

Rising Star

KM native Jimmy Wayne Barber's 'Stay Gone' 23 on Billboard country chart and still climbing

By TODD HAGANS
Special to The Herald

Bessemer City has its baseball star in Philadelphia Phillies pitcher Kevin Millwood. Now it looks like the 'City With A Heart' can claim its own rising country music star in Jimmy Wayne Barber.

Barber's first single, 'Stay Gone,' recently ranked at No. 23 on the Billboard country charts and at No. 18 on the Radio and Record charts and if the song's growing popularity is any indication, it could skyrocket to the top. The tune hit the airways in February and has found plenty of playing time on Charlotte's two country music stations and stations around the country.

Barber, 30, whose stage name is Jimmy Wayne, made his television debut on March 1 on Country Music Television (CMT) and appeared on the Grand Ole Opry on March 22, two big steps an artist takes on the way to stardom.

People in Bessemer City are talking about Barber's career with many boasting that another Bessemer City boy has found success.

"I am so proud," said Willodean Wise, whose son, Robert, 32, is Barber's friend. "I think Jimmy is going to make it."

Wise said Barber and her son spent many hours in the basement of her Skyland Ave. home, practicing music performed in Robert's rock and roll band. Wise said Robert was interested in hard rock while Barber obviously went the country route. The two met while working at the Osage Mill.

Wise said she was thrilled to see Barber make his television debut on CMT.

"I called him right after he appeared on national TV and told him how proud I was and he said, 'Willodean, it started in your basement,'" said Wise, noting that the basement music was quite loud. "The pictures in my kitchen used to vibrate."

Wise said she never realized that Barber had serious ambitions of becoming a country musician during the days the two practiced in the basement. But, she is excited that Barber is finally experiencing success.

"When he first started, I didn't know he was aspiring to be famous," said Wise. "It just unfolded for him."

Wise, the wife of the late Bessemer City mayor and county commissioner Bill Wise, said Barber is very special to her and her family. Barber came home to Bessemer City last summer to sing at Mr. Wise's funeral.

"He is special to me and he was to Bill and our family," she said. "We look at him as family."

Wise said she is glad that Barber refers to Bessemer City as his hometown, although he was born in Kings Mountain. She said both Barber and Millwood are proud to say they are from Bessemer City.

"Jimmy likes to hear and he tells people that he's from Bessemer City," said Wise, mentioning that she loves to hear Barber's song on the radio. "I pray for him every time I hear his music."

Wise last saw Barber at Christmas, recalling that the Nashville singer dropped by her home for a visit. With his guitar in hand, Wise said someone asked Barber what he was carrying with him replying, "This is my wife."

Barber has been busy since last fall, making appearances at radio stations across the country. More radio touring is ahead for Barber as his 'Stay Gone' single is set for release in stores on April 29. His 11-song album will be on shelves on June 24.

Barber signed with Acuff-Rose in 1998 and co-wrote the song, 'Put Your Hand In Mine,' which Tracy Byrd recorded and peaked at No. 9 on the country charts in early 2000. He signed a contract with Dream Works in 2001 and has worked for over a year on his debut album. The song has proven to be a hit, reaching the top 30 in just five weeks.

Barber's sister, Patricia, who lives in Shelby, inspired the song, 'Stay Gone,' after she went through a divorce. The song's title is a reference to his sister's wishes for her husband. The idea of the tune came to Barber as he sat in traffic at a red light.

As a child, Barber's father abandoned him and his mother went to prison when he was 12 years old. With his parents out of the picture, Barber relied on foster parents to provide the guidance needed for a successful life.

As a high school dropout at the age of 16, Barber met the late Beatrice Costner, who owned a woodworking shop in Bessemer City, while looking for work. Costner gave him a job and a home and helped him get his life back on track. Barber graduated from Bessemer City High School in 1992, attended Gaston College and worked at the state prison in Dallas before moving to Nashville.

While chasing after his music career, Barber performed as a guest entertain-

er for the Miss Gastonia pageant and was discovered during an audition at the Opryland theme park.

When Barber has the chance to come home, he often visits with family and friends in Bessemer City, Cherryville and Kings Mountain.

Barber was a guest musician during the 2001 Down Home Festival in Bessemer City, entertaining crowds with his favorite tunes. He also provided entertainment during the Bessemer City Area Chamber of Commerce's annual dinner in November 2000.



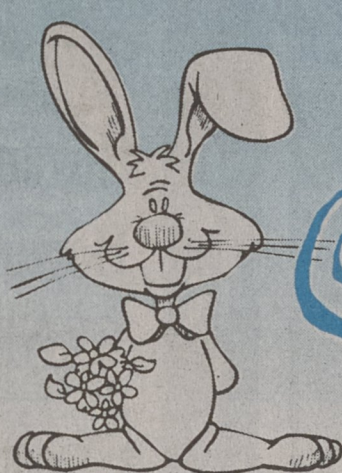
Kings Mountain native Jimmy Wayne Barber is a rising country music star. His latest single 'Stay Gone' is climbing the charts and gaining air play on stations in Charlotte and around the country.

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FOOD INSPECTIONS

Cleveland County Health Department inspected the following food-handling facilities during the week ending April 11.

**Denotes 2 extra points when an employee attended an approved food-handling course.

Restaurants:

- Bojangles, Cleveland Ave., Kings Mountain, 96**
- Chan's Garden, York Rd., Kings Mountain, 95.
- Jersey Mike's Subs, E. Dixon Blvd., 97.5
- One Stop, E. Marion St., 90.
- Poppis Chicken Coop, S. Post Rd., 91.5.
- Redbone Willys, Fallston Rd., 95.
- Sub Station II, S. Lafayette St., 99**
- Subway, York Rd., Kings

Mountain, 94.5**

Subway, Highland

Festival, 96.

The Dugout, S. Lafayette

St., 99**

Food Stands:

- Dominos Pizza, Grove St., Shelby, 99.
- One Stop, W. Dixon Blvd., 96.
- Harris Teeter Deli, E. King St., Kings Mountain, 96.5**
- Southern Convenience, W. King St., Kings Mountain, 95.
- The Pantry, E. Marion St., 85.
- Little Caesar, E. King St., Kings Mountain, 86.
- Texaco Express, Linwood Rd., Kings Mountain, 96.

Meat markets:

- Harris Teeter, E. King St., Kings Mountain, 96.