

BIO

Born to poor sharecroppers, one of eleven children in Sledge, Mississippi, Pride is a timeless everyman, revered by his musical peers and adored by countless millions of fans around the globe. His golden baritone voice has transcended race and spanned the generations.

Charley Pride unofficially started his music career in the late 1950s as a ballplayer with the Negro American League's Memphis Red Sox singing and playing guitar on the team bus between ballparks. Self-taught on a guitar bought at the age 14 from Sears Roebuck, Pride would join various bands' onstage as he and the team roved the country.

After a tryout with the New York Mets, Pride decided to return to his Montana home via Nashville. It was there he met Jack Johnson, who upon hearing the singer perform, sent him on his way with the promise of a management contract and a newly forged relationship that would last for over a decade.

A year later, Pride returned to the Music City and was introduced to producer, Jack Clement, who gave him several songs to learn. When Clement heard Pride's renditions, he immediately asked the fledgling singer if he could cut two songs in two hours. Pride agreed, and "The Snakes Crawl at Night" and "Atlantic Coastal Line" were recorded.

Three months later, Pride's two song demo landed in the hands of already legendary RCA Records head, Chet Atkins, who was so moved he immediately signed him to the label. Pride's first single hit the airwaves in January 1966 and just like that his star was on the rise. Within a short period of time "The Snakes Crawl at Night" was climbing the charts with his "Before I Met You" closing in on its tail.

Charley Pride has always set his own goals. One of those goals was to become an internationally known artist. He achieved this by performing, in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Fiji as well as the provinces of Canada. Charley still tours these countries today and even takes in a few extra countries, on USO Tours, entertaining our service men and women who are stationed overseas.

Between 1969, when he first hit #1 on the singles chart with "All I Have to Offer You (Is Me)" and 1984, when he commanded the top spot again with "Every Heart Should Have One," Pride scored more than 36 number one country singles.

Over the past thirty years, Pride has remained one of the Top 20 best-selling country artists of all-time. His incredible legacy includes 36 #1 hit singles, over 70 million albums sold, 31 gold and 4 platinum albums - including one quadruple platinum. On RCA Records, Charley Pride is second in sales only to Elvis Presley.

Dozens of Pride's chart toppers now stand as modern classics. "Kiss An Angel Good Morning" went on to be a million-selling crossover single and helped Pride land Country Music Association Awards as Entertainer of the Year in 1971 and Top Male Vocalist in 1971 and 1972.

Other memorable Pride standards include "Is Anybody Goin' To San Antone?" "I'm So Afraid of Losing You Again," "Mississippi Cotton Picking Delta Town," "Someone Loves You Honey," "When I Stop Leaving I'll be gone," "Burgers and Fries," and "You're So Good When You're Bad," to name but a few. His moving performances of Hank Williams classics "Kaw-Liga" and "Honky Tonk Blues" on his number 1 album, "There's a Little Bit of Hank in Me", was also certified Gold.

In 1994, Charley released his autobiography, *Pride: The Charley Pride Story* (published by William Morrow). Aside from detailing great moments of his amazing career and journeyman stint as a ballplayer, *Pride* is an often moving, sometimes hilarious tale of his almost improbable dream come true and journey to the top of the charts.

In his own words, Charley recalls his hardscrabble childhood, his enduring marriage, the thrill of his biggest hit - a double into the outfield gap off Hall of Famer Warren Spahn - and his first singing engagement in a Montana bar that eventually led to a career as the first and only African-American superstar in country music. Through it all, we are reminded that "The Pride of Country Music" remains one of the great legends in popular music - and that he is still going strong.

On May 1, 1993, Pride accepted a long-standing invitation to join the Grand Ole Opry, 26 years after he first played there as a guest, the first African-American in its over 70 year history.

In June 1994, Pride was honored by the Academy Of Country Music with its prestigious Pioneer Award.

In January 1996, Charley Pride was honored with a Trumpet Award by Turner Broadcasting, marking outstanding African-American Achievement. In between, his "Roll On Mississippi" was considered as the official song of his home state, a stretch of Mississippi highway was named for him, and he headlined a special Christmas performance for President and Mrs. Clinton at the White House.

In July 1999, Charley received his very own star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

On October 4, 2000, Charley was honored with the highest country music award, he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Charley wept when his name was announced by Hall of Famer, Brenda Lee.

And just in case music should leave his blood, Pride continues to work out annually with baseball's Texas Rangers. When not touring extensively worldwide or recording music, Pride can often be found pursuing another love, one at which he also excels - golf.

Charley Pride met the love of his life, Rozene, while playing baseball in Memphis. They have raised two sons, Kraig and Dion, as well as a daughter, Angela. They also enjoy their grandsons, Carlton and Malachi in Dallas, Texas, where their family resides.

Pride continues his illustrious career with the release of “Comfort of Her Wings” and “Pride and Joy: A Gospel Music Collection” on Music City Records. These albums show that Charley has not slowed down and proves his voice is as good, if not better than ever. Still touring to sell out crowds, Charley continues to please his audiences.