

From WCC to Nashville: Songplugger Sherrill Blackman

Sherrill Blackman is one of Nashville's top independent songpluggers, owns three music publishing companies and often rubs shoulders with some of the biggest names in country music. He's in demand across the country as a speaker, and he's a Wayne Community College graduate.

Lawrence Gerald, co-editor of the Campus Voice, had a chance to interview the Dudley native. Here's what he learned:

Q: What year were you born and how old are you?

A: I was born Nov. 14, 1957, so I am 48.

Q: What high school did you attend?

A: I graduated in 1976 from Southern Wayne High School.

Q: Can you tell me what was it like at Wayne Community back in the day?

A: When I was at WCC, the campus was located on Highway 70 across from the Pizza Inn. Since most of the buildings were fairly close together, it gave students a chance to get to know each other. The student center was in the middle of the campus and was the main hang out between and after classes. I remember the faculty as being extremely knowledgeable and dedicated. There were a lot of life lessons learned during that time that I still apply to this day.

Q: What was your major at WCC?

A: My first major at WCC was the College Transfer Program. My intention was to take all the core undergraduate classes there and then transfer to East Carolina. However, midway through my first quarter, for whatever reason, I decided that wasn't what I really wanted to do. The next quarter I switched over to Business

Administration and got my A.A. degree in 1979. As I was preparing for graduation, I found out about Belmont College and its music business degree programs. It was at that point that I knew I wanted to be in the music business and in Nashville. I spent the next year working and taking more classes as I readied myself for the move in August 1980.

Q: After you graduated from

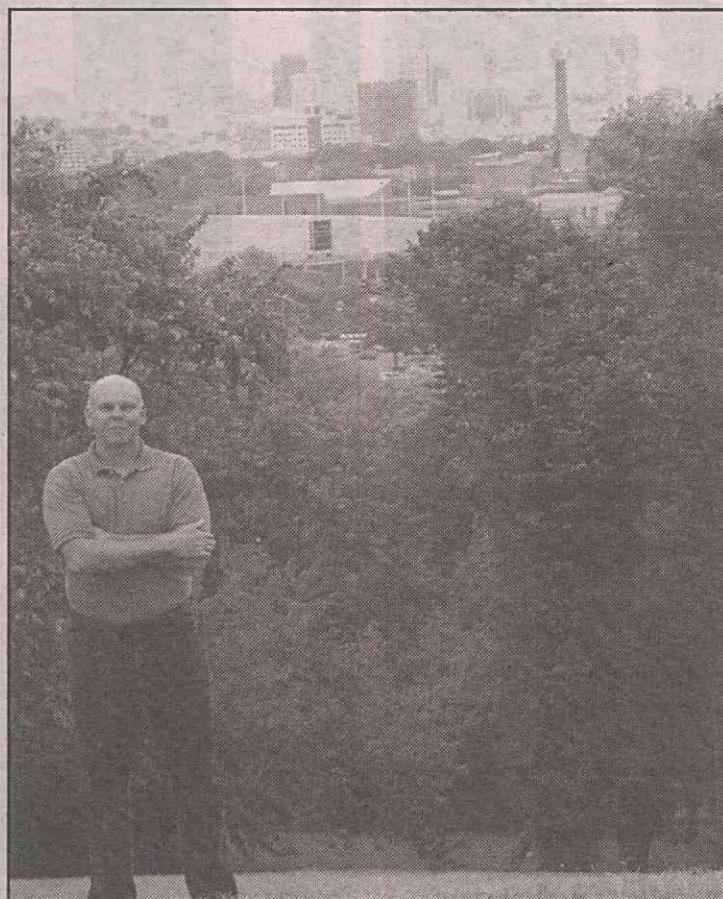


Photo courtesy of Goldsboro News-Argus

Blackman is pictured in front of Nashville's skyline.

WCC, were you ready for the big world?

A: When you're young and semi-educated, you feel like you're ready for anything. The real education doesn't start until you get out in the world. Even now, with two degrees and years of experience, I learn something new every day.

Q: Could you tell us more about what you do?

A: Basically, I am the middle person between the songwriter and the recording artists. I use my connections and experience to try to place songs and get them recorded. So, on any given day, I may play songs directly for artists, their managers, their producers, or their record companies. My hope is that the song or songs I have are what they are looking for ... I hear "no" a lot more than I hear "yes." There are hundreds of people here doing what I do, so it gets pretty competitive. Fortunately, I've had enough success through the years to keep me in business.

Q: Have you met anybody famous?

A: Due to the nature of my business, I meet stars and

celebrities all the time.

Q: If so, who did you meet? Were they nice?

A: Through the years, I've been fortunate enough to meet and get to know people like Garth Brooks, George Jones, LeAnn Rimes, Trace Adkins, Kenny Rogers, Tanya Tucker,

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etc. Basically, all the country music stars, a few soap opera stars and some movie and TV stars. They're all just people, nice and down to earth.

Q: Do you wake up thinking that you have an incredible job?

A: Every once in a while I stop and remind myself how fortunate and blessed I am to be doing something I absolutely love. Usually, when I wake up in the morning, my first thought is to see how I can make a difference in the world and in business that day.

Q: Would you recommend your job to any young people who may want to get into the profession?

A: I always tell people that if they have a dream, no matter how wild or crazy it may seem, follow it. Now, of course, with that said, there are certain steps a person must take to pursue a dream. That's where most folks fail. They don't plan or prepare properly. With my job, you have to be in a major music center. You have to have a passion for music. You also have to be a people person. And you have to be ready to

work for free or basically nothing until you get your foot in the door.

Q: What's your favorite meal?

A: One of the main things I miss about Goldsboro and Wayne County is the great barbeque and seafood. It's the best in the world.

Q: What's your favorite TV show?

A: My favorite current TV show is "Lost." For all time, it would have to be either "The Andy Griffith Show" or "The Beverly Hillbillies."

Q: Which celebrity, living or dead, would you want to date?

A: This is going to sound strange, but if she were alive, I think I'd like to go out with Jackie Kennedy Onassis. I'd love to ask her questions about John Kennedy's assassination. As for a living person, I've always thought Jamie Lee Curtis was attractive.

Q: Is there anything else you would like us to know?

A: We've just about covered it. Each day is a new experience and effort to get songs recorded. To me, it's all about a great song. That's what makes the world go round.

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