

Episode Title: Parker McCollum's Cowboy Heroes

Episode Summary: In this week's episode, Sid Evans, Editor-in-Chief of Southern Living Magazine, talks to Texas born musician, Parker Mccollum about spending his summers working on his Grandfather's ranch, finding his calling as a musician, and his commitment to writing songs that stand the test of time. Plus, Parker shares the wild story of Hollywood Gold, his grandfather's championship cutting horse and the namesake of his 2020 EP.

Episode Transcript:

(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins - Fiddler's Barn on Epidemic Sound - plays for 9 seconds before Sid's voice comes in)

Voice over from Sid Evans:

Welcome to the Summer Tour edition of Biscuits and Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of Southern Living Magazine, and my guest today is a Conroe, Texas native who's sometimes known as the Limestone Kid or, more recently, the Gold Chain Cowboy.

Parker McCollum spent childhood summers working on his grandfather's ranch and listening to classic country. He started writing songs with the guidance of his older brother and played his first gig at 16, but it wasn't until he moved to Austin, Texas that he knew that he'd found his calling as an artist. Today on the show, Parker talks about his mother's cooking, his commitment to writing songs that stand the test of time, his sold out Houston Rodeo show, and the first time he heard George Strait sing Amarillo By Morning. Plus, Parker shares the wild story of Hollywood Gold, his grandfather's championship cutting horse and the namesake of his 2020 EP. All that and more this week on Biscuits & Jam.

(End of theme music)

Sid Evans: Parker McCollum, welcome to Biscuits & Jam.

Parker McCollum: Hey, thank you Sid. Thanks for having me on.

Sid Evans: Parker, where am I reaching you right now?

Parker McCollum: I'm at my house in Nashville, Tennessee.

Sid Evans: You're based mostly in Nashville these days or are you still getting back to Texas a good bit?

Parker McCollum: Yeah. I was splitting town for about two years, and then got rid of my place in Austin, and bought a newer place here, and then currently trying to buy a ranch back in Texas, and make that move in the very, very near future.

Sid Evans: All right.

Parker McCollum: I'll probably keep this place here, but definitely itching to get back.

Sid Evans: So Parker, you grew up in a little town called Conroe, Texas.

Parker McCollum: Yeah. It was a little town. It's a huge town now. It's unbelievably large now, but it used to be small.

Sid Evans: It's really grown, huh?

Parker McCollum: Yeah. It was the number one fastest growing county in the United States for several years.

Sid Evans: Wow. Well, tell me a little bit about Conroe, and what it was like to grow up there?

Parker McCollum: Man, I miss it all the time. When I lived there growing up, I couldn't wait to get out, now all I want to do is go back. It's kind of funny how that works out. But man, Conroe was great. I mean my mom's side of family, my dad's side of family, very large, and, man, just had such a good childhood there. My granddad is a big cowboy, my mom's dad, and has two big ranches in Texas that I still spend a lot of time at. Spent every summer of my life working for him up there, cowboy, and then during the school year, I was in Conroe. My mom actually moved me to The Woodlands for high school, to go to better schools. And so I was the only person, almost, in my entire family that didn't graduate from Conroe High School on both sides. But you know The Woodlands is three miles down the road now, it's basically the same thing. It's all mushed into one thing. But I lived in Conroe till I was 14, I think, and then moved a few miles down the road to The Woodlands, went to high school there. And man, just a great place to grow up. I love the pine trees, every time I go home, it's the thing I miss the most. And when I'm looking at property in Texas or trying to move back, I'm looking to get back in those pine trees. It makes me feel very at home. But it's, I don't know, there's nothing really special about it, I don't think, unless you're from there.

Sid Evans: Yeah. What did your folks do for a living?

Parker McCollum: My dad's been in the car business his whole life, my mom's side of family owned a big concrete company in Conroe. I've been there. My granddad started it, 40 or 50 years ago, they sold it a couple years ago, actually to a company out of Nashville. And so that was a kind of a home base growing was that concrete plant. And then dad's still in the car business. He owns a dealership in Boerne, outside of San Antonio, he lives in Austin now. Then my mom is living in Fort Worth.

