"It's Dolly Parton's world and we're all just living in it."
–WASHINGTON POST



PQG423595

Dolly Parton

In Her Own Words

Edited by Suzanne Sonnier

Dolly Parton

In Her Own Words

Dolly Parton
In Her Own Words

EDITED BY
Suzanne Sonnier

A B2 BOOK
AGATE
CHICAGO

Copyright © 2020 by Agate Publishing, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without express written permission from the publisher.

Dolly Parton: In Her Own Words is in no way authorized, prepared, approved, or endorsed by Dolly Parton and is not affiliated with or endorsed by any of her past or present organizations.

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Parton, Dolly, author. | Sonnier, Suzanne, editor.
Title: Dolly Parton in her own words / edited by Suzanne Sonnier.
Description: Chicago : B2, 2020.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020040645 (print) | LCCN 2020040646 (ebook) | ISBN 9781572842946 (paperback) | ISBN 9781572848467 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Parton, Dolly--Quotations. | Country musicians--United States--Quotations.
Classification: LCC ML420.P28 A25 2020 (print) | LCC ML420.P28 (ebook) | DDC 782.421642092--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020040645
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020040646

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 20 21 22 23 24

Agate books are available in bulk at discount prices. For more information, go to agatepublishing.com.

Hopefully people can see beneath the hair to know there's a brain, beneath the boobs to know there's a heart, and behind all the other stuff to know there's some talent.

—DOLLY PARTON

Contents

Introduction **1**

Part I: Roots

Smoky Mountain Days 7

Marriage and Family 20

Spirituality 36

Values 47

Part II: Creative Life

Songwriting 61

Singing 77

Acting 86

Part III: Appearance

Signature Style 96

Part IV: Business

Philosophy 114

Dollywood 127

Philanthropy 137

Milestones **149**

Acknowledgments **171**

Introduction

Has there ever been a public figure acknowledged to be as simultaneously fake yet genuine as Dolly Parton? While she's famously a fan of big wigs, heavy makeup, and plastic surgery, she is also as authentic, sincere, and heartfelt as they come. The songwriter-singer-actor-producer-author-businessperson-park operator-philanthropist's music and belief system provide a warm embrace to multigenerational audiences of all sorts—from truckers to presidents, evangelical Christians to members of the LGBTQ community. Her fans love and claim her as one of their own, a status she is careful to maintain.

Parton understood at an early age that she had unusual gifts and became intent on using them to have a bigger life than the hardscrabble one she was born into in 1946 in rural Tennessee. She was the fourth of twelve siblings, and she grew up with her family in a two-room cabin. It wasn't long before she moved from performing on the cabin's porch for her siblings and in her grandfather's fundamentalist church to entertaining crowds further afield. At just ten years old, Parton began singing on local radio and television programs.

The day after her graduation from high school in 1964, Parton moved to country music's capital city, Nashville. After some early success writing and singing, her big break came three years later when she appeared as a performer on the popular television program, *The Porter Wagoner Show*. When a well-liked singer left,

Parton was hired as her replacement. The audience was openly displeased with the change, but Parton carried this disappointment with a smile while pouring her hurt feelings into songwriting—a lifelong habit when facing difficulties.

While Parton may be best known for her flashy style and sweet voice, her talent for writing songs is equally impressive. Her vast songwriting catalog covers a wide array of topics, with a particular penchant for songs about heartache. She has penned dozens of number one and top-ten hits, including "Coat of Many Colors," "Jolene," and "I Will Always Love You"—the last two written in the same evening. "I Will Always Love You" was written as a parting gift to Wagoner, who was unhappy she wanted to pursue an independent career. Whitney Houston's cover of the song was a massive chart-topper decades later, earning Parton millions in royalties.

Parton reached new heights as a solo artist in the mid-1970s. Along with writing and performing more hit country songs, she had her own syndicated television variety show and a million-selling, Grammy-winning crossover pop album, *Here You Come Again*. In the '80s, Parton branched out into film stardom with roles in *9 to 5*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *Rhinestone*, and *Steel Magnolias*, while also forming a production company and maintaining an active writing, recording, and performing schedule. Her musical output included popular collaborations with Kenny Rogers and the Trio (Parton, Emmylou Harris, and Linda Ronstadt). She also purchased a portion of a small theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, renaming it Dollywood. The park would eventually grow to become the largest

employer in the county and a destination for millions of vacationers.

Parton's career highlights of the 1990s included an autobiography, a Grammy-winning bluegrass album, induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame, and the founding of the Imagination Library, an early literacy program that sends books to children at no charge. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Parton became a member of the Songwriters Hall of Fame, authored more books, was a Kennedy Center honoree, created a record company, produced a television series based on her songs, and spearheaded several philanthropic ventures. The breadth of Parton's achievements is remarkable.

Along with her many talents, fans appreciate Parton's welcoming attitude. She knows what it's like to be an outsider, and is empathetic toward people facing many kinds of challenges. Though she no longer practices the fundamentalist Christianity in which she was raised, Parton says she believes that God created everyone equal and that everyone deserves love and kindness. She accepts others as they are and does not pass judgment. These are core values to her, and she visibly lives her values. Just as she openly loves others, people of all political, economic, and social stripes love her in return.

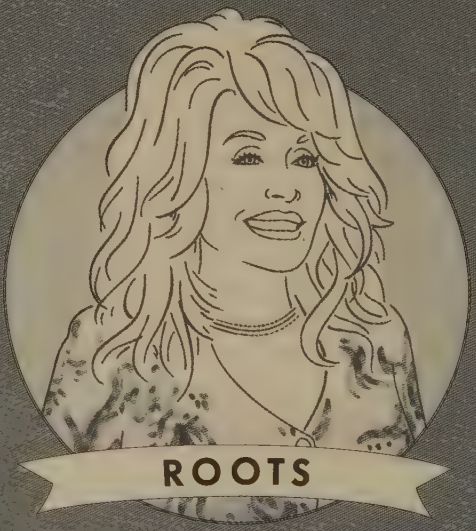
One of the mysteries of Parton is her political beliefs. She is loath to say much on the topic, as she tries to avoid alienating any of her followers. To this end, she is skilled at deflecting questions she doesn't want to answer. One tactic she deploys is to toss out a "Dollyism." These witty, self-deprecating quips, often about her looks or humble upbringing, charm listeners while also defusing tension and changing the subject. She has mastered controlling

the conversation—and her image.

But a closer look at her work and public remarks reveals more than you'd think about her life and priorities, such as her stance on feminism. In the 1980 movie *9 to 5*, Parton played one of three secretaries who rebel against their sexist boss. The movie and its number one hit theme song—written and sung by Parton—helped to raise awareness of workplace sexual harassment. For decades afterward, whenever she was asked if she was a feminist she denied it, saying that she loves men. Over the years, however, her understanding of feminism has visibly expanded—rather than a movement requiring women to be in opposition to men, her answers began to reflect an awareness that a feminist is someone who believes women should have equal rights and agency over their lives. In 2020, Parton stated, "I suppose I am a feminist if I believe that women should be able to do anything they want to." But she still prefers not to label herself regarding anything controversial, lest her views turn anybody off to her music.

Some of Parton's thinking may have evolved over the years, but her artistic spark and central beliefs remain the same. Her secret sauce of talent, authenticity, acceptance of others, and image management has secured her a lofty place in American culture, her legendary status well earned.

Part I



Smoky Mountain Days

My memories take me way back to a little cabin in East Tennessee. This was not a place where dreams easily came true. Too often, there was talk about all of the things we couldn't do rather than all of the things we could do.

—**Introduction,** ***The Little Engine That Could: 90th Anniversary Edition,*** **2020**

My folks were just simple, poor mountain people. We lived on a farm, so we grew our own hogs for our own meat. We had our own milk cows. We had to do the milking. We had our own chickens. We all had our chores to do. Our lives were very, very hard—moreso than you might know or that I can even say.

—***Dolly Parton: Platinum Blonde,*** **January 6, 2003**

WE CANNED OUR own food. We didn't have running water, unless we'd run and get it, which I make jokes about. We grew our own things and we all worked the fields, growin' your corn and your beans and your tobacco. Raised some hogs. Milked cows. All of my brothers used to hunt, some of us girls used to hunt. We were just part of the woods, and the trees, and the bees and bears all over the place.

—***Dolly Parton's America*** **podcast, October 29, 2019**

MY FATHER AND my uncles were big bear hunters, and they had bear dogs. We ate a lot of bear, rabbit, squirrel and groundhog. See, we were country people, and when you grow up in the mountains you grow up eating whatever's running around.

—***The New York Times,*** **April 29, 1992**

THERE'S A FUNNY thing about mountain folks. There's an awful lot that is never said out loud. I can remember very few times when one member of my family said the words "I love you" to another one. That doesn't mean it wasn't communicated. It's a kind of silent speech that says, "Thank you, Mama, for the hot butter beans," in the same way that a father might say to his son, "Nice going, you plowed a good straight row" by giving the boy a light punch on the shoulder.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

FOR MANY YEARS of my life, we were without electricity. My mother and my daddy, they were very sensitive and very loving. And we knew that there was more to life than money, because we didn't know about money for a long time.

—***Dolly Parton: Here She Comes Again!*, November 13, 2019**

Growing up in church with a musical family, that's where my love of music and singing really took hold.

—DollyParton.com, April 27, 1996

AFTER MOMMA GAVE birth to twelve of us kids, we put her up on a pedestal. It was mostly to keep Daddy away from her.

—Twitter, July 7, 2010

I NEVER FORGET how lucky I am to have had such a loving mother.

—Twitter, May 14, 2017

MY DADDY COULD be stubborn as a mule sometimes, but I love my daddy.

—Twitter, December 10, 2015

MY DAD WAS a hard worker, and I always say I got my talent, my spirituality, my creativity from my mom's people, but my dad was the center. He's the one that had the good direction, he's the one that had the good sense.

—CBS 42, May 4, 2018

MY FIRST MEMORY is just hearing Mama sing. Mama was always singing to us. And she would sing all those old ballads, from the old country. Singing all those old songs, like "In the Pines." Just simple melodies, where you just play and do those three part harmonies, family harmonies. So beautiful.

—***Dolly Parton's America*** **podcast, October 29, 2019**

THERE WAS MUSIC always in our family from my mother's people. They all played some sort of musical instrument. We'd sit on the porch, or sit around the heater in the wintertime, singin and pickin.

—***Dolly Parton: Platinum Blonde,*** **January 6, 2003**

SOMETIMES MAMA WOULD get to telling a story or singing a sad song and she'd start to cry. Then we'd all cry. That's what being a family is all about—sharing good times, misery, boredom, whatever.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

THE WORST THING about poverty is not the actual living of it, but the shame of it.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

WE DIDN'T HAVE books to read, except at school, and we tried not to read those.

—***Playboy*, October 1, 1978**

WE COULD SEE the pictures of the models in the newspapers that lined the walls of our house . . . We wanted to look like them. They didn't look at all like they had to work in the fields. They didn't look like they had to take a spot bath in a dishpan. They didn't look as if men and boys could just put their hands on them any time they felt like it, and with any degree of roughness they chose.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

SOMETIMES MY AUNT in Knoxville would bring newspapers up, which we used for toilet paper. But before we used it, we'd look at the pictures. And we'd hear about people who would get rich and you'd have all the food you wanted to eat and fancy clothes and houses. In our minds, there was so many of us, anybody that had a clean house was rich.

