

## **Episode Title: Walker Hayes Never Gave Up**

**Episode Summary:** In this week's episode, Sid Evans, Editor-in-Chief of Southern Living Magazine, welcomes Mobile, Alabama native and "Fancy Like" singer, Walker Hayes. Today on the show, the Father of 6 talks about how his Dad booked his first "life changing" gig at The Yacht Club in Mobile Bay, his struggles with alcoholism, and his friend Craig, who introduced him to the church and even gave him a van. Plus, Walker shares his go-to meal at Applebees, where he can now eat for free for the rest of his life.

### **Episode Transcript:**

#### **(Biscuits and Jam Theme begins)**

**Sid Voice Over:** Welcome to the Summer Tour edition of Biscuits and Jam, from Southern Living. I'm Sid Evans, editor-in-chief of Southern Living Magazine. My guest today is a Mobile, Alabama native who broke out last year with one of the biggest hits in country music—the pop sensation "Fancy Like." Walker Hayes grew up in a neighborhood where his church, school, and girlfriend were all within a mile radius. He met his future wife, Laney, in 11th grade. After they married in 2004, they drove straight to Nashville so he could pursue his music career, but that dream took more than a decade to get traction, and Walker struggled through some very hard times. Despite years of rejection and disappointment, his love of writing songs drove him to push through. Then, in 2021, "Fancy Like" hit the airwaves, Walker's dance moves became a TikTok sensation, and he's since been nominated for Grammys, Billboard Music Awards, CMT Awards, ACM's, and a Kid's Choice Award. Today on the show, the father of 6 talks about how his Dad booked his first "life changing" gig at The Yacht Club in Mobile Bay, his struggles with alcoholism, and his friend Craig, who introduced him to the church and even gave him a van. Plus, Walker shares his go-to meal at Applebees, where he can now eat for free for the rest of his life. All that and more this week on Biscuits & Jam.

**Sid Evans:** Walker Hayes, welcome to Biscuits and Jam.

**Walker Hayes:** Let's go, Biscuits and Jam.

**Sid Evans:** Great to have you on.

**Walker Hayes:** I appreciate you all having me.

**Sid Evans:** Where am I reaching you right now?

**Walker Hayes:** Today I'm in Phoenix, just a little one-off radio show, and I'll head back tonight.

**Sid Evans:** Oh, that's great. Well, Walker, you grew up in this part of the world, down in Mobile, Alabama, tell me a little bit about your hometown and what it was like for you as a kid.

**Walker Hayes:** Yeah, just, Mobile felt huge to me, growing up. I never would've called it a small town. I thought we were big stuff, down in 'Bama. If you lived in Birmingham or Mobile, that was it. Now I've traveled the world, come to find out, Mobile actually is kind of small. I call Mobile a strip mall town. It's grown a lot. I'm 42, so I've lived long enough to see that town change in many directions. I kind of watched it grow firsthand. I think the older I get and the further I go, the smaller Mobile feels, and that little neck of the woods in Spring Hill that I grew up in, is tinier. My wife Laney and I grew up about a song away from each other, and didn't meet until we were in 11th grade. We went to the same pre-K through 12 growing up, so even though Mobile is not a tiny, one stop sign town, my life was very confined in a really small area of just giant live oak trees and magnolias and azaleas. My church and my school and my girlfriend were all within like a mile radius.

**Sid Evans:** Well, when I think of Mobile, I think about the water, I think about the bay. I mean, did you grow up with that kind of strong connection to nature, spending a lot of time on the water?

**Walker Hayes:** The water, for sure. Yeah. I wish I could say I appreciated it, but my dad was dragging me out of bed on weekends to get down to the boat and clean it or work on it or go sailing on it. Then, my parents also had a house they bought probably when I was in high school. They purchased a home on Dog River, and so, water sports, that kind of stuff. My brother Brian, he married a girl in Wilmer, Alabama, and that's where I learned to hunt. Grew up playing baseball at the municipal park. Like I said, just really small radius of where my life, my upbringing was. I grew up going to Spring Hill Baptist, I walked to it. I mean, it was about a block away and I walked past it to walk to school, just small town. First concert was Jimmy Buffett. He's huge down there.

