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I call it my Smokey Mountain DNA. Who I am and who I ever hope to be is rooted in this place. In these mountains, in this dirt, and among all of my people who

My Tennessee Mountain Home



have lived and died before me - this is me. I am the butterflies in the meadow, the eagle soaring over the ridge, the hand of kindness extended to a stranger, and a big plate of steaming hot chicken and dumplings passed around a table of friends and family.

This is me; this is my life and this is Tennessee. ►

BY DOLLY PARTON



I feel so fortunate to love where I am from. I really can't imagine it any other way and I feel sorry for folks who somehow feel separated from their place. My Tennessee began on a cold and snowy January day in our little mountain cabin. It sounds like ancient history but it's true. There was my mother, a mere child herself, lying in a bed waiting on a dear doctor who was riding a horse to help

deliver me. Just think - one slip on an icy path and he might not make it to our house. Thankfully the horse was strong and fearless and the doctor - Dr. Robert F. Thomas - was an inspired man who was both doctor and preacher. He accepted a sack of cornmeal as payment for delivering me - so let me correct that statement about him - he was a doctor, a preacher, and an angel.

DOLLY AS A CHILD *gigi would have her or caption Cades Cove photo.*

My life was shaped by the forces of nature and the guidance of kin. We had no money but we always had a roof over our head - even if it did leak - ➤



© WILLIAM SILVER



and we always had a house full of love. As a child, I was surrounded by the beauty and the mystery of these mountains. Honeysuckle was my perfume and pokeberries were my lipstick. A corncob was my doll and an old tin can stuck on the end of a broomstick was my microphone...and that little porch on our cabin was my stage and those chickens were my audience.

DOLLY'S FAMILY *Gigi has the names of who is pictured. I need a photo caption for this photo and the cabin location behind them.*

I was one of 12 children so I had plenty of guidance! Yet those who loved me stretched far beyond my own immediate family to my uncles and aunts and grandparents and neighbors. Let there be no mistake about it, they had a hard life. It wasn't easy scratching out a living in the Smokies. I watched my Daddy try his hand at working in a factory in another state to make a living for us. He didn't last long up there because he missed us and he missed ►



his land. He came back home and told me that for better or for worse, he was going to live, work, and die right here in east Tennessee.

However it was a good life. It was playing music under the big elm tree and listening to a scary ghost story on a dark summer's night when you were sure you saw a ghost over by the woodpile. It was Sunday morning when the preaching was so fiery it would burn the sin right out of your soul. And to restore your spirits after a tussle with the devil, out on the yard was a big blanket where we could sit to eat a big mess of greens and some fried chicken.



This was the Tennessee of my youth. I loved it and still do but there was another Tennessee out there for me. I knew from day one that I had a dream to follow. It may have been born in these hills but it was going to take me to another place. A place so far off that we could only imagine what it would look like, smell like, and feel like. It was Nashville! ➤

GREAT SMOKEY MOUNTAINS *National Park chapel located in I need a photo caption for here please, pretty photos, description here.*



© DAVE NEWMAN



RYMAN AUDITORIUM in Nashville need text here and here. This is greeking till text comes I can fill iin this spot right here on

The day after I graduated from high school I headed off to Nashville. I was as country as cornbread but I was determined to make it in the music business. This place was nothing like east Tennessee. This was a city of opportunity where you had to look good, sound good, and try to be good...goodness knows that isn't easy. Nashville was then and still is today the center of the country music universe. The whole world knows Nashville and most everybody wants to make the journey to the Ryman. I know that was my goal and one day I found myself standing on that stage in front of a packed house and a national radio audience. Johnny Cash introduced me. If I were a Goo Goo Cluster, I would have melted right then and there. I stood there in front of that microphone with the WSM call letters on it and for a second I was like a tourist - admiring the microphone, the audience, and the sacred stage on which I was standing. But then one of those big flash bulbs ignited from the audience and snapped me out of it. I didn't know if I could do it but God lifted me up at that moment. I sang for my Momma and Daddy, for my >

Aunt Marth and my Uncle Bill, and for everybody who believed in me. When I finished, Nashville rose to its feet and gave me the biggest, loudest, and warmest ovation I ever heard. I did three encores and would have done 20 more if they would have let me. I fell in love with Nashville that day and I think Nashville kind of liked me, too.

Not too long ago, some folks did a little film about me and my Imagination Library. The fellow in the film was asked what comes to mind when he thinks of Tennessee. Well, he leaned back in his chair and grinned real big, "That's easy - It's Jack Daniels, Elvis and Dolly Parton." Now that's some fine company to keep. I am proud to say I have known Mr. Daniels a time or two but I never did meet Elvis. However I had a momentous encounter with his manager Col. Tom Parker.