Sid Evans: Got you. And you were talking about spending summers working on a ranch, was that with your grandparents?

Parker McCollum: Yeah. Yeah. My granddad. Yeah, we go work for him on the weekends. Occasionally during the school year, but as soon as school got out, man, we worked at that ranch, pretty much the whole summer. It was me and my brother, our cousins. I mean he ran a full operation, nothing glamorous about it by any stretch of the imagination. He was old school cowboy, very, very successful man, very, very hard worker, up until the day he died, he was working at that ranch, and one of the greatest cowboys to ever live. I was honored to get to be his grandson and get to work for him as much as I did.

Sid Evans: Parker, I saw you post something about a belt buckle that you have, that belonged to your grandfather. Tell me a little bit more about him and, and the influence that he had on you growing up.

Parker McCollum: The definition of the American Dream is what he was, really. He was born in the Great Depression, started that concrete company with, I think, a \$250 loan from his dad. I mean he was youngest judge in the state of Texas at one time when he was 23 years old, County Commissioner, unbelievable, successful. He bred Quarter Horses, and he was very successful at that, concrete company was very successful, and he built every bit of it from the ground up by himself, him and his wife who was still alive, my grandmother, who we call Jojo. Having people like that you're so close to, that grew up and were raised in such a different time in life, such a tough time in life. They've been through a lot, and seen a lot of failures and a lot of success, and I think had an influence like him in my life from such a young age, and having somebody to look up to, and model myself after. It was just instrumental. And it wasn't until I was in my mid twenties that I realized how lucky I was to be his grandson, and get to learn from him, and strive to be more like him. And that's great. What a blessing to have in life as a young man. My dad's the same way. He is such an influence on me. I look up to him so much, my best friend in the world. And when you're a kid, you don't think about those influences like that, and you get a little older and you grow up a little bit, and you start to realize how ... the reason that I'm able to do anything or have any sort of knowledge of anything, or hustle, or work ethic is because of those people in my life. And my granddad was such a great example of that.

Sid Evans: What were some of the jobs that you would've done during those summers?

Parker McCollum: Man, we broke a lot of horses for him. He has one ranch in a town outside of Crockett, Texas. It's just East Texas, and then one in Central Texas just outside of a town called Groesbeck. And so we kind of split time between the two ranches. And we broke a lot of horses for him. We worked a lot of cows for him, a lot of days working cows. He owned a lot of property across the state, and so a lot of times, you know, we'd be driving and checking on property and stuff like that. But man, those were long, very, very hot summer days that I would give anything in the world to have one more summer working for him at those ranches. And at the time, I was like, "Man, this sucks." It was no BS. I mean it was a full time operation out there even more so now. Man, I really am grateful to have had that in my life.

Sid Evans: Your album Hollywood Gold was named, I believe, after a race horse that your grandfather bought a long time ago-

Parker McCollum: Yes. A cutting horse. Yeah.

Sid Evans: A cutting horse. Okay. I know you've told the story before, but I'm wondering if you could just give us the short version of it, and what that story said about your grandfather and who he was.

Parker McCollum: Yeah. Hollywood Gold was a cutting horse, I believe from Australia, that he had seen an ad for. And this is way before my time. This was way before I was ever born. He had ordered this horse, they bought it and they'd shipped it to San Francisco maybe, and I want to say they flew out there and hauled it back, if I'm correct. You know just beautiful championship cutting horse, and his name, Hollywood Gold. Shortly after he had the horse back in Texas, somebody stole the horse, and they'd always talk about how they went out at nighttime for months. I think it was quite a while, looking for that horse. They'd go drive around town just trying to find who stole this championship cutting horse, and they ended up getting it back. So it was a happy ending to the story. But I had heard my grandma tell that story so many times, and then finally one day she was saying it, I was thinking to myself, "How has this never made its way into a song or anything?" So when I was naming that EP, I just thought Hollywood Gold sounded great.

Sid Evans: It sure does. I didn't realize that that was named after a horse. But when I heard that, I thought, "Well, that's just perfect." Parker, I want to talk food for a minute. I know you played a lot of sports in high school, so you must have had an appetite. Who was the cook in your family?

