

[PDF] The Three Of Us: Growing Up With Tammy And George

Patsi Bale Cox, Georgette Jones - pdf download free book

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Description:

Review "*The Three of Us* relates the inner struggle of country music princess Georgette Jones, who examines the contrasting childhoods of her larger-than-life superstar parents—George Jones and Tammy Wynette—to find meaning and make her own way in life. She tells of the fission in her nuclear family and its subsequent fallout as well as of her relationships with her step-parents—two sinners and one saint. This memoir is a must-read for any child of D-I-V-O-R-C-E." — Eileen Sisk, author of *Buck Owens: The Biography*

"Without artifice or attitude, the only child of country music's royal couple...tells the heartrending story of her quest to gain her parents' love and approval. One's impulse throughout is to lay the book

aside, reach out and hug her." —Edward Morris, former country music editor for *Billboard*

"I was totally absorbed by *The Three of Us*. Georgette Jones was born into the unreal world of country music royalty and automatically expected to be the heir apparent. Like everyone else on this earth, no one in her family is, or was, perfect. There were ups and there were downs....Georgette writes of both." —Jan Howard, Grand Ole Opry star

"Reads like a song classic full of heartache, disappointment, tragedy, and redemption" —*Publishers Weekly*

"The Tammy Wynette that I knew was the most loyal, strong friend anyone could ever have. Her daughter Georgette reminds us that Tammy was that, and much, much more. And it is great to have someone write honestly about the George Jones that isn't a wild country outlaw! He may have drank to hide it, but he is actually shy!" —Tanya Tucker

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ONE

WHEN MY MOM MARRIED MY dad, she was marrying her hero. I'd like to say that right up front, because one speculation I've run across from time to time is that Tammy Wynette wanted to marry George Jones in order to further her career.

Mom's career was doing just fine when she married Dad. She was without a doubt one of the hottest new artists to hit Nashville in a while, with four #1 records and a string of awards and nominations. That's not to say that Mom didn't have insecurities about performing from the very beginning. She even questioned the vocal on her signature record "Stand by Your Man." She did see Dad as the consummate vocal talent. But her career was going strong and in the hands of a man she trusted unreservedly, her producer, Billy Sherrill.

It was her personal life that was shaky, not her career.

Dad was a musical hero to Mom, but it was much more than that. Mom believed she had finally found her Prince Charming. She desperately wanted a champion. Sure, she knew he had a few rough edges when he drank, but like a lot of women have thought about men they loved, she believed she could change him.

She never could change him, but she loved Dad, even as she was leaving him.

Everyone is a product of time and environment, and none more so than Mom. She came along in the rural South just before women started seriously questioning their "place" in the world. She was raised by her grandfather and her stepfather, two good, kind men who respected their wives and loved their families deeply. They were men who would work hard to make sure their wives had what they wanted. Neither of these men had serious torments that complicated family life. My dad was the one who could have told her about having a father with demons to pass along.

Mom was born to Mildred and Hollice Pugh on May 5, 1942, on a six-hundred-acre farm in Itawamba County, Mississippi, just across the state line from Red Bay, Alabama. She called both states home. My grandfather Pugh knew he was dying by the time that Mom, his only child, was born. The brain tumor that was killing him was probably going to blind him first, and he told people he prayed that

he would see long enough to have a look at that baby Mildred was carrying. It was an answered prayer. He didn't pass until Mom was nine months old and he had seen his daughter.

Hollice Pugh's death while Mom was just a baby probably had more of an effect on her than she ever knew. But she was lucky in that she had a big extended family and strong father figures to step into her world. Champions.

Mom's mother, Mildred, my beloved MeeMaw, told her that having a child made Hollice's last months of life bearable—holding his baby, sitting at the piano and placing her hands on the keys, talking about his dreams that she would be a musician. He was a multi-instrumentalist, playing guitar, bass, mandolin, accordion, and piano. Mom listened to MeeMaw talk about Hollice's hopes, and they spurred her to learn both guitar and piano. In a way, it's sad that when she made it in music, she put aside the guitar and piano she'd learned. But the truth is, her ability to pick up a guitar and accompany herself helped immensely when she was looking for a recording contract.

The farm where Mom was born was owned by MeeMaw's parents, Chester and Flora Russell. For country people, Chester and Flora were successful and prominent in the county. Still, the Russell household didn't have electricity or a telephone when Mom was little. And whether they are successful or not, farm families usually work in the fields. Mom was no exception as she grew up.

The economic difference between Mom's childhood and Dad's was enormous. Mom did have to do chores on the farm, but it was the *family* farm. There was stability and safety surrounding her. Dad had to quit school at a young age to help out his family. No stability and no safety, just poverty and uncertainty.

