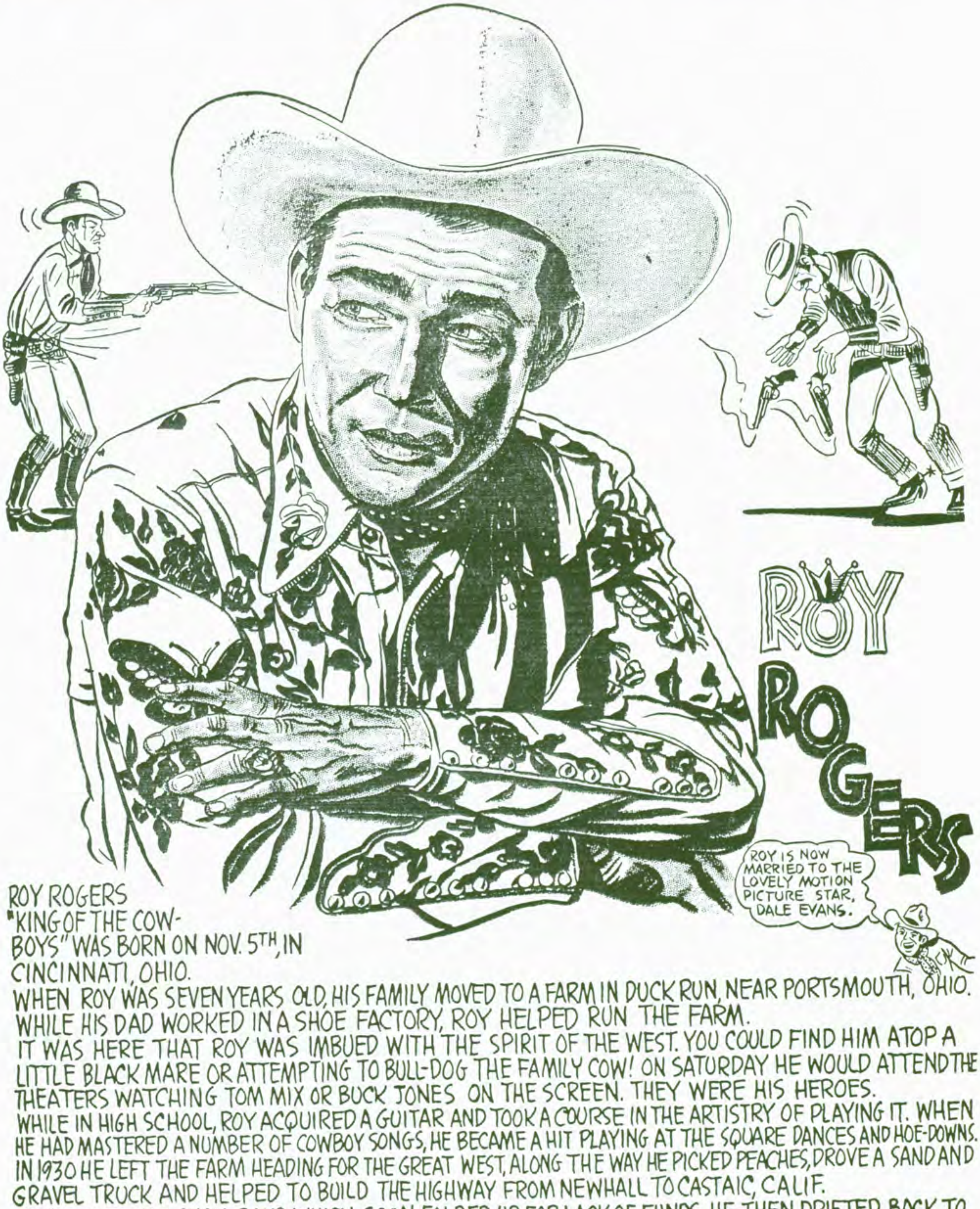
THE GIRLS WENT TO NEW YORK AND BROKE INTO RADIO WHERE THEY WERE FEATURED ON PAUL WHITEMAN'S PROGRAM IN 1934.

FROM RADIO, JUDY BRANCHED OUT INTO MUSICAL COMEDY AND SUBSEQUENTLY STARRED IN BROADWAY PRODUCTIONS AS "ZIEGFELD FOLLIES OF 1937," "CALLING ALL GIRLS" AND "YOKEL BOY." SHE WAS LURED TO HOLLYWOOD IN 1940 AND HAS APPEARED IN PICTURES AND ON THE AIR FROM THERE EVER SINCE.


TODAY JUDY IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AS ONE OF RADIO'S OUTSTANDING SINGING COMEDIENNES. SHE HAS A LARGE FOLLOWING BELIEVE ME!!

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO A. DEMARCO


ROY ROGERS
ROY IS NOW MARRIED TO THE LOVELY MOTION PICTURE STAR, DALE EVANS.

ROY ROGERS "KING OF THE COWBOYS" WAS BORN ON NOV. 5TH, IN CINCINNATI, OHIO.

WHEN ROY WAS SEVEN YEARS OLD, HIS FAMILY MOVED TO A FARM IN DUCK RUN, NEAR PORTSMOUTH, OHIO. WHILE HIS DAD WORKED IN A SHOE FACTORY, ROY HELPED RUN THE FARM.

IT WAS HERE THAT ROY WAS IMBUED WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE WEST. YOU COULD FIND HIM ATOP A LITTLE BLACK MARE OR ATTEMPTING TO BULL-DOG THE FAMILY COW! ON SATURDAY HE WOULD ATTEND THE THEATERS WATCHING TOM MIX OR BUCK JONES ON THE SCREEN. THEY WERE HIS HEROES.

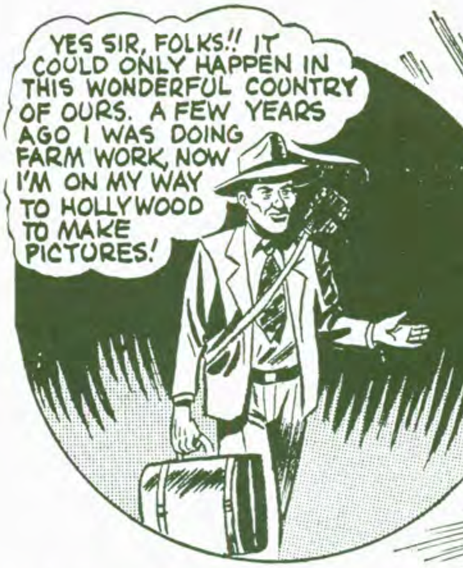
WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL, ROY ACQUIRED A GUITAR AND TOOK A COURSE IN THE ARTISTRY OF PLAYING IT. WHEN HE HAD MASTERED A NUMBER OF COWBOY SONGS, HE BECAME A HIT PLAYING AT THE SQUARE DANCES AND HOE-DOWNS.

IN 1930 HE LEFT THE FARM HEADING FOR THE GREAT WEST, ALONG THE WAY HE PICKED PEACHES, DROVE A SAND AND GRAVEL TRUCK AND HELPED TO BUILD THE HIGHWAY FROM NEWHALL TO CASTAIC, CALIF.

ROY PLAYED IN A SMALL BAND WHICH SOON FOLDED UP FOR LACK OF FUNDS. HE THEN DRIFTED BACK TO LOS ANGELES WHERE HE MET BOB NOLAN AND TIM SPENCER THEY FORMED THE NOW FAMOUS "SONS OF THE PIONEERS." THEIR RECORDING OF "THE LAST ROUNDUP" WAS A SMASH HIT. REPUBLIC PICTURES HAD BEEN AUDITIONING TALENT FOR FUTURE COWBOY PICTURES WHEN ROY SANG HIS RENDITION OF "TUMBLIN' TUMBLEWEEDS." WITH THIS HE WENT ON TO BECOME THE "KING OF THE COWBOYS."

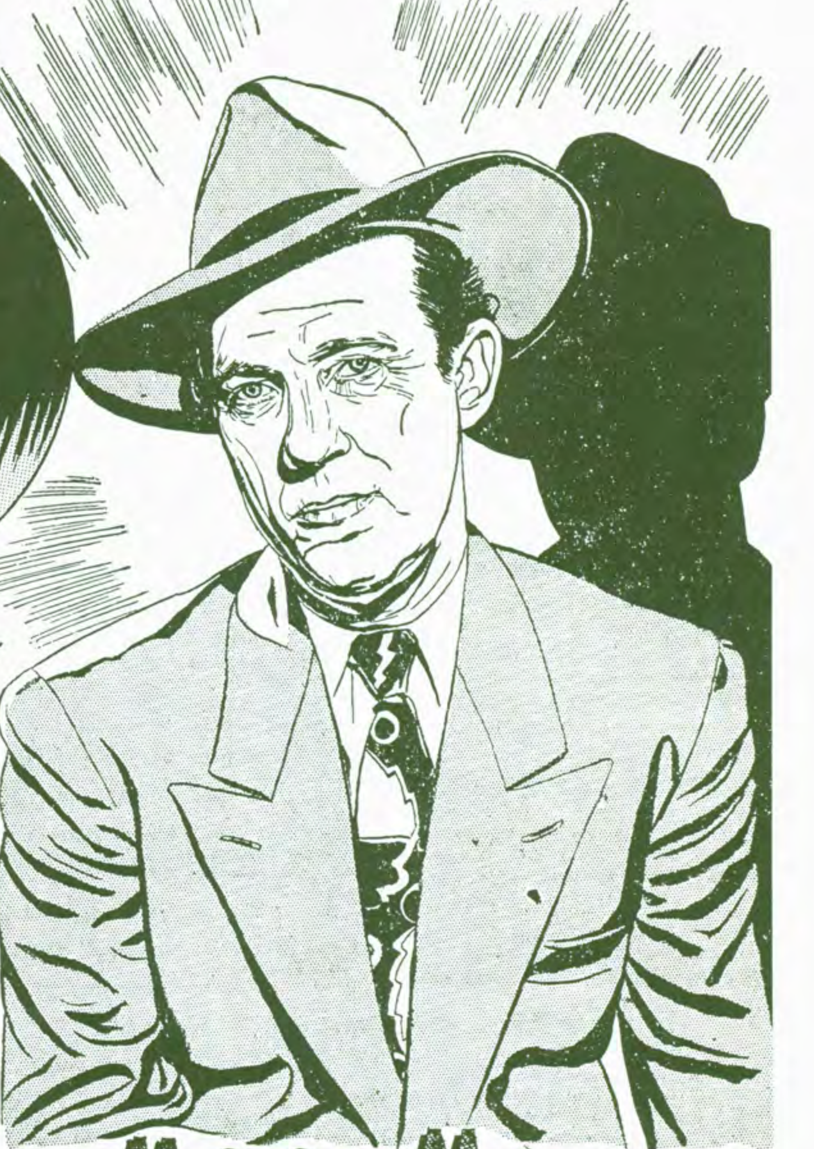
COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO DEMARCO


YES SIR, FOLKS!! IT COULD ONLY HAPPEN IN THIS WONDERFUL COUNTRY OF OURS. A FEW YEARS AGO I WAS DOING FARM WORK, NOW I'M ON MY WAY TO HOLLYWOOD TO MAKE PICTURES!

MOON'S PROFESSIONAL START CAME ON AN AFTERNOON IN LUFKIN, TEXAS, WHEN HE LEARNED THAT HE COULD POCKET MORE MONEY PLAYING THE SONGS HE LIKED IN A CAFE THAN HE COULD WORKING ON THE FARM.

MOON TRAVELED THROUGH TEXAS AND LOUISIANA AND IN 1939, HE JOURNEYED TO HOLLYWOOD WHERE HE MADE THE PICTURE "VILLAGE BARN DANCE."



MOON MULLICAN

FOR THE FIRST 8 YEARS OF HIS LIFE, IT LOOKED LIKE YOUNG MOON WAS DESTINED TO BECOME A FARMER. BUT THANKS TO THE HELP OF A NEGRO HIRED HAND WHO WORKED ON THE MULLICAN FARM, TAUGHT MOON HOW TO PLAY THE GUITAR, THE ONLY LESSONS HE EVER TOOK.