Parker McCollum: My mom, actually. My parents split when I was eight. And so I lived with my mom from then on out, until I graduated high school and moved to Austin. And she's a great cook. She's still a great cook. I remember one time I was in high school, she got really into making crème brûlée, and for several months, I'd come home from school every day and just stuff my face with crème brûlée out of the fridge. But she'd been a great cook my whole life.

Sid Evans: That's pretty fancy.

Parker McCollum: Yeah. Man, she's just talented like that. And really, I think she's always loved taking care of everybody, and cooking for everybody, and having everybody over. She always welcomed my friends over at the house, and always making sure we were fed, she has a true knack for that.

Sid Evans: What were some of the dishes she was known for that you really looked forward to?

Parker McCollum: She used to make like a homemade chicken pot pie that was unbelievable. Her tortilla soup is not to be messed with, probably award winning if it was ever entered into some kind of tortilla soup competition. She was really good, and she's a great cook.

Sid Evans: I feel like I've heard you say that you're still a big fan of chicken pot pie.

Parker McCollum: I eat them all the time. Marie Callender's was the real deal,

Sid Evans: Did y'all have a lot of big family gatherings? You said that you had quite a large family.

Parker McCollum: Yes, sir. Yeah. We went to my grandma's house every ... I mean whether it was 4th of July, New Year's Eve, Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving, every year of my life until really this last year, I spent Christmas with my wife and her family in Oklahoma. That was the first Christmas in 29 years that I had not been at my grandma's house on Christmas morning. But yeah, my mom has three siblings, and they all have kids. We were around the same age. There was kind of big kids group in our family, and the

younger kids. I was part of the younger ones, and we all grew up every day of our lives together. And man, just we're all really close. And all those holidays are definitely some of my favorite memories from my childhood, because those are really, really good days.

Sid Evans: So are there a bunch of singers in your family? Or are you kind of a standout in that regard?

Parker McCollum: My brother sings a little bit. But certainly, I'm the only one that will get up on a stage and rip vocally.

Sid Evans: Well, tell me a little bit about your brother. I've heard you say that your brother, I think his name's Tyler, was a big influence on you in terms of music. What are some things that you took away from him?

Parker McCollum: I mean, pretty much everything, Sid. I mean he was so ahead of his time when he was in high school and college, with his knack, just natural talent that he had for writing songs, and the songwriters that he was influencing, and studying and passing off to me. I mean I was in intermediate school, junior high, listening to Steve Earle, and the Traveling Wilburys, and Rodney Crowell from Houston. He had a record called Houston Kid that came out when I was real young, and one of my favorite albums of all time. James McMurtry, and Robert Earl Keen, and Todd Snider, and ... I mean just the list goes on and on of all these records he was buying to listen to. And obviously I was always running around with big brother, and fell in love with the songs that were written, like those guys were writing songs, those kind of poetic, really a lot of handcrafted songwriting is what we were into and he was into. So him being so hard on me about that when I was trying to write songs and starting out, he was just so adamant about we don't write these kind of songs. We don't write pickup truck beer songs. He was like, "We're real songwriters." And I really took to that, and I identified with that from a very, very young age. And so I think that was kind of what planted the seed in me for eventually one day trying to get on national country radio by still writing those kind of songs.

Sid Evans: Well, you're mentioning a bunch of guys that aren't really classic country artists. People like Rodney Crowell and Steve Earle. I mean I feel like you've kind of bridged genres in a lot of ways. Is that fair to say?

Parker McCollum: Oh, I don't know. I mean I honestly don't even think about it, Sid. I really don't. It's hard to turn my mind off to think about anything other than just trying to make it, and trying to make it on some real songwriting that could stand the test of time hopefully one day. That is quite literally the only thing that I think about.

Sid Evans: Well, there's so many great songwriters that have come from that state, and you've just got so much inspiring music to listen to and guide you.

Parker McCollum: Yeah. I mean not all the best songwriters come from Texas, but a lot of them do, and a lot of them did. And so growing up there, it's just inevitable if you're trying to play guitar and write songs, you're going to stumble across those guys at some point or another.

