



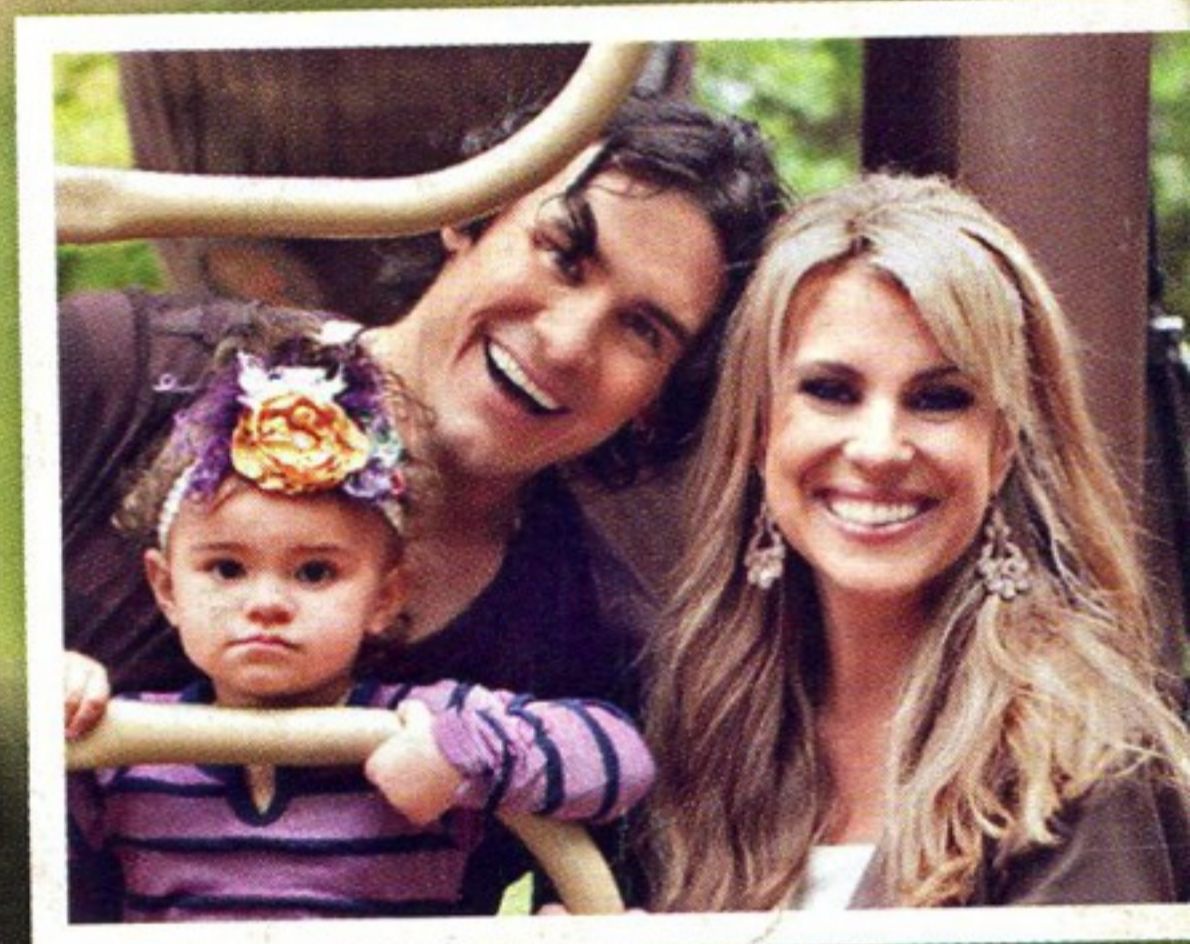
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DECEMBER 16, 2013

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COVER STORY

# 30

## Blake Shelton

Country music's leading firebrand—and the reigning CMA Male Vocalist of the Year—on his Oklahoma upbringing and the people who made him who he is today.

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BLAKE SHELTON BY SANDRA JOHNSON/WMG; JOE NICHOLS & FAMILY BY COURTNEY WILSON/BELLA PHOTOGRAPHY; LISA MARIE PRESLEY BY CHRIS HOLLO/HOLLO PHOTOGRAPHICS/GRAND OLE OPRY ON THE COVER: BLAKE SHELTON BY SANDRA JOHNSON/WMG; TOBY KEITH BY RICKY DIAMOND/CMT; JOE & FAMILY BY COURTNEY WILSON/BELLA PHOTOGRAPHY

A look at the people and places  
that shaped country's most  
entertaining personality.