HATS OFF TO YA MOON!! YOUR SONGS SURE MADE THIS OLD BODY OF MINE WORK OVERTIME IN 1947 AND '48!
OLE JUKE

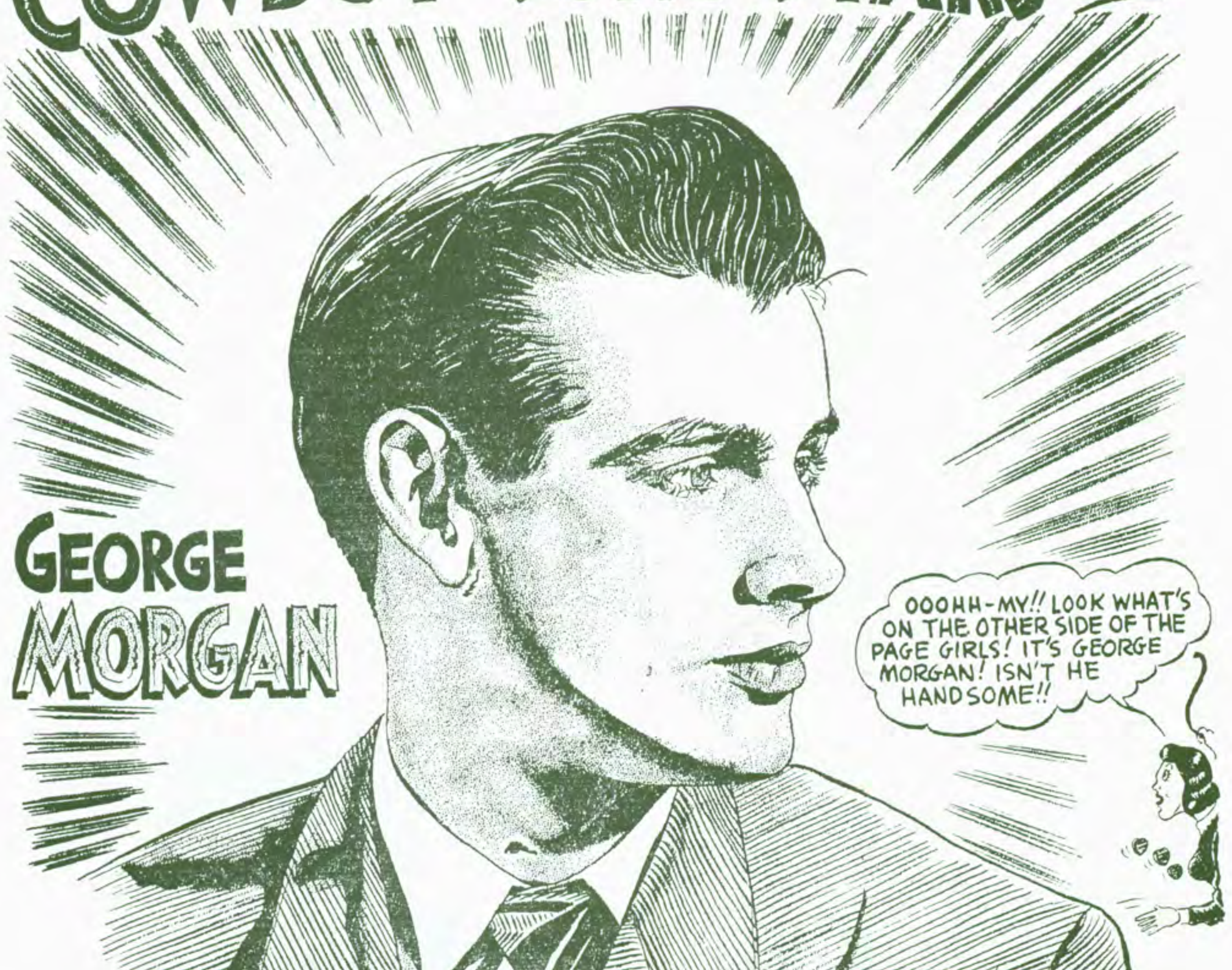
THANK YOU HELEN MURPHY FOR THOSE KIND WORDS YOU SAID ABOUT THE CARTOONS AND SONG BOOK!

IN THE CASH BOX POLL OF THE JUKE BOX OPERATORS OF AMERICA, HIS RECORDING OF "NEW PRETTY BLONDE" PLACED SECOND, WHILE HIS "SWEETER THAN THE FLOWERS" PLACED THIRD IN THE "BEST HILLBILLY RECORDS OF 1947 AND 1948."

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO A. DEMARCO

GEORGE MORGAN


OOOHH-MY!! LOOK WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PAGE GIRLS! IT'S GEORGE MORGAN! ISN'T HE HANDSOME!!

LISTENERS TO A SMALL RADIO STATION, WWST IN WOOSTER, OHIO WERE ENJOYING THE SINGING OF A YOUNG MAN WHOSE NAME WAS GEORGE MORGAN. GEORGE DROVE FROM BARBERTON, OHIO DAILY FOR HIS BROADCASTS.

IT WASN'T LONG AFTER THAT HE WAS RECEIVING NATIONWIDE PRAISE FROM THE MAGAZINE WRITERS WHO HAD HEARD HIM SINGING.

MORGAN'S BIG BREAK CAME WHEN HAWKSHAW HAWKINS LEFT WWVA, IN WHEELING, W. VA., THE STATION WAS LOOKING FOR A SINGER TO STAR ON THEIR JAMBOREE. HIS NAME WAS MENTIONED TO THE FOLKS AT THE STATION THOUGH AND THEY SENT FOR HIM. AFTER HIS FIRST BROADCAST HE BECAME AN INSTANT HIT WITH THE LISTENERS, WHO CAME IN THOUSANDS TO WHEELING, W. VA., TO SEE THE JAMBOREE AND TO SEE THE YOUNG FELLOW WHO PUT MORE INTO WORDS HE SANG THAN ANY OTHER SINGER THEY HAD EVER LISTENED TO. WHEN GEORGE APPEARED ON THE STAGE HE STOPPED THE SHOW CONTINUALLY. STATION WSM SENT FOR GEORGE AFTER THEIR STAR SINGER EDDY ARNOLD HAD LEFT THEM AND SIGNED HIM TO A TEN YEAR CONTRACT.

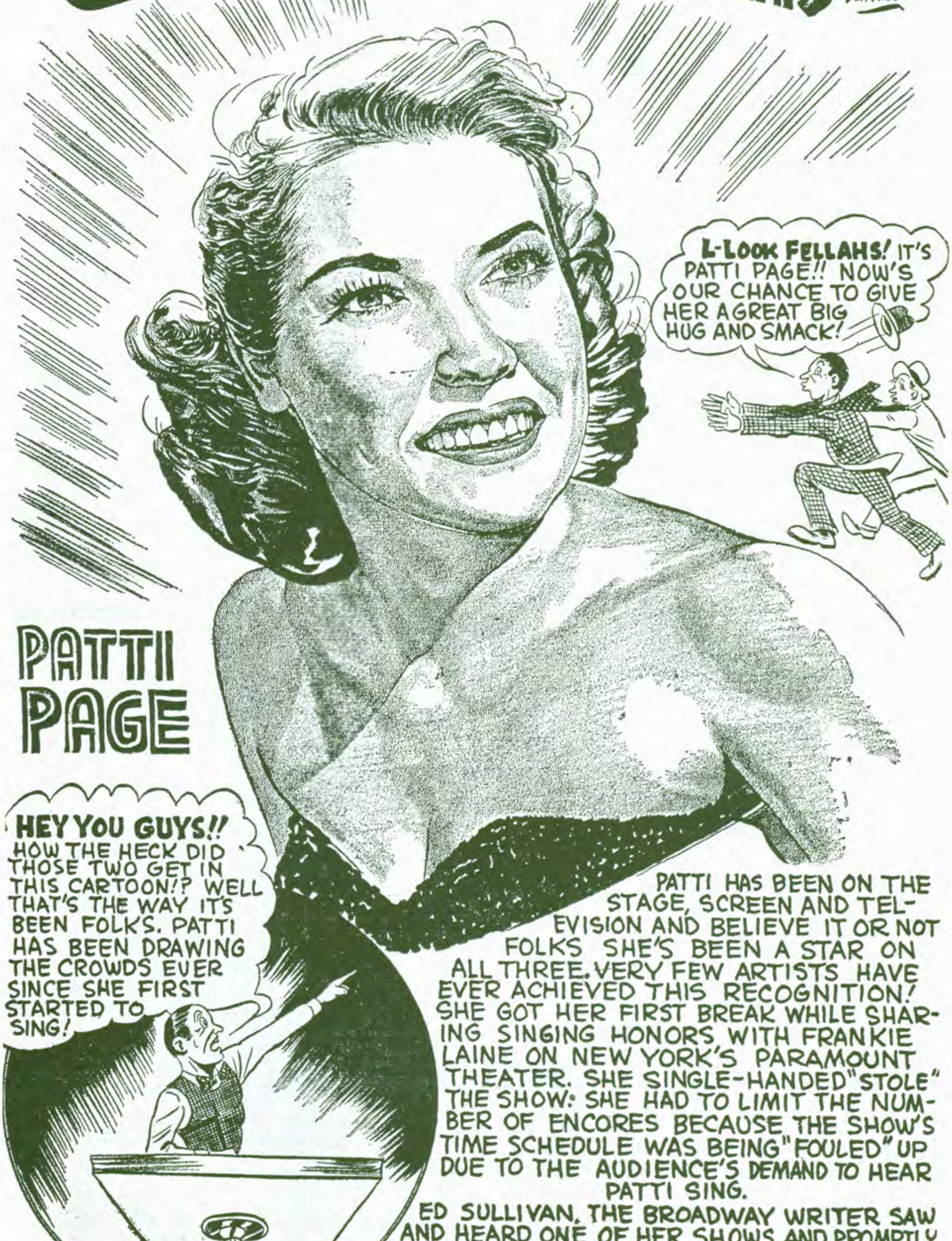
COLUMBIA RECORDS HAS HIM SIGNED FOR FIVE YEARS.

GEORGE WAS BORN IN WAVERLY, TENN. HE STANDS 6 FEET TALL, HAS BLOND HAIR AND BLUE EYES AND IS THE FRIENDLIEST FELLOW YOU'LL EVER MEET.

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO TONY DEMARCO

PATTI PAGE


L-LOOK FELLAHS! IT'S PATTI PAGE!! NOW'S OUR CHANCE TO GIVE HER A GREAT BIG HUG AND SMACK!
HEY YOU GUYS!! HOW THE HECK DID THOSE TWO GET IN THIS CARTOON!? WELL THAT'S THE WAY IT'S BEEN FOLKS. PATTI HAS BEEN DRAWING THE CROWDS EVER SINCE SHE FIRST STARTED TO SING!

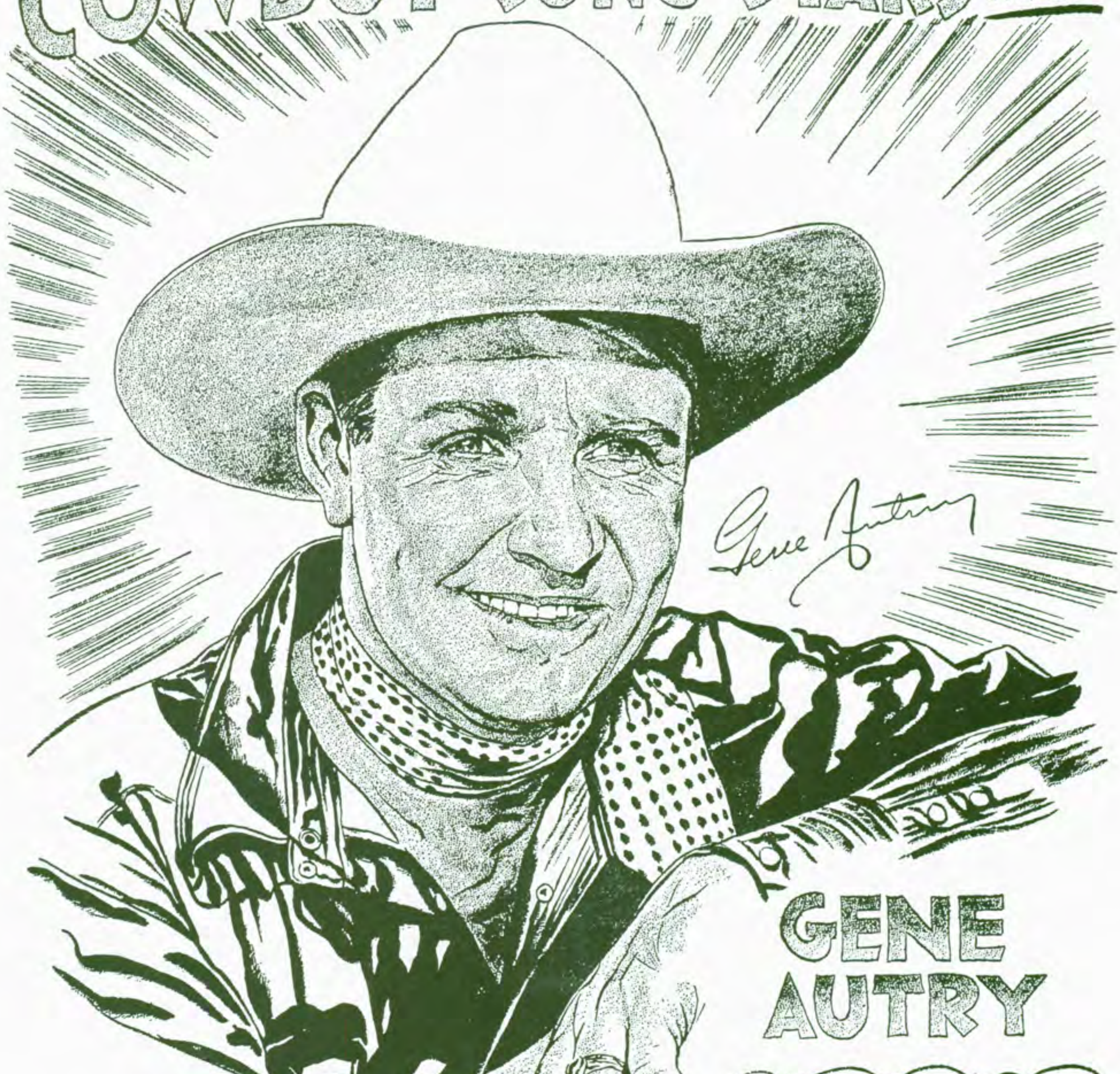
PATTI HAS BEEN ON THE STAGE, SCREEN AND TELEVISION AND BELIEVE IT OR NOT FOLKS SHE'S BEEN A STAR ON ALL THREE. VERY FEW ARTISTS HAVE EVER ACHIEVED THIS RECOGNITION! SHE GOT HER FIRST BREAK WHILE SHARING SINGING HONORS WITH FRANKIE LAINE ON NEW YORK'S PARAMOUNT THEATER. SHE SINGLE-HANDED "STOLE" THE SHOW: SHE HAD TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF ENCORES BECAUSE THE SHOW'S TIME SCHEDULE WAS BEING "FOULED" UP DUE TO THE AUDIENCE'S DEMAND TO HEAR PATTI SING.

