

The Big Interview

Episode Number: 210

Episode Title: Dolly Parton

Description: Country music superstar Dolly Parton talks about love, life and her latest album, with Dan Rather in Dollywood.

ACT 1

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT ON THE BIG INTERVIEW. THE ONE, THE ONLY...DOLLY PARTON.

DAN RATHER

What is the one thing you think that your public doesn't know about you?

DOLLY PARTON

They'd probably be surprised at how really ordinary I am in my day-to-day life--

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SHE'S STILL A SPITFIRE WHO SAYS WHAT'S ON HER MIND...UNAPOLOGETIC ABOUT WHO SHE IS... AND HOW SHE LOOKS.

RATHER

Bluntly put, how did you keep the men off of you (LAUGH) and keep your mind and their mind on business?

PARTON

I knew how men thought. I look like a woman, but I can also think like a man.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SINGER, SONGWRITER, PHILANTHROPIST AND ACTRESS. THE LEGENDARY DOLLY PARTON ... TONIGHT ON THE BIG INTERVIEW!

ACT 2

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE COUNTRY MUSIC WITHOUT DOLLY PARTON. SHE'S BEEN SINGING PROFESSIONALLY FOR OVER 50 YEARS... AND FIRST BEGAN PROMOTING RECORDS AS A CHILD. HER CAREER TOOK OFF IN 1967... WHEN AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-ONE SHE JOINED COUNTRY MUSIC LEGEND PORTER WAGONER AS THE CO HOST ON HIS HIT TELEVISION SHOW.

OVER THE YEARS, SHE'S RECORDED HUNDREDS OF SONGS... TWENTY FIVE OF WHICH BECAME NUMBER ONE HITS... AND SHE'S WON SEVEN GRAMMIES, AS WELL AS A HOST OF OTHER PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS FOR HER CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN MUSIC. NOW 68 YEARS OLD, SHE STILL PERFORMS ALL OVER THE WORLD... MOST RECENTLY TO PROMOTE HER LATEST ALBUM, *BLUE SMOKE*. DOLLY'S STORY IS A RAGS TO RICHES AMERICAN DREAM. SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN REFRESHINGLY AUTHENTIC... AND CAN STILL LIGHT UP A ROOM...

DOLLY PARTON

How are you?

DAN RATHER

Nice to see you again.

PARTON

Well, you, too.

RATHER

Well, hello, Dolly.

PARTON

Well, that's-- I've never heard that one before.

RATHER

(LAUGH) I bet you haven't.

PARTON

But I'm happy to see you.

RATHER

How you doing? You look sensational.

PARTON

Well, do I? Well, thank you.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF SITTING DOWN WITH HER AT DOLLYWOOD, HER
THEME PARK IN PIGEON FORGE, TENNESSEE.

PARTON

But you're lookin' well, too.

RATHER

Well-- well, thank you--

PARTON

May I compliment you?

RATHER

--well, thank you. Seein' as you made me so nervous, I dropped my (UNINTEL).

PARTON

I saw all that, (LAUGH) but I'm glad. See, it means I still got it.

RATHER

Do you have it? Come on, now. You're lookin' for a compliment and you're going to get it.

PARTON

Well, I wasn't really.

RATHER

Wh-- which raises the question, Dolly-- and-- I hope we can have some fun here to--

PARTON

Oh, please. (LAUGH) You know I know you. And you know me. So, we'll say whatever we
wanna say.

RATHER

--as close as I will come to a serious question, how do you do it? Seriously, you look terrific. You still have the waist of a wasp.

PARTON

(LAUGH) The waist of a wasp. I love that.

RATHER

No, you look-- really, how do you do it?

PARTON

Well, I work hard at it. You gotta-- I always say I think of myself as a show horse or a show dog. You gotta keep 'em groomed. You gotta keep 'em up. So, I always say if I see somethin' saggin', draggin' and baggin' I'm gonna get it nipped, tucked and sucked. (LAUGH)

And I always say I'll never graduate from collagen. And-- people say, "Oh, you look so happy." I say, "Well, that's Botox." But anyway, truth bein', I do whatever I need to do to-- to look good. But I have a good attitude, too. And I love my work. So, I don't think you can do a whole lot outside if it don't come from the inside, too. So, I try to, you know, just keep myself busy and keep myself useful and just wear that makeup. And it gets a thicker every year. (LAUGHTER)

RATHER

Well, speaking of work, you have a new album out. And this is, what, number forty, what, five?

PARTON

Oh, mercy. It's-- I've lost count 'cause I've been--

RATHER

Well--

PARTON

--doin' this for so long.

RATHER

I-- I have as well. And it's called *Blue Smoke*.

PARTON

Yes.

RATHER

Tell me about *Blue Smoke* because I'm interested in knowing the process for writing these songs. Now, you wrote this song.

PARTON

Yes. I wrote-- there-- there's 12 songs in this-- *Blue Smoke* CD, and I wrote nine of them. I did do some other songs, but *Blue Smoke* I wrote-- several years back. I just always loved it. And I'd recorded it-- sometime back. And I kept-- it just kept hauntin' me. I thought-- and different people, you know, when I would sing it to friends, they said, "Why didn't you ever release *Blue Smoke*," 'cause it's about a heartbreak train, you know, by the name of Blue Smoke. But it's very singable. It's very-- kinda got some bluegrass flavors, bluegrass harmonies, which I love that.