He approached me one day and said Elvis wanted to record " I Will Always Love You." Elvis was in the studio and he was ready to go. ➤



*The infamous **BROADWAY STREET** in downtown Nashville, need text for here please. Please write text.*





I couldn't believe it! Elvis Presley wanted to record my song. I was ecstatic. There was one stipulation, however. Col. Tom said Elvis never recorded any song without taking half of the publishing rights. I told Col. Tom I just couldn't agree to do that - my songs were like my children. I expected they would be taking care of me when I was old. So I respectfully declined the offer.

GRACELAND Hear the music that made the Delta famous at Ground Zero, Morgan Freeman's Clarkdale blues club.

When I went home that evening I cried all night. I could just hear Elvis singing my song but I knew in my heart that I was making the right decision and time has certainly proven me right. I know Col. Tom was doing his job and I was doing mine but it sure would have been something special to hear Elvis sing that song. I guess now I will just have to wait till the day we can sing that duet in heaven!

My career requires me to live the life of a gypsy. All of these years of touring and performing have brought me all over the world. In the USA, ►



there's probably not a diner or a roadside attraction that I have not visited. I have met wonderful people and have seen some of the most beautiful places in the world. Yet I have never been tempted to move away from Tennessee.

Once I was able to make a little money, Carl and I bought a house just outside of Nashville. We still live there and I have no intentions of getting rid of Carl or the house. I also bought my old home place in Sevier County and use it as my special place to get away and have some time to think and write.

Carl and I love to get around when I have some down time. We pile in our little camper and drive

all over this state. We have been from Mountain City to Memphis, from Clarksville to Chattanooga, and to all

points in between. I love good old country cooking so we make sure we try everybody's barbeque, meat loaf, and country fried steak. Now, I can't name any names about my favorites cause I don't want to make anybody mad. ➤

BEALE STREET *Hear the music that made the Delta famous at Ground Zero, Morgan Freeman's Clarksdale blues club.*



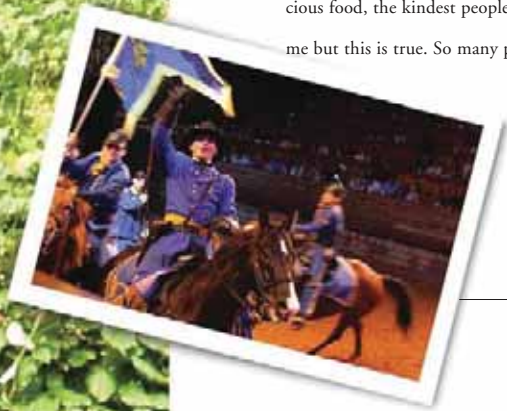
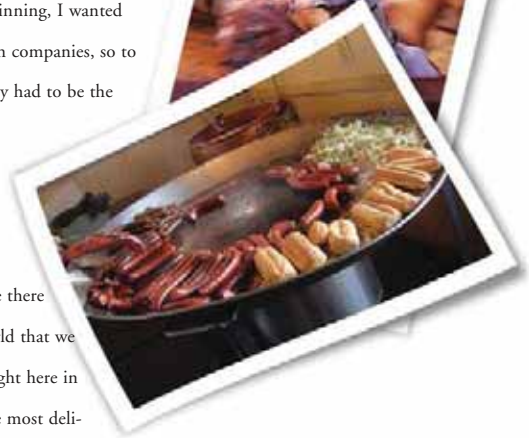


But I can say that Tennessee has the best food of any place in the country. It's the food I grew up on and it's the food I eat today - although I'm not quite the pig I used to be!

Now two places where I can brag about the food and everything else are Dollywood and Dixie Stampede. From the very beginning, I wanted Tennessee to be proud of both companies, so to make sure that happened, they had to be the best of everything Tennessee.

DOLLYWOOD train runs through the park. The North and South ride again in the Dixie Stampede Show. Huge skillet of food found at Dollywood.

Everything we have ever done there is to communicate to the world that we have the best of everything right here in our state - the best music, the most delicious food, the kindest people, and the warmest hearts. It's kind of funny to me but this is true. So many people come to Dollywood and to other parts ➤