—***Playboy*, October 1, 1978**

Growing up in the mountains of East Tennessee we got so much of what we needed from the land. I'll always be grateful to the land and to nature for all its given us!

—Twitter, April 22, 2019

I WAS JUST different and I knew it. A person might think that a kid growing up with that many others would never be lonely, but I often was. Some kids make up imaginary friends, and I had my own version of that. I called them my angels. I would talk to my angels all the time. I felt safer because they were with me. They understood why I had to sing, why I had such dreams, why I wanted to climb aboard a butterfly and wing my way out of the holler and into a world that I knew lay beyond what I could see.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

WHEN I WAS a little girl growing up in the hills of the Smoky Mountains, I'd often let my imagination just run away—something I still do now—dreaming these big dreams about what it'd be like to venture off with a family of bears into the woods or how fun it would be to hitch a ride with the butterflies and dragonflies.

—DollyParton.com, May 11, 2019

I ALWAYS FELT like I was somebody special, maybe it's because I needed to be somebody special. I just always knew I was going to be a star. I was always going to be rich so I could buy things for Mommy and Daddy, so that I could buy them a big house and we could have things.

—***Interview*, July 1984**

PROBABLY THE BEST birthday I ever had was when I turned 18, because I had been traveling back and forth to Nashville all those years before, and I knew my Daddy would send a posse after me if I left before I was 18.

—DollyParton.com, January 19, 2016

I GRADUATED ON a Friday night and headed out on a Saturday morning, and as I make jokes about it, with my matching luggage—those four paper bags from the same grocery store. I thought, "well, I can't be any poorer than I already am."

—***Dolly Parton: Here She Comes Again!*, November 13, 2019**

My desire to do things & know what's out there has always been greater than my fear. I was more scared of staying home than of leaving it.

—Twitter, March 22, 2012

Marriage and Family

I MET HIM the first day I got to Nashville, in 1964. I graduated on a Friday night, went to Nashville on a Saturday morning with dirty clothes and I went to a Laundromat looking for *anything* but love. I had just left two boyfriends back home and I wasn't looking to get involved because I had gone to Nashville to really get started in the business. I met him at the WishyWashy and he's been wishy washy ever since. We dated for two years before we got married.

—on Carl Dean, *Interview*, July, 1984

I WAS SURPRISED and delighted that while he talked to me, he looked at my face (a rare thing for me). He seemed to be genuinely interested in finding out who I was and what I was about.

—on meeting Carl, DollyParton.com, May 27, 2016

HE'S A GOOD man. It is a true love story and he's my best buddy—he's crazy, he's funny.

—*The Sun*, February 19, 2019

I LOVE CARL. He knows this is part of my work, plus it's somethin' I enjoy. Carl has his own business, asphalt pavin', and we respect each other.

—***The New York Times*, March 8, 1979**

CARL IS MY husband and my best friend so we have had a solid foundation to deal with all of the craziness that comes with a performing career.

—***The Guardian*, February 19, 2016**

HE'S VERY INDEPENDENT, and when I'm away working that's fine for him because he loves his solitude. He's not in the music business, and that's what has saved us.

—***Sunday Herald*, November 24, 2002**

Any relationship is like a house with an upstairs, it's got two stories.

—***Dolly Parton's America*** **podcast, October 22, 2019**

My husband is not one who wants to be just thrown out there. He's very private, and I've always respected that for him and about him. And so, we just try to live our lives.

—***Vogue*, August 10, 2016**

Carl's never wanted to be in the limelight, so I didn't put him there. He wants to be left alone and be a homebody and then hear about what I've been up to when I get back. He's my anchor and I'm his excitement.

—***The Guardian*, August 21, 2011**

My husband is not the type to hang onto my skirttail, trying to pull me back. He doesn't want me in his face all the time, nor do I want to be in his. We're both free to work and free to live.

—***McCalls*, May 1992**

A PERFORMER HAS to give up certain things in her personal relationships in order to have a "bigger" relationship with the public. By "bigger" I don't necessarily mean better. Carl will always be my husband when the lights die down; I will always go home to him. He loves me for what I am, and he knows that my singing is a big part of me.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

MY HUSBAND LIKES the freedom as much as I do. He's got his own work to do, and he's glad when I'm gone a certain amount of time. We're not afraid that one of us is gonna run off with somebody else, because we couldn't find in nobody else what we found in each other.

—***Rolling Stone*, December 11, 1980**

PEOPLE ALWAYS WANNA know the secret. I always say, I stay gone! Stay apart. You can't be in each other's face all the time. Actually, I think that has been the best formula for us, the fact that we appreciate each other when we are together. We don't have to be together all the time.

—***Taste of Country*, July 7, 2011**

BEING A WOMAN away from home, there are these good-looking guys that come on to you pretty strong. And every now and then I like to come on a little strong myself, and I do. But it's all in a flirt. But I know that I've got something at home that I wouldn't threaten nor take a chance on losing for anything in the world.

—Barbara Walters interview, December 14, 1982

I'M A FLIRT, but my husband's a flirt. He knows I'm a flirt, I know he's a flirt, but it's not a threat to us.

—Barbara Walters interview, December 14, 1982

WELL, THE STEADY marriage is one thing, but my flirtations, all that stuff, that's something else entirely. My husband knows I'm always coming home.

—***The Guardian*, December 6, 2014**

PEOPLE ALWAYS ASK me if I've had extramarital affairs. You can just draw your own conclusions. All I will say is my husband is a wonderful man and we'll be together till one of us dies. I wouldn't want to know is he was having an affair, and he wouldn't want to know if I was.

—***McCalls*, January 1996**

He thinks I'm fine just like I am. He doesn't try to change me. Wouldn't do him any good anyway.

—*The Times Picayune*, July 26, 2002

My husband has such an odd taste in music, and he loves Led Zeppelin. He's been a "Led Head" from day one and also loves bluegrass and big-band music. "Stairway to Heaven" was always Carl's favorite. It was kind of like "our song" because at romantic times or sweet times, we'd just be riding around in the car and if that would come on, Lord, he'd just knock us out of the car turning it up full blast.

—on covering Led Zeppelin, DollyParton.com, July 8, 2002

God has been good to me. He gave me Carl Dean. And that was the perfect man that I needed.

—*The Guardian*, December 6, 2014

WE DON'T HAVE kids, and we're free, and he's independent as he can be. We don't like to be together all the time. Nobody likes somebody to be stuck in their face all the time—that's why we get along so good, because when we are together we have a good time.

—***Interview*, July 1984**

I HAVE NEVER been pregnant. I don't know what that feeling is like. I think God has different purposes for different people. Some women are meant to be mothers and grandmothers. I was meant to be Aunt Granny.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

THE MOTHER PART of me always wanted to have children, because I grew up in a family of twelve. I was so involved in my work, and I really felt that was my true calling. I did use to feel guilty about it because I thought that's what all women were supposed to do.

—***Dolly Parton: Platinum Blonde*, January 6, 2003**

I LOVE KIDS. I'm crazy about them. As long as they're somebody else's. People had often asked me about having children, and I always felt guilty and selfish if I said I didn't want them. So sometimes I would just say I couldn't have them, and that lie made me feel even more guilty.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

YOU ALWAYS WONDER. My husband and I, when we first got married, we thought about if we had kids, what would they look like? Would they be tall—because he's tall? Or would they be little squats like me? If we'd had a girl, she was gonna be called Carla . . . Anyway, we talked about it, and we dreamed it, but it wasn't meant to be. Now that we're older? We're glad. I would have been a great mother, I think. I would probably have given up everything else. Because I would've felt guilty about that, if I'd have left them. Everything would have changed. I probably wouldn't have been a star.

—***The Guardian*, December 6, 2014**

NOW THAT CARL and I are older, we often say, "Aren't you glad we didn't have kids? Now we don't have kids to worry about."

—***Billboard*, October 24, 2014**

WE HAVE ALL these kids and grandchildren and we take them everywhere and send them to college and buy them cars when they graduate and we treat them just like we would our own children.

—on her grandnieces and nephews, *Sunday Herald*, November 24, 2002

MY FAMILY WILL always be my greatest love.

—***The Guardian*, February 19, 2016**

I LONG TO always stay attached to my home, to my family, that's a golden thread that keeps me tied to eternity.

—***Dolly Parton's America* podcast, October 29, 2019**

But I'm proud of my hillbilly, white trash background. To me that keeps you humble; that keeps you good. And it doesn't matter how hard you try to outrun it—if that's who you are, that's who you are. It'll show up once in a while.

—***Southern Living*, 2014**

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN proud of who I was and of my people. I was proud of where I was from. Some people want to get away, to move and get out and don't even want to be reminded, but that's not me. And the older I get, the more sappy I get about my childhood.

—***Southern Living*, 2014**

I STILL STRUGGLE with how to help my kinfolks be more successful in music, and I suffer sometimes from a guilt complex about my own success, feeling that so many of them are so deserving.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I HAVE OFTEN felt sympathy with my family for having to try to live up to my image. It's as though everyone expects all of Dolly Parton's relatives to live in big houses and drive fine cars. That is simply not the case. I have tried to help them in every way I can, but nobody makes that much money.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

SOME SAY MY relatives don't know "their butt from a biscuit" about business. I disagree, since they were no less educated, less qualified, or more rednecked than . . . me. It's all in how you look at it.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

Spirituality

YOU GOTTA STRUGGLE for that inner light that shines inside of you. I call it a God light. If you look hard enough it's there and it will guide you.

—Twitter, November 30, 2018

I ENJOY BEING loved—I love that. I always ask God to let me shine a light and uplift mankind because that is my purpose. I look fake, but my world is real to me.

—*The Guardian*, February 24, 2019

I PRAY A lot. I pray that God will show me what to do and will guide me and lead me.

—*Southern Living*, 2014

I ALWAYS COUNT my blessings far more than I ever count my money.

—*Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012

I'M NOT RELIGIOUS, but I'm extremely spiritual. God lives with me, and everything I do, I put Him first.

—***Country America*, November 1998**

I'VE ALWAYS FELT like everybody was born for a reason. Everybody has a purpose. Lots of people don't ever really find it, but I was luckier than a lot of people.

—***Rolling Stone*, December 11, 1980**

EVERY DAY, I pray God will let me touch somebody's life.

—***Birmingham News*, January 12, 2020**

I LOVE EVERYBODY, and I go right through the bullshit and I go right to the core of every person because we are all one, we are all the same. A lot of people say to me, "There are so few worthwhile people in the world," and I say "That's the biggest crock of shit I ever heard."

—***Interview*, July 1984**

ALL THOSE GOOD Christian people who have something to say about everybody, I think: Well, where's your religion? You're taught not to judge, and you're supposed to love your neighbor like yourself. I want to be loved, and so I try to love everybody.

—***Vogue*, August 10, 2016**

Anybody who spends any time at all observing nature has to believe there is a God.

—*Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994

Forgiveness? Forgiveness is all there is.

—***Dolly Parton's America*** **podcast, October 22, 2019**

So I just tried to personalize it a little bit so it would make more sense and I could explain it if someone asked me what it was about. Now, to me it's about the Second Coming, or the invasion of the aliens. I figure if there's a Second Coming, it's coming in a blaze of glory in some kind of spaceship.

—on covering Neil Young's "After the Goldrush,"
The New York Times**, October 3, 1996**

Even if I knew for a fact there was no God, I would choose to believe. I think we need to believe in something bigger than us or we have major ego problems or major depression. Every day I talk to God like He's my best friend, I talk things out. We all have to pay our prices for our blessings but as the scripture says: To whom much is given, much is expected.