Sid Evans: Yeah. I want to ask you about George Strait. It sounds like you've listened to a lot of George Strait in your day, and I think you said somewhere that he was the artist of your childhood. What is it about his music that you love?

Parker McCollum: I can just remember being so young and hearing Amarillo by Morning for the first time, and just that intro lick on the fiddle just being so captivating. I was so mesmerized by that song and that melody. And that's really the earliest I can remember of him. As much as my mom loved him and my dad loved him, and had us heard his music all the time, and just such timeless classic country songs. And he was doing it like that, in a time where it was pushing to a little more of the pop-ier stuff. Right? And he was really one of the last guys on the mainstream level hanging on to that. I think it just resonated with me a lot, and I identified with that. I mean he's the king. How can you not love him?

Sid Evans: You can't dispute it.

Parker McCollum: And there's only one, man. There will never be another, there'll never be another one just like him. It just won't be. It's a one-time. George Strait's a one-time deal, and we are all lucky to have gotten to be alive for at least part of his career.

Sid Evans: Well, and now you've gotten to know him.

Parker McCollum: I wouldn't say we know each other, but we've crossed paths a couple times, and gotten to say hello, take a picture, "How you're doing? Congratulations on everything," kind of thing. So he's somebody that I really don't truly desire to know personally. John Mayer's the same way. I know so much about them, and I, I'm so influenced by them, and there's kind of these mystical figures that I'm always chasing, and they've set the standard for me as an artist. Yeah. I just need that to remain that way. And once you're in there and you know them personally, they don't seem so high up on that mystical scale as ... It's like when you're a kid, how you look at him, I want that to remain that way in my mind.

Sid Evans: Right. Well, Parker, you started songwriting pretty early, and you were playing live at a pretty young age. I saw somewhere that you were playing in front of audiences when you were, I think, 16?

Parker McCollum: Mm-hmm.

Sid Evans: What were some of the early gigs that really stand out for you where you really felt this connection with an audience, and you felt like something special was happening?

Parker McCollum: I wouldn't say I felt that on stage until I was probably after high school. I was living in Austin and was living just down the road from the Saxon Pub, and I wasn't old enough to get in, so I had a fake ID, and I would go in there and listen to Walt Wilkins play on Wednesday nights. That's where I ended up meeting Ryan Bingham's guitar player, Corby Schaub, who produced my first EP and my first record. And I was trying to get gigs at Poodies in Spicewood, and I was trying to get a gig at Saxon Pub, and finally was able to pull it off, and got to start playing there a little bit. They let me play at midnight on like Sundays, and sometimes they'll let me have the slot after Walt on Wednesday nights. And that was really the first time that people started sticking around after Walt's show, and I'd start singing, and they'd

start paying attention, and it'd get real quiet. And I looked like I was 12 up there at the time, but I was 20. And people started to ask you know Who are you? How old are you? You're good." And I just was bumming around Austin trying to get gigs, and play guitar, and sing songs for people. And that was at the Saxon was really the first place that I started to feel like, "Man, maybe I'm right about this thing."

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme)

Voice over from Sid: I'll be back with more from Parker McCollum after the break.

(AD BREAK)

(Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme)

Voice over from Sid: Welcome back to Biscuits & Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, and today I'm talking with Parker McCollum.

Sid Evans: Well, you had a debut record called The Limestone Kid, which seems to have stuck with you as a nickname. Talk to me about where that record came from, and that title for that record.

