

WSM: the legendary “Air Castle of the South.” Home of the Grand Ole Opry, America’s longest-running live radio show, and the birthplace of countless country music careers. Just as Ralph Emery fostered the dreams of many up-and-coming artists, another late night disc jockey did the same for West Coast native Jayne Nelsen.

Serendipity brought Nelsen’s husband to Nashville on a business trip, and curiosity caused him to approach a WSM disc jockey to see if he’d play Jayne’s demo of “Are You Watching Me Now?” an autobiographical tribute to her late father. “He knocked on the window and the guy came up and said ‘We can’t do it right now, but if you come back at midnight, maybe they can play it then.’ So he came back, knocked on the window, and played the song for him. The DJ happened to have little girls at home, and he called me on the phone in California and said ‘I love this song and I want to play it.’ People started calling. Even a taxi driver called him crying at one in the morning.”

Airplay on WSM was the spark that lit the flame under Jayne’s career, prompting her to move cross-country to pursue her dreams. “A door opened and we had to go through it. That was it! When we came out here, we didn’t have anything really. When we left California, we were living with my mom. My husband quit his job, and at that point I thought ‘This is it. I’m never gonna do it if I don’t do it now. And if I’m gonna do it, I’d might as well not regret any of it!’”

Jayne’s one song demo grew into her aptly titled debut, “No Regrets.” Produced by Mark Oliverius, known for his work with Lorrie Morgan, the twelve-song CD seamlessly blends five of Nelsen’s own compositions with those of top Nashville tunesmiths like Leslie Satcher, who wrote Martina McBride’s hit “When God Fearin’ Women Get The Blues.”

In addition to the song about her father, Jayne’s tributes to her husband and two young daughters are woven through the lyrics of “No Regrets.”

The album kicks off with “Leave the Light On,” an up-tempo snapshot of a devoted husband who reminds his wife he still finds her attractive even after motherhood. “He’s always been like that with me. ‘I love you no matter what.’ I have two kids and sometimes I may feel like I’m fat, I’m ugly, whatever, but he’s never wanted to change me. He just keeps loving me more than I thought anybody would ever love me.”

In the CD’s most personal song, “On That Day,” Jayne relives the moment she discovered her youngest daughter Madelyn is autistic. “When you find out something like that, it changes everything. Your whole world revolves around it because you can’t change it. I didn’t know if she was going to talk. I didn’t know anything. What does that mean for her life? If I’m not here, then what’s gonna happen to her? Will she ever be able to take care of herself?”

When she’s not performing or taking care of her family, Jayne’s priority is working with autistic children. She hopes “On That Day” will draw even more attention to the cause. “Autistic kids just think differently. It’s like they’re trapped and they can’t communicate,

but there's so much going on. I think a lot of people think they just don't understand, but it's not true. They understand a lot. They understand more than a lot of people do I think. They just can't communicate it. They're kind of stuck. They need the tools to be able to communicate. They need the right people, a lot of intervention and a lot of help to communicate. A lot of them are little geniuses. They're very, very smart."

Thanks to early intervention, Jayne says 10-year-old Maddie now copes with her autism quite well. "We really didn't know she was going to come this far. She was 18 months old when she was diagnosed so she had a lot of early help. It's something that she's adapted to. Every time I put the CD in she says, 'Put it on number 7!' She sings it and tells everybody, 'Oh my Mommy wrote a song about me!' She loves it."

Another touching song written by frequent Joe Diffie collaborator Michael Higgins is the first single from "No Regrets." "What It Really Is" offers an alternative perspective on life's more serious concerns, giving us hope based on our point of view. "When I first heard Michael do it, I cried. My mother cried. I love the song, and I love the message. So many people can relate to it. It's a different take, not one you hear everyday. It makes you think, and I like songs that make you think."

"What It Really Is" closes with the story of a family losing a very young child. This hits particularly close to home for Jayne. "One of my best friends lost her baby when she was about 7 days old after heart surgery. Through it all she's been so amazing. I don't know how anybody can go through that. Being a mom, I don't know what I would do. To think of it the way it's expressed in the song is the only way you can get through it I think."

From the stone country pleadings of "Help Me Say No" to the playful crankiness of "Real Bad Mood" to the sexy seduction of "Take Your Time", "No Regrets" tells the story of a multi-faceted woman who knows exactly who she is: wife, mother, and country artist.

Jayne says that's exactly what sets her apart. "Nobody else has the experiences I have. Nobody else has my story."