—***The Sun*****, February 19, 2019**

TO ME, IT seemed like a lot of people took the Bible too literally. But at the same time they were selective in which parts they clung to with such conviction. It seemed to me like the part about "judge not, lest you be judged" got kind of swept under the rug.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

IT'S UP TO Him to decide, you know, what's right or what's wrong. And he made us all. And, if we're different? Well, that's fine. We're still His.

—***Dolly Parton's America* podcast, November 19, 2019**

I FEEL THAT sin and evil are the negative part of you, and I think it's like a battery: you've got to have the negative and the positive in order to be a complete person. I used to punish myself a lot for things I felt, and then I'd just say, "Well, if it's wrong for me to feel this why do I feel it?"

—***Interview*, July 1984**

My relationship with my family, my music and my God have always been the most important things that have kept me centered and grounded.

—Twitter, November 30, 2018

There's a whole lot of America written in the poetry of gospel music, and whether you know it or not, there's a lot of gospel music in each and every one of us.

—*Country Weekly*, March 23, 1999

They say wisdom comes with age, and I think peace does as well.

—*Country Music*, Winter 2000

My grandfather was a Pentecostal preacher and I think that all people who were brought up in a fundamental church like I was are left with some sort of guilt when they stray a little bit. But I don't agree with it. What I say is I'm too good to be bad and too bad to be good—I'm sort of caught somewhere in the middle.

—***London Independent*, June 30, 2002**

I grew up Pentecostal. That's hellfire and brimstone. Women in the early days of the church were not even allowed to pluck their eyebrows or shave their legs. So you could well imagine what kind of a freak I was considered.

—***Irish Independent*, December 16, 2007**

I deeply appreciate the way I was raised. My people gave me a very real relationship with God, and I'll always have that.

—***Palm Desert Entertainer*, February 7, 2007**

I was brought up religious and even if I'm not a fanatic, I have a communication with God, which helps me like a psychiatrist might help somebody else.

—*Playboy*, October 1, 1978

ALL THIS HIGH-TECH stuff is absolutely wonderful, but people have become obsessed with it, so caught up in it that they lose their way. We used to be obsessed with *other* things. We really looked forward to the future and to a life hereafter and tried to do better.

—Parade.com, December 4, 2015

I THINK GOD is in this, I really do. I think he's trying to hold us up to the light so we can see ourselves and see each other through the eyes of love. And I hope we learn that lesson. I think that when this passes we're gonna all be better people, so I know that I have a positive attitude about it, as negative as it seems to be right now. So just keep the faith. Don't be too scared; it's gonna be alright.

—on COVID-19, Twitter, March 27, 2020

Values

I've always said I wanted to honor my father and my mother, like it says in the Bible. A lot of people think that just means to obey them, but I think it means to bring honor to their name and who they are. I really just want to show people the kind of people that I came from.

—***Pure and Simple* press conference, March 3, 2016**

In those mountains, even today, if something is there, you find a way to use it. I believe that philosophy has made me what I am today. It is not just about survival, but about trying every day, literally every minute, to make things a little bit better.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

When you have little negatives, you [learn to] make positives out of 'em.

—***Late Night with David Letterman*, 1989**

LOOKING BACK, PERHAPS I should have included food when I was outlining the driving forces in my life. I have always loved to eat. If I were asked to create one sentence that involves God, music, and food as they all relate to my life it would have to be: Thank God I have been able to sing for my supper.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

I KNOW I'M not dumb and I know I'm not blonde.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

IF YOU TRULY care for people, you won't judge them. And then you will learn to appreciate the uniqueness in every single soul.

—commencement address at the University of Tennessee, May 14, 2009

I JUST THINK that we should be more loving, more caring. We are who we are. If you're gay, you're gay. If you're straight, you're straight. And you should be allowed to be, you know, how you are and who you are.

—***Larry King Now*, August 24, 2016**

I'M NOT GAY but I have so many gay friends and I accept everybody for who they are.

—***The Sun*, February 19, 2019**

I JUST KNOW, through the years, I've had people tell me I should do this or I shouldn't do that. I have a lot of gay fans because they know that I just accept people as they are. That's not my place to judge. I ain't God and I ain't runnin' for office.

—***The Boot*, August 10, 2012**

I'm not happy all the time, and I wouldn't want to be because that would make me a shallow person. But I do try to find the good in everybody.

—*The Guardian*, August 21, 2011

ALL MY LIFE, I've always loved the underdog. I've always been prone to go to the unusual. I love different people. I love the spice of life, the variety. I'm drawn to unusual people. I'm drawn to help people up if they feel down, and I'm prone to stand up for somebody who can't stand up for themselves.

—***Spare Change News*, February 26, 2019**

I TRY TO find the best in everybody, but sometimes you just have to see things as they are. And I didn't get where I was being a pushover. I'm very open and, like I say, if I see something that's not right, I go about trying to make it better. But I'm no saint, that's for sure.

—***The Guardian*, July 24, 2014**

I'M OPEN AND I'm honest. I don't dillydally. If there's something going on, I just say it. Sometimes if I get mad, I'll throw out a few cuss words just to prove my point. I've often said I don't lose my temper as much as I use it. I don't do either unless I have to because I love peace and harmony, but when you step in my territory, I will call you on it.

—***Billboard*, October 24, 2014**

YOU JUST TRY to be nice to everybody, 'cause you know everybody's got a dream.

—***The New York Times*, April 29, 1992**

I'M SUCH A personable person, I love people, and they've kind of grown up with me. I really think people look at me like an aunt or a sister or a friend.

—***Bobby Bones Show*, October 19, 2018**

I'M STILL OUT, living it, doing it, writing it. People say, "Why don't you get out and do more?" I say, "I don't have to preach. I write it. I sing it. I live it." If I'm not a good example of a woman in power, I don't know who is.

—on feminism, *Elle*, October 9, 2019

I STILL BELIEVE that women should be paid equal and should be treated with respect. I'm all about that. I can say I don't get out and have to preach it or march in the streets.

—*Dolly Parton: Here She Comes Again!*, November 13, 2019

WE'RE BEAUTIFUL, TOO, but I think women are very smart, very talented and should have every right to express what talent God has given them. They should get their just dues.

—*The New York Times*, June 24, 2016

I have never met a man I didn't like, and I've never met a man whose ass I couldn't kick if he didn't treat me with the right respect.

—Recording Academy MusiCares Person of the Year Award Speech, February 8, 2019

I DON'T DO politics. I have too many fans on both sides of the fence. Of course, I have my opinion about everything, but I learned years ago, keep your mouth shut about things.

—***Dolly Parton's America*** **podcast, November 12, 2019**

I'VE GOT AS many Republican friends as I've got Democrat friends and I just don't like voicing my opinion on things. I've seen things before, like the Dixie Chicks. You can ruin a career for speaking out. I respect my audience too much for that, I respect myself too much for that. Of course I have my own opinions, but that don't mean I got to throw them out there because you're going to piss off half the people.

—***The Guardian*****, February 24, 2019**

THEY ALWAYS SAY "Dolly for President," and I say we've had enough boobs in the White House! But there's no way that I would want to be in politics. But I don't think it's just our country that needs to come together, this world needs to come together. There needs to be a lot more acceptance, a lot more understanding, and a lot more willingness to try to work together as humanity. And accept people for who and what they are, and just stop trying to be political—it's this party, that party—and let's just have a party and celebrate love!

—***Clash Music*, March 6, 2019**

HOPE AND LOVE are the greatest forces there are. And if you have hope, you can survive prejudice, you can survive separation, you could even survive unspeakable loss.

—***Dolly Parton's Heartstrings*, November 22, 2019**

I THINK ATTITUDE is the greatest asset that anybody can ever have. I never allow myself to think that I'm old. The key is finding joy in what you do. And don't sit on your old ass and just go to seed.

—***More*, May 2002**

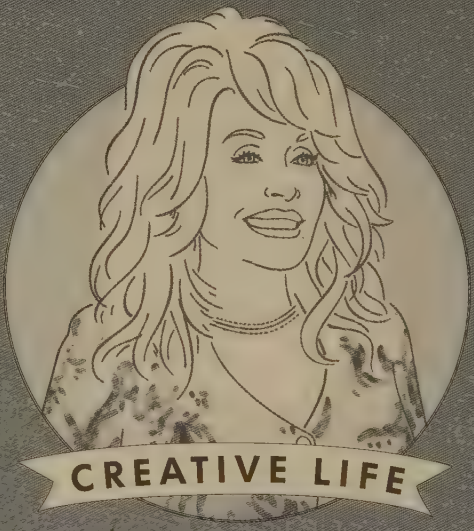
IT'S JUST THAT I'm tryin' to do everything I'm capable of doin' and have a perfect balance in my life—to be successful at my work, and at bein' a wife and a sister and a friend. I have to have all of those things in their proper place. I don't want to be a star if I have no life.

—***Rolling Stone*, December 11, 1980**

I THINK ONE of the big mistakes celebrities make is that they think because they are so popular, it sets them apart and makes them like gods instead of just extremely lucky people. I really feel sorry for a whole lot of stars, and I hope and pray I never get that way. I don't really believe I will.

—***Rolling Stone*, December 11, 1980**

Part II



Songwriting

EVER SINCE I was a little bitty kid, I could just rhyme everything. It was always fun, and it just kind of carried on over the years.

—Twitter, September 12, 2012

[MUSIC] HAS ALWAYS been an essential part of me. Since I have been able to form words, I have been able to rhyme them. I could catch on to anything that had a rhythm and make a song to go with it.

***—Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

MY FIRST SONG was about my corncob doll, but I was so little my mama had to write the lyrics down. Even then, I had big dreams!

—Twitter, March 22, 2018

I STARTED WRITING songs, or making up songs, when I was about five years old. And I started playing guitar when I was seven. So after I started playing guitar I wrote some serious sad songs for a seven-year-old. I'd write all these heartbreakers, things that I'd hear people talk about: people getting killed in the war, and all kinds of heartbreaking love songs of my husband leaving me here at seven years old.

—***60 Minutes Australia*, June 1986**

WHEN I WAS growing up here in the Great Smoky Mountains, my family couldn't afford to go to the theater, and it was years before we even owned a television. So when I was just a little bitty thing, I started writing songs that told stories about people that I would have liked to see up there on the big screen.

—***Dolly Parton's Heartstrings*, November 22, 2019**

WITHOUT A DOUBT, songwriting is my greatest source of joy and the best outlet for my creativity.

—Twitter, November 15, 2012

THE WAY I deal with the joy and the sadness of life is to write about it.

—Twitter, October 19, 2012

MUSIC IS THE universal language that unites all of us. It celebrates our people, our families and our communities. I've made music my life's work because I feel each and every one of us has a special song to sing.

—DollyParton.com, November 3, 2017

To write is my therapist, it's my friend, it's my God time, it's like feeling like I'm leaving something in the world today for tomorrow that wasn't there yesterday.

—DollyParton.com, April 27, 1996

BECAUSE I JUST love people, little things, and I think people are blind without knowing it sometimes. Sometimes if you can open their eyes, and throw a little light on the darkness that they didn't even realize they were in the darkness. And hopefully, through music, we can do a lot of that. That's what I was hoping to do.

—on the *Dumplin'* movie soundtrack, DollyParton.com, November 30, 2018

MY LITTLE GUITAR and my little songs—I've been able to work through every problem I ever had.