Parker McCollum: That record was probably my favorite record as far as how I wrote it. You know, I mean when you're 21 years old, you're living in Austin, you don't know anything ... I had a little job from one of my dad's friends that was paying a little bit of money and helping me out. I really wasn't good at anything, he was more paying me, just trying to help me have some money in my pocket. And I was living in an apartment, and you know I wasn't going to school or anything. I'd just wake up every day and try to write songs and put together an album. You know I wanted to start a band and call it the Limestoneers. That ranch that I worked on a bunch from my granddad in Groesbeck, Texas is in Limestone County. And I had the idea for a long time, the name, call a band The Limestoneers, which at the time sounded much better than it does now. I was really, really obsessed with Rodney Crowell's record, The Houston Kid. And I loved that idea ... I was always obsessed with Billy the Kid, from the movie Young Guns, and obviously, the concept of the Houston Kid. And I really just was infatuated with the kid thing, and making it at a young age and having success at a young age. So when I was trying to think of a record name, The Limestone Kid came to mind. I wrote it down on my desk, on the desk actually with Sharpie on the actual physical desk itself. And it was there every day, the whole time I was writing that record. You know, I had covered one of my brother's songs, and one of my older cousin Austin's songs on that record, and wrote all the rest of them. And I never in a million years thought that record would do what it did.

Sid Evans: It's a great record, and it's got such a real gritty authentic sound to it. I could picture it being written in a small apartment in Austin.

Parker McCollum: Yes. Those were good times, man. I didn't realize how little responsibility I really had, and now I do.

Sid Evans: There's a song on the next record that I love called I Can't Breathe, and it seems like one that audiences really respond to in a big way. Do you remember where you were when you wrote that song?

Parker McCollum: Yeah, I was sitting on my coffee table in the kitchen in a house I was living in Austin at the time, down on the Southeast Side. And there's actually a video on my Instagram way back of the night I wrote it. And I wrote the hook chorus, and the girl I was actually dating at the time was upstairs, and crying, and upset with me, and throwing this big fit, and doing the whole thing. And I was downstairs playing guitar, and I started singing "I can't breathe, baby I'm dying". It was really driving. It was real fast. "Why you cryin' while I'm tryin' for this long?" And I was like, "Man, that's cool." So I took a little video of it, and I think I posted it on my Instagram. And that was 2015/2016, and I had been playing at the Saxon Pub a little bit, and a guy named Micky Braun from a band called Micky & the Motorcars had heard me play in there one night, and came up to me and said, "Hey man, we should write sometime." I'd been a big fan of his for a long time. And I said, "Yeah, man, I'd love to." And so actually the next day after I had written that little I can't Breathe hook, I took it to Micky at his house, and we sat down and wrote I Can't Breathe. I had never really co-written before with anybody other than my brother. And so that was the first time ever doing that. And we wrote that song and Lloyd Maines produced that record, and just brought that song to life. And again, I never thought that song would be as big as it was.

Sid Evans: Do you really feel it from the crowd when you sing that song or is it-

Parker McCollum: Oh, we close with it every night.

Sid Evans: It's a great one. I just love it.

Parker McCollum: Thank you.

Parker's song, "I Can't Breathe" comes in and we hear the following at full volume then fades out:

*This towns holdin' time
But what you believe keeps you rollin'
I'm on the road missin' home
Missin' the road while I'm home
But baby this is my callin'
There's no right lines just lies
That keep this old train rollin'
I'm on the road missin' home
Missin' the road while I'm home
But baby I'm goin'*

Sid Evans: So your latest album is called Gold Chain Cowboy, and there's a song on there called Pretty Heart that has become a huge hit. There seems to be a little self-criticism in that song. Is that just songwriting or is that you reflecting on some poor decisions that you might've made back in the day?

Parker McCollum: Yeah, yeah, I mean I used to self destruct in a way trying to make myself sad, get out of relationships kind of thing so I could write a record. And I know it sounds terrible, but that really is kind of how I would feel songs when I was trying to write records and songs like that. And Pretty Heart actually, the hook was written while I was writing Probably Wrong, that second record. And I'd forgotten

about it for a long, long time. And the original lyric was; what does that say about me that I could love somebody like you? Then we ended up changing it that day when we wrote it, to what does that say about me that I could do to you like I did? And I wrote with my buddy Randy Montana. And I remember we wrote it that day, and I left and I was like, "God, that was such a good idea, we just ruined it." I was like, "That hook was so good." And then the record label heard it and they wanted to take it to Country Radio. And I think it charted on Billboard before they ever took it to radio. It was already charted. And so they kind of sped up that process a little bit. And that was all during COVID. That went to number one during COVID. We didn't play a single show the whole time. So pretty rowdy.

