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New WSRE production remembers country legend Hank Locklin

“Hank Locklin: Country Music’s Timeless Tenor” to celebrate 60th anniversary of “Please Help Me, I’m Falling” and Locklin’s Grand Ole Opry induction

PENSACOLA, Fla., May 14, 2020 — WSRE is producing a new film about country music recording artist Hank Locklin, who hailed from the piney woods of Santa Rosa County in McLellan, Fla. “Hank Locklin: Country Music’s Timeless Tenor” is scheduled for release this fall, commemorating the 60th anniversary of two career milestones: the release of “Please Help Me, I’m Falling” and Locklin’s Grand Ole Opry induction.

Production has been supported by grants from “Country Music: A Film By Ken Burns” and the Bear Family Foundation. The WSRE-TV Foundation is seeking additional funders to help secure archival footage and photos and the rights clearance required for distribution of the film beyond noncommercial broadcast and streaming, making possible screening events and DVD production.

WSRE will submit the film for national feed to other PBS stations through the National Educational Telecommunications Association. “We are confident that the film will have national appeal and will be broadcast on a number of PBS stations with particular interest coming from stations in the Southeast,” said Jill Hubbs, WSRE general manager.

Locklin made his first appearance on the Grand Ole Opry in 1953, following his first No. 1 hit, “Let Me Be The One.” He performed for the first time as an Opry member on Nov. 12, 1960, following the success of “Please Help Me, I’m Falling.” He remained a member for 49 years, making his last Opry performance in 2007 at age 89 and remarkably hitting the same high notes of his heyday as he performed his self-penned hit, “Send Me The Pillow You Dream On.”

“Please Help Me, I’m Falling,” written by Don Robertson and Hal Blair, was a monster hit on both the country and pop music charts in 1960. The song introduced a unique piano style and advanced the Nashville sound known for influencing country music as we know it today.

The song peaked at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot Country Songs chart on May 15, 1960. It remained on the chart for nine months—30 weeks in the Top 10, holding the top spot for 14 weeks, and it crossed over to Billboard’s Hot 100 chart, peaking at No. 8.
Other popular hits recorded by Locklin included “Geisha Girl,” “Country Music Hall of Fame,” and “Danny Boy.”

Locklin is admired within the country music community for both his influence on the artists who followed him and for the genuine kindness of his character, as evidenced by the cast of industry icons who agreed to interview for the WSRE documentary about his music and career.

In the film, Locklin’s story is told by his youngest son, Hank Adam Locklin, with help from country greats, including Bill Anderson, Ralph Emery, Crystal Gayle, Vince Gill, William Lee Golden, Dolly Parton, Charley Pride, Jeannie Seely, Ray Stevens, Marty Stuart, Dwight Yoakam and others.

About Locklin, producer Chet Atkins and the Nashville A-Team session musicians who first recorded “Please Help Me, I’m Falling,” legendary Grand Ole Opry and session guitarist Jimmy Capps said, “They knocked down all the bushes, and we drove in on paved roads.”

WSRE has scheduled the local broadcast premiere of “Hank Locklin: Country Music’s Timeless Tenor” for October 15. The film is being produced by Mary Riker. Emily Mitchell is associate producer, James Roy is director, and Ted King is assistant director.

For information about becoming a funder of this project, contact Tracie Hodson at 850-484-1246 or thodson@wsre.org.

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**Photo Credit:** Grand Ole Opry Archives: Photograph by Les Leverett

**About Hank Locklin**
Born Lawrence Hankins Locklin in McLellan, Fla. on Feb. 18, 1918, Hank Locklin began his career singing in roadhouses along the Gulf Coast and performing on WCOA radio in Pensacola. He went on to perform on the Big D Jamboree and Louisiana Hayride and was signed to 4 Star Records before being lured to record with Chet Atkins at RCA Victor, where he recorded in Nashville from 1955 to 1974 and helped establish the Nashville sound. In 1960, he joined the Grand Ole Opry, of which he remained a member for 49 years. Locklin is known for his role in introducing concept albums; for being hugely popular overseas, especially in Ireland; and for the longevity of his high tenor voice, recording well into his 80s. With six No. 1 hits and more than 15 million albums sold, Locklin received numerous industry awards, including two Grammy nominations. He was inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame in 2007 and into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in 2014. He died at his home in Brewton, Ala. on Mar. 8, 2009.

**About WSRE**
WSRE is a PBS member station, licensed to the Pensacola State College District Board of Trustees. Since 1967, WSRE has served Northwest Florida and South Alabama with educational and entertaining programs and community engagement activities. WSRE produces, acquires and distributes programs that address local interests and reflect the diverse characteristics of the coverage area and connects local schools and families to PBS educational resources.