***—Dolly Parton: Here She Comes Again!*, November 13, 2019**

MY MUSIC HAS taken me everywhere I've been & everywhere I'll go. It's my greatest love. I can't abandon it. I'll always keep making records.

—Twitter, February 24, 2012

ALL OF THOSE little pieces of your past, they're all important. That's why I'm so thankful I can write songs. I can capture all those memories in my songs and keep those memories alive.

—***Southern Living*, 2014**

MY SONGWRITERS AWARDS mean more to me, I think, than anything else, because I love to write songs.

—***Dolly Parton: Here She Comes Again!*, November 13, 2019**

SOME DAYS YOU'LL get one song, and some days you'll get five. And the moral to that story is, all that matters is you keep doing it.

—Twitter, May 17, 2019

Hone your skills, sharpen your wits, write those songs, and learn to play.

—Twitter, September 21, 2012

I WRITE ALL the time. I'll wake up in the mornings, I may be making breakfast and all of a sudden I'll get a good idea for a song, or I'll be humming a melody and I'll run and put the melody down so I don't forget it.

—***Larry King Now*, November 5, 2017**

I STILL USE my little tape recorder, and I still write longhand. I can't think unless I've got a pen or a pencil in my hand, with a big old yellow legal pad. I think my writing is as good as it ever was.

—Instagram, October 20, 2016

I WRITE IN cemeteries a lot; nobody bothers you there.

—***Rolling Stone*, August 25, 1977**

YOU HAVE TO be able to relate to the things you write about, but you don't have to live them personally.

—***Playboy*, October 1, 1978**

I CAN RELATE to everybody about anything—and that's good, because as a songwriter, I have to keep my feelings out on my sleeve. Some people harden their hearts just to get through life, and I think if I do that, I won't be able to write. I try to keep my heart open, even to the point of having to suffer more because I take everything so personal. But that's why I can write for other people: I try to keep myself where they are.

—***The New York Times*, December 17, 2018**

I ALWAYS SAY there are two kinds of women in the mountains: the kind that get married and have a lot of kids, and the kind who stay single and have a lot of kids. But I would also write things about people's lives and topics that I knew that mattered. I was writing about abortion, I was writing about adoption, I was writing about all sorts of things . . .

—***Dolly Parton's America* podcast, October 15, 2019**

I LIKE BALLADS, real strong, pitiful, sad, cryin' ballads.

—***Dolly Parton's America*** **podcast, October 15, 2019**

MANY YEARS AGO, I met this sweet little girl at one of my shows, and she wanted an autograph and her name was Jolene. And I loved that name, and it just stuck with me. I even told her then that someday I might write a song using that name. Then one day many years later, I caught my husband flirting with this red-haired hussy at our bank and I just had to write a song about how that made me feel. And the rest has become music history.

—***Dolly Parton's Heartstrings*****, November 22, 2019**

WHAT AM I going to write about Jolene? I have to have a real commercial story, so it'd get played on the radio. You had to always consider all that.

—*Dolly Parton's America* podcast, November 19, 2019

SOME PEOPLE ARE blind or ignorant, and you can't be that prejudiced and hateful and go through this world and still be happy. One thing about this movie is that I think art can change minds. It's alright to be who you are.

—on her song "Travelin' Thru" written for the movie "Transamerica," DollyParton.com, July 8, 2005

I WOULD HEAR some of the old-timers complain that I was "leaving country music." I would always reply, "I'm not leaving it, I'm taking it with me to new places."

—*Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994

I love people and I know everyone can't express their emotions. A lot of my heartbreak songs are inspired by things my sisters are going through, or friends.

—*The Guardian*, January 9, 2005

THE MAIN THING is, now I've got the freedom to do my music without havin' to worry about whether I'll make money or not, and because I don't have to worry about money, I will make more from it because it will be good.

—***Rolling Stone*, December 11, 1980**

I'M ALWAYS FLATTERED that anybody would record my songs, even if they change them. Certain ones of my songs, I'll hear somebody do it and I've had mixed emotions. I think either "Wow, that's great. I never thought of hearing it like that" or I'll think "Oh Lord, they've ruined that song." But you're still glad as a writer that they did it, no matter how it turns out. You're just glad that somebody liked your song enough to record it. But you do have your favorites. I guess the ones I'd like to record my songs right now are the ones having hits and make me the most money.

—***American Songwriter*, October 5, 2019**

It's saying, "Just because I'm going don't mean I won't love you. I appreciate you and I hope you do great and I appreciate everything you've done, but I'm out of here . . ." And I took it in the next morning. I said, "Sit down, Porter. I've written this song, and I want you to hear it." So I did sing it. And he was crying. He said, "That's the prettiest song I ever heard. And you can go, providing I get to produce that record." And he did, and the rest is history.

—on writing the song "I Will Always Love You" for Porter Wagoner, DollyParton.com, October 2, 1996

I thought my heart was gonna just bust right out of my body. It was the most powerful feeling, I guess, that I've ever had. 'Cause it was such a shock, and it was so great, and Whitney sang it so good, that I was just overwhelmed.

—on hearing Whitney Houston's version of "I Will Always Love You," *Songwriter Universe*, October 10, 2017

THAT'S WHAT I always said, it can be Whitney's song. She can have the credit as long as I get the cash.

—***Pure and Simple*** **press conference, March 3, 2016**

Singing

I WOULD SIT up on top of the woodpile playing and singing at the top of my lungs. Sometimes I would take a tobacco stake and stick it in the cracks between the boards on the front porch. A tin can on top of the tobacco stake turned it into a microphone, and the porch became my stage.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

I THANK MY lucky stars the tin cans and tobacco sticks I used for microphones as a child turned into real ones, and that my audiences weren't always just the ducks, dogs and neighbor's kids.

—Instagram, July 30, 2018

SINCE I WAS a little girl there's probably only been a handful of days I haven't had a guitar in my hand at some point, even if only for just a minute. And yes, usually in heels.

—Instagram, January 24, 2019

I'LL NEVER FORGET hearing my voice on the radio for the first time. It left a sting and a burn and an imprint on my soul.

—***The Guardian*, September 4, 2016**

AT THAT VERY moment I fell in love with the public. This was what I had always wanted—no, needed. It was the attention I had longed for. I knew what they were giving me. Now I had confidence in what I had to give them.

—on performing for the first time on the radio, *Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994

I SANG ON the Grand Ole Opry stage for the first time when I was ten years old. I remember my little heart just flying like a bird, but I always said that my desire to do it was greater than my fear.

—Instagram, October 8, 2019

As soon as I hear the downbeat, or when I hear my name, and the lights hit me, I'm all yours then. I don't think about nothing else but entertaining you.

—**Facebook Live, 2016**

EVERYONE WAS CRAMMED in there, and you'd hear some of them gossiping in the corner, and everybody would be fighting over their one little spot to get their lipstick on. I just remember feeling like I was part of the girl club, being in there with them. I was thinking, "This is history." And I felt like I was part of something big and special and important.

—on the Grand Ole Opry dressing room, *Tennessean*, October 4, 2019

I SANG ON television before my family ever owned one. I used to get five dollars a show, and I thought that was really big money. When you consider that my Daddy would sometimes work all day in a sawmill for the same money, it was.

***—Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

THE EXCITEMENT OF being on stage never goes away.

—Instagram, December 13, 2019

I AM ADDICTED to the love and the energy that I receive from the crowd, but it's a fair exchange. I love them and given them every ounce of energy that I have as well. So, I guess you could say that we feed off one another.

***—Songwriter Universe*, November 11, 2008**

I STILL WANT to do concerts—I don't want to ever just get into Vegas and movies. That does not take the place of my audience and my records and the concerts.

***—Rolling Stone*, December 11, 1980**

Before each show I can tell if they're going to be a boob crowd or a more spiritual audience.

—*The Guardian*, January 9, 2005

NO MATTER HOW many times you appear in front of an audience, there is a compulsive need to see just what they look like before you jump out on stange. After all these years, I know that every audience is different, but they're always familiar, too, as many of my great fans and folks who have followed my career since the early days will be there.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I WOULD LIKE to improve my voice to be able to hit better notes. My notes are not always true. But my heart is always true. And the emotion I put in is always true.

—***Playboy*, October 1, 1978**

I WAS NOT a great singer. I'm still not a great singer, but I got a style, I like that part.

—***Interview*, July 1984**

I'M CLOSE TO all the people in my band. I'm not above them just because I am the star. They are not sidemen to me. We are all musicians making a living for each other.

—***Playboy*, October 1, 1978**

BEEN PICKIN' AND grinnin' my whole life and I don't have plans to quit now!

—**Instagram, July 16, 2018**

Acting

I NEVER WANTED to be in the movies . . . all I said was, "I don't know if I can or can't, but if you think I can and you want to take that chance, I'll take it with you." It's as simple as that.

—***Playboy*, October 1, 1978**

I WAS OPEN for it. I didn't go looking for it, but I figured if my career went the way I'd planned that it would eventually lead me into that world. I honestly can say that it's very slow, I don't enjoy doing the movies as much as I enjoy other parts of my career, because it's so slow, but the end results are always good and I'm always proud of the stuff, and I learn a lot and meet a lot of people.

—***Late Night with David Letterman*, 1989**

THIS WAS NOT the first movie I was offered; it was the first one I accepted. If one I were to do on my own flopped, it would have been Dolly Parton's flop. That was why I was so picky—I hadn't found a script I thought was good enough.

—**On *9 to 5*, *Rolling Stone*, December 11, 1980**

I'D FULLY MEMORIZED the entire script because I'd no idea that we would be doing just bits and pieces at a time. Why, I was ready to do the whole thing the first day.

—***Chicago Tribune*, April 8, 1980**

I HAD NEVER in my life had to have such discipline as when I did *9 to 5*. I had never even seen a movie made at that time. I didn't know anything about it.

—***Dolly Parton: Platinum Blonde*, January 6, 2003**

I WOULDN'T HAVE been involved if I'd thought it was gonna be a sermon of some sort. Not that I'm not for rights for everybody, I'm just sayin' I didn't want to get involved in a political thing. It's just a funny, funny show. I think it's very obvious what it's sayin'.

—**on *9 to 5*, *Rolling Stone*, December 11, 1980**

I THINK THAT brought so much stuff to the forefront that people had not been willing to look at, even though they knew it was happening. At that time, we really hoped that it would make a bigger difference than it actually did.

—on *9 to 5*, *Elle*, October 9, 2019

IT'S EASY FOR me to memorize because I write. I knew that script back and forth in two weeks .... I don't think I'm a great actress. I think I can act or I can *react*. Coming from a musical background and being a dramatic singer and writer, when I write stuff I *really* feel it. So I sing it like it comes from *here*. That's how I do the acting. I've done three movies now and I think I could do some good acting.

—*Interview*, July 1984

THE ONLY ROLE I've ever done that's really been out of character for me was my biggest one, Doralee in *9 to 5*. I play a secretary, which I've never been. I can't even picture myself doing all the typing and the other things! But *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* . . . I could picture myself being a madam. And then, when I was Truvy . . . if I hadn't been a singer I would have definitely been a hairdresser. And *Rhinestone* was of course right down the alley for me.

—***Country America*, November 1998**

I'M JUST PLAYING a variation of Dolly. A lot of big stars played themselves all the time. The public likes them the way they are. I don't see anything wrong with that.

—***Chicago Tribune*, April 8, 1980**

I'm never going to be a Meryl Streep. But then, she'll never be a Dolly Parton either. Be true to you!