**Sid Evans:** Walker, when I think about Mobile, I also think about food and I think about things like crab claws and shrimp and flounder and low country boils and that sort of thing. Was all that kind of a part of your childhood?

**Walker Hayes:** Yeah, absolutely. I mean, When you venture out of your house and you put together get-togethers with your boys We would drive over to Fairhope or drive over to Gulf Shores. One thing we would do is pick up some boiled crawfish anywhere we could, and that went well with a cold beer, but yeah, it's funny, you take that for granted. I mean, there was an old restaurant called the Maxwell House, my parents would take me there growing up, and fried any kind of fish you wanted, shrimp. Crab claws was like, one out of three restaurants had them down there, growing up, and then again, I moved to Nashville and I was like, nobody even heard of a crab claw up there. Yeah, I was like, "You guys aren't that far away." It's just right down the road, but yeah, the seafood is incredible down there. I mean, I'm pretty much the only person in my family that doesn't know how to make gumbo.

**Sid Evans:** There's still time, Walker.

**Walker Hayes:** Hey, I can eat it. I can eat it. You're exactly right. I think, going back to just getting older, it's like, hey, I need to start ... I've been playing the guitar and writing songs and that's kind of been my focus, so now I need to pick up on some of those recipes, but yeah, just, oysters are a big thing. Christmas, We don't eat just turkey and ham. There's always some fried shrimp. There's always some fried oysters and things like that.

**Sid Evans:** Well, Walker, so you had a bunch of siblings. There were eight of you, right?

**Walker Hayes:** There was nine, actually. My parents, they came from previous marriages, so my mother had three boys and a girl and my father had three girls and a boy, and then they were married and then they had me, so, yeah.

**Sid Evans:** That's a pretty full house, and I'm wondering if you can describe a typical dinner in the Hayes house and who was doing all that cooking?

**Walker Hayes:** Well, the thing is, I only actually lived with one brother. His name was Brian he was the youngest on my mom's side. We're divided by many, many years. My oldest brother is probably about 25 or six years older than me, so.

**Sid Evans:** Oh, wow.

**Walker Hayes:** We're not that tight of a knit family, but yeah. My dad, growing up, he was always working late. He loved his job. He was a workaholic. I spent a lot of time with my mom, and there's one meal I particularly remember, is meatloaf. That was a regular in our house, but I retreated to my friends as early as I could, growing up. Like I said, my dad worked a whole lot. I didn't really get to spend a lot of time with him growing up, and I've been pretty vocal about that. I resented my dad as a child because he did work so much, and thank God, we were able to mend that relationship as I ... Shoot, as I had kids myself, and I was like, "Whoah, this is ... Now I get it, Dad, I get what you were going through."

**Sid Evans:** I want to ask you about your dad, Charles, who passed away last year.

**Walker Hayes:** Yeah.

**Sid Evans:** And the influence that he had on you. I know you've said that, you know, y'all, weren't particularly close when you were a kid, but when you look back on the influence that he had on you, what do you remember?

**Walker Hayes:** Oh, shoot. I kind of watched my dad, almost like a hero, but a hero that I wanted his attention growing up, but couldn't get it. I wanted him to be available, and he really wasn't, but he sold real estate, man. He crushed it. He was a go-against-the-grainer. He didn't do it like anybody else. My dad was just crazy. He loved music so much. We'd be standing in line at Cracker Barrel and he would just start singing, to an embarrassing level. I would be like, "What are you doing? Why are you doing this right now? Everybody in this restaurant is looking at us right now." He just was that kind of guy. He had blinders on, his whole life that I knew him. He was just always laser focused at whatever he was doing, which was, most of the time it was selling a house. If it was sailing, he was the same way. He was crazy, Sid. When you ever watch a sailboat race, it's kind of fun. It's like watching birds fly really slow. One goes and then they go, they do that, and at every starting line of my entire life, 150 boats would go this way and my dad would go that way, and I'd be like, "Dad, I think they may know something you don't," and we would either finish last or we would finish first. That was his attitude. He just was on his own, he marched to the beat of his own drum, and he's a very kind guy, very jolly guy. He and I never really shared super deep conversations. I think I could count them on one hand because life was just very laughable to him. Struggles, to him, market crashed, real estate's terrible. Katrina hits, there's one house for sale in Mobile. That's the only inventory we have, and he's like, "All good." He gets up, goes to work anyway. He was that type of guy, but I love my dad. I'll tell you one thing he just taught me, is that failure isn't that bad. You know what I mean? I meet so many people in my life and they tell me about their own