# Growing Up Blake

BY THE COUNTRY WEEKLY  
EDITORIAL STAFF

**O**ver the past few years, nearly everyone has come to feel as if they know Blake Shelton personally. He's become country music's most transparent star, sharing details of his life on Twitter, from his judge's chair on *The Voice* and, especially, on albums like *Based on a True Story . . .*, the CMA's Album of the Year.

Even so, there's still so much to learn about the 37-year-old singer and his path to country and pop culture fame. In this special cover story, *Country Weekly* mines its archives to better connect the dots of Blake's life and show how a prank-loving kid from Ada, Okla., grew into the admired entertainer—and, let's face it, beloved smartass—that he is today.

## AN OKLAHOMA RAISIN'

For coming-of-age Blake, ground zero was the family home in the rural refuge of Ada, Okla. (current population: a little over 17,000). It was there the gregarious outdoors lover began to forge relationships and create the memories he'd carry with him into adulthood. "I've got a lot of friends here, but what makes it special is this is still where all the family lives: cousins and aunts and uncles and parents. I know that I'm welcome at any of these people's houses," Blake once told *CW* during a visit to the home of his mother, Dorothy Shackelford. Dorothy married Mike Shackelford after she and Blake's father, Dick Shelton, divorced.

"Every memory I have is here," he said. "From the time I was born 'til the time I moved away, this is where everything in my life happened."

Including his first exposure to the guitar and to mu-



Young Blake with mom Dorothy at home in Oklahoma; (right) at 2 years old, Blake was already drawn to the guitar.





BLAKE SHELTON BY SANDRA JOHNSON / WMG FAMILY PICTURES COURTESY BLAKE SHELTON

## BLAKE SHELTON CONTINUED

sic in general. His uncle was the one who taught Blake simple guitar chords, and Blake's older brother, Richie, turned him on to the sounds of Waylon, Bocephus and even rap.

"His room was straight across the hallway from mine. He'd be in there cranking up anything from Ted Nugent all the way to Waylon Jennings, Hank Williams Jr., Garth Brooks, Joan Jett," Blake said. "He loved 'U Can't Touch This' by MC Hammer. I can't tell you how many times I heard that damn song coming out of his room!"

Perhaps it's easy, then, to see from where Blake's affinity for the hip-hop rhymes of "Boys 'Round Here" might have come.

Sadly, as most fans know, Blake's brother Richie died in a car accident in 1990, a tragic event that would inspire Blake and wife Miranda Lambert's award-winning hit "Over You" many years later.

"He was my hero," Blake has said, crediting Richie with his career direction. "I thought, 'If he loves music that much, that's what I want to do.'"

