

Episode Title: Reba McEntire's Southern Accent

Episode Summary: In this week's episode, Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of *Southern Living Magazine*, talks to country music legend Reba McEntire about growing up on her family's Oklahoma cattle ranch, her new career-spanning box set, and how she regained her passion for singing after the loss of her mother.

REBA MCENTIRE: I'm proud of my heritage. I'm proud of the state of Oklahoma, where I grew up. I'm proud of my parents. I love the Lord. And I think that's all the training and the things I learned and grew up with by being in the South. Some people might say Oklahoma is not the South, it's central or it's the center part of the United States. But I'm south of a lot of people. So I'll take it.

(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound)

Voice Over from SID EVANS: Welcome to *Biscuits and Jam* from *Southern Living*. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of *Southern Living Magazine*. There's an elite few in country music who are recognizable just by their first name. And though my guest this week was named after her grandmother and came from humble beginnings on a cattle farm in Oklahoma, the name Reba is about as synonymous with country music as they come.

REBA MCENTIRE: When I went to L.A., and people had said, "Oh, you kept your accent." I said, "Well, that's the way I talk." "Yeah, but don't you want to change it?" And I said, "Well, why? Then that wouldn't be Reba. That'd be somebody else."

Voice Over from SID EVANS: Approaching 45 years in music, television, film and now podcasting, Reba McEntire has done it all, selling more than 75 million records in the process. Inducted by her hero Dolly Parton into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2011, Reba comes from a family of world champion steer-ropers. Before seeing the world on a tour bus, she traveled with her mom, dad and three siblings in one truck to rodeo competitions around the country. But Reba's singing career skyrocketed in the 1980's, and aside for holding the record for most CMA and ACM nominations by a female artist, she's also scored number one songs in each of the last four decades.

On today's show, Reba tells me about life on the farm, her new duet with Dolly Parton and finding solace in her faith. All that and more this week on Biscuits & Jam.

(Theme music ends)

SID EVANS: Well, Reba McEntire, welcome to *Biscuits and Jam*.

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

SID EVANS: Where am I reaching you right now?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, I am in Nashville, Tennessee, at our offices.

SID EVANS: OK, well, I imagine you've spent quite a bit of time in Nashville last year and a half or so.

REBA MCENTIRE: I have, yeah. Yeah. When the COVID pandemic hit, we were in Oklahoma. We were going to have the funeral for our mom, Jacqueline McEntire. And then while we were picking out all the details for the funeral, our funeral director said, "No, we don't think you're going to have it, because I think they're going to close the state borders and nobody can come in." So that was our first realization that this was very serious. And all the rest of the time, I've been here in Nashville pretty much.

SID EVANS: Oh , well, that's just a lot to, uh, deal with, isn't it?

REBA MCENTIRE: It is. Way too much. More than our little brains can comprehend sometimes.

SID EVANS: Well, Reba, you know, I've read that you were named after your grandmother, who had a very different life than yours. I'm wondering, can you tell me a little bit about the original Reba?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, the original Reba was my mama's mama. She had four children, three girls and a boy. She was a farmer, sharecropper. She had an acre garden. And they canned all of their fruits and vegetables. They had an orchard in the back with peaches, cherries, apricots. And the only thing I remember them saying they ever had to buy was sugar, coffee and flour. Everything else they had out there on the little farm. Pigs, chickens, cows. So they had their milk, bacon and eggs, everything they needed.

SID EVANS: And was she right down the road from you?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, she was when we lived close to her and then we moved about five miles away from them. She was very spiritual. That's where we got all of our teachings about the Lord and the stories about Jesus—that came from Grandma Smith.

SID EVANS: Yeah. I've also read in your autobiography that she made a pretty good blackberry cobbler.

REBA MCENTIRE: My favorite. Absolutely. I loved it when everybody else was outside and I'd sneak back in the house. She kept it in a big pot, you know, after we'd eat and she would clean up. Then she put it in the refrigerator—we call it an icebox. And so I'd get in there and I would get me a big spoon and I'd just eat out of the big pot. And then I'd keep an eye out, make sure nobody came in and I got caught.

