

## Jana Jae

A combination of hard work and raw talent helped this dynamic entertainer accomplish stardom.

### Chapter 01 - 1:02

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** Musical talent runs through the family of Jana Jae. Her parents studied at the famed Julliard School of Music in New York City, and Jana was introduced to the classical study of the violin, on a 1/8 size instrument, at the age of two. Then, thanks to the direction and inspiration of her grandfather, an accomplished champion fiddler in his own right, Jana also learned to love playing by ear. She honed her skill of fiddling into a fine art and won the Ladies National Championship several times. She also continued her classical training, winning scholarships to Interlochen and the International String Congress. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a degree in music and studied abroad at the Vienna Academy of Music.

Jana got her big break at a Buck Owens concert in Redding, California when she was invited to play “Orange Blossom Special”. Buck offered her a job as the first female member of his “Buckaroos” band. She later became part of the regular team of performers on the *Hee Haw* show. You’ll find Jana Jae’s story interesting as she tells it for the oral history website [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 02 - 7:50

#### Musical Family

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling and today’s date is May 9, 2018.

Jana, would you state your full name, please?

**Jana Jae:** My full name?

**JE:** Yes.

**JJ:** You don’t want just Jana Jae? You want Jana Margaret Jae Owens.

**JE:** So what is it again?

**JJ:** Well, it's just Jana Jae.

**JE:** But we got other names in there too.

**JJ:** Well, the legal name is Jana Owens.

**JE:** Okay. Your date of birth?

**JJ:** Oh, my gosh, John, I don't know if I can go through with this interview. August 30, 1943.

**JE:** Your present age?

**JJ:** Oh, I don't know.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** You have to figure it out, for God's sake.

**JE:** You want—that's up to me to figure out?

**JJ:** That's enough of that!

**JE:** You're the second lady who refused to actually say her age.

**JJ:** Oh, my gosh, I shouldn't have given you even the date, but that is the correct date. Wikipedia is wrong.

**JE:** Where are we recording this interview?

**JJ:** Tulsa, Oklahoma, at my home.

**JE:** Where were you born?

**JJ:** Great Falls, Montana, air force baby. I was born in Deaconess Hospital, Malmstrom Air Force Base.

**JE:** Your mother's name?

**JJ:** Betty Sprague, Betty Patricia Sprague Meyer Hopper. [laughing] Two marriages.

**JE:** Tell us where she grew up and a little bit about her, her personality. What was she like?

**JJ:** Oh, yeah. You know, I just lost my mom, year before last. But she was playing violin until the very day she passed.

**JE:** And how old was she when she died?

**JJ:** Ninety-three, about two weeks shy of ninety-four. She was born in 1921. A big, big, big influence in my life. She and my maternal grandparents. Because my granddaddy on my mom's side was a champion fiddle player. My grandmother played piano, my granddaddy was a champion fiddle player and they were in Joplin, Missouri, area, Danita and so forth. Actually, their families were based in Colorado, Dust Bowl, Colorado. Wheat farmers.

Grandmother and Granddaddy played dances everywhere and Grandmother played some classic like, but they wanted my mom to learn "right," in quotes. So they sent her to Juilliard.

**JE:** Meaning, to read notes?

**JJ:** Well, she was reading.

**JE:** Grandmother was a classical pianist as well, you know, chorded for Granddaddy and all of his fiddle tunes. And they had her studying with somebody there in Julesburg, Colorado.

But anyway, they wanted her to learn right and do well, so they sent her to Juilliard and she was able to get into Juilliard. She had advanced quite a bit. There she met my dad.

**JE:** Okay. And then again—

**JJ:** And they were—

**JE:** ...her instrument was violin.

**JJ:** She played piano also. We all played multiple instruments, but primarily violin, that's what she was studying.

**JE:** And she meets your father at Juilliard and he—

**JJ:** Who also was a violinist.

**JE:** And his name?

**JJ:** Jacob G. Meyer, M-e-y-e-r. Jake.

**JE:** What was his personality like?

**JJ:** He was from a, kind of a Brethren background, Pennsylvania Dutch and French. His mom was full-blooded French, Anna Royer. Very musical. Five kids—they were all beautiful. He was very handsome, the only son. And my aunts, my aunts all had those big beautiful dimples. And I rolled that tape when I was twelve years old. I thought, *I know I'm supposed to have those dimples*. But I never did get the dimples, the Meyer dimples, but they were gorgeous. You know, they were beauty queens, homecoming queens, all that. And those dimples, oh, my gosh, they were to die for. And very sweet.

So the dad was a Brethren minister and then president of a couple of colleges. Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, and eventually, another college in Wisconsin.

Anyway, he had been brought up in this very strict—it wasn't Amish, it was Brethren, but still the same type of thing. They dress plain.

When I stayed with my Great Aunt Anna and Uncle Nathan when my little So in the morning I could choose sugar on the breakfast food or wait for ice cream at night or jam on my toast. One sweet a day. They were beautiful people, but my dad grew up in this very structured home, his dad being a preacher and president of the college, those kids had to toe the line. So he was a lot more strict than my mother, who was more from farming, wheat farming, and relaxed, you know, some fiddling and all that in her background.

Age two, he thought I was going to be the child prodigy.

**JE:** Two years old?

**JJ:** Two and a half. Little eight-size violin.

**JE:** Can you remember any of that?

**JJ:** Oh, yeah, I do remember it because I was terrified. I was terrified, I cried every day. I was scared to death of my dad.

**JE:** And he put this violin in your hand?

**JJ:** I had to practice an hour a day.

**JE:** As a child of two and a half, three years old?

**JJ:** Absolutely. So my mom broke it into little segments throughout the day. You know, we'd play, and that was kind of fun. I do remember liking my mother. I still have the little book that I started. I couldn't even reach out to the finger board, I had to hold the body of the violin. So I learned rhythms and notes, quarter notes, half notes, whole notes. The E string was a birdie, the A string was a hand, the D string was a frog, and G string was the bumblebee. You know, it was fun until my dad came home.

And my dad wanted to hear, you know, he gave me a lesson. He had been away in the service until I was, like, two. So he missed that baby time.

My mom never spoke ill of him, but she said, "Well, he just missed your infancies and you were bright." So when he entered the picture full time he expected me to be terrific.

I had flashcards, I learned to read when I was three. You know, I had all these flashcards, I still have some of those. There was a little conflict there between my mom and my dad and how I was being raised.

Then my little sister came along and that relaxed things a bit. But they eventually did part ways when I was seven.

**JE:** Your sister, is that the only sibling you have?

**JJ:** The only full sibling. I have halves.

**JE:** And your sister's name?

**JJ:** Sherry Meyer Ganns.

**JE:** Was she musical too?

**JJ:** Oh, yes, yeah, we were all musical.

**JE:** Did they force the violin on her too?

**JJ:** No, see, Dad had her as a baby in his life so he, um—

**JE:** He saw her differently?

**JJ:** Yes. He understood.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** You know, where you're coming from when you're just a baby. With me, I was already speaking and so forth and he was expecting much more of me. So that relaxed things considerably.

**JE:** Yeah. He obviously knew you had music in you.

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** Just because you were born of them doesn't mean—

**JJ:** Right.

**JE:** Did you ever sing?

**JJ:** I did sing. We sang songs as a kid, I know, all my whole life.

**JE:** Yeah, but, but did you ever say, "No, no, I'm not a vocalist at all"?

**JJ:** Um, I remember singing. We sang as a family and we sang, but I think my focus was on the violin.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** My focus was instrumental. And that's still how I am. If I have my band in place and harmonies, I'm fine, I'm right on pitch and I enjoy it. But I don't feel like I'm a Barbra Streisand type. I'm not a solo singer. With my band, we do lots of vocals.

## Chapter 03 - 10:35

### Kidnapped

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**John Erling:** First time you recall playing for a group?

**Jana Jae:** Oh? When I was two.

**JE:** These adults—

**JJ:** And three.

**JE:** ...had to look at this child, three years old. You know, it might have been easier to learn a guitar.

**JJ:** No.

**JE:** But here you've got this moving part.

**JJ:** Well—

**JE:** And holding it to your chin.

**JJ:** Yes.

**JE:** I mean, that's kind of—

**JJ:** And not able to reach down to the finger board.

**JE:** Right, right.

**JJ:** No, I remember playing for my folks. You know, they'd have their musician friends over. That was *the* things. They'd always have me play.

**JE:** Sure.

**JJ:** Bring the little audience in here, "Look at Jana at what she's doing!"

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And that was kind of fun. That was my reward.

**JE:** And you knew you were doing something good.

**JJ:** Yeah, yeah, I got a reaction early on.

**JE:** Because, yeah, so that made you feel good?

**JJ:** My first TV was age five, *Ted Mack, Amateur Hour*.

**JE:** *Ted Mack's Amateur Hour*, really?

**JJ:** I played Hungarian Dance Number Five. Da-da-dum, de-de-de-de.

**JE:** And for those who will not now what Ted Mack was—

**JJ:** Well, it dates me for sure.

**JE:** ... that was like *Ted Mack's Amateur Hour* was like *American Idol*.

**JJ:** Or *Johnny Carson* or anything like that.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** We were in New York City, you know, so—

**JE:** Oh, you were living there?

**JJ:** Yeah, Juilliard is in New York City, yeah, so that's—

**JE:** Because, you were, yes, yeah, okay.

**JJ:** ...where we were.

**JE:** They got you on *Ted Mack's Amateur Hour*? And what do you remember from that?

**JJ:** Well, I remember they had a big grand piano. It was very sterile, very sterile environment. I had to do a little audition and that's what was sterile. And I remember being kind of scared.

My mom talked to me quite a bit before we did that, but, you know, I could play it, so I did it. And then we did the TV. That was fun, yeah, I enjoyed it.

**JE:** Did you get a lot of attention, I mean, this went nationwide, *Ted Mack's Amateur Hour*?

**JJ:** Yeah, you know, that part I don't remember that much because it was a long time ago. But it was my first TV appearance.

**JE:** Right, right.

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** And a lot of those people on *Ted Mack's*, they went on to greater things.

**JJ:** Yeah, well, I was only—

**JE:** They were discovered, but you were only four.

**JJ:** ...only four and a half.

**JE:** Your maternal grandfather again, he was quite a musician, a little bit about him, tell us about him.

**JJ:** He was, yeah. Well, he was a champion fiddle player and he knew all those old-time fiddle tunes. When the folks were divorced, at that time they were in Idaho. Grandmother and Granddaddy moved from Colorado, where they had no control over the water. You know, they were wheat farmers and they'd gone through the Dust Bowl. So they moved to Idaho. Granddaddy wanted irrigation. And they had forty acres of fruit trees, apples and prunes. And it's still in the family.