Sid Evans: Parker. Would you mind singing just the first few lines of that song?

Parker McCollum: Yeah.

Parker begins to sing his song "Pretty Heart" a capella:

I didn't think I was a bad guy

I knew you were too good.

You were golden on the inside

And you loved me the best you could

the studio recording fades in while he's singing and we hear the following at full volume then fades out:

I'm the one who dropped the ball

Got you high and let you fall

Let the best thing I ever had slip away

What does that say about me?

I could do you like I did

That I can break an angels wings

What does that say about me?

Sid Evans: It's just great. It's a great lyric, it's just got a great feeling to it. I love it.

Parker McCollum: Thank you. Thank you.

Sid Evans: So Parker, you played the, uh, Houston Rodeo a few months ago. And for anyone who's not from Texas, can you explain what it's like to play there and why that is a big deal?

Parker McCollum: It's like the Superbowl of rodeos. I mean I know the NFR out in Vegas is, but Houston's certainly up there. And it's an NRG stadium where the Houston Texans play. I grew up just 40 minutes north of Houston and so I was a huge Houston Texans fan from 2001, their first year as a team. So that stadium was pretty special to me. And then I would go to the rodeo when I was a kid. My mom took me to see Pat Green there one time when he sold it out, when I was probably 11 years old. And I can

remember thinking ... I'm going to get tears in my eyes talking about this every time. I can remember thinking that night watching Pat, "I want to do that. And I wanted to do that here." And then I guess I would've been 15, and 17 years later I did, and sold it out, 72,000 people.

Sid Evans: I mean what is that scene like? It must be an incredible thing to get on that stage and look out at all those people, and to be in your hometown basically.

Parker McCollum: You know, I've been nervous before shows, before real big shows. The first time playing The Ryman I was pretty nervous. But one or two songs in, and it'll just go away, you're back, 100% back to normal. In the rodeo, it never happened. I never could gather myself the whole show. I just felt like ice in ... I don't know. I felt just like a wild ass ride downhill with no breaks, like, "I am not in control right now." You know, the stage is rotating the whole time that stadium is just massive, and there's so many people and you're out in the middle. And I couldn't gather myself the whole time. I don't remember what I said between songs. I don't remember if I thanked anybody. I may have not even sang very well. I don't know. So it was just something that ... ah, golly, I think we're playing it again next year. I hope we are. And I think I'll be able to handle myself a little better on stage. But it was overwhelming, and I had worked so hard with that being my ultimate goal. I had just thought about it for so long in so many empty bars or theaters, or four-hour Sunday afternoon shows or whatever I'd play. In every single one of them, I said, "This is going to be worth it. It'll be worth it. Just keep going. It will be worth it." And that was like ... I don't know. I mean I'll start crying. I get tears in my eyes thinking about it, because I wanted this. I wanted it so bad, and I got it.

Sid Evans: Well, and especially after COVID, after the last couple years, after you having an album come out and then not being able to tour. That must have been especially gratifying.

Parker McCollum: Yeah. I don't know, to want something that badly, and work that hard when you know people are just like, "You're not going to make it in the music business, bud." You know they're saying that when you walk out of every room. To actually do it was just like, "Oh, it was so worth it. Every piece of BS was so worth it."

Sid Evans: Mm-hmm. Well, you have had a very big year, to say the least. You won New Male Artist of the year at the ACMs a few months ago. But even bigger than that, you got married recently-

Parker McCollum: I did.

Sid Evans: ... to Hallie Ray. Am I saying that right?

Parker McCollum: You are. One of the very few people who say it right.

Sid Evans: And you all got married down in Tomball, Texas. I probably didn't say that right.

Parker McCollum: Yeah. Tomball. Yes, sir.

Sid Evans: So that's just down the road from where you grew up. Tell me some of the favorite moments from that day.