dreams, and that F word, failure to them is just, it's the end of the world. I can see it with my own kids as they're young and they're navigating life and I'm trying to raise them, just embarrassment, failure, failure in front of other people. It's petrifying to a lot of people, but it wasn't to my dad. My first gig was at the yacht club on Mobile Bay, the only reason I played that show is because he called me and said he booked it. He said, "You're already signed up to play," and he didn't ask me, he didn't ask if I wanted to, he didn't say, "Hey, practice." He said, "You're playing this Friday. Trudy, the bar manager, said you could play on Friday so I said you would." I was so mad, and my dad laughed. Every time I was mad at my dad in my life, I can still hear him laughing, because he just knew. It's not that big of a deal. You're angry, you're frustrated, you're scared, and it's just not that big of a deal.

**Sid Evans:** If you fail, so what?

**Walker Hayes:** Yeah, exactly, and so I played that gig and it changed ... It truly changed my life. I mean, and he is the reason. I would never in my life have picked up that guitar in the corner of my apartment and said, "Hey, you know what I think I'll do this Friday, is I think I'll go play some songs at this bar." I'm so grateful. There wasn't nobody else in my life who was saying, "Hey, you need to go do this." I was more of a follow the pack type. I just wanted to fit in, didn't want to really stand out too much. Really just wanted to make a life for me and Laney. I actually got that gig when I was engaged to Laney, so it wasn't great timing to pick up a hobby and try to make it a career.

**Sid Evans:** Well, it's a lot more than a hobby now, Walker.

**Walker Hayes:** Yeah. Yeah, it is, but father-son stuff, I could talk about it all day. It's the weirdest relationship, and the influence he had on me, it's going to influence my own kids. It's so wild, and he died right before this hit the rocket ship, and it's been perplexing to me this year. Just, honestly, I still text him. I texted his number from the Grammys and I said, "I'm nominated for a Grammy. You wouldn't believe it." That's so weird to me, that the guy who just heard me one day and said, "You need to just do that." What's funny too, Sid, is he was not a ... I mean, there was many times I would've loved for my dad to give me advice. He would say, "I don't want to be blamed when you go down the wrong road. You have to decide for yourself." Now, what's funny is my sons get ticked off at me because I'm the same way. I'm like, "Man, I don't want you calling me up when I told you to be a drummer and you hate the music business. You've got to blame yourself. You've got to take responsibility for what you run into in life. You had a choice and I'm not going to make it for you." Man, I love my dad. He was, I think no matter how much you love your dad, when he's gone, there's just going to be a lot ... It don't matter. If I had spent every waking moment with my dad from the time I was 10 until now, and he died tomorrow, I'd still have things to say or ask or just, "Dude, help."

**Sid Evans:** Well, you wrote a song about him called Briefcase, which is a wonderful song and a great tribute to him, and it has this lyric that I love. "Now I get it, Dad, it's a juggling act between feeding the kids and feeding the dreams we chase," Which I think is so true, and sounds like it was very true of him.

