

Music Composed by Combs Has Been Recorded, Sold All Over the World

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Moments of Reflection. It must have been at least five years ago on a Saturday morning, I was playing the keyboard down in the orchestra pit at the Lazy Time Pickin' Parlor, Weber City. The other members of the Pickin' Parlor Orchestra that day were Jaycee Radford who played the upright bass and Grady Church who played the guitar. To the best of my recollection, we were playing some of the what I call "Good music," the music of the 50's - "Moonglow" and "Old Cape Cod."

There were several people in the building that morning, but I remember distinctly when a stranger appeared along with a long-time regular at the Parlor, Paul Combs. Paul introduced us to Dave Combs, his first nephew, who is from Winston-Salem, N.C. After our group played some other selections including "Miles and Miles of Texas," "Columbus Stockade Blues" and "Cold, Cold Heart," Paul said, "Jack, Dave plays the piano."

I wanted to show Dave some good ole' Scott County hospitality, so I invited him to play my keyboard. Am I ever so glad he accepted my invitation? And can he ever play? This visit was the beginning of a lasting friendship.

I'm reminded of the words of an unknown author who wrote, "Friendship is not finding gold or silver among the rocks of life. It is accepting each other as coal until diamonds are found with time." I've found a diamond in Dave. Our love of music no doubt sealed the deal.

Dave played one of his own compositions "Rachel's Song," which has been recorded and sold across the globe. The remainder of this column will feature and highlight Dave's successful career in the music industry, the business world and his most recent achievement which is that of becoming an author.

Dave grew up in East Tennessee, gradu-

ated from Unicoi High School, Erwin, Tenn. and did his higher education studies at East Tennessee State University graduating with a degree in mathematics. He also earned an MBA from Wake Forest University. For several years, he had a very successful career with AT&T in Winston Salem and in Maryland and also served for five years as Chief Information Officer for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), his last position being Chief Information Officer.

Dave's family roots (both sides) run deep in Scott County. On the Combs side, his grandmother was Estelle Combs, whom everyone called Granny Combs.

She was married to his grandfather, John Combs, both born in the 1890s. Granny Combs played music by ear. Her favorite instrument was the old pump organ her family owned.

She played at her little country church, Pleasant View Independent Baptist Church, not far from Corn Ridge near Nickelsville. She walked the half mile to the church on a dirt road every Sunday, played the pump organ and sang a solo almost until the time she passed away at the age of 94.

Granny Combs was also an extraordinary autoharp player. She could almost make it sing with her musical talent.

Dave's dad was Joe Combs. His mother was Ruth Price Combs. Many of you long-time Scott Countians may remember Ruth's mom and dad, George and Sally McConnell Price. The Price and McConnell families were also very musical. Dave doesn't know from which side of the family he got his musical talent but thinks its mostly from the Combs side.

Dave is married to Linda Morrison Combs, whom he met when he moved to Winston Salem. Dave likes to say, "Her career spans from the schoolhouse to the White House."

When she first started out with a career in elementary education, she then moved to the corporate world of bank-

ing. While working at Wachovia Bank, and as a last-minute candidate, she was elected to serve on the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Board of Education. That victory and a news article about her surprising victory led her to being called by the Reagan White House to accept a position in the United States Department of Education. Since that time, Linda has served under two other Presidents and has held five United States Senate confirmed Presidential appointments. Her last position in Washington was Controller of the United States under President George W. Bush. She is currently the Controller of the State of North Carolina, the first woman to ever hold this position. As you can see, Dave and Linda have been highly successful in their careers.

Dave has written a book that has recently been published. He is best known for his inspirational instrumental "Rachel's Song." He has also written 120 songs and recorded 15 albums. I predict his book, "Rachel's Song - Touched by the Music—How the Story of Rachel's Song Can Change Your Life" (TBTM Publishing) will be a best seller. See Dave's website <combsmusic.com>.

"The book tells the story of how "Rachel's Song" came to be and, drawing from some 50,000 notes from fans Combs received, how a song with a simple melody, with no words has meant so much to so many. It changed Combs' life as well. As he writes in the introduction, "From writing the music of "Rachel's Song" on my old piano in my basement in 1981, to owning the copyrights to nearly 200 more songs and arrangements and having them heard by millions all over the world, is quite a journey with so much to tell. At the time Combs came up with his signature song, he was a traveling consultant for AT&T, and it took him three years to move the music forward. "Rachel's Song" can be heard on Spotify, Pandora, iTunes, iHeart, YouTube and Amazon." (Excerpted from a news release which appeared in the Winston Salem Journal.)