—Twitter, April 17, 2012

IT'S NOT IMPORTANT to me that a character be glamorous for me to play her. I'll take off the wig to play somebody. But only if I see I'm gonna be good at it. I wouldn't want to be ugly and a bad actress!

—RogerEbert.com. December 7, 1980

IT'S JUST REALLY hard to find something that I think I could do well. It's important to me to do a character that I can relate to. I couldn't handle a thing like Madonna on a movie like *Evita*. But there are characters I could play, that are close to my own personality.

—*New Country*, November 10, 1996

I'VE HAD THE wonderful opportunity to get to actually do movies. I get to do Broadway. I wrote a musical, which I was very proud of—the fact that I got to do it, that I could do it, that I had the opportunity to do that.

—*Taste of Country*, July 7, 2011

My whole life has been built on positive thinking and dreams, believing that I could do it. So, yes, I've been influenced back when I was a kid by (the movies). There's something about so many of us who've gone to the movies. When you're a kid, you look up at that screen, you see people living their lives with confidence. You feel that.

—DollyParton.com, November 30, 2018

Some people are blind or ignorant, and you can't be that prejudiced and hateful and go through this world and still be happy. One thing about this movie is that I think art can change minds. It's alright to be who you are.

—on her song "Travelin' Thru" written for the movie *Transamerica*, DollyParton.com, July 8, 2005

I ALWAYS THOUGHT, they should make movies out of my stories. So we went to Netflix, and they fell for it and they said, "Well let's do it," so we have a series called *Heartstrings*.

—***Dolly Parton: Here She Comes Again!*, November 13, 2019**

Part III



Signature Style

THE THING THAT'S always worked for me is the fact that I look so totally artificial, but am so totally real.

—Twitter, January 5, 2010

I LOOK JUST like the girls next door . . . if you happen to live next door to an amusement park!

—Twitter, January 20, 2010

IF THERE'S ONE thing this blonde has learned, blondes have more fun!

—Twitter, March 19, 2010

THE QUESTION I get asked most is "are they real?" . . . Well, of course not. They're acrylic. I could never grow my nails this long!!

—Twitter, October 25, 2011

DON'T LET THESE false eyelashes lead you to believe that I'm as shallow as I look 'cause I run true and deep.

—Twitter, July 26, 2012

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN misunderstood because of how I look . . . Don't judge me by the cover 'cause I'm a real good book!

—Twitter, May 16, 2013

I WANT TO mean something. I don't want to just be some joke. I don't want to be the all-American joke, you know, with the boobs, and the hair, and the tight belts, or the whatever. I want to be a meaningful, artistic person.

—Barbara Walters interview, December 14, 1982

WHENEVER I CATCH myself getting too nostalgic, well I just think about how heavy the wigs used to be!

—Twitter, March 23, 2019

I'VE BEEN AROUND a long time . . . Long enough for people to realize that there's more to me than the big hair and the phony stuff.

—Tumblr, December 22, 2014

I THOUGHT, "OH yes, you've gotta shine! If you're going to go on stage, you need to shine. Let people see you like you're a star." So I've always enjoyed playing dress up.

***—Dolly Parton: Queen of Country*, 2015**

I FEEL GLAMOROUS on the inside, so I want to look like it on the outside.

—Twitter, October 15, 2012

I THOUGHT YOU had to have big hair if you were gonna be in country music. The higher the hair, the closer to God. You know, if I have a bad hair day, I'll just change it right then. I don't have to worry about it. Everybody says, "How long does it take to do your hair?" I say, "I never know; I'm never there."

—***Dolly Parton: Platinum Blonde*, January 6, 2003**

IT'S EASY TO look like me. All you need is a stuffed shirt, wigs, high heels and makeup. I describe my look as a blend of Mother Goose, Cinderella and the local hooker.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I'M TOO CARTOONISH to ever be a threat to wives and girlfriends. Not to say I might or might not have ever crossed the line. Even Snow White slept with seven dwarfs!

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I feel that if you are a star, you owe it to your fans to look like one.

—Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business, 1994

I USED TO think that when I became a star, I would have candy and cakes and pies any time I felt like it. One need only look at the width of my butt in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* to know that I kept that promise to myself, at least for a while.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

BUT THE GOOD thing is I'll probably look the same when I'm one hundred, cause I'm more like a cartoon than anything else. I love to paint and powder, and I love the—[gestures to herself]. I have a look and it'll always be my look.

—***The Late Late Show with Tom Snyder*, 1996**

I'M KINDA LIKE a little cartoon character & cartoon characters don't get old. I'm animated, over-exaggerated & I will never change.

—Twitter, January 12, 2010

I WILL NEVER graduate from collagen.

—***Irish Independent*, October 13, 2002**

EVERYBODY HAS THEIR own journey, their own way of doing things, and who am I to judge? I've always had my own look that I felt comfortable with, whether it's good, bad or indifferent, it was comfortable for me.

—***BBC Newsnight*, February 15, 2019**

I DON'T WANNA look like everybody else.

—***BBC Newsnight*, February 15, 2019**

I'VE CREATED THIS and played it up—the makeup, the whole persona. I've over-exaggerated and made things worse. But I've had a good time doing it, and it all came from a serious place: a country girl's idea of what glamour is.

—***The New York Times*, July 21, 2002**

THERE WAS WHAT they call the "town trollop" in our town up in Sevierville. Well I thought she was the prettiest thing I've ever seen when I was a little girl and every chance I had to go to town, I'd see her and I would just say "Oh, she's so pretty." And they'd say, "Oh, she's just trash." And I thought that's what I'm gonna be when I grow up. And I know sometimes I look like it, but hopefully I'm a little more than that.

—commencement address at the University of Tennessee, May 14, 2009

IT COSTS A lot to look this cheap.

—"Be Yourself" speech, June 26, 2016

I HAVE REALLY tried to not promote nothing but my talent, and the way I look is the way I like to look. I'm just an extremist and so I like to dress the part—if I have extreme parts of my body, then I might as well have extreme hairdos or have extreme clothes to match the boobs and the hairdo. And, my personality is really extreme. I do just as I please, I always have and always will.

—***Rolling Stone*, August 25, 1977**

I LOOK SO totally artificial . . . but I've always been the simplest person in the world.

—***Rolling Stone*, October 30, 2003**

I HAVE SOME tattoos that I started doing just to cover up some scarring. I have a tendency to have keloid scarring.

—***Larry King Now*, August 24, 2016**

I'VE ALWAYS SAID, never leave a rhinestone unturned. Pretty sure I've stayed true to that, especially when it comes to fashion.

—Twitter, July 19, 2019

OF COURSE BY now I can certainly afford to wear whatever I want. Some of my good friends are fashion people like Calvin Klein and Diane Von Furstenberg. They are not ashamed to be with me, and I'm not intimidated by them. If I wear my polyester while they are wearing their silks and satins, I don't care. I'm comfortable with me.

—*The New York Times Magazine*, November 21, 1999

I PROBABLY HAVE thousands of dresses from over the years.

—DollyParton.com, January 27, 2019

I just wanted to be pretty. I wanted to be striking. I wanted to be colorful. I wanted to be seen. When I went to Nashville, I always overdid it. When they say, "Less is more," I say, "That's BS. More is more."

—*Elle*, October 9, 2019

I HAVE A huge gay following, and I'm proud of them. Sometimes some of them look more like me than I do.

—***The New York Times*, June 24, 2016**

I HAVE NO taste and no style and nobody cares. I love it.

—***The Guardian*, January 9, 2005**

A LOT OF men don't find me sexy. Women like me don't appeal to all types. But hopefully the reason my fanbase has stayed so diverse is because everybody thinks I'm like an older sister or an aunt or a girlfriend, or someone you went to school with. I always say people don't pay to see me be me, they pay to see me be them. They think, "I would love to have the nerve to dress like her or behave as outrageously."

—***The Guardian*, January 9, 2005**

TO ME, WHEN I talk about not being a natural beauty—I'm not. Trust me when I say: In the mornings, I gotta get up and paint on stuff. Those people who wake up and they're just beautiful, they're just born that way. Well that ain't me. I gotta work for everything I've got.

—***Southern Living*, September 11, 2014**

I NEVER WOULD have said I did it if I hadn't got caught at it. But I wasn't gonna lie about it! So then after I got caught and I didn't lie about it, people started asking me [more often]. And I thought, "Well, you know, what the hell?" After so much time, after you get older, it can help people. I'm not being the poster child for any of that, but people know you do it. If they ask me, I just say, "Yeah, whatever. And I ain't done yet!"

—on plastic surgery, *Southern Living*, September 11, 2014

IT'S A GIMMICK. It takes pure gall to go around under this. I always had a big hairdo. When the style went out, I still loved it. Wigs are great. I can get ready in fifteen minutes, faster than any woman I know.

—***TIME* Magazine, April 18, 1977**

TO ME, THAT'S still one of the funniest things, when people say that I am a fashion icon. I just always thought people thought I was so gaudy. I am! I'm flashy, and I'm flamboyant. Had I not been a girl, I definitely would have been a drag queen. I like all that flamboyance.

—***Elle*, October 9, 2019**

I WOULD NOT answer the door without some makeup or hair.

—***The Wendy Williams Show*, May 2014**

I'VE ALWAYS SAID I don't know if I'm supporting them or they're supporting me, but they've served me well. I love being girlie and I love my boobs.

—***Paper Magazine*, July 1997**

I ALWAYS SAY that the only way I'd be caught without makeup is if a radio fell into the bathtub and electrocuted me.

—***People*, April 23, 2020**

WHEN I DISCOVERED that there was actually a thing called a push-up bra, that, to me, had to be the equal of the day Einstein figured out that relativity thing.

—***Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business*, 1994**

I'VE MADE IT hard on myself looking the way I look and loving the music like I do. At first glance, people look at me as just hair and tits and a big mouth. Well, I know that, and I am that. But I am so much more than that.

—***The Times-Picayune*, July 26, 2002**

Part IV



Philosophy

I WAS ALWAYS aware of the fact that this was the music business, and I was interested in the business end.

—***Dolly Parton: Platinum Blonde*, January 6, 2003**

NOBODY CAN TRICK me, nobody can fool me. I can sit in a room with the biggest businessmen in the world, working on some of the biggest business deals and I don't feel a bit inadequate. In fact, I always feel like I got a little something on most of them.

—***60 Minutes Australia*, June 1986**

I'M COMPETITIVE IN the business world, trying to beat my own records. I know my strengths and weaknesses, what I will and won't tolerate and sacrifice. I don't put up with as much bull as I used to, and I don't have to kiss nobody's ass to get along in this world.

—***Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1995**

THE ONLY ONES I ever flirted with were the ones I was attracted to. Can't say I never flirted with one, but I never flirted with one to get my record played.

—on rumors that she flirts with local disc jockeys, *Playboy*, October 1, 1978

WORK YOUR BUTT off. That's the best thing to do.

—CBS 42, May 4, 2018

A PEACOCK WHO rests on its feathers is just another turkey.

—Twitter, June 1, 2010

I'M NOT GOING to limit myself just because people won't accept the fact that I can do something else.

—Twitter, November 3, 2010

I NEVER HAD a doubt I would make it because refusing to think I couldn't make it is the reason I could.

—***Playboy*, October 1, 1978**

I'M ONE OF those people who didn't know it couldn't be done until I already had it accomplished.

—***Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, February 9, 2007**

I AIN'T THE greatest at what I do, but I become greater because I *believe*. What I lack in talent I make up for in ambition and faith and determination and positive thinking.

