

Young Singer To Make The Most Of His 'Big Chance'

BY SUSAN USHER

It was the break of a lifetime and Shane Pittman came within minutes of missing it.

Auditions started at 1 p.m. that Wednesday in late October, and it had been one of those days.

When the West Brunswick High School junior and his cousin and music mentor, Jackie High, arrived two hours later at the Myrtle Beach Opry House, the Opryland regional auditions were almost over.

He was the 95th and last singer, and by six years the youngest, to take the mike in front of five talent scouts seated behind a long table holding only a "dinky tape recorder." The competition included experienced entertainers already on the payroll of the Carolina Opry, Myrtle Beach Opry, Dixie Stampede, and Alabama Theater.

On request the 16-year-old, dressed in scuffed white jeans and a red, white and blue American flag jacket, launched into his "best song"—Clint Black's "Put Yourself In My Shoes."

The scouts started talking among themselves. Halfway through the number, they stopped Shane. Assuming the worst, he turned to leave, only to be called back with a "Where do you think you're going?"

To his amazement, the audition had just begun. Before it was over Shane had learned and auditioned a dance number, completed vocal range and sight reading checks, and sung three songs instead of the usual two.

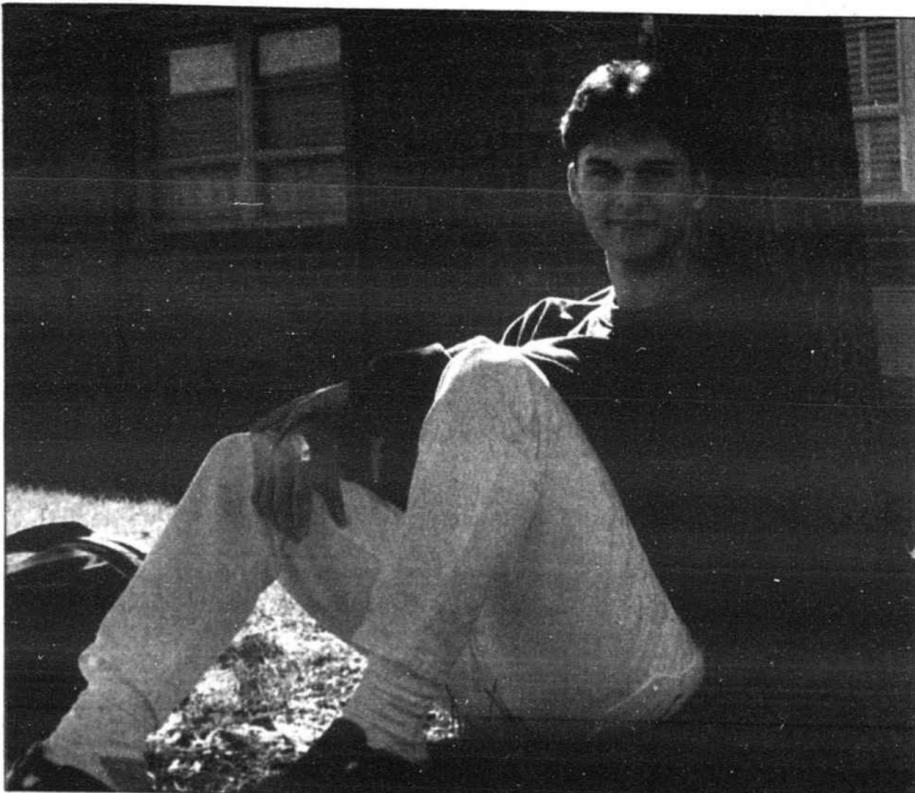
After a slow Clint Black number, "Nothing's News," Shane sang part of the standard "What Kind of Fool Am I?" from the West Brunswick Show Chorus's 1994 spring clown show, a piece chorus teacher Patty Jordan had recommended as a good vehicle for his voice. Then he sang it all, on request.

After struggling all week with a cold, his voice had been a big concern for Shane going into the audition. "I was praying," he recalled. "I finished it really well."

"Jackie says I have the power to imitate anyone," said Shane. "But I have my own voice as well and some people recognize that too."

In similar settings across the nation Opryland representatives were scouting for new talent to fill 1,000 positions in an entertainment stable that includes Alabama Theater at Myrtle Beach, Opryland in Nashville and locations in Fiesta, Texas, Branson, Mo., and Las Vegas.