The soothing music of "Rachel's Song" will stir your soul. I let the song play several times while I was reading the book. Friends, I'm a slow reader, but I'm telling you, I propped myself up in bed and read the 254-page book in two nights, a first for

me. The reason: Well, music is a part of my everyday life, and the words throughout the book were so uplifting, moving and pleasing, I couldn't put the book down. I highly, highly recommend "Rachel's Song - Touched by the Music" to all our readers of "Thru the Gap." I think you will find the amazing stories heart-warming.

Jack Canfield, co-author of the best-selling "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series and the late Jeanne Robertson, award winning humorist, wrote praise for "Touched by the Music" which appears on the cover. In addition, Combs has been featured in "Spectrum News" and "Guideposts" on Satellite Radio and on PBS North Carolina.

There is so much more I could tell you about Dave. I will conclude by saying it's evident he attributes his tremendous success to God, who has guided every major decision and action he has taken in his life. The book reveals in every chapter how his work has truly been inspired by his deep Christian beliefs.

"The book recounts many of the stories of his journey from one song, "Rachel's Song" to 15 albums of music, 11 piano sheet music books and the millions of lives that have been touched by the music." (Excerpted from his book, pp. 242-243).

In my eyes, Dave has made the transition with me from accepting each other as coal but has now become a diamond found with time.

Until next week, may the Good Lord bless and keep you. Let me leave you with this profound thought, "There are friends, there is family, and there are friends who become family."



Melinda Saltee, store manager of the Weber City location of Food City, presents gift cards to Kevin Barnett of Scott County Cooperatives Ministries and Maxwell Thomas of the Mendota Food Pantry.

Food City Donates Gift Cards to Local Food Pantries

Since 1992, Food City in partnership with their customers has conducted their annual Race Against Hunger campaign to raise funds for local non-profit hunger relief organizations.

"Hunger is a serious problem throughout our region. Food City is proud to be a part of the Race Against Hunger," said Steven C. Smith, Food City's president and chief executive officer.

Throughout the promotion, customers wishing to donate simply select the desired dollar amount and it is conveniently added to their order total. One hundred percent of the proceeds benefit hunger relief and charitable organizations throughout our region.

The Weber City location recently presented gift cards to two local food pantries that serve Scott County citizens.

Kevin Barnett of Scott County Cooperatives Ministries and Maxwell Thomas of the Mendota Food Pantry received gift cards in the amount of \$2,800 to each organization. Malinda Saltee, the Weber City store manager, made the presentation on Oct. 12.

"We would like to thank our loyal customers for helping make this promotion such a huge success," Smith added. "Their generosity will help feed thousands of our friends and neighbors in need throughout the region."



"and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Jer 3:15
Thank you for all you do, Pastor Ronnie and Wanda Horne. We love you.
Your Glenwood Church Family

FSA Seeks Nominations for LAA 3

Farm Service Agency announces the county committee make up election for LAA 3. Nomination period closes Dec. 2. Scott County LAA 3 includes the areas from the Hancock County, Tenn. line up Route 629 (Robinette Valley Road) to US Hwy 23 to Route 643 (Bray Road), to Route 627 (Double Ford Rd) to Route 665 (Manville Rd) to Route 664 (Beagle Club Rd) to Route 645 (Hill Station Alley) to Route 65 (Clinch River Hwy) then up the river to Route 649 (Rye Cove Memorial Road) to Route 722 (Mabe Stanleytown Road) that turns into Cove Creek Mine Lane to the Wise County Line and includes the areas of Blackwater, Canton, Clinchport, Duffield, Fairview, Fraley Town, Mabe-Stanleytown, Pattonville, Rye Cove and a part of Fort Blackmore.

Agricultural producers who participate or cooperate in an FSA program may be nominated as a candidate. Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Additionally, organizations representing minority and women agricultural producers may nominate candidates.

To become a nominee, eligible individuals must sign nomination form FSA-669A-1 that is available at your local Scott County Farm Service Agency.

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JASON MIYARES

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