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the King's Banquet Hall
The Gospel Journey of

 *Jerry*
WEATHERLY 

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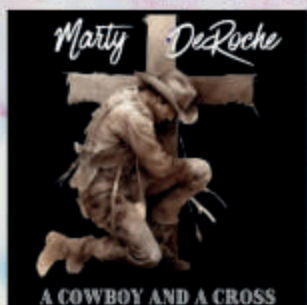
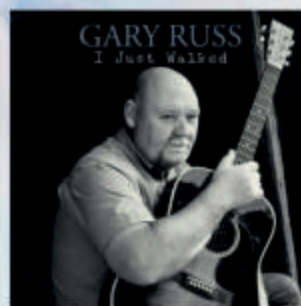


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IN THIS ISSUE...

ON THE COVER



30 From the Cotton Fields to the King's Banquet Hall
The Gospel Journey of Jerry Weatherly

By Jackson McKee

Features

11 Remembering...
Chuck Norris, Ronnie Bowman
Staff, Cross Country USA

26 Jelly Roll
From Brokenness to Grace
By Robin Tanner

34 Alexa Finney
Pursuing God
By Teresa Schweinsberg

38 JW Jackson
The Late Bloomer Who's Redefining Country Music, One Song at a Time
By Cory Parker

46 Ricky Lee Phelps
Country's Gone Christian
By Teresa Schweinsberg

50 The Flag in the Window
By June Marlowe

Series

8 Young Country - *The Biscuit Eaters*
By Robin Tanner

14 The Story Behind the Song - *That's the Way Mama Raised Me*
Staff, Cross Country USA

28 The Music Lives On - *Tammy Wynette*
By Robin Tanner

42 Legends Series - *The Cupps*
By Deborah Baliles

Departments

NEWS

18 Cross Country USA Report
Christian Country Music News & Scoops

MUSIC CHART

44 Cross Country USA Hot 100
Official Christian Country Music Top 100

4 CROSS COUNTRY USA MAGAZINE • MAY 2026

CrossCountryUSA
magazine

MAY 2026

CROSS COUNTRY USA MAGAZINE

PO Box 147 • 17911 Hwy 96 • Kennedy, AL 35574

Phone: 205-596-4371 / Fax: 205-596-4375

(Office hours: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm CST Mon-Fri)

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www.crosscountryusamagazine.com

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COVER PRICE

\$3.95 U.S. • \$5.95 CANADA

SUBSCRIPTION RATE

\$20.00 per year (U.S. Only)

Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express accepted

PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED BY



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From the Editor

May has a way of waking up the world, reminding us that life is a gift meant to be shared, honored, and dedicated to something greater than ourselves. This month, our calendar is full of moments that call us to look upward and outward.

Mother's Day isn't just a date on the calendar; it's a recognition of the selfless act of love, kindness, and the commitment to nurture and care for her family. Whether through birth, adoption, or mentorship, motherhood is a spiritual act - a daily practice of patience, sacrifice, and unconditional grace. To those who have held us, guided us, and prayed for us, we honor you. We remember those who have gone to their heavenly reward.

This month also echoes with the sounds of "Pomp and Circumstance." To our graduates, this transition ranges between who you were and who you are becoming. As you step into the unknown, remember that your path is not just about a career, but a calling. May you move forward with a spirit of courage, knowing that you are equipped for the journey ahead.

May 17 - Giving the USA Back to God. It is a call for our nation to return to its spiritual roots, seeking guidance and dedicating our future into God's hands. It's a moment for collective humility and a prayer for healing across the land.

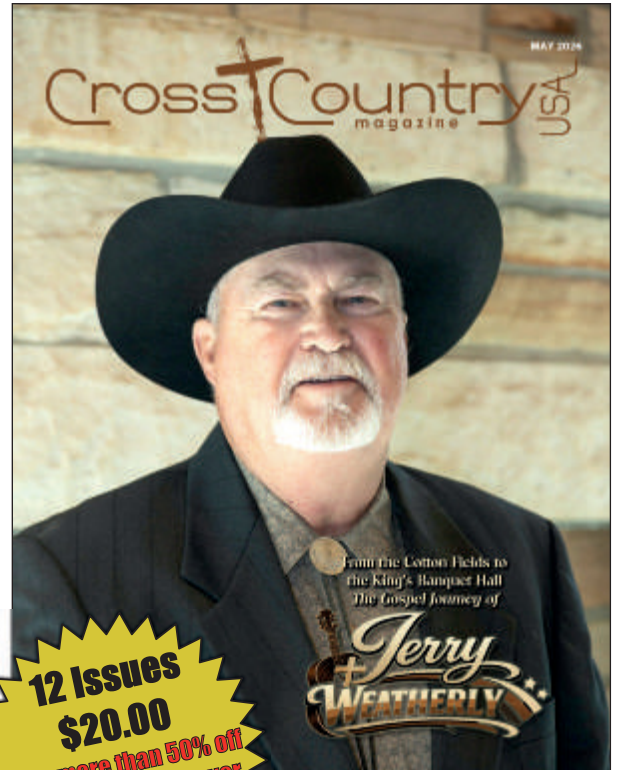
Finally, as the month draws to a close, we observe Memorial Day. In the stillness of the long weekend, we pause to honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. There is a deep, spiritual weight of "laying down one's life for a friend." We hold space for the families left behind and gratitude for the freedom we often take for granted.

As we move through these weeks, let's try to see the divine thread weaving through it all. May this month be a season of reflection for you. May you find God in the garden, the classroom, and the quiet moments of life. Let us bloom where we are planted, celebrate the milestones, and carry the torch of remembrance with grace.

Robin

Robin Tanner, Managing Editor

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THE BISCUIT EATERS

By Robin Tanner



The Biscuit Eaters: L-R Sam (16), Molly (7), Maggie Jane (12), Silas (10), Jo (14) and Frankie the dog

The Wilkerson family - better known across the Southeast as The Biscuit Eaters - is a close-knit Bluegrass band whose toe-tapping traditional music, old-time dance, and heartfelt harmonies have been winning over audiences since 2022. Led by Jason (Dad) and Meredith (Mom), and featuring five young pickers ages 7 to 16, this dynamic family brings a joyful, front-porch spirit to every stage they step onto.

Their harmonies were first shaped around the kitchen table, where traditional and Gospel Bluegrass songs became part of daily life. "Music has always been woven into our family," Meredith shares. "Jason and I are both 'back-porch musicians,' and I often joke that our first year of marriage had a constant soundtrack of him learning the banjo. That was 25 years ago, and our kids have grown up surrounded by those sounds ever since."

With Jason serving as a pastor, the children were raised on hymns and Gospel standards as much as fiddle tunes. "We even incorporated church music into our homeschool routine," Meredith says. "They learned to sing harmony long before they ever picked up instruments."

When the Wilkersons moved to Surry County, North Carolina - an internationally recognized hub for old-time music - their world expanded. Concerts, jams, and festivals became part of everyday life.

"It's truly a way of living here," Meredith explains. "People gather, play, dance, and share music like it's the most natural thing in the world. Playdates often included wiffle ball, creek swimming, watermelon - and a jam session."

When it comes to musical influences, each child's story is woven into the fabric of both their family and their community. Twelve-year-old Maggie often says her

inspirations are “Mr. Chester, the Carter Family, and Mom.” Chester MacMillian - an 84-year-old local legend who has played with many of the great fiddlers and banjo players in Surry County - has taught all of the children at one point or another. His old-time guitar style is unmistakably reflected in their playing, and Maggie connected with him so deeply that he eventually gifted her a hand-built guitar he had used on numerous recordings, a treasure she cherishes.

Molly’s musical path has been shaped by Mr. Chester as well, along with advanced fiddle instructor Ben Masterson through the Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program. She has spent several years studying there, surrounded by teachers like Caroline Beverly, Matthew Holder, and Josh Casstevens. The program, which serves around 30 students weekly in Elkin and is one of about 65 JAM programs across seven states, has been central to her growth. Meredith, who serves as the program director and beginning fiddle teacher, says the experience has helped the kids understand not only technique but also the community-building power of traditional music. The children now help teach younger students, something that has become especially meaningful to them.

Silas often mentions Ms. Mecca and Adam Lowe, Mr. Ben, and especially Mike Mitchell as major influences. Mike has recently begun mentoring him on fiddle, encouraging him to push his playing to the next level. “He brings so much positivity and treats the kids like true artists,” Meredith says. “It’s made a lasting impression.” The Lowes, close family friends whose boys are best buddies with the Wilkerson kids, have also played a major role in shaping the children’s understanding of the region’s musical heritage.

Josiah, the family’s banjo player, is deeply rooted in the Scruggs tradition and has long admired J.D. Crowe. When he appeared on Woodsongs Old-Time Radio Hour, he shared that his greatest influence was his dad - the same “back-porch banjo practice” that filled the early years of Jason and Meredith’s marriage. “I suppose those early years really paid off,” Meredith laughs.

Despite their youth, The Biscuit Eaters have already performed at some of the most respected venues and festivals in the Bluegrass world: MerleFest, Woodsongs Old-Time Radio Hour, Woodsongs Kids, Variety on Main at The Franklin Theater, Ocracoke Festival, The Floyd Country Store, The Martha Bassett Show, The Reeves Theater, Appalachia Sessions, Carolina Bible Camp Bluegrass Festival, The Rex Theater in Galax, IBMA, and the Earl Scruggs Music Festival.

One early memory still makes Meredith laugh. “After performing at IBMA in Raleigh, I asked the kids what their favorite part was. One of them said, ‘riding the escalator!’ That really captured where they were at the time.”

Molly treasures “playing on two different islands” - Ocracoke Island for the Ocracoke Festival and Kiawah Island for a special concert. The boys unanimously agree that performing on the main stage at the Earl Scruggs Festival with Jerry Douglas was unforgettable. “The crowd was

amazing,” Meredith says, “but the time spent talking with Jerry backstage meant even more.”

More than anything, the kids appreciate being treated like professionals. “They want their music valued for its quality - not just their age,” Meredith explains.

Their social media presence has grown to more than 800,000 followers across three platforms. “It’s been a joy to share our music with people from Brazil to Papua New Guinea. We feel like ambassadors for traditional music and for young people discovering the joy of playing together.”

The family is proud of their success at regional fiddlers conventions - especially Galax, the pinnacle of old-time and Bluegrass competition. “It’s tough,” Meredith says. “All of the kids have placed at one time or another. Sam, an excellent old-time fiddler, holds two blue ribbons in the old-time fiddle category. Youth night often has around 150 competitors.”

Their latest album, “North Carolina Kids,” released March 20, features a title track written by Meredith. “It’s a song born from gratitude for the simple, beautiful country life we’re blessed to live,” she says. Recorded and mixed by Mike Mitchell, the album represents countless hours of work and a milestone the family treasures.

When asked about future goals, ten-year-old Silas didn’t hesitate: “The Grand Ole Opry!” Meredith smiles. “It’s a big dream, but it reflects our heart for this music. The Opry represents tradition, history, and respect for the craft. We’ve even been encouraged to audition for shows like AGT or American Idol, but we know those paths aren’t for us. Maybe one day Silas will have his moment in the circle.”

A Biscuit Eaters show is charming, energetic, and deeply rooted in tradition. “Fiddlin’ Silas and Flatfootin’ Molly tend to win people over,” Meredith laughs. “But beyond that, audiences see young musicians who take their craft seriously. Their harmonies reflect the legacy of family bands who came before them.”

Their setlist blends Bluegrass Gospel favorites like *I’ll Fly Away* and *I Saw the Light*, old-time standards such as *Sail Away Ladies* and *Soldier’s Joy*, original songs, and classics like *Long Journey Home* and *Foggy Mountain Breakdown*.

The Wilkersons receive messages daily from people who say the kids’ music has encouraged them, lifted their spirits, or brought hope during difficult times. “Some have shared that during very dark seasons, these videos brought them light,” Meredith says. “My own father, who passed away in January, watched the kids’ videos every day.”

