

Carolyn Vincent: Always a Mom ...Especially in Bluegrass

Carolyn Vincent: Always a Mom

by Richelle Putnam

A melodious seed was planted within Carolyn Vincent when she was a teen, nurtured by her chorus classes every year in high school. That seed grew into her boundless love for harmony which would branch into a family tree of musical geniuses and legends. The branches include her three children, Rhonda, Darrin, and Brian, who grew up performing in their family band, The Sally Mountain Show. Two of the three, Rhonda and Darrin, later blossomed into Grand Ole Opry inductees and Grammy recipients.

Carolyn, however, didn't grow up around music. Her dad played guitar while he was in the service, but "he didn't really play much there at home," said Carolyn. Johnny Vincent changed all that. "He was a musician and he and his family played. His grandpa was a fiddler and his uncles all played and they had a band called the Lazy River Boys and a radio show on Saturday evenings." Carolyn listened to them all the time, every week, giving a close ear to the harmony.

Johnny brought Carolyn into his Vincent family by marriage, and, like any good bluegrass family would do, they taught her to play bass. "We were a trio for a long time, Johnny, his dad, and me. That's before the kids came along."

But when the kids did come along, the music didn't stop; it branched out mightily ... becoming stronger, grander, steadfast, and perpetual.

"Rhonda was small. We were going to a friend's house one day

and she was sitting in the car seat and singing Happy Birthday. It wasn't anybody's birthday, we were just singing, and Rhonda sang harmony with us. It's just always been her thing. She could always sing."



The family band played around where they lived and, when Rhonda was little, they were regulars on the country show, Frontier Jamboree. The Vincents also had a morning show, The Sally Mountain Show, when Rhonda was around five years old. "Rhonda got to play on our show. She played drums and she'd sing. She was kind of a little showpiece," said Carolyn. Then, along comes little brother Darrin who "never had to practice and could sing like it was born in him. He could just pick up an instrument and play it," said Carolyn. The youngest, Brian, sang and played guitar and mandolin.

In those early days, Carolyn earned the name Double Clutching Mama. She first told the story on Family Reunion, "about how we got the bus off Jim and Jesse. I said I had hardly ever been in one, much less drive one. Jesse took me up the road about a quarter of a mile and had me drive it back." Carolyn mentioned having to "double-clutch" and the name stuck. "When we got Jim & Jesse's bus, I was the only one who could drive it. Darrin wasn't old enough to drive."

Bluegrass seemed to center and grow around the Vincent tree. In 1986, Johnny bought 63 acres in Queen City, Missouri, and hosted the first Sally Mountain bluegrass festival.

"We were all based around the area called Sally Mountain," said Carolyn. "A lady, Sally Mosley, lived up the hill, which was the highpoint in the area, and the river ran down below. She used to make homebrew and had dances and played the fiddle." According to Carolyn, Sally Mosley originated the song "Sally Goodin" and no one has ever disputed it. "Her name is on the books up at the courthouse where she owned that land," she added.

Johnny Vincent enjoyed many years of the homegrown festival before his passing on October 5, 2014. The festival would have celebrated its 35th year this year, but with the kids grown now and no longer close to home, Carolyn is selling Sally Mountain Park. She said it takes around 12 hours to mow the 12

or so acres. Even with help, it's too much work for Carolyn.

Still, the Vincent tree remains stalwart and hearty due to each member's devoted attention to the roots from which they sprouted.

"Rhonda always includes me and wants me to go on the cruises with her. I have been on, I think, 25 cruises. And Darrin had some of the cruises and I went with him. He's always included me, too. They've always been close to me."



The UPS guy also showed up at Carolyn's shop, telling her he had been texted, called, and everything else on the package he was delivering, and he wanted to be sure Carolyn got it.

“The minister was here talking to my husband. I opened it up and said, ‘Oh, this is a beautiful watch,’ and I didn’t pay much attention. I started putting it back in the paper.”

Rhonda had mailed the package from Nashville. At the UPS office, in order to insure the package, she had to reveal the contents. That worried her because it wasn’t just any watch. It was a Rolex!

“It’s quite the thing. I never thought I’d ever have one,” said Carolyn.

Today, Carolyn plans to keep following the kids and to travel. Last year was South Dakota, North Dakota, and other places, and this year it’s Yellowstone National Park. And of course, she’ll go to the festivals where her kids are performing. Once a mom ...always a mom ...especially in bluegrass.

<https://youtu.be/jAp0Q9dKjCI>

A FEW MORE THINGS ABOUT CAROLYN:

OTHER NICKNAME: Pie Lady. “At the festival, I always made a bunch of the pies. You can’t buy a gooseberry pie anywhere. So, I made about 30 gooseberry pies and that was my biggest seller.” A gooseberry is a small round green tart berry. Once picked, Carolyn explained, you must steam them. She also made raisin pies and pecan pies, which amounted to over 100 pies for the festival. “We’d start in January or February making the pies and then freezing them. Rhonda didn’t touch a raisin or a gooseberry. “She was more the cherry pie type.”

FAVORITE SONG TO PERFORM WITH KIDS: Probably “Slippers with Wings” is my most favorite song to do with Rhonda and Darrin. The song came from the Lewis Family. I got it from them a long time ago. But that’s been my most requested song, as well as P-I-G (kind of like the D-I-V-O-R-C-E song).

COVID-19 – After being exposed, Carolyn came down with COVID-19, but thankfully received an infusion treatment and made it through the life-threatening virus.

SOMETHING ABOUT RHONDA THAT HER FANS MAY NOT KNOW: Rhonda sleeps with an eye mask because she sleeps with her eyes open! (If any of Rhonda's fans already knew that, let us know.)