The Myrtle Beach scouts who auditioned Shane liked what they heard. Out of the 95, he was one of 12 called back and offered letters of intent. Sometime between January and March—a schedule that seems a lifetime



A SUCCESSFUL AUDITION in Myrtle Beach may launch West Brunswick High School junior Shane Pittman on the musical career of his dreams. It's already thrust him into the spotlight among schoolmates.

away to Shane—he will receive a telephone call and an offer.

Shane has dreamed of a career in music since second grade. "I was raised in the church, with music," he said. "Everybody at this school knows I'm a music freak."

One of his biggest fans, along with Jackie, is his mother. He's the son of Virginia Pittman of Calabash and Ronnie Pittman of Nevada.

With his mother's encouragement, Shane has done more than dream about his career; he's been preparing

for it. Help has come from a variety of sources and doors seem to keep opening.

Only in the past year or so has Shane developed a liking for country music, and then only the more "upbeat" cross-over branch of its genealogy. Versatile, he also sings show tunes and pop.

This is his second year in the West Brunswick Show Choir, an ensemble that sings and dances, and his fourth year in vocal music under Mrs. Jordan.

"She has been a major influence," he said. "She taught me how to sight read, and that was a big advantage. I was one of only a few who auditioned who could read music. She has also helped me develop vocally and she helped with my dance."

A schoolmate, Casey Reaves, helped with dance as well, choreographing a number which he learned for the Opryland audition.

Shane's also getting mike time with the help of his cousin Jackie. Shane's sung three times on WPDE TV station's Star Time, a show she owns, and has performed at Suspenders, where she is karaoke hostess. That's where he was singing the night before school started this fall.

Myrtle Beach Opry cast members in the audience told him about the Opryland auditions and encouraged him to try out.

"I had almost decided not to go out that night because the next day was a school day," he recalled. "If I hadn't gone, I wouldn't have learned about the auditions and I would have missed my chance."

Waiting for that phone call in early 1995 is tough. Shane isn't sure what he'll be offered. The audition team discussed several options for the youngest among those auditioning.

"The director said they would plant us somewhere and watch us grow," said Shane. "I was mentally pleading 'Please plant me.'"

He's hoping to be 'planted' at the Alabama Theater in Myrtle Beach, where there may be as many as 10 jobs open. That assignment might allow him to remain enrolled at West Brunswick. Scouts discussed other options such as private tutoring or earning a GED at a community college and then continuing his education.

"I do want to finish school, but I don't necessarily want to finish it here. I've told them I'm available to move," said Shane, determination in his voice. "I've wanted to make it in music. I've worked hard for this chance and I deserve it. I'm going to do what it takes to make it."

FROM DAPHNE'S KITCHEN

Build Your Own Thanksgiving Traditions

BY DAPHNE McWHITE

For many people, Thanksgiving is a big event! It is a time for family and friends to congregate, enjoy laughter and good times.

It is at this season that I head home to beautiful rural Virginia, where at my childhood home, four generations gather together to partake of tradition.

The Thanksgiving meal is always the same. Mom cooks the turkey with dressing, and Dad does the carving. In between bites of corn pudding and candied yams, we eat those delicious melt-in-your-mouth yeast rolls that Granny makes.

Early Thanksgiving morning, Dad, sons and several guests go out on the farm with the dogs to hunt deer. Back at the house, Mom, daughters and friends prepare the feast, talk, sip hot cider and play with the little ones.

When we finally sit around the holiday table, filled with our extended family, Dad reads from the Bible and a thankful blessing is prayed. You know at that moment that life's most treasured gifts are health and the love between family and friends.

With today's families scattered across the globe, an old-fashioned family gathering is not easy for

everybody to accomplish. But no matter where you grew up, or where you live now, Thanksgiving is a tradition, and a tradition is something you can build upon every year.

It is your own. It is in your heart and it can grow into memories that can last for generations.

The recipes that follow are from my family's Thanksgiving table. Enjoy!

LENA'S SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE

3 cups cooked mashed sweet potatoes
1 cup white sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 eggs, well beaten
1 stick margarine

Mix ingredients and place in a baking dish. Add the following topping: Mix 1 cup brown sugar with 1/2 cup all-purpose flour and 1/2 stick soft margarine. Crumble together and sprinkle over mashed sweet potato mixture. Broken pecans can be added to the topping. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Serve warm.