She recalls praying with a fan near the end of his life who wanted to express how much the music meant to him. Another man shared that the last conversation he had with his father was about how much he enjoyed watching the kids play.

“We feel incredibly grateful to be used in this way,” Meredith reflects. “Being a family band isn’t always easy - we have disagreements like anyone - but knowing the joy this music brings to others keeps us grounded. It reminds us of our purpose.”

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CHUCK NORRIS • RONNIE BOWMAN



Chuck Norris

March 10, 1940 – March 19, 2026

Carlos Ray Norris was born March 10, 1940 in Ryan, Oklahoma. Norris became one of the most recognizable action stars of his day, best known as an on-screen martial artist. Norris wasn't merely an actor, however. Before becoming a screen icon, he was a genuine martial arts champion.

While serving in Korea with the United States Air Force, Norris discovered martial arts and began his training. After his discharge in 1962, he returned to the United States and opened his own studio. Soon, he was creating his own martial artists systems (including American Tang Soo Do), winning championships, and training actors like Steve McQueen and Donny Osmond.

Norris met martial arts legend Bruce Lee in 1968, and the pair formed a friendship. This led to Norris' breakthrough as an actor when he played Lee's rival in 1972's "Way of the Dragon." Norris had a few small roles previous to this, including in the Dean Martin film "The Wrecking Crew," but appearing opposite Lee put him on the path towards becoming a major action movie star. He had bit parts throughout the 1970s, with pictures like "Breaker! Breaker!" and "Good Guys Wear Black," his first forays into lead roles.

By the time the 1980s arrived, Norris was turning into an action film star thanks to movies like "A Force of One,"

"Missing in Action," "Delta Force," and their sequels. In 1993, he began starring on TV in "Walker, Texas Ranger," which ran for nine seasons and over 200 episodes, cementing Norris as a screen icon. In his later years, he appeared in throwback action movies like "The Expendables 2" while also penning a series of books, including 2008's "Black Belt Patriotism: How to Reawaken America" and "Against All Odds: My Story."

In the Internet era, Chuck Norris also became the subject of a running gag in which commenters outlined increasingly outlandish and unrealistic things and scenarios only Chuck Norris could do or survive, a play on his reputation as a tough guy icon. Norris also became an outspoken political activist, branding himself a conservative and a Christian.

Norris was also a philanthropist, forming Kickstart Kids and the United Fighting Arts Federation, spending time as a spokesperson for the U.S. Veterans Administration, and supporting the United Way and the Make-A-Wish Foundation, among other charitable efforts.

Norris was a black belt in multiple martial arts disciplines. His many honors include induction into the Martial Arts History Museum's Hall of Fame, "Black Belt" magazine's Fighter of the Year award in 1969, and three consecutive BMI TV Music Awards.

Chuck Norris, a martial artist and actor, died March 19, 2026, at the age of 86. "It is with heavy hearts that our family shares the sudden passing of our beloved Chuck Norris" Norris' family said in a post on Instagram. "While we would like to keep the circumstances private, please know that he was surrounded by his family and was at peace."

"To the world, he was a martial artist, actor, and a symbol of strength. To us, he was a devoted husband, a loving father and grandfather, an incredible brother, and the heart of our family. He lived his life with faith, purpose, and an unwavering commitment to the people he loved," Norris' family added.

He was best known for his nine-season run as Texas Ranger Sgt. Cordell Walker, a steely-eyed former Marine who dispensed Lone Star justice with roundhouse kicks and a decidedly old-school moral code. The series remains a staple of syndicated television.



Continued >>>



Ronnie Bowman
July 9, 1961 – March 22, 2026

For more than four decades, Ronnie Bowman earned success as a recording artist, instrumentalist, songwriter, and producer. His immense talent and hard work led to rare career longevity, critical acclaim, and lasting contributions to American roots music. But it's how Ronnie loved other people, so earnestly, openly, and dependably, that defines him.

Boyishly handsome, Ronnie had a huge smile that wrinkled his dark brown eyes, and he was always smiling. In conversations, co-writing sessions, or brief exchanges, he was quick with a joke and eager to listen. Ronnie made everyone feel special because to him, everybody mattered.

Raised in Mount Airy, North Carolina, Ronnie sang Gospel music soon after he started talking, playing in his family band with his four sisters in churches throughout North Carolina and Virginia. In 1987, he joined seminal Bluegrass outfit Lost & Found, and began making his unforgettable mark on Southern music. Three years later, he joined the profoundly influential Lonesome River Band as vocalist and bassist, playing alongside Sammy Shelor, Dan Tyminski, and Tim Austin. The group's 1991 album "Carrying the Tradition" garnered International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) honors for 'Album of the Year.' Released in 1994, the band's follow-up "Old Country Town" further endeared the Lonesome River Band's contemporary Bluegrass to new generations of players and fans.

Released in 1994, Ronnie's solo album debut "Cold Virginia Night" clinched IBMA 'Album of the Year' in 1995, while the title track earned IBMA 'Song of the Year.' Two

pivotal albums for Sugar Hill followed: 1998's "The Man I'm Tryin' to Be," which included IBMA and Gospel Performance of the Year *Three Rusty Nails*, and 2002's "Starting Over," which featured several songs produced by heavyweight Don Cook. Ronnie's smooth tenor wove stories of heartbreak, faith, and love with tenderness and warmth. The IBMA named him 'Male Vocalist of the Year' three times: 1995, 1998, and 1999.

Ronnie continued to record beloved solo projects, free to explore and create on his own terms. In 2005, Ronnie released "It's Gettin' Better All the Time," and in 2019, he released "Ronnie Bowman."

In 2001, between his second and third solo albums, Ronnie signed with Sony Tree Publishing and relocated to Nashville, where he quickly found success as a songwriter. He landed his first no. 1 record with *It's Getting Better All the Time*, written with Don Cook and recorded by Brooks & Dunn. Next, Kenny Chesney shot to no. 1 with *Never Wanted Nothing More*, penned by Ronnie and Chris Stapleton. Kindred spirits and strong collaborators, Ronnie and Chris also co-wrote Chris' *Nobody to Blame* with Barry Bales, *Outlaw State of Mind* with Jerry Salley and *More of You* for Chris' Grammy-winning album "Traveller." *Nobody to Blame* secured ACM 'Song of the Year' honors as well. In 2023, Chris released the Grammy-winning *It Takes a Woman*, which he co-wrote with Ronnie and Jerry.

The list of artists who relied on Ronnie for songs is long and distinguished: Lee Ann Womack recorded Ronnie's *The Healing Kind*, written with Greg Luck, for her "I Hope You Dance" album, while George Strait, Don Williams, Jake Owen, The Isaacs, and many others also recorded his songs. His long list of collaborators included John Fogarty, Alan Jackson, Alison Krauss and Del McCoury. Ronnie's songwriting never dimmed: In 2018, he signed a publishing deal with Eclipse Music where he continued to write until his passing.

Ronnie married Garnet Imes on September 29th, 2002. It is impossible to think of Ronnie without thinking of Garnet. The two were inseparable: a real-life example of the love idealized in songs and poems, offering proof to anyone who encountered them that soulmates do exist.

Ronnie became an American roots music legend, but the roles most precious to him were personal. He was a husband, father, grandfather, brother, and son who loved deeply.

Ronnie Bowman passed away on Sunday, March 22, due to a motorcycle accident in Nashville, Tennessee. He was 64. His passing has left his large circle of family, loved ones, and admirers heartbroken.

We know that Ronnie is with his Savior Jesus in Heaven, although he is terribly missed here on Earth. Ronnie's own words offer us some comfort: "Life's just a moment, but love has no end. Remember I love you, sweetheart, till we meet again."

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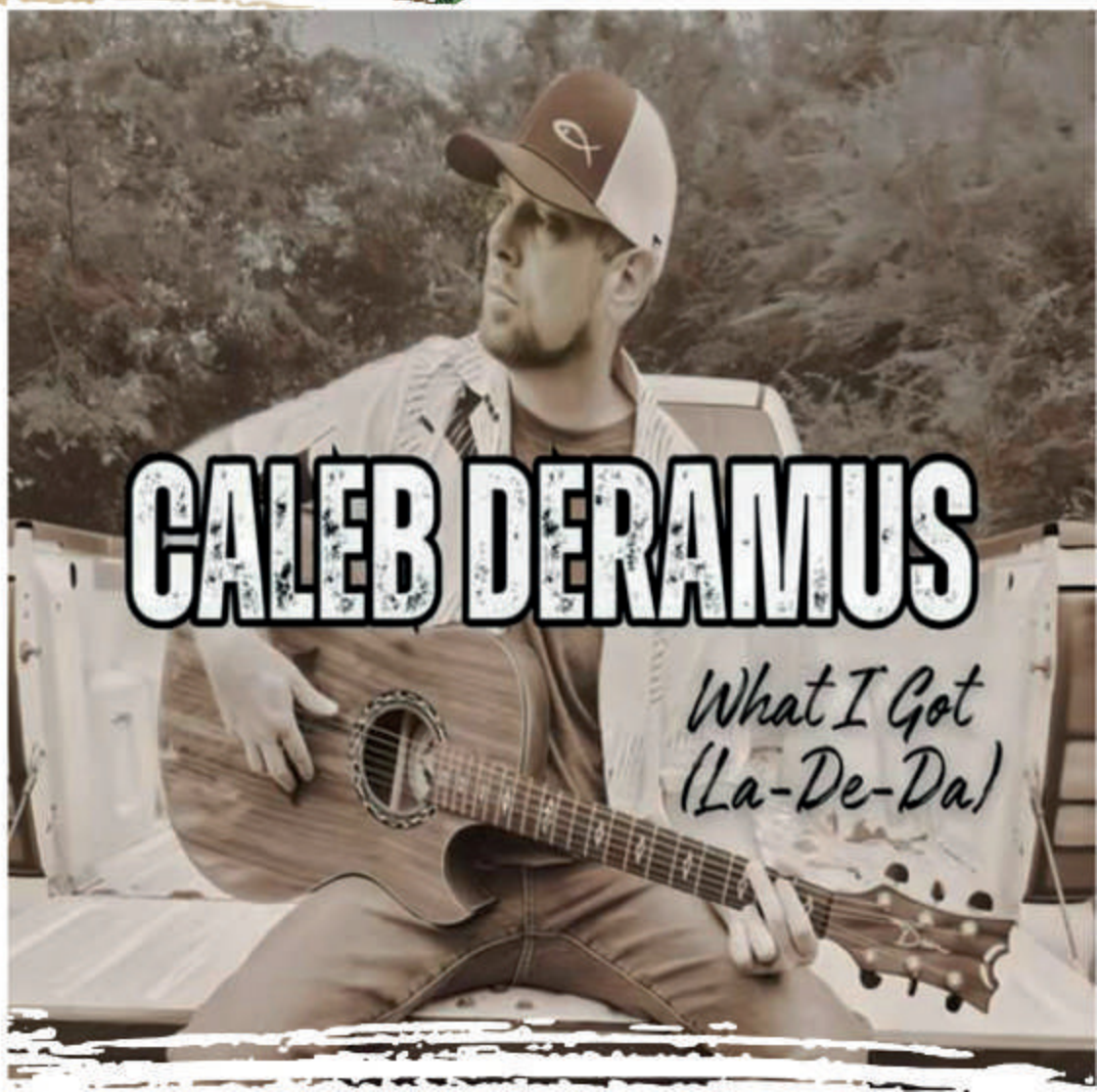
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*What I Got
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The Story Behind the Song

THAT'S THE WAY MAMA RAISED ME

Written and Recorded by Luke Hendrickson

Staff, Cross Country USA

If you were blessed with a mother who prayed, corrected, guided, and raised you with morals and respect, then you'll understand the heart behind Luke Hendrickson's newest single, *That's The Way Mama Raised Me*. For Luke, the song is more than a tribute - it's a testimony. His mother, Ewell Ava Sandle Hendrickson, shaped not only his childhood but the man and minister he would become.