So we moved from New York City to Fruitland, Idaho, to be with my grandparents. Granddaddy was so much fun. They loved each other so much, my grandmother and granddaddy. They were the most beautiful couple. I don't remember ever an argument with my grandmother and granddaddy. They were just happy people. They would take care of the land, the trees, whatever. Granddaddy had a shop, he made high chairs and chairs and rocking chairs. You know, he was very creative. He was an inventor, really. I could go on and on about some of those things.

But then in the evening, they would come in and have dinner. Grandma was a great cook. They had a big, oh, bigger than this room, this is a fairly large kitchen, but they had a big kitchen, linoleum floor. And the piano, the grand piano, was right on the other side of the doorway in the living room. So we played music. Granddaddy in that big kitchen, you know, he sang, he wrote songs. I've got a lot of his songs I need to get published eventually. Folk tunes, he was kind of a Woody Guthrie type.

**JE:** And what was his name?

**JJ:** Frank Neville Sprague, Frank N. Sprague, Frank Sprague. He taught me all those old-timey fiddle tunes and the dances. I learned the Schottisch and the Waltz and the Polka. We had so much fun! It was just so much fun.

And then during the day, of course, I was playing all my classical and learning all the classical. I would play early on Seitz Pupil's concerto or a movement of the Mozart and get polite response, you know, from my audience.

Then I'd play one of Granddaddy's fiddle tunes for an encore. Just brought the house down. I think it was the contrast. So I still use that in reverse. And people are amazed, you know, you're playing all this country music, and then you play a little "Flight of the Bumble Bee," or Csárdás, or something like that. Going, "Wow!"

**JE:** Wow, right.

**JJ:** It's that surprise that you can do both. I learned that early on.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** Still using that today.

**JE:** How old were you when your parents divorced?

**JJ:** Seven, or almost seven. I was second grade when I came to Fruitland. I'd had everything in New York City, advanced classes, or whatever. So they put me up a grade. They put me up a grade and that's why everybody thinks I'm a year older. That's why Wikipedia screwed up.

**JE:** Okay, all right.

**JJ:** Because I skipped a year, and I was so grateful for that. I had an extra year of life.

**JE:** E—even though your parents were divorced, did your father maintain an interest in you?

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** Over the years?

**JJ:** He came out and kidnapped me, took me back to New York. Yeah, that was pretty traumatic.

**JE:** How old were you then?

**JJ:** Well, that was probably within the first year when we moved out there.

**JE:** He took you?

**JJ:** Well, he came to the school. He did not come to the house, he came to the school. It was my dad. I said, "Oh, hi, Dad! My gosh!" I didn't really understand. There was not a lot of,

you know, my mom never dissed my dad, she never spoke ill of him. She wanted me to know I came from good roots.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** She would always talk about how smart the family was and Granddaddy is president of these colleges, et cetera. But I knew, because I had experienced their arguments—it was mostly over me, when we were in New York. If I wasn't just right, he'd spank me, and if I cried too much, he'd stick me in the closet until I stopped crying. Or things like that, that Mother, it made her really worried.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** Anyway, very idyllic when we came back to Idaho. But when I saw my dad, I just thought, *Oh, my dad's here.*

He said, "Well, hop in the car," and I thought we were going to see Mom.

And then I realized, *This isn't the road.* We were going and driving and I said, "Where are we going?"

And he said, "We're going to Boise and we're going to fly back to New York."

And, oh, I was shocked, I was shocked. I said, "We're not going to go see Mom and Grandmother and Granddaddy?"

"No, we're going to go to New York." So he took me to New York, and at that time, he was teaching in Irvington, New York, teaching music. Took me to Irvington, New York, and put me in school there.

And the battle began, because, of course, my mother didn't like that, my grandparents didn't like that. So they came back to New York, finally. I don't know how long I was there but I remember crying every night. I missed my mom and I remember I'd cry myself to sleep saying the Lord's Prayer. I think that's where a lot of my faith came to me because it saved me. I was so distraught.

So one day, Mom came to my school and took me out of school. She had a lawyer and Granddaddy was there and we went to White Plains to this restaurant, Tappan Zee.

I guess the teacher probably called my dad. So we're talking, you know, the lawyer and granddad and my mom and me, at this nice restaurant. Granddaddy had said, "If Jake comes you're just going to have to disappear."

So he did come and Granddaddy was a fan of the old wrestling, they had wrestling on TV and it was a big deal back then. Anyway, my vision in my memory was Granddaddy, he went to the front and got my dad in a headlock. And Mother took me down the hill. There was a beautiful view down the hill. There was a house down there, that's where we went. We knocked on the door and that's where we went.

The lawyer said, "I'll handle your dad."



So Mom and I just disappeared and Granddaddy held my dad until the lawyer and things settled down a bit. It was a legal thing from then. And Mom had custody. But Dad didn't know that the divorce had actually, I don't know that it had gone through but it was in place, legally, when he took me back to New York. So it was actually legally a kidnapping.

So Mom got custody of me and we saw my dad in the summers, three or four years, and I was about twelve, I guess, when he got married. And that changed things a little bit, you know, he wasn't quite so needy to have us around.

So we didn't have a lot of contact through quite a few years. But when I got married and had my first child, I wanted to see him and, you know, renew our closeness. He was a collector of fine violins. You know, there was a lot of music there, and, yeah, we were okay.

He never forgave my mom but he was okay with me.

**JE:** How long did he live?

**JJ:** It was about four years ago when we lost my dad. I think he was about eighty-nine, something like that, I'm not positive about that.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative). So he continued with a musical career himself?

**JJ:** Yeah, he actually was teaching in the Los Angeles area. And he was in several orchestras, I think, but he was primarily a teacher. He had some really good method books. Gave me all those, yeah, he was quite a guy. Very handsome, very athletic, played tennis a lot. He loved the Dodgers, Brooklyn Dodgers, originally, and then they were Los Angeles-based, so he said, "Yeah, my team followed." And he loved the water, you know, so from New York to LA.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** Bought a home in Malibu and he did very, very well.

## Chapter 04 - 10:42

### Classical Study

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**John Erling:** So you lived in Idaho then.

**Jana Jae:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** That was kind of interesting too because, I believe, that was not far from the old-timers' fiddler contest.

**JJ:** Absolutely. Oh, my gosh, I remember that so well in its early stages. And I'm judging this year.

**JE:** Oh?

**JJ:** They just invited me to judge and I think it's like their sixtieth year. Granddaddy was in that contest and I was too, eventually. It was originally square dancers. They had the fiddle playing just for entertainment while the dancers rested a little bit. Everybody loved the fiddling so much that that got bigger and bigger and bigger and finally took over.

**JE:** You even won the Ladies' National Championship several times.

**JJ:** Absolutely.

**JE:** As a young girl.

**JJ:** Well, I was more adult then, I think.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** I'm not very good at years, John. I'm not, I mean, I'll be as close as I can, but like I don't know how old I was.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** Was I married? I think maybe I was.

**JE:** You played by ear, didn't you?

**JJ:** Yes, with Granddaddy, the fiddle tunes were not written out, so I learned all those fiddle tunes by ear.

And then when Mom finally remarried, Daddy Joe was a fabulous improvisational guitarist, fiddle player, banjo, but primarily guitarist. He played every note of Chet Atkins, you know, he'd get an album of Chet's and learn every single note. If you wanted to play the blues or rock or whatever, a boogie, whatever, I mean, he would go on and on and on and on and on and on, very creative. And I learned my show fiddling from him, my double shuffle "Orange Blossom Special", black mountain rag type of double shuffle fiddle playing from him.

**JE:** You had to be a musician, didn't you? I mean, everybody around is music, music, music.

**JJ:** Well—

**JE:** If you didn't want to be that would have been awful.

**JJ:** It was like learning a language.

**JE:** Yeah, right.

**JJ:** It was just a part of my life and I'll tell you, I don't know what I would do if I couldn't play now. I'm so grateful this little accident I had, slip and fall, if I couldn't play for some reason, I'd have to have some counseling, because that's me.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** I just love music.

**JE:** Let's take you back then to your education. Well, you referred to elementary. Where did you go to high school?

**JJ:** At that time, Mom had married Daddy Joe, so we moved to Twin Falls, Idaho.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** That was an awakening too because Fruitland was too small, it didn't have an orchestra. I played clarinet for a little bit, but I never did like it that much. I already could play a lot of violin and fiddle, so I enjoyed that.

**JE:** But they had an orchestra, I suppose.

**JJ:** Yes, they had an orchestra. Richard Smith was the conductor. I was kind of terrified, I thought I'd have to audition. I didn't know what to expect. It was ninth grade, we moved in the summer, but I was going to be a ninth-grader. So I did kind of audition and I got first chair. Concert mistress of that orchestra.

Then Mr. Smith asked me to do solo with the orchestra. So I did. That was quite an awakening also. Plus Mr. Smith said, "Well, you need to apply for this scholarship to Interlochen and you need to apply for this scholarship to the International String Congress." So he was quite a mentor, he kept pushing me gently.

Our orchestra was really good, you know, number one ratings. And we went to All-State and All-Northwest. There were several of us that went to All-State and several of us that were chosen to go to All-Northwest. But those orchestra experiences were marvelous.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** I don't play in an orchestra now but I solo with orchestras and I love that. And I play chamber music.

**JE:** So in the '50s, later '50s, you were in high school.

**JJ:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Your friends and all, listening to the radio, what kind of music were you guys listening to? Elvis had come along at that point?

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** So was Elvis big or did you—

**JJ:** Yeah, we did—

**JE:** ...even acknowledge other music?

**JJ:** Oh, yeah, I love to dance. See, I graduated from high school in 1960. We did the twist.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And the swing dances that they do now. So it was kind of '50s rock.

**JE:** Did you listen to country music?

**JJ:** Um, some, but not a whole lot. I was more folk, the traditional fiddle music and all that. And the rock and roll that my peers, you know, the early rock and roll. I'm trying to think who we liked. We loved the Beatles too, which was just a little bit later. Elvis, yeah, he was a phenomenon. I think I liked all music, really.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** Country was there also but we were in Idaho. We didn't really turn on the radio and listen to the "Grand Ole Opry."