ED SULLIVAN, THE BROADWAY WRITER SAW AND HEARD ONE OF HER SHOWS AND PROMPTLY SIGNED HER UP FOR HIS OWN T.V. SHOW "TOAST OF THE TOWN."

ONE OF THE MOST UNUSUAL RECORDS THAT PATTI HAS EVER DONE WAS FOR MERCURY. SHE SANG AS A "QUARTET" FOR THE TUNE "WITH MY EYES WIDE OPEN."

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO DEMARCO


Gene Autry
GENE AUTRY

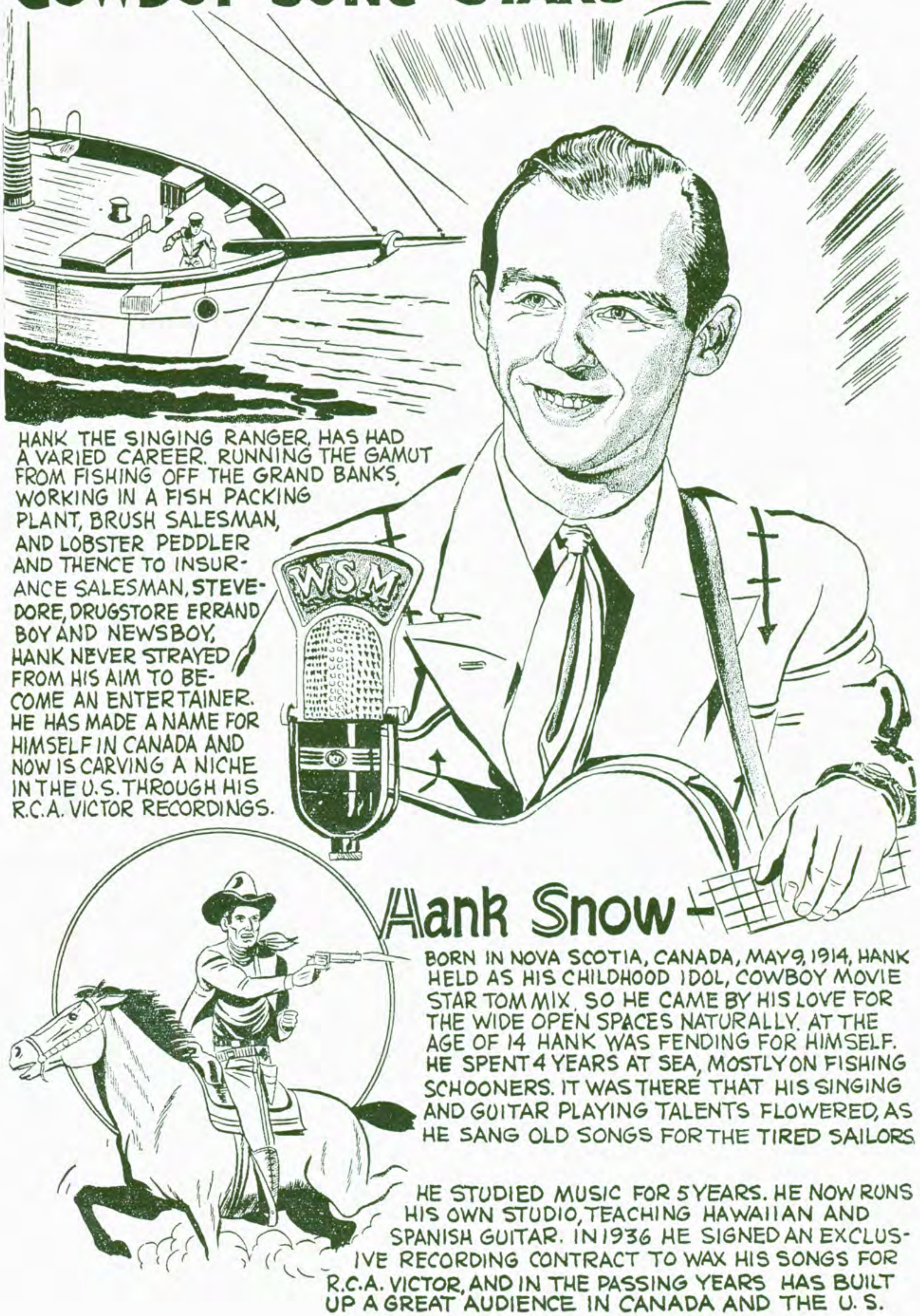
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO AUTRY SET OUT FROM HIS DAD'S RANCH IN OKLAHOMA TO MAKE HIS FORTUNE AS A TELEGRAPH OPERATOR IN RAVIA. IT WAS ONLY A SHORT TIME LATER THAT HE ACCEPTED AN OFFER FROM MASCOT PICTURES (NOW DEFUNCT) TO PLAY IN ONE OF KEN MAYNARD'S WESTERNS. GENE WAS HORRIFIED WHEN HE SAW HIMSELF ON THE SCREEN FOR THE FIRST TIME. THIS PROMPTED HIS DECISION TO LEAVE HOLLYWOOD, BUT NOT FOR LONG. MAIL POURED IN FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ASKING FOR THE YOUNG MAN THAT SANG SO WELL.

AUTRY BECAME THE SCREENS FIRST SINGING COWBOY IN A "MUSICAL WESTERN" TUMBLING TUMBLEWEEDS. SINCE HIS START IN PICTURES GENE HAS HAD A TOWN NAMED AFTER HIM, HAS FLOWN HIS HORSE "CHAMP" ACROSS THE NATION IN HIS OWN PLANE AND HAS RUBBED ELBOWS WITH PRESIDENTS, STATESMEN ETC.

GENE'S BEEN A MOVIE STAR FOR OVER FIFTEEN YEARS, HE'S ALSO A RECORDING AND RADIO HEADLINER, MOVIE RRODUCER, NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER, COLUMNIST, ATHLETE, OIL WELL OPERATOR AND RANCHER— WHEW!! DOESN'T HE EVER HAVE ANY TIME TO RELAX?!

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO DEMARCO



HANK THE SINGING RANGER, HAS HAD A VARIED CAREER, RUNNING THE GAMUT FROM FISHING OFF THE GRAND BANKS, WORKING IN A FISH PACKING PLANT, BRUSH SALESMAN, AND LOBSTER PEDDLER AND THENCE TO INSURANCE SALESMAN, STEVEDORE, DRUGSTORE ERRAND BOY AND NEWSBOY, HANK NEVER STRAYED FROM HIS AIM TO BECOME AN ENTERTAINER. HE HAS MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF IN CANADA AND NOW IS CARVING A NICHE IN THE U.S. THROUGH HIS R.C.A. VICTOR RECORDINGS.

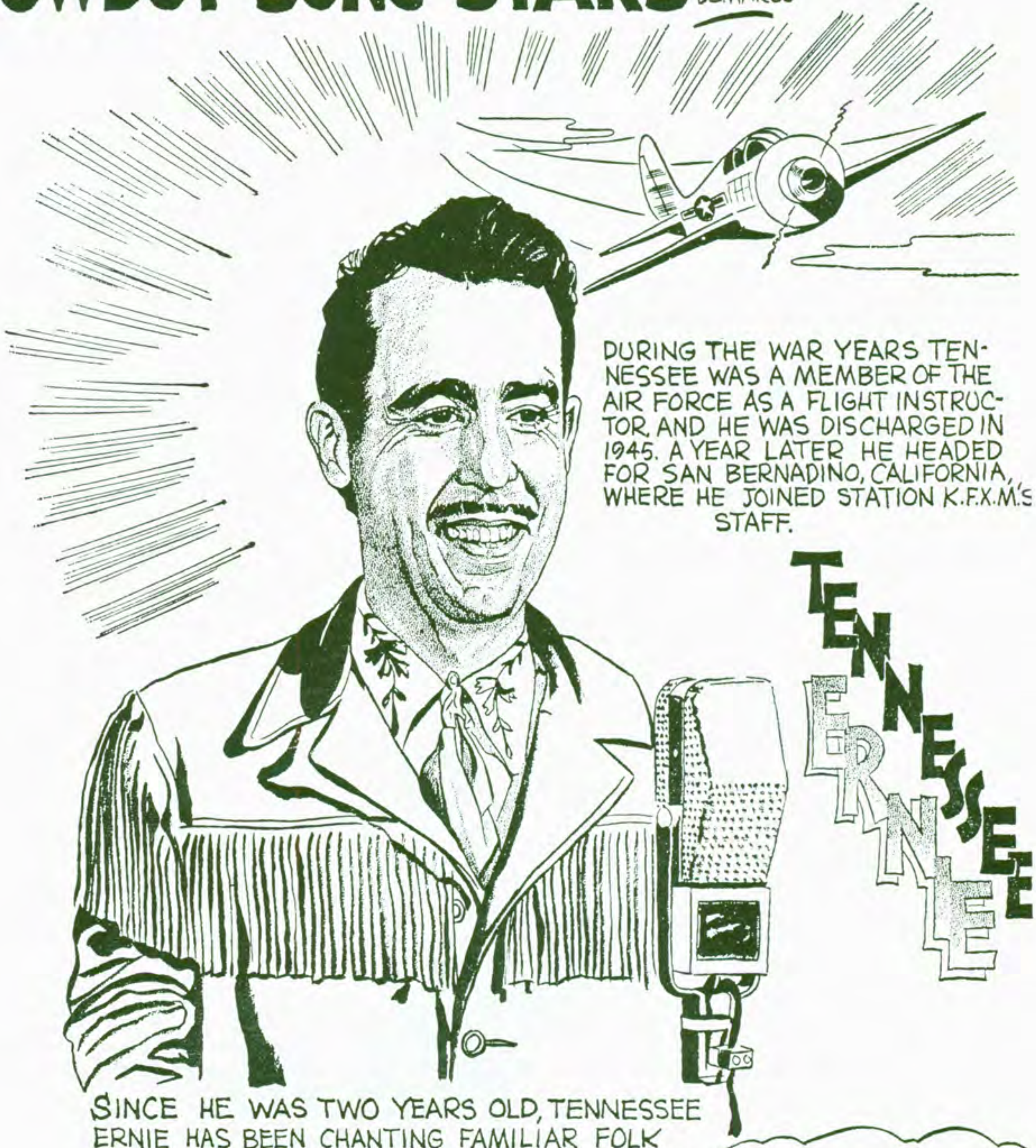
Hank Snow -

BORN IN NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA, MAY 9, 1914, HANK HELD AS HIS CHILDHOOD IDOL, COWBOY MOVIE STAR TOM MIX, SO HE CAME BY HIS LOVE FOR THE WIDE OPEN SPACES NATURALLY. AT THE AGE OF 14 HANK WAS FENDING FOR HIMSELF. HE SPENT 4 YEARS AT SEA, MOSTLY ON FISHING SCHOONERS. IT WAS THERE THAT HIS SINGING AND GUITAR PLAYING TALENTS FLOWERED, AS HE SANG OLD SONGS FOR THE TIRED SAILORS.