"The unwavering faith of my precious mother has inspired many of the songs that God has helped me write," Luke shares. "It is only through the grace and mercy of God that I am alive and well, along with the covering prayers of my mother. She was the spiritual leader in our home and a profound witness to God's love."

Luke speaks with deep gratitude about the foundation she laid. "The man I am today is largely because my sweet mother rocked my cradle and raised me with biblical principles. She rarely spared the loving rod of discipline, which hurt at the time, but I appreciate it now. Any good that I'm able to accomplish, I owe to Jesus and the faith instilled in me by my mother."

Luke's teenage years were marked by the same tension many young people face - a reverential fear of God mixed with seasons of rebellion. Yet the truths planted in him never left. "The fear of God instilled in me stayed with me even during my years of running from my God-given calling," he reflects.

Growing up in the South, Luke witnessed the cultural realities of the region, including racial prejudice. But his mother drew a firm line. "Although I was raised in the South, where racial prejudice is often prevalent, my mother would not tolerate it," he says. Her convictions became his convictions.

Luke's father also played a defining role. A hardworking man with a successful trucking business, two service stations, and even a stint as a school bus driver, he believed in discipline and responsibility. "He made his children work as



if we were as poor as he had been in his childhood," Luke recalls. His father had joined the Army at sixteen, serving in Korea, and later fought in both World War I and World War II. "Loving God and country - in that order - has always been a significant part of my life."

Luke hopes *That's The Way Mama Raised Me* will do more than honor his mother. He hopes it will stir hearts. "We have all seen the fabric of our blessed USA start to erode, and we must remain diligent in our convictions, speaking the truth in love," he says. "My hope is that this song will encourage believers to live by biblical principles and help turn our families back to the values that made our country the mighty global force it is today."

The message echoes the Scriptures that have guided Luke's life:

• "Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it... and you will find rest for your souls." - Jeremiah 6:16

• "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." - Psalm 9:17

• "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." - Psalm 33:12

For Luke Hendrickson, these verses aren't political statements - they're spiritual truths. They are the same truths his mother lived, taught, and prayed over him. And now, through this song, he hopes to pass them on to a new generation.

That's The Way Mama Raised Me

*(V1) Before we went in the morning, we bowed our knees
Thanking God for another day
as we planted Purple Hull peas
We learned that hard work pays
But you got to sow if you're going to reap
We always asked the Blessing before we sat down to eat
That's the way Mama raised me*

(Chorus)

*That's the way I was raised, that's the way I'll stay
Loving God and helping my neighbor out along the way
Stand up and salute the flag, kneel at cross
That's the Way Mama raised me.*

*(V2) We were taught to respect our elders
No matter the color of their skin
We always read the Bible
and lived by the truths within
And we went to Church on Sunday,
and even on Wednesday nights,
And we did all we could to avoid a fight.
Yea, that's the Way Mama Raised me.*

(Chorus)

*That's the way I was raised, that's the way I'll stay
Loving God and helping my neighbor out along the way
Stand up and salute the flag, kneel at cross
That's the Way Mama raised me.*

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CrossCountry Report

CHRISTIAN COUNTRY MUSIC NEWS & SCOOPS

Lee Newton Releases Intimate Acoustic Rendition of "Carolina Rain"

Award-winning singer-songwriter Lee Newton has released a special acoustic version of her fan-favorite single *Carolina Rain*. Offering a more intimate and heartfelt take on the beloved track, featured on her upcoming project, "Beautifully Undone," the new rendition showcases Newton's emotive delivery and deep connection to the song's story. The single was premiered by The Josie Network and was supported by Honey Rock Books & Cafe in Gallatin, Tennessee.



"Carolina Rain is more than just a song to me, "It's a feeling," shares Newton. "It takes me back home - to the roots, the memories, and the heart of who I am. Even though I didn't write it, it's become a part of my story, and I'm so honored that Tommy Barnes and Charlie Floyd trusted me to make it my own. This acoustic version on "Beautifully Undone" is stripped down, raw, and real, just like the way Carolina feels when it gets in your soul."

Newton recently gave fans a taste of her upcoming album, sharing a heartfelt acoustic rendition of her popular single *Your Hat*. Written by Newton herself, the stripped-back version takes listeners on a tender journey through love, memories, and the quiet significance of the things we can't let go of. Premiered by The Music Universe, the intimate arrangement highlights her authentic storytelling and soulful delivery.

Continuing to celebrate Country music's rich legacy, Newton also teamed with Georgette Jones and Heidi Parton for a special recording of the classic *Silver Threads and Golden Needles*, released earlier this year. Originally recorded in 1956 by rockabilly pioneer Wanda Jackson and later championed by legends like Dolly Parton, Tammy Wynette, and Loretta Lynn, the song has long stood as an anthem of strength and independence, now reimagined by three women honoring that enduring tradition.

Lee Newton is a Nashville recording artist and singer-songwriter from a small town in western North Carolina whose music blends traditional Country, soulful Blues, and a touch of Southern Rock. Inspired early by legends like Hank Williams, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette, and Patsy Cline, Newton began singing in church at age five and learned guitar from her father at seven. Her career has included collaborations with artists such as Leona Williams, Pam Tillis, T. Graham Brown, Joe Bonsall, and Rhonda Vincent. A multiple Josie Music Awards winner, including 'Vocalist of the Year' and 'Album of the Year,' Newton continues to build momentum with new releases, media appearances, and her powerful blend of heartfelt storytelling and authentic Country roots.

For more information, visit leenewtonofficial.com.

Shenandoah Announces '40th Anniversary Tour'

Legendary Country group Shenandoah has announced its 40th Anniversary Tour, set to take place throughout 2026. Marking four decades of classic Country, the tour will celebrate the band's legacy and continued impact on the genre.

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Jeff Bates Releases Latest Single from Upcoming Gospel Album

Bates' version of the traditional hymn, *Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord)* is based on a personal childhood memory. "This song has lived in my heart for as long as I can remember," shares Bates. "My Mama would sing this special song to me when I was a small child, as we waited for Daddy to come home from work late in the evening. She had her own haunting melody and feel that took me to the cross every time I heard her sing it. There were no instruments and no choir, only Mama's voice, in the quiet of the night, sounding heartbroken as she asked me, 'Were YOU there?' I am humbled and proud to share it with you."

Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord) is the first song from Bates' upcoming full-length Gospel album, scheduled for release this month. The single is available on digital streaming platforms.

The announcement follows a strong start to 2026, with Shenandoah already appearing at Luke Bryan's Crash My Playa and headlining the San Antonio Rodeo, continuing to prove their staying power with fans across the country.

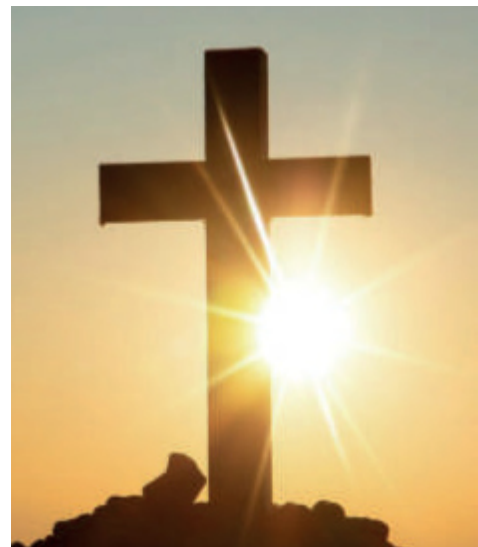
Throughout the year, the band will share the stage with some of Country music's biggest artists, including Jason Aldean, Ella Langley, Kid Rock, Brooks & Dunn, Hank Williams Jr., Old Dominion and more.

"Just to think 40 years," notes lead singer Marty Raybon. "Days of late have been filled with the memories of what this has truly meant to all of us. We have seen some of the best days in a lifetime and some of the hard things that is called life on life. I don't know that we would change anything. We are grateful for every opportunity we have been given and a fanbase that continues to grow with us, love us and support us through all of it."

Formed in the mid-1980s, Shenandoah quickly rose to prominence with a string of No. 1 hits including *Two Dozen Roses*, *Church on Cumberland Road*, and the GRAMMY® Award-winning *Somewhere in the Vicinity of the Heart*. Known for their signature harmonies and storytelling, the band has remained a cornerstone of Country music for generations.

The 40th Anniversary Tour will feature a career-spanning setlist, bringing fans a live experience packed with iconic hits as well as newer material. The tour runs through December. For more information and updates, visit shenandoahband.com.

Signed to RCA Records in late 2002, Jeff Bates released his debut album, "Rainbow Man," in May 2003. A second album, "Leave The Light On," was released in 2005 on RCA. The album was followed by Jeff Bates in 2008 on the independent Black River Entertainment. Bates' two RCA albums accounted for seven chart singles on the Billboard Country charts, of which three reached the Top 40: *The Love Song*, *I Wanna Make You Cry* and *Long, Slow Kisses*. Bates has been active in his works of compassion, collecting for organizations such as Toys for Tots and others. In 2005, a concert in Hattiesburg, Mississippi raised \$25,000 for Hurricane Katrina relief in his home area.



For more information, visit jeffbates.net.

Cross Country Report continued on page 22 >>>



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Ray Stevens Released New Album April 10, And Suffers Fall and Broken Neck

Legendary entertainer, two-time GRAMMY® Award winner, and Country Music Hall of Fame member Ray Stevens is recovering after a fall on Sunday, March 29 that resulted in a broken neck. He was briefly hospitalized in the Nashville area and is now recovering at home. Doctors advised Stevens to wear a neck brace for approximately four weeks. Despite the injury, he remains fully mobile and in good spirits as he continues his recovery.



The 13-track collection blends timeless classics with fresh material, showcasing Stevens' signature charm, wit, and musical versatility. "Favorites Old & New" features a curated mix of beloved standards alongside new selections from a range of talented songwriters, offering both nostalgia and discovery in one cohesive project.

"I had a lot of fun creating this album, "Favorites Old & New,"" explains Stevens. "It really does contain a few of my favorite old songs as well as favorite new ones penned by some talented writers. I just hope Ray Stevens fans enjoy it as much as Ray Stevens!"

On "Favorites Old & New," Stevens breathes new life into classics such as *The Look of Love*, *It Had To Be You*, and *Come Rain or Come Shine*, delivering them with his trademark style. The album also introduces fresh selections including *I Guess You've Never Been in Love With the Moon*, *Moving Out is Easier Than Moving On*, and *Time Machine*, highlighting contemporary songwriting while maintaining the nostalgic charm fans love.

With a career spanning more than six decades, Stevens continues to captivate audiences through his unique blend of humor and heartfelt storytelling. This latest release reinforces his enduring artistry while reflecting both his musical roots and ongoing passion for discovering meaningful songs.

Ray Stevens has spanned the generations with over 60 years of comedic musical talent, including songs such as his multi-million selling hit *The Streak* and his classic Pop standard *Everything Is Beautiful*. Throughout his career, Stevens has sold more than 40 million albums, amassing millions upon millions of fans worldwide. He is a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame, the Musicians Hall of Fame, the Georgia Music Hall of Fame and has a star on the Music City Walk of Fame.

For more information on Ray Stevens, visit raystevens.com or follow him on social media.

Don Williams and Allen Frizzell Inducted into the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame

The Texas Country Music Hall of Fame is proud to announce its 2026 inductees, honoring two legendary artists whose contributions have left a lasting mark on Country music: Don Williams and Allen Frizzell. The annual Texas Country Music Hall of Fame Celebration Weekend will take place August 7-9, 2026, in Carthage, Texas, featuring a full lineup of performances, competitions, and special events.

Known as the "Gentle Giant," Don Williams built a remarkable career defined by his smooth baritone voice and understated style. With timeless hits like *Tulsa Time*, *I Believe in You*, and *Good Ole Boys Like Me*, Williams earned a devoted global following and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2010. Though he passed away in 2017, his influence on Country music continues to resonate with artists and fans around the world.