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** And I didn't really have an image in my mind of the music business. I was not exposed to Nashville and all that.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** I was more just learning to play and loving to play all kinds of music. But I didn't play all kinds of music. We played a little bit of jazz. Daddy Joe was great at playing all the standards, any standard you can name, Deep Purple, you know, I mean, he played it all.

Oh, and my mom, they had a radio show and they did all sorts of music.

**JE:** College, where did you go to college?

**JJ:** Went to college in Colorado, Colorado Women's College, which is now Denver University. Wherever I got the best scholarship is where I went.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** And then I went to Vienna for a year, Vienna Academy of Music, and that was great. So I had all this classical study, I mean, Interlochen, that one summer, was phenomenal. That was my sophomore year—no, my sophomore year was Ann Jones and Her Western Sweethearts.

**JE:** Sophomore year in college.

**JJ:** No, in high school.

**JE:** In high school.

**JJ:** High school. My mom took me down to Jackpot, Nevada, which Daddy Joe was playing there in Jackpot, Nevada, at the casino. And Ann Jones and Her Western Sweethearts were performing there.

So Mom took me down there and said, "Gosh, you've got to meet these girls. And they've got to meet you."

And I said, "Mom, what am I going to do with these—they were traveling, they're a traveling band?" So I kind of didn't want to do that, you know, I didn't know why she was taking me down there. I did play with them, a couple of specialty numbers, and that was fun, on stage.

But then she said, "Well, you know, you should travel with them."

I didn't want to do that. I was in high school doing all this stuff.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And friends. So pretty soon we made a trip to Portland. That happened to be the base for Ann Jones and Her Western Sweethearts.

**JE:** Oh.

**JJ:** We spent a few days with them. And guess what happened with me?

**JE:** What?

**JJ:** I went out on the road.

**JE:** In high school?

**JJ:** I was fourteen. Went out on the road. See, I graduated from high school when I was sixteen, so I was fourteen, yeah.

**JE:** In the summertime?

**JJ:** Yeah, in the summer.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** We played NCO clubs all over the South. We made a big, big, big loop through the South, I remember that because that was eye-opening. There was a lot of colored bathrooms, things that I had never experienced. Swimming pools were segregated, restaurants were segregated. I just couldn't believe it because that didn't exist in Idaho.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** They would not let me hang out in the clubs. I would go to the stage and play. And I was very mature for my age. I looked mature and looked older than I was. And we had outfits on the bus. We'd, "Yeah, we're going to wear the red outfits tonight, or the blue." And they had fringes, western outfits.

So they hired me to play fiddle, but then their bass player left, so she said, "Well, you're going to have to play bass."

And I said, "Okay."

Then the drummer, there was a change of drummer, so I played drums. I never did play guitar but I played bass and drums both, and when I did that I did fiddle specialty numbers. But that was my training ground for present day, without my realizing it. I knew how to be on the road, we had a blast, they were a nice family.

Ann Jones' husband, Huey, drove the bus. The girls were real nice. It was a good experience all the way.

Blanche was a little bit older. I'm still in touch with Blanche. Steel guitar player, she was twenty-one and I was fourteen, so she kind of took care of me and made sure I'd get in to the stage and out. She was kind of Ann's right hand. She would play the steel guitar and dance. Da-da-da-da-ta, da-da-da-da-ta, so cute, tall, slender, nice long blonde hair and she was so nice. She and her husband live in Arizona now, but we're still in touch.

**JE:** Wow.

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** You were just having fun, weren't you, all this time?

**JJ:** Just had a blast but I didn't want to do it for over a summer. I had to leave, I wanted to go back to school and my friends and all that.

**JE:** Sure.

**JJ:** They were upset, Ann Jones was upset. But I had to do it, so I did.

**JE:** You had to go back to school, right?

**JJ:** Oh, I wanted to.

**JE:** Exactly.

**JJ:** They said, "Well, you can take correspondence courses."

**JE:** Oh.

**JJ:** My mom even said, “You could do this.”

I, no, I wanted—

**JE:** Don’t you think you knew the right thing to do?

**JJ:** I had to go back to school, yeah.

**JE:** Yeah. By the way, we should say, when you graduated from college you graduated magna cum laude with a degree in music.

**JJ:** That’s right.

**JE:** You could also play but you were also pretty darn smart.

**JJ:** I always liked school. I have memories early on of Granddaddy when we moved from New York to Idaho. The only thing I didn’t have were some of the, like, division facts, multiplication facts. So Granddaddy would be watching TV or something and during an ad he’d drill me on those facts and made it fun.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** So I loved learning. It was always easy and I was good at it so I never thought of it as work. I just enjoyed it. I enjoy learning, to this day.

## Chapter 05 - 4:50

### Married

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**John Erling:** You wouldn’t admit to your age but your height—is it true you’re five three and a half?

**Jana Jae:** That’s right, yeah. I think I still have that half. [both laughing]

**JE:** All right, so out of college, what happens to you out of college?

**JJ:** I got married.

**JE:** When did you get married?

**JJ:** Right out of college.

**JE:** Right out of college?

**JJ:** ’Sixty-four, yeah.

**JE:** Who did you marry?

**JJ:** Sidney Lee Greif, G-r-e-i-f, a wonderful family, twelve kids, six boys, six girls. I had met Sid’s sister Sarah at Girls’ State, we were good friends. They had a music store, they still do. And Mother worked for Greif’s Music Center. She taught lessons and worked there.

**JE:** So—

**JJ:** So we had a little relationship with the Greif’s.

**JE:** Sidney was musical, obviously.

**JJ:** Sort of, they were all singers, fabulous singers. They sang in harmony, they still do, they're just marvelous singers. Sid played guitar and he was pretty good, he was pretty good, but he wasn't diligent about it, you know, he wasn't a trained guitarist or anything.

**JE:** All right.

**JJ:** He just did it because he enjoyed it.

**JE:** So how old would you have been when you were married?

**JJ:** It was 1964.

**JE:** Not—

**JJ:** I don't think of ages but that's what I was.

**JE:** Nineteen sixty-four?

**JJ:** Let's figure it out later, I don't want to think about that.

**JE:** Okay, well, you don't want to think about the age, right. And he was your age or—

**JJ:** He was a little older, yeah.

**JE:** Did you have children from that marriage?

**JJ:** Yes, two wonderful children.

**JE:** And who are they?

**JJ:** A boy and a girl. Matthew Nathan Greif, he's now a member of the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. He always has been very musical and very studious and very, what's the word? He would just apply himself. He was very structured in his approach to things, like, if he had homework, he would do that homework letter perfect. When I would leave to go on the road, I had both of the kids practice an hour a day, half an hour on violin, half hour on piano. And then I gave them a lesson when I came home. But I wasn't as strict as my dad. We had fun with it. He was supposed to do that half an hour on violin, half hour on piano, he would do that, I could be sure.

**JE:** And then a daughter?

**JJ:** My daughter is Sydney, S-y-d-n-i, Sydney Catherine Greif.

**JE:** And is she musical too?

**JJ:** She's a marvelous singer, marvelous singer. But she was the opposite personality, she was always ready to have fun. "Yeah, Mom, let's go to the mall. Yeah, let's go do this." She wasn't the studious—didn't have the regimented approach or the disciplined approach that my son had.

**JE:** So did music become her way of life?

**JJ:** She still sings and her daughter, Sandra, is a vocal major and she has a better voice than any of us.

**JE:** Wow.

**JJ:** She's done a great voice.

**JE:** So how many grandchildren do you have?

**JJ:** I have four, two from my son and two from my daughter.

**JE:** And they're all musical, I suppose?

**JJ:** They're all pretty musical, yeah.

**JE:** Wow. I mean, it's just almost laughable to hear all this. [both laughing]

**JJ:** We—

**JE:** It comes drifting down to everybody.

**JJ:** I know. We had five generations on stage. It's great.

**JE:** It's wonderful, absolutely, it's wonderful.

**JJ:** It has been wonderful.

**JE:** How long were you married to Sidney?

**JJ:** Gosh, you ask these hard questions. I think about nine years, maybe.

**JE:** And—

**JJ:** Oh, yeah, it was nine years.

**JE:** And you were living in Idaho all this time with your family?

**JJ:** Well, we were living in Idaho and teaching. He was teaching Spanish and History in high school. And I was teaching fifth grade for a year. And then we moved to California, Redding, California.

**JE:** Why?

**JJ:** Just jobs.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** He got a good job in Redding and we moved to California. I had already had my son. We loved Redding, I loved Redding. I started a string program there that is still ongoing, that's one of my biggest joys, to see how that has exploded. I feel like I'm a good catalyst. I love it so much that it pleases me to see people catch fiddle fever.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** Or learn how to play enough so that they really enjoy it. Whatever style they want to do. But to see them catch fire, because music has been such a blessing in my life.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** So when I see people catch fire, it just thrills me to death. And I'm still teaching. You know, I have a class at NTC in Claremore that I'm just finishing up, six weeks, Monday evenings, and I can squeeze that in in the spring and the fall.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** I was on their board and they said, "Well, would you just teach one class to help us get this started?"

And I said, "Sure." And this is the ninth class.

**JE:** Umm (thoughtful sound).

**JJ:** Because we have a blast.

**JE:** Sure.

**JJ:** And we enjoy it.



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**Chapter 06 - 7:45****Buck Owens**

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**John Erling:** After you were divorced—

**Jana Jae:** Yes?

**JE:** Then your way of life changed, affected your musical career too.

**JJ:** Yes, yeah.

**JE:** Did you go back to performing on stage?

**JJ:** Well, I was always performing, you know, I always performed, did a lot of performing all the time and I was always in fiddle contests. I mean, that was always there.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** But, yeah, when I was teaching the string program in Redding, I had seven schools and the junior high and the college classes. So I was spread out. And my vision of what was going to happen in the future was all these little beginning violins, which I loved but, you know, it was going to be the same thing year after year, starting these little kids out. Hah (personal sound) and I almost got burned out.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And I was playing in a bluegrass band, French Gulch Hotel outside of Redding. Oh, my gosh, we packed them in. It was a long skinny room. They had a big long bar, and above this bar was a logging saw, a big long logging saw hooked up there. And we packed them in. And was an old hotel, a very historic hotel, with bluegrass, and people would start stomping and clapping and so forth, and that logging saw, I just knew that saw was going to fall down. It would just start vibrating and the floor was and the room was vi—it was such a high. We were good, man, we just packed them in and we had so much fun.

