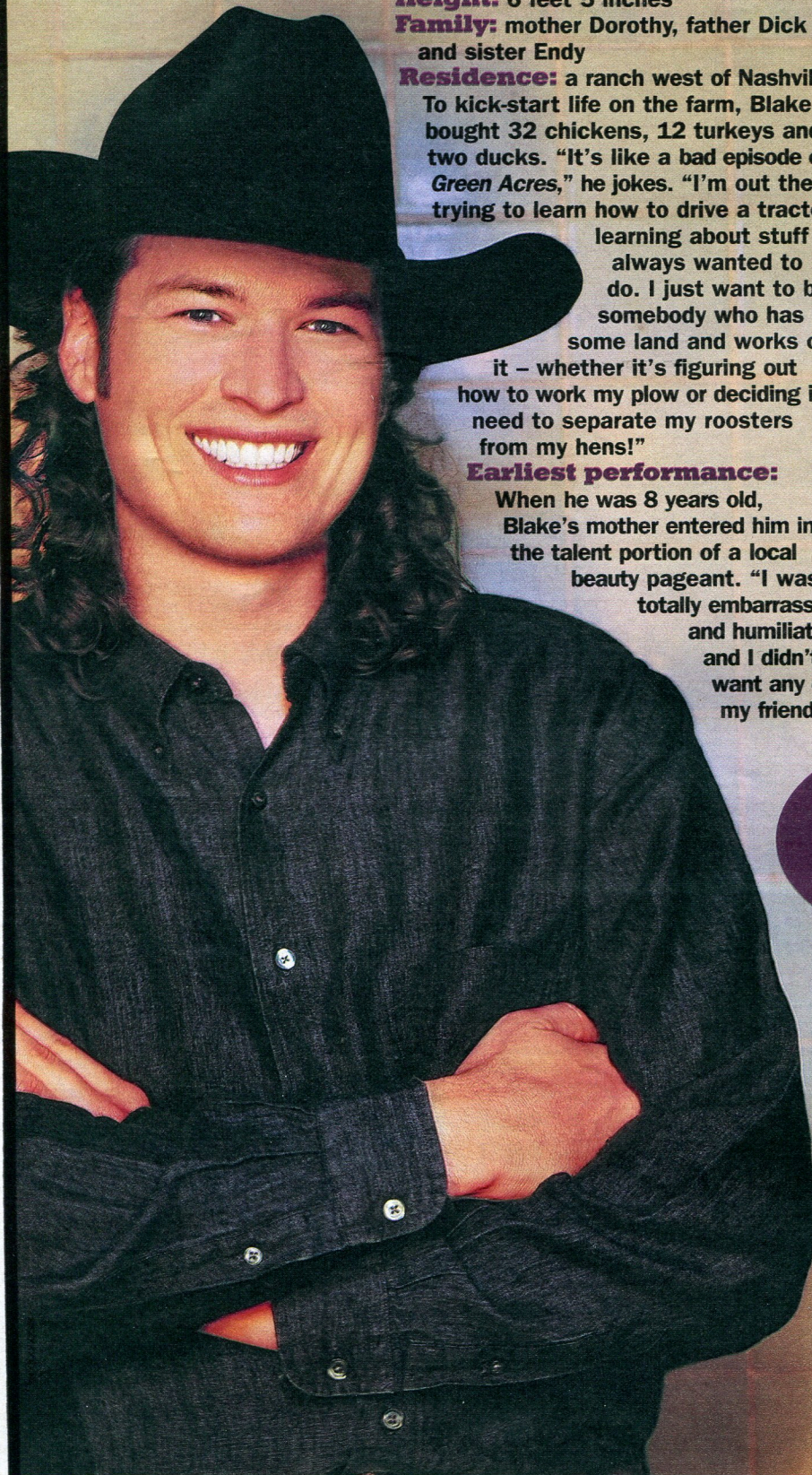


By John Vasile



Birth date: June 18, 1976

Raised: Ada, Okla.

Hair: brown **Eyes:** blue

Height: 6 feet 5 inches

Family: mother Dorothy, father Dick and sister Endy

Residence: a ranch west of Nashville.

To kick-start life on the farm, Blake bought 32 chickens, 12 turkeys and two ducks. "It's like a bad episode of *Green Acres*," he jokes. "I'm out there trying to learn how to drive a tractor, learning about stuff I always wanted to do. I just want to be somebody who has some land and works on it - whether it's figuring out how to work my plow or deciding if I need to separate my roosters from my hens!"

Earliest performance: When he was 8 years old, Blake's mother entered him into the talent portion of a local beauty pageant. "I was totally embarrassed and humiliated and I didn't want any of my friends

to know about it," he says. "I told my mom I didn't want to sing anymore because it's too embarrassing."

His arrival in Nashville: A teenage Blake was part of the entertainment lineup at an Ada, Okla., show honoring songwriter and native Oklahoman Mae Boren Axton, who co-wrote "Heartbreak Hotel." Mae was impressed with what she saw and convinced Blake he needed to move to Nashville. Blake followed her advice, and in June 1994, two weeks after graduating from high school, he headed for Music City. "I called Mae when I got to Nashville. I asked her what she wanted me to do now," Blake recalls. "Well," answered Mae, "you can come and paint my house for me."

Musical influences: Earl Thomas Conley (Blake's "all-time musical hero"), Travis Tritt, Hank Williams Jr., Dan Seals

Favorite album: Earl Thomas Conley's *Greatest Hits* (1985)

Favorite song: "What I'd Say" by Earl Thomas Conley

Career highlight: co-writing the song "All Over Me" with Earl Thomas Conley; "I got up extra early that morning so I would be awake and alert," he recalls, "and I was so nervous I must have drank two pots of coffee. So when I got to his house, the first thing I did after meeting him was

Write to:
Blake Shelton
Fan Club
P.O. Box 682472
Franklin, TN
37068

ask him if I could use his bathroom. When I got in there, the only thing I could think of was, 'I'm using Earl Thomas Conley's toilet!'"

Favorite color: blue

First Opry appearance: May 5, 2001

First time recognized in public:

"At a Hardee's somewhere between Kansas City, Kan., and Manhattan, Kan. It was a good feeling," he admits. "But it's an adjustment. I've gotta learn to straighten up a bit!"

Favorite food: Stuffed Crust Pizza from Pizza Hut

Favorite movies: *McLintock!*, the 1963 slapstick Western starring John Wayne, and *Dumb & Dumber*, the 1994 slapstick comedy starring Jim Carrey

Billboard No. 1 single: "Austin," which topped the charts for five weeks and tied with Billy Ray Cyrus' 1992 smash "Achy Breaky Heart" as the longest-running No. 1 song for a new male singer.