But it just seemed to be right. And not only did I include it in the CD, I named the whole album that. (LAUGH) But I decided it was a good title. *Blue Smoke* kind of reminds me of bluegrass and the blue smoke that rise from the Smoky Mountains here. And so, it just seemed to be like a perfect title for it. But the song kinda moves along. It's singable. And it's-- I think people identify with it. Gettin' on that train, gettin' outta here. It's like, (LAUGH) "This relationship is goin' nowhere, so I'm gonna jump on that heartbreak train, you know, Blue Smoke, and get on out."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE ALBUM WAS FIRST RELEASED IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND WHERE IT QUICKLY REACHED NUMBER ONE...

RATHER

Well, I read-- and I wanna check with you, is it possible-- that you have written more than 3,000 songs.

PARTON

Oh, at least. Well, I write all the time. And I've been writin' since I was just a little kid. I started playing guitar when I was seven years old. And I've been writin' serious songs ever since. But-- I have published hundreds, hundreds of songs and written more song-- I've --every drawer, every box, every-- in my basement, in my houses-- I got songs stuck everywhere. I pull out a drawer to get some panties. I pull out a drawer to get some drawers-- (LAUGH) I'll find a song in there. So, but that's just what I do. It's-- it's my therapy. It's my job. It's my joy. And it's like a poet.

You know, everything's a song to me. I always-- anything that happens, any conversation I have, somebody'll say somethin', I think, "Oooh, that's a good idea for a song."

RATHER

And you jot it down right away or put it in a tape recorder? How does that work?

PARTON

Both. I just write all kinds a ways. I-- you know, I'll-- I'll wake up-- sometimes from a dream and think, "I'd better get up and write that down or I'll forget it." And I just will either write down a title, or sometimes a melody will come to me. I'll put it on tape so I don't forget it. But usually, the-- the songs, the words and the music usually come at the same time. I'll just be thinkin' of somethin' or have a good title, and I'll just think on that and s-- usually there'll be a kinda melody spin in my head. And before you know it, I've got a song. They're not all good. I always say, "I've probably written at least 3,000 songs. I've probably got three good ones out of that."

RATHER

You once told me some time ago that you frequently are up very early in the morning--which I think you called it "the wee hours of wisdom."

PARTON

Wee hour wisdom is what I always say. But I do. I love-- I wake up early. I'm-- I'm one of those people that, I don't require a lotta sleep. My dad was like that, too. And the older I get, the less sleep I seem to need. I'm afraid I'm gonna miss something, I think. But I'm just wired that way.

I do nap off and on-- you know, those little power naps that Bob Hope and a lotta those people talk about doin'. But I just really love the mornings when everything else seems to be kinda quiet and the energies are kinda calm. And I'm up and I just seem to kinda just grab things outta the air, just just there are things out there for me. And I just get up and do some of my best work before most people get up. You know those a lot as-- those old sayin's, like, "early to bed, early to-- to rise make a man healthy, wealthy and wise"? I think there's so much truth in-- in that.

And it just seems to be, like, the time to-- that I absorb things more than I do when everything's crazy and the day has wore ya out.

RATHER

Is that the time when you're most spiritual during the day, during those wee hours?

PARTON

Yes, it is. That's why I call it wee hour wisdom. 'Cause I really feel like I connect more to that higher wisdom. And I just seem to be able to-- to-- you know, to get hooked into that. And great ideas come to me then, whether it's in a song or business ideas or just how to solve problems that's been buggin' me. And, you know, it's like-- there's always a time for answers. And I get a lotta answers during that time.

RATHER

Blue Smoke, everybody knows the Smokies, if-- ever seen them, it-- there is a kind of blue smoke. And the Native-Americans, particularly the Cherokees who were in there, they had a word for that--

PARTON

Shaconage? Is that--

RATHER

Shaconnage.

PARTON

--yeah.

RATHER

Which means blue smoke, does it not?

PARTON

Yes. That's a beautiful word. And that's why I thought that the blue smoke fit well because of the haze here on-- you know, in the Smokies. So-- and-- and I love the-- you know, the Native-American-- the Cherokee, especially because they're, like, part of our people. And they say that, you know, there's some Cherokee blood in-- in my family, in my mom's-- family. And so I always take some pride in thinkin'-- I know I don't look it, but I always think, (LAUGH) "Well, I got some Cherokee blood in me." So, but it's very special to me. And it-- like I say, in the bluegrass music, too. So--

RATHER

So you have bluegrass, blue smoke, the history of the Cherokees. And then train songs have been so important to country music.

PARTON

It has. C-- of course Hank Williams was one-- he loved trains. And in that "I'm so lonesome I could cry till I hear that lonesome whistle blow." You know, and then so many people do-- and I've written several train songs myself-- and I know-- I know that-- Merle Haggard loves trains. And his home-- I remem-- went-- went to see him one time. He's got-- his whole house, he's got these trains that run-- run through-- it's just spectacular. But he's written songs as well. But you're right, there's just somethin' about-- I think that we want to go. I think it's the gypsy in us,

like, we just wanna get on outta here. (LAUGH) If somethin' ain't right, you wanna hop a train or a plane and get on out of it. But the train, since most of us country folks are afraid to fly, we'd rather take the (LAUGH) train than get on a plane.

RATHER

Are you afraid of flying?

PARTON

I hate to fly. I'm not afraid of dyin', I'm just afraid of flyin'. (LAUGH) I have a tendency to get motion sickness, too. But I don't like the feelin' of bein' up where I just can't stop and say, "Well, let me out here for a minute."

RATHER

That's the reason you travel by bus.

PARTON

I do travel by bus. But I do travel overseas. In fact, we're goin' on-- we just got back from New Zealand and Australia. And, of course, you can't take the bus over there. But I did have my buses over there. They shipped them over. So, we actually took the buses when we're on the ground. But I just love the bus, 'cause I love bein' able to stop and start. But you can't-- you gotta travel, so you gotta fly. But I-- if I don't have to, I don't.

