

About Tammy Wynette...

She has been called a legend, a heroine, but the names she loved most are what she was first: Tammy Wynette, wife and mother.

Born Virginia Wynette Pugh on May 5, 1942, on a cotton farm in Itawamba County, Mississippi, she spent her youth picking cotton, working as a beautician, a waitress, and a shoe-factory employee before her rise to stardom.



By age seven, Tammy was working the cotton fields along with other relatives on the family farm. Her father's legacy – a piano, a guitar and the dream that his daughter would make music her life – became her only escape from the dull, arduous routine of farm life. She endured long, backbreaking hours in the cotton fields by daydreaming of singing before thousands of people. Years later, Tammy would still keep a crystal bowl full of cotton in her home to remind her of these meager beginnings.

As a teenage bride she found times even harder than she'd known at home. She had two children within three years and her husband, an itinerant construction worker, was unemployed more often than not. They were finally forced to move into an abandoned log house with no indoor plumbing.

Fed up with poverty and worn out from the drudgery of her life, Tammy enrolled in beauty school in nearby Tupelo, funding her schooling with money given to her by her mother. (Never believing her own hype, Tammy kept her beautician's license up to date regularly noting "she could always go back to hairdressing.")

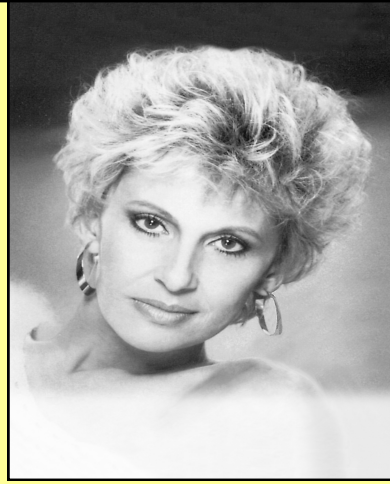
After becoming a beautician, Tammy moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where she gave birth to a third daughter, a 1 lb. 8 oz. premature baby who suffered a near-fatal bout with spinal meningitis before she was four months old. Her shaky marriage crumbled, and while getting a divorce she worked 10 hour days as a hairdresser, after getting up at 4 a.m. each day to sing on the local "Country Boy Eddie" TV show.

Beginning in 1965 she began making regular trips to Nashville meeting producers and trying to attain a recording contract. In 1966, after months of rejections and on the brink of giving up, she made the daring decision to move to Nashville anyway. She had no job, no place to live, and three small children totally dependent on her.

She eventually auditioned for Epic records producer Billy Sherrill who signed her and changed her stage name to Tammy. Her first single, "Apartment #9," was released within weeks, hitting the charts almost as soon as it hit the record racks. Her next 11 albums went to number one and within four short years, Tammy had won two Grammys and three CMA "Female Vocalist of the Year" awards.

From a naïve farm girl totally unfamiliar with the music business to one of the most recognizable voices in country music, she went on to sell more than 30 million records, grossing more than

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\$100 million. Her recording of "Stand By Your Man" is still the biggest selling single in the history of country music. Her releases have made the number one position on the charts some 20 times and she was the first female Country artist to sell a million albums.

No other female country singer conveyed the emotion of heartbreak like Tammy Wynette. She endeared herself to millions by singing about topics of everyday life – divorce, loneliness, parenting, passion. Her tearful singing style was the voice of every heartbreak a woman has ever known. Perhaps it's that Tammy herself lived through such tumultuous times that she could convey the emotion of such weighty topics.

Like her career, Tammy's personal life filled the papers. In 1968 she married her idol, George Jones, creating a union that captured the imaginations of country music fans like no other couple before them. For the next seven years they lived, sang, wrote, recorded and performed in a romantic, stormy and much-publicized relationship that ultimately brought Tammy more headlines than happiness. Jones' drinking sprees were almost as legendary as his music, and it was this problem that eventually destroyed the marriage. They had one child, Tamala Georgette, born in 1970.

On July 6, 1978, she finally found lasting happiness when she married her longtime friend, George Richey. The well-known songwriter had co-written several of Tammy's chart toppers and produced hits for Tammy and many other artists.

Throughout the next two decades Tammy suffered a variety of health problems and underwent several operations. Still, she managed to rise to the top of the international charts once again when she teamed with British pop act KLF to create the dance hit "Justified and Ancient." She continued her streak when she joined forces with Dolly Parton and Loretta Lynn on their landmark album, "Honky Tonk Angels."

Eventually her poor health caught up to her. Tammy passed away in her sleep at her home in Nashville, Tennessee on Monday, April 6, 1998. Three days later fans and members of the music industry honored her with a world-wide televised memorial service broadcast from Nashville's Ryman Auditorium. Later that year, Wynette was elected into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

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STAND BY YOUR MAN

THE TAMMY WYNETTE STORY