SID EVANS: I love it. Well, so you grew up on a farm in a little town called McAlester, Oklahoma. Am I saying that right?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, you're close. Thirty-two miles south is a little town called Chockie, Oklahoma, population 18. And we lived on a working cattle ranch. Daddy ran cross-bred steers. We'd buy in the

spring, sell in the fall. So it was for feeder cattle. Basically, we got them skinny, got them fat, and got them out of there.

SID EVANS: Yeah, what did a typical day on the farm look like for you?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, depending on what time of the year it was. I think if it was February, March, April, we're receiving cattle. That's when you have to straighten them up, give them all their shots, and brand them and ear tag them and dehorned them if they need to. Castrate them, if they were bulls, turn them into steers. And the reason we did that is because steers gained more weight quickly than bulls did. And then we'd turn them out. And then another week here come another load, 75—oh, maybe to 100 head of yearlings. Depends on how big they were. And we ran mama cows for a while and then Daddy got tired of that. And so we went to cross-bred steers. So it was early in the morning getting up and working cattle. We even did that sometimes in the summer. I remember getting a heat stroke. I came in from college and I always had a real good time at college. So on Saturday morning, about 11 o'clock, being close to the branding fire, I passed out. I got a heat stroke and I woke up. And Daddy was getting a drink out of the water jug and he looked at me, he said, "You want a drink?" I said, "yeah." So I took a big swig of water. And he said, "You OK?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Bring me another one." So we were—it was just Daddy and me down there at the pen. So I was his only hired hand for the day. So I had to get back to work.

And in the fall we'd get up early, early, early when it was still dark outside. And Daddy'd be making breakfast, Mom would be getting ready for work. And Pake and I would go out in a 40-acre pasture and get the horses. And they were frisky and running around and then we'd catch them, feed them a little bit, and, uh, hope you didn't get run over. And then we'd go back in for breakfast and then get on our horses and head up in the hills and start gathering cattle so we could weigh them. Then we'd go to school.

SID EVANS: Right.

REBA MCENTIRE: That was all before school.

SID EVANS: So, you must have started pretty early when you grew up on a farm like that. I imagine they've got you working, at a pretty young age.

REBA MCENTIRE: Oh yeah. Daddy'd come in and he'd say, "I need a driver to put the hay out" and, uh, Alice and Pake would be going and doing something. So it was Susie or me and we were the little girls. We'd be 4, 6 years old. And so whoever he saw first he said, "Come on, go with me, I need some help." And so he would put a sack of feed there in the driver's seat so we'd set on our knees and drive. And he'd put it in granny gear and hop out and get on the back and put the hay out. And our instructions were, "Don't hit a rock and try not to hit a tree." And so one day Daddy got—Daddy was out front and Mama walked out. She said, "What on earth happened to your truck?" He said, "Oh, it's my drivers." Who didn't stay away from them very well.

SID EVANS: Well, that's how you learn.

REBA MCENTIRE: Yeah, it is.

(Instrumental music break)

SID EVANS: Well, so I wanted to ask you about the steer roping and growing up around rodeos like you did. What are some things that you learned growing up around rodeos? I mean, what did that kind of teach you about life?

REBA MCENTIRE: Number one thing I learned how to read a road map. I'd sit between Mom and Daddy in the front seat if I was lucky, and I'd have the road map all spread out and I would try to find the best way to go. And Daddy already knew where he was going because he'd been traveling those trails for years. And then when the interstates came, that was a big, huge thing for us because we'd be traveling down the highway, like Route 66 and always two-lane roads. And of course, you went through all the little towns in the country. And so after the rodeo, we'd all pile in the car and Susie and I would get in the floorboard. We were little. So we were on one side of the hump and the other one on the other side of the hump. Alice was the eldest, so she got the seat and Pake got above the seat. So back then, Daddy had an old trailer that was real heavy, two horses in the back. And of course, we didn't have trailer breaks back in those days. And when Daddy had hit a town and he'd see a stoplight, he'd start stop stopping as soon as he could. Well, that made Pake fall down on Alice and Alice and Pake fall down on me and Susie, so we had to rassle and giggle and everything would get back in our perspective places. And by that time Daddy hit another little town.