RATHER

Among my earliest memories are listening to the Grand Ole Opry with my maternal grandmother, deep down in Bloomington, Texas, and hearing-- Roy Acuff, of course, sing-- you know what I'm gonna say-- *Wabash Cannonball*--

PARTON

Yes, I love that song. I've recorded that before. I've sung that before in different albums. I think I recorded it. If not, I should get you a copy of-- some tapes. I know that I have sung that many times in the past.

RATHER

Well, you've recorded so many songs and you've written so many songs of your own. But I just wonder whether that tied back to your very early girlhood of s-- of hearing the *Wabash Cannonball*, which in my recollection-- I could be wrong-- had to be one of the most popular songs in the country for--

PARTON

It was. And it--

RATHER

--some years.

PARTON

--still is. That's one of those songs that people still record. Every bluegrass group does a *Wabash Cannonball* on shows when they do-- *I Saw the Light*, those kinda things. (LAUGH)
And if you-- if you are inclined to be country or bluegrass at all, you've got to the *Wabash*.

And, of cou-- course, Roy Acuff, is from east Tennessee here, too. So, he was like a kindred soul. And I loved him dearly. He was like a great old uncle to me. And we used to sing that together. And he used to get a kick out of it when I workin' with *The Porter Wagoner Show* and we were all at the Grand Ole Opry. We'd get in his dressin' room and sing that song, along with all sorts of others. But that's always been a favorite of mine.

RATHER

Well, it's been so long ago-- and I don't wanna put you on the spot-- but do you remember even the first chorus of it?

PARTON

Well-- do you? I'm tryin' to think--

RATHER

(SINGING) "From the great Atlantic Ocean--

PARTON

(SINGING) "From the great Atlantic Ocean--

RATHER

--"to the wide Pacific shore--

PARTON

--"to the (UNINTEL) Pacific shore, from the--

RATHER

--"from the queen of flower (SIC) mountain to the--

PARTON

--"mountain--

RATHER

--"to the south bells by the bore."

PARTON

--"by the-- she's tall--

RATHER

"She's mighty t--

PARTON

--"and she's handsome. She's-- long and sh--

RATHER

--"long-- long-- well, known by-- w-- w--

PARTON

--"known quite well by all--

RATHER

--"all--

PARTON

--"She's the combination called the Wabash Cannonball." (LAUGH) Is it combination is--

RATHER

Yes, that's--

PARTON

--the word?

RATHER

--you've got it. (LAUGH)

PARTON

Anyway. So, yeah, of course I would know it (LAUGH) if I had the time to think about it, 'cause I sing it. But-- but that's a great one. That melody is-- is good, too. It's so singable.

ACT 3

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE ATTRACTIONS AT DOLLYWOOD IS THE CHASING RAINBOWS MUSEUM. THE MUSEUM HOUSES WHAT DOLLY PARTON CALLS "PIECES OF HER PAST" - DRESSES, COSTUMES AND SHOES SHE'S WORN ON STAGE AND IN HER FILMS.

COMING HERE IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE DOLLY BRAND IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST MUSIC... IT'S A MULTI MILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY, EMPLOYING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE. AND PARTON ISN'T SLOWING DOWN. HER DOLLYWOOD EMPIRE, WHICH DREW NEARLY FOUR MILLION VISITORS LAST YEAR, IS EXPANDING.

DOLLY PARTON

We have a \$300 million program where we actually are gonna be expandin' different parts of Dollywood. We're buildin' a new resort that's gonna actually be openin' next year, next summer. So, we're very excited about that. We're gonna be addin' more to the entertainment. And this year we've-- our Fire Chaser Express is our new rollercoaster ride. (LAUGH) You should ride it 'fore you go home.

RATHER

I'll ride it. I'll ride it--

PARTON

You--

RATHER

--with you. (LAUGH)

PARTON

--I don't ride the rides. (LAUGH) I'm afraid I'll lose my hair and--

RATHER

You mean to tell me you're gonna have a rollercoaster but you're not gonna ride it?

PARTON

(LAUGH) I-- I never ride the rides. I don't-- but I might with you. We could, I guess.

RATHER

You've been a remarkably-- successful businesswoman. How has that happened?

PARTON

Well, my dad was like that. My dad raised 12 children. My daddy could not read nor write. Never had a chance to go to school. But my daddy was so smart. You know, he was just-- I've just always wondered what all my daddy might have been able to do had he had an education.

But I-- my daddy, I watched him maneuver, I watched how he would-- he could trade and barter. And, you know, it's like he would-- what do they call it, good horse sense or horse tradin'? They call it street smarts if you're from the city, but good old country horse sense. My daddy was so smart. And I just watched him through the years. And my daddy was also one of those people that was really willin' to work. He was up all the time, up early, havin' to farm before he went to work on construction or doin' whatever he had to do to-- to keep food on the table.

But he always just managed to make some of the best deals and some of the best choices. And I-- I was very influenced by that. Now, I got my music from my mother's side of the family. And most musical people, musicians don't wanna work at anything else. So, I got my work ethic from my dad. I got my music from my momma. And I tried, in the early days when-- when-- when I would think about it and I started seein' that I could make money at this, I thought, "Well, they do call this the music business. So, why don't I kinda lay a little heavy on the business side (LAUGH) of things?" So, I got to thinkin', you know-- what I should do to make it really profitable, not just to sing and just let the money roll in and let it be gone before you think about it. So, I started thinkin' about-- keepin' my publishing to myself-- you know, publishin' my own songs, startin' my own publishin' company and just different things like that that I thought would be, you know, smart business. So, through the years, I have been lucky and made some really good choices. But I've got a lotta good people that's helped me a lot, too. I owe a lot of my success to a lot of smart people.