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Allen Frizzell, a talented singer-songwriter and brother to Country legends David and Lefty Frizzell, carved out his own respected place in the industry. Known for his rich vocals and authentic storytelling, Frizzell contributed both as a performer and songwriter, helping shape the sound of classic Country music while carrying forward the legacy of one of Country's most influential musical families.

The celebration weekend kicks off on Friday, August 7 at the Carthage Civic Center with the John Ritter Tribute Showcase. Doors open at 6:00 p.m., with the show beginning at 7:00 p.m. The showcase will feature 30 talented finalists competing for the title of Texas Country Music Hall of Fame Ambassador for 2027. Auditions for the showcase will be held on Saturday, June 27 at the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, and sign-ups are now open.

The highlight of the weekend takes place on Saturday, August 8, with the Induction Show at the Carthage Civic Center. Doors open at 5:00 p.m., and the show begins at 6:00 p.m.

This year's celebration will feature an impressive lineup of special guests,

including Clay Cooper, David Frizzell, John Schneider, Billie Jo, Luke Moody, Moe Bandy, Bobby Tomberlin, Tess Frizzell, Dallas Wayne, Linda Davis, and Lang Scott.

Also on Saturday, the KGAS Country Music Showdown will be held at the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, showcasing emerging talent from across the region. The weekend concludes on Sunday, August 9, with the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame Gospel Show, celebrating the roots of Country music through inspiring Gospel performances.

Call 903-694-9561 for more information.

44th Annual Sunday Mornin' Country At the Grand Ole Opry June 7th

The tradition continues as the Music City Christian Fellowship presents its 44th Annual Sunday Mornin' Country at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Tennessee. This beloved event blends top Country artists with your favorite Gospel music for an afternoon of celebration and inspiration. The historic show will be held June 7 at 3:30 PM.

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Sunday Mornin' Country is the longest-running named Country/Gospel event associated with CMA Music Fest/Fan Fair. Sponsored by the Nashville-based nonprofit Music City Christian Fellowship, this legendary program has uplifted and encouraged fans for more than four decades, leaving them with memories that last a lifetime.

Featured artists include Jimmy Fortune, Country Music Hall of Famer and longtime member of The Statler Brothers, along with Grand Ole Opry members Mandy Barnett and Charlie McCoy. Other artists who have graced the Sunday Mornin' Country stage many times include Nitty Gritty Dirt Band founder John McEuen, Grammy-nominated artist John Berry, sibling duo Cutter & Cash and Kentucky Grass, Adam Warner, and Leon Everette. From NBC's The Voice, Aubrey Nicole and MacKenzie Phipps and from the new singing competition show, The Road, Cassidy Daniels.

Veteran performers who have been vital to the show's legacy for decades include Cowboy Joe Babcock, The Fox Brothers, Melanie Walker, Tennessee River Boys, Holly Watson, Dianne Sherrill, Music City Quartet and many other talented artists who continue to make this event a musical highlight each year.

Co-producers Lynn Fox and Melanie Walker, along with the board and staff of Music City Christian Fellowship, work

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tirelessly to bring this production to life. The organization's founder, Cowboy Joe Babcock, first envisioned Sunday Mornin' Country more than forty years ago as a way for artists in the music industry to share the message of Jesus Christ through song. Four decades later, that vision is still going strong. As Cowboy Joe shares, "Our main goal is to lead people to Christ. That's the main thing. I am hoping it has led many to the Lord over the years."

Past Sunday Mornin' Country performers include Brenda Lee, Connie Smith, The Oak Ridge Boys, Lulu Roman, Ronnie McDowell, Barbara Fairchild, T. Graham Brown, Rhonda Vincent, and many more.

Make plans now to attend the 44th Annual Sunday Mornin' Country, June 7, 2026. More information is available at musiccitychristianfellowship.org and opry.com. Follow New Sunday Mornin' Country on Facebook.

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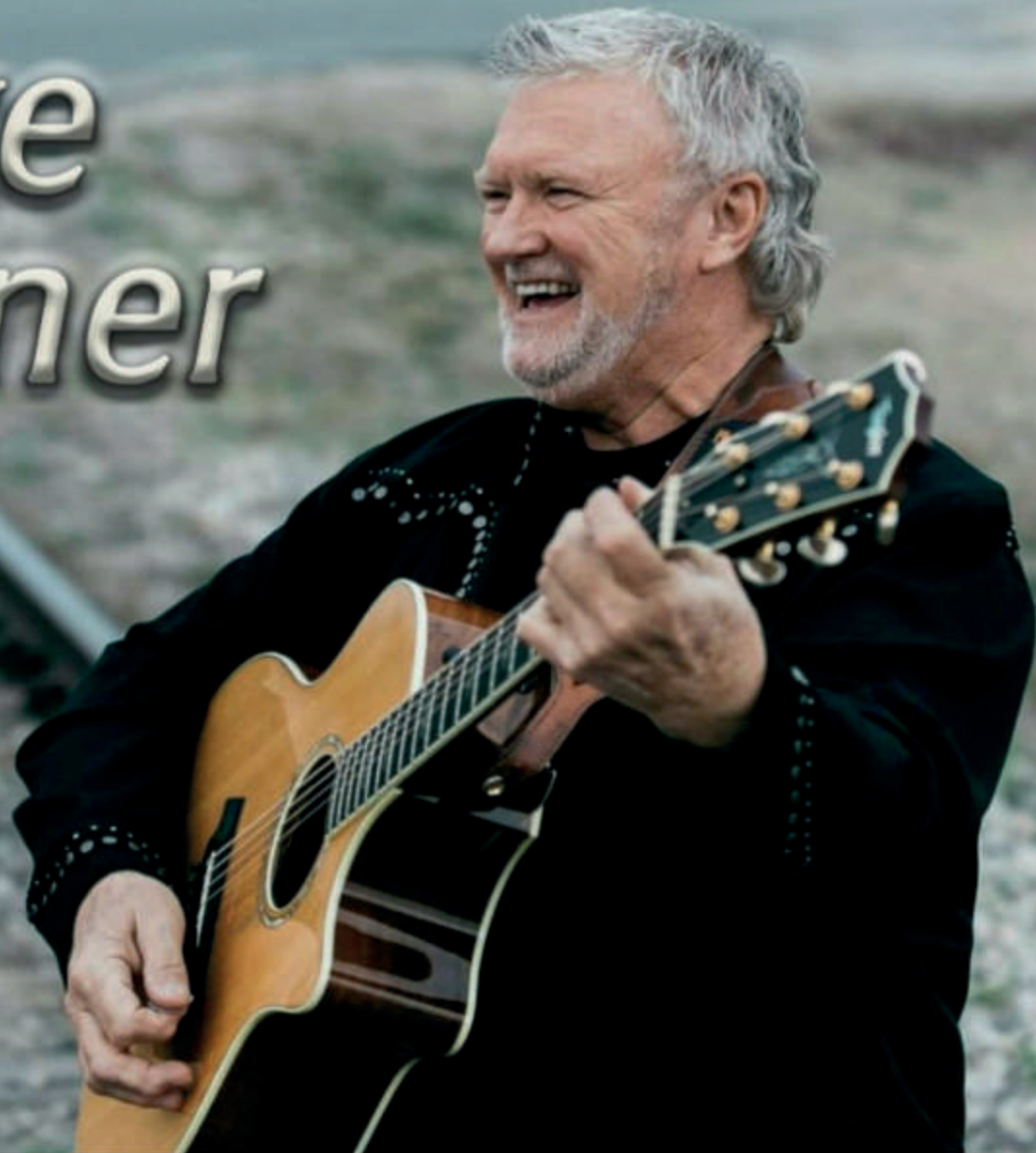
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Jelly Roll is a Grammy-winning singer, songwriter, and storyteller whose blend of Country, Rock, and Hip-Hop has earned him a devoted global fan base. His hit songs - *Save Me, Need a Favor, Son of a Sinner, I Am Not Okay*, and his new single *Thorns* - continue to break barriers with their authenticity, vulnerability, and message of hope.

FROM BROKENNESS TO GRACE



By Robin Tanner

Jelly Roll's rise to fame has been remarkable, but what makes his story truly resonate is the thread of faith woven through every chapter of his transformation. In a world where belief is often politicized or packaged, he has been adamant that faith isn't exclusive and it isn't a brand. His message is simple and deeply personal.

During his Grammy acceptance speech, he declared, "Jesus is for everybody... anybody can have a relationship with Him." That single line became one of the most shared quotes of the night. Online searches for "Jesus" and "God" spiked immediately afterward - proof that his testimony reached far beyond the walls of the arena.

Jelly Roll has never shied away from the truth of where he came from. He speaks openly about being broken, addicted, and serving time in jail in earlier years. His transformation from jail cells and addiction to award stages and global recognition is something he credits as divine intervention.

In that same Grammy speech, he said, "Jesus, I hear You and I'm listening, Lord." He added, "I wouldn't be here without my wife and God's grace." His Grammy-winning album "Beautifully Broken" is filled with songs about redemption, healing, and the unmistakable imprint of God's mercy. Jelly Roll often says that music changed his life - and God changed his life.

One of the most defining faith moments of his career came through his Grammy-winning collaboration with Brandon Lake, *Hard Fought Hallelujah*. With Lake beside him, the performance carried a deeper spiritual weight. Jelly Roll later said it felt like "God showing up in the room." For millions watching, it was more than a performance - it was a testimony.

His humility is part of what makes his message so powerful. He often tells fans, "I'm still a work in progress. God ain't done with me yet," and "I'm not perfect. I'm just

proof that God can use anybody.” These aren’t rehearsed lines - they come from a man who knows what grace feels like.

Jelly Roll’s relationship with God has become central to his story of redemption. He reminds fans again and again that “Jesus is for everybody,” a message that mirrors his own journey from brokenness to grace. For him, faith is the foundation of the man he’s becoming.

Recently, Jelly Roll celebrated one of the most meaningful victories of his life: losing over 200 pounds. The achievement is part of a broader lifestyle shift that includes daily training, improved nutrition, and a renewed spiritual focus. “I’m not trying to be perfect. I’m just trying to be better than I was yesterday,” he shared on social media. “God has given me a second chance at life, and I want to honor that gift. I want to be here for my wife, my daughter and son, my fans, and the people who look to me for hope.”

He has been open about the challenges he has faced - addiction, incarceration, mental-health struggles, and the pressures of fame. His weight-loss journey is the latest chapter in a story that continues to inspire millions who see themselves in his fight for redemption and resilience.

The blessings keep coming. The Grand Ole Opry recently extended an official invitation for Jelly Roll to become its newest member, a defining moment in the Nashville native’s extraordinary rise. The invitation was delivered by Opry member Craig Morgan during an appearance on the Joe


Rogan podcast. Morgan praised Jelly Roll for his authenticity, his genre-blending artistry, and his commitment to uplifting others. He reflected on their shared Opry history, including the emotional night Jelly Roll joined him onstage for *Almost Home* - a moment Jelly Roll has often described as one of the greatest honors of his career.

“Jelly Roll represents everything the Opry stands for: heart, humility, and a deep love for Country music,” Morgan said. “His story of redemption and his passion for helping others embody the spirit of this institution.”

Jelly Roll reacted with visible emotion, calling the moment “a dream I never thought would come true.” He added, “To be invited into the Opry family is the highest honor of my life. This stage gave me hope when I needed it most.” He was officially inducted on March 10 by his friend and fellow Country artist Lainie Wilson.


Jelly Roll - Jason DeFord - is a musical phenomenon with the attention of millions. For him to use that platform to point people toward God is nothing short of extraordinary. He can be a witness on platforms where many Christians can’t go. As he continues to grow, heal, and share his faith with the world, let’s keep him in our prayers. May he and his family continue to grow in their faith, and may his testimony keep shining a light into places where hope feels far away.