SID EVANS: Well, you must have grown up around a pretty tough, kind of hardscrabble crowd. And I'm wondering if you use some of that toughness to get through the music business?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, the best thing about the rodeo business was the families, because it was like a tour. Everybody who was at the rodeo this week, that same people were at the next rodeo we went to. So all of us kids grew up together. We knew all the families and it was consistency. We loved it. We traveled mostly in the northwest and then the central part of the United States and all the way down into Texas to the rodeos. And then Alice started rodeoing. She ran barrels, Pake roped calves, team roping and steer roping.

But Grandpap started it all out. He was the world champion in 1934. Back then it was whoever won Cheyenne Frontier Days was world champion because that was the biggest payday. Then Daddy won the world three times and then us kids, we just kind of took it up. We just loved it. When Daddy would release us from chores and Mama didn't have anything for us to do, we headed to the roping pen. It was about 10 acres because Daddy was a tripper. So he needed a lot of space. And you had to go down the hill, go through the gate, cross the little swampy spot before you crossed over the railroad track, and

then you had to go across this ditch and then go up a real steep hill to get to the roping pen. So you better really want to go the roping pen if you're going to go through all of those obstacles. And we loved it. That was our playground.

SID EVANS: Well, I know you picked up some rodeo skills of your own. What was the secret to being a good barrel racer?

REBA MCENTIRE: Hanging on. I never had a horse of my own until after I got married and I was 22 or 3. But Daddy, when he had his old steer roping horses that weren't working good and he'd try another one to work or another one, he needed me to keep his in shape, as did Pake. When Pake's calf-ropin' horse quit working, he'd say "Reba, go run barrels on Old Silkie." He was a good horse. I ran on him for a good year until Pake wanted him back and I filled my GRA Card, that's the Girl's Rodeo Association, which, now, it's the WPRA, Women's Professional Rodeo Association. But I filled both my permits so I could get my card, and I just loved it. I never did rope. Alice didn't either. We just stayed with the barrel racing.

SID EVANS: Do you still like to ride a little bit?

REBA MCENTIRE: I do. I've got a really neat horse that my niece Garret brought me from Oklahoma and we call him Gator. He's a smart horse. He can open the stall doors, get in, get out, whatever he wants to do.

SID EVANS: That's great. Reba, I know that your faith is very important to you. And I'm wondering if the church was partly where you discovered a love of music?

REBA MCENTIRE: Yes, it was, cause whenever the church doors were open, Grandma and Grandpa Smith were there and we would go with them. Mama never went with us to church much at all. Daddy went once in a while. But we would go with Grandma and Grandpa Smith and the church we went to there at Chockie wasn't a mile from the house. So we'd walk over and they'd bring us back. I love the Sunday ritual. I love going to church. And, and I've got a great little church here in Tennessee I go to, right outside of Nashville. It's just so heartwarming. And, uh, I was there Sunday and lady behind me said, "Oh, my gosh, I needed this." And I said, "You know, I say that every Sunday when we get through with the sermon." It just makes you feel good. And I love going out to eat with everybody after church because Grandma would always have something cooking when we got back home from church.

SID EVANS: Was it a Baptist church that you grew up going to?

REBA MCENTIRE: No, Holiness. Pentecostal holiness and then I was baptized at 12 years old as a Baptist. And now I go to the Methodist church. So they're all different but it's got the same point.

SID EVANS: Yeah.

REBA MCENTIRE: The same Holy Spirit shows up, so I'm a happy camper.

SID EVANS: So was Sunday also a big food day in your family?

REBA MCENTIRE: Uh-huh. Especially after church. We called it breakfast, dinner, and supper. It wasn't any lunch, because when you're working all the time, you have to have a lot of food for sustenance. So we would be down in the pens working and Daddy'd say, "OK, you girls go up, take the bucket of mountain oysters," you know, after you castrated the bulls. And we'd take it up to the house and we'd clean them and then we'd take them in to Mama and she'd fry them up and she'd have a platter stacked up, oh, I guess, 12 inches high of fried mountain oysters. And we'd have that and vegetables and a lot of ketchup because I love ketchup. I put ketchup on everything.