RATHER

But I'm thinking of-- of a young-- say, an 18-year-old Dolly Parton in Nashville trying to make it, talented. At-- in that period. There weren't many opportunities for women. And bluntly put, how did you keep the men off of you (LAUGH) and keep your-- your mind and their mind on business and therefore build a business, which is now-- tens-of-millions-of-dollars-a-year business?

PARTON

When I was young-- you gotta remember, I, first of all, believed in my talent. I really believed that I was headin' to Nashville with somethin' to sell. I thought my songs were good. And I thought I was, you know, a good enough singer that I could pull that off. And I-- I had all these brothers, so I knew men. Had my dad, my uncles that I loved-- and my grandpas. So, I knew how men thought. I knew them all so well. And I always said I kinda-- I look like a woman, but I can also think like a man. So, I was not intimidated. And I was a right pretty girl, you know, for-- for the times. You know, a little overdone, of course. But I used that. You know, I was not intimidated. I took it as a compliment when men thought I was-- if they thought I was pretty. I thought, "Well, this is all good. I can use this to my benefit." But I did not-- use it for anything other than to know what to do. I knew that I had somethin'. And I would say things like, "Look, I think I can make us both a lotta money if you want to, you know, work with me on this." And if sometimes some men did get, you know, a little outta line, a lotta outta place, but I knew how to manage that without hurtin' their feelings, to compliment them or not to take it as an insult, 'cause it wasn't. But if someone did get outta hand, I would know kind of what to say. So, I never slept with anybody to get anywhere. If I slept with somebody, it's 'cause I wanted to, not to try to get ahead in the business. So, I just-- with some people, especially with me bein' overdone and over-exaggerated with the makeup and the hair and-- and the way I dressed-- some people might have thought I was dumb. But I would have the deal done and gone before they realized what had happened. (LAUGH) So, I would-- I just looked at it like a business. And I-- I was always proud to be a woman. I never took their flirtin' as an insult. I thought it was a compliment. But I knew how to handle it.

RATHER

How many of them did you have to say-- "Hey, look me in the eyes, look up here"?

PARTON

(LAUGH) Well, quite a few of 'em. But that's all right. But I could do that in a jokin' way. I would just say it like that. "Hey now, you know, you can look all you want to. I'm just gonna stand here and let you look for a minute. But I came here on more important business." You know, it's like, "I might look like trash, but-- I got a little more goin' for me than that."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF WHAT DOLLY HAS GOING ON WHEN IT COMES TO BUSINESS CAN BE FOUND IN THE STORY OF HER HIT SONG - "I WILL ALWAYS

LOVE YOU” - WHICH NONE OTHER THAN THE KING OF ROCK N ROLL HIMSELF, ELVIS PRESLEY ONCE WANTED TO RECORD.

RATHER

You had the moxie, not to mention the good business sense, to, for example, when you wrote-- *I'll Always Love You* and Elvis Presley was going to record it, and suddenly you said, "Whoa, no." Tell me about that.

PARTON

Well, actually, Elvis loved the song. That was when he and Priscilla were havin' their problems-- which, I met her recently, and she told me that Elvis loved that song and he had s-- sung that to her on the day of their divorce. She-- he said she-- he kinda leaned in and sang a little bit of *I Will Always Love You*.

And so she told me how much that he loved that song, 'cause-- this was recently. We were t-- doin' some business. But durin' that time, it's no fault of Elvis. You know-- he loved the song. But Tom Parker was-- in defense of Tom Parker, too-- Colonel Tom--his manager-- you know, he made some wise decisions, evidently. (LAUGH) So, he knew what he was doin'. But that was-- goes back to that other thing, 'cause Elvis was ready to record it. I had told my friends and people that he was recordin' it. And they were in town to do the recording. They'd invited me down to the session. And Colonel Tom Parker called me the day before and says, "Now, you do know that Elvis is recordin' your song. And you do know that Elvis don't record anything that he don't publish or at least get half the publishin' on." I said, "Really?"

RATHER

Which is to say he would have the rights to the song.

PARTON

He would have the rights. At least half-- half of the-- the s-- rights to the publishing of the song. I said, "I can't do that. This song's already been a hit with me. And this is in my publishing company. And obviously this is gonna be one of my most important copyrights. And I can't give you half the publishing, 'cause that's stuff that I'm leavin' for my family." And-- he said, "Well then we can't record the song." And I was just heartbroken. I said, "Well, I'm really sorry, but I can't do that."

RATHER

Well, Dolly Parton--

PARTON

So, I didn't.

RATHER

--that took guts.

PARTON

Well, it didn't to me. It seemed to be the thing to do. I-- it hurt me, because I was so disappointed I was gonna have to tell my friends Elvis didn't record it. And-- but I just knew that that was not right and that that was not-- if it hadda been maybe-- if I didn't have my own publishing company, had the song not already been a hit, it mighta been different. But I couldn't give somebody half of a song that had already been number one and that was-- you know, was evident-- had already proved itself. So--

RATHER

Well, you had some redemption. Whitney Houston then--

PARTON

Well, yes--

RATHER

--many years later--

PARTON

-- (LAUGH) that's true. When Whitney recorded, I was like, "Oh, good, 'cause now I own 100% of the publishin', 100% of the writing," and I did really well with that. But I didn't blame Elvis and I didn't blame Colonel Tom either. I-- it was a decision I had to make at the time, and I'm glad I did.

RATHER

But when Whitney Houston recorded it, which made it a worldwide hit all over again, n-- not only made you a lotta money-- that's true-- but also y-- as you yourself said, you said, "Hey, here it comes again." And that really was a great song. My question is, Whitney Houston-- African-American heritage, you from the mountains of east Tennessee, what went through your mind when it was Whitney Houston who brought the song back and made it again such a sensational bestseller?