—***Rolling Stone*, August 25, 1977**

Other people didn't always believe in me. And in those times, I had to believe in myself. Plus, nothing's better than proving people wrong.

—Netflix, "Life Advice from Dolly Parton," November 25, 2019

I JUST FELT like I had something that was sellable. I would go into meetings saying, "I think I got something that could make us all a lot of money." I never felt that I had to cower or to feel like, because I was a girl, I had to do it any different. I just believed in myself. Still do.

—***Elle*, October 9, 2019**

YOU KNOW ME, always selling something.

—***Pure and Simple* press conference, March 3, 2016**

SO WHEN SOMETHING doesn't go my way or I stumble, I pick myself up, make sure I brush the disappointment off my rhinestones, and try not to harden my heart over it.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I NEVER FEEL like a failure just because something I tried has failed.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

THAT'S THE THING about life though. You'll have great times and you'll also have some challenges. Just try to make the best out of it. Make it work.

—commencement address at Eastern Tennessee State University, May 9, 2020

LEARNING IS REALLY all about experience, how you look at everything you do and draw lessons from what you have done. If you learn from that and you don't make the same mistakes twice, then not only are you smart, you have what we call "horse sense." I believe in horse sense first and foremost . . . it's just good ol' common sense that allows you to know what you need in any situation.

***—Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

NOTHING'S EVER LOST with me. I've had a lot of things that I've wanted to do that didn't exactly work out. But I applied it to something else and it worked out twice as good as I thought . . . I try to keep myself wide open to recognize what it is that I'm supposed to know and to see. I may not always like a route that something's taken. I might prefer it to be something different. But I think, "Well, this is what I've got." So you gotta make the most with what you're supposed to be doing.

—***Southern Living*, 2014**

WELL I'VE ALWAYS enjoyed what I do. I remember when I used to want to be a star, and I always thought well, you know, now that I've made it no matter how hard it gets I'm not about to bitch about it now.

—***Good Morning America*, 1976**

I HAVE GOOD management and good accountants, but I go outside of all of them to make my own decisions. I need them mostly for advice in certain areas and to negotiate certain things.

—***Interview*, July 1984**

I LOVE BEING able to do things that create opportunities for others, because that's when you learn that you've become more than just your success . . . when you learn you've achieved your dreams and helped somebody else achieve theirs.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I KNOW LOTS of people who I like so much but would never choose to hire. They may be funny or crazy and a ball to be around, but those same traits may not be very useful in a work environment.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I'm not one of those people that goes back and says, "Oh I wish I'da never done that," cause everything I did seemed to be the thing to be doing at the time.

—*Larry King Now*, November 5, 2017

I TRULY LOVE all my closest colleagues, because I trust them and respect them. These folks feel like my family.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

WORK ON A daily basis is all about small commitments. One pet peeve I have is punctuality. To me, being on time is keeping a small commitment. Over and over again, keeping these small commitments adds up to trust.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I HAVE TO get up and go to work because I've kind of worked myself into a corner. I've made all these dreams come true and now I have to be responsible for it. I have to think of myself as a working girl. You don't just get a dream come true and then let it go.

—***Rolling Stone*, August 19, 2016**

I'M MORE SUCCESSFUL now than I was then, but I still feel like the same girl. I'm just a working girl. I never think of myself as a star because, as somebody once said, "A star is nothing but a big ball of gas"—and I don't want to be that.

—*Billboard*, October 24, 2014

I'M OLD ENOUGH and cranky enough now that if someone tried to tell me what to do, I'd tell them where to put it.

—Twitter, June 21, 2012

I STILL FEEL like I'm just starting out! I don't ever want to retire.

—Twitter, October 6, 2011

I HOPE TO continue to go, unless my health should fail me or my husband should fall sick. I intend to work till I fall over. I would love to be able to be like Bob Hope and Betty White and a lot of those folks that work till they're ninety, one hundred years old.

—*The Guardian*, July 24, 2014

A WORD TO all the other artists out there: If you haven't made those provisions, do that. You don't want to leave that mess to your family for people to have to fight over. You need to take care of that yourself, even if it's a pain in the ass—and it is.

—on preparing her will, *Billboard*, August 15, 2020

AFTER YOU REACH a certain age, they think you're over. Well, I will never be over. I'll be making records if I have to sell them out of the trunk of my car. I've done that in my past, and I'd do it again.

—Instagram, November 12, 2016

PART FOUR: BUSINESS

Dollywood

A FEW YEARS back, when I first started seeing the Hollywood sign, I kept thinking how cute it would be if I could change the H to a D—and see how long it would take anybody to notice. It just popped into my mind that it would be a good name for a park.

—*People*, May 5, 1986

I USED TO think, oh if I ever get rich and famous, I'm going to build a park where families and people can come.

—"Be Yourself" speech, June 26, 2016

MY FAMILY WAS supportive and thought it was a great idea. But my accountants, they thought it was a very bad idea.

—*Entertainment Weekly*, July 16, 1999

You can take the girl out of the country, but you better watch out, she might go buy it up and build a theme park.

—"Be Yourself" speech, June 26, 2016

I REALLY WISH you could have seen the looks on my lawyer's and business manager's faces when I told them that I wanted to start a theme park in the hills of my hometown in East Tennessee and call it Dollywood. They thought I had already taken the train to Crazywood!

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You,* 2012**

THE SUCCESS OF both Dollywood and Dixie Stampede comes from our ability to each work in the areas of our expertise. Because, believe me, if I were in charge of the daily operation, I know I would give away far too many tickets and, certainly, colas and ice cream to all the kids!

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You,* 2012**

I DON'T RIDE the rides. I never have. I have a tendency to get motion sickness. Also, I'm a little bit chicken.

—***The New York Times,* June 9, 2019**

I HAVE TOO much to lose to get on one of these rides. My hair, my eyelashes—Lord, there's no telling what might spill out if I got on these rides.

—***Chattanooga Times Free Press*, May 6, 2007**

OUR SHOWS CURRENTLY are identified by where they are located. Some examples are Smoky Mountain Adventures or Dixie Stampede. We also recognize that attitudes change and feel that by streamlining the names of our shows, it will remove any confusion or concerns about our shows and will help our efforts to expand into new cities.

—on the Dixie Stampede controversy, Businesswire.com, January 8, 2018

THERE'S SUCH A thing as innocent ignorance, and so many of us are guilty of that . . . I thought, "Well, I don't want to offend anybody. This is a business."

— on the Dixie Stampede controversy, *Billboard*, August 15, 2020

I've made music my life's work because I feel each and every one of us has a special song to sing. I've made sure that here at my Dollywood, we use music to encourage and inspire those songs in each and every one of our shows.

—DollyParton.com, November 3, 2017

IT GAVE THEM somewhere to go, that they didn't have to hang on to me so much. Almost like a mama. I can't entertain 'em all the time. I can send 'em to the playground, though, with fun people that I trust. You know: "Go. Go, go, go play. Go swing. Go get on the seesaw." 'Cause they feel like it's all me. It's under that Dolly umbrella. And I feel good that I've been able to give them something. An extension of myself, so to speak.

—***The New York Times*, January 26, 2003**

YOU ALL KNOW how very proud I am of my Dollywood and the special folks who work there. It makes me feel so good to know that our guests feel the same way about the park when they come to visit us. It's the perfect place to help them make those memories they're always going to hold close.

—DollyParton.com, September 12, 2017

I HAVE TO say I'm as proud of Dollywood as anything I've ever done in my entire life. It's a wonderful place to go and a wonderful legacy to leave behind for my family.

—***Country Weekly*, August 29, 1995**

I ALWAYS THOUGHT that when I got to be the star that I wanted to be or hoped I would be, if I got lucky enough for that to happen, that I would want to go back and do something in my home area. Something to make my family proud.

—***Dolly Parton: Platinum Blonde*, January 6, 2003**

SO MANY OF the attractions we've added through the years are imagined and built with me and my family's Smoky Mountain childhood in mind; I'm so happy to have shared those same adventures with families.

—on Dollywood's Splash County, DollyParton.com, May 16, 2015

THROUGH MY COMPANY'S Dixie Stampede, Dollywood Splash Country, Dollywood, and with the new resort we're building, we employ about five thousand people.

—***The Wendy Williams Show*, May 2014**

I KNEW THIS would be a wonderful business venture, but I also knew it would really bring a lot of joy and happiness and a lot of jobs, too. That was important to me. Growing up poor, I know how important it is to make a living. And take pride in it.

—***The New York Times*, June 9, 2019**

WORD OF MOUTH gets around that if I'm in the park, I'm liable to show up anytime. Which I am!

—***Country Weekly*, July 29, 1997**

I HAVE THE kind of fun, outgoing personality to pull this off, yet still have the park taken seriously and the business taken seriously.

—***Seattle Times*, July 21, 2002**

I'M SO PROUD of what we've been able to accomplish here since we opened Dollywood in 1986. First, we've been able to provide so many jobs to the great people who live here in the Smokies. Second, I wanted the world to know how beautiful this area truly is. I've been able to travel the world and see so many great things, but in the end, the Smokies are where my heart sings. I wanted to give folks the world over a reason to come here and see it for themselves.

—DollyParton.com, September 9, 2019

Philanthropy

I LOVE TO entertain, but I also love to help people.

—DollyParton.com, May 5, 1993

WHEN I FINALLY started to make some extra money and people in my hometown thought I was famous and earning even more than I really was, I decided it was time to live up to being a hometown celebrity. I started going home and giving concerts to raise money to buy band uniforms and instruments for my high school.

***—Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I WAS THE worst student in the world, hated school. But I got involved in the education stuff several years ago when we first started the scholarship fund back in the '70s.

—DollyParton.com, December 12, 2003

In 1986, I started my Dollywood Company and the Dollywood Foundation. We got involved in the local schools and gave small scholarships to high school seniors interested in music and the environment. At the time, it seemed right and natural to do what I could to help the local school system.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

My main focus is on children and their early education and inspiration.

—on her philanthropic efforts, *A&U*, July 2003

One of the things I'm proudest of is the Imagination Library, which gives books to kids from the time they are born to when they start school. So many of my relatives didn't get a chance to go to school, and my own Daddy couldn't read or write. It started in my hometown, and now we are all over the world.

—***Reuters*, November 29, 2016**

YOU CAN NEVER get enough books into the hands of enough children.

—Instagram, April 2, 2018

WHEN I THOUGHT about my Mama reading the Bible to us, it hit me that if kids had books in the home, just maybe somebody would read to them and help them love books.

***—Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I JUST THINK it's important, because if you can learn to read, you can educate yourself about any subject. You don't have to have money. If you can't afford to go to school, there's a book on anything you want to know. But it's not going to do you any good if you can't read.

***—Songwriter Universe*, October 10, 2017**

I believe that if every kid grows up with a song in their heart and a book in their hand, there's a pretty good chance that their dreams will come true.

—Twitter, April 13, 2017

WHEN WE CREATED the Imagination Library, I made sure that every child in the area who signed up received the books. I never want a child to have that feeling that somehow they are less than someone else—or more than someone else.

—***Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

I DID IT in honor of my father, who was never able to read or write.

—on the Imagination Library, *Songwriter Universe*, October 10, 2017

CHILDREN GET A book once a month—all they have to do is sign up. It doesn't cost the parents a dime.

—***Parade*, December 4, 2015**

WE SENT OUT two million books last year, and hopefully in years to come we'll be all over the world. And it's not just for poor children, this goes to all children.

