



## June Webb by John Hyatt

Years ago in the sleepy town of L'Anse, Michigan, Louise and James Webb welcomed into the world a cuddly little baby girl they named June Ellen, a cutie with natural wavy blonde locks. Little did the blue collar couple know at the time but this tiny bundle of joy, and the two siblings that would join her over the next few years, would change their life's path in a very big way. Soon after, June and her family had to relocate to Miami, Florida as a result of doctor's orders for a medical condition Louise had. That move inspired James, a multi-talented out-of-the-box thinker and quasi entrepreneur whose most recent profession was a Fishing Boat Captain, to decide that the family should get into the music business. So Louise, a talented musician who was already polishing her

skills as songwriter, began introducing the children to singing, dancing, and the instruments they would ultimately master; young Ford the Steal Guitar, Shirley the Bass, and June the Guitar ... an instrument that she would one day become noted for. And so it began, June Webb's musical journey that would play out like an old country song ... yes, there were old dogs, diners, broken hearts, smoke-filled clubs, trains, and mama ... but no prison, June Webb was/is first-class all the way!

Early in the journey Shirley and June as the Webb Sisters made guest appearances on Kids' TV Shows and were entered into several Talent Shows across the Eastern Seaboard all the while gaining experience and building such a large collection of trophies that it's a wonder the den's fireplace mantel didn't collapse under it. As the trek continued to wind its way through life June had emerged as the lead singer with Shirley on harmony ... and the girls, now teens, backed up by the family band became the Harmony Sweethearts. This is when James kicked into high gear with his self-assigned role as manager and agent booking gigs around the Miami area with the likes of the incomparable Little Jimmy Dickens, the playful and amicable Cowboy Copas, and other big name Grand Ole Opry stars. It was through the association with and encouragement by these stars that James decided to move the family to Nashville and June's still uncertain future inched a little closer to her eventual storied country music career.

June once told me how depressed she was when she first arrived in Nashville in the late 1940s, truth is the feeling of woe was almost unbearable. Consider this, you're a teen in high school, you're pretty as a picture, you're very popular, you're being wooed by the school's most dreamy guys, and you live in your idea of paradise ... then all of a sudden you're looking out the car window through a rainy dreary night at a flickering motel sign introducing a vacancy that would soon be your home for a while. James and Louise were concerned that their daughter, who by nature was already incredibly quiet, would become withdrawn or perhaps worse but within days yet another twist of fate made those concerns quickly fade. Once the family was settled James one morning was assessing the next move ... "aha, he announced to the family, we're in Nashville so we'll need western wear" so off they went clothing shopping. Making their way along unfamiliar streets lined with unfamiliar stores a frustrated Louise spotted country & western clothing in the window of a modest little nondescript shop ... "let's try this" she blurted out. Though James' mind was thinking more flashy given he had seen all of the sequins and sparkles on the western wear being worn by country music stars over the years he knew when Louise was at wit's end so entered the little shop they did. Once in they noticed a young man lounging in a chair at the far right of the shop ... as they approached he started getting up -- and up -- and up, by golly it was tall lanky Hank Williams! He extended his hand to June's dad while at the same time glancing at June and Shirley and saying, "what have we here?" And there it was, the next unexpected twist in the career of June Webb ... the great Hank Williams took the girls under his wing.

In early '51 a renewed June found herself zigzagging across the eastern and southern states with Hank Williams' Hadacol Caravan Show. Hadacol, a so-called miracle medicine, may not have been the real

cure-all it was claimed to be but the Webb Sisters sure were the perfect cure for anyone needing a country music fix, the crowds loved them! Hank Williams was so impressed with the sisters that he insisted they be included in his late '52 tour that was dubbed 'Hank Williams' Comeback' by some of the media. That's when horror struck, June's friend and mentor Hank Williams was dead! Much has already been written about those two fateful nights but a quick review is in order here. The Webb Sisters were scheduled, along with other acts, to perform with Hank, who was billed as the headliner of the Western Style Revue, on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1952, in Charleston, West Virginia. However, due to a snowstorm Hank could not make the 300-mile trip therefore the show was cancelled. Promoter 'Bam' Bamford sent all of the acts on to Canton, Ohio where they were to appear with Hank at a matinee show on New Years 1953. All of the entertainers were ready for the curtains to go up when they got the news that Hank Williams was dead ... an eerie shock-driven hush was followed by hugs and tears. After a bit a composed Hawkshaw Hawkins determined that the show must go on ... and go on it did, with a spontaneous tribute like no other. One by one the acts slowly made their way on stage each singing a Hank Williams song, June sang A Mansion On The Hill. The show closed with the entire cast singing I Saw The Light as the lights dimmed into darkness.