SID EVANS: We may have to get your mountain oyster recipe.

REBA MCENTIRE: Oh, we can do that.

SID EVANS: I can't say I've had those before, but clearly I'm missing out.

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, they sometimes they call them calf fries.

SID EVANS: Uh-huh.

REBA MCENTIRE: But they weren't calves. They were full blown bulls, yeah.

SID EVANS: Right. An Oklahoma delicacy.

REBA MCENTIRE: Uh-huh, yeah.

(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound)

Voice Over from SID EVANS: I'll be back with more from the great Reba McEntire after the break.

BREAK

(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound)

Voice Over from SID EVANS: Welcome back to Biscuits & Jam from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, and I'm talking with the legendary Reba McEntire.

SID EVANS: So, Reba, I've got to ask you about Christmas, because I know that you've got a new Christmas special coming out this year.

REBA MCENTIRE: Uh-huh.

SID EVANS: And I'm curious, what are some of the albums that y'all used to put on around the holidays?

REBA MCENTIRE: You know, honestly, I don't remember music being played around Christmas because we were working always on the Christmas program at school. Mama did have an old record player that if you took the arm and was going to put the needle on the record, you better hurry up because it would shock you. So for some reason, it would just shock you every time you got a hold of the arm. So we scratched up a lot of records and Mama wouldn't let us play them. But Mama loved all types of music. She loved big band, she loved classical, she loved, blues, jazz. We had The Ink Spots. We had Elvis Presley, Johnny Horton, Johnny Tillotson, Johnny Cash. All the Johnnies were covered. Then I got Dolly Parton. But Christmas music was just something that we did at school, best I can remember. And the first time I was ever behind a microphone is when I was singing at the Christmas program in the first grade. I sang "Away in a Manger."

SID EVANS: Really?

REBA MCENTIRE: Mm-hmm. First grade.

SID EVANS: Hmm. And your mom was a very musical person. Was she the one who really kind of introduced you to music?

REBA MCENTIRE: All four of us kids, yes. Because when we were rodeoing, we didn't have a radio. We didn't have an air conditioner. We barely had an armrest. So, Mama, to keep us kids out of trouble, we would sing. And Mama taught us four-part harmony. Mama was a great singer; until the day she died, she could sing. You know, when you're traveling eight, 12 hours a day in a car, four kids in the backseat, there's a lot of wrestling and scoot over and don't touch my leg and all that kind of stuff going on. And Daddy didn't have much patience for that. So that's why we'd pass the time if we were awake.

SID EVANS: You know, you mentioned the memorial service that you were planning for your mom, whose name was Jacqueline. Is that right?

REBA MCENTIRE: Mm-hmm. Yes.

SID EVANS: And I've got to imagine that there was a lot of music in the works for that service.

REBA MCENTIRE: A lot. I'd recorded several songs that I dedicated to Mama, one on my gospel album, and then one of my regular album, "Just Like Them Horses." We shot the video on the home place where Susie lives and Mama's the star of the video. It really touched my heart to get to do that. And the other song that I did on my gospel album was, "You Never Gave Up On Me."

SID EVANS: Hmm.

REBA MCENTIRE: I did that for Mama.

SID EVANS: Oh, that's beautiful. Well, you know, I came across a performance that you gave with her at the Ryman singing—

REBA MCENTIRE: Uh-huh.

SID EVANS: —"I'll Fly Away," which must have been so much fun for both of y'all. Did she have musical ambitions of her own?

REBA MCENTIRE: She did. And that Ryman Auditorium, Alice and Susie was there with us and all four of us girls to be on stage together was just a dream come true for me. I wish Pake could have been there, too. But Mama wanted to be a singer. Mama had a friend and they were a duo and they wanted to go to California and pursue a career. But Grandpa wouldn't let them because he needed the help there at home.

SID EVANS: Hmm. Well, she certainly saw her dreams come true through you.

REBA MCENTIRE: Oh, thank you. Well, for all of her kids. Mama was the one that drove Alice when she was rodeoing and she took her all over the country. She would go with Pake and drive for him and be with him when he was rodeoing. And then when my career got started, she went with me and, you know, all over the country to Nashville, my first big trip to Nashville, she was there with me. And then she was just a big supporter of all four of us kids.