PARTON

Well, it was overwhelming.

WHITNEY HOUSTON, "I Will Always Love You"

"If I should stay..."

PARTON

The way she did it, David Foster, who arranged it p-- and produced it, and Kevin Costner, who's the one that just, you know, wanted to do the song in-- in the movie-- but when I heard her sing it-- of course, I always loved her singin' anyway-- I mean, what a voice she had. I mean, at that time, nobody could out-sing her. But when I heard it, I-- my heart just stopped. I just couldn't believe that (LAUGH) my little song, my little simple song that was written straight from my heart, you know, about-- a subject-- that we all know and relate to one way or another, whether it's someone has died or kids goin' off to school, people relate to that song in so many ways. But anyway, when I heard her sing it, I could not believe it. I almost-- I was drivin' at that time from my office in Nashville to my house in Brentwood. And I heard it when she started singing that a cappella, I thought, "Well, th--" it-- you know, it just-- I thought, "What is--" (LAUGH) you know, "If I should stay"-- and it-- it took a minute to realize. And then when-- when it went into the-- with the music part where she's singin' (SINGING) "I," I honestly thought I was gonna have a heart attack. (LAUGH) It was one of the most overwhelming things.

WHITNEY HOUSTON, "I Will Always Love You"

And I will always love you. I will always love you. I will always love you.

PARTON

The way she did it was spectacular. And I could never have done it like that myself. But-- it made me just think, "Well, I guess if you got a good song, it can be arranged and produced wi-- in almost any style." So-- but that's when I realized that the song was really important, 'cause-- and could be done any way. It was-- it was overwhelming. People say, "Well, that's Whitney's song." I said, "That's fine. You can give her the credit. I just want the cash. So, send that check on to me." (LAUGH) But it was her song. The way that she did that to make that such a worldwide hit, mine woulda never have done that. But-- since then, people have done it ins-- you know, as instrumentals, as duets and all of that. So, it's just one of those simple little songs that says nothing and yet everything. It's very simple.

DOLLY PARTON, "I Will Always Love You"

And I will always love you. I will always love you.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DOLLY PARTON WROTE - "I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU" - IN 1973, AS A GOODBYE SONG TO PORTER WAGONER WHEN SHE DECIDED TO LEAVE HIS SHOW AFTER CO-HOSTING FOR 7 YEARS.

ACT 4

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DOLLY PARTON HAS REACHED SUPER-STAR STATUS AS BOTH A SINGER AND A SONG-WRITER. SOME OF HER BIGGEST RECORDED HITS, LIKE *JOLENE*, HAVE ALSO BEEN RECORDED AND PERFORMED BY ARTISTS RANGING FROM OLIVIA NEWTON JOHN... TO THE WHITE STRIPES... TO PARTON'S OWN GOD-DAUGHTER, MILEY CYRUS...

DOLLY PARTON

Jolene is-- has been recorded more times than any song I've ever written, believe it or not. Every little-- every band, every little garage band, every-- you know, people sing it on stage. But it has been recorded so many times you wouldn't believe it, worldwide, in every language. And-- of course, *Nine to Five* was, you know, a big one, too.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PARTON'S HIT SONG - "NINE TO FIVE" - COMES FROM THE 1980 FILM OF THE SAME NAME STARRING JANE FONDA AND LILY TOMLIN. PARTON NOT ONLY STARRED IN IT - SHE WROTE THE MUSIC.

RATHER

That also took some moxie. Jane Fonda comes to you, says she wants to do this movie, *Nine to Five*, wants to cast you in the movie. And you say, "I'll be glad to if I can write the music."

PARTON

That's what I said because at the time I had never done a movie. I'd had different people try to get me in the movies, and I-- I wasn't really-- thinkin' along those terms. But then when Jane came with this wonderful script, and knowin' that Jane Fonda, who was so hot at that time-- and-- and Lily Tomlin was also very hot at that time-- I thought, "Well, if I'm ever gonna do it, this'd be a good time. 'Cause if it's a hit, then I can help take the credit. And if it's a flop I can just blame them," (LAUGH) 'cause they're the big stars. Nobody's gonna blame me. So, it was, like, one of those things. And I thought, "Wow, this is-- you know, this is somethin' I should do."

But anyway, when she did come to me-- to do it, I said I would do it if I could write the theme song.

(SOUND CLIP: "Workin' 9 to 5, what a way to make a livin'")

PARTON

And that was just part of my deal.

RATHER

Smart piece of business.

PARTON

Well, it seemed to be the right thing to do. I thought, "Well, you know, I don't have to do the movies, but I am a songwriter." 'Cause I've always loved my music more than anything else. I love to write songs and I love to sing 'em. So, I thought, "Well, you know, I'm not up for bein' some great actress. I'm no Meryl Streep. (LAUGH) But I-- if I do things that's kinda true to my personality, somethin' I can do, I will." But it was more about, you know, "If I'm gonna do this, why not drag my music (LAUGH) in there, too?"

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AS PARTON DOVE INTO ACTING SHE OFTEN BROUGHT HER MUSIC ALONG AS WELL... SHE COMPOSED THE SCORE FOR THE MOVIE *RHINESTONE*, WHERE SHE STARRED ALONGSIDE SYLVESTER STALLONE. AND TWO OF HER SONGS WERE INCLUDED ON THE SOUNDTRACK FOR *THE BEST LITTLE WHORE HOUSE IN TEXAS* WHERE SHE TEAMED UP WITH BURT REYNOLDS... BUT PARTON'S MOST FAMOUS AND ENDURING PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP HAS BEEN A MUSICAL ONE - WITH COUNTRY MUSIC LEGEND KENNY ROGERS. THEY HAVE BEEN SINGING TOGETHER FOR DECADES AND THEIR 1983 HIT, "ISLANDS IN THE STREAM" TOPPED CHARTS ALL OVER THE WORLD. ON HER LATEST ALBUM, *BLUE SMOKE*, PARTON TEAMS UP YET AGAIN WITH ROGERS FOR A POIGNANT AND INTIMATE DUET ENTITLED... "YOU CAN'T MAKE OLD FRIENDS."