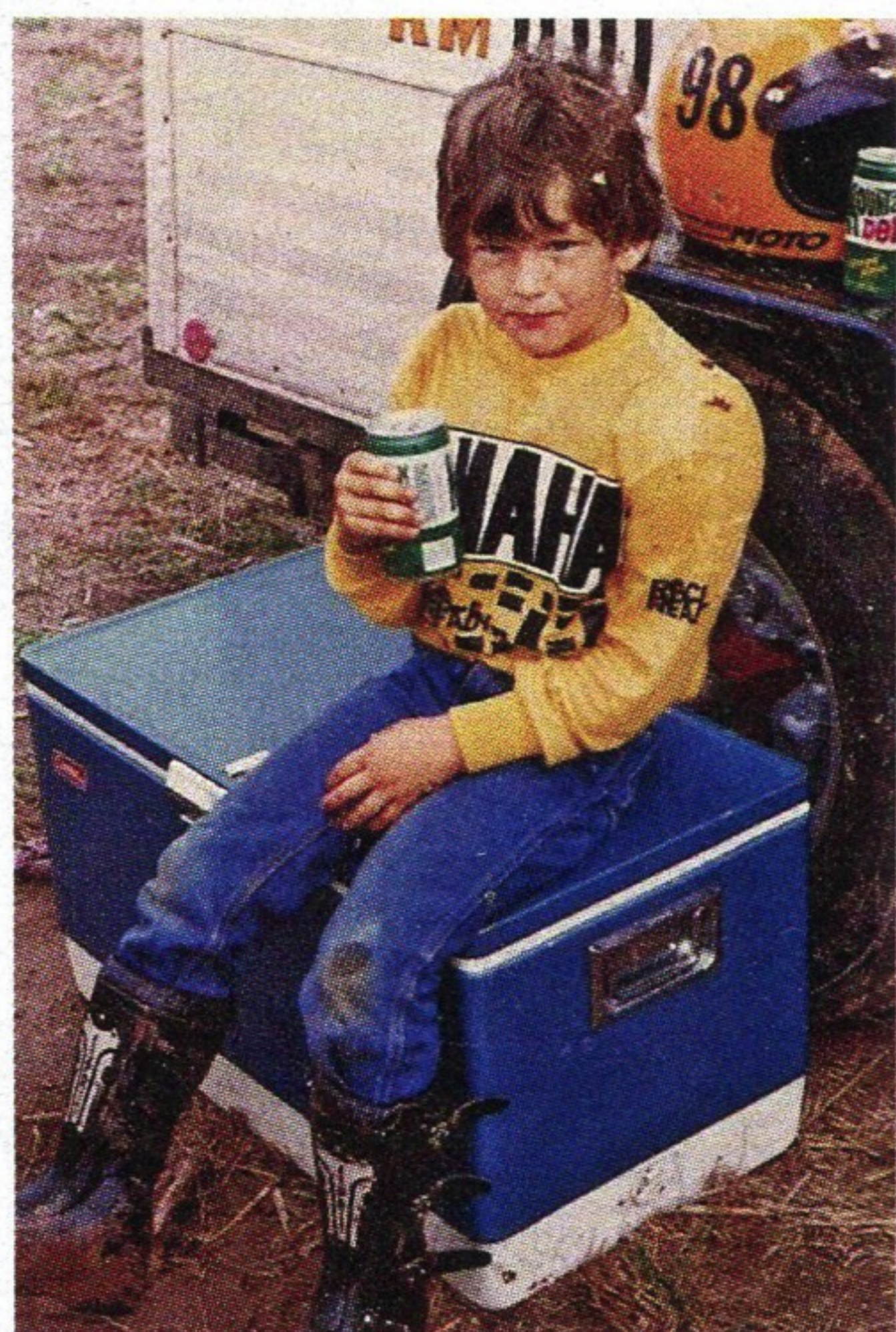
Blake's other sibling, older sister Endy Intrieri, who is now a jewelry designer in Moore, Okla. (see sidebar), was also influential in his formative years, even if the adoration Blake received occasionally chafed her as a child.

"I am the baby of my family," Blake said. "My mom was always babying me. I can remember my sister getting mad because she'd do something and then I'd do the same thing but wouldn't get in nearly as much trouble for it. I always had plenty of attention. I guess it made me want more and more. Maybe that's what edged me on into being an entertainer."

Ada is also where that first seed of the outrageous Blake persona was planted. One story recalled by a teacher of Blake's involved the wisecracker and a buddy posing a road-killed deer behind the wheel of a classmate's truck.



(Clockwise from above) A sibling portrait: Blake with brother Richie (left) and sis Endy; with Endy, father Dick and mom Dorothy; playing guitar with his uncle Dearn Newby; a motorbiking respite



As Blake has said of Oklahomans like himself, Carrie Underwood and Vince Gill, “We don’t take ourselves all that seriously.”

## TO TENNESSEE AND BACK

Shortly after graduating high school, Blake moved to Nashville in 1994. When success eventually struck, thanks to his 2001 No. 1 hit “Austin,” he was able to buy a farm in Centerville, Tenn. The avid hunter and budding farmer loved the remoteness of the property and populated it with chickens, ducks, hogs and even a pet turkey.

“I wanted to live out here because it’s so far away from everything. My favorite thing about this place is, I can do anything out here I want to—within reason,” Blake told *Country Weekly* back then. “And it’s my world. There’s nobody out here to answer to but myself.