Parker McCollum: Oh, man. I was sick as a dog. I had played in Arizona the night before, or two nights before, this huge dust storm, and I just woke up, I mean, just sick as a dog. I took steroid pills and all this medicine stuff, trying to get it ... And I was fine once the day started, my adrenaline was going. It was great. But man, I'll say, obviously I'd never been married before, so I didn't know what to expect at a wedding. Obviously, I've been to them, but I've never been the one getting married. But the things that I said that day, I wrote in a letter that her dad and I talked about, I'd never said stuff like that out loud before. Or if I had, it's certainly been a long time since then. And I just remember after it, I was like, "Man, that was way, way, way cooler than I thought it was going to be." Not that I didn't think it would be cool, but I don't know. My parents split when I was eight, and that was on my mind when I was thinking about getting married or thinking about asking her to marry me. I was like, "Man, I really don't want to do that to my future kids one day." I was like, "I just think it's so important, it's something that's so understated and undervalued in our society nowadays is having parents." And so that was a really big thing for me. I just remember afterwards, I was like, "Golly, I could not have made a better decision. That was just such a wonderful day." So much better than I thought it was going to be. I'll never do it again, but it was awesome.

Sid Evans: Well, it's still pretty new. So congratulations.

Parker McCollum: Thank you.

Sid Evans: So you all are planning to head back to Texas, or to be spending a whole lot more time in Texas. Is that right?

Parker McCollum: Yes, sir. Yeah, I've been looking at ranches for quite a while now, Obviously, everybody knows right now real estate's just the worst it's ever been for someone trying to buy something. So I'm just, "No rush." I mean I'm never home anyways. I've got this big house in Nashville, and I got home yesterday morning for the first time in a week and a half, and I leave tomorrow night for two weeks. So I don't even know how much of time I would have to enjoy that ranch right now. But I know I want to be closer to my mom and dad, and my grandparents are getting up there, and I can't go drive to see them anymore, just stuff like that, man. I know it sounds corny and all that. But I needed to get out of Austin. I needed to come here, and just get out what I was doing there. And it's been probably one of the better decisions I've ever made in my life was just to take a year or two to get out of there. But I don't know, man. As much as I love it up here, it's beautiful, I love where I live, but it's not home.

Sid Evans: Yeah. Well, you've got a great song called Young Man's Blues where you seem to really miss that small town life. You miss Texas. So it sounds like something that's been on your mind for a while.

Parker McCollum: Yeah. I mean even when I was leaving, I didn't really want to go, but I was not doing what I should have been. I was just heading down the wrong road, and I knew I'd been there nine years, and felt like I had done what I needed to do there. And I said, "Man, I have to get out. I got to get out of this hole that I'm in here." And it was through COVID and all that. I know it was hard on everybody, whatever. But just me personally, I had to go. And man, I've got a song on this next record, and the first line of the chorus on one of the songs, it says, "Why was I itching to get out of Nashville so bad?" And it's

because as soon as I came here full time, I was like, "I'm going back. I'm going back." And I was like, "You know what? I'm just going to stick it out. It'll be fine." Hallie moved up here, and all that happened. And man, it's just been such a good decision. I really am glad that I did that, but 100% on the way back.

Sid Evans: Well, Parker, I just have one more question for you. What does it mean to you to be a Texan?

Parker McCollum: It's clearly and obviously the best state in the country. No question. But man, I take a lot of pride in what I do for a living, and I try to hold myself to a high standard, and expect a lot out of myself. And I think the state of Texas mindset, being a Texan holds in that same regard. So I think I just identify with it really well. If I'm that way with my own personal life, that mindset, and that attitude of being from Texas, is just because I think I get along with that very well.

Sid Evans: Well, Parker McCollum, thanks so much for being on Biscuits & Jam.

Parker McCollum: Alright, thanks Sid, I appreciate it, man. I enjoyed it.

Voice over from Sid: Thanks for listening to my conversation with Parker McCollum. You can check out his latest album, Gold Chain Cowboy, wherever you get music. Make sure to visit ParkerMcCollum.com for tour dates, social media and more. Southern Living is based in Birmingham, AL. Be sure to follow Biscuits & Jam on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you listen so you don't miss an episode. And we'd love your feedback. If you could rate this podcast and leave us a review we'd really appreciate it. You can also find us online at southernliving.com/biscuitsandjam Make sure to come back here next week for my conversation with Vince Gill.