RATHER

in this-- new album, *Blue Smoke*, there is-- the duet you do with Kenny Rogers.

PARTON

Yes, and I love Kenny, love singin' with him. I did not write that song, by the way.

RATHER

I understand.

PARTON

You Can't Make Old Friends. Don't you love that?

RATHER

It's obvious that you and Kenny Rogers have something very special.

PARTON

We do. I love him to death. He's like a brother to me or like a twin soul. We just know each other. We can see each other across the room and know what the other is thinkin' about, whatever else is goin' on in the room, or we could just look at each other and laugh and smile or-- when other people say things, we-- we know how the other's gonna react to it. But I just love him. We've never had anything sexual at all. But there is a great romance that we have. It's like-- a sweet pa-- well, I mean, it's like you have-- I have a relationship with everybody I've ever worked with, but that's not to say I've had a love affair. Because I love people. I love to connect and I love to really get to know whoever I'm with and to know what they're about. But Kenny and I, he feels the same way. We just absolutely are perfect together.

RATHER

Well now, this is not true confessions, but you said-- with Kenny Rogers-- "it's not sexual but it is romantic."

PARTON

Uh-huh (AFFIRM).

RATHER

S-- you traveled since you've been a teenager, been on the road everywhere. Have you had romantic affairs that you look back on and say, "Well, it-- it wasn't the smartest thing I've ever did, I'm not proud of it, but I've a memory of it"?

PARTON

(LAUGH) Well, I would first never tell you who all I've had romances--

RATHER

Well, come on. This is--

PARTON

--with or-- or--

RATHER

--true confessions. You--

PARTON

--I know it's not true confession. (LAUGH) But I don't regret anything I've ever done, 'cause anything I've ever done seemed to be the thing to do at the time or I wouldn't have done it. So, I

think to say I regret this and that, I would regret gettin' caught at it or regret if I'd hurt somebody else with somethin'.

But I don't regret anything that I've done. Because to change one thing could change everything. I just think that you do what you do, and if you justify that in your own self that that was what seemed to be right for you at the time, I mean, what-- what can you do? What can you say? But it ain't true confession. I'm never gonna tell everything. But yes, I've-- like I said, I've had a relationship with everybody I've ever worked with, whether that's male or female. I'm not talkin' about (LAUGH) sexual affairs. I'm talkin' about, I get involved with people. But that's one of the things that I love 'cause I'm a songwriter. I wanna know about people 'cause I love people. I am just a people lovin' person. And I-- I just find somethin' fascinating about everything. I try to find the god core in everybody. I try to play to that and find the god light in everyone. We all have it. But I just love gettin' to know personalities and what makes people tick.

RATHER

Well, this general subject brings us to your marriage. As I do my math, and I'm not always good at it, soon you will have been married 50 years.

PARTON

Well, actually, we met 50 years ago this May. We've been married for 48 years. We-- we-- dated for two years and then we got married. So, that's a long time. He's a good guy. And we have a great understandin' of each other. We're great friends. Now he's a very complex involved person. I never get tired of him. He's got-- his own sense of humor. He's got his own way of thinkin'. And he's not involved in the music business at all, but he loves music. And we're different. But yet we just are so compatible.

RATHER

Well, you know, there are people to this day who do not believe your husband, Carl Dean, actually exists.

PARTON

I know that. They do. They think that I just made him up. Some say I'm havin'-- a relationship with my girlfriend, Judy. We've just had a great friendship. There's never been-- well, there's a great love there between us--

RATHER

With Judy--

PARTON

--with my friend, Judy. But people say, "Oh, you just have a husband 'cause you're this or you're that," or, "You've never ev--" you know, but we have been married. My husband just does not

wanna be in the spotlight. Years ago, early on when I came to Nashville, I took him to my first award-- dinner. I had won-- a s-- an award, BMI award for the Song of the Year. And my husband went with me, h-- rented a tuxedo, which I had him do. (LAUGH) He was absolutely miserable. And on the way to the car from the d-- (LAUGH) dinner, he was takin' off stuff and he said-- we got in the car and he said, "You know what? I want you to do really well. And I really do. And I-- I don't mind what you do, but I ain't never goin' to more of them damn things, so don't (LAUGH) even ask me." So, I never have. And he never did.

RATHER

Well-- you raise the subject, and-- and it's been --fairly recently-- this suggestion that-- because Judy, your friend from childhood, travels with you and has over the years-- that there's something quote "special" or something wrong going on. Have you ever talked to Oprah Winfrey about this? Because the same sorts of things have-- been associated with her. She has-- a lifelong childhood--

PARTON

Gayle--

RATHER

--friend--

PARTON

--her friend, Gayle.

RATHER

--Gayle. Have you ever talked to Oprah about this?