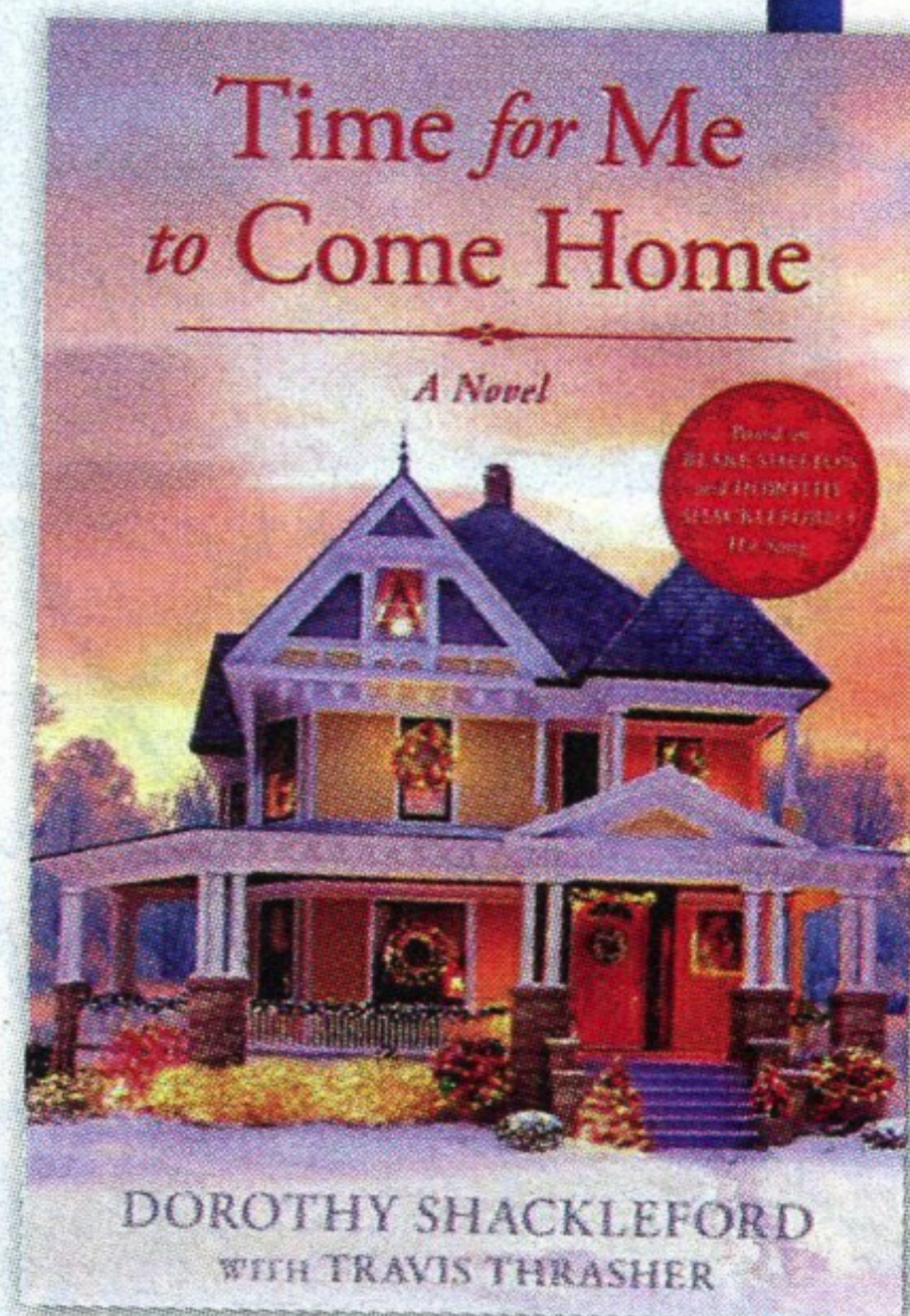
That would change in 2003 when Blake married



## Like Mother, Like Son?

Blake Shelton’s creativity didn’t come out of thin air. He has his mother, Dorothy Shackleford, to thank for some portion of it. In October, Dorothy released *Time for Me to Come Home*, her first novel (which she co-authored with Travis Thrasher). The title was inspired by “Time for Me to Come Home,” a song Dorothy wrote with her son that appeared on