So that was kind of my impetus, I thought, *Man, I need to see what's possible*. So I decided I'd sort of explore and we were playing in the summer. Mom had the kids. The bluegrass band was playing in Sacramento, Tia Maria's, and just had fun. So I would explore. I talked to everybody.

We made a trip to Reno and I met some of the people. I always went right to the top, whoever I could find who was in charge. I talked to them about performing in the casinos or whatever and talked to the Jack Imel, Lawrence Welk.

Before Tia Maria's, just before, when it was still the school year, Buck Owens came to Redding and did two shows. The guy at the college said, "Jana, you've got to meet him and he's got to meet you."

And I'm, "Okay."

So he set that up, the guy at the college, and in between the two shows, I went and met Buck. He said, "Well, they tell me you can play the fiddle."

And I said, "Well, I enjoy it."

He said, "Well, can you play 'Orange Blossom' special?"

I said, "Sure."

He said, "Would you play a little bit?"

So I played a little bit.

And he said, "Hey, would you do that on stage, second show?"

And I said, "Sure."

So Don Rich and I played "Orange Blossom Special" together and brought the house down.

**JE:** And it started?

**JJ:** Well, that was my connection. Oh, I was asking Jack, Buck's manager, to book our bluegrass band, because our bluegrass band was hot, we were really good. It was going really well. I kept thinking, *Oh, we need to be booked.* I mean, that's why we talked to Reno and all these places was to book the bluegrass band.

And he said, "Just stay in touch, call me, we'll book them, we'll get it done."

So I talked to him and one day he called me, and he said, "I want you to come to Bakersfield."

And I said, "Oh? You mean the band?" I was real confused what he meant.

And he said, "No, I want you to come to Bakersfield."

And I said, "Oh, we're playing at Tia Maria's five nights a week." And I said, "I can't do that."

And he said, "Well, you need to do it."

I said, "Well, why would I be coming? Is this just about booking?" I was still confused and I didn't want to just go.

He said, "No, I want you to audition for Buck."

In between the time I met Buck until the Tia Maria's deal and when Jack called, Don Rich had been killed in a motorcycle accident.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** So they were looking for something different. That was Jack's idea.

**JE:** And Jack is who?

**JJ:** Jack McFadden was Buck Owens manager.

**JE:** Okay. That was Buck Owens and the Buckaroos, wasn't it?

**JJ:** Yes.

**JE:** So we're talking about 1974, when Don Rich died. Then you were asked to replace him. Obviously then, you're the first female to become part of that band.

**JJ:** Yeah. That was quite an experience, that audition. I stayed in that motel. Jack said, "Don't leave the room, don't leave the room."

I said, "Well, can I just go shop?" I mean, I didn't have anything, I just had brought for a day trip. And here the guys are, I left them, high and dry at Tia Maria's. I knew they

could do it without me but all of our things were interwoven. So day after day and order room service. Fortunately, because he told me I was auditioning for Buck, I had recorded all of Buck's songs, all of Buck's songs. Took my little Webcor recorder, reel to reel, to Bakersfield because I didn't know a lot of those songs. I knew some of them but I didn't know a lot of those songs. So I was practicing, learning all those songs and all the fiddle licks.

I'd say, "Well, did you hear from Buck? You know, the guys really are antsy for me to get back."

"No, just stay there, he'll be ready."

So this went on every day. Jack would call, talk to me, "Stay in the room, do not leave," for a week. And I was ready to give up, I was ready to just, on my own, get a taxi, fly back to Sacramento. The last day, I said, "Jack, I'm going to have to leave."

He said, "Well, just hang tight." So anyway, he called this one morning when I was completely ready to leave, and he said, "Buck's ready to hear you. I'll be there in ten minutes. Pack up all your stuff, you're checking out."

And here for a week I'd been living in this room, you know. And my music all spread out. And Jack brought me a few things, you know, I needed manuscript paper and I needed this, that, and the other thing. I said, "You know, I can't be ready in ten minutes."

He said, "Get ready, I'll be there in ten minutes."

I flew into action and got myself somehow presentable.

**JE:** Why did it take a whole week in a hotel room before you—

**JJ:** Because Buck wasn't ready to hear me. I don't think he was probably for the idea. I don't know what was going on in his mind.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** But he was just not ready to hear me. So Jack was insistent that I wait until Buck was ready to hear me.

So then we went to the studio. The Buckaroos were all there, they were all set up in the studio. It was about four hours auditioning, "Can you play this? Can you play it? Well, play something classical. Well, play a show tune. Well, play 'Listen to the Mockingbird.' Do you now that one?"

"Yeah."

"Do you know 'Heartaches' by the note?"

"Yeah." I mean, it just went on and on and on.

Then Buck left the room. Jack came in a few seconds later and he said, "Okay, get your stuff together, we're going."

I thought I was going to airport to go back to Sacramento. No, we were going to Las Vegas, and that was it.

**JE:** Wow.

**JJ:** That was it, it was fast. It was fast.

**JE:** At—and you were in the band?

**JJ:** Yeah, I was in the band. I wasn't under contract yet but I was in the band. Yeah.

**JE:** You're in your thirties by the time this happens.

**JJ:** I don't know, John, you have to figure that part out.

**JE:** But you—yeah, well, this was all happening the latter part of the '70s.

**JJ:** Seems like it was '74, but I'm not positive.

**JE:** Okay. '74, you're in your early thirties.

## Chapter 07 - 3:34

### Finances

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**John Erling:** Money-wise, this must have been the most money that you ever earned.

**Jana Jae:** That's what I thought it was going to be.

**JE:** What happened?

**JJ:** Uh-huh (a kind of laugh). Well, when they offered me a contract we'd been doing shows maybe for a couple of weeks. The very first show, Buck just pointed at me, I was supposed to do the kickoff for "Diggy Liggy Lyle." I didn't really realize it was me. Jerry Wiggins saved the day, he was the drummer and he counted it off, you know, and then I did the kickoff. But it was so fast, I mean, there wasn't any time, there weren't introductions. The show was a fast-paced show so I was hanging on. But I could do it because I knew how to play, thank God.

So anyway, the contract, Jack offered me a contract. Well, they had asked me to come to Lawrence Welk. Lawrence Welk wanted to put me on. Jack Imel had a date for Lawrence Welk. I think that got him nervous that I was gonna maybe going to go to Lawrence Welk.

So Jack had a contract for me. He said, "I need to talk to ya." And it was less than I was earning teaching. I was just shocked at the amount.

I said, "Jack, there's no way. I can't take care of my kids on this amount of money."

And he said, "Well, that's what all the Buckaroos earn, that's what it is. But Buck has never let anybody starve."

I said, "There's just no way I can do that. I mean, how could I do that?"

And he said, "Well, we'll work something out but you need an organization behind you."

And I cried, I cried and cried because I thought it was going to be a big-time thing.

We drove out by Hoover Dam, he just went on a drive and talked to me and talked to me and I just was heartbroken.

I talked to a couple of people, I think the publicist Sandy, Sandy Brokow, maybe. They all said, “You know you need an organization behind you and this is a big organization, successful, they won’t let you starve.”

So I finally signed the contract.

**JE:** With a big organization, like what? What do you mean?

**JJ:** Well, Buck Owens’ organization. That was their selling point to me. “You’re part of a big organization, they’re not going to let you starve.” That it was an ongoing successful organization.

**JE:** Right. But your pay still wasn’t that much.

**JJ:** Um-um (negative).

**JE:** You think, we talk about gender equality today, do you think they were treating you differently because you’re female?

**JJ:** Um, well, Jack said all the Buckaroos were earning that. And, you know, money has never been my goal. Money has never been primary in my thought, it’s always been the music. But you’ve got to live, you know, you’ve got to take care of your kids. So I was sort of trapped.

But what they did, they provided a house for me. They got a house, 2520 Cameo Court.

**JE:** Where?

**JJ:** In Bakersfield. It was a nice house, so that made the difference, because I was able to have my children—I had to have my kids there. You know, they were with my folks while we were at Tia Maria’s that summer. But, of course, I had to have my children with me. I mean, I had to have that. So they provided the house and the salary. It was still not a whole lot but it was doable.

**JE:** Were you enjoying and playing in the groups?

**JJ:** Oh, yeah, I loved it, I loved it. It was just financial part that was such a shock. I thought, *How can I do this?*

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** But I loved the music, oh, yeah, it was great.

## Chapter 08 - 9:00

### Blue Violin

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**John Erling:** In here somewhere, you started playing a blue violin.

**Jana Jae:** Hmm (thoughtful sound), yeah.

**JE:** How did that come about?

**JJ:** Well, there was *Hee Haw* that happened very soon after Buck hired me. Went to *Hee Haw*. He said, “I want you to play this blue electric Barcus Berry fiddle.”

And I was horrified. I was horrified because I was a purest, you know, and that was my good Italian violin that I loved, made in 1750, in Milan, Italy, real close to the Strads, you know. That's where the Strads were made, in Cremona, which is about twenty miles from Milan.

**JE:** When you say Strads you mean Stradivarius.

**JJ:** Yes.

**JE:** The Strads were made there, right?

**JJ:** So that's my Strad, you know, my—

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** I envision it made of the same trees, the same time, the same varnish. The closest I'll ever get to a Strad, probably.

**JE:** So then this blue violin came in.

**JJ:** Oh, my gosh, I was horrified. I thought, *A blue violin?* At that time, there were no blue violins on stage. It was a departure, and Buck always was a step ahead, that's why he was so successful. You know, he had drums and all early on.

So I did play the blue violin, and by gosh, *Hee Haw* was quite an experience because people started to recognize me in airports and everywhere. Because *Hee Haw* was something everybody watched, you didn't have a hundred channels like we do now.

**JE:** No.

**JJ:** It was just every Saturday night everybody would watch *Hee Haw*.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** So it was a big, big deal and they didn't use my name on *Hee Haw*, but they'd write to "the girl with the blue violin," "the girl with the blue fiddle," "the girl with the blue violin." "Are you the one with that blue violin?"

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** So it became sort of a trademark and still is.

**JE:** Was that a Strad, the blue violin?

**JJ:** No. That was a Barcus Berry electric violin. But it was a good violin. I'm still playing it.

**JE:** You know, when we intertwine the two names, fiddle and violin, explain that.

**JJ:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** You're talking about a violin, but the fiddle or fiddling around is your style of play. Is that true?