PARTON

Yes, we have t-- when I've worked on her show before, we've talked about that. Because people that don't have, like, a best, best friend, I mean, a really true great friend, you said it right when you said somethin' special with Judy. 'Cause Judy and I have been best friends since we were, like, in the third grade. We went all through high school together, took all the same classes (LAUGH) together, dreamed and talked together. She knew that I was wantin' to be a star. She went to the military after we graduated, 'cause she's from a very poor family and she needed to do things for insurance and, you know, f-- for some-- and I said, "Well, I'm goin' on to Nashville. And when you get outta the military I should have some of my stuff goin', you know, by then." And so that's exactly what happened. I was just really gettin' goin' good. When she got outta the military, she came to Nashville. We picked right up where we left off. And we've worked together ever since. She tours with me all the time. She's like a sister and-- and certainly the best friend that anybody could have. And there has never been any kind of a sexual (LAUGH)

relationship with us. I mean, that's just-- there's just a true love. There are all kinds of true loves. And that is c-- certainly one of mine. But it is truly just a great friendship.

RATHER

Well, Dolly, you know from talking to me before, you never met anybody who had less interest in anybody's private life than I do. But a reason for picking up on what you said about this was, with you and with Oprah, it seems-- you tell me if it seems this way to you-- that if you're a successful woman, particularly a successful woman who's in the limelight, that these kinds of rumors, speculations, really sleazy stuff, are inevitable.

PARTON

Oh, absolutely. You learn that really early on. People love to gossip. This world is built on greed and gossip. And, of course, people are gonna talk. People want to talk. And I don't even mind what they say. You know, it's like, you can't really fall under that.

People love to say what they love to say. They love to talk about it. And if I can be a point of interest to them, I don't care what they say as long as they don't hurt my family or somebody else with it. But they're gonna say-- it doesn't matter if it's a female friend or a male friend. I've-- Lord, in the minds of people out there I've screwed everybody that I've ever worked with. But that's not so.

RATHER

Excuse me, I don't want to start a rumor here. (LAUGH)

PARTON

Yeah, with you and me. They'll be sayin' you and me--

RATHER

Well, n--

PARTON

--Dolly's new love.

RATHER

--it would probably help my reputation (LAUGH) at age 82 to get that started, but I'm not sure what-- what--

PARTON

Wow, you look good. Are you that age? (LAUGH) Are you really? Well, you look wonderful.

RATHER

Well, thank you.

RATHER

To all appearances-- and while I don't know you really well, I've known-- known you over the years-- so, all appearances and in my belief, you are incredibly sunny and you lack cynicism.

Now, for someone who's seen as much as you have done, you have the reputation of being a very nice woman in a very ugly business. How much of that is real? And how much is it-- is it, "Listen, this is my public persona to be sunny and not to be cynical," but when you get back home you kick the closet door and (LAUGH) curse at something?

PARTON

Well, of course. I mean, there-- there are parts-- all of us are so many colors. I'm a rainbow girl like everybody. But I really was born with a happy heart. And I try my best to do good. And like I say, I don't usually lose my temper, but sometimes I have to use my temper. And if I see somethin' that ain't right, I try to make it right. And-- and like I s-- I've said before, if I don't like where you got it, I can certainly tell you where to put it. (LAUGH) So, that's-- you know, I-- I'm not-- I'm not shy. I know how to say no. But I don't do it just to be rude. But I'm very honest and open and upfront. You know where you stand with me. If somethin's bothering me, I just say it.

ACT 5

DAN RATHER

What is the one thing you think that your public doesn't know about you?

DOLLY PARTON

Lord, I don't know. I've been around so long and-- (LAUGH) people like you have asked me so many things, I can't even begin to imagine what they don't know about me. I really don't. I mean, they probably-- not realize how I seem to be like such a showgirl, such a party girl. They'd probably be surprised at how really ordinary I am in my day-to-day life-- that I love to just go home, I love to cook, I love to be with my husband, we love to ride around in our little RV. You know, it's like I don't-- I don't party. Y-- I look like a party girl, but I just hate it when I even have to go do a lotta stuff where it's just so public. I do it. And I'm fine with it. And I love people. But I'm just really-- I just love-- I'm just a homebody.

RATHER

Well, I know what I wanted to ask you. True or untrue-- you wear your high heels even in the shower?

PARTON

(LAUGH) No, I don't. But I wear my high heels most of the time. Even my house shoes have a little heels on 'em, 'cause I'm very short, too. And plus, I've worn my heels so long, it's like if I walk around-- even when I'm workin' out and havin' to wear tennis shoes, my legs get so sore 'cause I'm so used to doin' that. But I'm little. I-- in order to get to my cabinets or whatever, I'll g-- I gotta have my shoes on. But it's not true that I wear 'em in the shower, (LAUGH) nor do I sleep in them unless I just fall across the bed with 'em on and go to sleep. But, no. But I'm-- I love my high heels.

RATHER

I wanna get back to the album for a moment-- *Blue Smoke*. There's also a duet with Willie Nelson.

PARTON

Yes. I love Willie Nelson. He's another one that I've always been very compatible with. He's very hard to sing with, though. He has that weird phrasing. And I have an unusual voice myself. (LAUGH) But I told him, I said, "I'll tell you, this is one of the hardest jobs I ever had, tryin' to--

RATHER

Why is that? I-- I don't know music very well. He-- he's-- he sings right on the note. Is that what it is?

PARTON

I don't know what he does. He's just got his own unusual phrasing, which is why he's so popular. And like I say, I have an unusual kinda phrasing myself. And you'd think that we would be able to-- but I had to catch him. I always had to say, (LAUGH) "Where's he goin' with this," and then to try to sing harmony, too. But he-- actually, the song we have in this CD, I did write it. It's called *From Here to the Moon and Back*. And he also has it on his album as well. Same with Kenny. Kenny has the duet on his album and then I put it on mine. That's our deal we make with our friends. "Okay, you can have this. Puttin' your album-- I put it in mine, too." (LAUGH) But I love Willie. He's such a great guy.