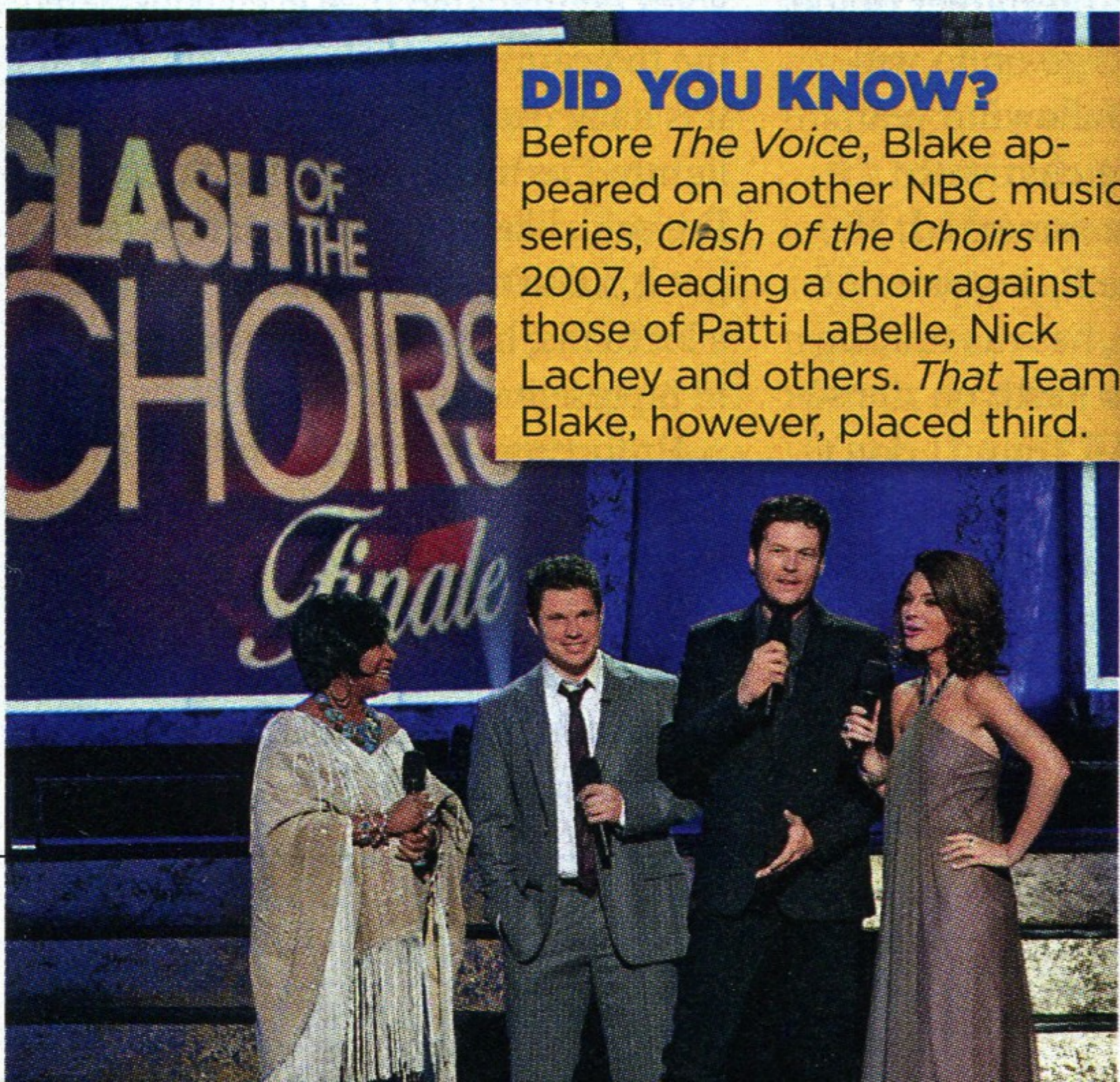
Blake’s 2012 holiday album, *Cheers, It’s Christmas*. The story certainly has some parallels in real life as well: Heath Sawyer, a 35-year-old country star, hits the big time and sells out Madison Square Garden only to realize he would like to spend Christmas back home in Oklahoma with his family. Of course, booking last-minute travel around the holidays is a nightmare with weather delays, and Heath has a certain “feisty young woman” accompanying him for the trip. As for Blake, he’s been doing his part to help promote the release. “So cool to be holding a book that my mom wrote!!!” he tweeted ahead of the novel’s release, with a picture of the cover. He later posted another of the back cover, a picture of him with his mom. Now that’s a good son.