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The Music & Legacy of Tammy Wynette

Tammy Wynette, born Virginia Wynette Pugh on May 5, 1942, in Itawamba County, Mississippi, remains one of the most influential and emotionally resonant voices in the history of Country music. Known worldwide as the ‘First Lady of Country Music,’ Wynette brought raw honesty and vulnerability to her songs, giving voice to the struggles, heartbreaks, and resilience of everyday women. Over the course of her extraordinary career, she recorded 20 No. 1 singles, sold more than 30 million records, and left a legacy that continues to shape the genre decades after her passing.

Raised on a Mississippi cotton farm, Wynette grew up working long hours in the fields while dreaming of a life far beyond her rural surroundings. Music became her refuge. She often credited her early hardships with giving her the emotional depth that later defined her singing, and she kept a bowl of cotton in her home throughout her life as a reminder of her roots.

As a young wife and mother facing financial hardship, Wynette trained as a beautician in Tupelo, Mississippi. Even after achieving fame, she kept her cosmetology license current, famously saying she could “always go back to hairdressing.” She later moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where she worked long days in a beauty shop and sang on the Country Boy Eddie TV show. During this time, she began making regular trips to Nashville, determined to build a career in music.

In 1966, with three children and no safety net, Wynette made the bold decision to move to Nashville permanently. After months of rejection, she auditioned for producer Billy Sherrill at Epic Records. He signed her immediately and suggested the stage name “Tammy.”

Her debut single, *Apartment #9*, charted quickly, and her follow-up hits established her as a major new voice. Between 1967 and 1971, Wynette dominated the charts with classics



such as *Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad*, *I Don't Wanna Play House*, *Take Me to Your World*, *D-I-V-O-R-C-E*, and her signature anthem, *Stand By Your Man*. The latter became one of the most recognizable songs in Country music history and was later inducted into the GRAMMY Hall of Fame.

By the early 1970s, Wynette had become the first female Country artist to sell a million albums, earned two GRAMMY Awards, and won three CMA ‘Female Vocalist of the Year’ titles.

In 1968, Wynette married country legend George Jones, forming one of the most iconic - and turbulent - partnerships in music history. Their chemistry produced timeless duets including *Golden Ring*, *We're Gonna Hold On*, *Two Story House*, and *Near You*. Fans affectionately dubbed them the “President and First Lady of Country Music.”

Although their marriage ended in 1975, their musical partnership endured, culminating in their 1995 reunion album "One." Their daughter, Georgette Jones, later became a recording artist and author, carrying forward both her parents' legacies.

Wynette remained a creative force throughout the 1980s and 1990s. She scored an unexpected international hit with the KLF's *Justified* and *Ancient* in 1991 and collaborated with Dolly Parton and Loretta Lynn on the celebrated album "Honky Tonk Angels" in 1993.

Despite chronic health issues, she continued to record and perform until her passing. On April 6, 1998, Tammy Wynette died in her sleep at her Nashville home. Her memorial service at the Ryman Auditorium was broadcast worldwide, reflecting her profound impact on music.

Tammy Wynette's influence remains unmatched. Her ability to convey heartbreak, strength, and vulnerability made her a defining voice of American music. Tammy earned a place in multiple halls of fame, including Country Music Hall of Fame (1998), Alabama Music Hall of Fame (1993), Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame (2009) and Mississippi Arts & Entertainment Experience Hall of Fame (2019).

Her life and marriage to George Jones were dramatized in the acclaimed Paramount miniseries *George & Tammy*, based on the memoir *The Three of Us* by Georgette Jones.

From the world-famous Ryman Auditorium, the former home of the Grand Ole Opry, hosted a one-night-only celebration honoring the life, legacy, and music of Tammy Wynette on March 30th. Presented uniquely in song, this special tribute brought together an extraordinary lineup of artists spanning genres and generations.

Featured performers included: Wynonna, Ann Wilson, The War and Treaty, Gretchen Wilson, Macy Gray, Lucinda Williams, Valerie June, Mandy Barnett, Tami Neilson, Katie Pruitt, Georgette Jones, and more. The evening showcased Wynette's most beloved classics, including *Stand by Your Man*, *D-I-V-O-R-C-E*, *Golden Ring*, *I Don't Wanna Play House*, *'Til I Get It Right*, *We're Gonna Hold On*, *Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad*, *'Til I Can Make It on My Own*, *One*, and many more.

The official Tammy Wynette Instagram account announced the event with excitement, celebrating the opportunity to honor the 'First Lady of Country Music.' Georgette Jones echoed the sentiment, sharing her family's pride in participating in such a meaningful tribute.

More than two decades after her passing, Wynette's music continues to resonate with new generations. Her voice - aching, powerful, unmistakably human - remains one of the most iconic in Country music history.

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From the Cotton Fields to
the King's Banquet Hall
The Gospel Journey of

Jerry
+
WEATHERLY

By Jackson McKee

From a rented shack in a Mississippi cotton patch to a ministry that reaches listeners around the world, Jerry Weatherly has lived the kind of story Country songs are made of. But for him, the spotlight has never been the goal. His mission is simple and unwavering: preach Jesus in song, offer hope to the hurting, and call sinners to repentance. With his newest release debuting this month on the Cross Country Hot 100, Weatherly's message is resonating louder than ever.

Jerry Weatherly likes to say his life has taken him "from the cotton fields of Mississippi to the King's banquet hall," and when he says it, you can hear both the weight of where he's been and the gratitude for where God has brought him. His ministry is simple at its core, yet profound in its reach: "A journey preaching Jesus in song; a blessing to the redeemed, a call for sinners to repent."

For Jerry, singing about Jesus isn't a career choice - it's a calling. "It has been a great journey," he says. "It is a good feeling to tell someone about God and His only begotten Son, Jesus. To share the Gospel. The Good News. That they can be saved and have eternal life with Him." His voice softens as he adds, "Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be able to tell you about my Jesus. This is what this ministry is all about."

Roots in the Red Clay

Jerry was born and raised in the Appalachian foothills of northeast Mississippi, in the small town of Pontotoc. His childhood was shaped by the sounds, struggles, and spiritual rhythms of the rural South. "I was influenced by traditional Gospel and Country music," he recalls. "As a child I was influenced by Bible Belt teachings about the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes in a church. Sometimes by what some would call worldly folks. Seemed like back then even some of the meanest ones had some fear of God."

Life wasn't easy. "Poverty, alcohol, divorce, violence and death were also a cruel taskmaster," he says. "They came around quite often. Especially on the weekends." Yet even in the hardship, seeds were being planted - seeds that would one day grow into songs of hope.

His first exposure to music came at eight years old at Woodland Baptist Church, where his aunt took him to Vacation Bible School. "First time I had been to church," he remembers. "They would sing the old hymns. To learn a Bible verse and get a little star on the wall was a big deal for this child. Don't underestimate your influence with children. The smallest deed can pay great dividends later on. They won't forget."

When he wasn't in church, he was listening to the Grand Ole Opry on a small portable radio in a rented shack "in a corner of a cotton patch." Those broadcasts became a lifeline. "The expressions of life's struggles, sorrows, hopes and disappointments were all there, pouring out of that little AM radio from Nashville, Tennessee," he says. "Gospel music. Country music. Shaping and influencing future singers, writers and musicians."

A Songwriter Finds His Voice

Jerry eventually moved to the Missouri Ozarks, married his wife Glenda, and settled into a quieter life. But something inside him kept stirring. "I began to write songs," he says. "I think my cousin Jim Weatherly said, 'It all begins with a song.'"

Jim Weatherly - the Hall of Fame songwriter from Pontotoc who penned classics like *Midnight Train to Georgia* - was a major encouragement. "He was a great encouragement to me," Jerry says. "Writing songs is what I enjoy best."

Jerry writes both Gospel and what he calls "clean Country." He says, "Country songs that do not offend my Jesus." His catalog reflects that conviction - stories of redemption, hope, and the God who walks with the broken.

A Ministry of Music and Mercy

Jerry's ministry extends far beyond the stage. "Please contact us if you would like to record any of my material," he says. "Or if you just need someone to pray with. Have hope. God loves you. God cares for you."

He and Glenda make all his music available for free on their website, YouTube, radio, and streaming platforms. "Glenda and I ask for your prayers as we move forward to give out what God has given us," he says. Glenda also shares Bible teaching videos on YouTube under the title What God's Word Has to Say About It. "You will be blessed," Jerry promises.

A New Release and a New Milestone

Jerry's newest single, *I Was There*, is a resurrection story of hope, and listeners are responding. The song debuted this month on the Cross Country Hot 100 chart, marking an exciting milestone in his ministry. "Thanks for requesting our newest release *I Was There*," he says. "It's a resurrection story of hope!"

For Jerry, chart success is simply another opportunity to point people to Christ. "It is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance," he says. "Jesus said to repent and believe."

Where the Journey Leads

When Jerry looks back on his life - the cotton fields, the poverty, the violence, the hymns, the Opry, the encouragement of family, the calling to write - he sees the hand of God in every chapter. "God's gift of salvation to man," he says quietly. "Where would we be without it?"

His story is not one of fame or fortune, but of faithfulness. A man shaped by hardship, redeemed by grace, and determined to spend his days telling the world about Jesus.

And as he continues to write, sing, and minister, Jerry Weatherly remains grateful for every open door. "It has been a great journey," he says again. "A blessing to the redeemed, a call for sinners to repent. God bless you and yours."

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NASHVILLE CHRISTIAN COUNTRY'S

Alexa Finney

Pursuing God



At only twenty-two years of age, Alexa Finney knows exactly who she is and Whose she is. With two amazingly strong women in her life, her mother Angela, and her grandmother Cindee, Alexa has never wavered from who God wants her to be.

By Teresa Schweinsberg

Raised in church all her life, Alexa knew at the young age of six she could not depend upon her father Lawrence, her mother or her grandmother's relationship with God, but needed her own personal relationship with Jesus. She then accepted Him and was also baptized, both in the Spirit and in water.

"I always had a strong desire to have a relationship with God, because I knew Jesus loved me, and I loved Him," says Alexa, who began singing in the children's choir called "King's Kids" at her church around that same time with her older sister Lauren.

At around eight years old, Alexa began taking piano lessons. She was always a little shy and enjoyed singing in the choir with many other children, but not by herself. She was asked to do her first solo as a special during the service at around fifteen.

"I was so nervous leading up to my special," Alexa shares. "I was much more comfortable with a choir singing with me, but not by myself."

When Alexa was seventeen, she began singing as part of her church's praise team, and though there were not as many people singing with her as in a choir, she found she enjoyed it a great deal. She has been on the praise team ever since.

Then, she was asked to audition for the Texas Choir at the Summit Conference where there were one hundred people singing with her. Not only did she have to audition, but she had to have her pastor's recommendation. Each of these steps have helped to build Alexa's confidence to try new things vocally. She has even tried to write a few songs but did not feel successful or confident yet there.

Alexa would have no problem with a lack of songs to sing, though, because her grandma Cindee, is well-known songwriter, Cynthia Reamy. Alexa says she knew God had His hand on her first recording and single release when it happened so suddenly.

Alexa's sister Lauren and her husband Daniel were planning to come to Nashville from Canada to record a song.

Alexa tells the story, "I just rode with my grandma from Texas to hang out. My grandma asked if I wanted to sing a song with Lauren, since Daniel was stuck in Canada with an illness. It was all kind of spontaneous. I listened to the demo and felt like the song fit me.

She continues, "Going into the studio, I was super nervous. Having everyone there be so nice and professional helped me so much! The musicians were so kind. I was just praying God would give me peace. Hearing the producer in my ear guiding me gave me the peace I needed."

Alexa shared that she previously had hated when someone recorded her singing at church on their phone. She did not like hearing her own voice. It was different for her hearing her voice when the song was completed and mastered. She says she could not wait to get the song out and see what God was going to do.

The experience of recording her first song in the studio helped Alexa know she wants to pursue music. She wants to get back to playing piano, so she can accompany herself when

she sings. She wants to make herself available to be used by God, using all the gifts and skills He has given her.