SHYRLE'S PECAN PIE

3 eggs, well beaten
1 cup light brown sugar
1 cup dark Karo syrup
1/2 stick margarine
Dash salt
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 cup broken pecans
9-inch deep dish pie crust
Combine eggs, sugar and syrup. Mash margarine with a fork and add

to egg mixture along with salt and vanilla. Stir and add pecans to mixture. Pour into pie crust. Bake at 450 degrees for 10 minutes. Turn over to 350 degrees and bake 30 more minutes or until pie is firm. Jiggle to check firmness.

MACKIE'S CORN PUDDING

2 eggs, well beaten
15-oz. can shoepeg corn
1/2 cup white sugar
3 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
Dash salt
1 cup milk
1/2 stick margarine
Mix together and bake at 400 degrees for 45 minutes to one hour.

DAPHNE'S BROCCOLI CASSEROLE

2 10-ounce packages frozen broccoli florets
1 8-ounce package Velveeta cheese
10-15 Townhouse crackers
1/2 stick margarine
Cook broccoli in a small amount of water and rain. Place in a baking dish. Melt Velveeta and margarine in a small saucepan over low heat. Stir until blended. Pour over broccoli. Top with crushed crackers. Heat at 350 degrees for 5 minutes.

KRISTIE'S SPICED CIDER

2 quarts apple cider
3 inches stick cinnamon
Dash ground nutmeg
3 oz. frozen lemonade
Orange or lemon slices

2 Tbsp. sugar
Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan. Heat and serve in warmed mugs. Serves 8.

MYRA'S FRUIT SALAD

1/2 cup sugar
2 Tbsp. cornstarch
20 oz. can pineapple chunks; drain and reserve juice
1 tsp. lemon juice
11 oz. can mandarin oranges, drained
2 medium apples, chopped
*2 bananas, sliced

Stir sugar and cornstarch together in a saucepan. Blend 1/2 cup pineapple juice, lemon juice and orange juice and add to saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens and boils for 1 minute. While hot, pour over fruit. Refrigerate uncovered overnight or several hours. (Pour 1/2 sauce over fruit and stir, then pour remaining sauce over fruit and do not stir.)

*Add bananas just before serving so they won't turn brown.
Daphne McWhite lives in Calabash. She and her husband John are the parents of daughters ages 5 and 2. She holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Longwood College in Farmville, Va., and taught school in Virginia for seven years before moving to the Carolinas. She will be a regular contributor to The Brunswick Beacon, writing about cooking and nutrition.



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Thanksgiving Blossoms

Mrs. Ivren (Ann) Hughes of Shallotte displays the beautiful 5-year-old Thanksgiving cactus she raised from a 2-inch seedling. To guarantee a burst of blossoms in the fall, she keeps it in the garage all winter, bringing it outdoors to a shady spot each spring.

Morning Has Broken

BY BILL FAVER

One of my favorite hymns became a popular song some years ago and gave a new meaning to the early morning at the beach.



FAVER

This reminder of the dawn and the new beginning of daylight gives us an opportunity to ponder some of the treasures associated with daybreak. "Morning Has Broken" belongs with the beach.

This transition time comes each day with almost a hush as the night creatures begin to still their activities and the light awakens the day creatures. The ghost crabs return to their sandy burrows after spending the dark hours searching for food along the beach.

Pelicans and gulls and terns dot the awakening sky with silhouettes against the

new sunrise. Sandpipers and willets begin following the waves for mole crabs and coquinas.

Morning breaks with a special kind for feeling, too. The beach strand is washed of footprints by the nighttime tides. Only the fine markings left by waves and the fresh probing of sand by birds interrupt the smoothness.

The soft morning light gives a special sparkle to shells and grains of sand. The water glistens with soft hues of morning: all in grays and blues and greens. As the sun rises, touches of soft pinks, yellows and reds are added and the early morning coolness slips away.

Morning has broken and the words of the hymn have special meaning as they are remembered:

*Morning has broken; like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them springing fresh from the Word.*

*Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning
Born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation; praise every morning,
God's re-creation of the new day!*



PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

THE FAMILIAR HYMN "Morning Has Broken" seems to belong with the beach.