HE STUDIED MUSIC FOR 5 YEARS. HE NOW RUNS HIS OWN STUDIO, TEACHING HAWAIIAN AND SPANISH GUITAR. IN 1936 HE SIGNED AN EXCLUSIVE RECORDING CONTRACT TO WAX HIS SONGS FOR R.C.A. VICTOR, AND IN THE PASSING YEARS HAS BUILT UP A GREAT AUDIENCE IN CANADA AND THE U. S.

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO DEMARCO



DURING THE WAR YEARS TENNESSEE WAS A MEMBER OF THE AIR FORCE AS A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR, AND HE WAS DISCHARGED IN 1945. A YEAR LATER HE HEADED FOR SAN BERNADINO, CALIFORNIA, WHERE HE JOINED STATION K.F.X.M.'S STAFF.

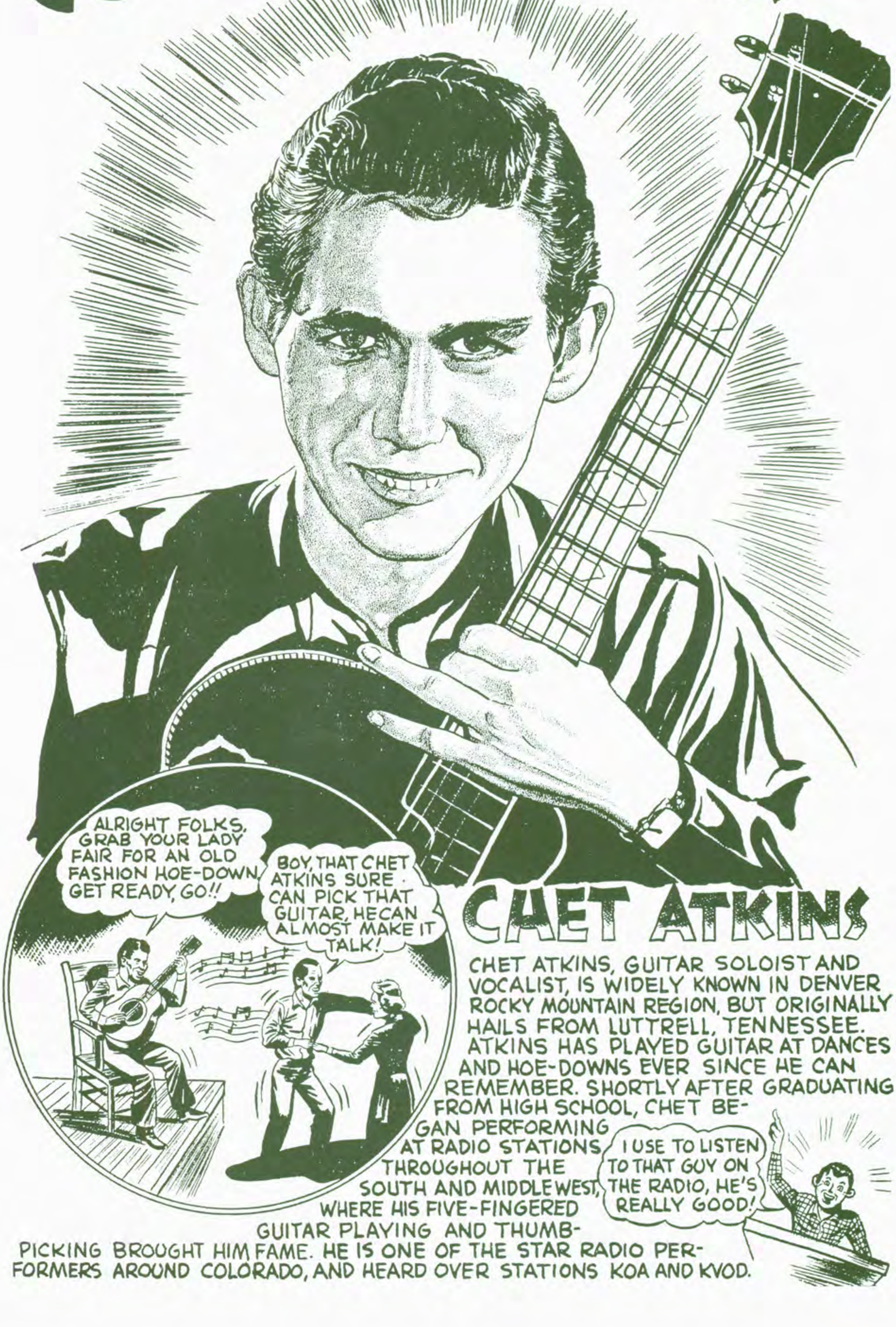
SINCE HE WAS TWO YEARS OLD, TENNESSEE ERNIE HAS BEEN CHANTING FAMILIAR FOLK MELODIES; ERNIE RECEIVED A HELPING HAND FROM HIS FATHER WHO PLUCKED A FIDDLE AND SANG HIMSELF, AND WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED FROM HIS FATHER, ERNIE'S CAREER PROGRESSED RAPIDLY. BORN IN BRISTOL, TENNESSEE IN 1919, HE COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL WITH INTENTIONS OF STEPPING INTO A QUIET, PEACEFUL FARM LIFE. HOWEVER, HE ENDED UP IN RADIO DUE TO HIS MUSIC TALENT. IN 1940 HE WAS AT STATION W.A.T.L. AS AN ANNOUNCER. HIS NEXT STEP WAS IN KNOXVILLE, WHERE HE DID DOUBLE DUTIES AS ANNOUNCER AND SINGER WITH THE HAPPY VALLEY BOYS.

AS A RESULT OF HIS UNIQUE PRESENTATIONS, HE WAS SIGNED TO A PACT WITH THE HOLLYWOOD DISKERY.

SINCE THE PHENOMENAL SUCCESS OF "MULE TRAIN," ERNIE GETS A LITTLE NOSTALGIC FOR THE OLD DAYS IN TENNESSEE.

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO "COWBOY" DEMARCO

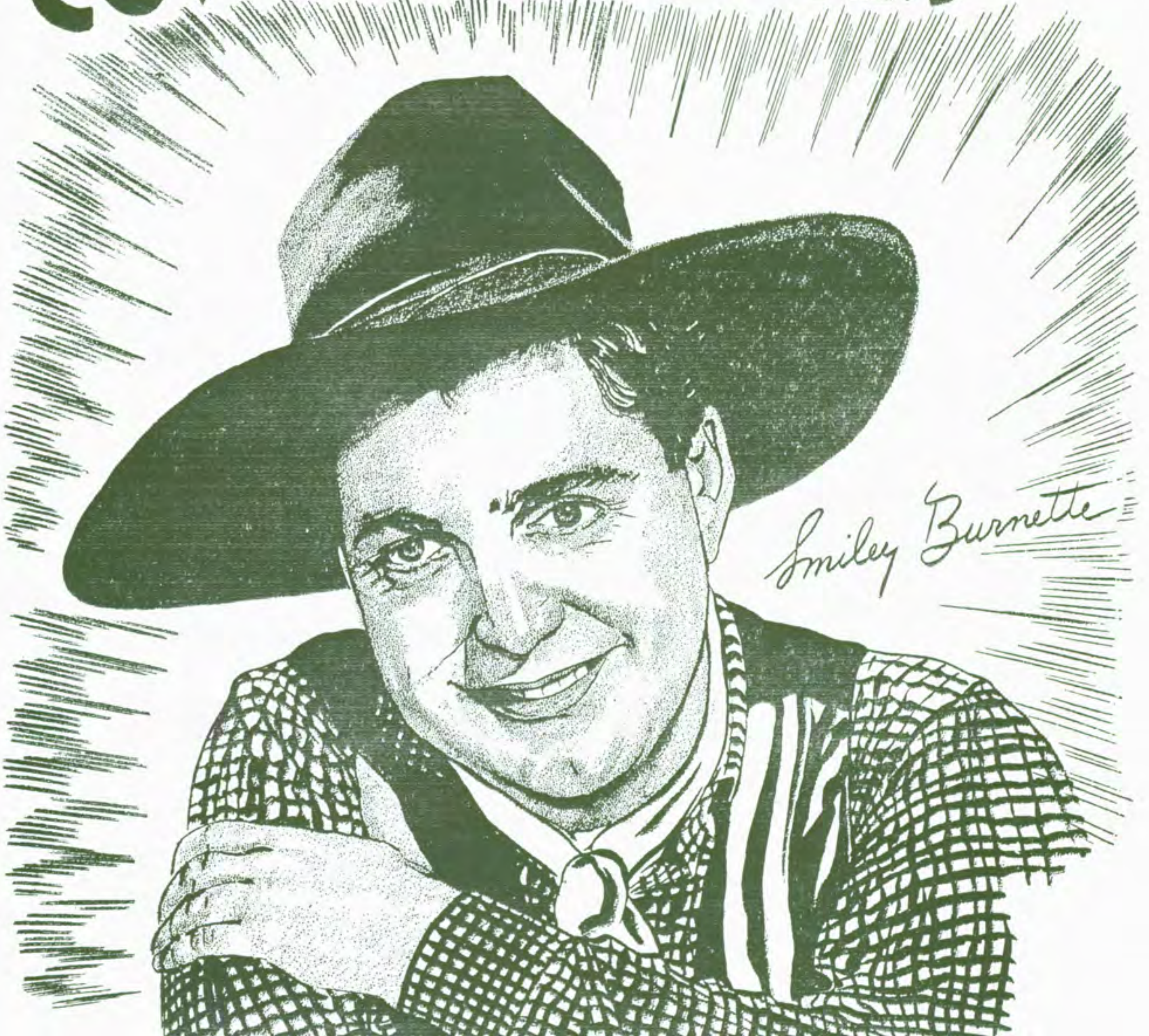

ALRIGHT FOLKS, GRAB YOUR LADY FAIR FOR AN OLD FASHION HOE-DOWN, GET READY, GO!!
BOY, THAT CHET ATKINS SURE CAN PICK THAT GUITAR, HE CAN ALMOST MAKE IT TALK!
I USE TO LISTEN TO THAT GUY ON THE RADIO, HE'S REALLY GOOD!

CHET ATKINS

CHET ATKINS, GUITAR SOLOIST AND VOCALIST, IS WIDELY KNOWN IN DENVER ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION, BUT ORIGINALLY HAILS FROM LUTTRELL, TENNESSEE. ATKINS HAS PLAYED GUITAR AT DANCES AND HOE-DOWNS EVER SINCE HE CAN REMEMBER. SHORTLY AFTER GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL, CHET BEGAN PERFORMING AT RADIO STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH AND MIDDLE WEST, WHERE HIS FIVE-FINGERED GUITAR PLAYING AND THUMB-PICKING BROUGHT HIM FAME. HE IS ONE OF THE STAR RADIO PERFORMERS AROUND COLORADO, AND HEARD OVER STATIONS KOA AND KVOD.

COWBOY SONG STARS

by MARIO DeMARCO

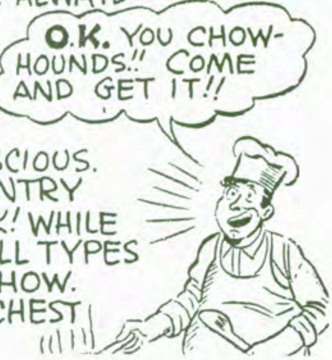

Smiley Burnette

SMILEY BURNETTE

A MUSICAL SAW...... SMILEY'S FIRST START AS AN ENTERTAINER! HE WAS NINE AT THE TIME AND HIS GROSS EARNING FOR HIS WORK WAS $3!

SMILEY HAS WRITTEN SEVERAL HUMOROUS BOOKS AND HAS A COLLECTION OF OVER 50 PUBLISHED SONGS!