"I would love to help lead worship with others," Alexa relays. "I'm open to anything God wants me to do. I don't want to put limits on Him, even if He puts me out of my comfort zone."

Alexa shared one of her favorite Bible verses, Ecclesiastes 3:11, "*He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.*"

Alexa states, "I have held onto this verse for a very long time. Even when we can't see our own potential, God knows His plans for us and will bring them about in His timing."

Alexa's grandma, Cynthia Reamy wrote Alexa's very first single release which came out in time for Easter, *Redemption Story*. About her grandma, she says, "It's so hard to put into words what my grandma means to me. She has always been such a strong prayer warrior. Anytime I've been with her, she has always talked about God with me and given me Bible verses to encourage and help me. She has been through so much and is one of the strongest women I've ever known. God uses her story and writing so much to minister to others. It was such a blessing to be able to do her song for my first release."

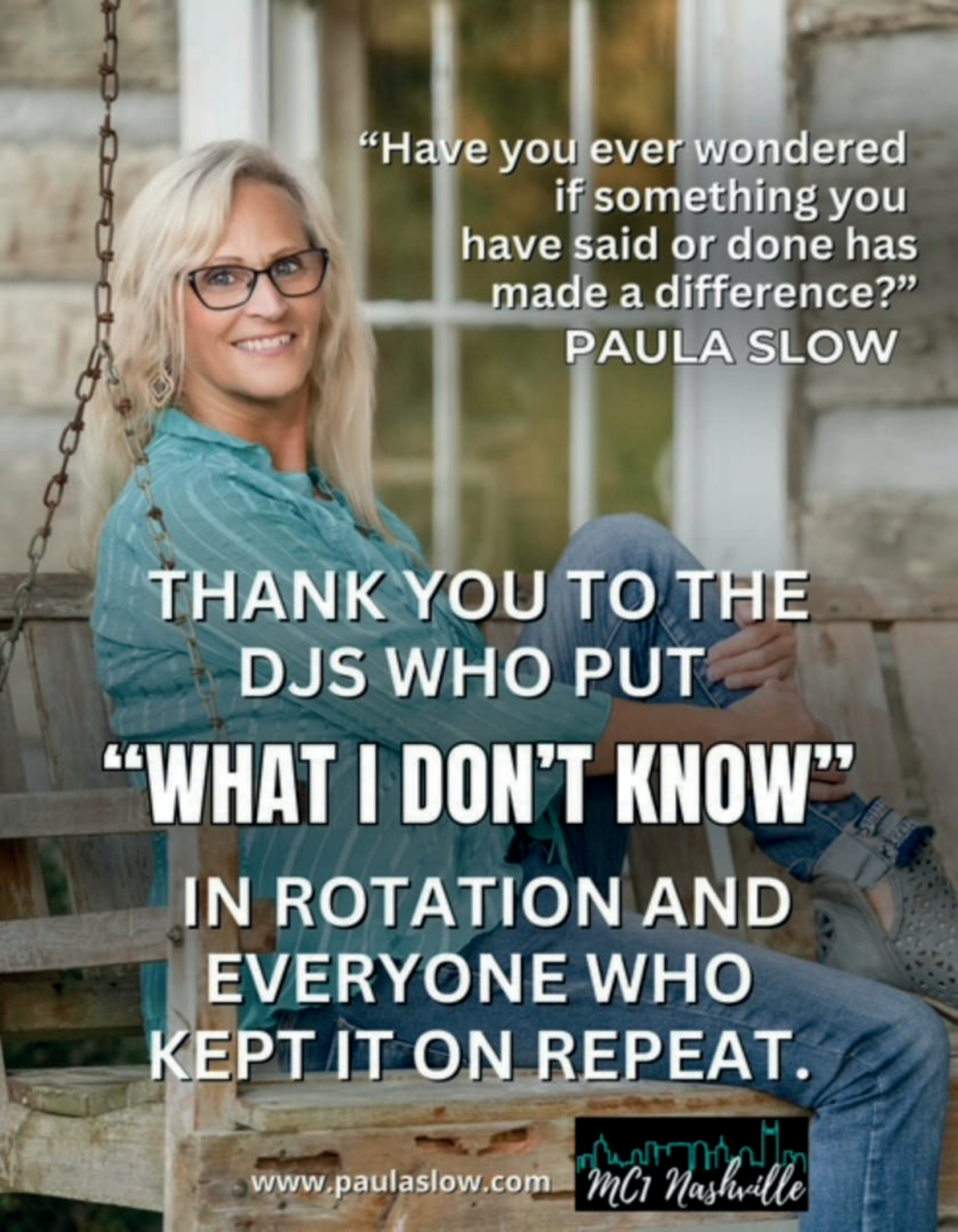


Grandma had a few words to say about Alexa as well. Cynthia said, "What an honor to have my granddaughter Alexa's very first single release be *Redemption Story*. I will say that I could not be more delighted. I have watched Alexa grow into a beautiful Christian, with a love and deep passion to minister to the lost, wounded, and broken.

Cynthia continues, "Easter has always been a very emotional time, as I think about the King of glory coming to earth and offering himself a sacrifice for my sins. *Redemption Story* is one of my favorite songs to have written. To have my granddaughter record it brings tears to my eyes, and joy to my heart. Alexa's beautiful, pure voice carries the message powerfully. What a double honor to have this special song recorded by my granddaughter."

The more this grandma and granddaughter work together, what a powerful singer/songwriter team they will make!

Stream, download, request, and add *Redemption Story* by Alexa Finney to your playlists today!



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At an age when most people are winding down, JW Jackson was just getting started. “I was 66 when I picked up a \$75 acoustic Epiphone six-string,” Jackson recalls with a chuckle. “Nice little guitar. Took me a month and some sore fingers to get three chords down. That’s when I wrote my first real song - *Blues Ain’t Country (But It’s Country to Me!)*”

That humble beginning marked the start of a whirlwind journey that would take Jackson from quiet songwriting sessions in Branson, Missouri, to the stages of Nashville, and eventually to the top of the European Academy of Country Music charts.

The Late Bloomer Who’s Redefining Country Music, One Song at a Time

JW JACKSON

By Cory Parker

A Voice That Refused to Blend In

Jackson’s musical roots stretch back to childhood church choirs in Wisconsin, where his unmistakable Country twang first made waves - literally.

“I was probably five or six,” he says. “The choir leader stopped everything and said, ‘What’s that noise?’ All the kids pointed at me. She asked, ‘Jimmy, do you think you could not do that with your voice?’ I said, ‘I was justa sangin’.”

That raw, unfiltered sound would become his signature. Though he never quite fit into the choir, Jackson found his place out front, singing solos that couldn’t be ignored.

A Family Legacy Unearthed

At 68, Jackson uncovered a truth that would deepen his connection to Country music: his birth father had been a Nashville songwriter. DNA tests revealed ties to the Jackson family, tracing back to immigrant Ralph Jackson, born in 1650.

“I found out my whole birth family were musicians,” he says. “Some with big connections. But I was pretty much ignored. It’s hard for folks to accept a new 68-year-old cousin or brother.”

Still, the revelations kept coming. His wife - also adopted - turned out to be related to Harold Morrison, a Hall of Fame Bluegrass musician who played with Loretta Lynn, George Jones, and Tammy Wynette.

“It didn’t change my music business,” Jackson insists. “I stand on my own. But it’s cool history. Full circle in so many ways.”

Baptism by Fire in Nashville

Jackson’s first real industry moment came at the Omni Hotel in Nashville, where he was invited to perform and attend, at the Listening Room during the Country Radio Seminar (CRS).

"I was unprepared would be the understatement," he laughs. "Had a sore throat, croaked my way through it. But I met some radio folks and fellow artists who gave me good advice on how to approach my approach."

That moment of vulnerability turned into a catalyst. Jackson began recording with top-tier session musicians introduced to him by Greg Roller of Roller Music Pro in Branson. The studio became a creative haven, producing nearly 30 songs and counting.

Building a Sound with Legends

Jackson's tracks feature a who's who of Country talent: Mike McAdoo on lead guitar (Mel Tillis, The Osmonds), Wayne Massengale on fiddle (Roy Clark, Tanya Tucker), and Debra Paxton on vocals (daughter of Gary Paxton who produced and recorded *Monster Mash* legend Bobby "Boris" Pickett and many other hits).

"I've been blessed," Jackson says. "These folks bring my songs to life. Mike McAdoo plays on many of my tracks, and Jonathon Black's keyboards are just magical."

One standout collaboration came through Herosong Studios, a charity supporting law enforcement and military. Jackson's tribute *Brave Blue Shields* featured Kent Slucher on drums (Luke Bryan), Jake Clayton on strings (Tanya Tucker) and harmonica legend Charlie McCoy, who had worked with Jackson's birth father decades earlier.

"Charlie sat next to me at a Herosong event," Jackson recalls. "Turns out he was best friends with Jim Denny, who signed my father's songwriter contracts. Another full circle moment."

Songs with Soul and Purpose

Jackson's music isn't just catchy, it's deeply personal. His song *Our Flag Flies in Dover*, written for Gold Star families, was inspired by his own military service.

"When I was 17, waiting to go to Vietnam, they put me on funeral detail at Dover Air Force Base," he says. "We buried an 18-year-old who had just served. I thought... that could be me."

The song was nominated for 'Social Impact Video of the Year' at the 2025 Josie Awards, held at the Grand Ole Opry. It's now playing on Cashbox-affiliated stations.

Another hit, *Bent Rusty Nail*, climbed to #1 on the EACM chart after 26 weeks and is nominated for 'Cut of the Year' by the Tennessee Songwriter's Association International.



Faith, Family, and the Fire to Keep Going

Jackson's faith is the bedrock of his artistry. "Nothing would be possible without my faith," he says. "And I believe the United States is the best place to live on this earth."

Recently, that faith took musical form. Jackson wrote and released his first Christian track, *My Tiny Soul*, a song he describes as coming "straight from the heart." It traces back to his earliest memory of church - a moment of wonder and confusion for a five-year-old boy suddenly moved from Perry, Georgia to Wisconsin to live with his adopted grandparents. His grandmother, a Sunday School teacher for 75 years, introduced him to the stories of Jesus and God, concepts that were mysterious and new to him. The song follows the spark of that first light as it grew through his life and into the man he is today. Those memories became the inspiration behind *My Tiny Soul*.

His songs often reflect that belief, blending patriotism with personal storytelling. His current Country single, *Pop Smoke*, tells the tale of a Vietnam veteran Jackson met in the Louisiana swamps. The Jerry Reed-style track features McAdoo's guitars, Black's organ, and Jackson's own ethereal background vocals. "All veterans will relate to that song," he says. "It's got heart."

Crossing Generations, Defying Expectations

Despite entering the industry at an age most would consider "too late," Jackson's music is resonating with younger audiences.

"One fan commented online, 'I think I just found my favorite new Country artist,'" Jackson says. "That makes me smile. He was young. So, my music is transcending age gaps."

He's seen firsthand how trends cycle back to tradition. "Younger folks are liking the more traditional stuff," he notes. "I write some old, some modern tunes. But I always try to deliver a heartfelt performance."

The Dream That Still Burns

Seven years into his music career, Jackson has already surpassed his own expectations. But there's one goal that still drives him. "I'd love to write that ONE super iconic song that's known by everyone," he says. "Something that lives on."

Until then, he'll keep writing, recording, and performing - one soulful, stompin' track at a time. "I hope fans have a good time," Jackson says. "And maybe be touched to the core or moved to tears. Most of my songs come from real experiences. I just try to deliver that heartfelt performance."

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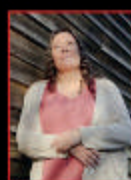
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LEGENDS SERIES

THE CUPPS

By Deborah Baliles



The family Southern Gospel group, The Singing Cupps, is comprised of Troy, Barbara, Sarah, Hannah, Leah, and Sarah's husband Ben Dishman. The Singing Cupps have been a part of the Gospel Music industry for many years. The highest honor bestowed on any ministry is but two simple words; heartfelt and anointed.

