

With A Home In Perquimans:

# Wolfman Jack: A Star Who Enjoys 'Making Folks Happy'



WOLFMAN JACK



A BELVIDERE NATIVE — Lucy "Lou" Lamb Smith, wife of Wolfman Jack, is a native of Perquimans County, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lamb. Her love for her home led to the purchase of their Perquimans residence.



WE JUST CALL HIM DAD — Wolfman's two children, Todd and Joy, see their father's celebrity status as "no big deal." Joy said, "We just call him Dad or Wolf."



By KATHY M. NEWBERN  
Perquimans County has long held different attractions for different people. But for the Robert W. Smith family the attraction was not the beautiful Perquimans River or the abundance of hunting and fishing facilities. No, for the Robert W. Smith family, Perquimans County was attractive because of a house and family ties.

In June, the family purchased a stately old manor in the Belvidere section of the county. As a little girl growing up in Belvidere, Mrs. Smith had often ridden by the house while going to and from school and had thought it to be "an interesting old home."

Perquimans residents may know Mrs. Smith as the former Lucy Lamb, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Lamb of Chappell-Hill, and sister to Jean, Pauline, Kathy and Murray Lamb.

Or they may know her as the wife of Wolfman Jack, famed star of radio and television.

In a recent interview with Wolfman whose real name is Bob Smith, he recalled highlights of his career and explained the purchase of a house in Perquimans County.

The house will not be a permanent residence for Wolfman and his family but rather a sort of retreat and a place to stay while visiting Lucy's parents and other relatives. Wolfman and his family actually reside in Beverly Hills, Calif. where he works. They also have a beach home on the Pacific coastline. And plans are to purchase several other retreat type places. In addition to being a place to stay when visiting in the area, Wolfman emphasized the fact that he hopes their newest home will also afford the family a little privacy, something they treasure but have little of. He described the new house not only as a retreat but also as a way "to get away from the press and telephones."

Concerning the new home in Belvidere, Wolfman said, "We've been able to escape down here pretty much. We're not looking for sightseers. We didn't buy this house to put a security guard outside. We're here because we choose to be here to get away from the world."

He further explained that he is very family-oriented and his work does not allow him to spend much time with his wife, whom he calls Lou, and his two children: Joy, age 15; and Todd, age 13. Wolfman pointed out that he spends about 150 days of the year traveling and another 100 days per year doing radio and television shows which doesn't leave much time to relax and enjoy being with his family. Both of Wolfman's children agree that he is away from home a lot but they feel they enjoy their time with him even more because of it. Having Wolfman Jack for a father is "no big deal" to

them although Todd did say, "It makes me more popular with certain people," and sister Joy readily agreed. Todd added that being the son of a celebrity really doesn't have any effect on him since he doesn't know what it is like not to be in that situation. Wolfman's wife, Lou, added that in California it is not "a big thing" since celebrities are in abundance there.

Wolfman was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. and has lived in the South and Texas but has spent most of his life in California. He met Lou when he was working as a disc jockey for WYOU in Norfolk, Va. They were married in 1960, a date that he marks as the "true beginning of my career."

Although he has worked as a disc jockey at numerous radio stations, Wolfman cites two in particular which were boosts to his career: XERF which he described as "the world's most powerful commercial station;" and XERB. He added that "American Graffiti," a film about and starring Wolfman Jack was a tremendous boost to his popularity.

XERF was a Mexican radio station in Del Rio, Tex. carrying 250,000 watts which covered the North American continent. After his marriage, Wolfman moved to the Del Rio station and then on to Los Angeles, Calif. He has also worked in New York City and Chicago.

While working at the Del Rio station, XERF, Bob Smith became known to his many fans as Wolfman Jack. It was in 1960, a time in radio that he remembers as the "Big Bopper Syndrome," a time when d.j.'s were using catchy air names. He would come on the air at midnight with wolves howling in the background. The Wolfman part came from the creature depicted in horror movies. And the Jack was simply added from a popular saying at the time, "What's happening, Jack." As his popularity grew with listening audiences, songs were written and recorded about him by some 18 artists among which included "The Beatles" and Jose Feliciano. One of the best known is "Clap for the Wolfman" recorded by the group, "Guess Who."

He describes his career from 1964 to 1973 as a time when he was "very hot on the west coast." And in 1973 the film, "American Graffiti" was released by Universal Pictures. Produced by Francis Ford Coppola of "The Godfather" fame and directed by George Lucas, the film can only be termed a box office hit. The movie was based around The Wolfman Jack Radio Show and starred the Wolfman himself. He described the film as "recapturing the feeling of the time." Lucas had asked Wolfman to appear in the film and the original agreement was for him to be paid \$1,000 per day. His part would take three days to do,

one day for the scenes starring him and two days to do the soundtrack. However the original agreement did not go through. Instead, Wolfman was "given a piece of the picture" or a percentage of the profits. He smiled and said, "I probably made a half million dollars off that movie by having a piece of it." He also added with pride, "That movie outgrossed everything done up to its time except for a few super hits like 'The Godfather.'" The Wolfman has also appeared in what he calls a lot of B movies, but he added, "I didn't do any more flicks after American Graffiti because it became a classic." He did add that he would like to do more movies but radio, television, and personal appearances are keeping him busy.

And keeping busy he is. Four years ago he became the host and moderator of the television show called "The Midnight Special" seen on NBC late Friday nights. It is now the longest running live music rock 'n roll show in existence and is seen in 30 countries around the world. Wolfman describes the show as the "strongest and heaviest music show in television." His radio show is syndicated on well over 2,000 stations and is heard in 43 countries including the United States. He is also the star of a new one-half hour variety comedy show being produced in Canada. Known as "The Wolfman Jack Show" it will be shown in the states starting in September. On the show, Wolfman exhibits his

many talents. In addition to being a fast talking disc jockey, he is also a singer, dancer and can play the piano, having taken lessons from the rock star, Leon Russell. While he doesn't read music, he admits that he "picked it up quickly" and his love for music is evident. He hypothesizes that he could have possibly become a recording artist if he had not put all his efforts in radio. But he doesn't regret the direction in which

he placed his efforts, he is quick to add.

As he put it, "I love what I do. I love everything I'm into. I'm very lucky. I've been able to do everything I've ever wanted. Yes, I'm very lucky and very fortunate. I think I've made a lot of folks happy."

When you see Wolfman Jack on television or hear him on the radio, you have to agree. He's a man that enjoys his work and he has made a lot of people happy.

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AT HOME IN PERQUIMANS — Taking time out from their busy lives, Lou, Todd and Joy relax at their new home in Perquimans. (Newbern photos)

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