BORN IN SUMMON, ILL., MARCH 18, 1911 SMILEY WAS CHRISTENED LESTER ALVIN BURNETTE. HAS BEEN A TRUCK DRIVER, GROCERY CLERK, PLUMBER'S HELPER.... ALL TO NO AVAIL! ALWAYS HAD HIS HEART IN MUSICAL COMEDY. IT WAS DURING A VISIT OF GENE AUTRY THAT HE GOT HIS BREAK AS AN ACCORDIONIST. THUS STARTED THE AUTRY-BURNETTE FRIENDSHIP THAT HAS MADE MANY FANS WESTERN CONSCIOUS. BESIDES BEING ADEPT WITH CARPENTRY TOOLS SMILEY IS AN EXPERT COOK! WHILE ON TOUR HE EXCELS IN COOKING ALL TYPES OF DISHES FOR THE CAST OF THE SHOW. PAT BUTTRAM IS ONE OF HIS STAUNCHEST SUPPORTERS.


O.K. YOU CHOWHOUNDS!! COME AND GET IT!!

Are These Guys Just Too Cool for Country Radio?

BY JAY ORR

In a break with tradition, organizers of the summer '91 Montreaux Jazz Festival invited a handful of country performers to appear at the event. Instead of recruiting Garth Brooks, Randy Travis, Clint Black or other top echelon country acts currently raking in big consumer dollars in the U.S., the festival officials courted Kevin Welch, the Texas Tornados, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, Jim Lauderdale, and Brenda Lee.

When the time came to present this bunch of hillbilly ambassadors to the hip continental audience, Montreaux emcees, searching for a connecting musical thread, dubbed their sound "Western Beat."

The tag struck Gilmore, Lubbock-born and Austin-based, as an appropriately ambiguous descriptor, he said later in an interview. "Western Beat" connected him and his musical colleagues to the country tradition but also hinted at bohemian, outside-the-mainstream aspects of their songcraft and performance style. Passion is a key element in his approach to music, and a uniting characteristic of songwriters and singers who share his perspective, Gilmore explained. "That's the only word I can use. No matter whether it's sad or happy, there's just this intensity of feeling."

All who participated regarded the Montreaux experience as a success. The passion—if that's what it is—of Western Beat translated well, and European audiences responded enthusiastically. American country radio is another matter, however. Gilmore, Hancock, Ely, the Tornados, Welch, Lauderdale and Lee may be able to whip a bunch of continentals into a twang frenzy, but when it comes to the narrowly formatted airwaves back home, it's as if these progressives were asking country radio programmers to play Great Airplane Takeoffs.

Following their hearts and writing songs for their own repertoires instead of pitching hit fodder to other artists, the Western Beats regard musical and lyrical formulas with the same enthusiasm George Bush has for fellow Republican David Duke. Though the Beats often write songs that use traditional instrumentation and treat familiar themes, their role models are likely to be Harlan Howard and Bob Dylan, Hank Williams Sr. and Randy Newman, Buck Owens and Tom Waits. As such, though they often become favorites of critics and discerning fans, the Western Beats present marketing problems for radio-oriented record companies. They can add prestige and a certain hipness to a roster, but they don't connect with the masses the way Brooks, Black and Travis have. Often, the Western Beats end up on labels like Sugar Hill, Rounder, Philo, Rykodisc, Flying Fish or HighTone—proud independents with high standards and modest sales goals.

L.A.-based Lauderdale, the youngest and least known of

A rogue's gallery of criminally ignored singer-songwriters: John Prine, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Steve Earle, Butch Hancock, and Jim Lauderdale.

the Montreaux Western Beats, released *Planet of Love* in November 1991. Produced by Rodney Crowell and John Leventhal, the Reprise album marks Lauderdale's LP debut, though he released a couple of unsuccessful singles for Columbia in 1988-89.

Crowell's name will be familiar to country fans as a singer, songwriter and producer of ex-wife Rosanne Cash's work; Leventhal produced New York singer/songwriter Shawn Colvin's 1989 debut and contributed to Marc Cohn's successful, self-titled pop album.

Planet of Love features seven songwriting collaborations by Lauderdale and Leventhal, two songs by Lauderdale alone, and one—"Maybe," the first single—by Crowell, Lauderdale and Leventhal.

The album moves through an exhilarating but unpredictable orbit of musical styles from the lush, Owen Bradley-ish country-pop arrangement of "Wake Up Screaming," to the spare, jazzy title cut, to the Marshall Crenshaw-inspired hillbilly-meets-rock feel of "Maybe." A native of North Carolina with roots in Tarheel bluegrass traditions, Lauderdale and his guitar-happy producing cohorts fashion plenty of fresh sounds on *Planet of Love* by combining elements from Howlin' Wolf, George Harrison, Ernest Tubb, Shel Silverstein, the Jordanaires, the Beach Boys, Buck Owens and the Everly Brothers, among others, all based firmly on country and bluegrass impulses. Lauderdale's work challenges radio programmers to expand their predictable formats and provides them with the goods to do so.

On Gilmore's newest, *After Awhile*, he sings a line from friend, collaborator and fellow Texan Hancock: "My mind's got a mind of it's own." Any doubters need only read Gilmore's liner note quotes, in which he cites Ezra Pound as an inspiration and confesses that he spent some time away from music investigating "the metaphysical implications of modern physics and found that some aspects are strikingly similar to Buddhist and pre-Buddhist thinking and Hindu cosmology."

A mind of his own, indeed.

Gilmore's genius, reflected on his first album for Elektra Nonesuch's "American Explorer" series after two fine collections for HighTone, is that he can struggle with cosmic issues while keeping his music engagingly simple, musically and lyrically. On "Go to Sleep Alone," he sings to a peppy, "Poison Love"-style rhumba beat (with Tish Hinojosa's harmony vocal), "You may wake up in the night and wonder if you're dreaming/And referee the fight between the being and the seeming/And when the victor holds your hand up to the great unknown/You've got to go back to sleep alone."

Gilmore sneaks his metaphysics by listeners on the strings of producer Stephen Bruton's guitars and mandolin, and James Pennebaker's fiddles and steel guitar. "Something that I always like . . . is to have a happy lyric with a heavy melody or vice versa," he says in the liner notes.

"Don't Be a Stranger to Your Heart," with its heavier guitar chords, sounds made for country radio, if country radio will dare; "Midnight Train," a simple but powerful electric blues (with good harmonica by Ted Roddy of Teddy & the Talltops), may carry the heaviest message of all, as it starkly lays out the choice of whether to "sit beside fear" or "travel with trust" in the train ride of life; and "These Blues," with its loose musical ramble, proverbs and yodel-like instrumental tag, connects cosmically with Gilmore's namesake, Jimmie Dale Rodgers. *After Awhile* ranks as one of the most ambitious, rich and satisfying country releases of '91.

Gilmore's pal Butch Hancock—with Gilmore and Joe Ely the core of the legendary Lubbock acoustic group The Flatlanders—has made loose, literate records on his own since 1978. *Own & Own*, first released in 1990 on Demon Records in England, gathers 17 songs from seven albums and a 1989 recording session. The recent Sugar Hill release of *Own & Own* marks the first time that Hancock's recordings have enjoyed efficient national distribution, though his songs have certainly reached a wide audience. Ely recorded thirteen Hancock tunes—including "If You Were a Bluebird," "West Texas Waltz," and "Fools Fall in Love"—on the four albums he released with MCA from 1977 to 1981 (recently reissued), and Gilmore reached into the Hancock songbag to find material for his HighTone albums. Emmylou Harris took the name of her 1989 album, *Bluebird*, from Hancock's "If You Were a Bluebird."

Hancock's own recordings of his songs feature the writer in a range of musical settings, from live, spare performances with acoustic guitar and rack harmonica accompaniment, to more carefully executed studio arrangements. Dense wordplay with a poetic quality, and Hancock's vocal style—syllable-stretching, singing/speaking, sometimes off-key—will remind listeners of Bob Dylan's acoustic and early electric recordings from the sixties. Like Hancock's stark photos of West Texas (previously published in the *Journal*), his songs have richly layered meanings.

John Prine's early work also prompted comparisons to Dylan, but the Nashville-based singer/songwriter has long since established his own identity. Prine's latest release, *The Missing Years*, appears on his own, independently distributed label, Oh Boy. Prine and producer Howie Epstein of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers, enlist a major label lineup of musical contributors, however, including backing vocalists Bruce Springsteen, Petty, Phil Everly, and Bonnie Raitt. Christina Amphlett of the Divinyls adds harmonies to Prine's zany arrangement of Lefty Frizzell's "I Want to Be with You Always."

The Missing Years ranks as Prine's best album since his self-titled debut in 1971. Although album credits list an impressive army of accompanists including other members of the Heartbreakers, John Jorgenson of the Desert Rose Band, David Lindley, Albert Lee, Mickey Raphael, and Jay Dee Maness, many of the songs ("Everybody

Wants to Feel Like You," "Everything Is Cool," "Daddy's Little Pumpkin," "Jesus the Missing Years") have simple acoustic arrangements. Prine's characters still have trouble making sense of this "big old goofy world," and the confusion often leaves them bitter. He wishes a former lover "All the Best" in a song of that name, but the benediction goes, "I wish you don't/Do like I do/And ever fall in love/With someone like you." In "The Sins of Memphisto," "Grampa's on the front lawn staring at a rake/Wondering if his marriage was a terrible mistake." "Great Rain," written with Heartbreaker guitarist Mike Campbell, is a disjointed blues rant. "I tell you funny stories," Prine sings, "Why can't you treat me nice."

David Olney's fine fourth album, *Roses*, begins with a rant of his own, an eccentric medley joining the traditional-sounding couplets of "Lee's Highway" with "Bamaloo," a soul shout inspired by Otis Redding and Clarence "Frogman" Henry, done with acoustic instrumentation. A veteran Nashville tunesmith who has the respect of his peers (see Townes Van Zandt's liner notes), Olney's music incorporates blues (Robert Johnson' s "Last Fair Deal," his own "Love's Been Linked to the Blues"), acoustic swing ("Luckiest Man," "Don't Keep It a Secret"), and ballads ("That's Why She's with Me," "Roses").

Producers Tommy Goldsmith and Jim Rooney help Olney make tasteful use of the extraordinary talents of Stephanie Davis (fiddle, trumpet) and Mike Henderson (resonator guitar, mandolin). Olney's voices range from the personal reminiscence of "Lean and Hungry Years" to the cosmic observations of the title track, a song about regeneration in the face of adversity.

Steve Earle's songs also speak with many voices: the restless young man trapped by community in "Someday," or the killer trapped by his crime in "Billy Austin," for instance. On his new live album, *Shut Up and Die Like an Aviator*, Earle sounds as burned out as the naked bus frame that graces the cover. His Canadian audiences don't seem to mind, however, offering enthusiastic reactions to nearly eighty minutes of Earle and the Dukes as they perform selections from Earle's four studio albums for MCA. The songs have plenty of meat on them; hearing them all together proves Earle has built up one of the most impressive song catalogs of any Nashville writer, as he's moved from the country rock of 1986's *Guitar Town* to the rock-oriented treatments on 1990's *The Hard Way*. But the Dukes' live renditions don't offer new insight into the recorded versions. Neither are there any new Earle compositions to make *Shut Up and Die* more interesting, only covers of the Sir Douglas Quintet's "She's About a Mover" and the Rolling Stones' "Dead Flowers." Though Earle is a major talent, this record sounds like the fulfillment of a contract obligation.

Chris Wall's second album for Rykodisc, *No Sweat*, is meant to sound road-hardened too. "I've logged a lot of miles on this honky-tonk highway. If you like, think of these songs as road songs along the way," he writes in his liner notes. Wall started writing and performing music several years ago with Pinto Bennett & His Famous Motel Cowboys, a hard-working country dance band popular in the West. He impressed Guy Clark and Jerry Jeff Walker, and Walker—whose records are distributed by Rykodisc—has become Wall's advisor, advocate, and business partner.

No Sweat represents a significant improvement over Wall's debut, *Honky Tonk Heart*, from 1989. The first LP affected macho Western stereotypes on songs such as "Trashy Women," "Entourage," and "Something to Shoot." *No Sweat* is still heavy on the cliches. Wall loves country music; a bartender keeps him from drinking so much he falls off his barstool; he hits every honky-tonk in Cowtown; he's slid his boots across many a hardwood floor; he's a rodeo cowboy—"half a sinner, half a saint"; and he likes to ride, drinking whiskey with the rig wound up and ol' Merle on the tape player. But where *Honky Tonk Heart* sounded like self-conscious swagger, *No Sweat* comes across as more relaxed and open. The cliches sound convincing—they grow out of the culture Wall describes, rather than out of an attempt to make it sound exotically appealing, and Wall delivers them in a Hank Jr.-style baritone voice.

