

# Carl Jackson: Good Living, Good Friends

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by Susan Marquez

It's always good to love what you do for a living, and to do it with good friends is even better. Carl Jackson has had that very experience time and again with his dear friends Larry Cordle, Jerry Salley, and Bradley Walker. Last year, the four musicians had the opportunity to provide backup vocals for Dolly Parton's never-before-heard version of "In the Sweet By and By." The tune is one of eight new recordings and six classics performed by some of the top names in music on a new album called *Country Faith Bluegrass*. Billy Blue Records released the album on September 17.

Salley produced the song for the album and asked Jackson, Cordle, and Walker to join him singing harmony vocals as a bluegrass quartet, reminiscent of the Jordanaires. "I've been blessed to sing with Dolly many times over the years," says Jackson. "We are good friends. She is such a sweet person, and she is a real class act. She is so funny; she really makes every moment you are around her special."

Singing harmony with Cordle, Salley, and Walker was quite natural for Jackson. "We are all really close friends, and I have done songwriter nights and house concerts with Cord and Jerry for many years. Folks refer to us as 'The Trio' sometimes when we play, but Bradley has joined us quite a few times and made us 'The Quartet,' I guess. I'll often have one or more of them come in and join me when I'm working on a

project, or they'll call me in to do something."

While Jackson has had many opportunities to sing with Dolly, it was the first time the other singers had the chance to sing with the music legend.

"I know what they were feeling," says Jackson. "I have been a Dolly fan ever since I saw her backstage at the Grand Ole Opry when I was 14 years old. One of my many goals was to someday sing with Emmylou Harris, Dolly Parton, and Linda Ronstadt. I now have been fortunate to sing numerous times with all of them! So, I know what that feeling of singing for the first time with Dolly is like."

**Enjoy this early video of Carl Jackson playing for Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, and Linda Ronstadt.**

<https://youtu.be/9q1f1ZV9inM>

Jackson says he is not sure if Dolly chose to sing "In the Sweet By and By" on the album or if she was asked to sing that song. "When I did the *Orthophonic Joy* album, we wanted Dolly to sing "When They Ring Those Golden Bells," which she did. But often we throw out options to artists or listen to what they'd like to do." As it turns out, "In the Sweet By and By" was an ideal choice for the *Country Faith Bluegrass* album.

"Jerry did a wonderful job with the song," says Jackson. "Dolly recorded her vocals with one guitarist and sent that track to Jerry. She told him to add what he wanted, but she had the opportunity to approve it before it was released." Salley took the guitar off the track, arranged the bluegrass band instrumentation around Parton's voice, and then added the quartet harmonies.

"Jerry told me that Dolly loved it," says Jackson, "and that meant so much to all of us."

Carl Jackson is a multiple Grammy award winner. The

Louisville, Mississippi native picked up the banjo at the age of eight and never looked back. His father and two uncles had a bluegrass band called The Country Partners, and young Jackson often joined them. "My father was a big Jim and Jesse fan, and when I was eleven or twelve, he took me with him to see Jim and Jesse play on a Saturday night in Reform, Mississippi. I remember it well because Ole Miss was playing that night; I wanted to stay home and listen to the game on the radio. But my dad made me go, and I loved the show once I got there."

That night changed the course of Jackson's life. During an intermission, Jackson wandered backstage with his dad, and they met Jim and Jesse. "My dad mentioned that I played the banjo, and before I knew it, I was on the stage playing with them. The crowd went wild because I was just a kid, although I have to say I was already pickin' pretty good!"



After the show, Jackson's dad told Jim McReynolds that if they ever needed a banjo player to keep young Carl in mind. When Jackson was 14 years old, McReynolds called and asked if

Jackson could tour them.

Jackson went on to play with The Sullivan Family, and his group, The Country Store, before being asked to tour with Glen Campbell.

*“God blessed me so much. Jim and Jesse opened so many doors for me to play at the Grand Ole Opry and the new bluegrass festivals that were coming along. I spent the summer of 1968 and the next several years on the road and enjoyed many wonderful times with them. On our first trip out, which was about two weeks, I got mighty homesick for my parents and sister. But I learned so much about the music business, singing, stage presence, and more. It was like I was on the front row of bluegrass school! I’m thankful my parents, my principal, and Jim and Jesse recognized and supported the talent God gave me.”*

He was with Campbell for twelve years before striking out on his own. Jackson has been a vocalist on dozens of recordings with some of music’s biggest stars and is a prolific songwriter and producer.

Jackson has won numerous Grammys and IBMA awards for his work.

*“Being a part of this song is an honor,” Jackson says. “To sing background for Dolly, and to do it with this group of talented vocalists, who just happen to be some of my best friends, is a true blessing to me.”*

<https://youtu.be/PxJZKkwG4No>



Dolly



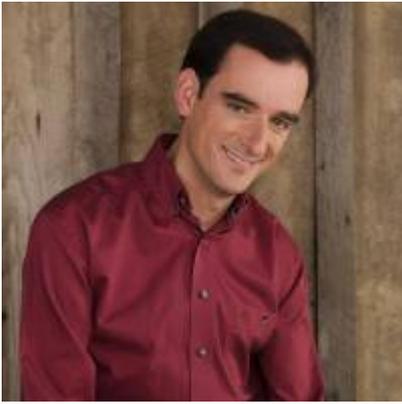
Jerry



Carl



Larry



Bradley