**Walker Hayes:** Yeah, totally. I've learned as I've gotten older, My dad told me so many things without ever saying some things to me. You know what I mean? And within those memories, there's lesson upon lesson about grace and mercy and forgiveness and loving a kid. There's never an adequate amount of gratitude you can give a parent. My dad loved me and I didn't give him anything in return, as a kid. I mean, maybe as a little kid, I never ate that meatloaf and thought, "Dad worked for this." I just ate that meatloaf thinking, "Well, that's what I'm going to feed my kid one day," and so if there's anything I would go back ... I did tell my dad face to face that I loved him, that I was proud of him. I hope he heard it. I

played the song Briefcase for him. He didn't know who I was. It was a sad moment, and that song for me, it was trying to repair a lot of things, It's easier for me to say it in a song than it is to just sit in a truck with my dad and say it, but I love my dad, and Lord willing, some of him gets passed on to my sons. I've forgiven him. Before he died, there was a lot of forgiveness, and that goes into that song too, just me saying, "We're all really kids." He's a son too.

**Walker's song, "Briefcase" comes in and we hear the following at full volume then fades out:**

*Now, I sound like him and I look like him*

*And I walk like him and I talk like him*

*And I try to make my wife laugh*

*When she's mad 'cause I love my job like him*

*Now, I get it dad, it's a jugglin' act*

*Between feedin' the kids and feedin' the dreams we chase*

*I guess a guitar doesn't fall too far from a briefcase*

**Sid Evans:** Well, there's a lot in that song and it's a great tribute to him.

**Walker Hayes:** Thank you.

**(Instrumental music break of Biscuits and Jam theme)**

**Voice over from Sid:** I'll be back with more from Walker Hayes 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 Walker Hayes.

**Sid Evans:** Well, Walker, so you moved to Nashville. You were there for a pretty long time before your music career started to get some traction. Were there hard conversations with your family about whether or not this whole thing was going to work?

**Walker Hayes:** I wish we were that communicative, but honestly, man, I think it had a lot to do with where I grew up, but silence says a lot, if things were heating up, we communicated a lot more, and if things were bad, the phones didn't ring. You know what I mean? That's just a natural ... I think I grew up in a place where, when things were bad, you just don't talk about it. When my dad was passing, there were times when I would get frustrated with my mom and be like, "Mom, you have got the call and you've got to tell me that dad fell down the stairs last night. You can't call me a week later and say, 'Hey, last week we had an episode, it's okay now,' you know?"

**Sid Evans:** I think some of that's a Southern thing, not wanting to make a thing of it, not wanting to bother you, that sort of thing.

**Walker Hayes:** Right. Totally, or just be vulnerable or admit weakness. I don't know what it is, but I'll just sum that answer up by saying, when I was at Costco and I was an alcoholic, and Laney was always pregnant, we didn't get a lot of visitors. My dad, same old, constant. He would laugh. I would call him and be like ... I remember one time I told him, I said, "I just got a job. I'm working at Costco." He just laughed and he said, "That's going to build some character." He was like, "That's going to be good for you."

**Sid Evans:** He believed in you.

**Walker Hayes:** He did.

**Sid Evans:** Well, it's a pretty remarkable story, Walker, and I've talked to a lot of people on this podcast who say that they were in Nashville for two years or three years or four years before something happened. I mean, you had a pretty long road to get to where you are. Was there ever a time when you thought, "Okay, I think I'm done, I'm going to hang it up here"?

