

JOHNNY CASH THE LEGACY LIVES ON

By Pam Windsor

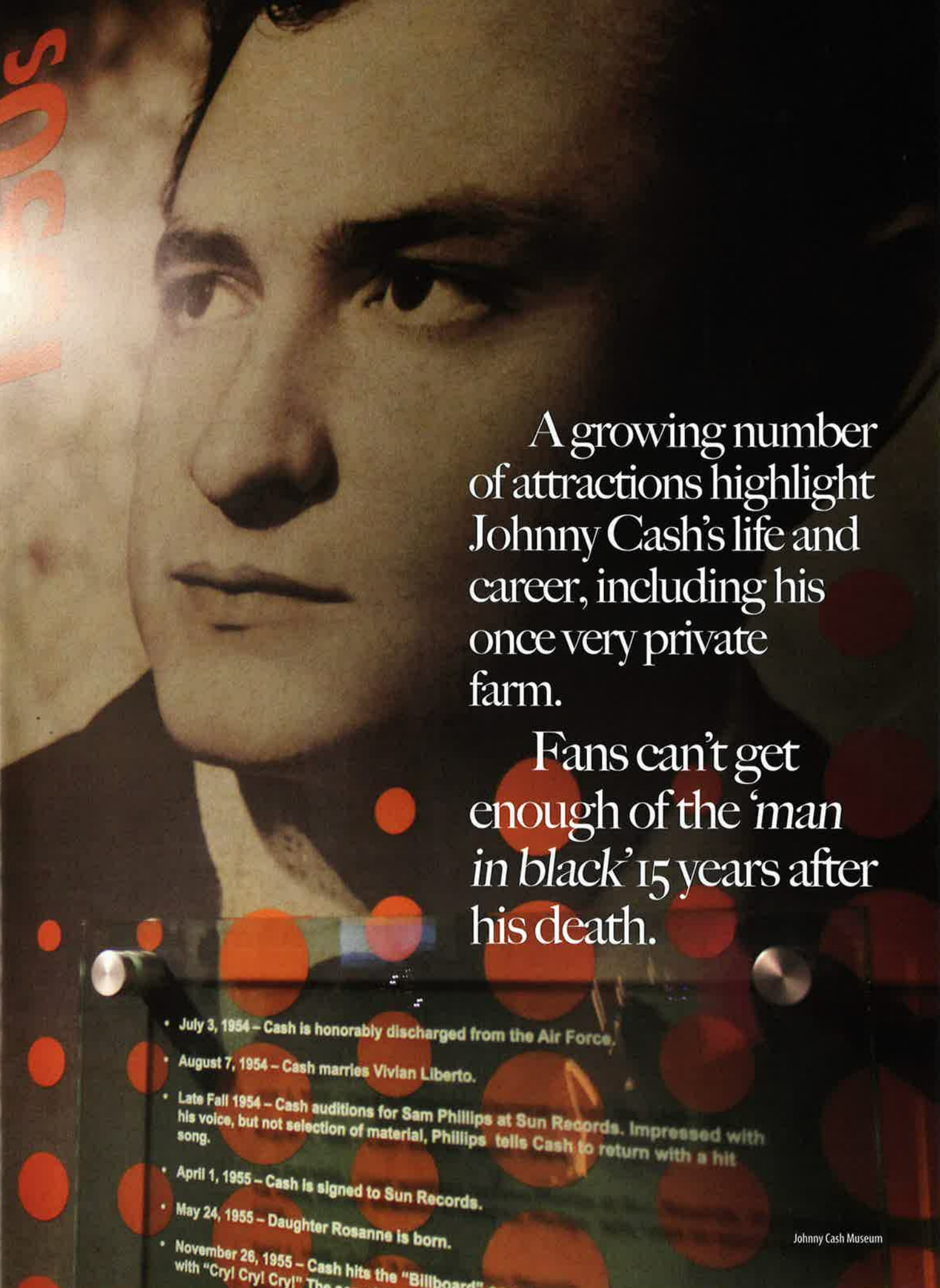
Photography courtesy of John Carter Cash,
Johnny Cash Museum and Cindy Cash