—"Biography: Dolly Parton," April 12, 2020

ONE OF MY favorite nicknames is the "Book Lady"! I love reading and think it's so important to help our littlest readers experience that same joy by taking a moment to read them a story!

—Instagram, April 2, 2018

IF I'M REMEMBERED one hundred years from now, I hope it will be not for looks but for books. (I don't want to be responsible for any boobs in the future! I had to get that off my chest.)

***—Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, 2012**

And of course Black lives matter. Do we think our little white asses are the only ones that matter? No!

—*Billboard*, August 15, 2020

I THINK IF you're in a position to help as a celebrity, you should do anything that you can, whether it's for the hurricane victims, or whatever, you know . . . you're in a position to help and you should.

—"Biography: Dolly Parton," April 12, 2020

MY SANDOLLAR PRODUCTIONS Company was responsible for the public awareness production of the Common Threads quilt program that traveled all over the nation.

—on her involvement with the AIDS Memorial Quilt project, *A&U*, July 2003

IT WAS ONLY right, that I do that, those are my people, and we did raise millions of dollars to help people who lost their homes and their businesses.

—on raising money to assist victims of the 2016 Smoky Mountain wildfires, Recording Academy MusiCares Person of the Year Award Speech, February 8, 2019

I really like that there is a good feeling when you do something for somebody else. I've been so blessed in my life that I want to give back. If God's been good to you, you should be good to other people. That's how we spread the love around. It makes me feel good to do it, and I think it's my duty to do it.

—***Rookie*, November 13, 2017**

WE'RE LIKE BROTHERS and sisters, and I'm sure you've noticed through the years how close-knit country [music] people are. They're so close to help out with anything, just like recently when we had the big fires in the Smoky Mountains and when I did the telethon. I mean, those people, I didn't have to ask them. They would just call and say, "What can we do to help?"

—Gold Derby, June 5, 2017

WHEN I WAS over in Sevier County High School, I couldn't wait to be a senior, and now that I'm in my second childhood, I'm a senior again.

—at the dedication ceremony renaming a senior center for her parents, *Knox News*, May 8, 2018

I AM MAKING a donation of $1 million to Vanderbilt towards that research and to encourage people that can afford it to make donations.

—on donating to find a cure to COVID-19, Twitter, April 1, 2020

Milestones

1946

- Dolly Rebecca Parton is born to Avie Lee Caroline and Robert Lee Parton Sr. Dolly is the fourth of twelve children, and grows up in a two-room house on the bank of a small river located in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. Her mother keeps house and entertains Parton and her siblings with songs and stories while her father works as a sharecropper and in construction. Parton credits her mother's relatives for her love for music, and her father for her talent in business.

- Parton describes her family as "dirt poor." Her father, though highly intelligent, cannot read, and her mother's health fluctuates due to the constant pregnancies. Songs like "Coat of Many Colors" and "In the Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad)" outline Parton's experience with poverty.

1952

- At the age of six, Parton begins performing music publicly at the church where her maternal grandfather, Jake Robert Owens, pastors. A year later, she begins playing a homemade guitar. At the age of eight, her uncle Bill Owens buys Parton her first real guitar.

1955

- Parton's brother Larry dies shortly after his birth.

1956

- Parton sings on the television and radio program *The Cas Walker Farm and Home Show*.

1959

- "Puppy Love" is released by Goldband Records. Parton writes the song at the age of eleven with assistance from Uncle Bill Owens, and records the song at thirteen after a thirty-hour bus ride from Tennessee to Louisiana. The lyrics are relatable, as the song is about the hot and cold feelings of young love, and demonstrate Parton's considerable talent even at a young age.

1964

- Parton graduates from Sevier County High School on a Friday night. The next morning, she leaves for Nashville. On her first day there, she heads to a laundromat. Outside the building, she meets her future husband, Carl Thomas Dean.

- Parton signs with Combine Publishing. She writes several charting singles with her uncle, such as Skeeter Davis' "Fuel to the Flame." Her work is sung by many other artists as well, most notably Hank Williams Jr. and Kitty Wells.

1965

- At the age of nineteen, Parton signs with Monument Records. With her vocal range and vibrato, she's first introduced as a pop singer. The one single that charts, "Happy Birthday Baby," does not enter the Billboard Hot 100. Parton expresses strong interest in recording country material, but Monument resists.

1966

- Parton and Dean are married in Ringgold, Georgia. Dean is in the construction business. He is a private person, and typically does not appear with his wife at public events. Though Parton does not use her husband's surname professionally, it is on her passport. Parton has mentioned that Dean is spontaneous and romantic, and that he likes to find ways to surprise and delight her, including writing her poems.

- When their contract with Combine ends, Parton and Bill Owens start their own publishing company, Owe-Par. This allows them to copyright their own music. Owe-Par is a significant business move for Parton, as she has a controlling interest in the company at twenty years old.

- Bill Phillips' recording of Parton's and Owens' song "Put It Off Until Tomorrow" hits number six on the country chart. Parton sings, uncredited, on harmony. It becomes BMI's song of the year, and Monument allows Parton to record country music.

1967

- Parton's first country single, "Dumb Blonde," reaches number twenty-four on the country chart. Parton's "Something Fishy," reaches number seventeen shortly thereafter. Both songs appear on *Hello, I'm Dolly*, Parton's first full-length album.
- Porter Wagoner, a musician and country music entertainer, invites Parton to work with him. He offers her a role on his weekly syndicated TV broadcast and in his road show. The audience is initially resistant to Parton, preferring the performer she replaced, Norma Jean. Wagoner convinces RCA Victor, his record label, to hire Parton.
- RCA Victor releases a duet between Parton and Wagoner as her first single with the label. Their remake of Tom Paxton's "The Last Thing on My Mind" reaches the country top ten and begins an almost uninterrupted six-year run of top ten singles for them.

1968

- "Just Because I'm a Woman" becomes Parton's first RCA Victor solo single and is a moderate success. However, Parton's duets with Wagoner are more successful overall than her solo projects. Wagoner is Parton's co-producer and owns close to half of Owe-Par.
- The Country Music Association names Parton and Wagoner the Vocal Group of the Year.

1970

- Wagoner convinces Parton to cover "Mule Skinner Blues," by Jimmie Rodgers, as a way to grow interest in her solo projects. The idea pays off, as the record hits number three. Soon after, her solo song "Joshua" hits number one. "Joshua" becomes Parton's first of many hits, followed by "Coat of Many Colors," "The Right Combination," "Burning the Midnight Oil," "Lost Forever in Your Kiss," "Touch Your Woman," "My Tennessee Mountain Home," and "Travelin' Man."

1973

- Parton composes "Jolene" and "I Will Always Love You" in one songwriting session. She cites this as "a good night."
- "Jolene" is released. Within a year, it tops the country chart and reaches the lower Hot 100, and eventually charts in the United Kingdom as well. It is Parton's biggest hit of the period and becomes one of her most enduring songs.

1974

- Parton and Wagoner perform their final concert as a duet in April 1974 after Parton decides to leave Wagoner's organization. Her last appearance on his TV show is a couple of months later, though they continue to be closely affiliated for another year.

- "I Will Always Love You," which Parton wrote in response to her split from Wagoner, becomes a number one hit on the country chart. Elvis Presley reaches out to Parton with an interest to record the song. Parton refuses Presley's manager's request that she, as the songwriter, give them half of the publishing rights to the song. This decision later helps her make a fortune in royalties.

- Over the next six years, Parton consistently has songs in the country top ten. Eight songs reach the top spot.

1976

- Parton's syndicated TV variety show *Dolly!* premieres. Her guests include Nashville and Hollywood stars such as KC and the Sunshine Band, Kenny Rogers, and Billy Davis Jr. *Dolly!* also features the first televised performance of the so-called Trio—Parton, Emmylou Harris, and Linda Ronstadt—a full decade before the release of the first of their two acclaimed albums. *Dolly!* lasts a single season on air.

- Sandy Gallin joins Parton's team. Gallin assists with a crossover campaign designed to expose a larger audience to her music and serves as Parton's manager and then production partner.

- Parton begins taking a more active role in production, co-producing the album *All I Can Do* with Porter Wagoner. She goes on to produce projects by herself.

1977

- Pop producer Gary Klein produces Parton's album *Here You Come Again*. The album spans the country-pop gap and becomes Parton's first to sell a million copies. It tops the country album chart and hits number twenty on the pop chart. Singles from the album are also popular in both genres.
- Parton is interviewed by Barbara Walters to coincide with the album release. This is quickly followed by an appearance on Cher's TV special and another special featuring Carol Burnett and Parton. These television appearances increase Parton's visibility outside of country music circles.
- Parton has a cameo in episode thirteen of *The Love Boat*, where she plays the boat captain's wife. It is not a speaking part.

1978

- Parton wins the Grammy Award for Best Female Country Vocal Performance for *Here You Come Again*.
- Along with Roy Clark and Glen Campbell, Parton serves as a co-host of the CBS special *50 Years of Country Music*.
- Parton appears on the cover of the October issue of *Playboy* but refuses to pose nude.

1979

- Parton performs live at the Ford Theatre in Washington, D.C.. Her audience includes President Jimmy Carter.

1980

- Her popularity continues to expand with three consecutive songs that hit number one on the country chart: "Starting Over Again," "Old Flames Can't Hold a Candle to You," and "9 to 5."
- Parton stars in the *9 to 5* feature film with Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin. Her role earns her nominations for two Golden Globes: Best Actress—Motion Picture Musical or Comedy, and New Star of the Year—Actress. The theme song, in addition to reaching number one on the country chart, also hits number one on the adult-contemporary and pop charts. Parton is one of very few female artists to have a song that is simultaneously number one on the pop and country charts. It wins two Grammys: Best Female Country Vocal Performance and Best Country Song. The song also receives nominations for an Academy Award for Best Original song and a Golden Globe for Best Original Song, though it does not win either.

1982

- *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* is released. This is Parton's second major film credit, and she earns her

second nomination for a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress—Motion Picture Musical or Comedy.

- Mid-concert in Indianapolis, Parton collapses due to severe pain. This is revealed to be from endometriosis. In order to combat this increasing pain, Parton receives a partial hysterectomy. Afterward, Parton suffers from depression.

1983

- Parton partners with Kenny Rogers for the duet "Islands in the Stream," which spends two weeks at number one. Further duets with Rogers as well as solo country top ten hits maintain her widespread exposure.

1984

- The film *Rhinestone*, starring Parton and Sylvester Stallone, is released. It garners weak reviews and loses money at the box office.
- Parton receives a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

1986

- A small theme park in Parton's hometown of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, catches her interest. Parton purchases a portion and it reopens as Dollywood.

1987

- RCA chooses to allow Parton's contract to expire, so she signs with Columbia Records.
- The *Dolly!* show returns to television but only lasts one season. Guests include Oprah Winfrey, Tom Petty, and Tyne Daly. Daly's appearance directly leads to Daly's casting as the lead role of the 1989 Broadway production of *Gypsy*.
- *Trio* is released. This collaborative album with Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt revitalizes Parton's relevancy in the music world. It spends five weeks at number one on the Billboard country albums chart and reaches the top ten on Billboard's top-200 albums chart. Millions of copies are sold. The album wins the Grammy for Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group with Vocal and is nominated for Album of the Year. This success pushes Parton to focus on country material again.

1989

- The documentary *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* is released. Parton and Sandy Gallin (Parton's former manager) co-own the production company, Sandollar Productions, which produced this film about the AIDS Memorial Quilt. The movie wins an Academy Award for Best Documentary (Feature). Some of Sandollar's other notable titles include *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Father of the Bride*, *Straight Talk*, and *Sabrina*.