**Walker Hayes:** There were moments that hurt really bad. There were rejections that hurt really bad. There were failures that really did, they felt final. There was a couple like that, but at the same time, and I don't know if this is a product of my father or I've got a screw loose or what, but I would just get up and write about it. There's a song I have called Lela's Stars, and it makes me laugh because I just look back at just that whole scenario and I'm like ... I honestly tell my own story and I'm like, "Man, we're crazy. I mean, we are crazy." It's almost like security was always saying, "Hey, I'm over here if you would like me," and we were like, "Nah, I'm going to go write a song about this." I mean, I remember sitting in my Honda with the roof that was held up by thumbtacks that my daughter let us borrow, and I'm about to clock in at Costco. It's like 3:50 in the morning and I'm looking around and there's lyrics written on my hands. There's lyrics written on cups, napkins, trash. There's lyrics written everywhere, and I'm sitting here trying to decide, "How do I be a great father? That's it. I just want to be a great father. Does that mean ride or die? Do this dream, drag them through the mud and my wife through near poverty, or does that mean I have to just hang that, I need to break up with this dream of mine?" Honestly, I'm hesitant to even call it a dream because I didn't have any goals in mind. It's not like I was going, "Man, I want to be famous. I want to be on the radio." I just loved music. I just loved to write, and it wasn't like I sat there and talked about that passion. I just did it. I just wrote, and I sang, and that's what I did naturally. There was a couple of arguments involving alcohol with Laney that were really, really tough. There were a couple failures, like I said. There was one day Steve Martin had actually flown me out to New York to audition for a part in his play called Bright Star, and I was so close. I remember Laney and I, she would hold our baby Loxley and film, we would do this scene hours and hours into the night, and we thought for sure, this was going to be it. This was 13 years in, you know what I mean? I mean, it's a 10 year town. We've already passed that, I remember getting the call that out of the last three, I was not selected, and I remember watching Laney crumble, and seeing her be sad was a different level of crushing. She was tough. She felt every heartbreak and we just rolled with it and she was like, "Nah, they're wrong," or, "Nah, they'll see" That was kind of her attitude, but when that one didn't happen, man, I remember her being upset, and that scared me, you know what I mean? It was like, "Whoa, even Laney felt that one."

**Sid Evans:** Well, Walker, you've talked about your struggles with alcoholism and these low points that you hit, but you have a song called AA that's on your record Country Stuff, It's a great song. Talk to me

about where you were when you wrote that and how that came together, and how you kind of take some of this darkness and turn it into something that feels so fresh.

**Walker Hayes:** Well, I guess really, if I had one goal with my music, it's just, I love music that makes me feel less alone. Whether it feels like I'm feeling or whether it's saying what I'm actually going through, and so I feel like God has gifted me with lyrics. I'm not a melody guy. I'm not a musician. I'm not like some virtuoso. I just love words, and so AA to me, you could actually sing that song and it would be very sad. You could make it sad, because it's a struggle. Life is a struggle. Life's not really the happiest thing ever. There are moments, but the moments between those great moments are pretty tough. Dads die, so do dogs. Hearts break, dreams don't all come true. I'm one of a billion people who try to be a singer-songwriter, but what AA to me focuses on is how life, really, if you look at it, and you don't try to not do this, but it can kind of be narrowed down to coping mechanisms. One by one, what makes you feel validated and gets you to the next moment? As a dad, that's trying to raise my daughters, trying to raise my sons, trying to continually win my wife, and balance our relationship like a plate spinning. Then with the AA line, really, that's a very deeply rooted line. A lot of people have commented or critiqued that line, but I thought long and hard about leaving it as, "I'm trying to stay out of AA," and the reason I left it there, because I actually do go to AA, and AA is great. It's wonderful for me and I will never stop going. It is awesome, but when I drank that first beer, when I was 13, 14, my end goal was not to go to AA. It wasn't to go to rehab. It wasn't to use something that would eventually control me, and so, yeah, I mean, AA was kind of my Anthem to just all the dads out there. It's been an amazing song to watch people react, but I ... If people are like me, I love the truth, and I love especially when it's dressed up with sadness and laughter.

***Walker's song, "AA" comes in and we hear the following at full volume then fades out:***

Tryna steer my daughters off the pole  
And my sons out of jail (sons out of jail)  
Tryna get to church so I don't go to hell (I don't wanna go)  
I'm just tryna keep my wife (hey babe) from figuring out (I love)  
That I married up (you're so fine, girl) and she married way, way down  
In Alabama where they love Nick Saban (Roll Tide)  
Tryna write a song the local country station'll play (I'm just tryna write a song)  
Hey, I'm just tryna stay out of AA

**Sid Evans:** Well, it's a great song and I can see why it's resonated with so many people. I want to ask you about another song called Craig, and this is a song about the guy who really kind of helped bring you into the church. Tell me a little bit about the song and the man behind it.