In 1996, the group signed a major recording contract with Kevin McManus and Oak Valley Studios in Nashville, Tennessee. Despite being told that it usually takes a couple of years for DJs to warm up to new artists, the Cupps were quickly gaining popularity with their first single reaching national charts just six months after its release. They went on to create ten albums at Oak Valley Studio, under the Zion Music label.

Over the years, the Cupps have released numerous songs to radio that have made their way into national charts, such as *Singing News*, *Christian Voice*, and *US Gospel News* magazines. Some of their most beloved hits to roll into the Top 100 include *What's Wrong With Living Right*, *Man In The Middle*, *Army Of Angels*, *Broken Pieces*, *I've Been*

Healed, *Heaven Is Real*, *I Found The Rock*, *He's My Friend*, and *It Wasn't The Nails*.

What's Wrong With Living Right gathered the attention to introduce The Singing Cupps' music to multiple countries worldwide. With their songs being heard internationally, they received a request to perform at Buckingham Palace in Westminster, London for the Queen of England. Unfortunately, they had to respectfully decline the invitation due to Troy's ongoing health issues. Still, their music continued to sweep internationally.

The Cupps faced a tragic event in August of 2010 when Troy accidentally fell from the rooftop of their food pantry building, almost losing his life. He was hospitalized for several months and had to undergo extensive physical therapy to regain the use of his right arm and learn to walk again. Suffering from memory loss, some wondered if this would mark the end of the Cupps singing ministry. Only God knew what was in store for the future Cupps family. Troy remained dedicated to the food pantry work and continued to assist volunteers, by phone, from his hospital bed.

With some months now behind them, the Cupps were feeling a new calling from God for their music ministry. Subsequently, this new calling brought to them numerous awards, over the next years, from former Kentucky Governors, City Officials in Tennessee, Christian Voice Magazine, The American Christian Music Association, and The Lake Cumberland Music Association. Remaining humble, the Cupps have stayed focused on their mission to inspire and touch lives for Christ.

The Williamsburg Gospel Barn in Kentucky would become a part of the call and mission of the Cupps. Mr. Ward Correll, a well-known and successful businessman who sometimes attended the Cupps' concerts became a strong supporter of their ministry beginning in 1994. Having witnessed the dedication of Cupps Ministry Inc., in 2014, Mr. Correll graciously donated one of his facilities to the ministry, now known as the Williamsburg Gospel Barn.

Located at 90 Happy Hollow Road in Williamsburg, Kentucky, the Williamsburg Gospel Barn is one of Kentucky's popular tourist attractions. It can be easily accessed from Interstate I-75, Exit 11.

On Saturday evenings, the Cupps hosts free live concerts featuring local and regional artists, as well as some of America's most popular singing groups and soloists. Troy Cupp states, "The main goal is to promote, protect, and preserve the rich history of Gospel music by providing these wonderful concerts at no cost to the public."

Aside from the music ministry, the Cupps have a charitable calling as well. Free hot meals are served to the homeless individuals who attend the concerts. Troy explains, "The Williamsburg Gospel Barn food pantry has been able to assist numerous families. Non-perishable foods and paper products have gone to serve the needy in Whitley, McCreary, Knox, and Laurel Counties in Kentucky, also Campbell and Scott Counties in Tennessee. In addition to giving away the



The Gospel Barn in Williamsburg, Kentucky, where The Cupps host free Gospel concerts every weekend.

free supplies, the Cupps collaborate with court-mandated community service workers, aiding individuals recovering from drug addictions. Retired professionals and members from various church denominations, in Southeastern Kentucky and East Tennessee, volunteer their time and services to the ministry."

As a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization, Cupps Ministries, Inc dba Williamsburg Gospel Barn does not have a traditional church tithing system for funding. They rely solely on donations from kind-hearted individuals and Christian-owned businesses. The ministry is upholding its mission and making a positive impact in the community.

At the end of the busy day, it all comes back to the music. The Cupps have a new CD coming soon, "From the Cradle to The Cross," with the title track leading as their first single from the project. Produced by Les Butler, the album features five songs written by Troy Cupp. They pray that fans will be pleased with this long-awaited addition to their music library.

The Singing Cupps music is available for purchase online or at your local Christian bookstore. Learn more about this ministry, their latest album, and the Williamsburg Gospel Barn at thecupps.org, gospelbarn.org, or subscribe to the Williamsburg Gospel Barn livestream on YouTube, where you can watch live concerts.



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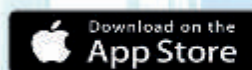
OFFICIAL CHRISTIAN COUNTRY TOP 100 - MAY 2026

TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST	TM	LM	SONG TITLE	ARTIST
1	4	I've Been Thinking	Waymasters	51	31	God Don't Waste The Hurt	Gary Russ
2	9	I Saw A Miracle Today	Michael Ray Fain	52	79	Let Me tell Ya' Bout My Faith	Kali Rose
3	6	New Man	Chuck Day	53	60	You Can Talk To The Father	Richard Strong
4	12	Everything You Do	Norman Lee Schaffer	54	69	God's Great	The Messengers
5	10	Waiting In The Water	Debbie Mills	55	85	Jesus To The Rescue	Beverly Brown Simms
6	17	Heaven Sweet Home	Blake Shelton	56	25	It's Never Too Late	Chuck Hancock
7	16	Get Out Of The Boat	Felicia Deramus Paul	57	71	Jesus Is The King	Ken Mobley
8	20	He Made It All	Dust And Grace	58	34	Mama's Old Chest Of Drawers	Marvin Harrell
9	19	Say Hello To Heaven	Steve Warren	59	76	Edge Of Heaven	Scott Peacock
10	18	Shout Of Testimony	Mike Leichner	60	30	Hand In Heaven	The Murphys ft. Abigail
11	7	Three Nails And A Cross	George Strait	61	64	The Journey	Joe Land
12	28	Warrior Of God	Mark Umfleet	62	67	Brothers And Sisters	Ken Lehning
13	22	What I Don't Know	Paula Slow	63	66	My God Can	Valerie Ellis Hawkins
14	24	Why Me Lord	Richard Lynch	64	62	That's The Least That I Can Do	Greg Marlow
15	26	It'll Be Good To Be Home	The Journeys	65	81	The Bridge	Daryl Baker
16	21	Wish You Were Here	Johnathan Bond	66	41	Footprints In The Sand	Dwight Sanders
17	8	Blood Bought Cowboy	Marty Deroche	67	47	The Way You Do	Michael Walsh
18	15	You Can Call On Him	Aaron Partridge and Steve Apirana	68	74	Jesus Is The Way	Rachel Taylor
19	36	Jesus Loves Me	Dierks Bentley	69	72	Heading Home With Jesus To Be	Lizzy G And Jeff Naper
20	5	If That Ain't True Love	Melanie Walker	70	87	The Turn	The Pauls
21	33	Man From Galilee	Jennifer Sides	71	75	When I Hear His Name	Victoria Steelman
22	29	Honey In The Rock	Mary James	72	55	One Of These Days	Carol Barham
23	3	When Love Arose	Joy LaVallee	73	73	Walking Out Of Egypt	One Voice
24	32	What I Got (La-De-Da)	Caleb Deramus	74	78	Why Me	Jenny Dean
25	68	Whiskey Road	Michael Tetrick	75	82	That's The Way Mama Raised Me	Luke Hendrickson
26	11	Pushing You Away	Mike McAdoo	76	86	The Last Song	Terry and Debra Luna
27	13	In Times Like These	Bruce and Betsy Mullen	77	83	Getting Back Up	Troy Richardson
28	43	It's Time, Lord	Eddy Mann	78	89	Cherished Memories	Jeff Hamilton
29	2	Living Proof	Ken & Kim Stull	79	84	Tell Me That There Ain't A God	Jon Brennan
30	53	This One's For You	Rocky and Tamie	80	88	If I'm Guilty	Thomas Brown
31	44	He Lives	Ed Bruce	81	80	Build Me An Ark	Caroline Owens
32	46	Blessings	Steven Paul McCollum	82	77	You're The Man	Judy Bailey
33	48	Song For My Son	Walker Hayes	83	94	Snowy Sunday Morning	Biscuits and Gravy Band Indiana
34	37	Somebody Bigger Than You And I	David Smith	84	92	Someday Things Are Gonna Get Better	Johnny Jones
35	45	The Crossroads	Richard Sprayberry	85	65	Give It All You've Got	Steve Anthony
36	38	Meanwhile Back At The Cross	Ron Hemphill	86	--	My Tiny Soul	JW Jackson
37	49	The Most Perfect Gift	Clare Cunningham	87	90	Beverage Of Choice	Brother Daniel
38	1	Greatly To Be Praised	Melissa Evans	88	91	Wayfaring Stranger	Debbie Bennett
39	42	Don't Cry For Me	Teresa Johnson	89	99	River Of Life	Shonshie Road
40	58	Hannah Whooped The Devil	Jason Welch	90	95	At War With Myself	Cyndi Reynolds
41	70	Looking For The Light	Delnora	91	93	There's Power In The Name Of Jesus	Jonathan Ray Smith
42	14	You Can't Box Me In	Fortner Brothers	92	97	Somebody Here	Linda Lanier
43	54	Love Like Jesus Does	Aaron Justice	93	--	Preacher Man	David Timms
44	56	Picture This	Jessie Ritchie	94	98	Just A Little Talk With Jesus	Ray Epperson
45	52	Saving Grace	Krystina B	95	--	I Was There	Jerry Weatherly
46	57	God Is Good Y'all	Wings of Love	96	--	Soldier Of The Cross	John Penney
47	23	Daddy's Hat	Debra Camp	97	100	You Got It	Royal Clark
48	59	Take Over Me	Rex Robards	98	--	Real Good Day	Kevin Morris
49	50	In The Morning	Hunter Logan	99	--	The Promise	Charity Hamilton
50	27	God Talks To Me	Dawson Road	100	--	I'm From The US Of A	Roger Barkley Jr



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RICKY LEE PHELPS

*Country's Gone
Christian!*

By Teresa Schweinsberg

Who could think of the late '80s and early '90s Country music scene, without remembering the irreverent rebels, the Kentucky Headhunters? With long hair, long sideburns, wild stage antics like riding unicycles and juggling, they were going against the grain in Nashville. The Kentucky Headhunters ruffled the feathers of some people in the music industry. Their album, "Pickin' on Nashville," won them the Grammy for 'Best Country Group of the Year' in 1989. Even the name of the album was meant to do what it said, with its double meaning. To lead singer Ricky Lee Phelps, this was the pinnacle of what he had been working for and dreaming of most of his life. Why was he not elated?

Ricky Lee had some stints with different groups, playing in clubs and bars around Texas and other places with minimal success. When his younger brother Doug found some success touring with Ronnie McDowell, Ricky Lee moved to Nashville, too, hoping to find his own success in Country music. After some years of struggling, he finally decided he should stay put in the stable job he had found itemizing and categorizing a collection of thousands of items for a sales catalogue of a friend. He gave up his dream of ever making it in the music industry... at least for a while.

After a few months of doing a “normal” nine to five job, Doug Phelps invited his brother, seven years his senior, to come to Edmonton, Kentucky, near Bowling Green, to hear a new band he had been practicing with in an old farm house on the property of two brothers, Richard and Fred Young. After putting Doug off for a while, Ricky Lee finally gave in at a weak moment one night to hear what caused his brother to be so excited. He had absolutely no intention of doing anything but supporting his little brother and listening.

With Richard on rhythm guitar and vocals, Fred with his long sideburns and coonskin cap on drums, and their cousin Greg Martin on lead guitar, Ricky Lee watched Doug having a difficult time playing bass on a new song while also learning the lyrics. Ricky Lee offered to help by singing Doug’s lead vocal to allow Doug to work on his bass parts. When Doug started singing backup, something magical happened with the family Bluegrass vocals and harmony against a Southern Rock band. The Headhunters were born that night in ‘The Practice House’ with psychedelic ‘70s Rock posters covering the holes in the walls.