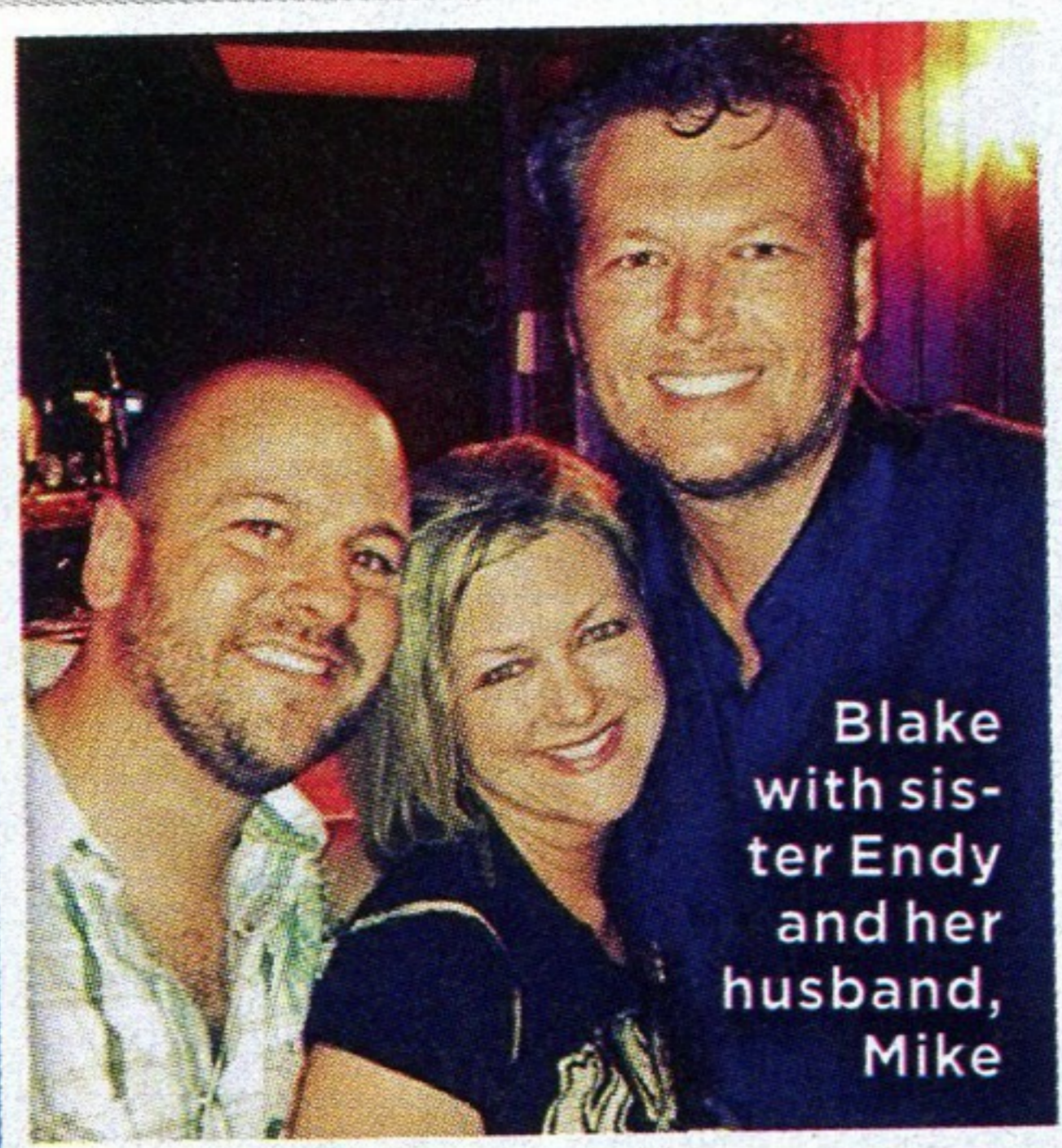


Blake had a pet turkey (as well as long hair) during the time he lived on a ranch in Centerville, Tenn.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Before *The Voice*, Blake appeared on another NBC music series, *Clash of the Choirs* in 2007, leading a choir against those of Patti LaBelle, Nick Lachey and others. *That Team Blake*, however, placed third.





Blake with sister Endy and her husband, Mike

## Sister Act

Blake's older sister, Endy Intrieri, has the creative family gene as well, putting her talents to her own handcrafted jewelry line, Endy Designs. The beaded necklaces and bracelets are colorful and rustic and the earrings are whimsical but tasteful for most any occasion. "Don't be caught with the same jewelry that everyone else is wearing," says Endy's website. For those hoping to catch a little bit of the family style, there are even jewelry lines inspired by both Blake and Miranda. Check it out at [endydesigns.com](http://endydesigns.com).



**BLAKE SHELTON CONTINUED** girlfriend Kaynette Williams. It was a union, however, that was short-lived. The couple divorced in 2006, and Blake fulfilled a comment he once made to *CW* on his Tennessee farm: "Sometimes I think I want to go back to Oklahoma and get a place there," he mused.

Blake moved into a converted hunting lodge on 1,200 acres near Tishomingo, Okla., just 30 minutes from his mom, Dorothy (see sidebar on page 33). Soon, the singer would have another loved one living much closer: Miranda Lambert.

## NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Blake and Miranda, as the famous love story goes, met during a taping of *CMT's 100 Greatest Duets* special. The song the two performed together? "You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma," originally cut by David Frizzell and Shelly West. It was yet another sign of the impact the Sooner State had on Blake.