The next few years are nearly a blur since June took some personal time off for family matters and to reevaluate her path. It was at this time that June concluded it would be easier to manage a solo career along with her own growing family without having to coordinate schedules with all members of the Webb family band. Though the decision was not popular with mom, dad and her siblings June signed with RCA ... her solo career was launched with flair, a new 45 [Crewcut Romeo, which she wrote, on one side and Final Affair on the other] and a jam-packed touring schedule with headliner Gentleman Jim Reeves as well as the Everly Brothers and a host of other top acts produced by Chet Atkins. Things were ramping up nicely when true to her country song-like life's journey June, on a beautiful paint horse, was galloping across a picturesque meadow her long blonde tresses majestically tossing in the wind, when the temperamental steed stopped dead in his tracks. After sailing over 20 feet in the air she landed awkwardly in a heap causing a multiple exposure compound fracture in her right ankle. The only touring Miss June did for the next nearly a year was to and from therapy ... and the once promising stint at RCA quietly came to an end due to some deliberate misinformation by one of the folks she trusted the most. Do you hear that squeaky door to what seemed like a can't-miss career being slammed shut? Not so fast ... a call from her agent > a guest appearance on a national TV show > a performance that brought the house down > and an offer to be a regular on the show > the train to success was back on the track and steaming right along!

What TV Show ... the Roy Acuff Show, of course. We're now in the mid '50s and a very big night had arrived, June was to guest on the show that would become her home away from home for several years and an important stepping stone along the well-traveled road to stardom. That night she sang Autry Inman's I Cried Again to a hootin' and hollerin' crowd, little did she know it was an audition ... a wowed Roy Acuff sure did, her signature graced the contract before night's end; June Webb was now the Roy Acuff Show's lead female singer! It was during this time that June Webb received Billboard Magazine's prestigious 'Most Promising Female Vocalist' award [1958]. June loved her time with the Roy Acuff Show ... oddly she even enjoyed the long car trips weaving from state to state with a two-night gig at a rousing dance hall here and a one-nighter playing to a boisterous crowd at a smoked-filled auditorium there. She especially looked forward to the annual USO tours that took them around the world ... June is a big supporter of our military and the USO tours gave her an opportunity to give back. Thinking back to those trips I recall June once told me about a couple of hilarious experiences she had with the outdoor urinals in parts of Europe and the over aggressive men in Italy. Knowing June like I do I can tell you those things sure did not set well with the super modest and humble 'lady' that she is. The next several years were a blast for June; her family was doing very well, she had a nice place just outside of Nashville, and her thriving career was gaining momentum with the Roy Acuff Show. Then, just as the lyrics of that old country song we've been comparing her life's path to has their ups and downs, on one fateful day when she received some of the greatest news of her life it was quickly snatched from her, again by one of the folks she trusted the most. The great June Webb walked off the stage that night, went into her dressing room where a friend was, handed her the key to her [June's] place and told her she could have everything in it. June drove off into the night never to look back ending a stellar country & western music career and depriving fans worldwide of this star's great music and her incredible grace and style.

Had we heard the last of June Webb? Yes, in a way that is true since unlike many celebrities who bask in the glory of -- I'm back so dote on me -- June is a person who makes a decision and moves on. That said, however, more than a person who sticks to her guns June is a darn fine person of high character, a class lady that possesses an abundance of compassion, caring, and forgiveness. So, when she answered her telephone in mid 1992 and a voice on the other end from the Grand Ole Opry asked her for a huge favor she listened instead of abruptly hanging up. Favor, what kind of favor ... a very big one indeed! June was informed that Roy Acuff was nearing the end of his star-studded life and was reaching out to her to appear with him on the Grand Ole Opry one last time. She never hesitated, on August 15, 1992, June Webb made her way onto the hallowed Opry stage to a roaring crowd that had packed the house ... there was a big on-stage hug from Roy that was followed by two incredible performances, wow, during her 30-year absence June Webb had not lost a beat figuratively or literally! Sadly Roy Acuff passed on three months later and is now entertaining folks in heaven.

Following her August 15, 1992, Opry appearance June again purposely removed herself from the limelight to lead a very private life. An innocent e-mail from a loyal fan in 2008 added yet another line or two of lyrics to June's country song life's path. That e-mail led to a move, a change in her personal life, a CD [June Web then... with a hint of now!], a website [junewebmusic.com], an induction into America's Old Time Country Music Hall of Fame [September 3, 2011], a ... oh heck, let's just say that June Webb is living happily ever after and leave it at that.

This Bio is authorized by June Webb [August 10, 2011]