**JJ:** You got it. "What's the difference between the violin and the fiddle?" I get that more than any other question.

**JE:** Yeah, and so let you explain it. I tried to but you—

**JJ:** Well, you did explain it, that was very good. People go through all this. "It's the strings. It's the way the bridge is shaped. It's the bow, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera." It's not any of those, it's just the style. But I would never play my blue electric violin in chamber music, you know.

- JE:** Right.
- JJ:** Or in an orchestra. I would solo with an orchestra with it.
- JE:** You mentioned Lawrence Welk. Did you ever meet him, be around him at all?
- JJ:** No, I just met Jack Imel, and I can't remember how Jack Imel was my contact, but he was the one who wanted me to come audition, set it up for me to audition.
- JE:** And he was Lawrence Welk's manager, was he?
- JJ:** No, he played—what did Jack play on the show? You know, I can't even remember.
- JE:** I forgot too, because I watched *Lawrence Welk* and I watched *Hee Haw*.
- JJ:** Yeah.
- JE:** Anyway, that put an end to *Lawrence Welk* because of *Hee Haw*.
- JJ:** Yeah, that kind—
- JE:** And it turned out to be a good thing.
- JJ:** It—
- JE:** It could have gone either way, it might have—
- JJ:** It could have gone either way and I probably would have been happy either way.
- JE:** Right.
- JJ:** But for me, Buck's deal was very natural. You know, I'd been Ann Jones and Her Western Sweethearts.
- JE:** Yeah.
- JJ:** I loved the music. I loved his showmanship. He got audiences in the palm of his hand. He got me standing ovations, at least two every show. Because he'd look at me, you know, on stage, look at the audience, look at the audience and look at me like, *A girl is doing this?* And he knew how to work the audience and how to get them on my side. It was just like magic. We had a real chemistry on stage, we were good. Yeah, I was good for his show and I was learning how to be a performer.
- JE:** Yeah.
- JJ:** A stage performer.
- JE:** You had chemistry on stage.
- JJ:** Yes we did.
- JE:** And then that turned into chemistry off stage.
- JJ:** [laughing] I knew you'd bring that up eventually.
- JE:** Right.
- JJ:** Well, he was a single man. It was about a year in. Yeah, we had a blast and he was so much fun. And yes, it did turn into a romantic relation. We really did fall in love.
- JE:** And you were married.
- JJ:** We did get married, yes.
- JE:** How long were you married?

**JJ:** Well, longer than they said in the tabloids. But we're actually married a little over a year, a year and something or other, but it was kind of a firestorm from the beginning because his sister thought I was going to take over. I mean, we had this wonderful thing going musically and on stage.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** Dorothy was in charge of the whole, you know, kept Buck sort of from spending too much. She was the one who kept things going, business-wise. So she thought it was going to be disaster. No pre-nup, and you know, that wasn't important to me.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** That really was not important to me, but nobody knows your heart. So she probably thought of me as something different than I was.

**JE:** Trying to move in and control things, right?

**JJ:** Yes. And I wasn't that at all.

**JE:** Right. Then you were divorced. Did you get remarried and divorced again? Did it go back and forth?

**JJ:** We did go back and forth. We didn't actually do the legal marriage thing but it did go back and forth for a while. It was pretty wild there for a while, it was a wild ride. Billboards saying, "Jana Jae Owens, I love you." Billboards all over California, all over LA. "I love you Matt and Katie, please come home."

So I did go back and move into the ranch. It went back and forth, it was a yo-yo, it was a seesaw at times for a while.

**JE:** So you had this little firestorm off stage—

**JJ:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**JE:** But then you go back on stage and play?

**JJ:** Well, after we got married, yeah, we did some shows, but there was such a lot going on in the personal department I don't even remember how we worked that out. We did shows.

I loved Buck and I know Buck loved me, I mean, that was how it was. And we were just so good together, you know

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** It was a really, really good relationship. So like any other relationship that's kind of pulling apart for whatever reason—

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**JJ:** ...you have times that it works and you think, *We're going to work this out*. And then, *Oh, wow, it's just not working*. And if somebody didn't want me to be around, I didn't want to be around.

**JE:** Right.



**JJ:** So if there was tension there in the family or whatever with Dorothy or whatever the problems were, I just was ready to leave. Because I didn't want to push it, I didn't want to force it, I didn't want to go through a lot of agony, and I didn't want to fight people. I'd been probably too, too nice. I could have probably fought a little bit and hung on and been there still but I don't think that was right for me.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** I think right for me was going on and just living my life.

**JE:** So this tension, when you were on *Hee Haw*, and, of course, Buck Owens was Mr. Personality along with Roy Clark.

**JJ:** Well, I guess we did the *Hee Haw* taping. I don't remember any tension on *Hee Haw* at all.

**JE:** Were you married then?

**JJ:** Yeah, for some of it. And then I still did *Hee Haw*.

**JE:** After him?

**JJ:** Yeah, a little bit. It was—

**JE:** He stayed with *Hee Haw*, didn't he?

**JJ:** Well, that was kind of when he had asked for another contract, a lot more money and so forth. I think there was still some taping but this was kind of the very end. They did the *Hee Haw Honeys* after that and they started to restructure. But it was kind of toward the end of *Hee Haw*.

**JE:** You had big names: Chet Atkins—

**JJ:** Oh, yeah, well, Chet, I did a lot of shows with Chet. That was really after I left Buck. Because I was exploring Nashville and meeting people and so forth.

No, when I was with Buck, it was just Buck. I remember going out to listen to some music in Bakersfield earlier, early on, took my fiddle and sat in with the band or something. That was a no-no, I found out. If you're a Buckaroo, you don't do that.

**JE:** [laughing]

**JJ:** You know, it's very, very closed. That's why, for me, I love being around people and enjoying all sorts of different styles of music and that sort of thing. It might have been restrictive in years, many, many, many years to come, or a different type of lifestyle, which would have been fine. I could have done that and enjoyed that and enjoyed the music business with Buck. I'm sure I would have.

But when I talked to Sam Lovullo about it, and I said, "I don't exactly what to do here." And he said, "Well, you need to call Jim Halsey."

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**Chapter 09 - 6:05****Hee Haw**

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**Jana Jae:** So I called Jim and I called from Buck's ranch. You know, it was that time in flux. I called Jim and I said, "Well, I'm not sure exactly what's going to happen here but I wanted to talk to you about possibilities, maybe doing some shows or whatever.

He said, "Yeah, come to Tulsa. We'll put you on stage."

So I had a booking to come to Tulsa and play—he might have called it the Tulsa Opry, but it was some sort of a showcase thing.

So I met Jim. I think actually he had come to California and met me and talked to me. Because I remember being at my dad's in Malibu with Jim and talking to him about different possibilities.

So I came to Tulsa and played and he said, "You don't have to play long, just ten minutes, three or four songs, just knock me out.

So I did "Flight of the Bumblebee" and "Orange Blossom" and some pretty waltz with double stops all over it. I said, "So, did I do okay?"

He said, "Yeah, you knocked me out." So he said, "We want to book you."

Then I moved out of Buck's ranch to LA area. So they were booking me and flying me, like, back to Florida, back to LA, back to South Carolina, back to LA. And I was spending all this time away from my children.

And the whole time, Jim was saying, "Well, you know, you could move to Tulsa. You know, it's a mecca."

So I was kind of researching Tulsa and I had been in Tulsa. My roommate from International String Congress in Puerto Rico, she was from Tulsa. Her sister worked for Saides for years and years.

**John Erling:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**JJ:** So I had stayed with her in Tulsa on my way back home to Idaho. We went all over Tulsa for four or five days. And I loved it, I thought it was a great city. So I knew Tulsa in that way. And then I did more research about the music. And they had orchestras and opera and they had all this going on besides the country music.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** And Bob Wells. And I thought, *That would be good for my kids, and it's central, central.*

**JE:** Okay, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** *So I can travel.*

**JE:** Central of the United States?

**JJ:** Yeah. So my traveling, I wouldn't be away from my kids so long.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** And I thought, *Man, that sounds great!* So I moved to Tulsa.

**JE:** So this is about in the early '80s then, that you're doing that?

**JJ:** I'm glad you're getting those dates straight.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** I want a copy of this so I can get those dates. I'm going to write my autobiography. [laughs]  
That's my next project.

**JE:** Just a little bit more about *Hee Haw*. I don't know how many years that went on.

**JJ:** I think about roughly it's five years.

**JE:** Was it fun?

**JJ:** Oh, it was a blast.

**JE:** Was it? We watched it, it was so much fun to watch.

**JJ:** Oh, I loved it.

**JE:** So behind the scenes it had to be hilarious.

**JJ:** It was wonderful, and Gailard Sartain, you know, he'd always crack everybody up. He'd make some comment or make some funny noise or something.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And get us all laughing. But it was like a big extended family, you know, it was really fun. And there again, because I was working under Buck's auspices, it was kind of close for me. We would do Buck's thirteen shows, it was always thirteen shows, they did thirteen shows at once. So we'd go in for two weeks and we did all of Buck's thirteen songs and all of the cast, thirteen songs, and all of the cornfield thirteen times, and I'd do my solo stuff. So we were in and out of there in two weeks, with not a lot of time to socialize. But I loved everybody, they were all wonderful.

Junior Samples was for real and he and Gracie, you know, just characters. Oh, my gosh, he brought a big jug of whiskey one time, put it over his shoulder, like they do. I was so shocked. I mean, he was just the real character, he was from the hills. And all of those people were so great.

And Lulu, I loved Lulu, she was just always a hoot.

You know, we're doing a show in October with Misty Rowe, she was always fun. And Buck Trent, and me, in Bristow, Oklahoma. You'll have to come, John.

**JE:** Oh, that would be fun.

**JJ:** October 13th.

**JE:** Yes.

**JJ:** And we're going to do more. We did it in Greenville. But, you know, it's kind of like a big extended family that has gone on.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** I love staying in touch.

