

# Songwriter motivated by love of music

By Jen Osborn  
Assistant editor

Rockfish resident Earl Chason may never find fame or fortune, but he is following his dream.

The 53-year-old singer/songwriter has had two of his songs recorded by country music artists in Nashville. One even hit the number three spot on the charts in Holland — joining the likes of famous country music recording artists George Jones and David Ball.

Although like any writer, he would love to hit the big time but Chason said he's happy he's come this far.

"Even if it doesn't turn out to be a very profitable situation, it's just so gratifying to see my name on those tape and CD covers," Chason said. "It was very uplifting and really made my adrenaline get to flowing."

The story began many years ago. Chason said in an interview with *Hard Country Beat* magazine that in the early 1960s his mother taught him some chords on a guitar and he took off from there. In 1969, he had a one-hour bluegrass show on a local radio station. His band was called "Earl and the Bluegrass Partners."

In the 1970s, he played and sang with a group called "The Mavericks." They played clubs at Fort Bragg and several night spots around Fayetteville, earning about \$15 a night. In the 1980s, he said, he organized a group of teenagers and called themselves "The Rockfish Revue Band." His son, Chuck, played lead guitar and the group played for events like hog callings, corn shuckings, chicken pluckings, hog cookings, family reunions for several years, as well as shows at Fayetteville's country music clubs.

"We had some fantastic times," he said.

The entire time, Chason said he was writing. While working as a department manager in hospital engineering in North and South Carolina, Chason spent hours at a time on the road. While driving, he says he had a good chance to mull over things in his life.

"I think everybody stops and takes check on their life once in a while," he said and added that he wrote several songs during these times.

Now two of his songs have been recorded by Nashville recording artists. The first break came in March when Chason said he received a letter from KMA Record's Keith Bradford, asking him to submit songs for an upcoming album, "One More Broken Heart."

Chason said he sent five songs to Bradford, who is part of a group that opens shows for Nashville star Kitty Wells. One song, "Love Runs Away From Me," was chosen and recorded. Later, Bradford asked Chason to write a song for his sister-in-law, Charlotte Bradford.

"I had never thought about writing for a female artist," he said.

So before he could begin, Bradford



Photo by Jen Osborn

Earl Chason's songs have hit number three in Holland.

sent him a tape of some of her other songs.

"It means a lot if you're going to write a song for someone if you get to know their style," Chason explained.

Bradford selected the song, "You Went out Two-Steppin' One Too Many Times," and recorded it on the KMA record label as well.

"The demo sounds great," Chason said in a recent issue of *Hard Country Beat* magazine, "and I'm equally happy about this one. Hopefully these will help establish me as a 'good' songwriter and someday make a hit song if one of these don't make it."

Although he's happy with the way things have turned out, Chason said he hopes he's not finished yet. He's glad the Bradford's have recorded his songs, but he would be even happier if a big-name artist would pick up one of his songs and re-record it.

"A break in country music would certainly help ensure that retirement would be secure for me in my older days," Chason said in the magazine.

Not only would it be flattering, it could also be lucrative for him because he gets a percentage of royalties every time the song is played on the radio — despite the artist.

"People don't realize when a radio station plays a singer's song, he gets money for that," he said.

The same goes for the writer. So if a big name recording artist records Chason's song on a bigger record label, Chason said there's a better chance for him to make money.

"If they do, the pyramid just goes on and on," Chason said. "That's really what you hope for — that someone will pick it up and record it many

times."

Chason said he also now belongs to a group that pays royalties if a song written by him gets any airplay.

Getting there is a long process, he said. As a newly published songwriter, Chason said he's learning how to protect himself in the recording industry. First, he said, every song — whether or not an artist has decided to record it — must be copyrighted through the Library of Congress to protect the writer. That can take six to eight weeks, but if it's not done, Chason said an artist can steal or change any part of the song and make it his own.

"But once you copyright it, they can't change anything in it," Chason said.

For those who are interested in entering the musical recording field, Chason gives this advice — check out all businesses you may have contact with. One way to do this is by calling the Better Business Bureau.

"There's so many of these things that are not on the up and up," Chason said.

In fact, Chason said he encountered one company in Texas that offered to record his song. Although the Better Business Bureau said they had no complaints against the business, Chason said he wasn't comfortable. He held onto his songs and later they were picked up by the KMA label.

Chason said he will continue to pursue a songwriting career.

"I've never been to Nashville, but always wanted to go and perform there when I was younger," Chason said in the magazine. "But, now that I've grown older, I'm pleased to see my name on an album cover as a writer of a song."



Photo by Kristin Guthrie

## United Way kicks off campaign

Tammie Burton, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hoke County United Way, kicks off the nonprofit group's fundraising campaign. The group raises money for several Hoke County organizations, including the Literacy Council, the Children's Developmental Center and the Rescue Squad.



Photo by Kristin Guthrie

## County Health Day

Mitchell Byrd, EMS director, Deanne Wells, secretary to the county manager, and Walter Bryant of the Hoke County Sheriff's Department discuss good nutrition during County Health Day at the health department. During the day on Tuesday, the health department was open for county employees only. The department hopes to make it a yearly event.

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