1960

1970

1980

January 1, 1958 - Cash performs his concert at San Quentin Prison.
February 15, 1959 - Cash records concept album "The Train."
June 1959 - Cash inspires Burt Bacharach's hit "Five Minutes to Live."
August 24, 1961 - Daughter Lisa is born.
January 25, 1962 - John Carter joins the Johnny Cash Show for the very first time at San Antonio, Texas.
May 15, 1962 - Cash plays Carnegie Hall for the first time.
March 25, 1962 - Cash records "Ring of Fire" which becomes his sixth chart-topping single, and first #1 hit.
April 4, 1964 - Cash returns to the top with "Underneath Your Rose," his seventh Number One hit.
July 25, 1964 - Cash performs at Newport Folk Festival.
November 1964 - Wilco (later the Grateful Dead) covers "The Ballad of Ira Hayes."
January 11, 1967 - Cash records "Johnny" with Julie Cash. The song hits Number Two on the charts and names the duo a Grammy.
January 12, 1968 - Cash records "Johnny".



A growing number of attractions highlight Johnny Cash's life and career, including his once very private farm.

Fans can't get enough of the 'man in black' 15 years after his death.

- July 3, 1954 – Cash is honorably discharged from the Air Force.
- August 7, 1954 – Cash marries Vivian Liberto.
- Late Fall 1954 – Cash auditions for Sam Phillips at Sun Records. Impressed with his voice, but not selection of material, Phillips tells Cash to return with a hit song.
- April 1, 1955 – Cash is signed to Sun Records.
- May 24, 1955 – Daughter Rosanne is born.
- November 26, 1955 – Cash hits the "Billboard" with "Cry! Cry! Cry!" The song...



Hideaway Farm In Bon Aqua, TN



Library at Hideaway Farm

Heading west from Nashville, it's an easy drive along Interstate 40 that only gets tricky after turning onto the winding, country roads that lead back to the farm once owned by Johnny Cash. Most people were more familiar with his larger, lakefront home in Hendersonville, but Johnny often came here to spend time with family and friends.

"Dad loved it here," says Cindy Cash. "As soon as we'd get off the road, June would want to stay at the big house and Dad would say, 'June, I'm going to the farm.'"

Tucked away in the small community of Bon Aqua, Tennessee, the farm offered more privacy.

"At his main house, Dad couldn't get into the car and drive out without stopping and signing autographs. But the farm was hidden. It was an hour away and nobody knew he lived there."

It took him back to his country roots as a young boy growing up in Dyess, Arkansas.

Friends – some of them famous – like Waylon Jennings, Marty Stuart, and others came to the farm. Singer Tony Orlando visited in 1976 for a Johnny Cash Christmas Special.

"It was a great time for me," he recalls. "Johnny said, 'You want to come see the farm?' Here I was a New York City kid on the farm, right? It was like hanging out with John Wayne."

He tells a story of how Johnny, known for his sense of humor, encouraged him to 'become a real country boy' and take a bite of a persimmon.

"I took a bite of this persimmon not knowing when a persimmon isn't ripe your face implodes," he says. "It was the most sour taste! I look over and Johnny's sitting there, laughing hysterically."

Despite the persimmon incident, he and Johnny became close friends and a YouTube video of the special shows Johnny, June, and Tony singing "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree" right there on the farm.

"I loved Johnny and June," Orlando says. "Johnny had a humble heart that came through in everything he sang."

No longer owned by the Cash family, the property is now called the Hideaway Farm and belongs to Brian and Sally Oxley, who have restored it and opened it up for tours.