But when we were going to Nashville for the first time in '75, I didn't know anything about the music business. And I was really missing my rodeo family. And I was wondering if I was going to be torn away from them completely. I made a lot of excuses to stop. You know, "I have to use a bathroom" or "can we get something to drink." And finally she got fed up with it and she said, "You know, Reba, if you don't want to do this, we don't have to do it. We can just turn around and go home." She said, "But if you go through it, I just want you to know that I'll be living all my dreams through you." I said, "Well, shoot. Why didn't you say that in the first place? Let's go."

And so when Mama passed, I kind of lost my reason of wanting to sing. Because I was always a pleaser. I always wanted to make Mama and Daddy both proud, but mainly Mama. I told Susie, because we were at the house for, you know, three weeks cleaning up Mom and Daddy's house and maybe longer. And I told her, I said, "I don't even want to go back, even whatever happens with COVID." And it took a good month or two. And I finally told her, I said, "Yeah, I'm getting it back. Mom would be tickled. I think she'd be happy." And Susie said, "Oh, yeah, Lord's got a lot of work for you left to do."

SID EVANS: And she's listening.

REBA MCENTIRE: Yeah. Yeah.

(Instrumental music break)

SID EVANS: So, Reba, you had an early hit called "How Blue" that is a personal favorite of mine—

REBA MCENTIRE: Aw.

SID EVANS: —And it's a song that I could almost see you singing with your family.

REBA MCENTIRE: Mm-hmm.

SID EVANS: I mean, there's something so simple and so pure about that song. What's the story behind that song?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, I was recording in Nashville. Harold Shedd—with my producer—and he found the song and I fell in love with it cause it was really a country song. And we have redone that song on this new album package. And it's slower. It's simple, more simple, less instruments. So it's even more special to me now. But it's just a song that I fell in love with and wanted to record.

SID EVANS: Reba, would you mind just singing just a little bit of that, just the beginning?

REBA MCENTIRE: (*singing*) How blue can you make me? / How long till I heal / How can I go on loving you when you're gone? / How blue can I feel?

SID EVANS: Oh, it's just such a great song. I mean—

REBA MCENTIRE: Thank you. Thank you. I've always loved that song.

SID EVANS: —And so simple and just so—

REBA MCENTIRE: Uh-huh.

SID EVANS: —So beautiful and, um, well, I just love it. That just made my day.

REBA MCENTIRE: Aww, thanks. Thanks.

SID EVANS: So you have this new project coming out called *Revived, Remixed, and Revisited*.

REBA MCENTIRE: Mm-hmm.

SID EVANS: Which is an update of a lot of your classics. And I want to ask you about another one you did a version of, "Does He Love You" with Dolly Parton.

REBA MCENTIRE: Yeah.

SID EVANS: And the first time you recorded it with, uh, Linda Davis and it won a Grammy. Can you tell me a little bit about how this new version happened and what it was like recording the song with Dolly?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, when we were coming up to do these songs again, record them again, do them differently, a dance mix of kind of stripped down, and then with the band as we perform them on stage. "Does He Love You?" came up and so it was, do you want to do a duet. I said, "I love duets." "Well who do you want to do it with?" And everybody — it was unanimous. "Can we try for Dolly?" It's kind of like, oh, "you said it out loud. So it's got to happen. It's released into the universe. Absolutely. Let's try for Dolly." And so we waited and we waited and we waited. And it was kind of like, "Have you all heard? I mean, got any word back?" So finally they went to Dolly and said, "Would you like to do 'Does He love you' with Reba?" And she said, "Yeah, I'd love to." And so we couldn't record it together, unfortunately. I did my part. And then she—they took it over to her studios and she did it on her own time when she wanted to do it. And when it came back, I got to tell you, I said, "Play it again. Play it again." She took it to a new dimension.