- JE:** Yeah.
- JJ:** I'm not in real good touch with a lot of them. But some of them.
- JE:** Okay. You're not consumed with the money, nor am I, but *Hee Haw* must have brought you some revenue that was pretty good for you.
- JJ:** All signed over to Buck.
- JE:** All turned over to Buck?
- JJ:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** And then he would pay—
- JJ:** Salary.
- JE:** ...salary. So he—
- JJ:** Every TV show we did, and so forth and so on. Now I'm getting tiny residuals but it's not a lot.
- JE:** From *Hee Haw* playing?
- JJ:** From *Hee Haw*, yeah. Yeah, that's how it was when I was under contract to Buck. We signed right there on the spot, signed a check that we'd get or a contract, signed it over to Buck. So he got everything.
- Well, you know, Buck had grown up really poor, really poor. He was clamoring to get to the top.
- I never had that feeling. I don't know, we were just okay. We just didn't think about money that much.
- JE:** Right, right.
- JJ:** But I always had what I needed. If I needed an outfit for stage, we just went and got it.
- JE:** Right.
- JJ:** But with Buck, he clamored, you know, he was dirt poor at the beginning, so he had a different mindset. And, boy, when he got it, he kept it. And that was his control, I mean, he felt in control.
- I've never had to feel that control. As long as I have enough to take care of what I really need, I'm okay. As long as I can play. [laughs] If I couldn't play, I'd be really upset. So I'm saying, enough for my needs, I'm fine.

## Chapter 10 - 4:30

### Death of Buck Owens

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**John Erling:** Buck died.

**Jana Jae:** Well, about a year, a couple of years maybe before he passed, he kept calling me. He

wanted me to come back, he wanted me to come back. He had the Crystal Palace going.

We did go back and do a couple shows.

**JE:** Come back to perform?

**JJ:** No, come back to him.

**JE:** Become a couple again?

**JJ:** Well, to come back and be with him, I don't know, I mean.

**JE:** And you were—

**JJ:** I couldn't do that.

**JE:** No.

**JJ:** I had already gone on with my life. I'd built my children, my whole foundation, it's all here in Oklahoma. Plus I found out my grandparents were here, it's like I've come full circle. And I'm supposed to be here and it feels right to be here. So I talked about—he'd call me and talk for hours. And I think he was worried about health. I think he felt like maybe he was mortal. I don't know if he wanted to make things right. We were sort of torn apart by other forces.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** But it was okay, I mean, if it wasn't quite right it was okay with me. So I never had a really bad feeling about that. He was pretty controlling when I was with him, but—

**JE:** But there still was that flame between the two of you?

**JJ:** Yeah, there was, yeah.

**JE:** And you never married again?

**JJ:** Oh, yeah, I did, yeah. But, you know, I cared about him, I mean, I cared about him.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** And I talked to him and I cared about his health. He just wanted support, I think.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** You know?

**JE:** And he felt comfortable with you.

**JJ:** Yeah, he did. So we had lots and lots and lots of phone conversations. And I went back a couple of times.

**JE:** He was then in California?

**JJ:** Yeah, he was always in Bakersfield. I went back and we played a couple of shows. Went back, some of my Walmart tours, stopped in and we played. And I think I've got a couple pictures with Buck and my band.

And then he wanted Matt, my son, to play for their Sunday brunch. We did it one time but it wasn't Matt's cup of tea to play for a brunch. He just, nah.

So there was always that pull to come back, but once I left, I really had left.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And just gone with my life. And that's what's comfortable to me. Still would do anything in the world for him, but, anyway, we don't have to go into all that. It was just, I want to

remember all the positives and I'm very thankful. I'm very, very grateful to Buck because he really made my career possible.

**JE:** Yeah. I don't know your marital status.

**JJ:** Single.

**JE:** You're single. But you married after Buck Owens?

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** And who did you marry?

**JJ:** Tony Solow, here in town.

**JE:** Tony Solow?

**JJ:** Do you know Tony?

**JE:** I just know the name.

**JJ:** Yeah, Solow's Glass Company downtown. And he worked for the *Tribune*, investigative reporter and all that. And he's still around my scene every day. My kids, he's very close to my kids. He actually lived with us, you know, for when the kids [laughing], I'm just sorry, I know your mouth is, it's jaw-dropping.

**JE:** Oh.

**JJ:** But anyway, Tony was a bright spot, you know, after all this trauma with Buck. He came to a couple of shows. And, oh, he installed this mirror behind my piano, that's how I really met him. I didn't have a lot of money when I was moving to Tulsa. So this big, whatever it cost for that huge wall-to-wall mirror behind the piano. I loved it though because I could see people if I were jamming. You know, I could be playing piano and I'd see whoever was behind. So I really wanted that big wall-to-wall mirror.

So I said, "Well, maybe we can trade out. I'll give you some fiddle lessons or something." Because he said he played fiddle. So that's how we really got to know each other. I gave him fiddle lessons for my [laughing] house construction project.

**JE:** So it ended in divorce, and so you're single again.

**JJ:** Yeah. Tony's kind of a bachelor. Even though we're still in touch all the time, and my kids think of him as their stepdad.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** Granddad, yes.

**JE:** Well, he got involved, didn't he?

**JJ:** Yeah.

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**Chapter 11 – 7:15**  
**Jana as a Solo Artist**

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**John Erling:** Performers, I'd throw them out to you. You've got some stories from Roy Clark, Ray Stevens—

**Jana Jae:** Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

**JE:** Oak Ridge Boys, Mel Tillis, Ricky Skaggs, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, all those people.

**JJ:** It goes on and on and on, I know.

**JE:** That you've been able to perform with.

**JJ:** I know, I need to write down all these stories about these wonderful people: Freddy Fender, you know, everybody that Jim Halsey booked, I played with. Doug Crenshaw, I mean, it goes on and on and on. You look at one of his rosters—Tammy Wynette, George Jones. That was a story, oh, my gosh.

**JE:** George Jones?

**JJ:** Yeah. We were booked into Johnny Ascuaga's Nugget. It was Tammy and George and me—I was their opening act. So we started out, first night was great. Tammy and George did great.

Next night, no George. "Well, they're icing him down in a bathtub, he may make it to the second show."

Third day, Tammy got ticked off with all this stuff, third or fourth day, and she left. She just left. That just left George and me [laughing] to finish the week. We did great! I loved it, I loved working with George. I loved working with Tammy too, they just couldn't, you know. If Buck and I had a little stormy, it wasn't anything like Tammy and George. I mean, that drinking thing made life pretty wild.

But he was so good and so nice. He was so nice to work with and so good and such a perfectionist, you know, about sound and everything. I loved working with him.

And, of course, they were marvelous together, but George and I did real well for the rest of the week, so that was kind of a wild week.

**JE:** That's nice to hear that when he wasn't drinking—

**JJ:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** ...and when he was sober, he was a great musician and paid attention to details.

**JJ:** He was wonderful.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** Wonderful. I loved that week.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** Yeah. [laughing]

**JE:** Your style of music, it blends several styles, is that true?

- JJ:** Yes, when I do my own show I like to put some variety in there.
- JE:** You've got some country fiddling—
- JJ:** Yeah.
- JE:** And you've got some western swing.
- JJ:** Yes.
- JE:** Wouldn't you love to have played with Bob Wills and all those people?
- JJ:** Oh, yes. But—
- JE:** If you'd come along, you would have been part of it.
- JJ:** Oh, I would have lov—well, I did play with Tiny Moore and I almost played for Merle, Merle Haggard, yeah. Merle was going to hire me and—
- JE:** And why not?
- JJ:** ...and Louise Mandrell. Well, that was right there when Buck was hiring me too.
- JE:** Oh.
- JJ:** Buck kind of went out. But, yeah, I talked to Merle, I did a couple of shows with Merle. His idea was to have Louise Mandrell and me on twin fiddles and backup harmony.
- JE:** Yeah, yes.
- JJ:** And then Tiny Moore's wife said, "You have to be pretty careful about these guys." I think Merle's group was into a lot more—I think they did a little stuff.
- JE:** Okay.
- JJ:** Buck never did, Buck was straight arrow. So I think she kind of warned me about that. She said, "But you're all right, you know, you just have to be careful."
- JE:** Yeah.
- JJ:** But I pulled back just a little bit from that idea because I don't feel like I need to do extra stuff to enjoy music. Music is my high, it's my high.
- JE:** Absolutely. You became a solo artist.
- JJ:** Yeah, I did. Really, when I went out on my own is when I moved to Tulsa. That's when I really became solo artist.
- JE:** Was that tough for you to do? Of course, you had Jim Halsey—
- JJ:** Uh-huh (negative).
- JE:** ...the impresario, as he was called.
- JJ:** Yeah. Before I had my own band, he booked me a lot as a single with Roy Clark's band, with Hank Thompson's band, with whoever. That's why I say I played with them all. We did Europe. I'd go as a single and play with bands over there.

But as a single, I couldn't do "Flight of the Bumblebee," I couldn't do my specialty numbers because it was too hard to put together in a professional way. You had to do something a little more standard, which is okay. But, for me, I like doing something nobody else can do or nobody else does.



**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** That it's my thing. So I put together a band.

**JE:** And the name of that band was?

**JJ:** Star—Hotwire. We were together for many, many years. Now, my bass player passed away and Jack, my guitarist, is still playing, but he has MS.

**JE:** Umm (condolence sound).

**JJ:** So I've just had, you know, all these marvelous musicians around here: Spencer Sutton, Patrick Savage, I just can plug these people in as I need them. And they know my stuff by now.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** So I don't feel hampered, and we're not on the road quite as much now. But I still have Roy Clark's bus, I bought Roy's bus.

**JE:** Oh, really?

**JJ:** First we traveled in a motorhome, then I bought an old silver Eagle. Then we couldn't find parts for that very easily, so I ended up buying Roy's bus. That's a great bus.

**JE:** You know, you talk about "Orange Blossoms" special, Roy Clark, of course, does his on the guitar.

**JJ:** Yes.

**JE:** Were the two of you able to do anything together?

**JJ:** Oh, yeah, we've done lots of shows together.

**JE:** Violin and—but that song?

**JJ:** Well, I always got Roy to play twin fiddles with me. He'd say, "Well, play it and make me sound good."

And I'd say, "Okay." We did really well on twin fiddles. He's not a fiddle player's fiddle player.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** But, you know, he'll get into "Orange Blossom" on the fiddle and just show it off, you know, just move and get all over it. Even if he's not really getting a lot of the notes.

**JE:** We wouldn't—

**JJ:** Who cares?

**JE:** And we don't know.

**JJ:** No. He's such a showman, and he's a marvelous musician too. I've enjoyed doing a lot of shows with Roy. Of course, Roy's married, I mean, that's a whole different thing. But we're good together—

**JE:** Chemistry together.

**JJ:** ...on stage, yeah.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** Yeah. We have fun on stage. And I show him off, you know, if I'm doing his show, my function is not to steal the show, I'm being good for his show but I'm bolstering him as well, so showing him off.

**JE:** By the way, here on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com), you can listen to Roy Clark's oral history interview.