In Mom's life as well as mine, the grandparents often took over the parenting role. For Mom, it began when her mother took a job in Memphis to work in a wartime airplane factory. Mom was left on the farm with my great-grandparents, Chester and Flora. Even when MeeMaw returned a couple of years later, Mom always saw her grandparents as parent figures. When MeeMaw moved back from Memphis, Mom moved in with her parents. That caused a little contention from time to time, because MeeMaw was very strict, and Mom knew she could get her way with the grandparents, especially her grandfather Chester. Mom was not above playing her parents and grandparents against one another, either.

Mom dearly loved her steady, rock-solid grandfather Chester, saying, "From him I formed the images I still carry of what a father and husband should be."

When she had her children, Mom ended up like her own mother and was the disciplinarian in the family. I can't speak for Euple Byrd, my sisters' father, but my dad certainly never wanted to be in that role. He couldn't stand the idea of a child being afraid of him, as he had once been afraid of his own father.

When Mom was four years old, MeeMaw married my PeePaw, Foy Lee, and for a time, the two moved into an old, run-down house on the Russell farm. When I say "run-down" I *mean* run-down. Mom said that there were holes in the roof and in the floor, and they literally had to shovel snow out of it in the winter. That's probably why Mom stayed right where she was, with her indulgent grandparents in their nice, big, warm farmhouse. Later, when MeeMaw and PeePaw (Mildred and Foy) moved to Memphis, Mom went with them. It was short-lived. She was a popular girl who missed both her friends and playing basketball with the school team.

But even though Mom stayed at the home of her grandparents Chester and Flora, she spent a lot of time with Mildred and Foy. PeePaw was a mild-mannered man. I never even heard him raise his

voice. Mom said that she saw him lose his temper only one time, when she was about six or seven years old.

PeePaw's father had been a raging alcoholic, far worse than my dad or any of the drinkers I ever knew. After PeePaw and MeeMaw were married, PeePaw continued to help his father take care of his farm, even though he had his own land to work. PeePaw would go over to his father's place after he finished his own chores and get him caught up. It made for long hours, but PeePaw believed it was a son's job to help his parents. He also believed that a husband and father owed his first allegiance to his wife and children. And one of the things he most loved doing was taking MeeMaw and Mom to the county fair. PeePaw, by the way, never thought of Mom as a "stepdaughter," but as his daughter. PeePaw wasn't trying to take Hollice Pugh's place, but he nevertheless considered Mom his child.

He'd been planning on a Saturday at the fair for several weeks, and Mom was revved up about it. He had all the work caught up on both places, so the family set out for the fair. PeePaw decided to stop by his father's house to let him know where they'd be, and that's when the trouble started. PeePaw's dad flew into a drunken rage and started shouting that he needed more help and he needed it right then. He forbade PeePaw from leaving.

Mom said that PeePaw told him very calmly that he would come back the next day, but that he was taking his family to the fair. Then PeePaw's father became horribly insulting, not just toward PeePaw, but toward MeeMaw and Mom, too. PeePaw warned him once. When that didn't stop him, PeePaw knocked him to the ground. Then he got back in the car and took his family to the fair.

"He never explained it or said one word about the incident," Mom said. "I was in complete shock. But the one thing I did understand was that your PeePaw wasn't going to allow anyone to disrespect his wife and daughter. In PeePaw's world, you respected women."

PeePaw also allowed MeeMaw to run the show in most instances. She was the one who was outspoken, the one who laid down the law. PeePaw just wanted to make her happy. I've wondered if Mom might have mistakenly thought all she had to do with my dad was to "lay down the law." That never was a good plan when it came to George Jones. For him, laying down the law was akin to waving a red shirt in front of a bull.

The extended family shaped Mom's circle of friends, too, because she considered her mother's younger sister Carolyn a best friend and sister rather than an aunt. Carolyn was five years older, but the two were very close growing up. They picked cotton and did other farmwork together, played at the family sawmill, washhouse, and barn, and played cowboys and Indians.

Mom was a tomboy who loved athletics more than doll playing, and by the time she made it to high school, she was a killer at the sport she so loved—basketball. Mom was little, but what she lacked in height, she made up for in speed and accuracy. I'd guess I'd always known she'd been a basketball player at one time, but I hadn't ever really thought about it until that day when she showed Richey's nephews her hook shot.

Mom's other early love was music. From the time she was a toddler, MeeMaw had talked to her about her father, Hollice, and his musical talents. Mom knew, for example, that her father had wanted her to have his guitar and to learn to play it well. She heard stories about his holding her at the piano while she was a baby. She took to music naturally, learning to play flute, accordion, guitar, piano, and organ. She had a natural talent, but I also think she wanted to become a skilled musician because it would have made her father proud.

Her feelings for Hollice Pugh took nothing away from her love of her stepfather, Foy Lee. The man I always called PeePaw was a wonderful stepfather. And...

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