Despite country radio's tight playlists, songwriters continue to find the genre a friendly and pliable outlet for their work. Out on the edges, away from the Wal-Mart racks and the trade magazine charts, artists as diverse as Tim O'Brien, Cheryl Wheeler, Nanci Griffith, Dave Alvin, Greg Brown, Lonesome Val, John Gorka, Don Henry, Pat Alger, Rosie Flores, Will T. Massey and Lisa Germano—to name a few—continue to write songs and make records that sideswipe country music. Billy Joe Shaver, one of the greatest and most underappreciated of all songwriters, has signed a record deal that calls for him to record and release a new album in 1992. The country—and Western—beat goes on.

JAY ORR
reports on music and entertainment for the *Nashville Banner*.

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS ELLIS

HICKORY WIND: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GRAM PARSONS.

By Ben Fong-Torres. (New York: Pocket Books, 1991. 236 pp., photographs, discography, index. Hardcover, $19.95.)

Imagine Tom Sawyer teleported into the boisterous sixties in California, cruising the Sunset Strip in a Nudie suit tastefully embellished with marijuana leaves and fast, painted women. Further fantasize Tom Sawyer taking over the Byrds in the formative years in his mission to get the "rock fans at the Whiskey and the truck drivers at the Palomino to get together and talk to each other and understand each other." A tall order, that, but surely only the naivete of a Tom Sawyer could envision such a musical utopia. He even led the Byrds onto the stage of country music's Mother Church, the Grand Ole Opry. Now imagine young Tom graduating from this country-rock foundation work to become a true missionary: he would go on and minister to the dissolute and deviant Rolling Stones and teach them the True Ways of country life and morality: young Tom innocently standing up to the Old Nick a.k.a. Keith Richards a.k.a. His Satanic Majesty and steadfastly singing "I like the Christian life." And for young Tom's troubles, he would be (reportedly) nicked of what became the Stones' song "Honky Tonk Women." (At least he escaped with his soul intact, unlike other Stones casualties. Apparently.)

That was Gram Parsons, a fresh-faced cherub who seemed to drop unsullied and unspoiled into country-rock at its moment of flux. That this choirboy would shuffle off this mortal coil in a spectacular fashion was totally unforeseen at the time when he was fashioning a true country-rock fusion. His life and times are a major part of that musical movement and they have heretofore been largely unexplored. His life was almost a blur and his career was a virtual blip on the radar screen of music history. Author Fong-Torres (the original music editor at *Rolling Stone*, he joined the magazine after journalism studies at San Francisco State College) reportedly had great difficulties with selling this book, mainly because few persons in publishing knew or cared who Gram Parsons was. That problem apparently carried over to the marketing side: in several chain stores where I inquired after the book, the clerks successfully feigned ignorance of, if not total indifference to, the book and the whole subject itself.

Be that as it may, *Hickory Wind* is a well-researched and rewarding account of a little-celebrated life that itself illuminates a side of music that has been shrouded in neglect. Fong-Torres's episodic narrative perfectly matches Parsons's own stutter-step approach to his career and life.

Had Tom Sawyer been exposed to the lures of dope, sex, and rock & roll, I don't want to haphazard a guess as to how quickly he would have embraced (or not embraced) the whore of Babylon. I don't think we'll ever again see such a textbook example of a promising pupil teetering on the great divide between perdition and redemption, between Sin City and Heaven itself. But I have absolutely no doubt that in the body and work of Gram Parsons that we can see such a pure example of the Southern dichotomy figuring itself out. Gram knew that Hank Williams himself agonized over his Saturday night (sin) performances raging against his Sunday morning (glory!) praises. Parsons's God, though, was the music; as with Hank, his devil was himself.

The idea or notion of a Gram Parsons exists today as a much more palpable entity than does the reality of the Gram Parsons. He left little in the way of music, recorded or otherwise. In his interviews, he mostly embellished—if he did not actually exaggerate or indeed invent—the bare facts of his life. Fong-Torres is at his best here in uncovering and chronicling those facts and showing the life that caused the music, which of course should be the goal of the music biographer (his eye for detail is unerring: Gram commissioning Nudie, for example, to design a $1,000 rhinestone wedding dress for his bride).

Legends don't last: music does? What of the reverse? There are ample examples of both in popular music, and especially so in country music. That's a notion worth examining here. Was Gram Parsons's country legacy actually spiritual or even inspirational rather than musical? That is an idea Fong-Torres traces throughout the brief career of Gram Parsons.

He was born stone Southern gothic to start with. His name was Ingram Cecil Connor III, born on November 5, 1946, in Winter Haven, Florida. His family was actually living in Waycross, Georgia, at the time, but his mother's family—the Snivelys of the very rich fruit farm Snivelys—had the idea that the Snively grandchild should be kept close to home.

As Fong-Torres tells it, he was surrounded by luxury, was attended to by black servants, he filled up the family's Cadillacs on toy-shopping sprees, and was "dressed like Little Lord Fauntleroy." Very little would be permanent for him, though. His family divided its time between Waycross and Winter Haven. His father, Coon Dog Connor, and his mother, Avis, were heavily into the bottle and didn't bother hiding it from their children. There are broad hints of wife-swapping parties and more.

Young Gram, already displaying a natural ear for music, was shipped off to military school at age 10 and was never really at home again anywhere for the rest of his life. For his personal history essay at school, he wrote, "I have crashed through a car window [and] gone out a mile on a raft alone, 7 years old."

Coon Dog committed suicide when Gram was 12 and Avis, after marrying a shiftless schemer named Bob Parsons, drank herself to death. Bob Parsons's first act after the marriage had been to legally adopt Gram and sister Little Avis, and he legally changed their name to Parsons—to ensure he would get his hands on Snively money, says Fong-Torres. In his career as well as in his life, Gram never really committed to anything or anyone from childhood on.

He was kicked out of military school (for an unspecified offense) and was admitted to Harvard but never bother to actually go to class. He had discovered the folkie life in Cambridge and found that he, himself, was a folkie after all. Music was the only true love of his short life (with the probable exception of his "intense" musical relationship with

Emmylou Harris, who declined to be interviewed for the book).

Dedicated GP fans know the rest. Thanks to his Snively trust fund (which fluctuated between $30,000 and $100,000 a year, depending on the orange crop), Gram jetted to L.A. and went from deal to deal, group to group, song to song, project to project. It' surprising to learn in retrospect, for instance, that he was with the Byrds for only four months.

And he went from drug to drug, from woman to woman, and from bottle to bottle. It all ended in Joshua Tree: OD'd, not quite 27 years old. Fong-Torres recounts the incredible battle over Gram's remains: his road manager Phil Kaufman (who had been in prison with Charles Manson and produced an album on Manson; he went on to become Emmylou's road manager), invoking a promise to Gram, stole the body and set it afire in the desert. What was left of the charred corpse was snapped up by adoptive father Bob Parsons and whisked away for burial in New Orleans, apparently to try to benefit by Louisiana inheritance laws. He was unsuccessful and died before he could profit by Gram. When Keith Richards next saw Phil Kaufman, Fong-Torres reports, he congratulated him: "You took care of Gram."

Not quite 27 yet. His idol Hank lasted longer and left more. What Gram Parsons did leave in the way of music is priceless, although his records sold almost nothing while he was alive. But what was more important, as Fong-Torres points out, was a certain burning inspiration, a flaming torch that has been held aloft by an increasing number of artists who share Gram Parsons's vision of a vital musical and emotional and experiential link between country and rock.

Chet Flippo
Knoxville, Tennessee

DEAD ELVIS.

By Greil Marcus (New York: Doubleday, 1991. 233 pp., photographs and illustrations, index. Hardcover, $30.00.)

Last year there was a stillborn attempt to elevate Jim Morrison of the Doors form the status of dead rock musician to cultural icon. Its failure meant that the transition is still the exclusive preserve of Elvis Aron Presley, late of Memphis, Tennessee, and, arguably, Sid Vicious.

Dead Elvis is a mosaic of the different strands that make up the ongoing obsession, an obsession in which Dead Elvis bears increasingly less resemblance to Living Elvis, and an obsession which continues in the face of declining Presley record sales—suggesting that the myth has now assumed far more significance than the music. Author Greil Marcus, whose *Mystery Train* is one of the acknowledged classics of popular music scholarship, underscores that conclusion: "In the face of the diffusion of Elvis as a myth," he writes, "the concentration on Elvis Presley as a person who once did interesting things has become irrelevant."

Marcus employs a scattershot effect. The gruesome (Presleyburgers—made of Elvis with traces of half-a-dozen drugs, for instance) is juxtaposed with prosaic reflections on something like the recently-discovered first recording from 1953. Personalized recollection, critique and polemic (much of the latter justifiably directed at Albert Goldman) stand shoulder-to-shoulder with straight-faced reportage of the debate over whether Elvis went to Heaven or Hell. The rationale for this approach is that the phenomenon has reached such magnitude that it can only be experienced in fragments.

Marcus's essential take on Presley is apparent by page 3. He was "a kind of necessity...existing in every culture that leads it to produce the perfect, all-inclusive metaphor for itself." That's why Jim Morrison will never be anything more than a dead rock star—he's an icon only to effete young men and women who assume that there is substance to his lyrics. On the other hand, much of America could see something of itself in Elvis Presley. From sharecropper's shack (surely a social rung or two below even the log cabin!) to Graceland to the Promised Land, with the ever-present bottle of placidyls to smooth over the rough spots. What could be more perfectly American?

Unlike Albert Goldman, whose biography was a cynical put-down by a cultural snob, Marcus clearly loves the best of what he found in Elvis, thus preventing the book from becoming a snide sideways look at a seedy corollary of the hamburger culture. Marcus also writes very engagingly, with the result that he can take us off on tangents, and we don't mind. Writing about Ed McClanahan's book *Famous People I Have Known*, for example, Marcus says that McClanahan is "the sort of professional Southerner created by the impulse of the American media to ghettoize whatever is not bland enough to reach into every sector of national life without changing any of it." Think about it, and by God it's true!

Marcus also acknowledges that the core of Elvis is unknowable. White singers had played and sung black music long before Elvis came along. "You can listen to Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams," he writes, "both originals, neither of whom would have existed without the blues and it isn't there. You can listen to Elvis at the very beginning and it is there; you just can't tell what it is." The paradigm of the white man singing the black man's music just doesn't quite encompass what Elvis did. The enigma is incapable of being unraveled. It was simply Elvis.

Dead Elvis is a challenging work that forces us to think about him in different ways, although it's hard to know precisely to whom it should be recommended. The Elvis faithful will probably be disappointed. They won't find out what Elvis's last supper consisted of (although it doesn't take too much imagination to guess), and they'd probably prefer the memoirs of his barber or his brother in pharmacology, Rick Stanley, or even the morbidly compelling *Death of Elvis*. Those who despise the culture that Presley epitomized will find plenty to reinforce their view, but will ultimately be dismayed that Marcus, whose intellect and skills should mark him out as one of them, is at his core an Elvis fan.

That leaves anyone who wondered how Elvis Presley became simply "Elvis." Mythological characters (Prometheus, Zeus) never seem to have last names, and, at some point, Elvis lost his. The Elvis myth then assumed multifarious forms. Marcus gives us a sense of its diversity and challenges us to consider what happened and why. Perhaps Elvis was the most perplexed of all. Marion Keisker, the person who is generally credited with discovering Elvis when he came to make a personal disc at Sun Records, told me once that she'd heard that Elvis sometimes said: "Why was I born to be Elvis Presley?"

Colin Escott
Toronto, Canada

ROADSIDE ELVIS

By Jack Barth. (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1991.184 pp., bibliography, index, b&w photographs. Paperback, $9.95.)

Maybe I'm taking it too seriously, but the emergence of

Elvis Presley as a kitsch idol really bothers me. When I see bumper stickers that proclaim "ELVIS PRESLEY FAN ON BOARD: I BRAKE FOR SIDEBURNS," or hear a pack of post-modern bohemians belly-laughing in the Graceland gift shops, I get kind of rankled. It's not that I can't appreciate the inherent humor in something as atrocious and gaudy as Graceland's Jungle Room, and it's certainly not because I think Elvis is some kind of model for clean living and godliness (although I'm sure he was a "good boy"). But Elvis does embody every facet of the American Dream, from the salvation of instant celebrity and riches to the price one sometimes pays for living out that dream. And along the way he did as much as anyone to create the hybrid known as rock & roll. That doesn't mean it's wrong to laugh at the salt-and-pepper shakers and black-velvet paintings emblazoned with Elvis's mutton-chopped image. But it does mean it's wrong to laugh at him as if he was a leisure-suited car salesman with his fly down.

