

LEROY VAN DYKE

by Tamela Meredith Partridge
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Country singer, Leroy Van Dyke, knew exactly what he wanted to pursue in life from the time he was a small boy growing up on a ranch in Missouri.

"There are only four things I ever really had an obsession or passion about," Van Dyke says by telephone from his Smithton, Mo., farm. "One is singing, one is selling, one is writing and the other is raising livestock. Fortunately, I've had the opportunity to do all four."



Van Dyke will perform on Saturday at Nashville North in Taylorville.

Van Dyke, who charted nearly twenty country singles including "The Auctioneer," "Walk On By" and "If A Woman Answers (Hang Up The Phone)," is also a farmer, writer and auctioneer.

"I'm a licensed and bonded auctioneer graduate of the Repperts School of Auctioneering," Van Dyke says. "I also received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Missouri, where I majored in Animal Husbandry and Journalism, with a minor in Speech."

Van Dyke served in the army from 1952-1954 as a counter-intelligence special agent during the Korean War.

"Part of my job in Korea was to give security lectures to the troops up at the front lines, bunkers and trenches," Van Dyke says. "One day, the assistant regimental commander asked if I would take my guitar with me when I gave those security lectures. So I did. I'd drive up in the hills in my jeep, take out my guitar, sing some songs, give my lecture and head back down the mountain."

While in Korea, Van Dyke wrote the song, "The Auctioneer," which was inspired by his second cousin and premier auctioneer, Ray Sims.

After the army, Van Dyke worked in Illinois at the agricultural and livestock publication, "The Chicago Drover's Journal."

"It was a daily paper back then, now it's a magazine," Van Dyke says. "I did public relations, sold advertising, worked the ring at various cattle auctions and wrote up the results of livestock shows around the country. It was very good training."

Van Dyke's big break occurred when he won third place singing "The Auctioneer" in a Chicago talent contest in 1956. Within two weeks, "The Auctioneer" was released as a single and went on to sell close to three million records.

Due to the popularity of "The Auctioneer," Van Dyke partnered with Hugh James and Ray Sims in the 1960's and founded The Superior School Of Auctioneering in Decatur, IL.

Even though the auctioneering school is no longer in business, Van Dyke still teaches the art of auctioneering through his "Auctioneering, Motivation and Success" audio cassette and textbook home study course.

"We've asked Leroy Van Dyke to auction off some country celebrity items after his show," says Nashville North co-owner Mike Myers. "All the proceeds will go to the Taylorville Emergency Food Pantry."

Auction items include two Nashville North front row Loretta Lynn tickets and a variety of autographed posters, caps, t-shirts and cd's by Neal McCoy, Toby Keith, Tanya Tucker, Patty Loveless, Sawyer Brown, Ricky Van Shelton, Billy Dean, Brad Paisley, Tammy Cochran, Ty Herndon, SheDaisy and more.

Leroy Van Dyke continues to pursue his four main interests in life by auctioneering, writing his autobiography, raising Arabian mules and singing country songs.

"Country music has such a wide appeal among people of all levels and professions," Van Dyke says. "Whether we are blue collar or white collar, we all have the same aspirations of being successful in our lives, work, finances, love and relationships. That applies from the top to the bottom spectrum of the economic ladder. It's universal."