RATHER

Yeah. When he turned his back on Nashville, I think he was saying Nashville turned its back on him (LAUGH) and he moved to Austin. Were you surprised? And did you think, "Well, that may be the end of him because he-- he left Nashville"?

PARTON

I didn't think about it in those terms. In fact, Willie and I were one of the first people-- we-- we arrived in Nashville about the same time. We both write for Combine Music, for Fred Foster.

We both went to RCA at the same time. So, our-- our careers and our lives and our friendship were-- you know, really kinda worked hand in hand. And we've talked about that through the years. And-- by the time he decided to leave because he wasn't gettin' the appreciation, I was beginning to, you know, be a star 'cause I'd started with *The Porter Wagoner Show*. And-- so, but I didn't realize that-- that Willie had left-- or to think about that he was just gone-- I mean, that was his personal life-- until he came back. I thought he was one of the greatest writers I'd ever heard. And we used to sit and work together doing things in the early days. But it was only when they came back as the-- as the outlaws-- (LAUGH) and, of course-- Waylon and Willie and all those guys that decided, just, they didn't care, they d-- they weren't gonna go by other people's rules--

RATHER

You mention Waylon Jennings. I think he recorded a song by this name. I'm pretty sure he did. But he was fond of saying, "Nashville is hell on the living, but it always speaks well of the dead."

PARTON

(LAUGH) What a great line!

RATHER

True?

PARTON

It was. It is true. It is true. But anyway, I loved-- I loved their sound. I loved the fact that they became outlaws. I even loved that whole title. They didn't care. They were just gonna do their music their own way. And I completely understood that and got that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHEN WE RETURN...DOLLY PARTON TALKS ABOUT A PROJECT THAT IS VERY NEAR AND DEAR TO HER HEART... THAT'S NEXT ON THE BIG INTERVIEW...

ACT 6

DAN RATHER

Dolly, you have this-- this program-- the Imagination Library. What a great thing to get books in the hands of young children. How and why did that happen?

DOLLY PARTON

Well, remember I told you a little earlier that my dad didn't get a chance to get an education?

And so many of my people didn't. But that's the way it was with mountain people, country people. They had big families. They worked hard. They needed each other. And so many people didn't get to go to school, 'cause they had to go to the fields and work. They had to feed those-- that big family. My dad was from-- a huge family. I think there was 14 or 15 of them.

And, of course, there was 12 of us. But when my daddy was young, he had to go to work. He had to help. And so it was only because, what I was talkin' about, my dad bein' so smart and me wonderin' about that, that I wanted to do somethin' to honor him. And so I started that program just here in my h-- home county of Sevierville, in Sevier County. And so it was what we were doin' for children where we give them a book a month from the time they're born until they start school. So--

RATHER

Every child in the county?

PARTON

In the county. That's-- it started. Then the governor at that time-- Governor Phil Bredesen, he got wind of that and he thought it was a great idea. And we teamed up and next thing you know it's all over Tennessee. Then it starts, it's all over the United States. Then we go into Canada.

Then we go into-- you know, to different places. Now we're in Scotland. And we just opened the Imagination Library in-- in Australia when we were there. And so now we're in different places all over the world.

PARTON

We've given over 50 million books away to date. And now that we've hooked up with United Way and the Rotary, we're gonna actually put out millions and millions more. So, it's-- it's a very exciting program. And it's one of the things I've proudest of. But it all came from a very personal place. I just know how important it is. 'Cause if you can't afford to go to school, if you can read, you-- there's a book on any subject that you want to read. You can read-- if you can read, you can self-educate yourself. And so that was my main-- my main point.

RATHER

Dolly, talking about the many facets of your life. We've had a lotta fun here. But again, I-- I'll turn serious for a second.

PARTON

Okay.

RATHER

Who are you?

PARTON

Who am I? Well, I think I've been around long enough for people to pretty much figure that out. But I would-- I like to think of myself, you know, as-- as a giving person, a caring person, a fun-lovin' person. I love to work. I love to be happy. Nobody's always happy.

But I-- I wake up every morning-- if-- if things are not right I try to set about tryin' to make 'em right. I'm a very spiritual person. So, I really think-- I know I'm a phony-lookin' person, but I know I'm-- I look artificial, but I'd like to believe that I'm totally real where it really counts. 'Cause I was not a natural beauty so, of course, I'm gonna overdo it and try to, you know, create my own little look. And so, I mean, just-- I'm just a country girl that wanted to do good, and thank god, and because of god, I have done good. And I'm grateful and--

RATHER

And I might need to argue that you're not still a country girl at heart. But I will say, when I look at you, I see two huge assets that took you to the top and put you on top and have kept you there. And those assets-- so there's no mistake-- and I'm looking at you in the eyes, not elsewhere--

PARTON

T-- (LAUGH) I started to say--

RATHER

--no, no-- those two assets are you are smart. You're really intelligent. And you do have enormous talent.

PARTON

Well, thank you very much. I would like to think I do. But there're lots of people more talented than me, but I-- I've always had more-- more guts than I've got talent. I've never-- I've always just decided that, "This is what I do and this is the gifts god gave me. And I'm gonna make the most of it." So, I just go for it, 'cause who knows why we're really here? And who knows where we're really goin'? We have hopes that there's somethin' more, but what if there's not? Let's just make the most of what we-- what we can right here.

RATHER

You've been generous with your time, and as usual you're generous with yourself. And I really appreciate you--

PARTON

Well, I just loved you to death.

RATHER

Thank you. But--

PARTON

And I was excited when I was gonna get to talk to you again. (LAUGH) I was glad. So, thank you. You're always--

RATHER

Thank you so much.

PARTON

--the best.

END TRANSCRIPT