**Walker Hayes:** Well, as the song says, I still haven't figured out church, but I get Craig, and I think God was merciful and kind to bring Craig and his wife and his family into our life. I personally didn't have a lot of respect for Christians, only because I'd been hurt by them. In the past growing up, my dad was a music minister. I was in church three times a week. I saw a lot of behind the scenes stuff and it didn't really rub me the right way. I was out, and then when I met Craig, I was at probably the peak of my cynicism, would've called myself an atheist. I just thought it was all fake, and there was no real transformation. Then, Craig knew these things about me. He knew alcoholic Walker, but he didn't shy away from me. He didn't allow me to push him away. He loved us unconditionally, and you can hear, when I wrote the song I was not a believer, but you can hear my heart confused. You can hear my heart saying, "Hey, here's this guy that has something, I don't know what it is. He's got something I need, or, he

talks about Jesus. He might actually know this guy." You know what I mean? Like I said, I didn't think that happened, and I got to see it firsthand. And the reason I wrote this song was to thank Craig for a car. He literally gave us the minivan out of his garage. He's not a rich person, according to the world's standards. I mean, he sacrificially gave us this van because he saw a need, and that really had an impact on me, as you can hear in the song. In the meantime, I discovered Jesus on my own. I realized I need a savior, and I also have felt a lot of forgiveness towards that hypocrisy, I used to call it, and that animosity towards kind of a Pharisee type of person, because now that I'm a believer, I see that Christians need Jesus too. Pastor put it the other day, I was talking to him, he said, "I'm just a beggar trying to help a beggar, another beggar trying to get bread." That's kind of what I am now, but Craig is my best friend. We went from complete strangers to next-door neighbors, and now I sing that song as a full-blown believer, and Sid, when I wrote it, I didn't put the name of Jesus in those lyrics because I felt like I would be lying. I just didn't believe in Jesus. It's almost like I was cursing God when I wrote the song, and now when I sing the song, I just want to point to God and I want to point to Jesus, which is incredible.

**Sid Evans:** Walker, would you mind just singing that first verse or so of the song?

**Walker Hayes:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. It just says, "I met Craig at the church called Redeeming Grace. It's like he understood my I don't want to be here face. I didn't bow my head and I smelled like beer, but he just shook my hand said, 'I'm glad you're here.' He says, 'We'll all be judged,' but he was never judgemental, and even though my songs, they don't belong and know hymnal, he'd quote me my lyrics, slap me on the back, say, 'Man, you got a gift, how you write like that.' Yeah, I know. He sounds cool, right? Not your typical kid from Sunday school, right? I still ain't figured out church yet, but Craig, I get. Said, no, he can't walk on water, or turn Napa Valley red, but he just might be tight with a man that did." There you go.

**Sid Evans:** That's great. That's great. Really, it's like you were just sorting it all out as you wrote that song.

**Walker Hayes:** It was, and I'm glad you said that those words, sort it all out. I really should stop calling my Nashville thing a dream. It really was, and I feel like I'm still doing this, but I feel like every day, that's just all I'm doing, is sorting it all out. I'm sorting out yesterday. I'm sorting out stuff that happened to me when I was 15, and thank goodness for pens and paper, and thank God I somehow stumbled into that hobby, just that gift, and then the language of music, because that's ... I swear, I get frustrated being in an artist community because I'm just, I don't wake up thinking, "Man, I'd love to win this or do this." It's fun to think, "Oh wow, this sold a lot," or you get this applause, but I'm truly just a guy trying to sort things out, and it just so happens I make music, and so people can hear what's going on in my brain.

**Sid Evans:** Well, I think they hear it coming through loud and clear, and I think they relate to it. I've got to ask you about this song, Fancy Like, which was just this rocket ship of a song last year, and it's on your new album. It became a TikTok sensation when you danced to it with your daughter, and you've been at this a long time. You've written Lord knows how many songs. As you said, you were scribbling them on pieces of paper when you were working at the Costco. What was it about this one that resonated with people in such a big way?