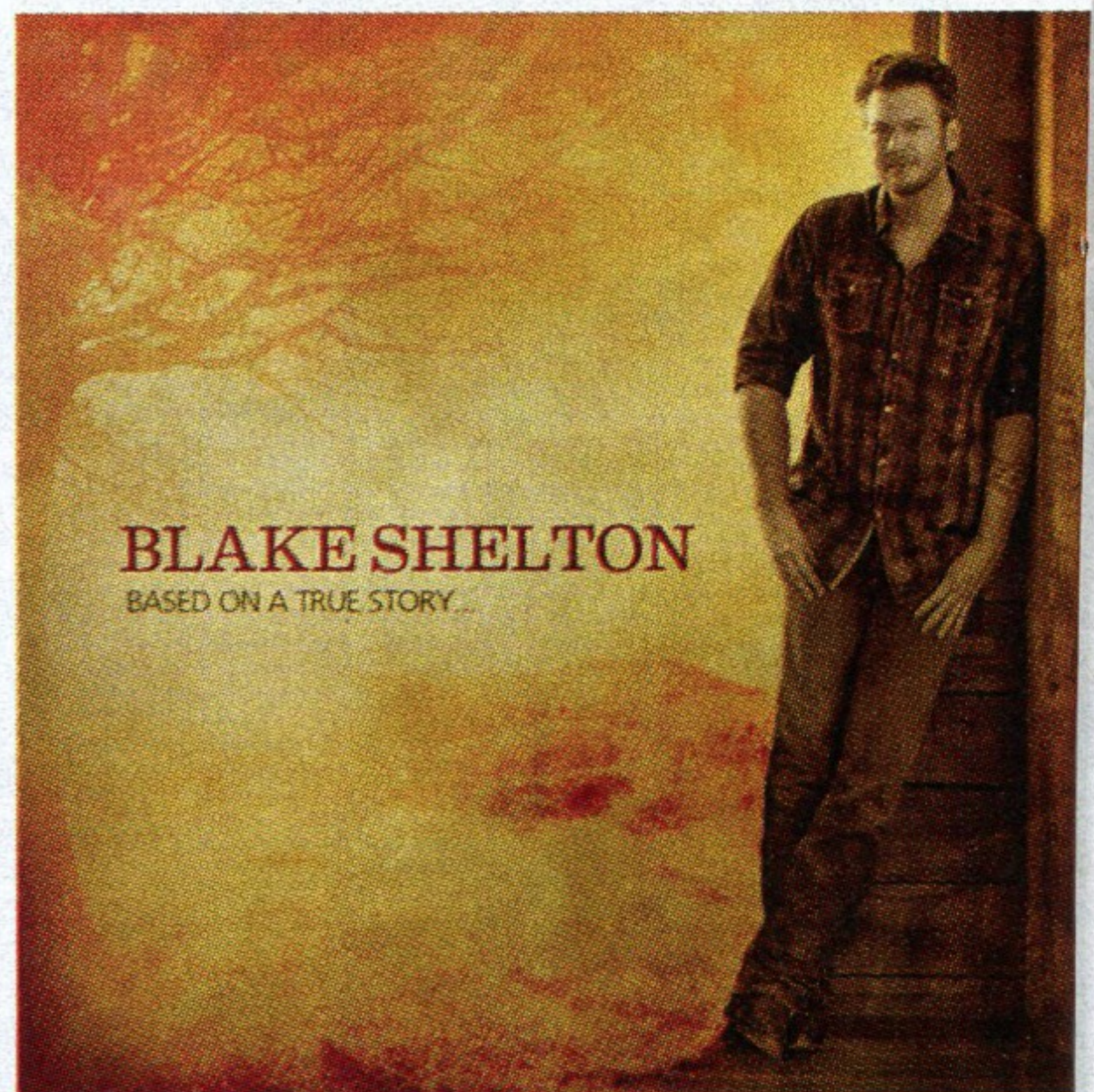
"It's real easy to lose yourself and lose focus in this music industry thing. I just feel like, all of a sudden, being back here in Oklahoma and four albums into this thing and kind of able to take control of my destiny a little bit . . .," Blake told *CW* in 2008, "I just love how my life is at the moment."

Little did he know then that his life and career would both skyrocket even further. He married Miranda in 2011, joined *The Voice* that same year and scored his first CMA Entertainer of the Year nomination. He'd go on to win the coveted prize the following year.

Ironically, in a 2004 chat with *Country Weekly*, Blake remarked, "I don't think I'll ever be Entertainer of the Year." At the time, he was touring with fellow Okie Toby Keith on the superstar's Shock'N Y'All Tour. "I don't know if I have it in me," he said.