**JJ:** Oh, yeah.

**JE:** He also brought that sense of humor that he had.

**JJ:** Oh, yes. So witty.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And you know now, he's not playing that much. He's gone through all these health issues, but he's doing these conversations.

**JE:** Yes.

**JJ:** He is so witty and so funny. Always gets a laugh, and he's fun to be around. We did Montreux Jazz Festival together with Barbara Mandrell, Gatemouth Brown. The Oak Ridge Boys were on that tour. You know, we've done a lot, we've done a lot.

**JE:** I got to say—

**JJ:** And I did a lot with Chet too.

**JE:** Those Mandrell sisters—

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** ...I was in love with them. [laughing]

**JJ:** I know. Aren't they great?

**JE:** Louise and Barbara.

**JJ:** Barbara.

**JE:** Yeah. I'm sitting out here watching television—

**JJ:** And Irlene too.

**JE:** ...couldn't get enough of seeing them [laughing].

**JJ:** I know. Yeah, they're still terrific. They've kind of gone their separate ways, but they're all good.

## Chapter 12 - 9:45

### Grove, Oklahoma

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**John Erling:** You've done a lot of traveling, Wembley Festival in England.

**Jana Jae:** Yes.

**JE:** New Orleans Jazz Festival. You've toured Japan, the Philippines, Australia, Africa, Brazil, other countries. I guess you—

**JJ:** Ohh.

**JE:** ...may not be able to understand their language but what that language, that music that comes out of that violin—

**JJ:** Yes.

**JE:** ...is what brings everybody together. And you brought them to your feet in every country, I'm sure.

**JJ:** I—we just, this last year, did the Silk Road International Arts Festival, ten days in China. And they were huge audiences. You could not see the end. They did a few outdoor ones—they have beautiful facilities too. They're big production shows. But when they were outdoors, we could not see the end of the people. They would just come from everywhere, clear around the stage. They absolutely loved it.

Yeah, China's on a roll, their work ethic is high. They're doing a lot with the arts. It was a great experience. Wonderful people who were doing this festival. Maybe I get to go back.

**JE:** I'm sure you will. Well, is it true your nickname was the Fiddling Femme Fatale?

**JJ:** Yeah, I think somebody coined that. They usually say the First Lady of Country Fiddle.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** But Fiddling Femme Fatale, I don't know who coined that but that stuck too.

**JE:** Well, it's a form of alliteration there.

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** It's actually, "A very attractive woman, which you are, but one who will bring disaster to a man who becomes involved with her."

**JJ:** Oh dear! Oh no!

**JE:** That's what a femme fatale is.

**JJ:** Oh no! I've never thought of me in that regard, no, no, no. I hope I've been good for everybody I've come in contact with.

**JE:** Are you with Jim Halsey today or are you on your own?

**JJ:** Well, we've always had a really good working relationship. I still do a lot with Jim. You know, Jim and I have never had a formal contract.

**JE:** Oh?

**JJ:** But he's booked me and so forth and so on. They never ask for a contract. So we just have a good working relationship.

**JE:** That's great.

**JJ:** Yeah, it is.

**JE:** Somehow you get to grow Oklahoma.

**JJ:** Oh.

**JE:** Tell us how you get to grow.

**JJ:** Well—

**JE:** Don't say Highway 44.

**JJ:** [both laughing] Oh, yeah, or the old Route 66.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** They were going to take this house because they were widening 71st Street from two lanes to six lanes.

**JE:** So we're talking about between Harvard and Yale.

**JJ:** Yes.

**JE:** Seventy-First.

**JJ:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Thinking they were going to take this house.

**JJ:** They were going to take this house.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** So I was looking for other houses. I couldn't believe they were going to take this house, but they were. So I was looking for other places and this realtor talked me into coming up to Grove. And I thought, *Well, that's too far away.*

She said, "Well, maybe some of your other music business friends would like this because you've got to see this house. Got to."

So I finally went, and I thought, *Well, it's too far away, too big, too this, too that.* My kids were going to be going to college pretty soon and I thought, *It's just too much.* But when I saw this place, I just absolutely loved it. Stood out on the patio overlooking Grand Lake, and thought, *Well, I just want to remember this forever.*

And I guess I sort of zoned out and the gal came over. She said, "Are you all right, dear?"

**JE:** [laughing]

**JJ:** [laughs] I said, "Yeah, I just want to remember this, you know, it's so beautiful. And the house is beautiful." But it's right there in nature, right on the lake and beautiful trees. It's just gorgeous.

So they kept coming back to me. The house was in bankruptcy and they kept coming back to me and back to me and back to me. "You've got to have this house, or somebody's got to have this house, that you know." Anyway, they kept giving me a better deal and a better deal. And they finally said, "Choose your down. You've got to have this house."

I thought, *Well, heck, I could just buy it and sell it.* So I bought it. Choose my own down payment, got it, and fell in love with the house and the area.

When I was up there, I was talking to my mom and she said, "Jana, where is this house in Grove? Where is Grove?"

And I said, "Oh, it's about an hour outside of Tulsa."

She said, "How far is it from Vinita?"

I said, "How do you know about Vinita, Mom?" She's in Idaho; I barely knew Vinita existed. "How do you know about Vinita?"

She said, "Well, how far is it from Vinita?"

And I said, "Oh, about thirty miles. Why?"

She said, "Grandmother and Granddaddy used to live there."

**JE:** Hmm, hmm, hmm (funny, thoughtful sounds).

**JJ:** My grandmother and granddaddy, the champion fiddle player who taught me all this in Idaho, used to live there. Their very best friends and where they stayed all the time was like next door to my house, the Butlers. Mama said, "You got to look up Mamie J. Butler, queen of the Cherokees."

I looked for Mamie J. Butler for a couple years but finally, Mother was here for Thanksgiving and we talked to the postmaster there in Vinita. Good pastor, about eighty-five. She said, "Do you know Mamie J. Butler?"

And he said, "No, I don't think I do."

Mother said, "Well, her mom, Sally Butler, was a great cook and they had a boardinghouse, Colonial Hotel"

He said, "Oh, I know who you're talking about. That Colonial Hotel was in Big Cabin. And they lived in Vinita and we knew her as Mamie Adams. She was married to Dr. Adams, who started the hospital in Vinita."

So there was the connection. And all this time, for two years, I thought my mom had it wrong. And she was right on. So all of my grandmother's people were there; there's a whole cemetery full of them. Quaker Cemetery, right east of Joplin, and they were big. And EaglePicher, the management of EaglePicher and there's still a house there in that city, a great big house.

So I have all this family history—

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** ...right there. And my granddaddy, who taught me, and they played right around there. And they were married in Joplin. So, ah—

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** It still makes my little heart pound, I can't believe it.

**JE:** Kind of makes you wonder, there's a plan, isn't there?

**JJ:** There is a plan. I swear to God, it was like watching a video when all this happened in Grove. It was just like, *This felt right, this felt right*. I got a little store there. I started these festivals there. And I was able to keep my Tulsa house—they didn't need it. They weren't going to pay me anything for it, I couldn't have even bought a condo. And I need it because of traveling.

**JE:** So now in Grove, you own an art gallery.

**JJ:** Yes.

**JE:** You have a lakefront campground, Snider's Camp.

**JJ:** Yes. Which has been great for the festivals.

**JE:** Right. Three festivals.

**JJ:** Yes.

**JE:** American Heritage Music Festival and this here—

**JJ:** Cajun Festival, Fourth of July.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** And then my fiddle camp, Labor Day weekend.

**JE:** That you have all going there.

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** This art gallery, how did you get interested in art? So far I've only heard you being interested in music. [laughing]

**JJ:** Yeah. In Vienna, I studied with the curator of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Dr. Spitzmüller. She was our teacher. She took us to the museum every day. I've never had any art. I looked at Pieter Bruegel and Rubens and Caravaggio, and I learned the difference. She's say, "Well, what's the difference between the lights, the lighting that Caravaggio uses and Rubens uses? And how about Rembrandt?" We'd look at these originals.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** It started to make sense to me, *Oh, yeah, Pieter Bruegel, he's very detailed. Caravaggio, he's got all this light and dark. And Rubens has got all these chubby little cre—you know, it all sort of came to my consciousness and it opened up a whole new world to me.*

Of course, we looked at all the architecture in Europe. I've always been interested in that, but it sort of opened my eyes. So when I got to Oklahoma, here's all this fabulous Native American art. Oh, my gosh!

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And all this silver-smithing and all the jewelry and the turquoise, I mean, it just blew my mind. So I had an opportunity to buy this one little corner piece, and I thought, *Well, I can't really use the whole place but I need an office. So I'll put my office and do a little art thing right here.* So it kind of grew [laughing], it grew, to say the least. And then I needed good art for that house up there, so that's how it happened.

**JE:** That's Gallery.

**JJ:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** That's open most every day, I guess.

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** And lots of people come by and see it.

**JJ:** Yeah, it's really a shop more than a gallery. It's called Gallery Southwest. We have a lot of variety. And so things like this, this wonderful deal, although this was a gift from Tony—

**JE:** It's a beautiful bracelet you have there.

**JJ:** But, you know, I just became fascinated with it. And I love it because it's different. I go to the Gallery and that's where my office is. It's fun—

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** ...to see all those beautiful things and share them. I like sharing. I love sharing music, and I like sharing the art too.

## Chapter 13 - 13:40

### Sharing Music

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**John Erling:** You have had some nice honors in the last few years. In 2015, you were inducted in the National Fiddler Hall of Fame.

**Jana Jae:** Right. My class was great. It was Charlie Daniels, Jay Unger, me—

**JE:** And the posthumous inductee was Howard Big Howdy Forrester.

**JJ:** Howdy Forrester, yes, oh, yeah. And his family—

**JE:** So that was a good class, right.

**JJ:** ... as Howdy Forrester is just fantastic.

**JE:** And also, I believe, in that year, you were inducted in the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame.

**JJ:** That's right, that was 2015, boy, I know that year.

**JE:** Tom Paxton, Tom Skinner, Otto Gray, and the Apache tribe of Oklahoma, for its contribution to music.

**JJ:** Yeah, and Sherman Halsey was in there also.

**JE:** And Sherman Halsey, the son of Jim.

**JJ:** Yeah, right.

**JE:** That took place in Bristow.

**JJ:** And I'm going back to Bristow. I love all this. It's kind of like revisiting a wonderful experience, you know?

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** That Bristow Auditorium PAC is just fabulous.