- The popular film *Steel Magnolias* is released, in which Parton plays salon owner and hairstylist Truvy Jones.

1992

- *The Bodyguard* is released. Whitney Houston records Parton's "I Will Always Love You" for the film, and the single and album are highly successful. This proves to be one of Parton's biggest successes in the '90s.

1993

- Parton releases *Honky Tonk Angels* with Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette. The album is certified gold and helps reinvigorate the careers of Lynn and Wynette.
- Parton makes a cameo appearance as herself in the movie adaptation of *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

1994

- The autobiography *Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business* is published.

1995

- The Dollywood Foundation establishes Imagination Library, which sends books at no charge to children in Sevier County, Tennessee. Each enrolled child is mailed one book per month from birth until the start of kindergarten. Over the next twenty-five years, the program expands statewide and to other parts

of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland.

- Parton re-records "I Will Always Love You" as a duet with Vince Gill, which wins the Country Music Association's Vocal Event of the Year Award.

1996

- Parton co-creates the television sitcom *Mindin' My Own Business*. The show features Parton as a caterer to the stars but never makes it to air.
- *Treasures*, Parton's album of '60s and '70s hits, is released. Most notable is her cover of Cat Stevens' "Peace Train," which is remixed as a dance single.
- The first mammal cloned through a new process, Dolly the Sheep, is named for Parton. The lead scientist states, "Dolly is derived from a mammary gland cell and we couldn't think of a more impressive pair of glands than Dolly Parton's."

1998

- The *Hungry Again* album ventures into country-rock. Though the singles from the album do not chart, Parton's music videos receive airplay on Country Music Television.
- Nashville Business ranks Parton as the wealthiest country music star, with an estimated net worth of five hundred million dollars.

1999

- Harris, Ronstadt, and Parton team up to make *Trio II*. They cover Neil Young's "After the Gold Rush," which wins a Grammy Award for Best Country Collaboration with Vocals.
- Parton is inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Her fellow inductees that year are Johnny Bond and Conway Twitty.
- Parton's *The Grass is Blue* album wins a Grammy for Best Bluegrass Album. Two years later, her rendition of "Shine" by Collective Soul wins a Grammy for Best Female Country Vocal Performance.

2000

- Parton's father passes away.

2001

- Parton is inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. In 2007, she receives the prestigious Johnny Mercer Award. To be eligible for the award, writers need to be members of the Hall of Fame and have a history of outstanding creative works. Other recipients of the Johnny Mercer Award include Stevie Wonder, Carole King, Elton John, and Steven Sondheim.

2003

- At the BMI Country Awards, Parton is honored as a BMI Icon. Over her career, she has earned dozens of BMI Pop and Country Awards.
- Parton receives the Partnership Award from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for her efforts to preserve the bald eagle population through a sanctuary at Dollywood.
- Parton's mother passes away.

2005

- The film *Transamerica* is released, and Parton wins an Academy Award for Best Original Song for "Travelin' Thru." The song is also nominated for the Golden Globe for Best Original Song and the Critics' Choice Awards for Best Song. Due to the film's positive portrayal of a transgender woman, Parton receives death threats for her involvement.

2006

- Parton guest stars on Disney's *Hannah Montana* as "Aunt Dolly." Miley Cyrus, the actress playing the titular role, is Parton's real-life goddaughter and also grew up in Tennessee. Parton reprises her role on the show in 2007 and 2010.
- *Dolly's Dixie Fixin's: Love, Laughter and Lots of Good Food,* Parton's cookbook, is published. Recipes include classic southern cooking, menu items from

Dollywood's restaurants, and dishes from some of Parton's favorite tour locations. She will go on to publish more books, including autobiographies and children's stories.

- Parton pledges five hundred thousand dollars toward a proposed cancer center and hospital to be built in her hometown. She also organizes a benefit concert to raise more funds for the project.

2007

- Parton joins the ranks of the Girl Scouts as a lifetime member. The presentation in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, brings together over one thousand Girl Scouts to join Parton in reciting the Girl Scout Promise. Parton never got to be a Girl Scout as a child and considers this a great honor and privilege.

2008

- The Library of Congress honors Parton for her work with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
- Parton simultaneously creates her own record company, Dolly Records, and releases a new studio album: *Backwoods Barbie*. The album is her first foray into mainstream country in over fifteen years. It hits number two on the country chart and debuts at number seventeen on the Billboard top-200 albums chart, marking the best debut of her career.

- A fire on the backlot of Universal Studio Hollywood destroys some of Parton's audio material. The fire begins when a worker uses a blowtorch to warm asphalt shingles and destroys between 118,000 and 175,000 audio master tapes.

2009

- *9 to 5: The Musical* opens on Broadway to mixed reviews. Parton writes the score, and the title track of *Backwoods Barbie* was initially written for a character in the musical. The score and acting are praised but the show struggles. The show closes after twenty-four previews and 148 performances. Parton is nominated for the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Music, the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Lyrics, and the Tony Award for Best Original Score.

- Parton releases a boxed set of four CDs, featuring ninety-nine songs and spanning most of her career. The set is titled *Dolly*.

- Parton delivers the commencement speech at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's College of Arts and Sciences graduation ceremony. She is awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters for her work in the music industry but also for her work as an education advocate, philanthropist, and cultural ambassador.

2010

- Parton partners with Billy Ray Cyrus to release the album *Brother Clyde*. This sparks a series of other partnerships over the next decade as Parton spends less time working solo and more time collaborating. These artists notably include Lulu Roman, Kenny Rogers, Pentatonix, Kesha, The Highwomen, and Linda Perry.
- Dollywood becomes a larger focus for Parton and she becomes more involved in the park's operation. Over four thousand people are employed at Dollywood, making it the largest employer in the community. The park earns the Liseberg Applause Award, the most prestigious award for theme parks, in November of that year.

2011

- Parton receives the Lifetime Achievement Grammy for her five decades as a singer, songwriter, author, actress, philanthropist, and businesswoman.

2012

- *Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You* is published. In it, Parton discusses her life and philosophy.

2013

- Parton announces that Dollywood is expanding to include a resort and spa.

2014

- Parton performs at the UK Glastonbury Festival for the first time, playing favorites like "Jolene," "9 to 5," and "Coat of Many Colors." Over 180,000 people watch her well-received performance.
- Parton builds a Dream Box to be opened in 2045. The box is located at the Dollywood DreamMore resort and contains a copy of Parton's 2012 book, *Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, a piece of wood from Parton's Tennessee Mountain Home's front porch, a song written by Parton to be released in 2045, and a sealed chestnut mystery box.

2015

- A made-for-TV movie titled *Dolly Parton's Coat of Many Colors* is released. The movie is based on Parton's hit song of the same name. A child actor plays young Parton, and Parton herself narrates the movie. A sequel is released the following year, which contains a cameo from Parton.
- A new species of fungus discovered in the southern Appalachians is named after Parton—Japewiella dollypartoniana.

2016

- Parton and her husband Carl Dean renew their vows to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary.
- Parton joins Pentatonix to release an a cappella version of "Jolene." Later in the year, she performs on *The Voice* with Pentatonix and her goddaughter Miley Cyrus.
- To celebrate fifty years of the Country Music Association Awards, Parton participates in a thirty-artist, multi-song mashup. It includes the songs "Take Me Home, Country Roads," "On the Road Again," and "I Will Always Love You." Parton is given the Willie Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Parton participates in a telethon to raise money for the victims of the Great Smoky Mountains wildfires. A couple of days later, she hosts her own telethon to raise more funds.
- Imagination Library sends one million books per month to children worldwide.

2017

- *I Believe in You,* Parton's forty-sixth solo studio album and first children's album, is released. All proceeds from the album sales go to benefit Parton's Imagination Library.
- Tennessee releases the official Dolly Parton license plate, with proceeds going to the Imagination Library.

2018

- Parton receives a second Hollywood Walk of Fame star for her work with Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris.
- The film *Dumplin'* is released on Netflix. Parton provides the music for the story of a girl, nicknamed "Dumplin,'" who is raised by her Aunt Lucy. Aunt Lucy instills a love for Dolly Parton and self-confidence in Dumplin' in a coming-of-age story.
- Parton's brother Floyd passes away.
- Dixie Stampede, Parton's Civil War-themed dinner theater attraction, with locations in Tennessee, Missouri, and South Carolina, changes its name. The new name—Dolly Parton's Stampede—comes after backlash regarding the content, as the audience chooses to side with the North or the South in the Civil War, and the South occasionally wins. The plot of the performance is adjusted to reflect modern perceptions of history.

2019

- *Dolly Parton's Heartstrings* is released on Netflix. This eight-part series features Parton as executive producer and co-star and tells stories based on her songs.
- *Dolly Parton's America*, a nine-part podcast about Parton's life and career, is released.

2020

- Parton posts four pictures in which she shows how she presents herself on four different social media platforms: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This goes viral as other celebrities participate in the "Dolly Parton challenge."
- Dollywood adds a new festival to its roster: the Flower and Food Festival. This joins a roster of other events including the Festival of Nations, the Barbecue & Bluegrass Festival, the Summer Celebration, the Harvest Festival, and Smoky Mountain Christmas.
- Parton donates one million dollars toward Vanderbilt University's coronavirus research and urges others with the ability to do the same.
- Parton also institutes "Goodnight with Dolly" as a new Imagination Library program, where she reads aloud stories for children that address issues of the time including isolation, safety, family, and togetherness. Her aim is to keep hope alive during a difficult period.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Kelsey Dame, Kristina Dehlin, Elizabeth Pappas, Marilyn Isaacks, Hannah Masters, Amanda Gibson, Claire Maclauchlan, and Will Russo for their invaluable contributions to the preparation of this manuscript.

NEW FROM AGATE'S BESTSELLING IN THEIR OWN WORDS SERIES

Thought-provoking, inspiring quotations from some of the world's most illuminating leaders and cultural icons



RuPaul
In His Own Words
$12.95 | 978-1-57284-279-3



Martha Stewart
In Her Own Words
$12.95 |978-1-57284-288-5



Taylor Swift
In Her Own Words
$12.95 | 978-1-57284-278-6

AND MORE...

Warren Buffett:
In His Own Words
978-1-57284-273-1

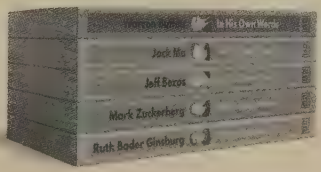
Jack Ma:
In His Own Words
978-1-57284-264-9

Jeff Bezos:
In His Own Words
978-1-57284-265-6

Mark Zuckerberg:
In His Own Words
978-1-57284-262-5

Ruth Bader Ginsberg:
In Her Own Words
978-1-57284-249-6

Richard Branson:
In His Own Words
978-1-57284-291-5



"Find out who you are and do it on purpose."

Get inside the head of one of the most beloved musicians of our time, a longtime country music phenomenon turned titan of industry and cultural icon. This collection of quotes has been carefully curated from her numerous public statements—interviews, books, speeches, social media posts, and more. It's a comprehensive picture of her legacy as one of America's most recognizable music superstars, whose considerable impact can be felt throughout popular culture and beyond.

BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY

ISBN 978-1-57284-294-6

USD $12.95

51295

9 781572 842946 >

AGATE

Agatepublishing.com

Cover illustration by Arthur Mount