**Walker Hayes:** Oh, gosh. Sid, if I knew, I would do it again, but, I don't know, Sid. I mean, at this point in my life, the Lord just does what he wants with us, Laney and I lost our seventh child, and you said it, man. I mean, I've written a thousand songs. I don't know. My batting average is terrible, but I will tell you this, man. Me and Josh Jenkins and Shane Stevens, we're writers on that song and I'm going to tell you, all of us will just say God wanted to just use a really average human with just a normal family that fights



about where they're going to go to eat, and a beautiful woman, and just high school sweethearts getting older, and the other writers, God is so good that he would allow the world to just dance for a moment, I seriously think the Lord orchestrated all of it, He orchestrated whatever song I'm about to put out, if it flops. He did that too, and it's great. It's just as great. It just doesn't have that sparkle, but it's all for good and for his glory. I mean, we had a good time writing that song, but I'm telling you that what happened with it, it's still confusing. I don't know if I'll ever figure out what that was.

**Sid Evans:** Well, some things, some questions you just don't need to ask, but I know you have fun performing it, and if nothing else, I heard you got a gold card to Applebee's, which means that you can eat there for free for the rest of your life. I've just got to ask you, what is your go-to Applebee's order?

**Walker Hayes:** I've been trying to stay on the lighter side lately, because we eat so much of it, but man, I've got to tell you, dude, Applebee's ... I joke around a lot, but I've got to tell you, man, Applebee's is truly family. It's crazy to think I used to steal my dad's credit card and take Laney there when we were in 11th grade. Who would've thought two kids sitting there just eating a Bourbon Street steak, going, "One day you're going to write a song that basically just blows Applebee's up, and you're going to do a dance with our daughter" Man, Lately I've been doing the Southwest bowls, and the quesadilla burger is really, really good, but the spinach dip, man, I never go without getting a spinach dip.

**Sid Evans:** Well, if this music thing doesn't end up working out for you, at least you're going to have that gold card still.

**Walker Hayes:** That gold card, and again, back to my dad. My dad, he would be proud of that. He would be like, "Wow." I've definitely thought that. No matter what happens, I've got a meal waiting for me at Applebee's.

**Sid Evans:** Well, Walker, I've just got one more question for you. What does it mean to you to be Southern?

**Walker Hayes:** Oh, shoot. I've probably taken the typical route of growing up in the South and wanting to kind of sneak out and be like, "What else does this world have to offer?" The South has a way of preserving the best things about traditions, Southern is synonymous with simplicity, and I think some of the basics of family and friendships and comradery and the pace of life, and keeping things ... I say small town, but I mean just know people, know people and be known, spend time together. Simple, stupid things like, just be kind, you know what I mean? That's one thing I love about the South, is it reminds me of, when you roll up into Mobile, it's like being on the lake. Every time you pass somebody on a boat, you wave, and that's a good thing. That's a good thing to teach your kids. No matter who they are, whether they're on a little, they've got a little outboard fishing boat and they're going to throw a net somewhere and you're wakeboarding, you just say, "Hey." That's Southern, and it's not pretentious. In the South, there is a candy-coated sweetness that happens, and it can be very bad, but that's not pretentious, kindness, hospitality. That's Southern to me, but yeah, my South, when you get real specific, I mean, Southern is coastal to me, going back to that food, and it's family, and I've been a lot of places in the world and there's a lot of faith in the South. Again, it's not perfect. They don't got it all figured out, but faith is a value that I see in the South. I hope that answers the question.

**Sid Evans:** It sure does, Walker, and I appreciate your candor and I appreciate all the time you spent with me today. Thanks so much for being on Biscuits and Jam.

**Walker Hayes:** Thank you. I appreciate it. I thought we were going to eat Biscuits and Jam, but maybe next time.

**Sid Evans:** We're working on that.

**Voice over from Sid:** Thanks for listening to my conversation with Walker Hayes. You can check out his latest song, "Y'all Life", wherever you get music. Make sure to visit [WalkerHayes.com](http://WalkerHayes.com) for tour dates and more. Southern Living is based in Birmingham, AL. Be sure to follow Biscuits & Jam on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you listen. 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](http://southernliving.com/biscuitsandjam) Make sure to come back here next week for my conversation with the rising star and Texas native Madeline Edwards.