With a sponsor offering to back them for a very low amount of money, they bought studio time one night in Nashville, loaded in their old instruments and junk parts drum set with the high school band bass drum and entered the studio late to record a cover of the Bill Monroe song *Walk Softly on this Heart of Mine* in a pretty unconventional version of their own. Also, on that cassette was a song about a man they knew in Kentucky with a small hole-in-the-wall spot where he had a restaurant with a place for playing marbles in the back. He had gained fame as a world champion marble player. That man’s name was *Dumas Walker*. Pretty soon the world would be singing about a “slaw burger, fries, and a bottle of Ski” when Mercury Records signed them and released four singles making the Top Forty Top Country Hits from a cheaply done project on a cassette on which the Headhunters had played all their own instruments and produced themselves - unheard of in Nashville.

Standing on the Grammy platform to accept the award after a whirlwind of two years playing in arenas for Farm Aid with Willie Nelson and opening for major headliners, Ricky Lee did not feel the emotions he thought he would feel in achieving the highest of all awards in music. Instead, he heard a voice speak to him and felt empty.

Ricky Lee became restless after that and tried to fill his life with other things to have the elation he wanted to feel that

night. He even talked Doug into leaving the Kentucky Headhunters with him to form a duet called Brother Phelps, a nod to their father, a Pentecostal preacher. Riding motorcycles on an extensive radio tour to promote their album “Any Way the Wind Blows” did not give Ricky Lee the peace he was looking for either. Soon, Doug went back to the Kentucky Headhunters and Ricky Lee fell off the grid, as far as the music industry was concerned.

Proverbs 22:6 says, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” Proving you “can’t get away from your raisin’,” Ricky Lee continued to feel that still small voice gnawing at him. One day he walked into a shop for car repairs and saw a little red New Testament laying on the counter and picked it up. The owner of the shop told him to take it with him. He did and began reading the scriptures he had heard his dad preach all those years ago, before his life had taken a different direction. Ricky Lee went back to God and began pastoring a church in Florida many years ago.



His decision to go off the grid was very much intentional. Out of the spotlight, he was able to live a simple life with his wife Karen and their children on the ocean with the peaceful life for which he had been searching. Ricky Lee would occasionally sing on the beach on Saturday night, doing a few of the songs he was famous for, to get vacationers’ attention and then invite them to his church the next morning to bring them to God, too.

Now Ricky Lee is back in Arkansas, taking care of his ninety-seven-year-old father after his mother’s passing. His father was still preaching until a couple of years ago when he became unable. Ricky Lee has come full circle back to his roots in every way.

(For much more on this colorful story of redemption, watch for Ricky Lee Phelps’ full autobiography, written with Teresa Schweinsberg to be released sometime...when Ricky Lee’s life permits and he decides.)

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THE FLAG IN THE WINDOW

A Memorial Day Story

By June Marlowe

The sun had barely risen over the quiet Alabama hills when twelve-year-old Caleb Turner stepped onto the front porch, rubbing sleep from his eyes. The morning air was cool, still carrying the last traces of night, and the world felt hushed - as if creation itself paused to remember. It was Memorial Day, a day his family treated with the same reverence as Easter morning or Christmas Eve.

Caleb's grandfather, Samuel Turner - "Granddad Sam" to everyone who loved him - had served in Vietnam. He rarely spoke about the war, but he always spoke about the men who didn't come home. And every Memorial Day, he rose before dawn, brewed a pot of strong coffee, and hung the same weathered American flag in the front window.

But this year was different.

Granddad Sam had passed away the previous fall, leaving behind a quiet ache that settled into every corner of the Turner home. His chair at the dinner table remained empty. His boots still sat by the back door. And the flag - the one he had folded and unfolded for nearly fifty years - lay carefully stored in a cedar box in the hallway closet.

Caleb stood on the porch, staring at the empty window. Something inside him tugged.

He slipped back inside, careful not to wake his parents, and made his way to the closet. The cedar box was heavier than he expected. When he lifted the lid, the familiar scent of wood and time drifted upward. Inside lay the folded flag, its colors still vibrant despite its age.

He hesitated. What if he unfolded it wrong? What if he dropped it? What if he wasn't worthy to carry on something Granddad had done with such devotion?

But then he remembered something Granddad Sam had told him the summer before he died. They had been sitting on the porch swing, cicadas humming in the trees.

"Caleb," he'd said, "honoring someone doesn't require perfection. It requires heart. The men I served with - they'd rather be remembered imperfectly than forgotten perfectly."

So Caleb took a deep breath, lifted the flag, and stepped outside. The porch boards creaked beneath his feet as he climbed onto the small wooden stool Granddad used every year. The window frame felt cool beneath his fingers. He unfolded the flag slowly, carefully, smoothing each crease the way he had seen Granddad do countless times.

When he finally secured it in place, the flag hung proudly, catching the early morning light. Red, white, and blue shimmered softly, as if waking from sleep.

Caleb stepped back. Something about the moment felt sacred. He whispered, "This is for you, Granddad."

Inside the house, his mother, Emily Turner, had woken and stood quietly in the doorway, watching her son. Her eyes softened. She didn't interrupt. She didn't correct him. She simply let the moment breathe.

When Caleb finally turned around, she opened her arms, and he walked straight into them. "You did it just right," she whispered into his hair. "He'd be proud."



Later that morning, the family gathered around the kitchen table. Caleb's father, Michael Turner, set down a plate of biscuits and cleared his throat. "Your granddad left something for you," he said, sliding a small envelope across the table. Caleb's heart thumped. His name was written on the front in Granddad's unmistakable handwriting - strong, slanted, confident.

Inside was a single sheet of paper.

Caleb,

If you're reading this, it means I'm not there to hang the flag with you. But I want you to know something important. The flag isn't just cloth. It's a story - one written by men and women who gave everything so others could live free.

I carried that flag in my pack through mud, rain, and fear. I watched friends salute it for the last time. I watched others cling to it as a reminder of home. And I brought it back because I wanted you — and your children someday — to know that freedom has a cost.

If you choose to hang it, do it with honor. If you choose not to, do it with understanding. Either way, remember the ones who never made it home.

I love you, kid. Make me proud. - Granddad Sam

Caleb read the letter twice, then a third time. His throat tightened. "I want to hang it every year," he said quietly. "Just like he did." His father nodded. "Then we'll do it together."

By mid-morning, the Turner family made their way to the small cemetery on the edge of town. It was a tradition Granddad had started long before Caleb was born. They carried fresh flowers - white lilies, Granddad's favorite - and a small wooden cross Caleb had carved in shop class.

The cemetery was peaceful, dotted with flags placed by volunteers. Birds sang from the trees. A gentle breeze rustled the grass.



They stopped at a simple headstone. Caleb knelt and placed the wooden cross beside the flowers. His father rested a hand on his shoulder. "Your granddad always said Memorial Day wasn't about sadness. It was about gratitude." Caleb nodded. "I'm grateful."

They stood in silence for a long moment. Not the heavy silence of grief, but the warm, reverent silence of remembrance.

That afternoon, the Turner family hosted their usual Memorial Day cookout - something Granddad insisted on every year. "If we're going to honor the fallen," he used to say, "we ought to live the kind of life they fought to protect."

Neighbors arrived with dishes, stories, and laughter. Children ran through sprinklers. The smell of grilled chicken drifted through the air.

But this year, something new happened. As people gathered in the yard, they noticed the flag in the window. Several paused, placing hands over their hearts. A few wiped away tears.

Mrs. Henderson from next door approached Caleb. "Your granddad hung that flag every year," she said softly. "Seeing it again... it feels like he's still here."

Caleb smiled. "I wanted to do it for him." She squeezed his shoulder. "You honored him well."

As the sun dipped low, painting the sky in shades of gold and rose, Caleb sat on the porch swing - the same one where Granddad had shared so many stories.

He looked at the flag, gently swaying in the evening breeze. And for the first time since Granddad's passing, he didn't feel the sharp sting of loss. Instead, he felt something warm, steady, and strong.

Legacy.

Responsibility.

Love.

He whispered, "I'll keep your story alive." And in that quiet moment, he knew he would.

Not just on Memorial Day, but every day he remembered the cost of freedom, the weight of sacrifice, and the honor of carrying forward the stories of those who gave everything.

That night, as the Turner family prepared for bed, Caleb paused at the window one last time. The flag glowed softly in the porch light, a symbol of courage, sacrifice, and the enduring bond between generations.

He placed his hand against the glass. "Thank you," he whispered, not just to Granddad Sam, but to every hero whose story lived on through families like his.

And as the house settled into peaceful silence, the flag continued to sway gently, keeping watch over the home of a boy who had learned what it truly meant to remember.



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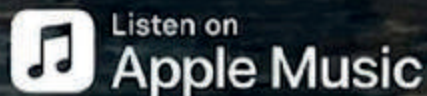
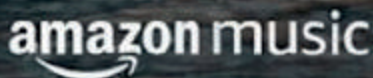
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Michael Tetrick Jr here, "Whiskey Road Productions"

I have recorded a number of songs over the years and have recently began a new journey adding some more to the arsenal of getting the message through music heard! Soon Whiskey Road Productions will have its own channel launched that will be our own channel on smart TV's that will have a reachable audience of about 400k! Not only will I be hosting all Christian content, churches, movies, artists and other things, I will be ready to serve the Christian music community with options to grow your own listening audience through your own spot on Whiskey Road Productions media!

Another thing I'll be doing is working with artists who have the desire to sing but don't have their own material! I have recorded well over 100 songs professionally and you can just look me up on Spotify and hear them! If you are an aspiring artist who wants to record content, you can pick the songs you like best and I have the tracks already available for you to record vocals onto! There will be many options for you to choose from if you want to record one or several, even a whole album of my songs for your project! I can work with you on a budget however you decide to go forward and with whichever option you choose! You can come here to Indiana and stay a weekend or several days at Momma's Craft Cottage in downtown Nashville, Indiana, where my vocal studio is right next door! You can look that up on Facebook (Mommas Craft Cottage). We can track your vocals and after that, I will have them mixed and mastered in Nashville, Tennessee to insure your project is spot on quality!

We will be offering music video packages when you come! If you'd like to consider working with me and some of my tracks, (at a more affordable price than you can find anywhere), contact me at (812) 703-0390 and leave a message or text and or email me at Whiskeyroadrecovery@gmail.com

Most importantly above all, realize...

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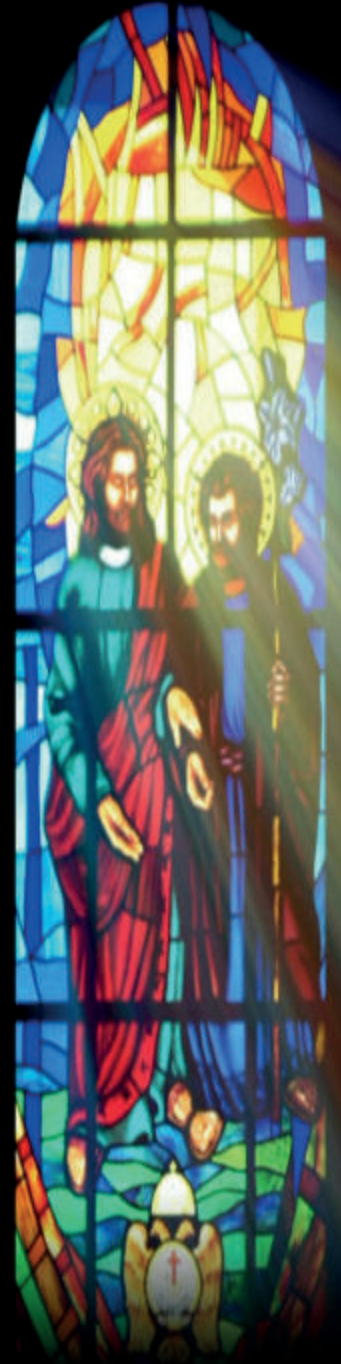
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