Even Blake would have to admit he's thankful to have sold himself short. After his big win in 2012, he raved about the honor in a *CW* cover story.

"The fact that the Nashville industry



votes on that, that they even considered me to begin with is a shock, but to win it is a big deal to me. I don't take it lightly. I've read some of the things that I've said, like, saying it was dumb that I got it. I don't mean it that way. It means a lot to me, because everything I do I try to represent country," Blake said.

Unfortunately, Blake's father, Dick Shelton, wasn't around to share in his son's joy. The Oklahoma car-lot owner died early in 2012. Blake said that that final Christmas with his dad, spent in the hospital at his bedside, was his most memorable.

ENDY, HUSBAND & BLAKE AND ENDY DESIGNS JEWELRY COURTESY ENDY DESIGNS; TWITTER: BLAKE & MIRANDA GREATEST DUETS BY CURTIS HILBUN;

(Clockwise) Performing at CMA Music Festival last summer; accepting his Entertainer of the Year trophy from pal Reba; with dad Dick; his CMA Album of the Year, *Based on a True Story...*; with his *Voice* mates; and his fateful duet with Miranda Lambert on "You're the Reason God Made Oklahoma."



# COUNTRY WEEKLY



## STANDING OVATION

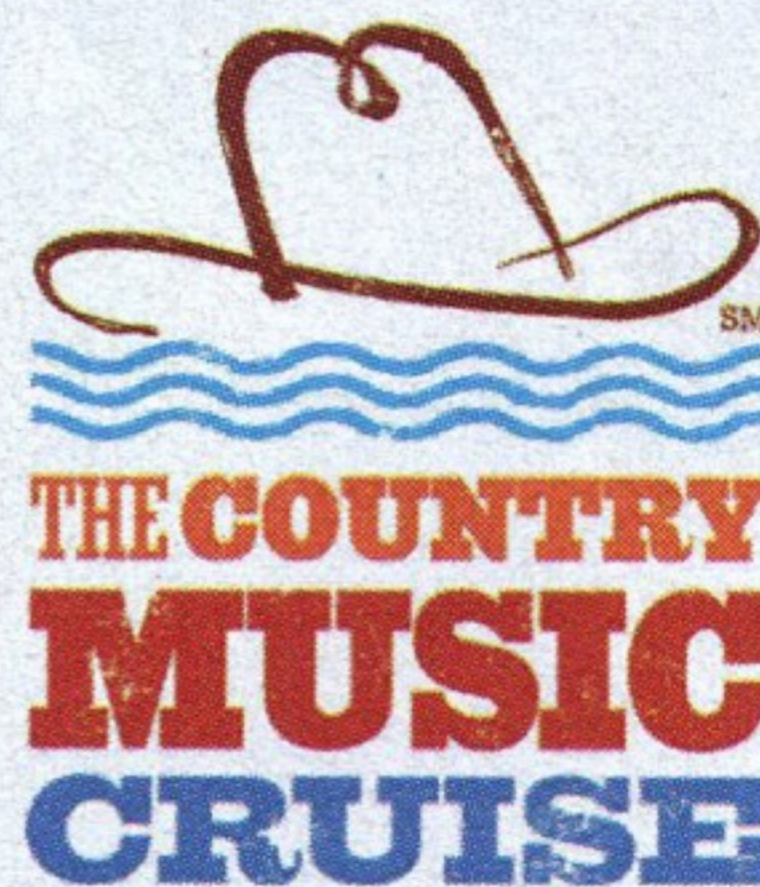
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"It will always be special to me. It's just a strange way it kind of turned out. Of course, nobody in the family knew how sick Dad was at that point, and my sister, she has a husband with two kids now, and they were doing their normal Christmas Eve with the kids. And Miranda has a tradition of going out and spending Christmas Eve with her family in Texas, and I normally go down there with her, too. But it was playing out like, somebody needs to hang out with Dad, he's not feeling too good, he's in the hospital. I said, 'If it's OK with everybody, I'm just going

to stay up here with Dad,'" Blake said, recalling the visit. "I wouldn't trade that night for anything."

It's hard to envision the Blake we know today without the influence of such strong figures as his father and mother, or even his Ada neighbors and friends. In other words: Blake's home. He grew up in Oklahoma, left to pursue and realize his dreams, and then returned to the place that shaped him.

"I love what I do and I'm thankful for it, but it's not the thing that makes me happy," he once said. "Being home is what makes me happy." **CW**