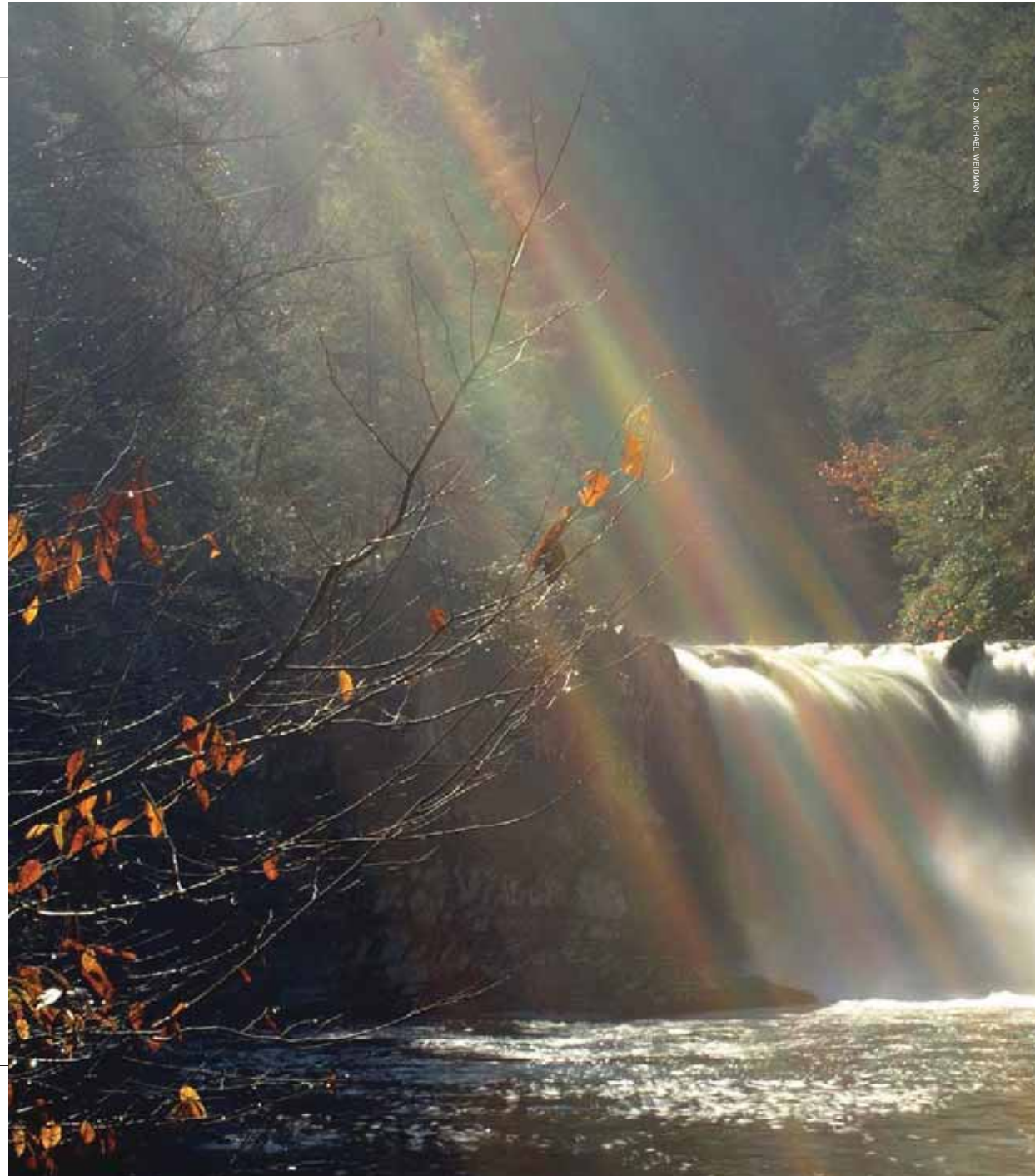


of Tennessee with what I would call modest expectations. Yet every last one of them leaves us with a memory that not only exceeds their expectations but also with a strong desire to come back to our state over and over again. They become our family because we treated them like family.

ABRAMS FALLS Great Smokey Mountains National Park, rainbow. Dolly's coat of Many Colors on display in Dollywood.

If you haven't noticed this by now, I want to make certain that you do know that family is very important to me. It's a feeling of belonging and of being proud of those who have walked before you. You want to do the best for your family but you also want them to do their best for themselves.

I am often asked what is my favorite song. Believe it or not, that is an easy question for me to answer. It is "My Coat Of Many Colors." It's such a personal song for me on so many levels. My Momma stitched a coat for me out of ►



© JON MICHAEL WEIDMAN

scraps of material. This was Momma's gift: she could take anything and make it look good, cook anything and make it taste good, and say anything and make it sound good. Well, this little coat was made from scraps but it was priceless to me.

The BLUE RIDGE in Tennessee with fall colors on the trees and the winding path of the river make an amazingly beautiful scene.

Tennessee is my Coat of Many Colors. We are a great state made up of all sorts of unique people and unforgettable places. Each and every one of us is special in our own way. We may seem as much different as we are alike. We may even quarrel every now and again. However, just like my Momma did so long ago, our shared history has stitched us together. We are sewn together not by threads but by love and respect. We are a beautiful people whose strength has been forged by adversity and whose hearts have been lightened by our hope that we can be better. Our bond is unbreakable. Our dreams will never end. We are a family. ■