"I came out here and fell in love



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Album Display inside the Johnny Cash Museum



"It was his voice, it was the way he delivered the songs. A lot of people can sing songs, but Johnny Cash could perform a song. There's a big difference."
- Nashville Recording Engineer & Producer Bil VornDICK

Inside Storyteller's Museum



"As an artist, my father followed his heart and did what he thought was right. He never altered in that."
- John Carter Cash

with it,” Brian says. He found an old video tape showing a Johnny Cash celebration from the ‘70s with family members and an emotional tribute from Carl Perkins. A search to locate where that took place led to the purchase of the building down the road now called the Storytellers Museum.

They join a growing number of attractions highlighting Johnny Cash’s life and career at a time when fans can’t seem to get enough. Visitors stream through the Johnny Cash Museum in Nashville on a daily basis. Johnny’s boyhood home in Dyess, Arkansas, has been restored and has an annual music festival in October.

Nearly 15 years after Johnny’s death, there’s a resurgence of interest in both the man and his music.

“It was his voice, it was the way he delivered the songs,” notes Nashville recording engineer and producer Bil VornDick, “A lot of people can sing songs, but Johnny Cash could perform a song. There’s a big difference.”

Johnny’s career started at Sun Records in Memphis in the ‘50s and spanned five decades. He recorded his signature song, “I Walk the Line” in 1956. Other hits would follow.

He started a family. He and first wife Vivian (Liberto) had four daughters: Rosanne, Kathy, Cindy, and Tara.

Toward the end of the decade, Cash began performing at prisons. Merle Haggard would later credit Cash’s first visit to San Quentin, where Haggard was serving time, with inspiring him to pursue his own music career. (Cash would continue doing prison shows with the historic taping of his Folsom Prison album in 1968 and the recording of “A Boy Named Sue” at San Quentin in 1969.)

As his fame grew, Cash became addicted to drugs, something he struggled with for years. “The amphetamines would get me up, the barbiturates would bring me down,” he later said.

And yet, even during the tough times, he held on to his core values.

“Johnny was always spiritual,” notes sister Joanne Cash Yates. “We were raised in church and Johnny gave his heart to the Lord when he was 12. Then, when he grew up and got into the music business, he kind of got away from it.”

Early on, she says, he wanted to sing gospel songs.

“Johnny wanted to be a gospel

tea

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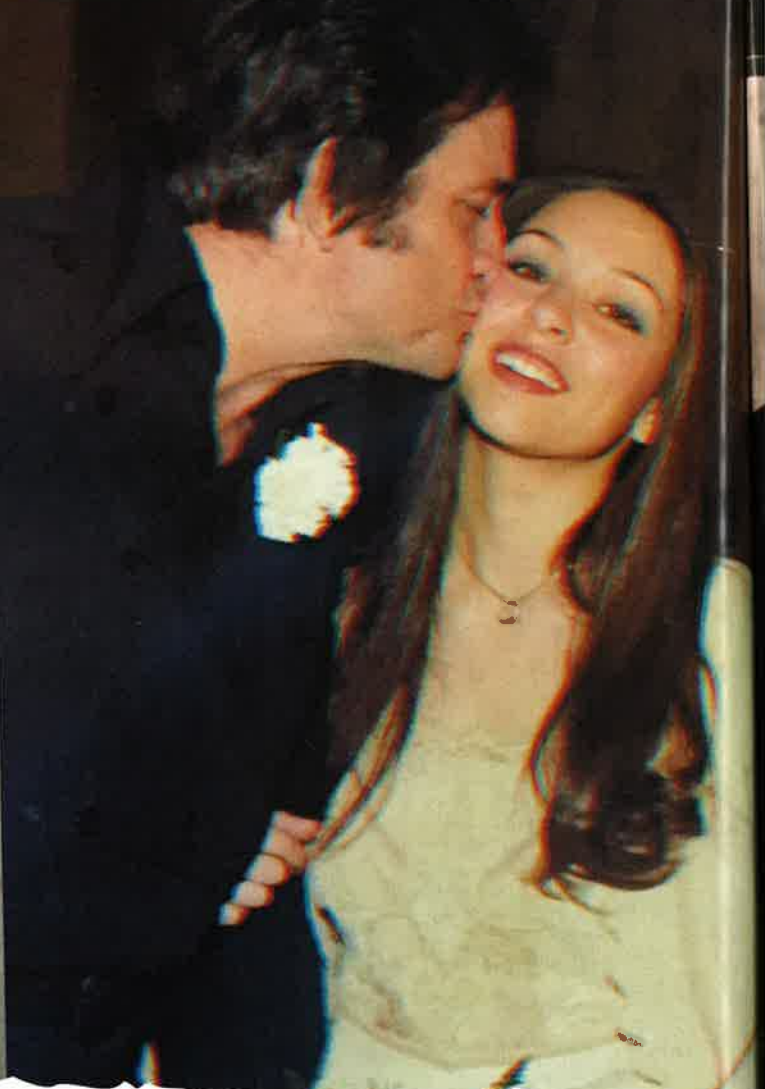
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Thomas Gabriel, grandson of Johnny Cash at the Hideaway Farm