("*Does He Love You - Revisited*" begins playing: "*Does he love you / like he loves me / Does he think of you / the way he's holding me / Does he whisper all his fantasies / Does he love you / like he's been loving me?*")

REBA MCENTIRE: First time I ever saw Dolly was Sept. 17th, 1977. I was doing the Grand Ole Opry my first time. When I got there, they said, "Reba, I'm sorry, we're going to have to pull one of your songs." I said, "Why?" and they said, "Well, Dolly Parton just pulled up in the parking lot and we're going to give her one of your songs." "She can have both of them, if I can just meet her!" I didn't get to meet her, but, you know, when she came in there, like, "Everybody back up." And she walked by—I don't think her feet touched the floor—in this black chiffon pant suit with rhinestone butterflies on. She had that big, beautiful hair and the most beautiful woman I ever saw my life. That's first time I ever got to see her. I didn't even say hi or nothing. I just backed up.

SID EVANS: And y'all been friends for a long time.

REBA MCENTIRE: Yeah, we have. She was so sweet to come do the *Reba* TV show. So we got to spend five days together. She was there at table read and, and she came in and and treated everyone equal from catering to the producers, to the cameramen, the actors—everybody was equal to her.

SID EVANS: She was on this podcast, and that was a real highlight.

REBA MCENTIRE: Oh, yeah, I can imagine. She's a hoot.

SID EVANS: Well, speaking of podcasts, you launched your own podcast in 2020 with your friend Melissa Peterman—

REBA MCENTIRE: Yeah.

SID EVANS: —called Living and Learning with Reba McEntire.

REBA MCENTIRE: Uh-huh.

SID EVANS: And with everything that you have going on, what inspired you to want to make a podcast and what are some of your hopes for it?

REBA MCENTIRE: You know, I didn't even listen to podcasts. I said, "Why do we want to do this?" I am not the idea person, I'm the doer. So they come up with the ideas. I think Justin Macintosh came up with the idea and said, "You ought to do a podcast." And I said, "Well, I got to listen to some," because I wasn't in that world. So I did and I saw the wide variety of what you can do with them. You can tell stories, you can read like a play, you can interview people, you can talk to yourself. And so I thought, "Oh gosh, I'm not that good at interviewing. I can tell stories all day long." But I said, "Can I get Melissa to do it with me?" Because she knows all the questions. She's a great talker. And so that's what we did. And it was a lot of fun. We were all together at first and then COVID hit and we had to, you know, do them by Zoom, which I didn't mind at all. I got to stay at home in my pajamas and got my hair kind of fixed up and did it. But it was a lot of fun to get to do. And I learned so much. They picked topics that—I mean, like cancel culture.

SID EVANS: Right.

REBA MCENTIRE: —I don't know what cancel culture was. And so I learned so much about what was going on in the world through the podcast.

SID EVANS: Well, they're great conversations, and you've covered a lot of really cool topics like manners and friendship and faith and forging your own path. Is there one episode or one conversation that you really love the most?

REBA MCENTIRE: Well, of course, Dolly was a hoot. I loved interviewing her. Lauren Daigle on the spirituality was amazing. I loved that. Kristin Chenoweth was so much fun because I've known Kristin for a long time and getting to know more about her after I read her autobiography, that was really neat. All of them were great.

SID EVANS: Does this kind of fill something for you that that entertaining and acting maybe don't?

REBA MCENTIRE: Yeah, it educates me. You know, I don't have that much time to read and get educated. When I want entertainment, I want it to be almost either historical fiction or fiction. So to learn about

people and events and what's going on now, it was very interesting to me. So it was, it was good for me—

SID EVANS: Yeah.

REBA MCENTIRE: —To kind of branch out, do something different.

SID EVANS: Yeah.

REBA MCENTIRE: Do you enjoy doing it?

SID EVANS: I do. I love it. And I always come away a little bit inspired. And it kind of makes you curious about what other people are doing and what they're thinking. So, yeah.

REBA MCENTIRE: Absolutely. I wish that I had said that first. I'm going to say ditto.

SID EVANS: Well, listen, I know you've spent so much time on the road over the years. Were you able to do any cooking during the pandemic?