Jack Barth's *Roadside Elvis*, a paperback travelogue of Elvis sites and trivia, could have been just another piece of smart-assed bookshelf junk: he's an incorrigible wiseacre who can't resist taking shots at his subject. But he has an obvious love for his subject, and that seems to encourage Barth's unflagging nose for research (which made his last book, *Roadside Hollywood*, so much fun). He may peck at his word processor like a smirking commentator, but he can't hide the admiration he feels for his subject, which means that he, too, really wants to know where an 11-year-old Elvis bought his first guitar. (In case you're curious, Tupelo Hardware is the hallowed spot.)

The book traces nearly every footstep the King took, from the place where he "accidentally" shot out a TV set (Asheville, North Carolina) to where he holed up while shooting *Clambake* and *It Happened At the World's Fair*. You also find out where a young Priscilla Beaulieu (under an alias) modeled clothes for extra money; where and when Elvis's ancestors first hit American soil; where he raised hell with the Memphis Mafia; where he celebrated each New Year's Eve; where he bought all those giveaway Cadillacs; where he liked to buy jewelry; where he liked to buy flowers; and where his casket was manufactured. There's also loads of trivia on the mysterious background of Colonel Tom Parker (such as where he picked up his dubious military title), information on where Dr. Nick filled his scripts, and the approximate location where Vernon and Gladys Presley actually conceived the soon-to-be King of Western Bop.

But *Roadside Elvis* goes beyond geographic trivia. For the highway-bound Elvis nut, the book is a veritable World Atlas of Elvis museums, historic markers, all-Elvis radio stations, grass-roots shrines, and annual city tributes. So if you're an Elvis fan who has to attend an out-of-town family reunion or your goofy brother-in-law's wedding in Charleston, Missouri, Barth's guide will make the trip more bearable, because there's Elvis stuff all over America. (In fact, in Charleston there's a fireworks stand which has on display two of Elvis and Linda Thompson's Lincoln Continentals and a cream-colored Caddy Elvis bought for a Denver policeman.) There's also a house in Waco, Texas, owned by the King's buddy Eddie Fadal, where Elvis took weekend retreats during his Army stint at Fort Hood, which features a memorabilia room that's so impressive many Elvis fan clubs hold annual meetings there. And Elvis recorded his album *Forever Young, Forever Beautiful* right there in the living room.

In spite of this mother lode of information, *Roadside Elvis* is not an easy read. I've read it twice, and each time I felt like I was perusing the cards in an Elvis Presley Trivial Pursuit game. Of course, I was sitting on my couch while I read it. But if I was barreling down the highway with "Good Rockin' Tonight" blasting from the tape deck and a road atlas balanced on the dash board, *Roadside Elvis* would be my bible.

John Floyd
Memphis, Tennessee

RANDY TRAVIS: THE KING OF THE NEW COUNTRY TRADITIONALISTS.

By Don Cusic. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. 210 pp. Paperback, $8.95.)

It is a sad reality that few books on country music sell especially well. Popular books on currently hot artists tend to do better than average, but many of them are uncritical treatments that satisfy only the artist's most rabid fans. That the first book-length treatment of the meteoric career of Randy Travis (born Traywick), certainly a currently hot artist if ever there was one, was by Don Cusic, a respected writer and scholar, raised hopes that for once such a book might transcend the apparently genetic limitations of the genre.

If you are interested in a book that culls through the press and television accounts of Travis's young career and accurately presents them, liberally garnished with information from interviews with many individuals whose contact with Travis preceded his fame, this is the book for you. For fans whose knowledge of country music, Nashville, and the music business in general is somewhat lacking, the author takes you by the hand on a guided tour, much as if you had somehow become friends with someone who knows his way around Nashville.

Your tour guide, a university professor, does take occasional side-trips of little interest to most fans. For instance, he takes pains to point out that "new traditionalism is an oxymoron if ever there was one," a position glaringly at odds with the book's subtitle. But he duly acknowledges the role played by new traditionalists Ricky Skaggs and George Strait in making country music safe for real country music. During the tour you get exposure to generally accurate accounts of such barely related topics as the history of country music recording and broadcasting in Travis's home state, North Carolina, as well as in Nashville, and such background filler as the history of Union County, North Carolina and the fact that the Saint Lawrence Seaway opened the year of Travis's birth.

If you are looking for scandal, you will not find it here. To his credit, the author does not play the Travis story for sensationalism. After a dramatic opening account of Travis's father running him off ("I ought to blow your g——-m ass away .... Put that in your f——-n' book!") Cusic lapses into a straight narrative, with only occasional references to the elder Traywick's drinking and hell raising. There is no mention of the first marriages of each of Travis's parents, and one can only speculate that their November 16, 1957, marriage might have been influenced by a pregnancy, for Cusic notes that their first child was born in the spring of 1958.

Travis's early run-ins with the law are reported with the same matter-of-fact lack of detail that Travis himself has admitted. The speculation concerning whether Travis and his longtime manager, Lib Hatcher, were sleeping together is treated in a short chapter that does little more than state the fact of the rumors and Travis's denials, concluding that "the bond between these two transcends all the rumors and gossip." Their May 25, 1991, marriage and the resulting confession that they "had been a couple" for twelve years followed the book's publication.

Neither will you find many photos. The seventeen included are fairly small and mostly poorly reproduced, although several of the early pictures are quite interesting. As is all too frequently the case, a few proper names in the text are misspelled (it's Little Jimmy Dickens, not Jimmie), but there are far fewer errors than in most popular books.

Certainly the book has the indicia of a serious treatment: a bibliography, a discography, and an index are included, and almost every page of the book demonstrates that a lot of careful research went into it. Ultimately, however, it fails to satisfy the desire for a work on Travis and his career to date that will be definitive.

In part that failure to satisfy may be due to the author's inability to get complete cooperation from the subject and his management. While there are many direct quotations from both Travis and Hatcher, it appears that the book just recycles other sources, mostly newspaper articles and on-the-air statements from Nashville Network television programs. Many of the other quotations appear to be the result of original interviews, but the story of Johnny Russell's falling asleep while he and Travis were writing a song together is taken directly from a "Nashville Now" broadcast and there is no indication that funnyman Russell is noted for exaggerrating stories to enhance their comedic impact. A number of individuals apparently were not interviewed, such as Russell, Dickens, Minnie Pearl (whose quotation on the cover is almost the only mention of her), Joe Stampley (who produced Travis's first recordings), Roy Acuff, Grand Ole Opry manager Hal Durham among others, come readily to mind, and input from them would have helped make the book better. In the final analysis, the absence of original interview material with Travis and Hatcher more seriously limits the value of the book.

The presence of a discography, critical information all too often omitted from books about country artists, is undercut by its lack of completeness. It lists Travis's first single on the Paula label as Randy Traywick but omits its flip side ("All the Praises"), while his 1986 Christmas single, "White Christmas Makes Me Blue" b/w "Pretty Paper," is neglected entirely, as is 1988's "Deeper Than The Holler" b/w "It's Out Of My Hands." There is no indication that his first album, *Randy Ray Live At The Nashville Palace*, is also available as *Randy Travis Live*, or that the two Paula singles are currently available as exact reissues of the originals, although one uses his current stage name on the artist credit. The discography is mute on "Prairie Rose," which appears only on the 1984 *Rustler's Rhapsody* soundtrack. The text does mention its existence, crediting production to Keith Stegall and Kyle Lehning, even though the album itself credits only Lehning. According to the text, Steve Dorff produced the rest of the album, but the album credits Dorff with producing only two cuts, attributing the rest to nine other producers. The discography has no indication of the release dates of any of the records, although some of that information is contained in the text. Considering the fantastic number of awards Travis has received, a separate listing of them would have been helpful.

Because the book is a popular account, there is necessarily extensive explanation of the significance of many things that Nashville's music business takes for granted, from simple matters like the makeup of Music Row and the role of publicists, to more meaningful matters like the relationship between Music Row and the Opry. Some of those explanations parrot popularly held Nashville beliefs (such as the revelation that for many other artists, country music and Nashville "were just a vehicle to become a star. Their egos were in it even though their hearts weren't. And their minds weren't deep enough to know the difference.") or delve into pop psychology ("Country people live in a limited world, with no desire to transcend those limits. For these people, country music is a way of life, a way of defining who they are and what they are. It's more than just a music to these people: it's a sound-track for their lives"). At times those explanations seem banal to the extreme (as in the passage where the feelings one might have about being nominated for an award, attending the ceremony, and deciding whether to prepare an acceptance speech are set forth for those unable to imagine such a thing's happening to them). At other times the book does not explain enough (as in the passage where production costs of $65,000 for the *Storms Of Life* album are contrasted with Warner Bros. calculated gross of $5.2 million, with the conclusion that "the profits were huge," without considering manufacturing, distribution, and promotion costs).

It appears that the book sometimes takes on faith things that have been reported. For example, a discussion of Travis' early songwriting states that "Heaven's Gonna Miss You Tonight," co-written by Travis and Stegall, appears on Stegall's CBS album. While the song may have been recorded for that album, it does not appear on the only Stegall album on a CBS label, a self-titled 1985 Epic album.

The book's precision on dates seems to be a sometime thing, for Travis's Opry debut is reported only as occurring sometime in March 1985 (it was March 7), despite its being a milestone event in his career, while others, like the date his gift shop opened, are reported exactly.

While neither fans nor scholars will be totally satisfied with the book, and Travis's father in particular is not sympathetically presented, all things considered, they should not be totally dissatisfied either, for the book is worth its cost. However, the definitive work on Randy Travis has yet to be written.

Otto Kitsinger
Nashville, Tennessee

YÉ YAILLE, CHERE!: TRADITIONAL CAJUN DANCE MUSIC.

By Raymond E. François.
(Lafayette, Louisiana:
Thunderstone Press, 123
Florida Court, Lafayette,
Louisiana 70503. 1990. 506
pp. Hardcover, $31.95.)

Come Mardi Gras time, Cajun music enthusiasts are generally all hopped-up and drunk on glossy text, spirited hype, and Wisconsin-brewed Cajun beer. For those of you who may need to climb on the wagon with some straight poop on Cajun music, Raymond François's monumental resource, *Yé Yaille Chère!: Traditional Cajun Dance Music*, may be your ticket.

François's credibility as a Cajun music expert is beyond question. Born 1931 on Prairie Hayes in the community of Patassa (Perchville) and reared a few miles away in L'Anse Chaoui (Coon Cove), the author hails from the very heart of Cajun country. Rural Prairie Hayes neighborhoods have produced generations of great musical families: LeJeune, Thibodeaux, Bergeron, Matte, and Cormier, to name a few. In the late 1930s, François was roaming this prairie on horseback to join neighboring youngsters, Eldridge Aguillard, Vinus LeJeune, and Dick Richard, all of whom became masters of the Cajun violin. Over the years, François has fiddled with top Cajun bands like Aldus Roger & the Lafayette Playboys, Bee Cormier & the Church Point Playboys, and D. L. Menard & the Louisiana Aces. From the insider's point of view, I am fairly confident that even Bo don't know what François knows about Cajun music.

The author's motives clearly derive from a somewhat nostalgic attraction to the "true" Cajun sound. François writes, "...the idea of this book started when I began to notice that the younger musicians were having trouble playing the music I had grown up with." That he is clearly disappointed with the experimentations of some of these young musicians is borne out when he admits that "their music makes me think of Chef Paul Prudhomme's cooking style: imaginative, interesting, uses local ingredients, but nothing like what I grew up with."

The core of *Yé Yaille Chère!* is the transcription (accomplished with help from a Macintosh computer) of 247 Cajun songs. The selection of songs transcribed here indicates the author's preference for old-time traditional Cajun music. François tells us that he purposefully omitted songs which are heavily influenced by country and western music, and Cajun versions of American songs. He also avoided most recent Cajun and zydeco songs, especially those that are influenced by pop, rock, or soul trends. Sorry, this is not the book for those whose interests in Cajun music begin and end with "Don't Mess with My Toot-Toot."

In defining the structural elements of Cajun music, François recognizes three major components: the "tune;" the "turn" (extended bridge); and the "vocal," which usually follows the melody of the "tune." He strongly emphasizes the importance of the essential identifying chord structures of Cajun music, which are supported by a back-up, or "bass" part, played on violin, accordion, and/or guitar. François offers a chart of the bass chords he uses on the violin as well as instructions on how to bass some of the less standard rhythms.

François strongly emphasizes rhythm, because traditional Cajun music is dance music. He argues that most Cajun rhythms derive from European waltzes, quadrilles, reels, mazurkas, and polkas. Although François mentions the contributions of black musicians, and he notes an overlap of zydeco and Cajun repertoires, he does not seem to follow recent interpretations which ascribe tremendous importance to African influences on Cajun music.