Johnny and Cindy (daughter) Cash

singer but when he went to Sun Records, Sam Phillips said gospel won't sell. He later went on to record several gospel albums during his career."

It was music that eventually brought Cash and June Carter together. They met at the Grand Ole Opry and began touring together in the early 1960s. In 1963, Cash recorded "Ring of Fire," a song co-written by Carter.

In the mid-1960s, Vivian filed for divorce, and Cash married June. Their son, John Carter Cash, was born in 1970.

Johnny stayed busy with music and other projects, hosting a TV show from 1969 to 1971. He also began doing some acting. In 1985, he became part of The Highwaymen with Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, and Kris Kristofferson. They toured into the late 90s.

June died in May of 2003, and Johnny died four months later. Music remained a constant for him until the end. His video for "Hurt" was released the same year he died, garnering several posthumous awards.

"I think we're just beginning to see his impact," John Carter says. "It goes beyond his music. His character had so much to do with who he was as a human being."

Many still don't know his true depth.

"If you ask some people, who is Johnny Cash," he says, "the response is he wore black, he did drugs in the 60s,

he married June Carter and she saved his life." But, he adds, there's more to the story. "As an artist, my father followed his heart and did what he thought was right. He never altered in that."

John Carter published a book called "Forever Words," containing poems he discovered after his dad died. Some of those poems have been turned into songs by Willie Nelson, Brad Paisley, Rosanne Cash, and others for an album also called "Forever Words."

"It's about letting my father tell his own story," John Carter explains. "His private words said so much and it was cathartic for me to do the project."

As Johnny's legacy lives on, so does his musical influence. John Carter, a producer and musician in his own right, releases his own album called "We Must Believe in Magic" in the fall.

Back at the Storytellers Museum and Hideaway Farm, privately owned and not associated with John Carter, Johnny's grandson has become a featured performer.

Thomas Gabriel (his mother is Johnny's daughter Kathy) has a voice hauntingly similar to Johnny's. He's also had a similar struggle with drugs.

"My grandfather wanted me to become a police officer, so I did that for a while. But I had a bad alcohol and later a pill

Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash



problem and fell to my addiction. I wound up going to prison twice and hitting rock bottom.”

He and Johnny discussed his problem. “He said we had the same disease. He said, ‘I understand,’ just be honest.”

Years later, Thomas hopes to find his way through music. “A lot of things he said that I questioned, I understand. I see what he meant and I feel closer to him now.”

Johnny Cash remains one of the most influential artists in American music.

“His heart shined through his music,” Cindy says. “He spoke through his songs and his songs always had a message.”

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Pam Windsor is a Nashville-based freelancer, who has written for AARP, MotorHome Magazine, the Myrtle Beach Sun News, American Profile, Country Weekly, and other publications.

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