REBA MCENTIRE: Oh, my gosh, yes. I've become a pretty good cook. My boyfriend, Rex Linn and I, we love to cook. But he's the type that will start three days early and he'll do the brine and he'll do the smoking and then he'll do something else. And I said, "Well, are you hungry?" He said, "yes." And so I just go in the kitchen, I just clean out the refrigerator and throw it all together and said, "Come on, let's eat." And he'll go, "Well that was really good." I said, "Well, you sound surprised." He said, "Well, shoot. I think, you know—I—well, we're just different cooks, but it works out really well."

SID EVANS: Well, I've heard you've got a really good recipe for banana pudding.

REBA MCENTIRE: I sure do. I've experimented with banana pudding it seems like probably for the last 40 years. My cousin Paula Daniel and I would have a little competition who could make the best banana pudding. And so we'd come in and everybody'd ooh and ahh over both of them. They didn't want to hurt anybody's feelings. But then Paula found out that I make my banana pudding from a mix. And she did it from scratch. And I said, "Why did you do that?" She said, "Because it's better." I said, "You really think so?" So we've been on that ongoing battle back and forth for a long time, but I've even put peanut butter on each vanilla wafer.

SID EVANS: Oh, OK.

REBA MCENTIRE: And you know what? It's so rich, you can't hardly eat it with all the other stuff. But I love to layer bananas, the vanilla wafers and the pudding and just keep on going with it. And I'll eat hot or cold.

SID EVANS: That's a dish where you don't need to hold back.

REBA MCENTIRE: True. More the better.

(Instrumental music break)

SID EVANS: Well, I know you've got some dates coming up, getting back in front of audiences again. I think you're playing some dates with Brooks and Dunn, is that right?

REBA MCENTIRE: Yeah, that's December, right after I get through in Durant, Oklahoma, at the Choctaw Casino, um, we're going to go to Las Vegas there at Caesar's. We're doing nine shows in 15 days, so that's going to keep us busy.

SID EVANS: Yeah.

REBA MCENTIRE: Going from me not doing anything to 15 days in Vegas—we're going to have a blast. I'm going to really get into training and working my throat, my voice, and get ready for it. And then in January, we'll go back out for my tour for three months. So God willing, and keep fingers crossed and say a big prayer and hopefully we'll get to go back out.

SID EVANS: Well we're all looking forward to that and, to seeing you back on the road. Reba, I just have one question for you. and that is, what does it mean to you to be Southern?

REBA MCENTIRE: It's an honor. When I went to L.A. and people had said, "Oh, you kept your accent." I said, "Well, that's the way I talk." "Yeah, but don't you want to change it?" And I said, "Well, why? Then that wouldn't be Reba. That'd be somebody else." So I'm proud of my heritage. I'm proud of the state of Oklahoma, where I grew up. I'm proud of my parents. I respected my parents. Still do. I honor them. I love the Lord. And I think that's all the training and the things I learned and grew up with by being in the South. Well, some people might say Oklahoma is not the South, it's central or it's the center part of the United States. But I'm south of a lot of people. So I'll take it.

SID EVANS: Well, we'll claim you if we can.

REBA MCENTIRE: Thank you. Now I'm in Tennessee. I've been here since '88, so I'm definitely from the South. And I love it.

SID EVANS: Well, Reba McEntire, thank you so much for being on Biscuits and Jam.

REBA MCENTIRE: Thank you so much. And I didn't tell you this, but other than biscuits and gravy, biscuits and jam is one of my favorite things to eat.

SID EVANS: It's hard to get much better than that, isn't it?

REBA MCENTIRE: Isn't that the truth? Thank you so much for your time. I'm sure I've enjoyed visiting with you.

(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound)

Voice Over from SID EVANS: Thanks for listening to my conversation with Reba McEntire. Her new box set, Revived, Remixed, Revisited, is out now wherever you get music, and catch her new holiday special "Christmas In Tune" on the Lifetime Network.

Join me again next week when I visit with Alabama native Paul Janeway, lead singer of the acclaimed soul band St. Paul and the Broken Bones.

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Biscuits and Jam is produced by Heather Morgan Shott, Krissy Tiglias and me, Sid Evans, for Southern Living. Thanks also to Ann Kane, Jim Hanke, Danielle Roth, Andy Bosnak, Matt Sav and Rachael King at Pod People.

We'll see you back here next week for more Biscuits & Jam!