Most of the tunes transcribed in *Yé Yaille, Chère* are waltzes and two-steps currently played in Louisiana today. However, François documents two forms of dance music that are now practically extinct. One of these, the valse à deux temps, is represented by several tunes taken from the repertoire of the late Dennis McGee. François defines this rare dance rhythm by its "two dotted quarter notes per measure." To my knowledge, this is the first time that the valse à deux temps has been defined in print.

The author documents another dance rhythm that has become rare during the last half of the twentieth century—the one-step. Four one-steps are transcribed in *Yé Yaille, Chère*. The author tells us that his father, Leopold François, claims to have first witnessed the one-step about 1916. The elder François's description of this dance seems reasonable, if not exceedingly precise: "it looks like a two-step with one step left out."

For each of the 247 songs transcribed, François provides: 1) the normal key that the song is played in by a Cajun band; 2) a typical pattern, or arrangement of the various parts of the song; 3) the song's special rhythm characteristics; 4) the source of the transcribed version of the song he presents; 5) a French transcription and an English translation of the most common lyrics associated with the song; and 6) titles and sources of related songs (the author refers to a total of 498 song titles in commentary).

His musical notation is presented from the Cajun violinist's perspective. Like most Cajun fiddlers, François tunes his instrument standard when playing with a D diatonic accordion, and tunes down a step (DGCF) when playing with a C accordion. Songs normally played in the key of D or A are transcribed in those keys. However, songs normally played in the keys of C or G have been transposed by the author into the keys of D or A so as to preserve the "better" violin playing positions. Violinists who wish to remain in standard tuning, and guitarists looking for chord changes or melody lines, will have to re-transpose C and G tunes in order to play them in their normal keys.

The value of *Yé Yaille, Chère* is greatly enhanced by the addition of anecdotes and tales collected by the author from his Cajun informants. Salted throughout the book, in the form of italicized quotes, are stories and comments from Dennis McGee, Sady Courville, Roy Fusilier, Preston Manuel, Allie Young, Dewey Balfa, Ambrose Thibodeaux, Moise Robin, Aldus and his wife Bernice Roger, Shelton Manuel, and Varise Conner. These printed commentaries will only gain in value with the unceasing march of time. They provide glimpses into the lives of legendary musicians like Améde Breaux, Leo Soileau, Joe Falcon, Lawrence Walker, Austin Pitre, Améde Ardoin, Angelas, and Iry Lejeune. To the author's credit, a host of important but lesser-known musicians, like Albert and Sidney Broussard, Oscar and Valsin Aguillard, Henry LaFleur, and Elius Soileau, are saved from relative obscurity in the text of these commentaries.

The author also notably informs us concerning the geography of Cajun music. François discusses the origins of Louisiana place names like Châtaigner, Calcasieu, Carencro, and Choupique—place names whose spellings on maps and road signs so baffle and intrigue visitors, and whose pronunciations by visitors so amuse the natives. But both foreigners and natives will appreciate François's inside perspectives on legendary Cajun neighborhoods that do not appear on maps—places like La Pointe Noire, Le Marais Bouleur, L'Anse au Paille, and Crapaudville.

Some critics will object to François's purist tendencies with regard to the authenticity of some of the new Cajun music. It is also likely that occasional errors in English translation, French transcription, or musical notation will be uncovered. And I am almost certain that someone's mother will be scandalized by the translation of "Faire L'Amour dans les Rangs de Coton" ("Making Love in the Cotton Rows"). All criticisms notwithstanding, there is a tremendous quantity, range, and depth of "inside" Cajun information provided here. *Yé Yaille, Chère* will no doubt be recognized as an illuminating find for serious Cajun music enthusiasts and as an essential resource for developing Cajun musicians. On the other hand, if you like that mild "Cajun-style" hot sauce from New Jersey, you may not appreciate this book.

C. Ray Brassieur
Cultural Heritage Center
University of
Missouri-Columbia
Columbia, Missouri

1990-91 COUNTRY MUSIC OBITUARIES

1990

TEXAS JIM LEWIS, songwriter/singer/bandleader; vaudeville to TV era; recording artist, wrote "Squaws Along the Yukon," January 23.

A.B. "BUCK" PEDDY, former Mel Tillis manager, co-writer of some early Mel Tillis hits ("I'm Tired"), March 13.

DARRELL GLENN, hit singer of 1953's "Crying in the Chapel," April 9.

JOHN HENRY FAULK, Texas humorist, once a "Hee Haw" regular, April 9.

BILLY STONEMAN, bluegrass musician in D.C. area; son of Ernest V. "Pop" Stoneman, April 10.

CLAUDE JACKSON "JACKIE" PHELPS, thumb-style guitarist for Roy Acuff; long-time "Hee Haw" partner of Jimmie Riddle, April 22.

WESLEY ROSE, publisher and producer, 1986 Hall of Fame electee, CMA and CMF Board member, son of Fred Rose, long-time Acuff-Rose and Hickory Records chief, April 26.

CLAUD SWEET, featured singer at the Renfro Valley Barn Dance, April 27.

DeWITT "SNUFFY" JENKINS, pioneer Carolina banjoist, influence on Earl Scruggs, April 29.

WILLIAM "RED" RECTOR, bluegrass mandolinist for Reno & Smiley, Carl Story, and others, May 31.

COY PRIDDY, Renfro Valley Barn Dance entertainer, June 6.

GUS FIORE, Maine county music bandleader, once at WLS, June 7.

ISAAC PAYTON SWEAT, Texas musician who enjoyed brief vogue during "Urban Cowboy" period, June 23.

BETTY FOLEY CUMMINS, daughter and duet partner of Red Foley, mother of Clyde Foley Cummins, June 27.

R. E. HARDAWAY, Nashville drummer, road musician for Porter Wagoner, Ed Bruce, June 28.

BILL STARNES, Texas club owner, son of Starday co-founder Jack Starnes, July 12.

ARTHUR "RUSTY" GABBARD, writer of Ray Price's "I'll Be There," recording artist, one-time Texas Troubadour, July 23.

WILLIS GRAHAM, WSM publicist, songwriter ("Morning"), founder of TV syndicator Show Biz, Inc., July 23.

HAROLD WEAKLEY, Opry staff drummer and harmony vocalist, recording artist, July 25.

WAYNE KINCAID, steel guitarist and fiddler for Billy Walker, Lonzo & Oscar, Stonewall Jackson, Stan Hitchcock, others, July 29.

JOE STANLEY, Dan Seals's steel guitarist, regular at Gabe's in Nashville, August 12.

LEW DEWITT, original member of the Statler Brothers, left group for illness in 1982, then solo career, August 15.

ED SHEA, Nashville publicist who headed ASCAP's Music Row office, 1968-80, August 27.

LESTER WILBURN, bass player for Wilburn Family and Wilburn Brothers, older sibling of Teddy and Doyle, September 2.

MARTIN HAERLE, founder of CMH Records, September 4.

KENNEDY JONES, influential Kentucky-born thumb-style guitarist, September 5.

BEN SMATHERS, founder-leader of Stoney Mountain Cloggers, Grand Ole Opry regulars since 1958, September 13.

OMER FORRESTER, Nashville-area banjoist, September 22.

NEIL WILBURN, recording studio designer, producer and engineer, October 21.

BILL MIZE, Florida country music radio broadcaster, October 24.

MEL FOREE, long-time Acuff-Rose songwriter and songplugger, October 28.

CARL BELEW, writer or co-writer of "Lonely Street," "Stop the World," "What's He Doing in My World," "Tender Years," "Don't Squeeze My Sharmon," October 31.

RUSTY GOODMAN, bass singer for Happy Goodman Family, writer of "I Wouldn't Take Nothin' For My Journey Now" and others, November 10.

ESCO HANKINS, recording artist for King, Mercury, Columbia, November 18.

X. COSSE, concert promoter, second husband of Martha Carson. November 18.

PHIL BAUGH, Nashville guitarist, producer, leader of Nashville Superpickers, head of Sound Factory Records, November 11.

MELISSA MONROE, daughter of Bill Monroe, cut eight sides for Columbia Records in her early teens (1950-51), one-time "Martha White" girl, toured sporadically in 1940s and 1950s with the Blue Grass Boys, December 3.

1991

HAROLD "SHOT" JACKSON, dobro player for Bailes Brothers, Johnnie & Jack, steel guitarist for Kitty Wells and Roy Acuff, cofounder of Sho-Bud Guitars (with Buddy Emmons), January 24.

GUTHRIE T. "GUS" MEADE, fiddler and folklorist, scholar of the origins of pre-war country songs, February 9.

LON VARNELL, country music promoter since 1940s, longtime basketball coach at the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, February 17.

GEORGE GOBEL, "Lonesome George," childhood star at Chicago's WLS, TV personality in later years, February 24.

WEBB PIERCE, honky-tonk legend, the top country hitmaker of the 1950s with such #1 hits as "Slowly," "I Don't Care," "More and More," "There Stands the Glass," and "In the Jailhouse Now," February 24.

HAZE B. JONES, booking agent, owner of Atlas Artists Bureau, 1967-87. Booked Jim Reeves, Ray Price, Ernest Tubb, and many others, February 28.

1990-91 COUNTRY MUSIC OBITUARIES

BILLY JACK WILLS, western swing bandleader, drummer and bass player for his older brother Bob Wills, March 2.

ERNEST "LARRY" McBRIDE, founder-promoter-producer for both Alabama and Atlanta, March 6.

CARRIE C. CASH, mother of Johnny Cash, Tommy Cash, March 11.

DEE MULLINS, Fort Worth native, enjoyed minor chart success, 1968-73, for Shelby Singleton's independent labels, March 13.

DOC POMUS (JEROME E. FELDER), pop songwriter, collaborated with Mort Shuman on Elvis Presley hits "Mess of Blues," "Little Sister," "(Marie's the Name of) His Latest Flame," March 15.

Eight members of Reba McEntire's organization, killed in San Diego airplane crash:
CHRIS AUSTIN,
KIRK CAPPELLO,
JOEY CIGAINERO,
PAULA KAYE EVANS,
JIM HAMMON,
TERRY JACKSON,
TONY SAPUTO,
MICHAEL THOMAS,
March 16.

CLARENCE "LEO" FENDER, developer of Telecaster and Stratocaster solid-body electric guitars for the California company he founded, Fender Guitars, March 21.

HENRY GLOVER, A&R man-songwriter-jazz pianist, producer for many of King Records' hillbilly and r&b acts during the 1950s (see story on p. 30), April 7.

KEN CURTIS, one-time member of the Sons of the Pioneers, most famous as Festus of TV's "Gunsmoke" from 1963-75, April 28.

CLEVELAND CHENIER, washboard player, brother of the late zydeco accordionist Clifton Chenier, May 7.

AL LESTER, bluegrass fiddler, most recently with Warrior River Boys, session player at Muscle Shoals studios, May 14.

GENE CLARK, singer-songwriter, original member of the Byrds, country-rock pioneer who recorded with banjoist Doug Dillard in the Dillard & Clark Expedition as well as Vern and Rex Gosdin, May 24.

CLAUDE A. TOMLINSON, WIVK-Knoxville air personality, May 26.

BILLIE JO WILLIAMS, singer from Wilkesboro, North Carolina, killed in automobile accident en route to 1991 Fan Fair, June 10.

CECILE HAM, wife of Clint Black's manager, murdered in Houston, July 2.

DOTTIE WEST, singer-songwriter responsible for the Coca-Cola jingle "Country Sunshine," longtime Opry star, duet partner at various times with Jim Reeves, Jimmy Dean, Don Gibson, Kenny Rogers; mother of Shelly West, September 4.

DOROTHY THOMPSON TRAVIS, ex-wife of singer Hank Thompson, widow of Merle Travis, September 19.

LLOYD LESLIE GEORGE, early "Lonzo" of musical comedy team Lonzo & Oscar, October 16.

ERNEST JENNINGS FORD, "Tennessee Ernie," Country Music Hall of Fame member (elected 1990), radio-TV personality, humorist, salesman, inspirational singer, October 17.

GRANT TURNER, only current member of both the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Disc Jockey Hall of Fame, "The Voice of the Opry," where he announced from June 1944 up until the night before his death, October 19.

—COMPILED BY RONNIE PUGH

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The Country Music Foundation is the largest and most active popular music research center in the world. Located in the heart of Nashville's historic "Music Row" district, the Foundation operates the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and offers journalists and researchers a massive library of recordings and printed material covering the full history of country music. In addition to its museum and library programs, the Country Music Foundation reissues historic recordings on its own record label, publishes books, conducts educational programs in schools and hospitals, and actively investigates issues related to contemporary and historical country music performance.

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Ray Price

Billie Jean Williams and Hank

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