**JE:** I've got to say, the passing of Guy Logsdon—

**JJ:** Oh, gosh.

**JE:** We have his interview here on [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com). But—

**JJ:** I'm glad you do.

**JE:** But what a man, a contribution to the world of history, to Woody Guthrie.

**JJ:** Um.

**JE:** Bob Wills, this man just—

**JJ:** Fiddle contests, he ran the fiddle contest here for a long time.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** He was a phenomenal person.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And I just saw Phyllis and his daughter, Tamara. And Tamara is on the board now of the Woody Guthrie Center.

But anyway, we did share a visit and I was honored to play for his services.

**JE:** I was there.

**JJ:** Oh, you were? Oh, gosh.

**JE:** With—and I think there was some word that you were going to be able to get there on time. You flew in.

**JJ:** I flew in and went right from the airport, I mean, it was close, and they had already started the service, but I made it in time to play something for him.

**JE:** It looked like it was just—like you'd been hanging around for hours. [both laughing]

But it was a nice tribute that you could be there for Guy Logsdon, who was just one of the sweetest men you'll ever meet.

**JJ:** Oh, and so brilliant.

**JE:** Yes.

**JJ:** I was so honored and I was honored to play for Sam Lovullo's service. He was the producer of *Hee Haw*, and he's the one who connected me with Jim Halsey.

**JE:** Okay.

**JJ:** He did such a nice video endorsement of me for the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, that I still have. It's wonderful to think of these people who have these good hearts and they help you along.

**JE:** It's nice to hear that about show biz because—

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** ...sometimes we think about show biz as probably not caring.

**JJ:** I know. Well, a lot of people are clamoring to get to the top but I've never had that feeling. I just want to take advantage of opportunities and I want to be good for whatever organization or whatever show I'm in. If I can contribute, I'm there. If I can enjoy it, boy, that's frosting on the cake.

**JE:** You taught many students.

**JJ:** Yes, and I love that too.

**JE:** Is there any that you have seen that blossom and are having a career in music?

**JJ:** Scott Joss is one that comes to mind. He was with that Redding—I didn't talk very much about the Redding String program but I started out with four students the beginning of the year. And we had over two hundred by the end of the school year. And Scott was one of



those. He played for Dwight Yoakam and Merle Haggard. Merle Haggard until his death. Scott always writes me a Christmas card and signs it, "Always your student."

**JE:** Wow.

**JJ:** [laughs] That's really touching.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** And then the gal who plays with Rod Stewart, Anna Jacoby, I started her at age four. So, yeah, those are really heartwarming.

Eric Dysart, who's here in Oklahoma, he came to Fiddle Camp when he was six years old, never had picked up a fiddle. And, of course, his grandparents took him all over and helped him get his roots and music. But we had our part in it.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** Because he was inspired there at the beginning. He always comes back. That's what I mean, I love sharing this and seeing somebody connect. And if they can go on to a career or just to enjoy it for their whole life, that's my reward.

**JE:** I always ask, as a person looks back, what gives them the greatest satisfaction, and that had to be one of them.

**JJ:** Yeah, sharing music, I think, is it. I love sharing music on stage, I mean, that's my high. And affecting people, sharing it so that other people blossom. Even with my band, you know, I always share the guys. You know, love to show them off. So that's kind of me.

I'm just a catalyst, I'm here to do what I can to make it happen.

**JE:** About your career, do you have any regrets? Because Roy Clark, when we visited with him, said, "There's a regret I have that maybe I didn't work harder to push myself to be a star."

**JJ:** Hmm (thoughtful sound). Super star, yeah.

**JE:** He became a star but I think he thought he could have become even greater if he'd pushed himself.

Do you have any regrets in your career?

**JJ:** No regrets. I feel like I'm in a really good spot. You know, I experienced the real big time with Buck, where you can't really go out of the house. And Elvis was caught in that conundrum where you go out and you're in a public place. If you don't get attention, you feel like they don't love you anymore. And if you do get too much attention, you know, you don't have a moment of privacy.

So I'm in a great spot.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** You know? I can do shows. I've been blessed to be able to earn my living with music. I've been blessed to be able to share it. And I still can have privacy when I want it. I can walk through the airport now. And so most people recognize me. I love to talk to them.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** If they don't, it doesn't bother me.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** You know?

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** So I'm in a real good spot.

**JE:** You're not looking for it.

**JJ:** Yeah.

**JE:** Right. Young musicians that maybe are listening to this and will be listening to it twenty-five, fifty years from now, not every musician can become a star. But what would you say to them?

**JJ:** You don't have to be a star to enjoy music and have music be your passion and your life purpose. It's whatever feels right, I think, to the individual. You know, if you really want to be a star, and you really want to go through that process, you've got to have a recording contract to be a star. But even then, many times it's flash in the pan. You're a big star and then you're not.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** And then you have that to deal with. So you have to realize there are ups and downs and do whatever it takes to even that out.

When I first started playing with Buck, we were out a couple of weeks and I came home and I could not get out of bed. I couldn't move. I mean, I just couldn't do anything. I guess you'd call it depression or something, but I wasn't depressed, or I didn't think I was. I'd never had any problem with depression.

But I mentioned it to a friend, John Hartford, who wrote "Gentle on My Mind," and he gave me the very best advice. He said, "You think about it, Jana, you've been out on the road in these tight quarters, traveling together, playing together, intense, adrenaline going all the time. You come home and you crash."

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JJ:** And that's exactly what happened. So it's like you're on an artificial high, even though you haven't taken any pills.

**JE:** Right.

**JJ:** You're on an artificial high with all this adrenaline and then you're going to crash down as low as you were high, before you come back to normal.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**JJ:** And he said, "It's natural."

So I said, "Well, what do I do?"

He said, "You just get out of the house. Just make yourself get up and get out."

So I did that, and, by gosh, I never struggled with that again. Well, I did struggle with it, but I made myself get out.

- JE:** Right.
- JJ:** And once I was out, it was okay. It was like I pulled myself back to normal. And from—
- JE:** I guess we forget you music stars are human too, aren't you?
- JJ:** [both laughing] Well, that was pretty good advice.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JJ:** Because I thought it was not normal, but it is normal to experience those highs and lows. You just have to learn how to deal with it. And I think that if you can stay off the pills and the stuff, you're doing yourself a favor. Because you learn how to do it yourself.
- JE:** Right. Not everybody can have a strong music career and live off it.
- In my oral history interview with Steve Ripley and the Tractors—
- JJ:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- JE:** ...and he's associated with Leon Russell and Bob Dylan and all, he said, "The guys who play on the weekends and go back to their regular job, Monday through Friday, are having the most fun."
- JJ:** [laughing] Well, I don't know, I'd say I'm having the most fun.
- JE:** Yeah.
- JJ:** Because I get to do it all the time.
- JE:** All the time, right.
- JJ:** And I don't feel like I even have a job, I just am doing what I really love to do.
- JE:** And you get to still do that.
- JJ:** And I get to still do that now!
- JE:** And you're—you're still busy—
- JJ:** Yeah.
- JE:** ...in whatever age you are.
- JJ:** That's right.
- JE:** You are very fortunate.
- JJ:** Tremendously blessed.
- JE:** Because you have all these dates that are yet to be played.
- JJ:** Yeah, I do.
- JE:** And all of that.
- JJ:** I have—at the end of this summer, I will have performed in fifty countries.
- JE:** Oh my!
- JJ:** So I feel like I'm sharing music with a lot of people. And I'm taking our music, our American music, I'm very proud to represent America.
- In China, we were the representatives of the USA. I took Barry "Bones" Bat and he plays the bones, just phenomenal. And they loved him so much. I mean, he was the star. He's dressed in his big black western hat, a cowboy.

And they said, "Oh, we want to get that cowboy's, the American cowboy's, autograph."

Sharing a little bit of America and our American music really gives me great pleasure. I love playing, you know, I still play in string quartets. I'm going to Romania, going to be with the gypsies and then we're doing chamber music over there as well, a couple of concerts. But I love that sharing, you know, bringing our American music to them. And really appreciating what their culture is sharing with us.

**JE:** That must be a terrific feeling, and like, you talk about the Chinese, how welcoming they were to you.

**JJ:** Oh.

**JE:** They're listening with their mouth wide open?

**JJ:** Absolutely, they are enthralled. And the fact that we are Americans, coming from America and playing American music, they just love it. I mean, they eat it up, they just can't get enough.

**JE:** Right. And because of the way the world is today they know the music you're playing too.

**JJ:** Right.

**JE:** It's not the first time they're heard it.

**JJ:** Yeah, bluegrass is really big in Japan. I was shocked. We did the Aspecta, it's the largest outdoor facility in the world. Right there by Kumamoto, where the volcano was starting to erupt, just when we were leaving. But anyway, it was a real high, this huge thing on the hillside, a huge number of people. Bluegrass or country, they just went ape over it. They just couldn't get enough cheering, clapping along, it reminded me of French Gulch Hotel when they were about to dislodge that logging saw. They would be up on tables, clapping along. That music can be very, very inspiring and very moving.

Fiddle music has a rhythm, a strong rhythm, a strong drive, so that people start clapping along, tapping their toes, dancing, whatever. It's kind of a release too, I think, people really enjoy it. And I enjoy providing that.

**JE:** And you know how fortunate you are because when we hear your entire story here, you were chosen.

**JJ:** Ah.

**JE:** You were chosen.

**JJ:** Ah.

**JE:** Not everybody get the gift. Not everybody wakes up and knows what they want to do or to be. But you were chosen.

**JJ:** Oh.

**JE:** And your gift, of course, comes from God.

**JJ:** Yes, I do believe that. But, you know, we have to use whatever talents we have. I think if your heart is in the right place and you want to do good and play good music and share

good vibes, that good things happen. It may seem like you go through some ups and downs but I feel blessed with everything that has happened in my life.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** I look at it as a blessing. And I hope I can be a blessing to others.

**JE:** How would you like to be remembered?

**JJ:** Well, that's probably how, you know, that I've been able to share and that I've been able to have enough of a career in music that I *can* share and share beyond our borders.

**JE:** Yeah.

**JJ:** That I can really make a difference in this world to whoever I touch. Yeah.

**JE:** Well, you're very fortunate. And we're fortunate to hear your story.

**JJ:** Well, thank you so much, John.

**JE:** And that you gave your story here to [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com). This is fun and I enjoyed it.

**JJ:** Well, I have enjoyed it as well. You're terrific.

**JE:** Thank you.

## Chapter 14 - 0:33

### Conclusion

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**Announcer:** This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience.

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